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THE FATE OF JADID WOMEN DURING THE PERIOD OF REPRESSION AND THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICAL MEMORY

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Abstract: This article examines the fate of Jadid women during Soviet political repression and the preservation of their historical memory. It analyzes how ideological pressure, censorship, imprisonment, and professional exclusion affected women engaged in education, literature, journalism, and public life. The study also highlights the importance of archival research and rehabilitation in restoring their intellectual legacy and reassessing their contribution to the cultural modernization of Central Asia.

Keywords: Jadid women, political repression, historical memory, female intelligentsia, intellectual heritage, archival research, rehabilitation.

The political repression of the 1920s–1930s constituted one of the most destructive periods in the intellectual history of Soviet Central Asia. In Uzbekistan, the strengthening of the totalitarian system gradually transformed the political and cultural environment in which the national intelligentsia had previously participated in education, literature, journalism, medicine, and social reform. By the 1930s, representatives associated with Jadid ideas, independent intellectual activity, foreign education, or concepts of national cultural development increasingly became objects of ideological surveillance and political persecution. Recent historical research characterizes these repressions as a systematic mechanism that weakened intellectual continuity and restricted the development of national educational and cultural traditions.

Within this historical process, the experience of Jadid women requires particular scholarly attention. The emergence of educated women in the early twentieth century was closely connected with transformations in schooling, publishing, professional training, and public participation. Female intellectuals became involved in literary and educational activities during the 1920s and 1930s, contributing to the formation of a new cultural environment in the Uzbek SSR. Recent studies demonstrate that women's authorship and intellectual participation developed within a complex interaction between Jadid reformist traditions and the rapidly changing Soviet ideological system.

The intensification of Stalinist political control fundamentally altered this environment. Accusations such as "bourgeois nationalism," "anti-Soviet activity," political unreliability, and connections with foreign countries became instruments for removing members of the national intelligentsia from public life. For educated women, foreign contacts, participation in intellectual networks, journalistic activity, or family and professional connections could acquire political meanings that had not originally existed. As a result, repression affected not only individual lives but also the institutional and cultural spaces in which a generation of educated women had begun to establish themselves.

The consequences extended far beyond arrest, imprisonment, exile, or physical elimination. Political repression interrupted professional careers, destroyed intellectual networks, restricted the circulation of texts and ideas, and removed many individuals from official historical narratives. The suppression of Jadid heritage during the 1930s and early 1940s also influenced educational policy and collective perceptions of the reformist movement for decades. Research on Soviet educational policy

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shows that Jadid intellectual heritage was increasingly marginalized, ideologically reinterpreted, or excluded from legitimate public discourse as Stalinist control intensified.For this reason, the study of Jadid women during the repression period cannot be limited to documenting political persecution alone. It also involves the problem of historical memory—the processes through which forgotten biographies, intellectual contributions, personal documents, and suppressed narratives are recovered and reassessed. The restoration of these histories makes it possible to examine women not merely as passive victims of a repressive regime, but as independent participants in the educational, professional, literary, and cultural transformation of their society.

From this perspective, investigating the fate of Jadid women provides an opportunity to reconsider the relationship between political repression, gender, intellectual history, and collective memory. It also contributes to a more comprehensive reconstruction of Uzbekistan's twentieth-century history by identifying the intellectual losses caused by repression and restoring women's agency within the history of national modernization. Such an approach allows historical memory to function not simply as commemoration, but as a scholarly method for recovering previously marginalized dimensions of the Jadid intellectual legacy.

The position of the Jadid-oriented intelligentsia changed substantially after the consolidation of Soviet power in Central Asia. During the 1920s, certain elements of the Jadid reform program—mass literacy, secular education, teacher training, publishing, and the expansion of women's access to education—temporarily overlapped with aspects of early Soviet modernization. This limited convergence allowed some representatives of the indigenous intelligentsia to participate in educational and cultural institutions. However, the ideological foundations of Jadidism and Soviet modernization remained fundamentally different. Jadid intellectuals understood reform largely through national development, cultural renewal, and the creation of an educated society, whereas Soviet authorities increasingly demanded political and ideological conformity to the centralized Communist system. Adeeb Khalid's research demonstrates that, by the end of the 1920s, this difference became increasingly difficult for the Soviet state to tolerate.

