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Ramazan S. Abdulmazhidov,  
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## The Arabic-Language Manuscript Collection of Sultanmuhammad al-Bezhti<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract:* During the archaeological fieldwork in August 2024 in the village of Bezhta (Republic of Dagestan), the collection of the Dagestani scholar, the *naib* of the Caucasian Imamate Sultanmuhammad al-Bezhti, was explored, described and digitized. Sultanmuhammad al-Bezhti, also known as Sultan-*dibir*, was a founder of an entire dynasty of scholars and public and political figures (among them are his sons, Kebedmuhammad and Abdulmazhid). The collection consists of classical works by Arab-Muslim authors, which were available in every Dagestan private manuscript library. However, each of these manuscripts contains a lot of important and valuable information that expands our understanding of the history and culture of this region. These include numerous glosses found in the margins, between the lines, on the flyleaf, and on the first and last pages of the manuscripts. The last page of the manuscript turns into a family chronicle, which fixes important events from the lives of relatives. Most often, copiists or manuscript owners preferred to leave such notes on the colophon page.

*Key words:* private arabographic manuscript collections; manuscript tradition in Dagestan; Bezhta; the Ankratl communities; the Caucasian Imamate, scholars

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During the archaeographical fieldwork in August 2024 in the village of Bezhta (Republic of Dagestan), the collection of one of the Dagestani scholar, the *naib* of the Caucasian Imamate Sultanmuhammad al-Bezhti, was explored, described and digitized. Sultanmuhammad comes from Bezhta, one of the main villages of the confederation of unions of the Ankratl communities.<sup>2</sup>

Sultanmuhammad, the son of Mallamuhammad, the son of Muhammad, the son of Ramazan, the son of Muhammad, the son of Muhammad al-Bezhti, became the first Bezhta *naib* (deputy), who was appointed by Imam Shamil in 1844. After the fall of the Caucasian Imamate in 1864, he was a *qadi* in the village of Shaitl.<sup>3</sup> In the early 1870s, he lived in Irib,<sup>4</sup> where he probably also served as a *qadi*. Sultanmuhammad, along with many other prominent Muslim theologians, was subject to persecution. Together with several other villagers, he was sentenced to exile. But, as archival documents reveal,<sup>5</sup> he was not released in time and died while being imprisoned in the village of Verkhneye Kazanishche in October 1878. Recently, his grave has been discovered in this village. On the tombstone, there is an inscription: “The scholar Sultanmuhammad al-Bezhti died while imprisoned in Verkhny Kazanishche on the month of *Shawwāl*, after the Jummah prayer in midday, in the year 1295H. May Allah have mercy on his soul”.

Sultanmuhammad al-Bezhti, also known as Sultan-*dibir*, became the founder of an entire dynasty of scholars and public and political figures. His eldest son, Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti (1864–1922), continued the family's tradition. Like his father, Kebedmuhammad played a prominent role in the socio-political life of Southwestern Dagestan in the early 20th c. From 1896 to 1918, he held various positions, including deputy of the Gunib District Court, *qadi* of the Gunib District, and the *naib* of the Antsukho-Kapuchinsky district. Kebedmuhammad was a well-known arabist and legal scholar, who took an active part in the events that unfolded in Dagestan after the October Revolution. He was one of the leaders of the counterrevolutionary uprising in 1921 led by Nazhmuddin Gotsinsky. In his speeches to various Avar community groups, he called for resistance against the Bolsheviks and signed himself as “the manager of affairs of Nazhmuddin”.<sup>6</sup> Kebedmuham-

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<sup>2</sup> Ankratl is a confederation of community unions (Antsukh, Antsroso, Bezhta (Kapucha), Bokhnoda, Jurmut, Unkhada, Tash), now part of the Bezhtinsky site (Tsuntinsky district) and Tlyaratinsky district of the Republic of Dagestan.

<sup>3</sup> Shaitl — now the village in the Tsuntinsky district of the Republic of Dagestan.

<sup>4</sup> Irib — now the village in the Charodinsky district of the Republic of Dagestan.

<sup>5</sup> Central Historical Archive of Georgia. Col. 545. Inv. 1. File 1473. 367 ff.

<sup>6</sup> Central State Archive of the Republic of Dagesta. Col. 1. Inv. 1. File 38. Ff. 15–16.

