Patrons of Islamic Mosques in Dāghistān Reconsidered in Light of the Kūrāj Mosque

Muhammad Nasir Aboelkhier

Department of Islamic Archaeology, Fayoum University, Fayoum, Egypt.

E- mail: Mni11@fayoum.edu.eg

Received: 0/0/0; Received in Revised form: 0/0/0; Accepted: 0/0/0; Published: 0/0/0

Abstract

This study reassesses Islamic mosque patronage in Dāghistān by examining the Kūrāj Mosque in the Agul region. During the Islamic era, the mosque underwent four major reconstruction phases, including documented renovations in 1677, 1795, and 1829; the last of these dates appears in the mosque's final inscription. Drawing on newly identified material evidence and textual inscriptions concerning the mosque's architecture and repairs, as well as records of social subsidies and village contributions to Islamic charities, the study reconstructs a plan of Kūrāj during the Islamic period.

It examines the dates of the mosque's renovations and identifies the artists and donors involved in its construction and restoration. Moreover, it analyses the architecture, inscriptions, and historical context of the Kūrāj Mosque together. The study also offers, for the first time, translations of the Arabic inscriptions, based on unpublished patterns documented in a survey the author conducted. As approximately seventy other mosques in Dāghistān remain to be examined, this research provides a valuable foundation for further study.

The study concludes that the Kūrāj Mosque is significant for its architectural features, monumental character, historical records, and religious inscriptions. It is also one of the few mosques in Dāghistān built with the support of Kūrāj's Muslim population in the Agul region, whose donations extended to neighbouring villages.

Keywords: Dāghistān, Islamic architecture, building epigraphy, shareholders, charitable subsidies, sponsors.

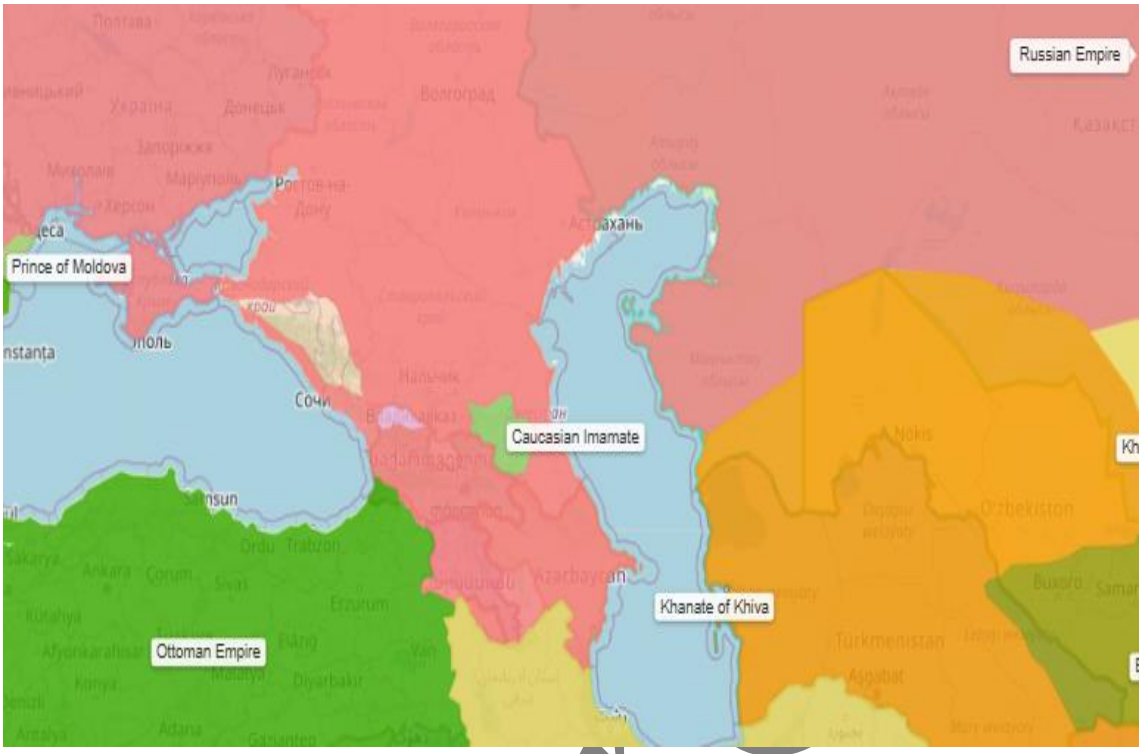
In Press

۱. Introduction

Mosques and other Islamic structures were often built with significant patronage from rulers, members of the ruling elite and high-ranking officials (Magdy, 2024, p. 22); (Ameen A. , 2019b, p. 208); (Ameen A. , 2014, p. 17); (Ameen A. , 2021, pp. 566-597); (Ameen A. , 2019c, pp. 93-115); (Ameen A. &., 2025, pp. 125–143), reflecting a typical pattern of construction driven by competition among caliphs, princes, sultans and elite men and women (Ameen A. , 2019a, p. 137). Muslim minorities live in non-Muslim states, such as those of the Caucasus, and in several territories with Muslim populations, such as Russia (Aboelkhier M. , 2026c, pp. 236-249) (Aboelkhier M. , 2026d); (Лаврова, 1966, pp. 1-77); (Шихсаидов, 1984). Therefore, it was the duty of wealthy figures, merchants from the Muslim community (Saied, 2025, pp. 171-177); (Ruzaiq, 2024a, pp. 499-502); (Ruzieq, 2024b, pp. 95-98) or even founders of charitable organisations and donors from rural areas, to fund the building and maintenance of mosques, especially in Islamic-ruled regions. In Dāghistān, seventy old mosques survive (Aboelkhier, 2026b).

These mosques, which date from the 14th century to the mid-20th century, coincide with the end of the Muslim presence in Russia and are of considerable historical and architectural importance. The archaeological field survey indicates that the renovators, builders, and architects involved in these reconstructions belonged to the non-elite stratum of the Muslim community in Dāghistān (Aboelkhier, 2026b); (Aboelkhier M. , 2026a) ***(Map 1)***. Additionally, some mosques built by Muslims in Dāghistān are either recent or, judging by their foundations, may be old, except for some built by Muslim expatriates as a consequence of the Russification policy, which sought to alter the social structure in line with shifts in Dāghistān's population distribution. Table 1 displays the results of an archaeological field study that identified the founders of seventy medieval mosques in one sector of Dāghistān.

In Press



Map 1. Historical map of the Dāghistān Imamate between Tsarist Russia, Ottoman Turkey and the Asian khanates. World History Atlas (Anon, 2026)

During the conflict with the Tsarist Russians, a few mosques in the Caucasus were owned by influential figures, because there was no centralised authority (Saied, 2025, p. 171); (Khalil, 2022, pp. 257-276); (Aboelkhier M. , 2024a, pp. 236-249). The texts of contemporary mosques mentioned Grand Imāms with titles such as "Imām of Dāghistān" (Shmuel), "warrior (al-Manṣūr)" and "village community (Dargu)". Most of the patrons who commissioned the construction of mosques were men or women who made charitable donations with a positive social impact (al-Ġhamīqīy, n.d, pp. 5-15); (al-Qarāḵẖīy, 2019, p. 11). Taking into account donors from village communities and from the proprietors of charitable organisations shows that the number of mosques increased dramatically. The corps of Imām-warriors and Caucasian Imāmate deputies who fought in the Russo-Caucasian War (Aboelkhier, 2026b); (Aboelkhier M. , 2026a) holds the second rank, which also comprises court judges and their families (Saied, 2025, p. 171); (Aboelkhier, 2026b).

۲. Research Questions

This article examines how monumental building inscriptions carved on the walls of mosques in the local villages of Dāghistān serve as public media within the Dāghistān Imamate's collective memory. It explores how these inscriptions illuminate the cultural, religious, and architectural contributions of the ruling power as well as those of non-elite contributors and donors. The study is guided by five questions:

(١) How do these textual inscriptions identify patrons? What do they reveal about the roles of elite and non-elite participants in the construction, repair, restoration, and maintenance of religious buildings in Dāghistān?

(٢) How do these textual inscriptions describe the legitimacy of the jurisdiction of the Dāghistān Imamate over the Muslim community? What religious expressions did some of its rulers use to build mosques within the local community and to legitimise their rule?

(٣) What executive data, professional positions, toponyms, types of social contribution, charitable endowments, wages and categories of currency in circulation can be derived from specific formulae?

(٤) How do the inscriptions record the dimensions of collective contributions to the local community in Dāghistān through the distribution of labour, the names and categories of manufacturers, the building materials and the physical process of repairing, restoring and maintaining mosques?

(٥) What does the regional practice of writing on architectural structures in Dāghistān reveal about the rules of epigraphy, the types of script, its historical and civilisational layout and the combination of inscribed texts (*Qurʾānic quotations, supplications, invocations, surnames, jihad and names of geographical borders*)?

٣. Methods

To clarify the functional role of the scribal profession in Dāghistān during and after the Russo-Caucasian War, the study employs a field survey to document commemorative inscriptions in Arabic on surviving mosques, specifically those of the Imamate period. These inscriptions are then converted into calligraphic drawings that reproduce the letter forms. Additionally, each inscription is provided with a written transcript recording all of its morphemic, orthographic, lexical, and diacritical features, together with a consistent transliteration and an explanation of each word based on an annotated English translation. To understand the contemporary socioeconomic and religious circumstances, the record of memorial inscriptions is then compared with modern materials, regional records and the register of architectural monuments, contextualising dates, occupations, surnames, personalities, names of geographical boundaries, construction terms, definitions of wages, some craft designations and the quality of endowments.

٤. Corpus of the Inscriptions

Written memorial inscriptions act as “public documents” on mosques, schools, tombstones and even civil, residential or other service facilities (Hagras, 2023); (Aboelkhier M. , 2024a, pp. 53-57). They have long been used to consolidate contemporary historical narratives by recording these inscriptions either directly or through exile in specific geographical places and in religious, linguistic and cultural contexts grounded in political and military pillars, thereby allowing the reconstruction of a clear picture of the local authority of the ruling elite, non-elite contributors (Aboelkhier, 2026b); (Saied, 2025, p. 171); (Khalil, 2022, pp. 257-276); (Aboelkhier M. , 2024,

In Press

pp. 2-11) and donors in the collective memory of Muslim communities, to preserve the written record of architectural buildings within the literary sources that document the history of nations, peoples and cultures (Tawfiq, 2020, p. 613); (Ameen A. , 2019b, pp. 208-243); (Ramadan, 2022, pp. 234-245).

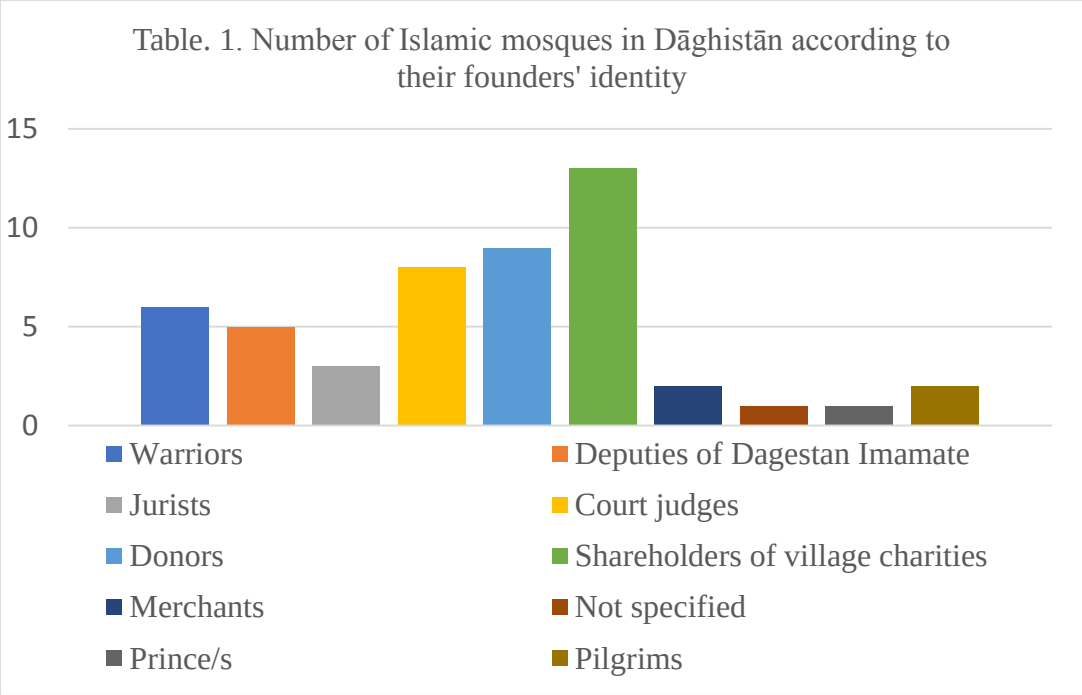


Table 1: Number of Islamic mosques in Dāghistān according to the identity of their founders

The corpus also highlights the economic role of the local Muslim community through donations, endowments, and charitable subsidies within the geographical surroundings of male and female, elite or non-elite patrons. This helps to identify the impact of the inscriptions on the religious and social authority of the local village, as well as the associated acts of charity, piety, and charity-related links that implicitly influenced the record of inscriptions and memorabilia (Saied, ٢٠٢٥, p. 163); (Ruzaiq, 2024a, p. 499); (Aboelkhier, 2026b); (Aboelkhier M. , 2026a).

