

**RESEARCH ARTICLE** OPEN ACCESS

# The issue of women in the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic (1920-1924)

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## ABSTRACT

This article aims to shed light on issues related to the social life of women in the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic in 1920-1924, such as education, family and marital relations, and the activities of the Department for Working with Women.

**Keywords:** Economic hardship, marriage, education, Ministry of Education, early life, resistance, schools.

## INTRODUCTION

After the establishment of Soviet power in Turkestan, the Khiva Khanate, which had existed for several centuries, was one of the first to be abolished. The impact of this change also affected the social life of the people, especially women.

The economic and political crisis in Turkestan in the 1920s led to the following situation in Khorezm. In 1920, the resolution of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of Khorezm stated that there were many poor people in Khiva, and that it was necessary to build labor colonies and shelters for women, children, and the elderly so that they would not die of hunger.

In such a situation, in order to improve the social life of the population, in particular, their health, in 1920 the TASSR sent 3 doctors, 8 paramedics, 1 dentist and 1 midwife to Khiva to open 3 hospitals. However, these numbers did not allow providing medical care to all the population. When considering the issue of women at that time, the Women's Work Department in Turkestan recognized that although reaching the Khorezm Republic required great difficulties (riding on horseback and camels in the desert), work among women yielded results. This was evidenced by the fact that 3 women were delegates, 4 of whom were members of the Soviet Congress, and 5 women formed

colleagues in the Women's Work Department (of whom 1 was Kyrgyz and 3 were Uzbeks). However, these numbers were very few for the entire Republic.

The Soviet political system, which was gradually entering into force, attempted to make changes in the social life of women. One of these was the resolution of the Khorezm Council of Ministers on July 3, 1921 on the procedure for concluding and dissolving marriage. It stipulated that if a marriage existed among those who had not reached the age of marriage, the bride would not meet the groom until she reached the specified age, but the groom would provide the bride with food and clothing. After reaching the age of 16, the marriage would be voluntary or irrevocable. From the date of publication of this resolution, early marriage was prohibited, and violators of the resolution were sentenced to 5 years in prison by a tribunal. If the husband did not provide his wife with sufficient food, tortured her, or beat her to the point of leaving scars on her body, and this was confirmed by witnesses, the woman could divorce him in accordance with Sharia law. If the husband did not beat his wife or torture her but did not provide her with sufficient support, the husband would divorce her with his consent. If the woman's application contained lies and slander, the wife would be returned to her husband. If a woman opposed the decision, she was punished accordingly. This decision can be understood as a form of compromise

between the traditional order and the new one by the Soviet authorities of the USSR.

Gradually, the women's issue began to spread more widely. In 1923, a Women's Affairs Department was established in Khorezm, not only in the capital, but also in the regions. However, it was emphasized that the women of Khorezm were not interested in participating in the changes taking place. In 1924, when the Women's Affairs Department made a report on March 8 and the situation of women in the East, working women were completely exempted from the 12-hour work day, but the event did not go well. The Women's Affairs Department also held 4 talks with Uzbek women that year. When the issue of establishing a regional department for working on women's issues was raised, there was a problem of finding a worker to work in it. In this regard, a personal request was made to the Central Asian Bureau to send a worker for this Khorezm issue in the East. This situation also symbolized great Russian chauvinism. During this period, not only in Khorezm, but also in other Soviet republics, heads of Russian nationality were appointed to manage women's issues.

The five-year collection of the Women's Work Department provides information about the activities of Khorezm women that contradicts the above facts: In 1924, at the conference of the district volosts, women did not remain silent as before. They demanded marriage, land and water laws. In 1923, the aul soviet had 14 members, later 39 members. One of them was a Turkish woman. In a number of districts, girls were accepted as active participants in Komsomol work. In January 1924, 41 Uzbek women participated in a hashar to establish a Women's Work Department as an aid to the Red Army. In New Urgench, girls worked in a general Komsomol club, even participated in theater performances. Khiva itself had national actresses. Such facts were more intended for propaganda purposes.

From this time on, women began to appear openly in the theater. Abdusalomov, Safoev, Dauletov, Otajonov, Boltaev, Murotov and others allowed their wives to walk without a veil. However, the existing changes also served to break the traditional society. The Department for Working with Women was often approached with the issue of separation.

One of the most important issues in the social life of women in the dark era was education. In 1920, the People's Commissariat of Education was established in Khorezm.

Bekjon Rakhmonov was elected People's Commissariat of Education. With the establishment of the People's Commissariat of Education, schools were opened in the cities (Khiva, Urgench, Dargaza, Khozoras, Khata, Kattakungrad and Kungrad), and in connection with the opening of schools, a need arose for teachers. Priests who graduated from religious madrasas were appointed to them. That is why the schools opened by the Soviet government were like old schools and did not serve their purpose.

According to the letter of the head of the department for working with women, it was noted that the desire of Khorezm women to study was high, especially among young people. There were also schools for adults, and in Khiva itself there was a school for the elimination of illiteracy for delegates. It is interesting that girls entered general schools in the villages of Taraz. Girls also studied in such general schools in Khanka and Gurlan.

By the way, it was stated that everywhere in the old schools there was always coeducation, and the attitude of the people to coeducation was favorable, and the establishment of a separate women's school was a wrong path that led to the disintegration of the coeducation of the younger generation.

Elders and mullahs began to turn the people against the new schools, thinking that they would take them to Moscow and baptize them. Believing this, the population withdrew their children from schools. After this event, the Ministry of Education issued an order to compile a list of children of school age from 7 to 15 years old. On the day after the announcement of this decree, believers, scholars, judges and rich people gathered in Madamin Madrasa.

At this meeting, all the clergy spread propaganda not only against the Ministry of Education, but also against the entire Soviet republic, that they were violating Sharia law, that the Russian Tatars had sent them to Khiva for this very purpose, and that they intended to marry all the Khorezm girls to the Russians. They called on all citizens to join the holy war against the Soviets. This rally was dispersed by the youth association.

As a result of the rally, the Ministry's order was canceled and the education of children remained in the hands of the clergy. The influence of elders and clergy among the people increased, and as a result, almost all the schools opened by the Ministry of Education that year were empty, and the marriage of minor girls amounted to 75 percent.

These actions of the Khorezm people arose as a kind of protection of their daughters from the invading non-religious people. This proves that in addition to economic hardship, there were also the above reasons for marrying off girls who had not yet reached the age of childbearing.

According to the report on educational work in Khorezm, the number of students attending one of the girls' schools was 75. There were 3 girls' schools in total: in Khiva, Kungrad, and Urgench. The lack of books in the national language of the population in almost all schools in Khorezm, the lack of teaching aids and allowances, severely hampered educational work in the region.

On December 27, 1923, the USSR asked the TASSR to provide Khorezm students with clothing. Their condition was very deplorable, almost naked. As a last resort, it was stated that if measures were not taken to satisfy the students, they would have to satisfy them at their own expense, and this money would have to be paid for by their students in Tashkent.

According to a report sent by Safayev and Abdusalomov to the Women's Department in Tashkent in January 1924, about 200 girls were studying in Khorezm, 40 in Khiva, and 65 in Yangi Urgench. In 1924, 9 girls from Khorezm came to Tashkent to study. The fact that on March 19, 1924, a petition was written on the women's Internet asking for firewood for the bathhouse indicates that the material and technical support for girls' education was insufficient.

Although the USSR was not as conservative in its views on women as the nomadic Turkmen and Karakalpak cultures in the USSR and the USSR inhabited by ethnic minorities, it created its own system of protecting women from invading non-religious peoples.

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