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mad was one of the organizers of the resistance to M. Atayev's detachment in the area of Kosob village. Subsequently, he intended to emigrate to Turkey, but his relatives were taken hostage and sent to the prison in Khunzakh. Upon learning about this, Kebedmuhammad decided to surrender; after that, his relatives were released. He was imprisoned in Buynaksk (Temir-Khan-Shura before 1921) and was shot in 1922.<sup>7</sup>

Kebedmuhammad's younger brother, Abdulmazhid (1865–1933), was also known for his scholarship and profound knowledge of Arab-Muslim sciences. He attained his basic education from his father, Sultanmuhammad, and later continued studying Islamic sciences in the villages of Tlyarata, Tlyarosh, Koroda and Balakan. For several years, he worked as a clerk in the Antsukho-Kapuchinsky district, and for a long time, he held the position of a *qadi* in his hometown. Sultanmuhammad's grandsons, Khalil and Abdulmazhid, also received a thorough traditional Islamic education.

The collection contains manuscripts of both Sultanmuhammad himself and his relatives mentioned above. It contains 55 manuscripts from the 16th to 20th cc. The collection covers a wide range of genres, including interpretations of the Quran (*tafsir*), works on astronomy and mathematics. However, the most popular genre is Muslim law (*fiqh*) and its theory (*usul al-fiqh*). The earliest dated manuscript of this collection belongs to this genre and it is the work of the largest Muslim scholar from Egypt Zakaria al-Ansari: the manuscript is titled “Ghāyat al-wuṣūl fi lubb al-uṣūl” and discusses the theory of Muslim law. According to the colophon, it was copied in the Middle East by Ahmad b. ‘Ali b. al-Hasan al-Qasim al-Shafi’i al-Ansari al-Khazraji in May 1587. Another manuscript, also copied in the Middle East, is from the 1660s and 1690s. It is “Rawdat al-Talibīn” by the famous imam Abu Zakariya al-Nawawi dedicated to the Muslim law.

However, the vast majority of the manuscripts in this collection are of local origin. Many were personally copied by Sultanmuhammad al-Bezhti and his sons, Kebedmuhammad and Abdulmazhid.

Of particular interest is the manuscript of Ibn Hajar al-Haythamī's famous work, “Tuḥfat al-muḥtāj”, which was copied in Dagestan in 1848. In addition to the numerous valuable comments written by Dagestani legal scholars in the margins, between the lines, and on inserts between pages, the colophon of the work gives the scribe's genealogy: Sultanmuhammad al-Bezhti, son of Mallamuhammad, son of Muhammad, son of Ramazan, son of Muhammad al-Bezhti. It is also worth interesting that at the time when the

<sup>7</sup> MUSAEV 2020: 588.

manuscript was copied the scribe was the *naib* of Imam Shamil, which he reports immediately after the colophon.

Another common genre in this collection is the grammar of the Arabic language, which includes rhetoric (*ilm al-balagha*) and philosophy of language (*ilm al-wad*<sup>8</sup>). This field is represented by classic works by Arab-Muslim authors who were popular in Dagestan, such as “al-Fawāid al-Diya’iyya” by ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Jami, “Sharh Marāh al-arwāh” by Aḥmad b. ‘Abdullah Dinqūzī al-Rūmī, “Sharh Taṣrīf al-‘Izzī” by Sa’d al-Din al-Taftāzānī and others. These manuscripts contain a large number of valuable and interesting notes and glosses, indicating that each manuscript went through a long and meticulous process of annotation. Moreover, every new owner or reader of these manuscripts continued to add their own annotations.

The works of local theologians in this field are particularly interesting in this collection. One of the manuscripts (convolute) contains a work by the major Dagestani legal scholar, Muhammad ‘Ali al-Chukhi, on grammar issues, in the form of answers to questions. This is immediately followed by another work by Abdul Hamid al-Gumuqi, which is a refutation of al-Chukhi's answers. The essay is titled “Rejecting Attacks on the Questioner's Questions” (“Daf’ as-Sayil ‘an Masail as-Sayil”). Both of these works were copied personally by Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti in 1880.

Two small manuscripts, copied at the beginning of the 20th c., contain a number of works by Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti himself and his villager Iman ‘Ali al-Bezhti on the issue of the number of prayers-*tarāwīh*. The creation of these works was prompted by a discussion that took place between these scholars, during which each of them demonstrated their deep knowledge of Sharia’ law and Arabic language.<sup>9</sup>

Exegesis is also represented by the classical works of Muslim scholars. In particular, the work of Nasir al-Din al-Bayḍāwī on the interpretation of the Quran “Anwār al-Tanzīl [wa Asrar al-Ta’wil]”, copied in the middle of the 18th c. and the famous “Tafsīr al-Jalālayn” — the interpretation of the Quran by two authors: Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti and Jalal al-Din al-Maḥalli.

