MARYAM SULTONMURODOVA: A SYMBOL OF THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE AND NATIONAL AWAKENING

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Abstract. This paper examines the life, pursuit of education, and role in the spiritual lives of Uzbek women played by Maryam Sultonmurodova, an enlightened woman active in the early 20th century. It analyzes her education abroad, her work in journalism, and her fate during the era of political repressions, drawing upon historical sources.

Keywords: Maryam Sultonmurodova, Jadidism, enlightenment, women's education, journalism, repression, national awakening.

Introduction.In the early 20th century, an enlightenment movement aimed at advancing science, education, and national consciousness gained momentum in the region of Turkestan. Women's education and their active participation in societal life emerged as key issues within this process. Maryam Sultonmurodova was one of the intellectual women who emerged against this historical backdrop, dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the service of her people[1;3].

Maryam Sultonmurodova was born on February 13, 1905, in the city of Khiva. Her early education was associated with "new-method" schools, and she later had the opportunity to pursue further studies in Tashkent and Orenburg[1;3]. This educational journey shaped her worldview and influenced her future career.

A significant milestone in Maryam's life was the period she spent studying in Germany.In 1922, she was selected as one of the students sent abroad for education. While in Germany, she studied the German language, pedagogy, and other professional disciplines. Her experience of education abroad played a pivotal role in her approach to enlightenment and professional work upon her return to Uzbekistan.

Maryam Sultonmurodova was not only an educator but also engaged in journalism

and literary activities. She worked for the magazines "Guliston" and "Yorqin Turmush"[1;2]. Her translations from German literature and her articles addressing the social issues facing women are recognized as significant contributions to the development of the Uzbek press .Maryam's career faced severe trials during the era of political repressions. In 1937, she was arrested on charges of espionage and sentenced to imprisonment. She was subsequently imprisoned again and sent into exile. On August 2, 1957, she was exonerated by the Supreme Court of the USSR. These events illustrate the impact of the political persecutions of that time on the lives of the intelligentsia. Maryam Sultonmurodova's life serves as an important historical source for examining issues regarding women's access to education, professional development, and their role in society. Her work in translation and journalism helps shed light on the history of women's participation in social life.

Historical background. The enlightenment activity of Maryam Sultonmurodova cannot be understood in isolation from the intellectual atmosphere that took shape in Turkestan and Khorezm at the turn of the twentieth century. The reformist intelligentsia of that period had concluded that the

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backwardness of the region was rooted less in material poverty than in the narrowness of the prevailing system of instruction, and they therefore treated the school as the primary instrument of social renewal. Within this programme the question of the education of girls occupied a particularly sensitive place, since it touched simultaneously upon pedagogy, family custom and religious interpretation. Reform-minded publicists argued that a mother deprived of literacy could not raise a literate generation, and that the exclusion of half of society from learning amounted to a deliberate weakening of the nation itself.

The institutional expression of these ideas was the network of so-called new-method schools, in which the phonetic teaching of reading, arithmetic, geography and the natural sciences replaced purely memorisation-based instruction. For a girl born in Khiva in 1905, such a school represented an entirely novel biographical possibility: it offered a path that led beyond the domestic sphere without requiring a complete break with the cultural environment in which she had been raised. The childhood of Maryam Sultonmurodova coincided with the years in which these schools were multiplying, and her subsequent trajectory demonstrates how quickly the new pedagogy could produce a generation capable of operating in several languages and several intellectual traditions at once.

The political transformations of 1917–1920 altered the framework within which this educational project unfolded. The establishment of the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic created, for a short period, an administrative environment in which former Jadid reformers and the new authorities shared an interest in the rapid preparation of qualified specialists. Sending young people abroad for study was regarded as the fastest available means of overcoming the shortage of teachers, engineers, physicians and translators. It was precisely this convergence of reformist aspiration and state necessity that opened the door through which a young woman from Khiva could travel to Europe.

