

THE ISSUE OF GIRLS' EDUCATION IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE DOCUMENTS AND STATISTICAL SOURCES OF THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE IN TURKESTAN**Bekmurodova Sarvinoz Uchkun kizi**

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Abstract. The issue of education in Turkestan during the Russian imperial period remains one of the central topics in the historiography of colonial Central Asia. In particular, the education of Muslim girls occupied a specific place within the imperial administrative discourse and statistical documentation. This article analyzes archival-administrative materials, statistical data, reports of military governors, educational inspectors, and imperial officials concerning girls' education in Turkestan under Russian colonial rule. The study demonstrates that the educational reforms introduced by the Russian Empire were not primarily intended to increase literacy among the indigenous population, but rather aimed at creating ideologically loyal subjects and "faithful mothers" raised within the framework of imperial values. Statistical evidence from Tashkent, Fergana, Samarkand, and other regions reveals both the persistence of traditional Muslim educational institutions and the limited penetration of Russian-native schools. The article further examines the contradictions of colonial educational policy, dual administrative control, financial deficiencies, and the gradual deterioration of the indigenous educational system under imperial governance.

Key words: Turkestan, Russian Empire, girls' education, colonial education, Russian-native schools, maktab, waqf, literacy, V.P. Nalivkin, N.P. Ostroumov.

Introduction. Education constitutes one of the most significant subjects in the study of Turkestan's colonial history. Following the conquest of Central Asia by the Russian Empire, nearly every sphere of social life was documented through administrative reports and statistical records. The educational sector, including the education of women and girls, became one of the principal fields through which the imperial administration attempted to regulate and transform indigenous society.

During the colonial period, education functioned simultaneously as an ideological and practical instrument of imperial governance. Within this process, the issue of girls' education was reflected in official documents and statistical materials in a distinctive manner that reveals broader colonial attitudes toward Muslim society. The educational policy of the Russian Empire in Turkestan was extensively discussed in the records of the Turkestan General-Governor's Chancellery, the Inspectorate of Public Education, and the reports of provincial military governors. Officials such as V.P. Nalivkin and N.P. Ostroumov played an important role in shaping educational policy and documenting the state of Muslim schools.

Traditional education in Turkestan consisted of two stages. The first stage was the elementary maktab or maktab-khana, where children began studying from approximately five years of age. The maktab represented the primary institution of traditional Muslim education and was widespread among the indigenous population of Turkestan.

According to statistical data, by January 1, 1890, the city of Tashkent contained 242 maktabas with 242 teachers, indicating that each school generally employed only one instructor. These schools educated 3,527 boys and 1,461 girls. In Tashkent district (uezd), there were 329 schools with the same number of teachers, yet the number of pupils was comparatively smaller: 2,675 boys and only 116 girls. The largest concentration of traditional schools in Turkestan was located in the Fergana region, where 1,814 schools with 1,799 teachers provided education for 22,372 pupils, including 18,973 boys and 3,399 girls. These statistics demonstrate that girls'

participation in education existed before Russian intervention, although at significantly lower rates than boys. At the same time, the figures challenge the widespread colonial narrative portraying the indigenous population as entirely illiterate.

Literature review and methodology. This research employs historical-comparative and source-analytical methodologies. The study is based on administrative documents of the Russian Empire, statistical records, educational reports, memoirs of imperial officials, and contemporary historiographical analyses. The principal sources analyzed include:

- ✚ Reports of the Turkestan General-Governorate;
- ✚ Statistical data concerning maktab and Russian-native schools;
- ✚ Educational reports by V.P. Nalivkin and N.P. Ostroumov;
- ✚ Administrative records of military governors;
- ✚ Population census materials from 1897;
- ✚ Observations by Russian scholars and travelers including A. Middendorf and A.P. Khoroshkhin;
- ✚ Publications concerning waqf financing and indigenous educational institutions.

The research additionally applies quantitative analysis to statistical data concerning school distribution, student demographics, gender ratios, and literacy indicators. Comparative interpretation is used to evaluate contradictions between imperial narratives and indigenous educational realities.

Results and discussion. The Russian administration acknowledged the existence of an extensive indigenous educational network throughout Turkestan. Statistical records indicate that girls participated in traditional education to a greater extent than imperial authorities often admitted.

By 1890, Tashkent city schools enrolled 1,461 girls alongside 3,527 boys. In contrast, Tashkent district recorded only 116 female students despite having a larger number of schools. This discrepancy suggests significant regional variations in attitudes toward female education.