This transformation had important consequences for women who had entered education, literature, journalism, and other professional spheres through the intellectual environment created by reformist modernization. Recent scholarship on female intellectuals in the Uzbek SSR indicates that Jadid educational reforms contributed significantly to the emergence of women's authorship and their participation in cultural life during the 1920s and 1930s. Women were increasingly present as teachers, writers, journalists, students, medical workers, and participants in public institutions. Their activity represented a significant departure from the limited opportunities available to women in earlier decades.

Nevertheless, it is methodologically important not to describe every educated Uzbek woman of the period as a direct member of the Jadid movement. By the late 1920s, the boundaries between Jadid intellectual traditions and Soviet educational institutions had become increasingly complicated. Some women were influenced by Jadid concepts of enlightenment and national progress while simultaneously working within Soviet structures. Others belonged to a younger generation whose professional formation occurred primarily after the establishment of Soviet institutions. Therefore, the concept of "Jadid women" is most useful when it refers to women whose educational and intellectual activities were connected with the reformist legacy of Jadidism rather than simply to all socially active women of the period.

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The situation changed dramatically with the strengthening of Stalinist political control. From the late 1920s onward, cultural and educational independence became increasingly vulnerable to political interpretation. Concepts such as national culture, historical continuity, independent intellectual judgment, and connections with the pre-Soviet reformist intelligentsia could be classified as signs of "bourgeois nationalism." The Soviet campaign against the old intelligentsia was therefore not restricted to political organizations; it increasingly penetrated schools, universities, publishing institutions, literary organizations, and research environments. Khalid describes this period as an ideological "assault" during which cultural production and educational institutions were subjected to stricter political supervision.

For female intellectuals, the effects of this transformation were particularly complex. Their entrance into public life had initially symbolized social modernization, yet professional independence did not protect them from political suspicion. Women connected to intellectual families, foreign educational networks, reformist circles, independent literary activity, or individuals already under investigation could themselves become vulnerable to surveillance. Political repression thus operated through networks of association as well as through individual actions. Recent archival-based scholarship on the repression of Uzbek educators and scholars emphasizes that the campaigns of the 1930s were systemic rather than a collection of isolated legal cases. The repression disrupted academic institutions, destroyed professional continuity, and removed experienced educators and intellectuals from cultural life. The resulting damage extended beyond those who were arrested: students lost teachers, publications lost authors and editors, institutions lost trained specialists, and younger generations lost direct contact with earlier intellectual traditions.The gender dimension adds another level to this historical problem. Female intellectuals had only recently acquired greater access to professional education and public cultural activity. Consequently, when repression interrupted their careers, it affected a still-developing layer of women's intellectual participation. The removal or silencing of even a relatively small number of highly educated women could have wider consequences because the professional female intelligentsia was still limited in size.

The historical experience of Jadid-oriented women should also be distinguished from the official Soviet campaign for female emancipation. Jadid reformers had discussed women's literacy, girls' schooling, marriage practices, family education, and women's role in social progress before the Bolshevik consolidation of power. Contemporary research on the Jadid press demonstrates that newspapers and journals such as Taraqqiy, Sadoi Turkiston, and Oyina treated women's education as an essential component of broader social reform.

The Soviet state, however, increasingly attempted to bring the transformation of women's lives under centralized ideological control. The most dramatic example was the Hujum, launched in 1927, which promoted the mass unveiling of Central Asian women. Marianne Kamp's extensive study demonstrates that the campaign cannot be interpreted simply as a straightforward process of liberation. It opened new possibilities for some women but also involved coercive state intervention and generated serious social conflict and violence. The memory of the campaign itself has remained historically contested.

This context is essential for understanding Jadid women because it reveals that indigenous reformist approaches to women's advancement and Soviet gender policy were not identical. Jadid intellectual culture generally emphasized education and gradual social transformation as essential elements of national renewal, whereas Stalinist political culture increasingly linked women's

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emancipation to ideological loyalty and state-controlled transformation. The distinction became especially important when independent intellectual perspectives were no longer tolerated.

Women therefore faced a contradictory historical environment. On the one hand, opportunities for literacy, higher education, employment, and participation in public institutions expanded. On the other hand, the political space in which intellectuals could independently define the meaning of modernization narrowed sharply. The result was a paradox: women could become more visible professionally while simultaneously becoming subject to stronger ideological regulation.

The repression of the 1930s relied heavily on political categories that were broad enough to encompass different forms of intellectual activity. Individuals could be accused of nationalism, anti-Soviet propaganda, participation in counter-revolutionary organizations, foreign connections, espionage, or ideological unreliability. Such categories enabled cultural, educational, and professional contacts to be reinterpreted as political evidence.

