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The Formation of The Uzbek Women's Press at The Beginning of the 20th Century

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Abstract: This article analyzes the emergence and development of the Uzbek women's press against the backdrop of socio-political changes that occurred in the Turkestan region in the first quarter of the 20th century. The main attention is paid to the activities of the magazine "Yangi Yul", founded in the 1920s, and the factors that influenced its emergence are studied. The article scientifically analyzes the transition of the magazine from a newspaper format to a magazine format, its content areas, the system of columns, the composition of the editorial board, and the activities of creative women. Also, women's issues covered on the pages of "Yangi Yul" are considered in the context of the press of the time. The article analyzes the views of local and foreign researchers on a comparative basis and determines the place of the magazine in journalism during the transition from Jadidism to Soviet ideology. The results of the study show that the magazine "Yangi Yul" played an important role in increasing the social activity of Uzbek women, expanding literacy, and developing the national press.

Keywords: "Yangi Yul" magazine, women's press, Jadid movement, women's rights, Soviet ideology, national awakening, history of the Uzbek press, "Hujum" movement, women's education, journalism.

Introduction: In the first quarter of the 20th century, the processes of national awakening in Turkestan, the activation of the Jadid movement, and the establishment of Soviet power in subsequent years had a great impact on the socio-political life of the country. The collapse of the Russian Empire, the October Revolution, and subsequent political changes led to fundamental changes in all aspects of the region, especially in the lives of women. It was at such a difficult time that the idea of creating the first independent publication for Uzbek women was born. This idea was implemented in the early 1920s and later went down in history as the magazine "Yangi Yul". In the early 1920s, when the Soviet government in Turkestan intensified its policy of widely involving women in public life and forming them as subjects with equal rights with men, the need for a special women's publication increased even more. For this purpose, women's departments were established under the party central committees, and they initiated the publication of newspapers and magazines to carry out propaganda work. Ziyo Said's work "Materials for the History of the Uzbek Contemporary Press (1870–1927)" provides important information about the "New Way" publication. According to the author, this publication was first published in newspaper form on January 1, 1924, and was described as "the disseminator of the opinion of the women's department under the Central Committee of the Turkestan Hastilyun Party" [1].

The "New Way" newspaper was first published biweekly, and later weekly, and the main focus was on issues of women's freedom. Initially, the newspaper was distributed free of charge, and its circulation initially amounted to 500 copies, but later reached 2,000 copies. The publication was printed in the first printing house located in the old part of Tashkent. As Ziyo Said noted, due to the lack of female authors, male editors often participated in the preparation of newspaper materials. During the newspaper's activity, one of the main tasks was to increase women's literacy and encourage them to enlightenment. A few years later, the publication was transformed into a magazine.

About this process, Candidate of Philological Sciences Markhamat Alimova notes in her work "History of Women's Press in Uzbekistan" that the magazine

"Yangi Yol" began to be prepared for publication in November 1925 and its first issue was published in December [2]. The processes of national and territorial demarcation were also one of the factors that accelerated the creation of the magazine. Although the publication was subordinated to the ideological system of the Soviet era, it contained calls for women to become active and enter public life.

From December 1925, "Yangi Yol" began to be published as a full-fledged magazine. According to Ziyo Said, the magazine was published twice a month and its main goal was to arm women with knowledge, introduce them to cultural life, and prepare them for active participation in labor unions. In the early days, the magazine was edited by the famous poet Elbek[1].

There is information that the republican press helped improve the content, quality, language, and style of the magazine "Yangi Yol" with colorful articles about the impact of the network of female correspondents on women in the regions [2].

