



A NEW APPROACH TO THE ISSUE OF WOMEN IN THE SOCIAL STRATIFICATION OF SOCIETY (1900-1930 s)

Ismoilova Nigorakhon Usmonjanovna
Teacher of Namangan State University

Abstract

This study examines the role of women in the social stratification of Turkestan (present-day Uzbekistan) during the early 20th century (1900–1930s), focusing on the impact of Russian imperial and early Soviet policies on women’s social, educational, and cultural positions. The research analyzes how women’s participation in education, literacy programs, and socio-political activities was shaped by colonial and Soviet administrative-command systems, ideological goals, and modernization efforts. The study highlights both the quantitative achievements—such as increased literacy and the emergence of the first generations of female teachers and intellectuals—and the qualitative challenges, including cultural disruption, politicization, and repression of traditional female roles. This work adopts a new methodological approach to assess women’s historical position, using archival sources, scientific literature, and periodicals from the Russian Empire and early Soviet Turkestan.

Keywords: Women’s emancipation; social stratification; Soviet Uzbekistan; Turkestan; education; modernization; cultural transformation; gender roles; 1900–1930s; colonial policy.

Introduction

Today, profound qualitative changes are being carried out in all spheres, socio-political and economic life is being modernized and reformed. The realization of this goal is based on the implementation of changes in the thinking of citizens, strengthening their social activity, raising their political culture, and strengthening the spiritual foundations of society in people.



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The main force of the development of any society is spirituality and enlightenment, and men and women have their own place in this regard. After all, throughout the long history of our country, the role of women in the life of the state and society has been significant. History has not forgotten the work done by women in the fields of politics, economics, spirituality and culture. It can be rightly noted that how far a society has advanced on the path of democratic changes is determined by the attitude of this society towards women.

“If the body of society is the economy, then its soul and spirit are spirituality”, Shavkat Mirziyoev said at the meeting. "Having decided to build a new Uzbekistan, we rely on two strong pillars. The first is a strong economy based on market principles. The second is a strong spirituality based on the rich heritage of our ancestors and national values. The ideology of the new Uzbekistan we are creating will be the idea of goodness, humanity, and humanism. When we say ideology, we understand, first of all, the education of thought, the education of national and universal values. They are based on the thousands of years of life concepts and values of our people [1]. So, today's demand is to study authentic history on a scientific basis. Therefore, the study of the period studied in the publication also serves to draw instructive lessons and understand the events of the present day. In the early years of Soviet rule, the issue of the role of indigenous women in society was primarily studied scientifically by activists of the women's movement [2].

The study of the place of women in the socio-political, economic and cultural life of Turkestan until the thirties of the 20th century, as well as their place in the social stratification of society, increases the relevance of the topic. In these processes, it is necessary to take into account the social origin and other characteristics of women. The scientific and moral significance of this issue is determined by the following: firstly, the role of women in the social stratification of society in the period we are studying has not yet been studied; secondly, the relationship, social status and lifestyle of local and European women in the population have been little studied; thirdly, the scientific study of the lack of research on the attitude of local women to the modernization of the period we are studying. In covering the topic, it is very important to analyze in general terms the status of women in society in the Russian Empire and the former Soviet period



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of Turkestan at the present stage of social development and to draw conclusions from it. At that time, the oppression of women's national and spiritual values, the emergence of mental depression, and the scientific study of the role of women in the development of society are very necessary for the progressive socio-cultural processes of the development of society today. Among the scientific community, there is a strong desire to study the issue of women, to think objectively about this issue, to fill the gap in this period of history, but these situations have not been studied from the perspective of the chronological period and topic that we have chosen. This topic is one of the first studies covering the Russian Empire and the Soviet era, which requires studying the attitude of the colonialists and the Soviets towards women on the basis of the ideology of independence and analyzing it with new requirements. These further increase the relevance of the topic we have chosen. The level of study of the topic can be determined by the following. In the social and humanitarian sciences, the discussion, analysis, and drawing scientific conclusions of one or another issue are undoubtedly directly related to the political and ideological basis of the existing system and the interests of the ruling power. It should be noted that in the majority of works created during the Soviet regime, women's issues, especially the criteria for determining their place and rights in society, are determined on an ideological basis. In particular, these ideas are expressed by Kh. Sulaymonova, Z. Rakhimbobayeva, V. Sodikova, Kh. Shukurova, M. Shaburova, S. Lyubimova, R. Abdullayeva [3] belongs to researchers who have conducted serious research on cultural and social issues. Without denying the scientificity of the works of the above-mentioned scientists devoted to the history of Uzbekistan, we note that in their works, studies related to the issue of women in society were studied from the point of view of the ideology and political beliefs of that time. Researchers carried out certain works on the study of women's issues in the 90s, and in general, during the Soviet period. These include the studies of Y. Abdullayeva, E. Raupova, K. Nishanbayeva, V. Mukhamedzhanova, D. Rajabova, N. Juraeva [4]. Also, the studies of D.A. Alimova [5] devoted to women's issues are of particular importance, since the scientist comprehensively covered the historiographical analysis of women's issues.