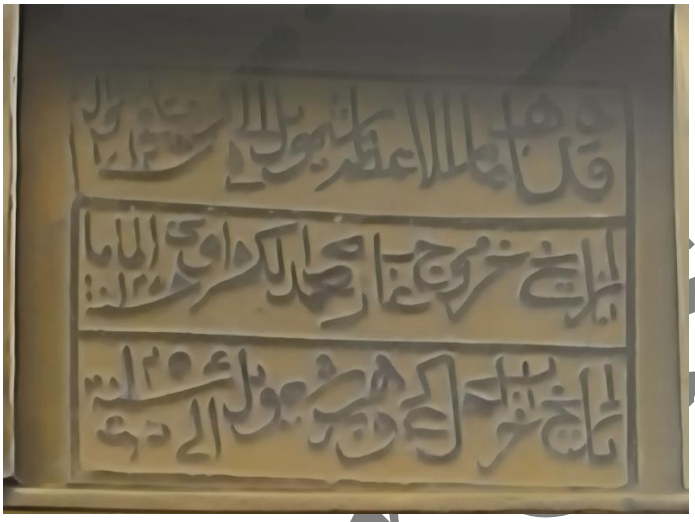
This section presents inscriptions from memorial buildings constructed by both aristocratic and non-elite patrons, which were photographed during the field survey in Dāghistān. Arabic script is used in most of the commemorative inscriptions found on surviving mosques, in styles such as *Thuluth (ثُلث) and Naskh (نسخ).* Their content includes cultural information about the conditions of the local Muslim community in Dāghistān, including its economy, structure, social and religious practices, endowment systems, charitable contributions and community subsidies, as well as material of considerable linguistic and literary value.

The attached table, which presents relative quantitative historical data and illustrates the types of contributors to the construction, maintenance and restoration of religious buildings in Dāghistān during and after the Russo-Caucasian War, is based on the number of surviving Islamic memorial inscriptions in Dāghistān that were photographed during the field survey. The statistical overview

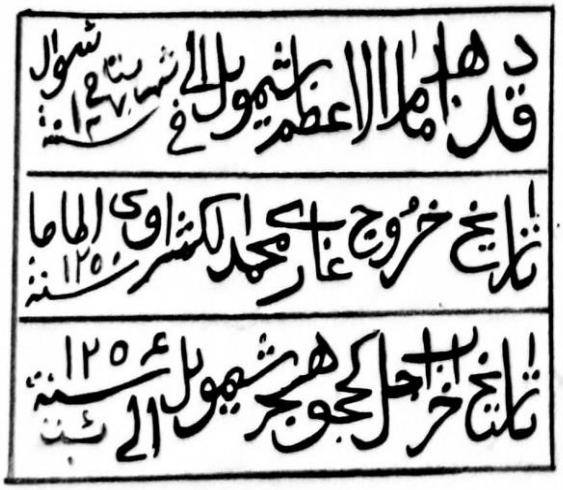
includes details of the patrons, their ethnic origins and occupations, as well as an estimated percentage of surviving structures ***(Table 1).***

٤,١ Deputies of the Dāghistān Imamate

٤,١,١ Inscription No. 1 (Renovation Inscription of "Ǧīynūkẖ Mosque")



(Plate 1): Renovation Inscriptions of "Ǧīynūkẖ Mosque" (Photo by Abo Elkhier 2021).



(Figure 1): A Transcription of the Renovation Inscription of (Ǧīynūkẖ) Mosque by Imām Šimwīl and Ǧāzī al-Ġhamrāwīy

Arabic Text	***Transliteration***	***English Translation***
س١/ قد ذهب إمام الأعظم شمويل إلى مفتاح في شهر شوال ١٢٧٠	*li.1: Qad Ḍhahab Imām al-Aʿẓam Šimwīl Ilā*	*li.1: The Grand Imām Šimwīl (Shmuel) went to Miftah (Victory) in the month of Shawwal 1270 AH.*

س٢/ تاريخ خروج غازي محمد الگمراوي الماما سنة ١٢٥٠	*li.2: Tārīkẖ Kẖurūj Ǧāzī Muḥammad al-Ġhamrāwīy al-Māmā sanah 1250*	*li.2: The date of exit (jihad) of Imām Ǧāzī Muḥammad al-Ġhamrāwīy from Dāghistān is the year 1250 (al-Māmā).*
س٣/ تاريخ خراب [.؟؟] أهل بجينوخ ذهب (هجر) شمويل إلى درغة سنة ١٢٥٦	*li.3: Tārīkẖ Kẖarāb [؟؟.] Aḥl bi Ǧīynūkẖ Ḏhahab (Hağr) Šimwīl ilā Dargu sanah 1256*	*li.3: The history of the destruction [؟؟ .] of the people of Ǧīynūkẖ, Shmuel (Imām Šimwīl) went (abandoned) to Dargu in 1256.*

In Press

٤,٢ Princes of the Khanates

٤,٢,١ Inscription No. 2 (Renovation Inscription of "*Gāzī Kumūkẖ Mosque*")



(Plate 2): Renovation Inscriptions of "Gāzī Kumūkẖ" Mosque (Photo by Abo Elkhier 2021)



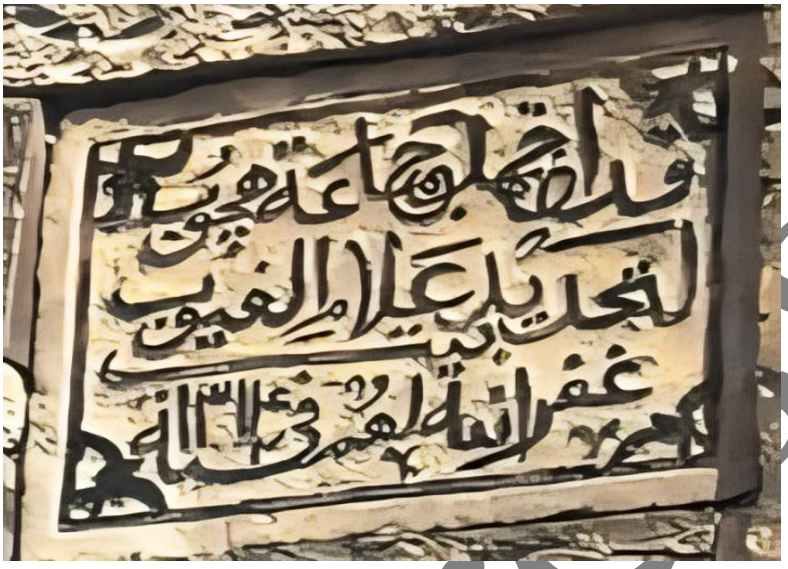
(Figure 2): A Transcription of (Renovation Inscription of "Gāzī Kumūkẖ" Mosque)

Arabic Text	Transliteration	English Translation
س١/ إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَٰجِدَ ٱللَّهِ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِٱللَّهِ	li.1: Innmā Yaʿmur Masājid Allāh man ʾAmana bi Allāh	li.1: The Mosques of Allāh are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allāh
***** وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْأَخِرِ وَأَقَامَ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ	***** wa al-Yawm al-ʾAkẖir wa Aqām aṣ-Ṣalāh	***** and the Last Day and establish prayer
س٢/ وَءَاتَى ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهَ	li.2: wa ʾAtā az-Zakāh wa lam Yakẖšā Illā Allāh	li.2: and give zakāh and do not fear except Allāh, for it is expected that
***** فَعَسَىٰٓ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ أَن يَكُونُوا۟ مِنَ ٱلْمُهْتَدِينَ	***** Faʿasā ūlaʾik an Yakūnū mina al-Muhatadīn	***** those will be of the [rightly] guided.
س٣/ ابن الأميرة الكريمة سلمي تنكة بنت الأمير الكريم صالح خان أوصت بتجديد هذا البناء	li.3: ibn al-Amīrah al-Karīmah Salmā Tankah bint al-Amīr al-Karīm Ṣāliḥ Kẖān awṣat bi Tajdīd Haḏhā al-Bināʾ	li.3: The son of the generous Princess Salmā Tankah, the daughter of the generous prince Ṣāliḥ Kẖān recommended the renovation of this building.
***** مسجد مير نجم الدين لحرب ونصر للشابر ولحدود وغير ذلك من المال ووقفت عنه مرز[ا] بيك	***** Masjid Mīr Najm ad-Dīn li Ḥarb wa Naṣr li Šābir wa li Ḥudūd wa Ġhayr Zalik mina al-Māl wa waqafit ʿAnhu Mirzā Bayk	***** Mīr Najm ad-Dīn Mosque for war and victory of the Šābir, for borders and other money and was stopped by Mirzā Bey
س٤/ [...؟؟؟؟] فاتٍ عفا الله عنهم والجماعة في إتمام المُهمات	li.4: [...؟؟؟] Fāt ʿAfā Allāh ʿAnhum wa al-Jamāʿah fī Itmām al-Mahammāt	li.4: [...؟؟؟] May Allāh forgive them and the congregation for completing the tasks
***** وجمع المربي عوناً [...؟؟] غير طالبين رضا الله جزاه الله خير الجزاء سنة ١٢٨٠	***** wa Jamaʿa al-Murabbī ʿAwnā [...؟؟؟] Ġhayr Ṭālibīn Riḍā Allāh Jazāhu Allāh Kẖayr al-Jazāʾ sanah 1280	***** The educator gathered help [...؟؟؟] Non-askers other than the satisfaction of Allāh, may Allāh reward a good deed in the year 1280.