Sufism is represented by only a few works. One of them is the work attributed to Imam al-Ghazali “Minhāj al-‘ābidīn”. This manuscript was copied

<sup>8</sup> See: “Ilm al-wad’, on the other hand, has no apparent counterpart among the branches of Western philology or linguistics; as a matter of fact, its subject matter, which will be unfolded in the course of the present study, does not seem to fall within the domain of the Western philologist’s, or linguist’s interests” (WEISS 1987: 339).

<sup>9</sup> See more: ABDULMAZHIDOV & ALIBEKOV 2021.

in June 1587 “in the *madrasah* of our lord and indefatigable Imam Ali, son of Husanshi (خُصْنَشِي)”. The question of whether this manuscript is of local origin remains open. In the same collection there is an essay by another famous sufi Shihāb al-Din Abū Hafs ‘Umar b. Muhammad al-Sahruwardī “A’lām al-Hudā wa ‘Aqīdatu Arbāb al-Tuqā” dedicated to Islamic dogmatics. The work was copied by the same scribe in the same *madrasah* and in the same year, but a month later.

There are several classical works on natural sciences, such as an essay on astronomy written by the Shafi’i jurist Ibn ‘Abd al-Haqq al-Sunbati, which was copied by Ishaq, the son of Malla Ibrahim al-Yirsi al-Tabasarani, in 1719–20. Another work is “al-Futūḥāt al-wahbiyah sharḥ al-risālah al-fatḥiyah”, written by ‘Ali b. ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Nubaiti al-Hanafi and is a commentary on the work of Badr al-Din al-Mardini, which was also copied by the same person. The manuscript of “Umda Ulī al-Nuhā” on astronomy by Ridwan al-Misri, was copied in the Gunib fortress by Abdulmajid, the son of Sultandibir al-Bezhti, on May 3, 1898. The work on mathematics, “Khulāṣat al-ḥisāb” (“Symma of arithmetic”), written by al-‘Amili, is an invariable part of almost any Dagestan library and it was copied in 1886 by Kebedmukhammad “far from his homeland... in the village of Katekh<sup>10</sup>”.

As you can see, the collection consists of classical works by Arab-Muslim authors, which were available in every Dagestan library. However, each of these manuscripts contains a lot of important and valuable information that expands our understanding of the history and culture of this region. These include numerous glosses found in the margins, between the lines, on the flyleaf, and on the first and last pages of the manuscripts. Most of these glosses are devoted to analyzing and commenting on the texts within the manuscripts, and they are largely based on books by Middle Eastern Muslim scholars. In addition, there are also a significant number of comments written by local theologians, some of which are of particular interest, whether they are found in the margins of the manuscript or on.

For example, on one of these folios there is a note by the famous scholar Muhammad ‘Ali al-Ubri, in which he talks about the litigation that arose in the lesson of his teacher, the famous Muhammad, the son of Musa al-Quduqi. It was about the loot that the husband brought from military campaigns, mainly to Georgia. Al-Quduqi sides with the husband in this dispute, since, according to the Shafi’i *mazhab*, an authorized person cannot be appointed in matters of obtaining military loot. The person who captured the

<sup>10</sup> Now a village in the Balakan region of Azerbaijan.

trophy directly or participated in the risky business is the sole owner of their share of the war spoils. The note says the following:

*«Know that at the meeting (majlis) of Muhammad, son of Musa al-Quduqi (may Allah have mercy on him), there was a dispute between the spouses regarding the property that one of them had gained from the infidels. The wife said: "I cooked food, made all the preparations for the military campaign and took care of the household". The husband said: "I personally participated in a military campaign". Al-Quduqi, may Allah have mercy on him, considered this issue a matter of surety (wakala) and made a decision based on the words of Ibn Hajar that surety is impossible in those matters where the right to ownership is affected only by a direct participant, for example, military booty or picking up [abandoned or lost] things. If the dispute is about the property that the spouse gets by hunting or by developing virgin lands, i.e. where surety is possible, al-Quduqi, may Allah have mercy on him, ordered to husband to take an oath that the property he obtained was obtained with intent for both spouses, i.e. in general for the house. If the spouse refuses to take the oath, then the property is considered to be the common and equal property of both parties. This is an important issue. Ubri, May Allah have mercy on him».*

