

## Muridism as a Stateforming Element of Imam Shamil's Imamate (1834-1859)

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### **Abstract**

*The article examines the role of muridism as an important state-forming ideological element of Imam Shamil's theocratic state – the Imamate, during the period of his rule (1834-1859). It presents key moments of the forming of the ideology of muridism, its aspects which differentiate it from the Sufi tariqa Naqshbandiyyia-Khalidiyya and which were used for establishing the Imamate. The article indicates how muridism was adapted to the North-Eastern Caucasian realities and the confrontation between the Imamate and the Russian empire.*

**Keywords:** North Caucasus, Sufism, tariqa, muridism, Shamil, Imamate, ideology

### **İmam Şamil'in İmamat'ında Devlet Kurucu Öğe Olarak Müridizm (1834-1859)**

### **Özet**

*Makale İmam Şamil'in iktidar döneminde (1834-1859) İmamat'ın oluşumunda önemli bir ideolojik öğe olan müridizmi incelemektedir. Müridizm ideolojisinin İmamat'ın oluşum sürecindeki önemli dönüm noktalarını ve onu Nakşibendi-Halidiyye Sufi tarikatından ayıran yönlerini sunmaktadır. Makale müridizmin Kuzey-Doğu Kafkasya gerçeklerine nasıl uyarlandığına ve İmamlık ile Rus İmparatorluğu arasındaki ilişkiye işaret etmektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kuzey Kafkasya, Sufizm, tarikat, müridizm, Şamil, İmamlık, ideoloji

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The period under consideration presents a key moment in the relations between the Russian Empire and its new subjects – the North Caucasian mountaineers. After conquering most of the Transcaucasus, North Caucasus turned to be in the cross-country between the Russian Ciscaucasian territories and the newly acquired possessions. Thus, the full subjection of North Caucasian nations was inevitable as their territories were of a key significance for the security of the empire and integration processes of the new subjects. Suppressing the Decembrist revolt in 1825 and that of the Polish in 1830, Emperor Nicholas I introduced drastic measures to nip any internal threat for the stability and unity of the empire in the bud, which could cause cataclysms on national level or could turn into an impetus for foreign interference aimed at taking advantage of the weakness of imperial power. The wars with Persia (1826-1828) and the Ottoman Empire (1828-1829) were another factor, giving incentive to the resistance of the Caucasian peoples and to the aspirations of the regional powers for revision of the territorial acquisitions of the Russian empire. Having secured the western<sup>1</sup> and southern<sup>2</sup> borders of the country, Nicholas I was more than ever determined to subordinate the rebellious North Caucasians. The North Caucasus was a broad peripheral region with an ethnically diverse population where the loyalty to the Russian Tsar was only a formal statement but not a factual political reality. Therefore, Nicholas I and his officials in the region took severe measures to subordinate the mountaineers. The Emperor's biggest mistake was that he wanted to see the effectiveness of his policies immediately, without understanding the nature of the political and social processes in the North Caucasus and estimating the role of a newly-born

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<sup>1</sup> The establishment of the so called "preservative bloc" by Nicholas I, a series of agreements with the Habsburgs empire and Prussia to guarantee the security of the western borders of Russia. It presented an attempt to maintain the Vienna System, which underwent serious changes after the death of one of its founders – Alexander I.

<sup>2</sup> The security of the southern borders was guaranteed not only by the Treaty of Turkmenchay (1828) and Treaty of Adrianople (1829), but also by the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi with the Ottoman Empire in 1833, which eliminated the possibility of military threat for the Russian Black Sea shores.

ideology – the muridism, which seemed to possess the potential to unify the mountaineers against the Russian authority.

The period when Russia proceeded to the colonization of North Caucasus coincided with several transformations the mountain societies were going through (Bliev 151-168; Fadeev 67-77), which began in 18<sup>th</sup> Century and continued until the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> Century turning existing patriarchal-clan relations into semi-feudal or feudal ones and introducing social differentiation, where distinguished tribal, religious and military leaders took in their hands most of the control in the tuqums<sup>3</sup> (Dagestan) and taips<sup>4</sup> (Chechnya), and altering social positions from selective to inheritable and forming a privileged ruling crust. The unifications of tuqums and taips for protecting territories and military expansion made some unions stronger than others and caused redistribution of territories – mountain pastures and plains, changing the economic situation of the tribes and their internal-tribal cohesion and external relations with their neighbours. These two parallel processes were the genesis of the change in power structures within the region (Bliev and Degoev 87). The internecine wars between the tribes turned to be a serious obstacle for uniting the mountaineer societies. Besides, especially in Dagestan, this confrontation was complemented by the existence of feudal khanates (Dadaev 25-39), which tried also to seek balance between the new Russian rule and the neighbouring tribes, not always successfully.