For women associated with intellectual circles, the consequences were not limited to formal sentences. Repression also operated through dismissal from employment, exclusion from publishing, interruption of education, destruction of manuscripts, restrictions on professional advancement, and the stigmatization of family members. Even when women themselves were not executed or imprisoned, the arrest of spouses, relatives, teachers, colleagues, or intellectual associates could radically alter their social position.A particularly important consequence was the disruption of intellectual continuity. Educational reform depends not only on institutions but also on the transmission of experience between generations. The disappearance of teachers, writers, editors, and scholars weakened precisely this process. Recent research on Soviet treatment of the Jadid heritage between 1930 and 1941 shows that educational institutions increasingly filtered, suppressed, or ideologically reinterpreted the intellectual legacy associated with the reform movement.

This process also affected the historical visibility of women. Male figures frequently occupied the central place in later narratives of Jadidism, whereas the contributions of female educators, writers, journalists, and professionals remained considerably less documented. Political repression intensified this imbalance because access to their writings, correspondence, professional records, and personal histories was interrupted. As a result, the disappearance of women from historical narratives was sometimes a second form of exclusion following the initial political persecution.

The concept of historical memory is especially relevant in examining this phenomenon because repression operated not only against living individuals but also against their cultural presence. When an author was declared politically unreliable, her works could disappear from public circulation. When an educator was removed from an institution, her pedagogical contribution could cease to be transmitted. When families avoided discussing persecuted relatives because of fear, even personal memories could become fragmented.

Thus, historical silence should not be interpreted as evidence that women had no significant role in the Jadid intellectual environment. In many cases, silence itself was produced by political circumstances. The study of female intellectuals requires researchers to reconstruct biographies from fragmented archival documents, periodical publications, investigation files, memoirs, correspondence, institutional records, and materials preserved by descendants.

This methodological problem is particularly important because Soviet investigative files cannot automatically be treated as neutral biographical sources. Such documents were created within a

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repressive institutional framework and often contained politically constructed accusations. Therefore, information extracted from them needs to be compared with independent archival evidence, contemporary publications, educational documents, personal correspondence, and later rehabilitation records. A critical comparison of different types of evidence allows scholars to separate documented activity from accusations produced by the machinery of repression.

The restoration of the history of politically persecuted intellectuals became significantly more possible after the end of the Soviet period. The opening and reassessment of archival materials enabled researchers to reconsider accusations that had previously shaped official biographies. The development of research devoted to political repression has also expanded the concept of historical loss: attention is now paid not only to executions and imprisonment but also to interrupted scientific schools, destroyed literary careers, educational discontinuity, and the long-term effects of fear on cultural memory.In contemporary Uzbekistan, the preservation of the memory of repression victims has increasingly acquired an institutional character.

The State Museum of the Victims of Repression serves as one of the principal institutions devoted to collecting, studying, and presenting materials connected with political persecution and Jadid heritage. Furthermore, a government decision adopted on 4 November 2025 approved a program for 2025–2026 aimed at intensifying the study and public commemoration of victims of political repression. Among the measures are annual remembrance activities, national scientific conferences, educational initiatives, and further improvement of the museum's work.

From the perspective of women's history, however, rehabilitation should involve more than the legal cancellation of former accusations. Historical rehabilitation also requires the reconstruction of women's intellectual biographies and the restoration of their professional achievements to the broader narrative of national history. Recent scholarship devoted specifically to female intellectuals of the 1920s and 1930s is important in this regard because it shifts attention from women as secondary participants to women as producers of literature, education, professional knowledge, and public discourse.

The reconstruction of this heritage also changes the interpretation of Jadidism itself. If Jadid history is examined only through prominent male reformers, the movement appears primarily as a male intellectual phenomenon. The inclusion of women demonstrates that the consequences of Jadid reform extended into changing educational opportunities, professional identities, literary authorship, and new forms of female participation in social life. Therefore, the study of women affected by repression is essential not simply for completing individual biographies, but for producing a more comprehensive understanding of the intellectual history of Central Asia.

Ultimately, political repression produced a dual loss. It removed or marginalized individuals who had acquired valuable intellectual and professional experience, and it subsequently weakened society's memory of their contribution. Recovering the history of Jadid women therefore represents an important component of both historical scholarship and the reconstruction of intellectual continuity. Their experiences reveal that the consequences of repression were measured not only by the number of victims, but also by the unrealized educational, literary, scientific, and cultural possibilities that disappeared with them.

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