In Press

٤,٣ Patrons of Village Charities

٤,٣,١ Inscription No. 3 (Renovation Inscription of "*Ğūšub Mosque*")



(Plate 3): Renovation Inscriptions of (Ğūšub) Mosque Inscriptions (Photo by Abo Elkhier 2021)



(Figure 3): A Transcription of (Ğūšub) Mosque Inscriptions

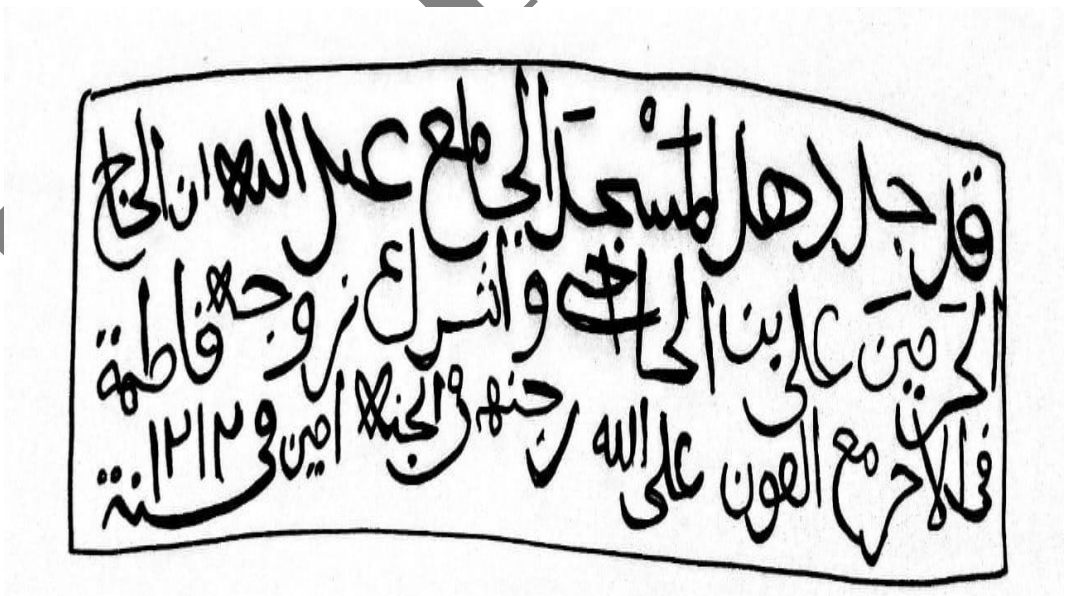
Arabic Text	***Transliteration***	***English Translation***
س١/ قد أجمله جماعة هچوب س٢/ لتجديد بيت علام الغيوب	*li.1: Qad ajmalahu Jamāʿah Hujūb*	*li.1: Compiled by Hujūb Group (charitable sponsors)*

س٣/ غفرانته لهم في سنة ١٣١٤	li.2: li Tajdid bayt ʿAllām al-Ġhuyūb li.3: Ghufrānahu lahum fī sanah 1314	li.2: To renovate the House of the Knower of the Unseen li.3: Asking for his forgiveness in the year 1314.

٤,٣,٢ **Inscription No. 4 (Renovation Inscription of "*Nūtsāl Mosque*")**



(Plate 4): Renovation Inscriptions of (Nūtsāl) Mosque (Photo by Abo Elkhier 2021)

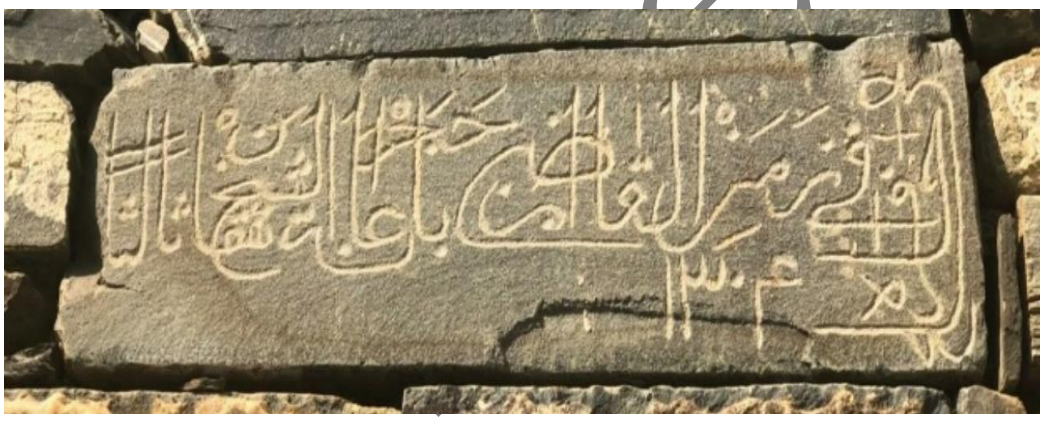


(Figure 4): A Transcription of (Nūtsāl) Mosque Inscriptions

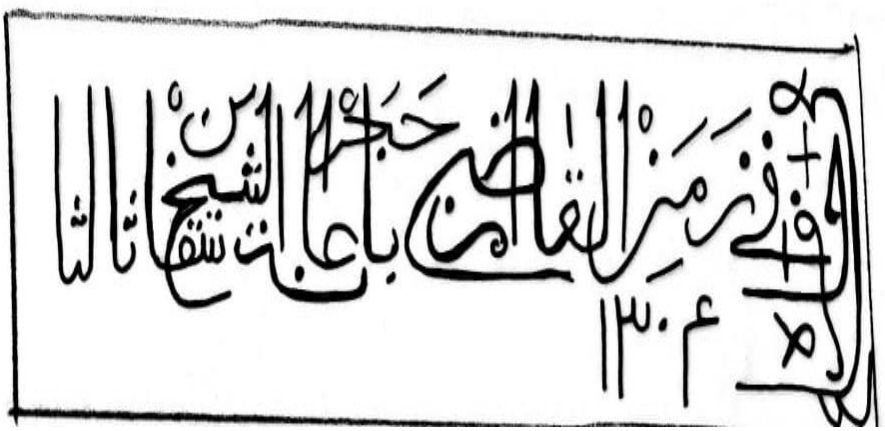
Arabic Text	*Transliteration*	*English Translation*
س١/ قد جدد هذا المسجد الجامع عبد الله بن الحاج	*li.1: Qad jaddad Haḏhā al-Masjid al-Jāmiʿ ʿAbd Allāh ibn al-Ḥājj*	*li.1: This Mosque has been renovated by ʿAbd Allāh, the son of al-Ḥājj*
س٢/ الحرمين علي بن الجلاخي وإشراف زوجته فاطمة	*li.2: al-Ḥaramayn ʿAlī al-Jilākẖīy wa Išrāf Zawjathu Fāṭimah*	*li.2: Haramain (two shrines in Mecca and Medina) ʿAlī, son of al-Jilākẖīy and the supervision of his wife Fatima*
س٣/ في الأجر مع العون أعلى الله درجته في الجنة آمين في سنة ١٣١٢	*li.3: fī al-Ajr Maʿa al-ʿAwn Aʿlā Allāh Darajathu fī al-Jannah ʾAmīn fī sanah*	*li.3: In reward for help, Allah has raised his grade in Paradise. Amen in the year 1312.*

٤,٤ Court Judges

٤,٤,١ Inscription No. 5 (Foundation Inscription of "*Santlada Mosque*")



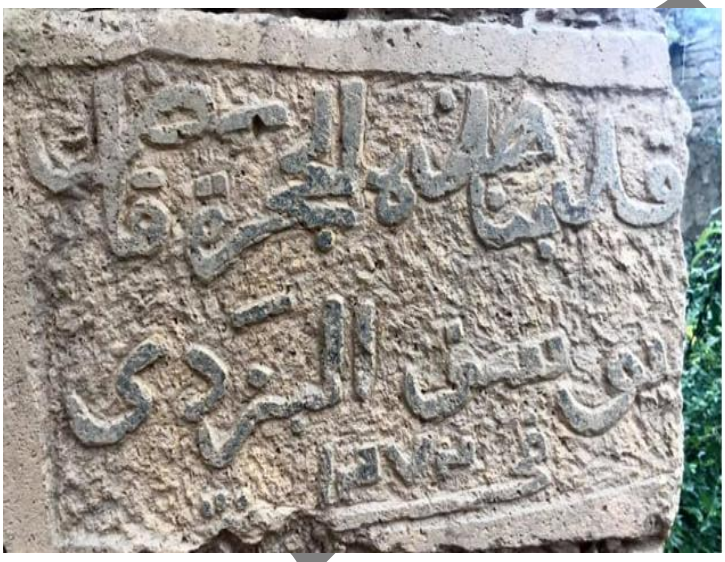
(Plate 5): Foundation Inscriptions of Santlada Mosque (Photo by Abo Elkhier 2021)



(Figure 5): A Transcription of Santlada Mosque Inscriptions

Arabic Text		Transliteration		English Translation	
في زمن القاضي حاجي بإعانة الشيخ شعبان بن ثالثاً ١٣٠٢	حافره صالح	*li.1: fī zaman al-Qādī Ḥajjī bi Iʿānah aš-Šaykh Šāʿbān ibn [Ṯālit]1302*	*Ḥāfirhu Ṣāliḥ*	*li.1: In the reign of Judge Haji, with the help of Sheikh Shaaban Ibn III, 1302*	*The stone-digger, Ṣāliḥ*

٤,٤,٢ Inscription No. 6 (Foundation Inscription of "*Yūsuf al-Biḏhdīy Madrasa*")



(Plate 6): Foundation Inscriptions of Yūsuf al-Biḏhdīy Madrasa in Jumatsel Mosque (Photo by Abo Elkhier 2021)



(Figure 6): A Transcription of Yūsuf al-Biḏhdīy Madrasa in Jumatsel Mosque Inscriptions

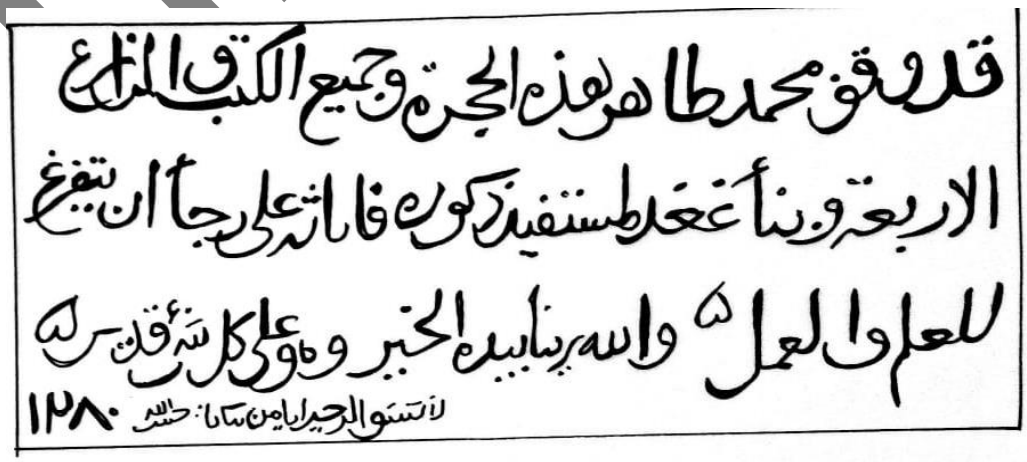
Arabic Text	*Transliteration*	*English Translation*
س١/ قد بنى هذه الحجرة قاض	*li.1: Qad Banā Haḏhih al-Ḥujrah Qāḍh*	*li.1: This room was built by a judge*
س٢/ يوسف البژدي	*li.2: Yūsuf al-Biḏhdīy*	*li.2: Yūsuf al-Biḏhdīy*
س٣/ في سنة ١٢٧٢	*li.3: fī sanah 1272*	*li.3: in the year 1272.*

٤,٥ Jurists

٤,٥,١ Inscription No. 7 (Foundation Inscription of "Muḥammad al-Qarākẖīy Mosque")



(Plate 7): Foundation Inscriptions of Muḥammad al-Qarākẖīy Madrasa in Urada Mosque (Photo by Abo Elkhier 2021)