The point of collision between mountaineers of Dagestan and Chechnya and the Russian empire was the intersection of those transformations and the Russian colonial policy, which became catalyst of the military confrontation and prepared the soil for flourishing of the muridism. This collision had in the main two aspects. One is connected with the so called “system of raids” which was a typical part of the life in the region means for most of the

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<sup>3</sup> Tuqum in Dagestan means kin, clan. It is ancient form of kinship of Dagestanis. According to the traditions every Dagestani, and every family in Dagestan belongs to a tuqum.

<sup>4</sup> Taip – a unit of organization of the Nakh people (Ingush and Chechens), self-determined by the common origin of its members, probably originally had the character of a territorial and tribal union.

mountaineers, such as Chechens, Dagestanis, Kabardinians, Circassians etc. (Gapurov 27-32) Its existence originated from the end of 17<sup>th</sup> Century before the arrival of Russians and was connected with specifics of the mountainous social and economic structures. The reinforcement of power and influence distinguished the ruling crust and enabled them to satisfy the material needs of the members of their societies, leading to internal confrontation which was solved through raids to their neighbours (Bliev and Degoev 117-125) The main objects of plundering were domestic animals, agricultural products, and slaves etc. Initially limited in intensity, the “system of raids” gradually became more widespread at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> Century when Russian policy clashed with the interests of the raiders. On the one hand, the empire deprived the mountaineers of their traditional object of raids by incorporating new Caucasian territories and starting to protect them. For example, the Georgian kingdom of Kakheta was such a territory that was attacked many times by Dagestanis. On the other hand, the empire created new destinations for attacks – Ciscaucasia and North Caucasian plains where new Russian settlements, fortresses and bazaars were established, contributing to the economic life of the region. When the raids acquired anti-Russian character as a result of the Russian fight with the mountaineers and the strong-arm tactics for establishing power in the North Caucasus, the gap between the two sides widened. The Russian methods such as punitive expeditions to restrict trade of salt and wheat sharpened the confrontation. “The economies of the still independent, or “unpacified”, communities were strongly affected by the Russian economic warfare” (Gammer, *Muslim...* 40). The quarantine introduced at the Caucasian Line, the prevention of some communities from using fields and pastures, the constrains on raiding and slave trade (AKAK VI/2, 1875: 498, Doc.№ 873; 501-502, Doc.№ 882; Vinogradov and Klychnikov 45-50) – all of them destroyed the traditional food production system and commercial life of the tribes. In the “pacified” regions, not only the population was levied a tax by their rulers, but they also had to “supply the Russian forces with food, firewood, pack-horses and two-wheeled carts on demand and for negligible prices, at best” (Gammer, *Muslim...* 41). Other measures undertaken by the Russians were part of the so called “siege system”

initiated by General Aleksey Ermolov and developed in resettling of the "pacified" Chechens southward between Terek and Sunja rivers, settling Cossacks on their lands in order to besiege the "unpacified" ones (Lesin 268, 270-271, 277; Degoev 163-164). As a result many Chechen communities were deprived of their fertile lands. One more fact contributed to worsen the relations between mountaineers and Russians was the support of the latter for the local feudal lords and ruling crust, burdened with the duty of keeping local communities under control and not letting them to rebel against the imperial power. In return, Russians provided them with ranks, titles, money, and military support (Babich: 41-49; Degoev 155). Thus local leaders increased the pressure on ordinary people as different methods were used to prevent their disobedience to the Russians (Degoev 170).

The penetration of a Sufi order during this specific transitional period of social changes and confrontation with a new factor in their life – the Russians, was a key moment for establishing this ideological unification, which laid the basis for the appearance of the muridism and its consequences for the Caucasian mountaineers. The irregular spreading of Christianity and Islam, the existence of paganism in some of the Caucasian societies until the end of 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is well researched (Zelkina; Bitova 65-75; Bobrovnikov; Narochnitskiy; Jaimoukha). While Dagestan was an important centre for spreading Islam and famous for its schools and scholars, the situation in Chechnya was more complicated as Islam had started to spread there later. The Chechens still had some mixed beliefs based on the traditional culture and also the so-called *adat*\* – the set of rules for arranging their social relations. When the relations between Russians and the societies in the North Caucasus started to escalate into a military confrontation, the place of the religion took important role at the historical stage and especially in connection with the spread of the Sufi order and muridism.

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\* The Adat is the traditional system of justice among the eastern Caucasian peoples which is based on local customs and popular legal practices. The Circassian notion of Habze played the same role in the Western Caucasus.

To begin with, it is very important to differentiate the Sufi tariqa Naqshbandiyya and the ideology became known in the Northeastern Caucasus as muridism. Naqshbandiyya is one of the major Sufi tariqa, which was named after Baha al-Din Naqshband (1318-1398) who lived in Bukhara and gave the final structure to this Sufi teaching (Gammer, *Proniknovenie bratstv* 95; Zelkina 80-83). Its philosophy is based on the desire to achieve union with God, surmounting the limitations of human existence through a special path (tariqa) to the Divinity (Knysh; Kolodin, *Myuridizm...*). According to the teachings, a man has the ability to reach several stages of perfection, preparing him for the unification with God: 1. *Sharia* - devout life following the prescriptions and the orders of the Muslim legislation. This is called worldly perfection; 2. *Tariqa* (way, path) – a man who decides to follow a mystical path, bringing him closed to the unification with God; 3. *Maarifat* (knowledge) – a mystical *hal* (trance) as result of ascetic life, deep self-concentration, which is the third stage of the perfection; 4. One can gradually separate oneself from the earthly and move to unity with God when he finally reaches a *haqiqa* - a stage in which he is in direct communion with God and resides not on the earth, but in the midst of existence and non-existence.