### **The book as the special subject of law**

In more rare cases, one can find notes in manuscripts about lawsuits in which the owners or copyists of the manuscripts were involved. Thus, on the last page of the list of essays on the theory of law "Sharh Jam' al-jawāmi'" by Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli, there is no usual colophon but instead of it there is an inscription in a triangular shape, stating that he purchased the book in the summer of 1848 from Abdurahman of Antsukh for 13 rubles. There is a large text on the side in which Sultanmuhammad reports in more detail about the deal and the issues that arose after that:

*“Sultanmuhammad purchased the book named "Jam' al-jawāmi'", from Abdurahman al-Ansukhi, the son of Tinamuhammad, for 13 rubles (غروش) of pure silver in 1264. Then, after some time, qadi Numan and qadi Isam testified that the book had been bequeathed as a waqf to the children [of the first owner]. In this regard, naib of the imam 'Adalav, with the decision (fatwa) of Hajimuhammad-afandi al-Bukhnudi, withdrew the book from them. So the book was in the possession of 'Adalav and his mufti for a year or more. I went to Abdurahman to collect the price paid to him for the book. How-*

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ever, both of them (*Adalav* and the *mufti*) returned it to me, saying that the testimony of the witnesses had been found to be false and that they had revealed the lies. They also said: "We are afraid of Allah to take the cost of the book from the orphans of Abdurahman, besides, he was the owner and proprietor of the book. Abdurahman said during his lifetime: "All the books of my father Tinamuhammad were given to me according to a reliable will (*nazr*)". He showed a corresponding written note as a proof. During his lifetime, Abdurahman had his own evidence, and after his death, this lie was revealed near the witnesses: 'Adalav, Hajimuhammad, Muhammad, son of Irmî (إرمي), Ilyas, Muhammad b. Qurban and a large number of other people. In 1272,<sup>11</sup> it was thus established that the book belonged to its buyer Sultanmuhammad'.

It is understood from the text that, after Sultanmuhammad bought the book in the summer of 1848, some *qadis* opposed this deal on the basis that Abdurahman's father Tinamuhammad bequeathed the book to his children. Therefore, Abdurahman was not entitled to sell it. Based on the opinion of these *qadis*, *naib* and *mudir* of Imam Shamil, 'Adalav, withdraws this book for further investigation. It is noteworthy that the *naib* had his own *mufti*, who advised him on Sharia issues and issued religious and legal decisions (*fatwas*). For some unknown reason, the consideration of this controversial issue was delayed for several years. And only after the death of the person (Abdurahman) who sold the book, the *naib* comes to the conclusion that the transaction was legitimate, and therefore the book should be returned to Sultanmuhammad. In 1855–56, another court session was held, where, in the presence of a large number of people, the judgment was rendered in favor of Sultanmuhammad al-Bezhti.

In general, the manuscripts in this collection contain numerous legal documents that were included on the first or last pages of the manuscript or on the flyleaf. These documents are important for the research of the economic history and legal culture of Dagestan. One example is a document about the bride's dowry. A note left on the last page of the Quran from the Bezhta collection dates back to the 18th c. This record states:

*"This is an explanation of the property of Patimat, the daughter of Mahdi Muhammad, which she handed over to her husband Musa, the son of Tami: household utensils worth six sheep; three silver chains worth three sheep; two leg bracelets worth several sheep; a cow worth four sheep; a fur coat worth two sheep; a chain... made of silver worth several sheep; [the book]*

<sup>11</sup> The year 1272 of the Hijri began on September 12, 1855.

*“al-Minhaj” worth three sheep; one sheep; three goats and one kid; one mut-ton (bazi); a tray worth several sheep; a share in a gun, worth two sheep; six and a half measures of barley. This is witnessed by Malla, the son of Yusuf, and Ilyas, the son of Muhammad in the village of Bezhta. Muhammadvali al-Bezhti was the author of these lines. May Allah be the best witness!”*

The following can be learned from this interesting source. Firstly, the main valuable items of that time are presented here: jewelry, cattle, dishes, weapons, books, grain, etc. Secondly, despite the fact that Persian, Ottoman and Russian money was already in circulation in Dagestan during this period, the bride's side preferred to value the property with a more stable equivalent — sheep. Thirdly, the purpose of such notes was to fix the dowry so that in case of divorce, it could be claimed back.