Starting from the 5th issue of 1926, the magazine had separate sections:

1. Health
2. Women's rights
3. Women's life
4. Against old beliefs
5. Child rearing
6. Useful advice
7. Questions and answers
8. Literature
9. Abroad
10. Mixing and matching
11. Attention, Yangi Yol!
12. Learn to read and write

Although there were many changes in the editorial board of the "Yangi Yol" publication during 1925-1927, it continued its activities. During this period, L. Karimova, Lolakhon Saifulina, Sobira Kholdorova worked. The editorial board members were Robiya Nosirova, Komiljon Alimov. From May 23, 1927, on the recommendation of the press department of the Central Committee of the CPSU (b), a new composition of the editorial board was established. Of these, the political department was headed by Tojikhon Shodieva[The first editor of the magazine "Yangi Yul" Tojikhon Shodieva was not a journalist. In determining the content, content, and direction of the publication, she was a reliable candidate who knew the politics of the time well. As one of the victims of the repressions of 1937, she spent 19 years of her life in the Russian forests. After her acquittal, she lived in Fergana.] was transferred.

The circulation of "Yangi Yol" increased from 2000 in 1925-1926, from 1000 to 1.5 thousand in 1927, and from 2250 to 7000 in 1928-1929. Until 1934, that is, until the closure of the "Yangi Yol" magazine, 99 issues were published.[3]

The government's move of "Yangi Yol" to Samarkand, along with other publications, in July 1927, and its return to Tashkent in February 1931 had a negative impact on the magazine's activities. In particular, the transition from Arabic graphics to Latin graphics, which was not yet well prepared, was due to the printing conditions in the early 1930s, the shortage of paper, and the decrease in the number of correspondents, which led to the decline of the "Yangi Yol" magazine in 1927-1929.

The team of the magazine "Yangi Yul" includes well-known publicists, writers and poets, representatives of women's departments, and students.

Among the Jadids, such enlighteners as Abdulla Qodiriy, Usmon Nosir, Botu, Elbek, Mirmuhsin Shermukhamedov, Zarif Bashirov, Mannon Ramz, Gayratiy, Erkin, Sultan Jura, and among the female artists Munavvara Bokieva, Robiya Nosirova, Muzayyana Alavia, Manzura Sobirqarieva - Aydin, Bahri Gulomava, Rahbar Alimova, Buvinisa Teshaboeva, Lazokat, Tuhfa Sadyk kyzi, Ra'nokhanim, Oftob Qarieva, Almatkhan, Munavvara Bokieva, Munisa Teshaboeva, Hamida Akhmadjonova, as well as the most common pseudonyms - Lazokat, Sharofat, Saodat, Oliya, Erkchi (Mahbuba Rahim kyzi).

In particular, a number of reports and articles by Mahbuba Rahim kyzy, such as “Against the Two Diseases of the Old Life” [5], “When the Red Ribbons Are Spinning” [6], “Towards Important Issues” [7], “Let’s Give Our Schools a Healthy Education” [8], “We Need Work for Mothers, and Portable Swings for Children” [9], are published in the pages of “Yangi Yol” and are devoted to the pressing issues of the time. A number of poems, such as “Let It Be, Let It Be” [10], “On the Path of My Wish” [11], and “Spring” [12], are also published. The magazine published at least 3-4 poetic pieces in each issue.

We found that articles on the following topics were regularly published in the “Yangi Yol” magazine:

1. Women's social activities: articles encouraging women to participate in the production process, work in factories and mills;
2. The “Hujum” movement
3. Women's equal rights with men;
4. Family and marriage issues: critical articles against

early marriage, polygamy, superstition and backwardness;

5. Education, science and enlightenment: attracting girls to school, eliminating illiteracy, opening new schools and courses, updating curricula;

6. National culture and language: increasing the prestige of the Uzbek language and other topics.

Articles devoted to the “Hujum” movement in 1927-1928 make up the majority of the magazine's materials. For example, in the goals and objectives of such politically charged articles, news and columns as “Attack”, “Women’s Issue”, “Brief”, “Women’s Life”, “The Exit of the Burqa”, “The Burqa in Central Asia”, one can see that the ideology of the Soviets and the ideas of national awakening are closely intertwined [13]. On the one hand, the magazine articles demanded that women abandon old superstitions and customs, and on the other hand, they also covered the issues of preserving national values, developing the Uzbek language and culture. The authors urged representatives of different nationalities to learn the Uzbek language and promoted it as a means of common communication. This was an important step in the development of the new Uzbek national press.