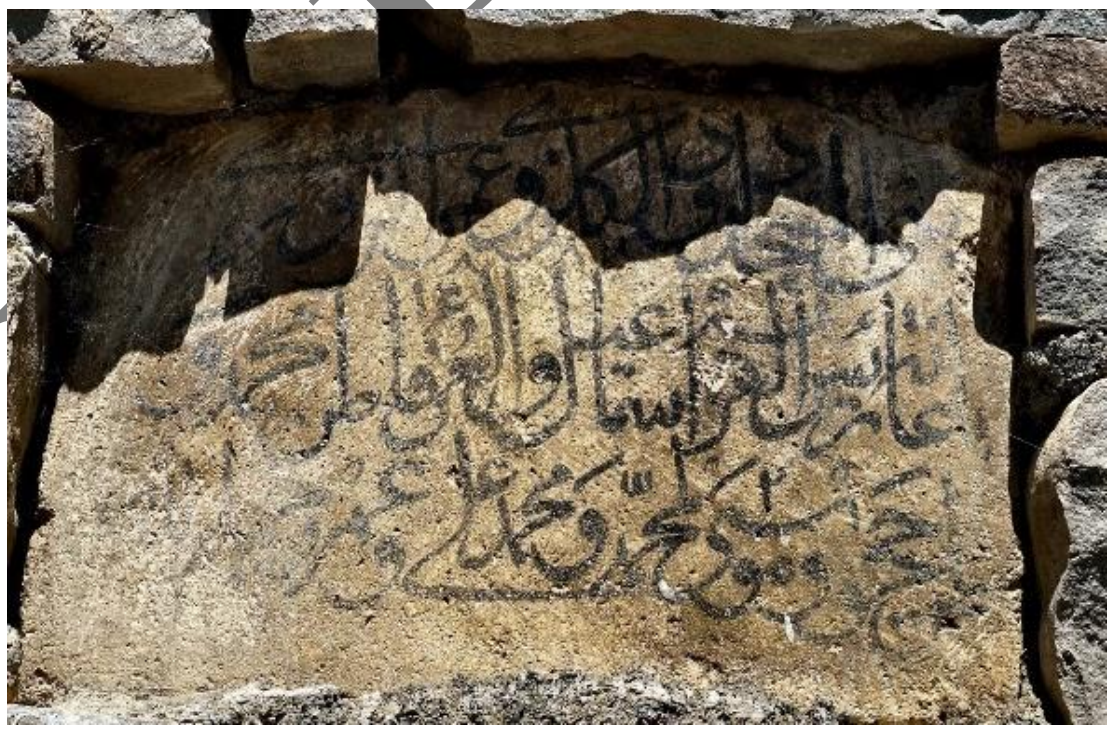


(Figure 7): A Transcription of Muḥammad al-Qarākẖīy Madrasa in Urada Mosque Inscriptions

Arabic Text	*Transliteration*	*English Translation*
س١/ قد وقف محمد طاهر هذه الحجرة وجميع الكتب والذراع	*li.1: Qad waqaf Muḥammad Ṭāhir Haḏhih al-Ḥujrah wa jamīʿ al-Kutb wa aḍ-Ḍhiāʿ*	*li.1: Muhammad Tahir endowed (gave) this room, all the books and the iwan*
س٢/ الأربعة وبناء أعقد لمستفيد ذكوره فأثابه على رجاء أن يتفرغ	*li.2: al-Arbaʿah wa bināʾ Uʿqid li Mustafīd Ḍhuzūruh ʿAlā Rajāʾ an Yatafarrag̈h*	*li.2: The four, based on the complexity of a male beneficiary, he should please be free*
س٣/ للعلم والعمل والله يرينا بيك الخير وهو على كل شيء قدير	*li.3: li al-ʿIlm wa al-ʿAmal wa Allāh Yūrīynā bik al-Kẖayr wa hūwa ʿAlā kull šayʾ Qadīr*	*li.3: For knowledge and work, and Allah shows us the good in you, and he is omnipotent over everything*
س٤/ لا تنسوا الرحيل يا من [.؟؟] أحسن الله ١٢٨٠	*li.٤: lā tanswūā ar-Raḥīl yā man [.??] Aḥsan Allāh 1280*	*li.٤: Don't forget to leave [.??] Allah bless (in the year) 1280*

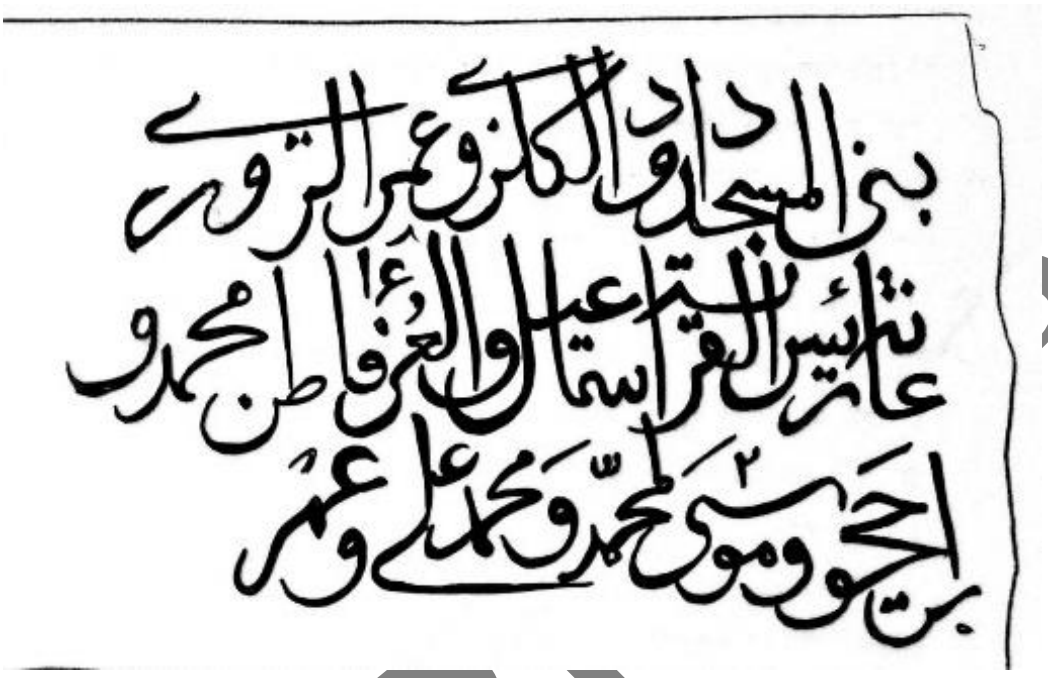
٤,٦ Donors

٤,٦,١ Inscription No. 8 (Foundation Inscription of "Ğādšādā Mosque")



Press

(Plate 8): Foundation Inscriptions of Ğādšādā Mosque (Photo by Abo Elkhier 2021)



(Figure 8): A Transcription of Ğādšādā Mosque Inscriptions

Arabic Text	*Transliteration*	*English Translation*
س١/ بنى المسجد داود الكلزوني وعمر الزواري	*li.1: Banā al-Masjid Dāwūd al-Kalzūnīy wa ʿUmar az-Zaffarīy*	*li.1: The mosque was built by the founders Dāwūd al-Kalzūnīy, and ʿUmar az-Zaffarīy*
س٢/ باعانة رئيس القرية إسماعيل والعرفاء لمن محمد و [عمر بن]	*li.2: bi Iʿānih Raʾīs al-Qaryah Ismāʿīl wa al-ʿUrāfāʾ Lamin Muḥammad wa [ʿUmar ibn]*	*li.2: With the help of the village head Isma'il and the Companions of Muhammad and ' Umar ibn*
س٣/ لمن حجيو وموسى لمحمّد ومحمّد علي وعمر [.؟؟]	*li.3 Lamin Ḥajjyū wa Mūsā li Muḥammad wa Muḥammad ʿAlī wa ʿUmar*	*li.3: For those of Ḥajjyū and Moses for Muhammad, Muhammad Ali and Umar [.??]*

٤,٧ Not Specified

٤,٧,١ Inscription No. 9 (Renovation Inscription of "Bakẖtīy Mosque")



(Plate 9): Renovation Inscriptions of Bakẖtīy Mosque (Photo by Abo Elkhier 2021)



(Figure 9): A Transcription of Bakẖtīy Mosque Renovation Inscriptions

Arabic Text	*Transliteration*	*English Translation*
س١/ قد جُدد هذا المسجد بمال علي بن حسن	*li.1: Qad Juddid Haḏhā al-Masjid bi Māl ʿAlī ibn Ḥasan*	*li.1: This mosque was renovated with the money of ʿAlī, the son of Ḥasan.*

٥. Epigraphic Analysis

This study presents a collection of fervent military, religious, and charitable inscriptions by non-elite shepherds in Dāghistān during the Islamic era, found on surviving architectural structures. Analysing these inscriptions helps to identify the overall political outlook of the Caucasus and some regional cultural milestones in Caucasian history. Several invocations of cultural and political importance may be found in these inscriptions, for example "*ʿAfā Allāh ʿAnhum wa al-Jamāʿah" (May Allāh forgive them and the Congregation)* (عفا الله عنهم والجماعة) and "*Ġhayr Ṭālibīn Riḍā Allāh Jazāhu Allāh Kẖayr al-Jazāʾ" (Non-Askers other than the satisfaction of Allāh, may Allāh reward a good deed)* (غير طالبين رضا الله جزاه الله خير الجزاء).

Non-Qurʾānic religious discourse forms a diverse record within the corpus of inscriptions. Documentary material, together with moral poetry and brief devotional formulae referring to Allāh's countenance, helps to define the meaning of the symbol. In the textual inscriptions, certain expressions of *prayer and requests for divine mercy and reward* appear, including "*fī al-Ajr Maʿa al-ʿAwn Aʿlā Allāh Darajathu fī al-Jannah ʾAmīn" (In reward with help, Allah has raised his grade in Paradise Amen)* (في الأجر مع العون أعلى الله درجته في الجنة آمين). They frequently conclude with

In Pre

an affirmation such as Amīn (غفرانه). The calligrapher made a mistake in writing it in this form (غفرانننه). It may be read by inserting the letter N (ن) as an additional sign in the word (غفرانه). Possibly, he was unfamiliar with how the Arabic letters were formed, even though he knew their significance and what forgiveness means in the context of helping to build the mosque. Some inscriptions include texts of *Qurʾānic quotations*: "The Mosques of Allāh are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allāh and the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakāh and do not fear except Allāh, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided" (إِنَّمَا يَعۡمُرُ مَسَٰجِدَ ٱللَّهِ مَنۡ ءَامَنَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلۡيَوۡمِ ٱلۡأٓخِرِ وَأَقَامَ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتَى ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَلَمۡ يَخۡشَ إِلَّا ٱللَّهَۖ فَعَسَىٰٓ أُوْلَٰٓئِكَ أَن يَكُونُواْ مِنَ ٱلۡمُهۡتَدِينَ).

In many of the cases examined, this category of devotional inscriptions extends beyond commemoration to include *cautionary passages and guidelines, serving* as a site of moral education. Typical themes include the deceptiveness of worldly comfort, the transience of life and worldly pleasures, and the inevitability of death, expressed through phrases such as "*male beneficiary, he should please be free*" (فأثابه على رجاء أن يتفرغ للعلم والعمل والله يرينا بيك الخير); and "*Allah shows us the good in you, and he is omnipotent over everything, don't forget to leave [.??] Allah bless*" (أحسن الله [. ؟؟] من يا الرحيل تنسوا لا قدير شيء كل على وهو). In particular, the *charitable endowment* for the repair and restoration of mosques, recorded in Arabic and employing terms of effort and economy, reveals aspects of social and cultural life, such as "*recommended the renovation of this building ***** for borders and other money and was stopped by Mirzā Bey*" (أوصت بتجديد هذا البناء ولحدود وغير ذلك من المال ووقفت عنه مرز[ا] بيك *****); "*This mosque was renovated with the money of…*" (قد جُدد هذا المسجد بمال), and "*Muhammad Tahir endowed (gave) this room and all the books*" (قد وقف محمد طاهر هذه الحجرة وجميع الكتب).

This paper examines a collection of Arabic inscriptions from mosques and madrasas (schools) that survived the Russo-Caucasian War, focusing on commemorative inscriptions with religious, political, and military implications. These inscriptions, which record names and surnames, show the expansion of Islamic culture and reveal aspects of communal life. These epigraphic records, which chronicle the spread of Arab and Islamic culture in Dāghistān, are among the most important surviving examples. They fill gaps left by general histories and biographies, which neglected significant individuals during Russian hegemony over the Caucasus because Russia forbade foreigners from entering the region to maintain firm control.

Some inscriptions list the names of many military leaders who sacrificed their lives in the brutal Russian war of the 13th/19th century, such as *Imām Šimwīl* (الإمام شمويل) *and Ǧāzī Muḥammad al-Ġhamrāwīy* (الإمام غازي محمد الگمراوي). In contrast, other inscriptions list the names of many non-elite shepherds in Dāghistān who took part in charitable work for the renovation and construction of mosques as part of village contributions in the 13th/19th century, including *Mīr Najm ad-Dīn* (مير نجم الدين), *Ṣāliḥ Kẖān* (صالح خان), *Salmā Tankah* (سلمي تنكة) *and Mirzā Bey* (مرزا بك).