In the middle of 15<sup>th</sup> Century Sufi sheikhs became very influential in Central Asia which made them also politically active and their authority was closely associated with the local rulers, as the latter "...were made responsible by God for the well-being of the Muslim *umma* and as such were obliged to uphold and safeguard the Sharia of which they (the sheikhs – a.n.) claimed to be the main interpreters." (Zelkina 81-82) From Central Asia the Naqshbandiyya spread to other parts of the Muslim world. It underwent several transformations in India by Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi al-Faruqi (1564-1624) known as the mujaddid (the renovator), who established the suborder Naqshbandiyyia-Mujaddidiyya. Its aim was to revive "God's law" and purify it from non-Islamic ideas and practices, by following strictly the example of the Prophet (Sunna) and the Sharia as seen through the mystical prism of Sufi as a need of seeking the inner essence (haqiqa) of Sharia to attain the true knowledge of God (Zelkina 86). From India it spread to Middle East and then the Northeast Caucasus; but before introducing it into the latter, the Sufi teaching underwent one more

transformation by the Ottoman sheikh Diya al-Din Khalid al-Shahrazuri (1779-1827), giving the name of the suborder Naqshbandiyyia-Mujaddidiyya-Khalidiyya or only Naqshbandiyyia-Khalidiyya. There were several fundamental aspects of its doctrine, namely accepting the political weakness and depravity of the Muslims as a result of their neglect of Sharia. Therefore Muslims had to return to the strict observance of the Quran and Sunna, to restore Sharia in order to regain their former strength and international prestige. This could be achieved with the support of a ruler who assumed Sharia as the legal foundation for all his deeds and orders, which was to be guaranteed and approved by a righteous sheikh. "Sheikh Khalid accepted the Sharia exclusively from its legal dimension. For him the Sharia was the main constituent part of the Muslim society and sole guarantor of its independence from the rule of foreign infidels" (Zelkina 93). Most of these important suggestions could be seen later in the activities of the three Imams – Ghazi Muhammad, Hamzat Bek and Shamil, and propagation of muridism in the North Caucasus.

To go through the stages of unification with God, a follower of the tariqa becomes murid (disciple) of Sufi imam or sheikh, choosing him as his murshid (leader), as the murid unconditionally obeys the murshid and murshid's orders, without judging if they are good or bad. The relationship between the murshid (sheikh) and the murid as practiced was also changed by Sheik Khalid, as to him one could receive his training not directly from the sheikh but from one of his deputies. The final training of the murid was given by the Sheikh Kalid himself or by one of his most trusted deputies. Still, the deputies had only an intermediary role as the murids were obliged to keep their spiritual relationship only with Sheikh Khalid (Zelkina 95). Seen as the necessary prerequisite to ascending the mystical path to God, the strict following of the Sharia at any stage of spiritual development became an integral part of the Naqshbandiyya doctrine. The second most important principle was solitude within the crowd the predominant interpretation of which implied the active involvement of Sufi sheikh in the political and religious life of the Muslim *umma*. According to that principle a Naqshbandiyya sheikh was responsible for the correct interpretation of the Sharia and the Muslim communities' compliance with their rulers.

The Naqshbandiyyia-Khalidiyya appeared in the Caucasus at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century as some authors accepted it was transferred by the Bukhari Has-Muhammad in Yaragi villiage in Khanate of Kyurin (Gammer, *Muslim...* 40). He passed on the teaching to Muhammad al-Yaragi. However, according to Imam Shamil, the Buhari had never passed on the teaching to Muhammad al-Yaragi and Dagestani people had never seen or heard about him (Dnevnik Runovskogo 1493). According to E. G. Vaydenbaum the bearer of the teaching was Sheykh Ismail from Kurdamir village situated in Shemakhi district. From him the teaching was transferred to Has-Mohammad Shirvani, who in his turn passed it on to Mohammad al-Yaragi. The last was mentor in the tariqa of Jamal al-Din Ghazi-Kumukhi (Vaydenbaum 159; King 77-78), where Shamil received his religious education. This tariqa was named first by the Russian generals on service in Caucasus. They reported about the movement among the Caucasians, as they named those disciples of the Sufi movement muridids who took part in the Holy War against the Russian empire and called it Ghazawat that was understood as Jihad by force of arms (Magomedov 57). Still, even in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the Russians realized that there was some difference between what they called muridism and the Sufi tariqa. They used the same term but separated it into two branches – the peaceful one, which was concerned with religious teaching, and the warlike one which was connected with the leading the jihad (Hanykov 58-60; Shamil` i Chechnya 121-164; Berezin 86-92; Dubrovin 388-395). The term “muridism” continued to be used until modern times in the Russian, Turkish and western historiography. While some researchers are still making the same separation (Magomedova; Magomedov; Kemper; Kundukh; King), others are claiming that muridism and Naqshbandi tariqa were one and the same (Zelkina; Hamid; Voronina).