Education in Germany. The decision to send a group of students from Turkestan and Khorezm to Germany in 1922 was among the most ambitious educational undertakings of the early Soviet years in the region. Germany was chosen not accidentally: its universities and pedagogical institutes enjoyed considerable prestige, the cost of living in the years of inflation was comparatively low, and the country already hosted a sizeable community of students from the East. For the young people who arrived there, however, the experience was far more demanding than a simple transfer from one classroom to another. They had to master an unfamiliar language before they could master a discipline, adapt to an academic culture built upon independent reading and written argument, and sustain themselves in a society passing through severe economic crisis.

For Maryam Sultonmurodova these years of study produced a combination of competences that few of her contemporaries possessed: command of German, familiarity with European pedagogical theory, and the habit of comparing educational practices across cultures. This combination explains the direction her later work would take. She returned not as an administrator seeking a post but as an intermediary — a person able to transfer ideas, texts and methods from one linguistic environment into another. The biographies of the members of this student cohort, taken together, form a distinct chapter in the history of Uzbek intellectual life, and their shared fate in the following decade gives that chapter its tragic coherence.

Journalism and translation. Upon her return, the periodical press became the natural field for such an intermediary role. The magazines in which Maryam Sultonmurodova published were addressed to a readership that was only beginning to form, and their editors faced the double task of supplying information and creating the very language in which modern subjects could be discussed. Translation from German literature was therefore not a peripheral literary exercise but part of this linguistic

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construction: each translated text required decisions about terminology, syntax and register that gradually enriched the expressive resources of written Uzbek.

Her articles on the position of women continued, in a new political vocabulary, the argument advanced by the reformers of the previous generation. Literacy, professional training and participation in public work were presented not as concessions granted from above but as conditions without which a society could not develop. The significance of this journalistic work lies in its dual character: it documents the concrete difficulties encountered by educated women of the 1920s and 1930s, and it simultaneously constitutes an attempt to reshape public opinion regarding their place in social life.

The years of repression. The accusation of espionage brought against Maryam Sultonmurodova in 1937 followed a pattern that was applied throughout the Soviet Union to people with foreign educational experience. Study abroad, knowledge of a European language and correspondence with acquaintances outside the country were reinterpreted, in the logic of the investigative organs, as evidence of hostile connections. What had a decade earlier been regarded as a state priority became, under the changed political conditions, the principal element of the charge. The cohort sent to Germany in 1922 was consequently affected with particular severity, and the destruction of this group deprived the republic of a substantial part of its first generation of European-trained specialists.

Imprisonment and subsequent exile interrupted the professional biography of Maryam Sultonmurodova at the point of its maturity. The rehabilitation pronounced by the Supreme Court of the USSR on August 2, 1957, restored her legal standing but could not restore the decades of work that had been lost, nor return to the reading public the translations and articles that were never written. Documents of this kind — indictments, appeals, letters sent from places of exile — possess a particular value for the historian, because they record not only the mechanism of persecution but also the reasoning, self-defence and moral position of the accused.

Historiographical significance. The study of this biography contributes to several fields simultaneously. For the history of education it provides a concrete case illustrating how reformist ideas concerning the instruction of girls were translated into individual careers. For the history of the press it clarifies the role played by women authors and translators in the formation of modern Uzbek periodical literature. For the history of political repression it adds a documented example of how international educational contacts were retrospectively criminalised. Examined together, these dimensions show that an individual life may serve as a reliable instrument for analysing broad social processes.

Further research on the subject would benefit from a systematic comparison of published biographical accounts with archival materials, including the files of the students sent abroad, editorial records of the periodicals concerned, and investigative documentation of the late 1930s. Such work would make it possible to replace approximate chronology with verified dates, to establish the full bibliography of her translations and articles, and to situate her career precisely within the cohort of enlightened women of her generation. Preserving and publishing these materials is a necessary condition for the accurate reconstruction of the intellectual history of the period.

Conclusion. Maryam Sultonmurodova is one of the intellectual women who played an active role in education, enlightenment, and journalism in 20th-century Uzbek history. Her education abroad, her work in the press, and her fate during the years of repression are of significant importance to historical memory. Studying the life of Maryam Sultonmurodova allows for a deeper understanding of the participation of Uzbek women in the advancement of education and enlightenment.

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