A review of current sources reveals no biographies, chronicles, or even social-historical evidence concerning the people associated with the events of the period. Their names appear in abbreviated form, with the title followed by the first name only. Notably, the architectural repair of the mosques

In Press

of Dāghistān involved more people than those named here. As a result, epigraphy highlights the names of ordinary people who are absent from biographical records. Such biographies focused on the elite of Islamic society and paid little attention to ordinary people. For example, *Ṣāliḥ Kẖān* (صالح خان) was a prince in Dāghistān; *Mirzā Bey* (مرزا بك) managed the charitable endowment of the mosque of *Ṣāliḥ's daughter*. Other public figures include *ʿAbd Allāh* and *ʿAlī*, a son attributed to the *al-Jilākẖīy* family; together with Judge *Yūsuf al-Biḏhdīy* (whose name is recorded in letters of the Dāghistān Turkic language) and *Dāwūd al-Kalzūnīy, they* and their families are attributed to local villages in Dāghistān.

According to the content of the inscriptions relating to female shepherds, the rituals of Dāghistān were not limited to a small number of non-elite women. Other labourers often participated by giving gifts and charitable donations, or even through hard labour. Mosques were constructed by the Muslim community within an interconnected structure that established social standing. A few villages provided building supplies, bricks, stones, and construction tools. Additionally, the inscriptions contained actual dating terms. For instance, when mentioning the Russo-Caucasian War era, some inscriptions read *Tārīkẖ Kẖurūj Ğāzī Muḥammad al-Ġhamrāwīy* (تاريخ خروج غازي محمد الگمراوي) and *Tārīkẖ Kẖarāb [. ؟؟] Aḥl bi Ğīynūkẖ* (تاريخ خراب [. ؟؟] أهل بجينوخ). Moreover, they help to identify some important titles, such as *al-Ġhamrāwīy* "الگمراوي", which could refer to the village of *Ġhamrīy* attributed to Imām Šimwīl (the village of his birth).

Several expressions refer to renovation or construction, such as "*Awṣat bi Tajdīd Haḏhā al-Binā* "/أوصت بتجديد هذا البناء/ *recommended the renovation of this building*, and "*Qad jaddad Haḏhā al-Masjid*"/قد جُدّد هذا المسجد/ *This mosque has been renovate*d. Moreover, charitable inscriptions mention geographical regions of the Caucasus, such as "*Dargu*" Ar. (درغة), and "*Šābir*" Ar. (شابر). Among the examined mosques, one was commissioned by a woman (*al-Amīrah al-Karīmah Salmā Tankah bint al-Amīr al-Karīm Ṣāliḥ Kẖān* in (الأميرة الكريمة سلمي تنكة بنت الأمير الكريم صالح خان أوصت بتجديد هذا البناء), and another is the mosque of the wife of *Ḥajj ʿAlī al-Jilākẖīy*/ علي بن الجلاخي وإشراف زوجته فاطمة). The fifth category includes mosques built by village groups and contributors through donations and subsidies, such as the *Ğūšub* Mosque. Mosques in the sixth and seventh categories were built by members of the judiciary and by scholars, e.g., *Muḥammad b. Ṭāhir* and *Yūsuf al-Biḏhdīy*. Equally important is the material vocabulary in these textual inscriptions: technical references for construction, repair, and restoration (e.g., "*Qad Banā Haḏhih al-Ḥujrah; This room was built by*" قد بنى هذه الحجرة); recurrent phrases marking building activity ("*this mosque*; *Haḏhā* al-Masjid" هذا المسجد; "*al-Masjid al-Jāmiʿ*; and *Congregational Mosque*" المسجد الجامع).

The context of the three earlier inscriptions indicates that the Sunni Muslim patrons who built mosques and charitable institutions in the villages of Dāghistān were not members of the ruling class but influential individuals (women, princes, judges, Sufi guardians and warriors) who were prepared to contribute financially or socially to religious, cultural and charitable endeavours dispersed throughout the villages during the 13th/19th centuries. These mosques were often built for spiritual benefit, political pride and legacy. Throughout history, dynastic rulers have extended

In Press

patronage to local elites, which exposes complex social and theological ties as well as devout aspirations to gain Allāh's favour.

Examples of such patronage include constructing mosques and sponsoring scholars, including the financing of manuscripts, education, and endowments. The patrons' motives may be summarised as follows:

- *Spiritual merit*: To seek benefit, goodness and paradise (righteousness) in the hereafter, the shepherds of Dāghistān encouraged the founding of religious institutions for study, worship and good works. They guarded the endowments (*Mirzā Bey, ʿAlī al-Jilākẖīy wa Išrāf Zawjathu Fāṭimah*) and often inscribed their names on them, as shown in the inscription.
- *Religious authority*: *Imām Šimwīl and Ǧāzī Muḥammad al-Ġhamrāwīy* were among the leaders of Muslim communities in Dāghistān who were eager to build structures for religious instruction and prayer, because the sheiks and Imāms who led the war against the Tsarist Russians were seen as wealthy and pious through their patronage.
- *Social status*: Wealthy merchants and nobles, such as Prince (*Ṣāliḥ Kẖān*), his daughter, and his grandson, financed religious institutions in the Muslim community of Dāghistān to build their reputation and demonstrate their commitment to religion. They guarded the endowments (*Mirzā Bey*) and often inscribed their names on them, as shown in the inscription. In addition, a charitable inscription relating to the village community is also provided.
- *Cultural preservation*: The patrons financed the building of Islamic structures, especially religious buildings, to create centres of Islamic education that would spread knowledge and culture, especially during the Russification campaigns, e.g., the *Muḥammad al-Qarākẖīy Madrasa in Urada.*

In Press

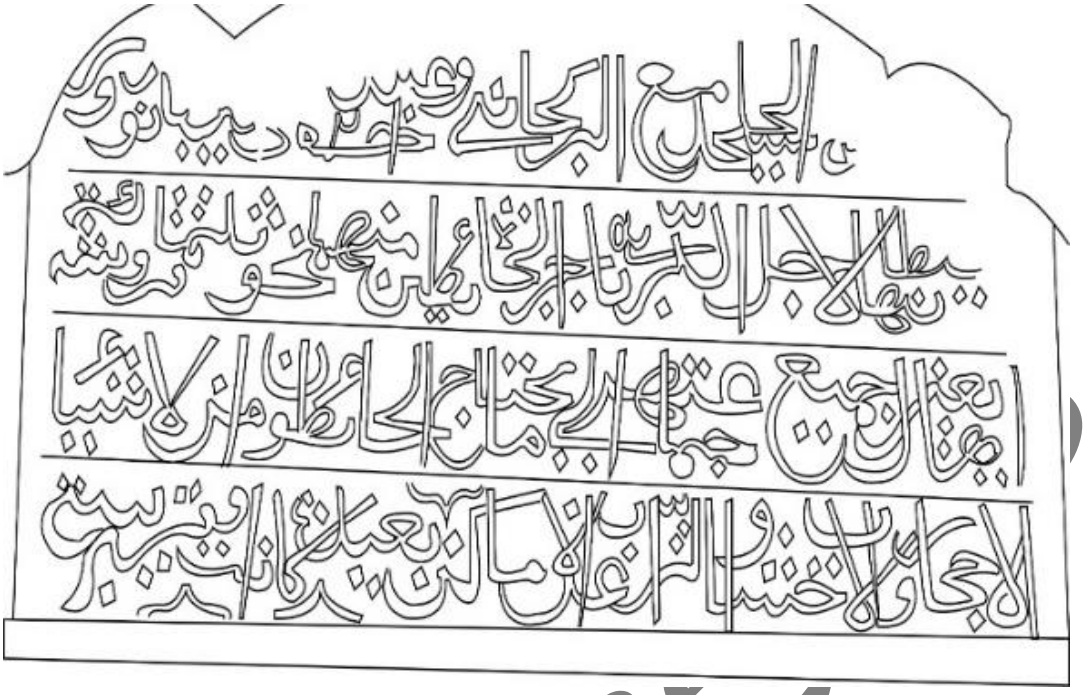
٦. Epigraphic Cartography of the Kūrāj Mosque

The unique inscription map of the Kūrāj Mosque highlights its restorations after the Russo-Caucasian War. The inscriptions mention numerous patrons and terms from the 14th to the 20th centuries, covering a wide range of literary and religious subjects. Eleven inscriptions are found throughout the mosque complex: they appear above the windows and on the main façade to the right and left of the entrance, with two above the entrance and nine on the mosque's interior and exterior walls. All Arabic inscriptions are written in Thuluth script, and some of the symbols have phonetic values in the Dāghistān Turkic language. The inscriptions of the mosque record renovations, dates in words and numerals, the names of artisans and manufacturers, prayers and the genealogy of the makers. All inscriptions are rectangular: some are set within cartouches, others are not, and some are written in regular lines, others in irregular ones.

٦,١ Inscription No. 10



(Plate 10): Renovation Inscriptions of the Kūrāj Mosque (Photo by Abo Elkhier 2021)



(Figure 10): A Transcription of Kūrāj Mosque Renovation Inscriptions

Arabic Text	*Transliteration*	*English Translation*
س١/ قد جَدّد هَذا المسَجد الجامع البركخاني حسين وعبد [الرحمن] .. [؟]	*li.1: Qad jaddad Haḏhā al-Masjid al-jāmiʿ al-Birkẖānī Ḥusayn wa ʿAbd [ar-Raḥman]. [?]*	*li.1: This Congregational Mosque (called) al-Birkẖānī has been renovated by Ḥusayn and ʿAbd [ar-Raḥman]. [?]*
س٢/ حيطانها لأجل البرّية بأجر الحائطين منهما نحو ثلثمائة قروش	*li.2: Ḥīṭānuhā li Ajl al-Barīyah bi Ajr al-Ḥāʾṭayn Minhumā Naḥw Ṯalaṯumāh Qurūš*	*li.2: Walls built for the sake of humanity, the two walls of which cost about three hundred piastres*
س٣/ أهال بغير جميع جماعتهم إلى ما يحتاج الحائطون من الأشياء	*li.3: Ahāl bi ġhayr jāmīʿ Jamāʿathum Ilā mā yḥtāj al-Ḥāʾṭūn mina al-Ašyāʾ*	*li.3: without the families of their community changes all his outfits to what the wallers need from things*
س٤/ الأحجار والأخشاب والترّاب عن الأماكن بعيلة كانت أفقر بيتي سنة ١٠٨٨	*li.4: al-Aḥjār wa al-Akẖšāb wa at-Turāb ʿAn al-Amākin bi ʿAylah Kānat Afqaru Baytī Sannah 1088*	*li.4: stones, wood and dirt from places far away (constructed) by a family was the poorest house (in the village) in the year 1088*

In Press

Commentary

This limestone inscription is placed above the mosque's entrance. The text panel measures 68 by 148 centimetres and is 2.17 metres above the ground. The renovation text is arranged in four lines in the centre. The craftsman's name and lineage open the renovation formula in the top line of the inscription. Beneath, on the second and third lines, are the walls undergoing renovation and the craftsmen's earnings in Qurūš (piastres), followed by the building materials, such as wood and stone. Next comes the date of the improvements. The inscription includes diacritical marks (ḥarakāt tashkīl), such as the Šaddah (ـّـ), the sign of consonant doubling, on Yāʾ (ي) in the word al-Barīyah (البرّية); and on the letter Tāʾ (ت) in the word (التّراب). This mosque was dedicated to congregational prayer. The ancient mosque was enlarged by renovating its walls. Builders and craftsmen were paid about 300 piastres, in addition to the cost of materials such as clay, wood, and stone. The administration decided to rebuild the mosque's original walls in an attempt to win Allāh's favour and pleasure, after local worshippers had visited it. The ancient walls in the village of Kūrāj were to be demolished, the mosque's capacity assessed, and new walls constructed in their place.