This extremely different points of view in the historiography are connected with the fact the in the North Caucasus the tariqa underwent serious transformations which created a base for the appearance of the muridism – an ideology, a key stone in the Caucasian war and political tool for the establishment of a theocratic state. That is why, for instance, according to Alexandr Kolodin, “the term muridism is not very felicitous” (Kolodin, *Myuridizm...*). Namely



on the base of the muridism Shamil established his Imamate and kept under control the tribes in Dagestan and Chechnya, removing uncompromisingly most of the norms of *adat* and replacing them with the rules of Sharia (Magomedsalihov 139). In this sense, even there are still discussions about the term itself among historians, the **muridism** was a military-political ideology that was based on the Sufi teaching of Naqshbandiyyia-Khalidiyya; bred by internal socio-political transformations in the North Caucasian communities and external political factors; connected with the change of the geopolitical situation, and international influence in North Caucasus. The ideology was shaped and closely connected with its propagator, namely Imam Shamil, who utilised the foundations laid by the previous two Imams, and developed a system of leadership within the framework of an established state and united population irrespective of ethnic origin. There were several underlining aspects of muridism, namely: 1. **religious** – it stimulated the spread of the tariqa on the territories of the Imamate and beyond them, but at the same time supported the spread of the Sharia rules as a source of strengthening the moral power of the tribes, needed for the political purposes of the Imams. As Y.D. Dzhabrailov wrote “...the impregnation of Sharia in essence became political slogan, a means to achieve unity and political-juridical unification.” (Dzhabrailov 68) According to A. Avalov and N. Vladimirov: “The idea of jihad (sacred struggle for faith) in muridizm was interpreted as gazawat - war against infidels for the triumph of Islam. At the same time, not only the "giaours" - representatives of the Russian authorities were referred as infidels, but also the mountain nobility who surrendered to them.” (Alov and Vladimirov 88) 2. **Political** – here we have two directions, which set the initial and main political frame of the Imamate. One, already mentioned, was connected with internal political aims to release the mountaineers from the rule of the local aristocracy and ruling crust, which exceeded its authority and ruled in a despotic manner and to make all the people equal as social sense. The other direction was connected with external political aim – to release the people from the Russian rule and give them independence. As A. Kundukh wrote: “The Caucasian muridism is an ideology aimed at the independence of the North Caucasus” (Kundukh 47). These both political directions are connected

as the local crust often was on Russian service and as such was perceived as representative of the Russian empire. In such a way the behaviour and the despotic rule of the aristocracy contributed to undermine the confidence in the Russian power among the tribes and just complemented the military methods Russians used against the mountaineers. 3. **Military** – leading a ghazawat against the enemies: internal in the face of the local ruling crust, and external – their supporters and conquerors the Russians, which were oppressing and threatening the life of the mountaineers. The military aspect has its strong reflection on the newly established state structure in regard to the need of a stable military organisation. It also influenced the legislation and rules in the Imamate, which had to safeguard the fighting strength of the people. 4. **Psychological** – united by the religion, under the leadership of the Imam, the mountaineers were inspired to fight for achieving a common goal without reference to their ethnical difference. The defence of their religion, traditions and way of life from the Russians, who pressed them harder and harder, had strong effect on the consciousness of the mountaineers and their feelings, developing something that can be described as proto-nationalism (Lieven 359). 5. **Regional** – the muridism was in close relation with and influenced by the local specifics of the North Caucasian life, traditions, religion, and internal and external socio-political factors. It appeared at a concrete historical stage of development and transformation of the North Caucasian societies within the framework of the confrontation with the Russian Empire. Thus the specific ideology led to the establishment of a “original state system, which was one of the main results and achievements of Shamil`s activities” (*Voyna i islam* 15).

Even though the Sufi teaching of Naqshbandiyya underwent essential changes in the XIX<sup>th</sup> Century in Caucasus and Middle East adding a political impetus to the generally leading to spiritual internal self-perfection teaching (Kidirniyazov and Lysenko 2), muridism went even further in its development as a structured ideology connected with the transformation in the Caucasian communities and their aspiration for social and political freedom. In connection with this S.A. Musaev wrote: “We consider that the leaders of the national-liberation movement (the Imams of the Ghazawat), borrowing some

elements from the Sufi, aimed at turning muridism into its ideological cover, and this muridism absolutely differs from the *tasawwuf*\* and established new ideology, namely – the Ghazawat muridism” (Musaev 33) In the diary of A. I. Runovsky, Shamil's confirmation can be found that the germ of the Holy War lay in the base of the Muslim religion. The Imam represented the muridism as deep and ambiguous phenomenon, descended in the traditional eastern Islamic centres (Plieva 126). The role of the Ghazawat in the ideology was very well explained by Imam Shamil himself to Runovski. The Imam said he lead the Ghazawat for equality and against the despotic aristocracy, which exceeded its rights (Dnevnik Runovskogo 1498-1500). The Russians who “closed their eyes” for the outrage of the crust and were using severe military methods to subordinate the North Caucasian people more than logically also were the object of the Ghazawat as well. Still there were confrontations within the brotherhood itself about the Jihad against the Russian empire.