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D.A. Alimova first showed how women's problems were solved, how the "Attack" policy was implemented administratively and artificially, the peculiarities of women's education specific to the country, how collectivization was carried out, the mistakes and shortcomings, and shortcomings.

Some work has been done on the topic we have chosen. Some articles and popular science publications provide information on women's issues in the first thirty years of the 20th century. However, they were written based on the requirements of that time, and based on the research created at that time, the following conclusion can be drawn: the role of women in the social stratification of society in the first thirty years of the 20th century: traditionalism and changes, was not seriously studied based on the new methodological requirements for studying the idea and history of national independence; There have been no published studies that shed light on the mechanism of oppression of women, including the Uzbek national culture, by the administrative command system, and its political process; the obstacles to increasing the role of women in the conditions of a tyrannical regime have not been studied in a generalized manner. All of this serves as the basis for a new approach to studying the traditionalism and changes in the social stratification of society in the first thirty years of the 20th century. The years 1900-1930 will be studied in three parts: the first period is 1900-1917; the second period is 1917-1925; the third period is 1925-1930. This period is important for objectively revealing the formation of the administrative command system in the Russian Empire and the early years of the former Soviet era, the intensification of external violence, the attitude towards women, and the gradual formation of cultural and educational spheres.

The main goal is to study the mechanisms of the formation of contradictory situations regarding women in the development of society in Uzbekistan, the participation of women in education and science, and the intensification of the process of politicization in spiritual life on a scientific basis and based on new methodological conceptual requirements.

The books, articles, and dissertations published so far have been one-sidedly covered under the influence of the old colonial system and the ideology of the Soviet era. One of the main factors of this topic is that it differs from other studies in its new approach to the chosen topic. Also, the issue is not limited to a one-



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sided approach to that period, but rather, it is explained by an objective assessment of the events and developments specific to this specific research period. For example, the first women's uprising: in 1916, uprisings broke out across the cities and villages of Turkestan against the Russian administration. This was the first time in history that women participated in a unique uprising. Turkestan women had never participated in mass demonstrations and uprisings before. Various uprisings occurred in Turkestan during the imperial period. This revolt, which was linked to the policy of changing military labor practices, attracted people throughout Turkestan (present-day Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan) and called for a struggle against the colonial government. This revolt has been called a "national liberation movement" by some historians. However, the revolts in the cities of Samarkand, Tashkent, and Fergana were suppressed by the government army. Rebellions continued in the Kyrgyz and Kazakh districts. There are various opinions about the reasons for the participation of Turkestan women in the revolt, and there are no exact details. There are speculations that some decided to participate on their own, others were encouraged by men, and some joined the revolt because they did not like the men leaving during the harvest season. The large number of women leads us to assume that they were recruited by men and recruiters in mosques, markets, and other public places. Perhaps Turkestanis finally realized that women were the "mothers of the nation" and that they had a place in Turkestan's political life and the right to have their voices heard.

After the revolution, women's rights changed; after the February Revolution of 1917, women in Russia were granted the right to vote and stand for election, and after the October Revolution, these rights were fulfilled by the Bolsheviks. In the same year, the Shourai Islamiya Party, under the Provisional Government in Tashkent, discussed the issue of women's voting rights. However, they did not accept the law on women's equality adopted in St. Petersburg. After Turkestan came under Bolshevik control, women were granted the right to vote and stand for election. However, few women knew about this, and they did not use it in practice until the late 1920s. After the October Revolution, the Women's Department of the Communist Party sought to involve Uzbek women in party activities, in elections, and in local government activities.[6]



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Although the Soviet government, in the course of modernization, provided women with equal rights in education and employment, gender considerations and roles remained unchanged. These government actions were aimed at “modernizing” women and society in general. After the division of Central Asia into five union and autonomous republics in 1924, they were tasked with mobilizing their citizens to build a modern, socialist national society. The Soviet system of transformations and reforms of the 1920s did not actually originate from this system, and they were aimed not only at the promotion of women, but also at the modernization of the Soviet Union. Similar programs aimed at combating “backwardness” were also implemented by several states of the time. To understand why the state project of the 1920s was supported by Uzbek women, it is extremely important to study the fact that Soviet modernization in Central Asia was built on the basis of Jadid modernization and the dreams and thoughts of women about creating a “new woman”.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the early 20th century was a period of profound transformation for women in Turkestan, as they navigated the intersecting forces of traditional social norms, colonial policies, and Soviet modernization. While the introduction of literacy programs, pedagogical institutes, and educational reforms significantly increased women’s access to education and public life, these changes were closely linked to political and ideological objectives of the ruling powers. Women’s roles were instrumentalized to support the Soviet state’s economic and political goals, often at the expense of traditional cultural values and personal autonomy. Despite these challenges, the period witnessed the emergence of the first generation of educated Uzbek women, capable of influencing education, culture, and social life. Ultimately, the study underscores the complex nature of women’s emancipation during this era—marked by both progress in social participation and the loss of cultural and spiritual autonomy—offering important insights into the historical processes that shaped modern Uzbek society.



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