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THE WOMEN'S QUESTION IN THE JADID PRESS OF TURKESTAN IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Abstract. *This thesis analyzes the representation of the women's question in the Jadid press of Turkestan in the early twentieth century. It examines how newspapers and publicistic texts brought women's education, family upbringing, early marriage, legal status and social activity into public debate. The study focuses on publications such as Sadoi Turkiston and Turkiston viloyatining gazeti, as well as the views of Jadid intellectuals and women writers who linked women's enlightenment with national progress.*

Keywords: *Turkestan, Jadid press, women's question, girls' education, Sadoi Turkiston, enlightenment, social activity.*

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Jadid press of Turkestan became one of the principal spaces in which the women's question acquired public resonance. Previously, issues of women's education, family upbringing, early marriage, and legal status had more often been discussed within narrow religious, familial, or administrative circles. The emergence of the national periodical press changed the nature of the debate: the women's question came to be considered in relation to the future of the nation, the quality of educating a new generation, and the prospects for the cultural renewal of society.

Jadid publicists did not confine the women's question to the domestic sphere. In their view, girls' education, mothers' literacy, and expanded female participation in educational life were linked to the tasks of national awakening. The periodical press therefore performed a dual function: it criticized established social stereotypes while

simultaneously shaping a new ideal of the educated, morally mature, and socially useful woman.

MAIN PART

One early direction of discussion involved criticism of the simplified image of the “Eastern woman.” In prerevolutionary journalism and colonial discourse, the woman of Turkestan was often depicted as a wholly disenfranchised figure deprived of the opportunity to participate in social life. The Jadid press gradually complicated this picture. Its pages emphasized that women’s legal and social status had to be considered through the combination of sharia norms, local customs, family economics, and educational opportunities (Nalivkin & Nalivkina, 1886:138).

Particular attention was given to materials offering an Islamic legal basis for women’s education. Publicists sought to show that religious tradition did not deny women’s pursuit of knowledge. In this reasoning, contributions devoted to women’s rights drew on arguments from Muslim ethics, family duty, and parents’ obligations toward their children. Zuhridin Fathiddinzoda’s article “Huquqi nisvon” (“Women’s Rights”), published in *Sadoi Turkiston*, was one example of such argumentation (Fathiddinzoda, 1914).

The newspaper *Sadoi Turkiston* played a notable role in turning the women’s question into a subject of public debate. Its pages raised the issues of girls’ education, female literacy, moral upbringing, early marriage, family responsibility, and women’s participation in cultural life. The publications did not reduce women’s enlightenment to an individual right to study. Instead, it was interpreted as the basis for educating future generations and as a condition of society’s cultural resilience (Sharipov, 2002:31).

A significant feature of the Jadid press was women’s own participation in the debate. Nozimakhonim, Laylikhonim, Sora Muzaffariya, and other authors opposed restrictions on women’s talent and defended women’s right to knowledge. Their texts transferred women’s experience from the domestic sphere into public space. This change was highly significant: the female voice ceased to be merely an object of discussion and became an independent participant in public debate (Rahimova, 1992).

Journalistic writings by Hamza, Tavallo, Rauf Muzaffarzoda, and other representatives of the Jadid milieu complemented this line of thought. Their articles linked women’s illiteracy to the general condition of society and women’s education to the possibility

of overcoming cultural backwardness. This criticism of ignorance was not directed against the family as an institution. On the contrary, the family was regarded as the first school of moral upbringing, whose quality depended on the level of maternal literacy |(Fitrat, 2000).

The theme of early marriage also occupied a prominent place in the Jadid press. Publicists viewed the premature marriage of girls as an obstacle to their physical, intellectual, and social development. The problem was examined through the links among education, health, family stability, and child-rearing. Framed in this way, the press performed informational, educational, and transformative functions, gradually changing public perceptions.

Alongside criticism of social restrictions, the Jadid press proposed practical solutions. These included opening schools for girls, training female teachers, supporting women's courses, distributing educational literature, encouraging reading, and establishing public oversight of the quality of upbringing. In this respect, the periodical press served as an organizational intermediary between ideas and practical initiatives.

The significance of Turkiston viloyatining gazeti and other periodicals lay in their expansion of the space for public debate. They recorded different positions on women's education, reflected the clash between traditional and reformist views, and showed that women's enlightenment was gradually becoming part of the broader program for the renewal of society (Ayni, 1906).

The Jadid press of the early twentieth century developed a distinctive model for discussing women. It combined religious arguments, social criticism, a pedagogical program, and the national idea. This model moved beyond a simple opposition between tradition and modernization. Women's education acquired the meaning of an internal need for a society seeking cultural and intellectual renewal.

CONCLUSION

The women's question in the Jadid press of early twentieth-century Turkestan was connected to a broader program of national and cultural renewal. The periodical press brought women's education, early marriage, family upbringing, legal status, and social activity into open public debate. As a result, the women's question moved beyond the bounds of a private family matter.

First, the Jadid press showed that girls' education and mothers' literacy were directly important for society's future. Second, it created a space in which women began to speak as authors, polemicists, and bearers of their own social experience. Third, Jadid

publications linked women's enlightenment to moral education, school reform, and national development.

The historical significance of this debate lies in the fact that the Jadid press prepared an ideological foundation for the subsequent expansion of women's education in Turkestan. It criticized social restrictions and formulated a practical program of action. Studying the women's question in Jadid periodicals therefore allows a deeper understanding of the internal mechanisms of modernization in Turkestan society.

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