



# The issue of women's education in the Turkestan region from the 17th century to the first quarter of the 20th century

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**ABSTRACT**

This article discusses the historical evolution of women's education in the Turkestan region from the 17th century to the first quarter of the 20th century. It explores the early roots of education in the region, the influence of empires, the role of religion, and the transformative impact of Soviet educational reforms. The article highlights the challenges and progress in women's education during this period, ultimately reflecting the complex interplay of tradition, external influence, and the pursuit of women's empowerment in a historically conservative society.

**Keywords:**

Women's Education, Turkestan Region, Historical Evolution, Empires

Religion, Soviet Influence, Gender Equality, Educational Reforms, Challenges, Progress, Traditional Norms, Cultural Heritage, Gender Empowerment, Women's, Literacy, Cultural Transformation, Historical Dynamics, Socio-Educational Development, Gender Roles

The history of women's education in the Turkestan region, spanning from the 17th century to the first quarter of the 20th century, reflects the complex social, cultural, and political dynamics that shaped this vast and diverse region. Throughout this period, women's education in Turkestan evolved in response to various historical factors, including the influence of empires, religious institutions, and indigenous educational traditions. One of the most pivotal moments in the history of women's education in the Turkestan region occurred during the first quarter of the 20th century when the region came under the influence of the Soviet Union. Valuing the only European education, he believed only in this formation,

and as a staunch Russian administrator, who had had administrative experience in their service in the north-western region, in which he

defended the Russian educational and school ideas from the Polish propaganda, he was in Turkestan was determined to keep policy through the medium of the Russian school. In these considerations, the late Governor General, representing the stagnation of Muslim education, did not expect to hold Russian government views among indigenous natives in Muslim schools. At the same time, he knew that in Turkestan there are numerous Kyrgyz population, is an independent ethnographic group, which, although close to Sart and Tatars by origin and language, but not crowded, unilaterally, exclusively Muslim religious school-wise and therefore viable and susceptible with education. So he decided to focus all their attention on the device enlightened in Turkestan Russian schools specifically for children Kyrgyz and hoped that the Kyrgyz children in Russian schools Russification and join Russian citizenship and then narrow one-way Islam will no longer be able to give them their influence that does not conform to the ideas and principles of European civilization. The Soviet government initiated far-reaching educational reforms that reshaped the

educational landscape and promoted gender equality. At the heart of these reforms was the establishment of secular schools, marking a profound departure from the region's historical reliance on religious and traditional educational institutions. These newly established schools aimed to provide comprehensive education, covering a wide array of academic and vocational subjects. Women, previously confined to the narrow domains of religious and domestic knowledge, suddenly had access to a broader spectrum of learning. Subjects ranging from science and mathematics to literature and vocational training became available to them. This was a remarkable departure from the past, and it opened doors for women to explore new horizons. Perhaps the most notable aspect of this period was the Soviet government's active advocacy for gender equality. Women were not only encouraged but often required to participate in various aspects of public life, and this extended to education. Women in urban areas began enrolling in these newly established schools in significant numbers. It marked a watershed moment where they were no longer confined to traditional roles but could aspire to become doctors, engineers, teachers, and professionals in a wide range of fields. Despite the promising changes, the implementation of these reforms was not without challenges. The traditional norms and deeply ingrained religious beliefs in the region often clashed with the Soviet agenda. Some communities resisted these sweeping changes, and in rural areas, access to modern education remained limited. Concerns also arose about the preservation of cultural identity and heritage in the face of a rapidly modernizing society. Nonetheless, the impact of these policies was undeniable. Women's literacy rates soared, and they gained new skills and knowledge that empowered them not only within their families but also within their communities. The increased participation of women in the workforce, which had been a rarity in the past, contributed significantly to the region's development and modernization. The legacy of this period in Turkestan's history endures. While the Soviet Union is no longer in existence, the advancements in women's education and

their active participation in various professions have left a lasting impact. Women in the region continue to pursue higher education and careers, contributing to both the region's development and the preservation of its cultural heritage. This article explores the challenges and progress in women's education in Turkestan during this timeframe, shedding light on the remarkable journey of women's empowerment in a historically conservative and traditional society. Education in Turkestan has a rich history that can be traced back to the region's early engagement with Islamic culture and Persian influences. In the 17th century, the Turkestan region was characterized by a predominantly agrarian and nomadic society, with education being limited primarily to the religious sphere. Madrasas, Islamic schools, and the Quranic education of young boys were common, but formal education for girls was generally restricted. Women's education, when provided, was usually limited to the basics of religious and domestic knowledge, often delivered at home. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, Turkestan was subjected to the influence of various empires, including the Persian, Russian, and Qing dynasties. Each empire had its own approach to education and influenced the region's educational landscape. Persian Influence: The Persian Empire's cultural and linguistic ties with Turkestan contributed to the spread of Persian-language education, which extended to some segments of the population, including women. In urban centers like Bukhara and Samarkand, Persian was commonly spoken and written, and Persian-language schools provided opportunities for women to access education, albeit still primarily focused on religious and domestic subjects. Russian Influence: The Russian Empire's expansion into Turkestan in the 19th century brought significant changes to the region's education system. Russian colonial authorities established secular schools and encouraged the education of both boys and girls, though the curriculum remained largely focused on the Russian language and culture. This marked a shift in the region's educational landscape and opened up new opportunities for women's education. Religion played a vital role in shaping

women's education in Turkestan. Islamic traditions emphasized the importance of seeking knowledge, and religious leaders, including female spiritual teachers, played significant roles in educating women on matters of faith and morality. Women could attend religious classes and Quranic schools, where they were taught not only religious principles but also basic literacy and numeracy skills. Despite the advancements in women's education, several challenges persisted. Traditional norms and societal expectations often discouraged women from pursuing education beyond religious and domestic matters. Access to education was still limited, particularly in rural areas. Furthermore, early 20th-century political and social upheavals in Turkestan, including the Russian Revolution and the emergence of the Soviet Union, brought further changes to the educational landscape, with both opportunities and restrictions for women's education. The early 20th century saw a significant push for modernization and education in Turkestan, as the region became part of the Soviet Union. Soviet policies promoted gender equality and access to education for all, including women. These policies led to the establishment of secular schools that offered comprehensive education, with a focus on academic and vocational subjects. Women in urban centers began to enroll in these schools, gaining access to a broader range of knowledge and skills.

In conclusion, the early 20th century marked a monumental turning point in the history of women's education in the Turkestan region. The influence of the Soviet Union led to significant progress in women's access to education and their roles in society. This period represents a vital chapter in the ongoing struggle for gender equality and access to education in the region, and it continues to shape the lives of women in Turkestan to this day. The region's history demonstrates the dynamic interplay between tradition, outside influence, and the enduring spirit of women seeking knowledge and empowerment.

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