The connection between Jihad and the Sufi teaching in Caucasus, which was used as a foundation of the muridism, is still under discussion in the historiography (Kemper; Kurbanova), even though the preaching of Jihad was being done at the same time with the preaching of the *tariqa*. Muhammad al-Yaraghi and his disciples preached Jihad against the Russians from the very beginning even though here the important was the principle, while their first concern was to establish and enforce Sharia. It was only when the Muslims returned to the right path they would have strength to wage a Jihad against the Russians and liberate themselves (Gammer, *Muslim...* 43-44). Later, when the first Imam Ghazi-Muhammad didn't gain the benevolence of his sheikh Jamal al-Din, asked for permission for Jihad Muhammad al-Yaraghi, who gave his consent, according to some authors, because he had personal animosity towards Khan of Khyurin (Kemper). As a result sheikh Jamal al-Din was pressed to accept the wage of Jihad against the definitely more powerful Russian enemy but later, even becoming advisor of Shamil, he continued to try to make the Imam renounce the Holy war against the Russian empire. The war

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\* Sufism (*tasawwuf* in Arabic) – Muslim mysticism.

was not part of the mystical Naqshbandi teaching – just opposite, the murids had to live almost isolated from the society, learning and practicing the rules of Sharia, praying and preparing for the unification with God. These were the so called tariqa murids, who devoting themselves to the tariqa were perceived by the population as privileged persons who even had the right not to take part in Jihad (Dnevnik Runosvskogo 1480-1481). In the tariqa there was no Ghazawat, but who decided to participate in it rejects the tariqa (Dnevnik Runosvskogo 1498-1499).

All already presented aspects of the muridism made it suitable ideology for uniting people in one state, under the rule of a distinguished and proven leader as Imam Shamil. The strength of the ideology and effectiveness was depending much on his personal characteristics described by A. Lieven as “sheer force of character, charisma, physical and moral courage, and public displays of piety and ruthless religious self-discipline, according to the Naqshbandi code” (Lieven 360). The miraculous escapes of Shamil after the attacks of Gimri (1832), Tiliq (1837) and Ahulgo (1839) (Baddeley 266-282), his ability to know in advance who was coming to visit him, the religious trances in which he received instructions from the Prophet (Baddeley 231-251; Gammer, *Muslim...* 238-240), were those mystical Sufi practices used to enhance the impact of the authority of the leader and consolidate the belief in his abilities as such. Even though he was well acquainted with the Sufi teaching, the position of Shamil in the Naqshbandi brotherhood his religious order was *khalifa* (assistant of the sheikh) and he didn't receive rank of murshid. As his sheikh Jamal al-Din Ghazi-Kumukhi was still alive, Shamil had no right independently to propagate the tariqa (97). But he used very well the relations within the Sufi teaching to establish strong vertical subjection in his state and at the same time the rules of Sharia to establish the practical control over the population.

To continue speaking about the religion as a part of the muridism as a state-building element of the Imamate, there must be considered two directions of the presence of the religion in this state formation. The first one is connected with the use of the relations murshid-murid in order to establish strong vertical subordination between Imam Shamil and his servants. According to M. Magomedov: “The ideology

of muridism completely reflected the Sufi system of social relations between teacher and his disciples" (59). We can see this in the relations between Shamil and his naibs\* who had to follow the orders of the Imam and rule the entrusted population according to his instructions. The Imam and the naibs relayed in the implementation of their power on so called "naibski" murids (Kemper; Dnevnik Runovskogo1474). They were totally subdued to the Imam and the naibs and executed their will without any hesitation or doubt. The secretary of Shamil Gadzhi Ali wrote: "To be a murid means truly to believe in God and worship him; equally to endeavour to do good to people, not disobeying the Imam; not lying him; not betraying him in anything; not taking bribes from the people; not stealing, but if needs something to ask; the main thing is to execute without any delays all orders of the Imam, no matter how difficult they are" (7). The murids and their families were sustained by the naibs and also equipped by them with everything needed for the war. Here is the moment to mention the second direction connected with the Islam not in its Sufi variation – the main task of the murid in his education was to read the Quran and to realise the necessity of Jihad (Dnevnik Runovskogo 1481). In addition, "administrative functions were entrusted to rural kadi and mufti of village unions, i.e. specialists in Islamic law, not Sufi" (Kemper). According to M. Kemper there might be among them some who belonged to tariqa but there were absolutely no information or sources about that. Thus, muridism turned to be flexible and adapted to the needs of the state-building ideology, managing to unite Islam and its mystical sect Naqshbandi. Sharia was the rule imposed by the Imam in the Imamate in his efforts to reform society, to purify the moral of the Muslims from all sins such as drinking alcohol, use of tobacco and other "non-Islamic "vices" (Knysh 290) as well as to restrict the use of *adat* norms and especially the practice of blood revenge. The Imamate itself was a theocratic state, based on Sharia and having a religious leader for a state ruler. Even the fiscal system in