In particular, we will analyze the article titled "Women in History," published in the magazine's 3rd issue of 1928. In terms of content and style, the article can be interpreted as an example of journalism during the transition from Jadidism to Soviet ideology. It sharply criticizes the condition of Central Asian women as a result of old customs and superstitions: “No religion or law in the history of the world has ever resolved the issue of women in a way that is true and humane. When we look at the condition of Central Asian women in particular, we see very tragic and heartbreaking scenes. There is no doubt that these conditions – old customs, old practices – are a form of Islamic religion. When a husband dies, burying his wife alive with him and burying his daughters alive, men who are free to take wives as long as they can and kill them if they want – these rights granted to them were a form of slightly simplified customs and traditions of Arab culture. The people of Central Asia were not left out of the process of practicing on these principles and modifying them to suit their own circumstances – they completely excluded women from life”[13].

At the same time, it can be seen that the criticism in the article is directed not at the true essence of the Islamic religion, but at the customs that have been mixed with local customs over the centuries, and are disguised as religion. This means that the author's critical thinking, characteristic of Jadidism, was preserved in his thoughts: "They allocated special inner courtyards for women and locked them in narrow and airless houses. Fathers, in accordance with this custom, did not spare their beloved daughters, but sold them to old men aged 50-60. They threw their wives aside like worn-out clothes and bought young girls as if they were buying new dresses. The Soviet government and the Communist Party completely eliminated the inequalities that had existed between men and women for centuries, and gave women their share of life and livelihood. So, women were given everything that history had not given them by the Soviet government. Now women must accept and implement these things"[].

The thoughts at the end of the article lead to the conclusion that the issue of women's liberation was completely connected with the activities of the Soviet government, moving away from the enlightened and reformist spirit and into the spirit of ideological propaganda.

Foreign specialists and scholars have also conducted research on the magazine "Yangi Yul". In particular, Michael James Erdman, curator of the Turkic language collections of the British Library, Doctor of Science, in his study of the content of four issues of the magazine "Yangi Yul", a monthly publication for women and girls published by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan in 1926-1927, noted that the publication was printed in old Arabic script, and that the materials were supplemented with photographs and drawings. He also notes that the magazine was intended to inform women about news in the field of education, to broaden their worldview, and even included articles about the participation of European women in "unfeminine" work, and that the photographs depicted Muslim women with their heads uncovered, smiling, operating mechanisms, and laying bricks. The researcher notes that the publication was broader than the traditional household sphere, in the spirit of propaganda, that the articles were rich in poems that glorified “proletarian and peasant” women, that they told about “the importance of land reform for working women, working women fighting against the faceless bourgeoisie and the rich,” and that it provided not only local topics, but also information about the participation of European women in various fields. For example, photographs depicting women operating mechanisms or participating in construction work were a great novelty for Uzbek society at that time [14]. At the same time, he noted that the magazine contained general informational materials - for example, it provided information about other ethnic groups, astronomical discoveries, and Egyptian history (such as the miracle of Tutankhamun’s tomb). As a result, Erdman concludes: “These periodicals were intended

to educate women, broaden their worldview, and acquaint them with general (mainly Western) culture."[16]

Researcher Zaynab Muhammad Dost, in her article "Women's Issues in the Uzbek Press in the 1920s-2020s," draws attention to the work of some women who participated in the Jadid movement in the Yangi Yol magazine. "They also participated in social and political processes and promoted the expansion of women's status in society. In particular, they promoted reforms in the field of education and were inspired by the Jadids in terms of the equal distribution of traditional gender roles in restrictive Muslim societies."[15]

Marianne Kamp, a researcher on Central Asia at Indiana University, discusses the changing role of Turkestan women, particularly Uzbek women, under various governments since the 19th century, their place in society, and their activities in her book "The new woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism." The work is valuable for its comprehensive coverage of the social image of Uzbek women, which was shaped by the political changes of the colonial period, the Jadid movement, and the Soviet regime. In this work, Kamp comprehensively analyzes the life of women in Muslim society at the beginning of the 20th century. Her research is notable not only for its focus on collecting historical data, but also for its in-depth study of sources that directly reflect the lives of women of that time.