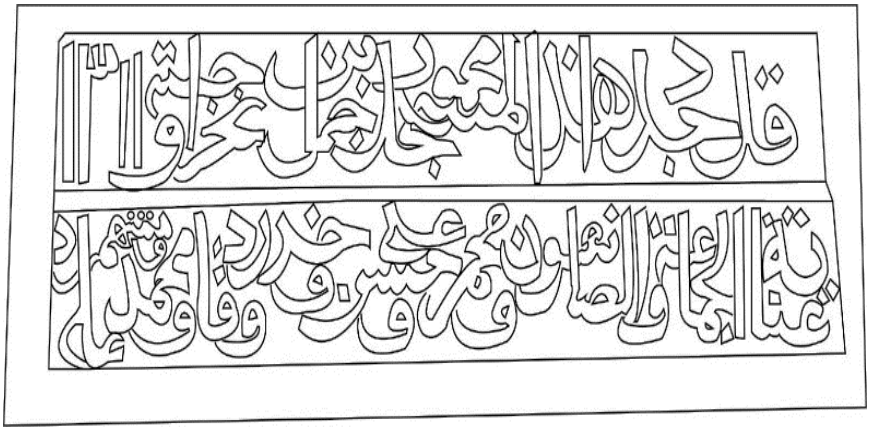
In monetary terms, the inscription shows that the artisans and manufacturers who contributed to the building received 300 piastres, or three pounds of gold. The brothers Ḥusayn and ʿAbd ar-Raḥman were the renovators; everyone in the hamlet shared in the inscription imprinted on the markers, without disclosing their family names. Phrases from memorial inscriptions were also used, suggesting that the mosque was dedicated either to humanity at large (al-Barīyah) or to the Muslims living in the settlement of Kūrāj. Al-Birkẖānī, the mosque's original builder, is said to have inspired the name al-Birkẖānī given to the mosque. Because his name was difficult to identify and the historical record of Kūrāj village contains no information about him, I could not find a biographical entry for him.

٦,٢ Inscription No. 11



(Plate 11): The Second Renovation Inscriptions of the Kūrāj Mosque (Photo by Abo Elkhier 2021)

In Press



(Figure 11): A Transcription of the Second Renovation Inscriptions of the Kūrāj Mosque

Arabic Text	*Transliteration*	*English Translation*
س١/ قد جَدّد هَذا المسَجد محمود بن جمل بحرفٍ حسنة ١٢١٠	*li.1: Qad Jaddad Haḏhā al-Masjid Maḥmūd b. Jamāl bi Ḥiraf Ḥasanh 1210*	*li.1: This Mosque has been renovated by Maḥmūd b. Gamāl, through a good craft (in the year) 1210*
س٢/ عناية الجماعة والصانعون محمد وعلي وحسن [وخدرد] وقاف محمد [.؟] وعلي	*li.2: ʿInāyah al-Jamāʿah wa aṣ-Ṣāniʿūn Muḥammad wa ʿAlī wa Ḥasan [wẖdrd] wqāf Muḥammad wa [.؟] wa ʿAlī*	*li.2: Sponsored by the group and the makers Muḥammad, ʿAlī, Ḥasan, and Khudurd] Waqf Muḥammad, [.؟] and ʿAlī*

Commentary

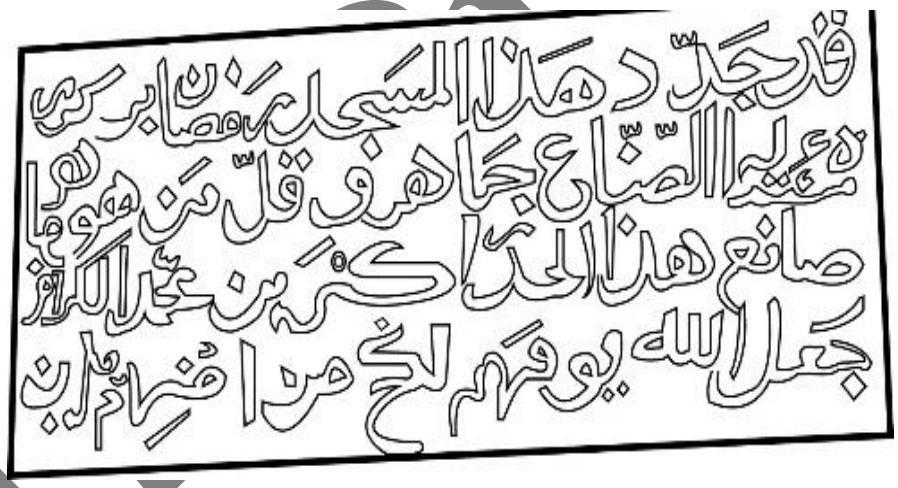
A powerful individual renovated and funded the mosque, supported by an endowment. The inscription names four artisans: a porter, a calligrapher, a worker and a writer. The work was funded by the neighbourhood association. The inscription contains no diacritical marks. A well-known villager of Kūrāj oversaw the renovation, with a charity fund run by ʿAlī and Muḥammad. However, neither appears in individual biographical or annals books, and their full names and occupations are not given. The restorer was "Maḥmūd b. Jamāl". The inscription gives only the artisan's first name, making it difficult to identify his tribe, family or occupation. I propose that four craftspeople—a worker, a writer, a calligrapher and a porter—were involved in completing the renovation. Their names were Muḥammad, ʿAlī and Ḥasan. The village association instituted the practice of sponsoring religious buildings, with donations and gifts made through the charitable subsidy system.

In Press

٦,٣ Inscription No. 12



(Plate 12): The Third Renovation Inscriptions of the Kūrāj Mosque (Photo by Abo Elkhier 2021)



(Figure 12): A Transcription of the Third Renovation Inscriptions of the Kūrāj Mosque

Arabic Text	*Transliteration*	*English Translation*
س١/ قد جَدّد هَذا المسَجد رمضان بن كوي	*li.1: Qad jaddad Haḏhā al-Masjid Ramaḍān ibn Kūy*	*li.1: This Mosque has been renovated by Ramaḍān, son of Kūy*

س٢/ سنة ١٢٦٥ الصّنّاع جمّاهر وقلّ مَن هو لو	*li.2: Sannah 1265 aṣ-Ṣunnāʿ Jamāhir wa Qul man Huwa [.?.]*	*li.2: In the year 1265, the makers are the community of people (Ṣunnāʿ), and say who is if [.?.]*
س٣/ صانع هذا الجدار كني بن محمّد الكراخي	*li.3: Ṣāniʿ Haḏhā al-Gidār Kannī b. Muḥammad al-Karākẖīy*	*li.3: The creator of this wall is Kannī b. Muḥammad al-Karākẖī*
س٤/ جَعل الله يَومَهم [..كخ] من أقرم [.؟.]	*li.4: Jaʿala Allāh Yawmahum [.?.]*	*li.4: Allāh made their day [.?.]*

Commentary

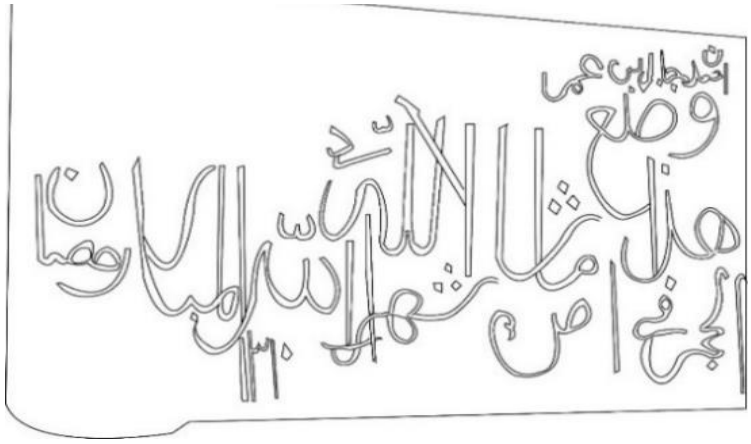
The following notes describe the diacritics that are still visible on some letters. ـَـ fathah (a small stroke placed above a letter, indicating the 'opening of the mouth'), e.g. above the letter jīm (ج) – e.g., in the words 'jaddad' (جّدد), 'jamāhir' (جماهر), and 'jaʿala' (جعل) – and the letter Rāʾ (ر) – the word 'Ramaḍān' (رمضان). Šaddah ـّـ (the sign of consonant doubling) appears on letters such as Dāl (د) – in the word 'jaddad' (جّدد) – and the letter Ṣād (ص) in the word 'aṣ-Ṣunnāʿ' (الصنّاع). A powerful individual renovated and funded the mosque, supported by an endowment. The inscription names four artisans: a porter, a calligrapher, a worker, and a writer. The work was funded by the neighbourhood association. No diacritical marks appear in the texts. A well-known villager of Kūrāj oversaw the renovation, with a charity fund run by ʿAlī and Muḥammad. No entries for either of them appear in individual biographical or annals books, and their full names and occupations are not given. The restorer was "Maḥmūd b. Jamāl". The inscription gives only the artisan's first name, making it difficult to identify his tribe, family, or occupation.

٦,٤ Inscription No. 13



(Plate 13): The Fourth Renovation Inscriptions of the Kūrāj Mosque (Photo by Abo Elkhier 2021)

In Press



(Figure 13): A Transcription of the Fourth Renovation Inscriptions of the Kūrāj Mosque

Arabic Text	***Transliteration***	***English Translation***
س١/ أحمد جابر بن عمر	*li.1: Aḥmad Jābir b. ʿUmar*	*li.1: Aḥmad Ǧābir b. ʿUmar (Renovator)*
س٢/ وضع	*li.2: Waḍaʿ*	*li.2: Laying (the foundation stone)*
س٣/ هذا ما شاء الله	*li.3: Haḏhā Mā Šāʾ Allāh*	*li.3: This, is 'What Allāh willed*
س٤/ الحجر في [؟] شهر الله المبارك رمضان	*li.4: al-Ḥaǧr fī [؟] Šahr Allāh al-Mubārak Ramaḍān*	*li.4: The stone, is in the holy month of Ramadan*
س٥/ ١٣١٠	*li.5: 1310*	*li.5: (in the year) 1310*

Commentary

The text is organised horizontally into five lines. The name of the owner of the foundation stone and renovator comes first, followed by a religious statement, the month and the year. The builder's name, "*Aḥmad Jābir b. ʿUmar*", is given in triple form in the charitable inscription. Modern sources indicate that he was one of the locals who helped to build the mosque. The inscription also contains a line of prayer, *'This is what Allāh willed'*/ما شاء الله' and ends with a dating formula, 'in the holy month of Ramadan'. Unlike other inscriptions, this one was recorded vertically rather than horizontally; this is unusual, as the characters were organized vertically on three consecutive lines.

In Press

۷. Discussion of the Epigraphic Evidence

Villagers contributed to cultural and charitable endeavors, such as building mosques or reconstructing or restoring demolished buildings; the surviving charitable architectural works in Dāghistān were built by charities, a category distinct from the ruling political class. The inscriptions provide the names of some social figures—artisans, manufacturers, and craft owners—who are not mentioned in relevant historical sources, such as annals, biographies, or even social histories, because those sources focused chiefly on the activities of the political elite. Nevertheless, these inscriptions give an impression of the socioeconomic and cultural make-up of the Muslim community of Dāghistān. Alongside the names of a few donors, they record the names of various members of the Islamic community, both male and female.

The inscriptions also highlight the system of social and charitable subsidies among the Muslim communities of the villages and cities of Dāghistān.

۷،۱ General Form of Charitable Inscriptions in Dāghistān

These inscriptions, which were frequently written in Thuluth and Naskh scripts at the time, took various forms: a rectangular frame with an apse and semicircular knots on top; a rectangle divided by a horizontal line into two horizontal chamfers reserved for the inscription; or a rectangle not divided into chamfers and surrounded by an external frame, with blurred inscriptions.

۷،۲ Methods of Manufacturing, Restoration and Decoration

The inscriptions (Figures 10–11) show that a variety of methods and materials, such as mortar; lime for painting and coating; smooth or rusticated masonry; moulded (cast) elements, especially burnt bricks; and wooden ties to reinforce walls, were used in the construction, reconstruction and restoration of Islamic architectural structures, especially mosques, in Dāghistān. The workers' association, also known as the craft organization, built and painted the walls and prepared the bricks carved with decoration. Notably, the textual inscriptions were stamped on the interior of these templates, which were carved for the dedicatory inscriptions; the backs of the templates were unmarked and unadorned. Wooden ties were used as part of the architectural strengthening measures to lessen the load on the structure, because the area is mountainous and prone to devastating earthquakes. As a result, Dāghistān's buildings were progressively demolished. In the gaps between stones and masonry, manufacturers used mortar and lime to fuse additional pieces (Aboelkhier, 2026b); (Ruzieq, 2024b, p. 92).