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\* Naib – a deputy of Shamil in the military-administrative system of the Imamate, who ruled and commanded a separate mountain society within the state.

the Imamate was in conformity with the Sharia. The state treasury – *bait-ul-mal*, part of the income from taxation was from *zakyat* and *haradj*, while the other part was as a result from raids. In addition the revenue were formed by fees for violation of Sharia and other crimes, by confiscated property, and by money paid by some tribes in order to save themselves from the murids` attacks (Bliev and Degoev 391).

The Islam through the Ghazawat against the Russians and their local allays was that aspect of the muridism which gave impulse not only of the movement for liberation but also for the establishment of a militarized administrative state structure and military organisation. Shamil started the process one year after becoming Imam in 1835 to have an almost completed state formation in the late 1840`s (Bliev and Degoev 360-361, 383-428; Smirnov 104-125; Gadzhiev; Gammer, *Shamil...* 1998). The regions of Dagestan and after 1840 of Chechnya, which recognised his power, were separated on districts - *naibstva* (in the beginning of the 1840`s they were 17 – a.n.), governed by Shamil`s deputies – *naibs*, appointed by him. The *naibs* had executive powers in military, administrative, juridical and religious sphere. Under their orders there was also folk corps, besides the permanent army of murids, which was recruited if necessary. The *naibs* saw to the military conscription, condition of armaments and other army matters. They were the organizers and leaders of the raids. The *naib* supervised the legal proceedings examined by the *kadi* and *mufti* according to the Sharia. As a deputy of the *naib* Shamil appointed *debir* – executor with limited rights. There were also *tateli* (informer) in the administrative apparatus of the *naibs*, who observed whether the people follow the Sharia. The *naibstva* were united in provinces, governed by *mudirs*, to whom with aim at control over their actions, unofficially special people were appointed – *muhtasibs* – part of an institution reminding a secret political police. These people were chosen by the Imam himself and they provided him with information about local abuses. The central administration was represented by Council (Divan), which gradually turned into Supreme Council of 6 persons. This Council and Shamil represented the supreme military, administrative and juridical instance, where the most important matters of the public life were being examined. Imam Shamil had private detachment of guards – 120 murids, separate from the so called guards of the Imam consisted of

600 to 900 *murtaziqas* (Bliev and Degoev 386-387). In the strongest periods of his power, Shamil could raise an army of up to 60.000 soldiers, and in 1842 he managed to obtain artillery – Russian fortress and field cannons, seized after the unsuccessful battles for the Russians. According to E. Vaydenbaum in Vedeno (one of the capitals of the Imamate) even a foundry appeared, where up to 50 guns were made but from them only  $\frac{1}{4}$  were usable. Teachers of the mountaineers in artillery, engineering, and construction were quite often the defected Russian soldiers, who Shamil valued highly (Vaydenbaum 168).

As the state structure of the Imamate was adapted to the prolonged waging of Ghazawat, it had no permanent capital. Depending on the progress of the military operations, Shamil placed his capital in Chechnya or Dagestan in the auls of Gimri, Vedeno or Gunib (Alov, and Vladimirov 90).

The military state structure and military approach and methods to defend internal and external politics resembled even in a perfunctory manner the Russian military approach: military servants in the civil administration, attacking the disobedient population, resettlement of people (sometimes by violence), destroying arable lands, construction of fortresses and military infrastructure, formation of folk corps etc. The interaction of the methods during the Caucasian war was inevitable as best proof can be given with the Caucasian corps where the soldiers started to resemble the mountaineers not only in a waging a fight but also in outer appearance.

Imam Shamil's policy for reforming the moral of the population, liberating it from the oppression of local crust and Russian power, was in fact continuation of the deed of the previous two Imams. Still, he managed to implement this aspect of the muridism ideology, putting it in a concrete framework through confrontation and emancipation. In the period 1834-1836 he managed to establish firm control almost over whole Dagestan even the resistance of the local ruling families and Russian interventions (Knysh 290). His skills, experience and military talent helped him a lot in the self-assertion as a third Imam and leader. The circumstances connected with the Russia's shortage of manpower and concentration of Russian efforts for conquering the Western Caucasus (Gammer, *Muslim...* 73-74) should not be forgotten

as a factor for giving Shamil the opportunity to strengthen his authority. In 1837 due to the omission of the Russians to capture Shamil, he took advantage of the situation and practically legitimised himself not only as a leader but as a ruler of a political formation which was not part of the Russian empire, but something different and separate. During the negotiations Shamil wrote two letters to General Fezi (Baddeley 805-806); in the first one he stated that he and his followers had concluded peace with the Russian Emperor, and in the second that a conditional peace was concluded between Shamil and the Russian Emperor. However, in both cases, by having these documents acknowledged by the Russian command structures, the Imam obtained a diplomatic victory. Even the same year when he rejected General Klugenau's offer to meet with Nicholas I, Shamil referred to the latter as "your tsar" (Anadol 112). The proclamation of the Imam as an independent ruler was obvious.