### Personal notes

Sultanmuhammad, on the last page of the work “Tuḥfat al-muḥtāj” by al-Haythamī immediately after the colophon, in which he reports that he completed the copying in the early summer of 1264H (1848), writes: “*I was the naib of Imam Shamil at the time of the beginning of the copy of this book and its completion. First i was his naib in 1260, and then again in 1264*”. Immediately after this note, there is a message from his son Kebedmuhammad, in which he writes about the death of his cousin and about his own location at the time of writing the note: “*On May 8, 1910, which corresponds to the 10th Jumādā al-’ākhīrah of 1328, Tal’i(?), i.e. the son of my paternal uncle, a meek scientist Ali-dibir, the son of Kurban-Ali al-Bezhti, died. May Allah forgive him and his parents. Me, the author of these lines — Kebedmuhammad, the son of Sultan-dibir al-Bezhti, wrote this in the fortress of Gunib, when I was the qadi of the Gunib district and my wife Aminat and her children were with me*”. Thus, the last page of the manuscript turns into a family chronicle, which fixes important events from the lives of relatives. Most often, copyists or manuscript owners preferred to leave such notes on the colophon page.

Almost every manuscript has the owner's notes on it. In one of them, the founder of the collection, Sultan Muhammad, provides some information about his family:

*“From the books of poor Sultanmuhammad, son of Mallamuhammad. His nickname is Chartli and he belongs to the Antlkilish (“six-fingered”) al-Bezhti tribe. May Allah have mercy on them, Amin!”*

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## Letters: official and private correspondence

Another important component of the Dagestan manuscripts is the presence of numerous letters embedded or pasted between their pages. For example, the collection of Sultanmuhammad al-Bezhti includes a letter from Imam Shamil addressed to the Bezhta Jamaat:

*“And peace be upon you, and then. Your messengers have reached me with a letter, and I have read it and understood its contents, but remained unaware of your affairs. And I don't have anyone who knows the truth about your situation. And I have entrusted all your affairs to your Naib Sultanmuhammad and your mudir, the noble Emir Daniyal Sultan, and if this matters don't improve, then I will ask both of them. And indeed, hypocrisy often leads to strife, but prosperity and God's favor can be found in harmony. Your respected envoys will keep you informed about our affairs. And may peace be upon you. 28 Dhu al-hijjah 1262<sup>12</sup>”.*

The content of this letter becomes clearer when we turn to the historical context. During the trade and economic blockade imposed by the tsarist authorities in the early 1840s, the residents of Dagestan communities bordering Kakhети faced an extremely difficult situation. The Bezhtins and neighboring Antsukh communities needed to maintain trade relations with Kakhети for their economic activities. Due to the blockade, many refugees from the Bezhta Khanate were unable to descend into the Alazani Valley and went to Chechnya in search of food. Georgian archives contain documents about attempts by some residents of Bezhta to move to Kakhети in 1846, but these attempts were unsuccessful.<sup>13</sup> It seems that some of the people in the *naibity* were against joining the Caucasian Imamate due to the problems that arose. In order to resolve these conflicts, the representatives of the Bezhta community, in our opinion, turned to Imam Shamil.

Some personal letters in this collection are also very interesting, such as Kebedmuhammad's letter addressed to his elder brother, which contains exhortations to study:

*“To the venerable father, student Sultanmuhammad.<sup>14</sup> Salam alaykum.*

*And then, first of all, I wish you, your friends and your teacher well. May Allah protect you from diseases and misfortunes.*

<sup>12</sup> 16th December 1846.

<sup>13</sup> Central Historical Archive of Georgia. Col. 545. Inv. 1. File 1473. 367 ff.

<sup>14</sup> Such an appeal to the son or the elder relative (brother, nephew, by the name of the father) is common for the Bezhtins. The letter indicates the process of formation of the dynasty of the *'alims* and scholars in Dagestan — as the one who got an education himself supports his relatives on the same path.