۷،۳ Textual Content

Inscriptions recording the renovation of charitable buildings in Dāghistān included invocatory and supplicatory phrases as well as functional documentary statements naming the facility (the mosque).

In Press

۷،۳،۱ Religious Texts

Mosque inscriptions from the Islamic era reveal a dual textual tradition, combining fixed Qurʾānic verses with fluid, non-Qurʾānic prayers (Hagras, 2023); (Ameen A. &., 2025). However, the written record primarily favoured the latter, as the memorial inscriptions included Hadiths and devotional formulae of a Sufi-resistant character (Aboelkhier M. , 2026a); (Aboelkhier, 2026b). Contemporary inscriptions served both as a direct means of communication and as an archive of popular Islamic devotion in the North Caucasus, asserting Islamic identity against Russian cultural encroachment and resistance to Russian globalisation (Khalil, A Rare Unpublished Collection of Military Medals at Makhachkala Museum in Dagestan: (13TH AH. /19TH AD. Century)., 2022); (Ruzaiq, 2024a); (Saied, 2025).

۷،۳،۱،۱ Moralising Verse and Invocations

The corpus of written inscriptions on mosques in Dāghistān, in which the documentary and memorial functions of stone inscriptions on congregational mosques intersect with short devotional formulae and didactic verses intended to guide people, constitutes a visual and performative language that mediates between the text of the Holy Qurʾān and the active religiosity of the Muslim community. Within this collection, non-Qurʾānic religious discourse has considerable cultural, intellectual, and theological significance. Religious supplications and prayers intended to obtain divine mercy and to merit reward were usually conveyed through brief invocations or expressive units that were more deeply embedded in the language and covered a wide range of content. Although these formulae may not be repeated across the inscriptions of different mosques in Dāghistān, they act as normative sayings that consolidate collective memory, strengthen cultural identity, heighten moral expectations and emphasise the spirit of humility and dependence on divine grace, such as:

"... *walls built for the sake of humanity*" (قد جَدّد ... حيطانها لأجل البرّية). The formula is typical of commemorative inscriptions. It indicates that the mosque was dedicated to acts of charity towards humanity and towards the Muslims of Kūrāj. Inscriptions were often closed with a devotional prayer formula confirming acceptance of the reward, such as "*Allāh made their day*" (جَعل الله يَومَهم); a prayer asking Allāh to make their day beautiful after death.

۷،۳،۲ Documentary Content

In Dāghistān, local mosque inscriptions functioned as documentary archives for the construction, renovation, restoration, and maintenance of religious buildings. They often recorded the Hijrī date in various forms, alongside Persian numerals, special formulae, the names of the donors and their lineage, the builder, the reasons for reconstruction, the details of financing, the payment to manufacturers, and the endowment status. These writings are therefore reliable, and they place the mosque within the social and political history of the North Caucasus.

In Press

۷,۳,۲,۱ Onomastics

This paper has examined a collection of Arabic inscriptions written by mosque patrons in Dāghistān during the post-war Russo-Caucasian era (Khalil, 2010, p. 10); (Khalil, 2023, p. 782). Because biographical writings of this genre concentrated primarily on the lives of the elite and paid little attention to the non-elite, it is possible to trace features of the communal life of some individuals through these inscriptions, which are not covered in modern sociological sources or biographies (al-Kilābī, 2009, p. 354). As the most durable records of that era, these inscriptions offer verifiable proof of the individuals' involvement in charitable activities and social contributions in nearby villages of Dāghistān (Hagras, 2023); (Ruzieq, 2024b); (Saied, 2025). The inscriptions recorded some non-elite public figures, such as *Maḥmūd b. Jamāl* (محمود بن جمل). Notably, the second name (Jamāl) did not include the medial letter (A/ا), as in early Arabic writing during the spread of Islam; therefore, instead of writing Jamāl, he wrote (جمل).

The inscriptions also contained the abbreviated names and signatures of the makers, such as (Muḥammad, ʿAlī and Ḥasan). Without mentioning their ancestry, tribes, or origins, these manufacturers inscribed their names in abbreviated form or as a signature, much like the signatures on Islamic architectural monuments and applied arts (Husayn, 1998, pp. 180-219). The names of the engineers overseeing the construction were listed in the inscriptions, such as "Ramaḍān ibn Kūy", who, with the help of the locals and the supporters of the charitable endowment in the village of Kūrāj, funded the building work and the upkeep of labourers and artisans to rebuild the old wall and replace the charitable inscription. The architect's biography showed that the name was published in a simplified version that provided only the first name and the father's name, Ramaḍān ibn Kūy, and left out the family name, genealogy and tribe, as in "Kannī b. Muḥammad al-Karākẖ̲ī".

A search of biographies, chronicles and even social histories dealing with the social migrations and movements of the time revealed nothing. These names appeared in abbreviated form, as a signature, consisting only of the individual's first name and a single attribution rather than the full name. As a result, little is known about most of the people involved in reconstructing the mosques of Dāghistān. The names of commoners who were not included in biographical records appear instead in the inscriptions. These biographies paid little attention to the ordinary population and concentrated on the affairs of the Muslim community's elite.

۷,۳,۲,۲ Chronological Formulae

A variety of dating techniques appear in the Islamic charitable memorial inscriptions of Dāghistān examined in this study, including Arabic letters, Persian numerals and the term "Zaman" (time). In fewer instances, the dating formulae combined fully written dates with numerical coding, improving chronological accuracy. This diversity is not random; rather, it provides evidence of local practice in Dāghistān and reflects the practical choices made by scribes and stonecutters working within a common monumental genre. This system uses three main dating methods. First,

In Press

many texts use numerals to indicate the year, with concise clauses such as "*in the year …"* (Plate 12). Second, other inscriptions provide expanded formulae that spell out the Hijrī month and year, rendering the date entirely in words, e.g., *in the holy month of Ramadan* (Plate 13). Third, some inscriptions use only Persian numerals (Plate 11).

۷,۳,۲,۳ Monetary Phrases with Economic Connotation

These inscriptions reflect a communal commitment in Muslim communities: rebuilding is presented as requiring the involvement of the full spectrum of men and women, particularly when official institutions lack patrons. Members of the local Muslim community frequently appear as benefactors and supporters of philanthropic endeavours for the building and repair of mosques, supplying the equipment or materials required to complete the project (Morsy, 2024, pp. 1363–١٣٩٣); (Ameen A. , ٢٠٢٠b, pp. ٧٣–٨٥); (Ameen A. &., ٢٠٢٥, pp. ١٠١٢-١٠٢١).

Equally important is the direct documentary character of these records, as seen in the inscriptions of Dāghistān's sanctified mosques. For instance, the announcement of a wage payment suggests that inscriptions could serve as general cost assessments, as tributes of piety and gifts to revitalise Islamic cultural manifestations, and as a record of the change and of how it was financed (Aboelkhier, 2026b); (Hagras, 2023). The inscription, expressed in monetary terms, mentioned a fee of 300 piastres, or three pounds of gold, as pay for the manufacturers and artisans who contributed to the building, as in (بأجر الحائطين منهما نحو ثلثمائة قروش), i.e. "*the two walls of which cost about three hundred piastres*" *(*Plate ١٠*).*

۷,۳,۲,٤ Architectural Terminology

The way monuments are designated in the inscriptions by certain nomenclature formulae strengthens the architectural and artistic documentation of some of the best-known architectural expressions of Dāghistān. Mosques are sometimes described anonymously as "congregational mosque" or given honorifics (such as "*mosque*"). Other architectural terms include "*wall"*. *(*Plate 12*).*

۷,۳,۲,٥ Collaborative Patronage

A characteristic of these Islamic inscriptions is that the construction and repair of mosques, whether through the addition of architectural elements or their restoration, are framed as the work of networks of charitable financing, social contributions or donations, rather than as the initiatives of a single elite patron, such as those associated with state institutions. This pattern is not unique to Dāghistān; it may also be seen in other areas, including Greece during the Ottoman era, where assistance from local peasants was often necessary for the upkeep and rebuilding of Islamic structures. The following phrases are examples:

In Press

"*Without the families of their community changes all his outfits to what the Wallers need from things" (*Plate 10*), "Mosque has been renovated ... through a good craft ... Sponsored by the group* and *the makers" (*Plate 11*) and "the makers are the community of people" (*Plate 12*).*

Numerous written contexts in the corpus of Arabic inscriptions on the village mosques of Dāghistān demonstrate the establishment of systems of community care and charitable contributions, with community members appearing as active contributors of material and charitable support for architectural construction projects and for the local development of the mosques of Dāghistān. Because the inscriptions preserve information about the involvement of craftsmen, makers and the local community in overseeing and following up charitable construction, in which manual participation is explicitly shown—carrying stone or providing the tools or supplies necessary to complete the work—reconstruction is framed as a communal commitment carried out in public spaces and later recorded in archaeological writing.

Discussion

The architecture of the congregational mosque, the inscriptions discovered at Kūrāj in Dāghistān, its religious written programme and its advantageous position during the Russo-Caucasian struggle imply that the mosque was rebuilt in three phases. Possibly, the mosque was renovated about ten years after it was destroyed in the 1667 earthquake, which ravaged most civic and religious buildings in Dāghistān and the Caucasus. The second and third restorations, dated 1795 and 1829 respectively, took place during the roughly forty-year Russo-Caucasian War, which ended in the late 19th century. The fourth refurbishment followed in 1892.

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and the wars, the lack of funding and patronage for mosque building from the state or its leaders affected both mosque designers and art patrons. Therefore, the mosque at Kūrāj was probably the result of gifts from charitable organisations, contributions from the Muslim community in the city, and subsidies. The inscriptions list the names of the builders, calligraphers, endowment owners, benefactors, patrons, and proprietors of benevolent subsidies, such as Aḥmad Jābir b. ʿUmar, Ramaḍān b. Kūy and Kannī b. Muḥammad al-Karākẖīy.

Some mosques have survived thanks to contributions or charitable subsidies from Muslims, who are typically a minority. Overall, because it was not constructed under the customary patronage of the royal government, the Kūrāj Mosque is a remarkably well-preserved example of an Islamic mosque in Dāghistān. Rather, it was built in collaboration with the Muslim community through donations and financial assistance; hence, the restoration of the mosque at the time represented both the mosque's architects and the primary supporters of Islamic architecture.

Conclusion

The study examined and published charitable subsidies and inscriptions of aid from Dāghistān recorded during the field survey. These inscriptions provided information on historical events;

In Press

beneficiaries by religious belief and political position; the military conflict with the Russians; and the involvement of jihad leaders under Imām Shūāmil. They also conveyed the geographical and administrative divisions of the Caucasus. Other inscriptions reflected religious devotion, including "This Congregational Mosque has been renovated". The inscriptions intersect with non-elite biographies and historical records, recording the names of several jihad leaders in Dāghistān. The study therefore discussed the theological importance of charitable subsidy inscriptions that depict the nature of the jihad in the Caucasus in the 13th century AH/19th century AD. "The date of exit (jihad) of Imām al-Manṣūr from the country of Dāghistān is the year 1247" is an example of these inscriptions. Some recorded details, such as titles, names, dates, events, and monetary terms, were strongly emphasised.

Acknowledgements

Countless colleagues supported my efforts in this field study, and I received substantial support in writing this paper. I thank Prof. *Atef Mansour Mohamed*, Dean of the Faculty of Archaeology, Fayoum University, whose expertise was invaluable in formulating the research questions and methodology. I would also like to thank Prof. *Alexander Apkaravich Kordiavtsv*, North Caucasus Federal University, for helping me to resolve uncertainties in the material.