Fergana province represented the largest educational center of Turkestan. Of the 22,372 students studying in 1,814 schools, 3,399 were girls. Although female enrollment remained considerably lower than male enrollment, these figures nevertheless indicate the existence of institutionalized girls' education within traditional Muslim society.

A.P. Khoroshkhin's data from 1876 indicates that girls generally studied between the ages of seven and eleven, after which they were trained in sewing and domestic crafts between ages eleven and fifteen. In the village of Urgut near Samarkand, girls' schools were more developed than in other regions. Every volost reportedly maintained girls' schools, and Urgut demonstrated the highest level of female educational participation relative to population size.

Nevertheless, girls constituted only approximately 10% of total students in many areas. According to 1913 data from Samarkand district, only 249 girls attended schools among a Muslim female population of 122,790. Thus, merely 0.2% of Muslim women received formal schooling. Across Samarkand province, where 444,587 Muslim women resided, only one out of every 105 school-age girls attended school.

Education remained strictly gender-segregated. Boys and girls did not study together, although younger brothers occasionally attended girls' schools. Many parents preferred their daughters to receive initial education from female teachers.

On March 5, 1859, the curriculum for the first Russian schools in Turkestan was officially approved. According to reports from Fort No. 1 and Fort Perovsky, the Syr-Darya line contained 56 children aged seven to fourteen, including 33 boys and 23 girls. These first Russian schools were established as three-grade institutions, although the duration of study remained unrestricted in practice.

N.P. Ostroumov observed that even in interior Russia during the 1860s, primary education often lacked fixed educational duration due to prevailing patriarchal structures. During the entire

existence of the first Russian schools, only one Kazakh student, twenty-year-old Kul-Muhammad Utyaganov, reportedly studied there.

The colonial administration's educational policy was fundamentally ideological. Laws and reforms concerning girls' education were not designed primarily to increase literacy among the indigenous population. Rather, the objective was to cultivate "loyal mothers" who would raise future generations according to imperial ideology and values. Similar goals also applied to boys' education, although implemented through somewhat different mechanisms.

According to K.K. Palen, Article 8 of the Regulation on the Administration of Turkestan placed educational affairs under the Ministry of Public Education. However, Article 12 granted extensive authority to the Turkestan General-Governor, effectively placing educational responsibility under his control. Consequently, general-governors constantly interfered in educational affairs, creating a dual administrative system that negatively affected educational development.

A report submitted on October 26, 1916, by the Chief Inspector of Educational Institutions to General-Governor N. Kuropatkin emphasized that effective supervision of Muslim schools required a substantial increase in the number of inspectors. Administrative understaffing represented one of the most serious problems in the colonial educational system. The Russian Empire introduced its educational system in Turkestan through several stages:

1. Between 1867 and the 1880s, Russian schools were established where both Russian settlers' children and indigenous children could study.
2. During the 1870s and 1880s, the administration strengthened colonial policy by establishing institutions intended to produce lower-level bureaucrats loyal to imperial authority.
3. From the mid-1880s until the beginning of the twentieth century, Russian-native schools were increasingly opened for indigenous children, alongside vocational and secondary educational institutions.

Despite these efforts, the colonial administration failed to achieve complete control over Muslim educational institutions. Simultaneously, numerous restrictions were imposed upon the *jadid* "new method" schools that became increasingly influential in Turkestan during the late nineteenth century.

Education required substantial financial support, yet most schools in Turkestan received no state funding. In Samarkand and other regions, educational institutions depended largely upon community support, *waqf* property, charitable donations, and parental contributions.

School construction, maintenance, and teachers' salaries were primarily financed by students' families. Payments were often made not only in money but also in kind, especially in rural areas, where families provided flour, rice, meat, and bread weekly.

An important custom known as *payshanbalik* existed in many schools. Every Thursday, students presented gifts to teachers. During holidays, parents sent robes (*chapan*), money, *plov*, bread, and other goods through their children. The value of such gifts depended upon family wealth, eventually contributing to social stratification among pupils. Teachers frequently treated students differently according to the level of gifts received. Some teachers reportedly survived exclusively through these Thursday offerings.

Russian colonial authorities frequently portrayed the indigenous population as illiterate. However, several contemporary observers challenged this representation.

During his 1878 journey through the Fergana Valley, academician A. Middendorf praised the region's educational system and suggested that it could serve as a model for Russia itself. He claimed that nearly every local peasant could read. Educational historian K.E. Bendrikov partially disputed this assertion, arguing that many people could recite Qur'anic surahs rather than read in the modern sense.