The fifth chapter of the work provides a comprehensive analysis of the magazine "Yangi Yul" and its socio-ideological mission. The author describes this publication as a platform where the positions of the Jadids and communists were, in a certain sense, combined. In her opinion, both movements - Jadids and communists - were supporters of reform, that is, modernizers, who considered many traditional practices of women to be backward and aimed to involve women in modern life by eliminating this backwardness.

Kamp cites as an example a story published in the magazine. It depicts women gathering in courtyards to cook, sing, and dance on the occasion of the spring festival, "Sayil" (meaning "Navruz"). During the festival, women are seen as a ritual of purification by jumping over a fire. Both Jadids and communists condemned this practice as superstition. In particular, Jadids considered it an incorrect religious belief, while communists considered it a remnant of illiteracy and illogicality. Kamp emphasizes through this example that the magazine's goal was to rid women of racial and religious prejudices and to modernize their minds. This melodramatic story, published in "Yangi Yul," clearly demonstrates the idea of reforming Uzbek society and prioritizing reason and knowledge through the death of a girl who jumped into a bonfire in order to cleanse herself of her sins. According to the researcher, the newspaper and its editors demonstrated a combination of Jadidist thinking and communist ideology at some points. The magazine's articles on women's literacy, the restriction of early marriage, the reform of marriage and family relations, and the moral and legal status of women were in harmony with the traditions of the Jadids, while also supporting the policies of the Communist Party.[17] Thus, the emergence of "Yangi Yul" marked the beginning of a new stage in the lives of women in Uzbekistan. It became not only a propaganda organ of the party, but also a national press, the first step towards women's liberation and enlightenment. This process laid a solid foundation for the magazine's transformation into a comprehensive socio-spiritual platform in subsequent years. Among its editors and creative staff were progressive women of the time, as well as supporters of communist ideology and enlighteners inspired by Jadid ideas.

By 1929, major changes had occurred in the policies of "Yangi Yul" and in the general social environment. The politics of the time were of paramount importance, and the women's press was forced to intensify propaganda in a new direction. In 1930, the magazine began to be published under the name "Bright Life." The new name was based on the idea of "the brightness of Soviet life."

The pages of "Bright Life" increasingly contained articles encouraging women to work on collective and state farms, reports on socialist competitions, and interviews with heroes of production. However, the magazine's educational roots did not completely disappear: topics such as the eradication of illiteracy, the expansion of girls' schools, and the improvement of reading culture continued.

In the 1950s, the magazine's name and content were updated and it began to be called "Women of Uzbekistan". During this period, the women's press became not only a platform for propaganda, but also a platform for the preservation of national culture and traditions, the development of art and literature. The publication of scientific and practical articles, folklore materials, advice for young families, and medical information further expanded the circle of its readers.

The magazine began to be published in May 1966 under the name "Saodat". The main motto of "Saodat" is "the spiritual perfection of a modern woman", and it continues its activities today. This continuous development path shows that the ideological and spiritual movement that began in "Yangi Yul" has

become a historical legacy for more than a century.

In keeping with the spirit of the times, it was published under the titles “Yangi Yul” from 1925-1934, “Yorkin Nushup” from 1936-1937, “Yorkin Hayot” from 1936-1941, “Uzbekistan Khotin-Kizlari” from October 1950 to April 1966, and “Saodat” continuously from May 1966 to the present.

“Yangi Yul” and its successor publications served to radically change the position of women in Uzbek society. At the beginning of the 20th century, educational opportunities for women were limited, and participation in the political arena was almost impossible. Through the magazine, thousands of girls were directed to literacy courses or new schools. Through articles on various topics, practical advice, and training programs published in it, women were encouraged not only to gain knowledge, but also to defend their rights. The conclusion is that the magazine “Yangi Yul” played an incomparable role in the spiritual, social, and cultural upliftment of Uzbek women in the 20th century. Although it served various political eras and ideological stages in content, its main goal was to increase the place and status of women in society, and to expand their knowledge and thinking.

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