In Press

Bibliography

Aboelkhier. (2026b). Female Patrons of Islamic Mosques in Dagestan in Studying Non-Elites in the Medieval Caucasus. *First International Conference of the Medieval Caucasus Network.* Brussels: Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Retrieved from https://medievalcaucasus.org/

Aboelkhier, M. (2024). al-Nuqūsh al-janā'izīyah 'alá shawāhid al-qubūr al-Islāmīyah bi-maqbarat Madīnat Bāb al-Abwāb bi-Iqlīm Dāghistān : khilāla al-qarn al-thānī 'ashar al-Hijrī/al-thāmin 'ashar al-Mīlādī. In w. Khalil (Ed.), *[Arabic: non-English title]. English title: Funerary inscriptions on Islamic tombstones in the Bab al-Abwab city cemetery, Dagestan region, during the 12th Hijri AH/18th century AD* (Vol. 1). Cairo, United Arab Emirates: Dār Nuqṭah lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī'.

Aboelkhier, M. (2024a). Ishāmāt aṯ-Ṯaqāfah al-Islāmīyah wa al-ʿAarbīyah wa numwwihā al-Ḥaḍārīy bi blād al-Qūqāz wa ʾAṯarhiā ʿAlā Šarq Urūbbā wa Šamāl al-Imbrāṭūrīyah ar-Rūsīyah. In *[Arabic: non-English title]. English title: Contributions of Islamic and Arab Civilizational and its cultural growth in the Caucasus and its impact on Eastern Europe and the north of the Russian Empire".* (pp. 25-27). Cairo: Commemorative issue (Paper Award), Proceedings of General Union of Arab Archaeologist's journal, The Arab Council of the General Union of Arab Archaeologists.

Aboelkhier, M. (2026a). Collection of Archaeological Inscriptions of Historical Buildings in Dagestan: an Archaeological, Artistic and Cultural study. *Shedet, 15*(15). doi:10.21608/SHEDET.2025.380461.1298

Aboelkhier, M. (2026c). Tawqīʿāt aṣ-Ṣunnāʿ wa al-Miʿmārīyyīn ʿAlā al-ʾAṭār al-Miʿmārīyah wa al-Funūn at-taṭbiqīyah fī Dāġhistān. In *[Arabic: non English title]. English title: Autographs of manufacturers and artists on architectural structures and the Applied Arts of Dagestan* (Vol. 5, pp. 236-249). Fayoum: Archaeological Inscriptions Journal. doi:10.21608/ARCHIN.2025.380487.1026

Aboelkhier, M. (2026d). The Combined Sundial and the Qibla Indicator: A Study of the Time and Temporality in the Mosques of Dagestan. In J. B. Krötzl (Ed.), *The International Medieval Congress (IMC).* Leeds: the University of Leeds. Retrieved from https://imc-leeds.confex.com/imc/2026/prelim.cgi/Paper/14829

al-Ġhamīqīy, J. a.-D.-R. (n.d). *at-Taḏhkirah fī bayān Aḥwāl Ahālīy Dāġhistān wa Šīšān. [In Arabic: non English title]. English title: The ticket is in the statement of the conditions of the people of Dagestan and Chechnya.* Dagestan: Dar Saltuw.

al-Kilābī, Ḥ. (2009). n-Nuqūš al-Islāmīahʿalā Ṭarīq al-Ḥajj aš-Šāmī Bi Šamāl Ġarb al-Mamlakah alʿArabīyah as-Suʿūdīyah Min al-Qarn al-Awal īlā al-Qarn al-Kẖāmis al-Hijjrī. In *[Arabic: non-English title]. English title: Islamic inscriptions on the sham pilgrimage route in northwestern Saudi Arabia from the first to the fifth century AH.* Riyadh: King Fahd National Library.

al-Qarākẖīy, M. B. (2019). *Bāriqah as-Sīyūf al-Jabalīyah fī baʿḍ al-Jazāwāt aš-Šāmilīyah. [In Arabic: non English title]. English title: The glint of mountain swords in some Shamal invasions.* Makhachkala: Dār saltūw.

Ameen, A. &. (2025). Textual embodiments of the sacred: Analyzing the Qur'anic inscriptions in Al-Aṣḥāb Mosque of Quanzhou, China. *SHEDET, 14*, 125–143. doi:10.21608/shedet.2025.352617.1283

Ameen, A. &. (2025). The visual impact of colors in Ottoman inscriptions: A case study of the Sultan Bayezid II Mosque in Didymóteichon, Greece. *Journal of Islamic Architecture, 8*(4), 1012-1021. doi:https://doi.org/10.18860/jia.v8i4.27523

Ameen, A. (2014). Interpretation of the concept of universality as a characteristic feature of Islamic civilization: The case of the minarets. *Leptis Magna (An International Scientific Refereed Annual Journal in Archaeology and Conservation, 1*, 16-62.

Ameen, A. (2019a). Patrons of Ottoman Mosques in Greece Reconsidered in Light of The Ierapetra Mosque of Crete. *Journal of Islamic Architecture, 5*(3), 137. doi:10.18860/jia.v5i3.5365

Ameen, A. (2019b). Bilingual and trilingual inscriptions of the Ottoman buildings in Greece: A search for the history of the late Ottoman period. *Abgadiyat: Scientific Refereed Annual Journal, 14*, 208–243. doi:10.21608/abgad.2019.140483

Ameen, A. (2019c). The Ottoman architecture in Greece then and now: Quantitative approach. *SHEDET, 6*(25), 93-115. doi:10.36816/shedet.006.06

In Press

Ameen, A. (2020b). The significance of the Qur’anic quotation “Mā shāʾ Allāh” on both Ottoman and Greek heritages in the Balkans. *Egyptian Journal of Archaeological and Restoration Studies (EJARS), 10*(1), 73–85. doi:https://doi.org/10.21608/EJARS.2020.98963

Ameen, A. (2021). Ottoman waqf–medreses in Greece: Archival and architectural study. *Journal of Architecture, Arts and Humanistic Science, 25*, 566–597. doi:10.21608/MJAF.2020.25255.1534

Anon. (2026). *World History Atlas*|. Retrieved from Ancient and Modern States: https://worldhist.org/

Hagras, H. (2023). THE INITIAL ARCHITECTURAL SHAPE OF THE GUANGTA MINARET: TEXTUAL AND ARCHITECTURAL STUDY. *Shedet, 10*(10), 207-226. doi:10.21608/shedet.2023.291373

Husayn, M. (1998). al-Anā al-Fāʿilah fī al-Fann wa al-ʿImārah al-Islāmīyah (Dirāsah fī al-Fikr). [Arabic: non English title]. English title: The Active Self in Islamic Art and Architecture (a astudy of thought). *Arab Journal of Humanities, scientific publishing Council, Kuwait University, 13*(52), 180-219. doi:10.34120/ajh.v13i52.1495

Khalil, W. (2010). Ислам и исламские традиции в духовной и материальной культуре населения средневекового Дербента. Romanized title: Islam i islamskiye traditsii v dukhovnoy i material'noy kul'ture naseleniya srednevekovogo Derbenta. In *[Russian: non English title]. English title: Islam and Islamic traditions in the spiritual and material culture of the population of medieval Derbent.* Ростов: Университет Южного федерального округа.

Khalil, W. (2022). A Rare Unpublished Collection of Military Medals at Makhachkala Museum in Dagestan: (13TH AH. /19TH AD. Century). *Egyptian Journal of Archaeological and Restoration Studies (EJARS), 12*(2), 257-276. doi:10.21608/ejars.2022.276174

Khalil, W. (2023). ad-Dalālāt ar-Ramzīyah wa aš-Šaklīyah wa al-Waẓīfīyah li Majmūʿah šawāhid Qubūr min al-Qarn 14-20 min Jabbānah Kirkẖylyār bi šarq al-Qūqāz (Dirāsah wa Našr li Awwil Marrah). In *[Arabic: non English title]. English title: The Functional and Morphological Symbolic Significance of Some Tombstones Models from the Kirklar Cemetery in Eastern Caucasus during the 14th century AH/20TH AD* (Vol. 8(40, pp. 782-820). Cairo: Journal of Architecture, Arts and Humanistic Science. doi:10.21608/MJAF.2021.89372.2430

Magdy, A. (2024). Mawsūʿah at-Tanāfusīyah fī al-ʿImārah al-Mamlūkīyah: at-Tanāfusīyah bayna as-Salāṭīn waʾAṭarihā ʿAlā Izdihār al-ʿImārah al-Mamlūkīyah bi Miṣr (648-923 AH/ 1250-1517 AD). In *[Arabic: non English title]. English title: Encyclopedia of Competetion in Mamluk Architecture Among The Sultans and its Impact on the Flourishing of Mamluk Architecture in Egypt (648-923 AH/ 1250-1517 AD).* Syria: Nūr Ḥūrān for Publishing and Distrubting Heritage.

Morsy, M. &. (2024). Collective waqf and its role in sponsoring the Ottoman mosques and medreses in Greece (late 13th/19th–early 14th/20th centuries): Civilised and archival study. *Journal of the Faculty of Archaeology, Cairo University, 16*(27), 1363–1393. doi:https://doi.org/10.21608/JARCH.2024.333288

In Press

Ramadan, A. M. (2022). The credibility of religious quotes on Islamic numismatics considering its actual historical context: The case of Ṭarmashīrīn Khan. *SHEDET, 9*, 234–245. doi:10.21608/SHEDET.2022.248913

Ruzaiq, H. (2024a). an-Nuqūš al-Kitābīyah wa al-ʿAnāṣir az-Zukẖrufīyah wa al-Miʿmārīyah ʿAlā al-Masjid al-Jāmiʿ fī Qaryah kūrāy bi Iqlīm Dāġhistān Kẖlāl al-Qarn 16: Dirāsah Muqārnah. In *[Arabic: non English title]. English title: Written inscriptions, Decorative and architectural elements on the Congregational mosque of Kurai, Dagestan Territory during the 10th century AH/ 16 century AD; Comparative study* (Vol. 25, pp. 499-502). Libya: Faculty of Education, Al-Marqab University. Retrieved from https://search.mandumah.com/Record/1489356

Ruzieq, H. (2024b). al-Qubbah aḍ-Ḍrīẖīyah li al-Masǧid al-Ǧāmiʿ fi Qaryah Māġāl bi Ǧanūb Dāġhistān Kẖlāl al-Qarn 18AD/12AH: Dirāsah Aṯārīyah. In *[Arabic: non English title]. English title: Shrine Dome of Maghal Congregational Mosque in southern Dagestan during the 13/19 century: An civiliztional historical study* (Vol. 22, pp. 102-85). Libya: Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Al-Marqab University.

Saied, R. (2025). an-Nuqūš at-Tāsīsīyah wa at-Tawṯīqīyah ʿAlā wāǧihāt al-Masǧid al-Ǧāmiʿ al-Qadīm bi Qaryah "Ǧīynūkẖ" Ǧanūb Dāġhistān kẖlāl al-Qarn13Ah/19AD (Dirāsah wa Našr li Awwal Marrah. In *[Arabic: non-English title]. English title: Inscriptions on Facades of the old mosque in The Village of "Jinukh" in Southern Dagestan During the 13th century AH - 19th century AD: a study in form and content* (Vol. 16). Minya University: Journal of resaerches and Archeological studies. doi:10.21608/archmu.2025.357970.1282

Tawfiq, M. S.-H.-L. (2020). A historical and numismatic study of the dinars of the Sultan Maḥmūd b. Sabuktakīn at Nishapur. *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma. Serie III, Historia Medieval, 33*, 613–652. doi:10.5944/etfiii.33.2020.24006

Лаврова, в. и. (1966). Эпиграфические памятники Северного Кавказа на арабском, персидском и турецком языках [Текст]/ Тексты, переводы, комментарии. In *[Russian: non-English title]. English title: Epigraphic monuments of the North Caucasus in Arabic, Persian and Turkish [Text]/ Texts, translations, comments* (Vol. Часть 3). Москва: Наука.

Шихсаидов, А. (1984). Эпиграфические памятники Дагестана X-XVII вв., как исторический источник. In *[Russian: non-English title]. English title: Epigraphic monuments of Dagestan from the 10th to the 18th centuries as a historical source* (pp. 1-464). Москва: Изд-во "Наука".

In Press