As a result of the short-sighted Russian policies in 1840, Chechens turned to Shamil and proposed him to become their leader in return for consenting to strictly obey him and the Sharia law. Following this development, the Imam set off one of the most successful stages of the Caucasian war<sup>5</sup> He first built his new capital in Dargo, which was located in hard-to-reach forests, and completed the structuring of his army, which in the period 1840-1841 carried out constant raids on the Caucasian Line and began to expand the territorial scope of his authority. The power and influence that Shamil acquired in the Northeast Caucasus was confirmed even by the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army in the Caucasus, Y. A. Golovin, in a letter to the Minister of War General A. I. Chernyshev, in which he said "it can be said affirmatively that we have not yet had in the Caucasus an enemy more cruel and dangerous than Shamil. Under the concurrence of circumstances, his power becomes spiritual-military in nature, akin to

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<sup>5</sup> Russian policies in question were first and foremost connected with the neglect of the corrupt pristavs who were their representatives on the local population. The order to confiscate firearms in the society simply complemented the previous issue. See more: Zelkina, *In Quest for God and Freedom*, 190-193.



the beginning of Islam when the sword of Mohammed shook the three parts of the universe." (AKAK IX, 1884: 346, Doc.№ 313)

In the period 1842-1843, Shamil achieved important victories not only against the Russians but also on the *tuqums* in Chechnya, which were against his rule, and the Ghazi Kumuk and Avar Khanates in Dagestan, which had long been under the protection of Russia and were of military-strategic and political importance for the control of the Northeast Caucasus. For a three-year period (1840-1843), the power and influence of Shamil increased to such an extent that he fully controlled the mountainous parts of Dagestan and Chechnya and part of the plains of the latter, with the total number of families inhabiting these territories reaching approximately 230.000. Only the coastal areas of Dagestan, some fortifications along the Sulak River, Gazi Kumukh Koysu, and parts of the lowland Chechnya remained under the Russian rule (Bliev and Degoev 381).

To structure the institutions of the Imamate in the period 1842-1847, Shamil issued instructions and ordinances called "Nizam" (Nizam Shamilya 1870). They reflected the internal social-political and juridical relations and became legislation. The norms were adapted to the realities and made changes to Sharia laws (Bobrovnikov 138) and *adat* (Zelkina 218), as the latter could not be totally eradicated. As Shamil himself explained, "Nizam is nothing but a collection of various governmental measures concerning solely the security of the region, the welfare of the people and the strengthening of the means to resist our enemies. Furthermore, it introduced other governmental measures, concerning not only the judicial sector and the public life of the mountaineers, but also their domestic life". (Dnevnik Runovskogo 1464) Thus, the Nizam entered the context of the existing ideology of muridism. Its formation as the legislation of the Imamate bore the specifics of the regional aspect of the muridism, where Sharia, *adat* and necessities of the concrete historical realities were entangled. Thus, some of the rules were even connected with the religious requirements and solved some day-to-day issues such as drinking, smoking and enjoying dances and music at a time when people had to be concentrated on the military activities during the war and should not compromise their fighting spirit. Another aspect was connected with the preservation of the physical ability for fighting. For instance,

the Sharia ruling of amputation as a punishment for theft was replaced with financial penalties and imprisonment (Nizam Shamilya 3-8). The Imam also took care of the population growth by regulating marital relations and traditions, which could also adversely affect the mountaineers' morale and resources to wage war (Dnevnik Runovskogo 1398).

As a peculiarity, it is also interesting to mention that in accordance with the Nizam the Muslim clergy not only performed religious functions and responsibilities but also military-political ones. "...every — jurist, scholar, mufti and kazi — is ready, at the first movement of the troops, to be on the march against the infidels; if they don't fight with hands, let them fight with tongues: admonish, warn, induce to what God promised the fighting people." (Nizam Shamilya 11-12)

Shamil's Nizam was an example of a source which not only manifested concrete rules, rights and responsibilities in the sphere of government and everyday life of the mountaineers, directing the social-political relations, but also contained important information about the inherent problems in the Imamate which led to the decrease of Imam's authority. The interrelations between different representatives of the authority, the enrichment of the naibs, internal struggles caused by the Imam among the members of the new ruling elite, contradictions between the rulers and the ruled (Pokrovskiy 73) combined to erode the uniting ideology of muridism and worked in the final analysis in Russia's favour.