*I am sending you a part of the tablet so that you may write on it what you wish. I also ask that you be diligent in your studies and in doing good deeds, and strive to become a great scholar like your father. And I ask you not to wander around the bazaars and not to sleep in the morning.*

*If I see how hard you are trying to gain knowledge, I will certainly sew beautiful outerwear for you, for which I will buy the best fabric from the merchant. Otherwise, you don't have to hope for it.*

*Next, give greetings to my brother Muhammad Shafi and tell him to obey his mother and not just waste precious time, being not busy with either worldly or ahirat.*

*Also send greetings to your friends Muhammadrasul and Jamaluddin and our neighbor Muhammad, as well as my sister's son Ramazan. Thursday. April 1892”.*

The place of storage of letters in Dagestan has traditionally been handwritten books. Many letters were also used to write various comments on the manuscript. Most letters, as mentioned above, dealt with household and personal matters. However, it was not uncommon to find letters sent from one community to another or between feudal lords. For instance, in this collection, there is a letter where the community of Arakani village protects the property of one of its members:

*“From the residents of the village of Arakani to the venerable brothers: the Imam, the community and the residents of the village of Kudutl — may peace be upon you, the mercy of Allah and His grace!*

*Further, know, brothers, that Gazi lives among us under our communal law (rasm) and the law (hukm), therefore you are not allowed to charge ishkil from him. Release his donkey, just as the residents of Aymaki village released your fellow villager's donkey when we sent them a letter and demanded his release. Respect our rights by thinking carefully about how we respect your rights. You have to let him go. May the Almighty Creator have mercy upon you all, and may peace prevail!”*

The *ishkil* referred to in this document is the seizure of the property of a relative or fellow villager of the debtor, in order to force him to pay the debt. This practice was criticized by representatives of the Muslim clergy, nevertheless it was widely practiced in Dagestan.

Also the collection contains a letter from Hadis al-Machadi to a certain Haji Muhammad, the son of Churilav (that he did not know the answer to the question asked by Haji Muhammad earlier) dated approximately 1740–1760s. Hadis al-Machadi (1689–1770) is named by a number of sources among the

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most famous and competent Dagestani theologians of the 18th c.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the collection of manuscripts and documents of Sultanmuhammad al-Bezhti, which preserved this letter, once again testifies to the ties between Dagestani scholars and the recognition of the authority of many of them.

### Other types of documents in the collection

In addition, it should be noted that the collection under study contains another type of document — a collection of legal regulations compiled in 1895. The title page of the manuscript says the following: “This collection includes the ‘*adats* of the societies of the Naib of the Antsukh-Kapucha and Bokhnoda region dated July 10, 1895”. At the same time, it must be said that the ‘*adat* regulations concerned not only the unions of communities named on the title, but cover all other jamaats, that were traditionally part of the *Ankrat*l (or rus. *Semizemeli* — “The Seven Lands”) military-political union. And the presence on the title of only the names of three unions of communities is due to the fact that after the formation of the Dagestan region in the territory of Ankratl, two separate *naibities* were created, united by the period of compilation of the collection of ‘*adats* into the *naibity* “Antsukh-Kapucha and Bokhnoda” with the center in the village of Tlyarata.<sup>16</sup> The compiler of the collections of ‘*adats*, in our opinion, is Kebedmuhammad al-Bezhti.

Unlike many other Dagestani ‘*adat* codes, these ‘*adats* of Antsukh-Kapucha and Bokhnoda has a fairly well-organised structure. The numbered ‘*adat* regulations are set out in the form of a specific legal case and are divided according to the type of offense.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, this collection is a collection of valuable and significant sources on the history of Dagestan. The study of such Dagestan handwritten Arabic collections not only contributes to the study of local history, but also enhances our understanding of the evolution of the Arab-Muslim written tradition both in Dagestan and in general on the periphery of the Muslim world. On the

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<sup>15</sup> It is known that Hadis al-Machadi had many *fatwas*, which were widely spread in Dagestan; he also took an active part in the socio-political life of Dagestan — for example, in the ideological justification of opposition to the invasion of Nadir Shah. Hadis al-Machadi left behind a rich collection of manuscripts that had been collected for several centuries and in summer of 2023 was partially described and digitized by the project team. For the collection and personality of Hadis al-Machadi, see: ABDULMAZHIDOV & ANIKEVA & SHEKMAGOMEDOV 2024.

<sup>16</sup> *Kavkazskii calendar*’ 1895.

<sup>17</sup> See more at: ABDULMAZHIDOV 2014.

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example of the Sultanmuhammad al-Bezhti manuscript collection, we can clearly see how a relatively small book collection contains the most diverse range of sources and materials on the history and culture of the region.

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