By the late nineteenth century, the dual administrative structure and colonial neglect significantly damaged educational quality. According to the planned policy of the first Turkestan

General-Governor K.P. Kaufman, indigenous education was intentionally left without meaningful support, allowing gradual decline.

As a result, Muslim educational institutions experienced deteriorating quality, weakened supervision, disrupted continuity between educational stages, and declining standards of instruction.

V.P. Nalivkin reported that by 1890 the official number of schools in Turkestan reached 5,000, while unofficially their number approached 10,000. Nevertheless, little analytical information existed concerning instructional quality or curriculum organization.

Nomadic pastoral populations represented a significant portion of Turkestan's inhabitants, yet educational provision for nomadic children remained almost entirely neglected. Seasonal schools operated mainly during spring and early summer, frequently staffed by madrasa students on vacation.

The peoples of Central Asia possessed a rich intellectual and cultural tradition that produced scholars such as Al-Farghani, Al-Farabi, Beruni, Khwarizmi, Ibn Sina, Alisher Navoi, Ulugh Beg, and Babur. Despite this legacy, the 1897 imperial census claimed extraordinarily high illiteracy rates: 99.5% among Tajiks, 99.4% among Kyrgyz, 99.3% among Turkmens, 98.4% among Uzbeks, and 97.9% among Kazakhs.

These figures require critical interpretation because they were calculated largely according to attendance in Russian-native schools, excluding students of traditional maktab, madrasas, and women educated privately by otinbibi instructors.

For example, in 1897 Samarkand contained only one Russian-native school but maintained 21 madrasas and 83 maktab, while Bukhara possessed 103 madrasas. Therefore, the assertion published in the journal *Vestnik Vospitaniya* in 1900 claiming that "Central Asia and Kazakhstan would require 4,600 years to become fully literate" reflected colonial prejudice rather than objective analysis.

General N.A. Kuropatkin himself admitted in his diary: "For fifty years we kept the local population away from development, schools, education, and Russian life".

Similarly, V. Nalivkin wrote in 1913 that Russian-native schools produced almost no practical results. Across Samarkand, Fergana, and Syr-Darya provinces, only 8,961 students attended 143 Russian-native schools, representing merely 0.17% of the population.

Educational expenditures during the colonial period increased only from 0.7% to 2.33% of the total budget, demonstrating the limited financial commitment of imperial authorities to public education.

The evidence demonstrates that the Russian Empire's educational policy in Turkestan was deeply contradictory. Official rhetoric frequently justified colonial intervention as a "civilizing mission," yet practical policies reveal limited interest in genuinely expanding literacy or educational quality among the indigenous population.

Girls' education occupied a particularly symbolic place within imperial ideology. Russian administrators viewed educated indigenous women primarily as instruments for shaping future generations loyal to imperial rule. Nevertheless, the colonial state invested insufficient resources into female education and often undermined existing local institutions through restrictions on waqf property and interference in traditional educational structures.

The statistical data further indicate that indigenous educational traditions remained more resilient and widespread than colonial narratives admitted. Although female participation rates were undeniably low, girls' schools existed throughout Turkestan, especially in regions such as Urgut and Fergana. Female literacy and instruction often continued outside formal institutions through otinbibi networks and domestic education.

The dual administrative structure created by overlapping authority between the Ministry of Public Education and the Turkestan General-Governor contributed significantly to institutional inefficiency. Financial neglect, inadequate inspection systems, and political interference weakened both traditional and colonial educational institutions.

Moreover, the colonial administration's hostility toward jadid reform movements demonstrates that imperial authorities feared genuinely modernized indigenous education. The suppression of jadid schools suggests that the empire preferred limited and controllable educational development rather than broad intellectual advancement.

Conclusion. The analysis of Russian imperial administrative documents and statistical materials concerning girls' education in Turkestan reveals a complex colonial educational landscape. Contrary to imperial narratives portraying the local population as universally illiterate, traditional educational institutions remained widespread and included notable, though limited, participation of girls.

The Russian colonial administration approached education primarily as an ideological mechanism for consolidating imperial rule rather than as a genuine means of public enlightenment. Girls' education was encouraged selectively to produce socially loyal mothers capable of transmitting imperial values within indigenous families.

At the same time, the colonial system suffered from serious structural deficiencies including dual administration, financial neglect, insufficient supervision, and interference in local educational traditions. These policies contributed to the gradual weakening of Muslim educational institutions while failing to establish an effective alternative system.

Ultimately, the educational policies of the Russian Empire in Turkestan reflected the broader contradictions of colonial governance: attempts at administrative modernization coexisted with political control, cultural domination, and deliberate educational limitation.

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