The psychological effect of muridism brought the national development of the tribes in the Northeast Caucasus to a new level. As a strong leader and authority, Imam Shamil managed to reinforce the process of unification of the mountaineers, initiated by the previous Imams. He finished the shaping of muridism as an ideology to provide the means for devotion to a common goal and obedience to a common leader. To achieve the goal, i.e. the elimination of the internal and external enemies, all the obstacles had to be removed. Firstly, the oppression of the aristocracy in the service of the Russians and implementation of the promise for social equality, which had universal support in the society had to be initiated. Secondly, the purification of the moral values, which had been deeply shaken up by the cultural clash with a new civilization and undergone structural

changes, was to be achieved. It was only after the obtainment of the first two aims did the population become ready to fight with the external enemy, namely the Russian Empire in the name of protecting life, religion, and state. Shamil managed to do this by using the mechanisms of the Sufi teaching and Sharia norms, by setting strong examples and being merciless in cases of violations of the religious, political, and social order. Demirpolat asserts that "as a result of Shamil's Sufi organisation and leadership, religion had the strongest claim to define the sense of unity between and within the various tribes probably more than any other aspect of life in the Caucasus." (Demirpolat 36; Knysh 300) The respect toward the proven leader, who was assumed to possess mystical knowledge, easily led to the relationship of the "master-apprentice" to be implemented in the society, resulting in the appearance of a new feeling of self-identification as a part of one nation in solidarity with one another and striving for freedom against a common threat. The tribal differences were left aside when muridism gave the mountaineers a common goal and directed their efforts towards a common enemy under the indisputable leadership of a respected and trusted leader. Thus, muridism was an important state-building element. Uniting people in one territory; enabling them to live under same social, governmental, administrative and religious norms; and following a common domestic and foreign policy, the Imamate "generated a concept of citizenship and loyalty far greater and stronger than that of the clan, tribe and commune" (Zelkina 236) as the ground for this was very well prepared by the muridism.

Nevertheless, however unifying, the ideology as well as the Imamate were doomed to failure without giving a chance to the natural gradation of the mountaineer society. The return to the "siege strategy" and its further development by the Russians for final subordination of the mountaineers in the form of a war of attrition; the outcome of the Crimean War, which had left the Caucasus in Russian possession; and the strong Russian counter-propaganda were the external factors which directly impacted on the internal political and social situation in the Imamate in the beginning of 1850s. The exceedance of the naibs` and murids` authority, corruption and abuse of power, extra-judicial executions for violating rules or treachery

raised the people's discontent in the Imamate. In addition to that, their complicated social situation contributed to undermining of their morale. The loss of lowland Chechnya – the main grain supplier of the Imamate, forced Shamil to increase taxes, to forbid the foreign trade, and to introduce grain prices that were lower than in Russian-controlled territories (Zelkina 227-228). The resettlement on fruitless mountainous territories and lack of security because of the narrowing the circle around the Imamate by Russian forces, resulted in drones of people surrendering to Russians. They were followed by some of the closest naibs of Shamil. The end of the Imamate and the muridism became inevitable. People "perceived the muridism movement as a means of their freedom"(Demirpolat 36), but they lost it both in social aspect in the Imamate, which turned more or less into a despotic state, ruled by uncontrolled crust on a local level. In the political aspect, Russians beyond doubt would achieve their final aim of subduing North Caucasian tribes by narrowing their territory and outnumbering Shamil's army by thousands. The muridism played its role and it seemed that it was time to leave the historical scene when it did not come up to mountaineers' expectations.

The muridism was a military-political ideology, developed by the first two Imams and given its final shape by Imam Shamil. Based on the Sufi tariqa Naqshbandiyya-Halidiyya, it reproduced the form of relations in the tariqa in a broader context; yet muridism was different from the tariqa movement in the North-eastern Caucasus. It was also different from the pure Jihad against the enemies and threatened the Muslim society in the region despite including it as one of the aspects of the ideology. Muridism was a fully developed system, a state-building element, and part of the development of a state structure as a means for managing the process in the Dagestani and Chechen societies. Based on it, the Imamate was the framework for the unification of the population and its confrontation with the Russians, and was regulated by the Nizam and the real management practices. The success of the muridism was depending on the Shamil's authority, who he built it in years as its spiritual, political and military leader, whom the people were ready to follow to defend their interests. Therefore, it is not surprising that the muridism lost its uniting power and devotion to the common goal when Shamil lost their confidence

and his authority fell into discredit. The disintegration of the Imamate changed the goal to a mere desire to survive and the means to achieve this. Yet, the muridism was the element that laid the ideological foundation of the Imamate and gave significance to the fight against Russia, stimulating the formation of a proto-national consciousness and solidarity among the North East Caucasian mountaineers. Appearing at the moment of historical transformations in the socio-political life of the Northeastern Caucasian societies, muridism bore the regional characteristics and specifics of this process and was adapted to the realities and objective necessities in the hostile atmosphere of military confrontation.

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