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THE ROLE OF ENLIGHTENED WOMEN IN THE MODERNIZATION OF TURKESTAN EDUCATION

Abstract. *This thesis examines the role of enlightened women in the modernization of education in Turkestan at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. It analyses how the traditions of otinoyi and bibiotin schools, the literary activity of Dilshod Barno, Uvaysiy, Anbar Otin and Samar-Bonu, and the emergence of women's voices in the press transformed girls' education from a household practice into a visible cultural and educational initiative. The study argues that women's participation in schooling, writing, teaching and public debate became an internal factor in the renewal of Turkestan education.*

Keywords: *Turkestan; enlightened women; girls' education; modernization; otinoyi; bibiotin; Jadid press; social activism.*

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, the education of girls in Turkestan developed at the intersection of local traditions, colonial administration, religious norms and reformist ideas. The process of educational renewal was shaped by Jadid intellectuals, public discussions and institutional changes. A significant part of this transformation was connected with the activity of enlightened women who worked within the traditional environment and gradually expanded the boundaries of girls' learning.

The importance of this issue lies in the fact that women were not passive recipients of educational reform. They acted as teachers, poets, public voices and organisers of learning. Through their activity, the domestic tradition of female literacy moved towards

a broader educational and cultural function. This change made women's participation one of the key internal factors in the modernization of Turkestan education.

MAIN PART

The earliest institutional basis for girls' education in Turkestan was connected with otinoyi and bibiotin schools. These schools usually functioned in a household environment and were linked with religious, moral and literary instruction. Girls learned basic literacy, Arabic script, elements of Islamic literature and ethical norms. In many cases, this form of education preserved cultural continuity and prepared girls for family and social responsibilities (Nalivkin & Nalivkina, 1886:138).

The educational value of such schools should be assessed in connection with their social function. They did not create a fully public school system, yet they formed a stable channel for female literacy. Through these schools, girls obtained access to texts, religious knowledge, poetry and elementary calculation. Reports on the educational life of Turkestan indicate that girls could sometimes master Arabic and Persian more deeply than boys, since their instruction often included intensive reading and memorisation practices (Pashino, 1868:159).

The activity of enlightened women gave this traditional system a new cultural meaning. Dilshod Barno, Uvaysiy, Anbar Otin and Samar-Bonu are important examples of women who combined literary creativity with educational work. In their circles and schools, girls did not remain limited to elementary literacy. They studied the works of Hafiz, Saadi, Navoi, Bedil, Fuzuli and other classical authors, learned the basics of poetic composition and became familiar with the moral and aesthetic values of the classical literary tradition (Alimova, 2015).

Dilshod Barno's educational activity reflected the connection between female literacy and literary culture. Her work shows that a woman teacher could become an organiser of intellectual life in her local environment. The school was a place where girls acquired linguistic skills, cultural memory and moral discipline. Such activity broadened the concept of education and connected it with refinement of speech, poetic thinking and ethical self-awareness.

Anbar Otin's legacy is especially important for understanding the social dimension of women's enlightenment. Her texts criticised injustice and emphasised the dignity of

women. Education in this context was presented as a condition for moral strength, social respect and intellectual independence. This view changed the meaning of women's literacy: it was no longer confined to private reading and religious practice, since it became a means of self-expression and social judgement (Rahimova, 1992).

Uvaysiy and Samar-Bonu also represented the continuity between classical women's literary culture and educational practice. Their activity demonstrates that the modernization of girls' education did not begin only with formal state schools. It also developed through local female circles, private instruction, poetic gatherings and the transmission of literary knowledge. This inner continuity prepared the social ground for later reformist initiatives.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the women's voice in the press became another sign of educational modernization. The appearance of columns and publications devoted to women's concerns strengthened public discussion of education, rights, labour, family and civic participation. The "Xonimlar tovushi" section in Sadoi Turkiston and materials published in Sadoi Farg'ona helped to move women's issues from the domestic sphere into public debate (Fathiddinzoda, 1914).

Women's appeals and letters addressed to Muslim political circles raised the need to open schools for girls, to train female teachers, to improve the quality of education and to provide material support for teachers. These demands show that women's participation gained an institutional character. Enlightened women did not only support general reformist slogans; they proposed concrete measures connected with schooling, teaching staff and public supervision (Rajabova, 2003).

The modernization of education in Turkestan therefore took place through several interrelated channels. The first was the preservation and renewal of traditional female schooling. The second was the literary and pedagogical activity of enlightened women. The third was the spread of women's voices in the press. The fourth was the connection between girls' education and the broader Jadid programme of cultural renewal. These channels created a social environment in which women's education became a matter of public importance.

The role of enlightened women also changed the content of education. In their practice, learning was connected with literacy, moral upbringing, aesthetic taste, religious knowledge, classical literature and social consciousness. Such a combination allowed girls' education to move beyond simple reading skills. It developed into a

cultural programme that linked personal development with the future of the family and society.

The resistance to girls' education remained strong in many local environments. Economic limits, early marriage, household labour and fear of social change slowed the spread of schooling. However, the activity of women teachers and writers weakened these barriers by presenting education as a familiar and legitimate practice. The authority of otinoyi and bibiotin figures helped to adapt educational renewal to local values and made reform more acceptable to society (Murtazaeva, 2021:6–8).

This historical experience shows that educational modernization in Turkestan cannot be explained only through administrative reforms or Jadid male intellectuals. Enlightened women created an important bridge between the household, the school, literary culture and public discussion. Their work gave girls' education a social base and connected it with cultural continuity.

CONCLUSION

The role of enlightened women in the modernization of Turkestan education was multidimensional. They preserved the tradition of female literacy, enriched it with literary and moral content, and gradually expanded it into a broader public and educational movement. Through the activity of otinoyi and bibiotin schools, women teachers created the first stable environment for girls' learning.

The legacy of Dilshod Barno, Uvaysiy, Anbar Otin and Samar-Bonu demonstrates that female education in Turkestan developed through both literary creativity and pedagogical practice. Their schools and circles formed a cultural space where girls acquired literacy, poetic taste, ethical discipline and social awareness. This process prepared the ground for Jadid reforms and for the wider discussion of women's education in the press.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, women's participation in newspapers and public appeals transformed the issue of girls' education into an institutional question. The demand for schools, female teachers and public supervision showed that women were becoming active participants in educational change. For this reason, enlightened women should be regarded as one of the decisive internal forces in the modernization of Turkestan education.

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