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MARYAM SULTONMURODOVA AND KHAYRINISO MAJIDKHONOVA'S EDUCATION IN GERMANY: PURPOSE, ACTIVITIES, AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

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Abstract: This article examines the educational experiences of Maryam Sultonmurodova and Khayriniso Majidkhonova in Germany within the broader context of the intellectual modernization of Turkestan in the 1920s. Particular attention is paid to the institutional environment in which they studied, the professional competencies they acquired, and the ways in which European educational practices influenced their later work in Central Asia. The study also considers their participation in pedagogy, medicine, journalism, and public life as evidence of the emergence of a new generation of professionally educated women. Drawing on biographical, archival, and recent scholarly materials, the article evaluates their role as mediators of knowledge between European educational institutions and Uzbek society. It further highlights how their international academic experience, initially regarded as an instrument of social progress, was later reinterpreted negatively during the period of Soviet political repression. The biographies of Sultonmurodova and Majidkhonova therefore provide an important basis for reassessing the contribution of women to the Jadid intellectual environment, professional modernization, and the formation of modern female agency in Central Asia.

Keywords: Jadid women, Maryam Sultonmurodova, Khayriniso Majidkhonova, Germany, overseas education, intellectual modernization, knowledge transfer, women's professional education, Central Asia, Soviet repression.

The Jadid movement played a significant role in the cultural and intellectual transformation of Central Asia in the early twentieth century. One of its important aims was to promote modern education and to prepare a new generation of educated specialists who could contribute to the social and cultural development of the region. Within this process, the participation of women was especially significant, as access to advanced education for women was still highly limited. Maryam Sultonmurodova and Khayriniso Majidkhonova were among the pioneering young women from Turkestan who continued their education in Germany in the 1920s. Their studies abroad reflected the Jadids' broader vision of national progress through modern knowledge, professional training, and international educational experience. The educational journeys of these women were not only important for their personal intellectual development but also demonstrated the growing role of women in the modernization of Uzbek society. Therefore, studying the purpose of their education in Germany, their subsequent activities, and the historical significance of their experiences provides valuable insight into the contribution of Jadid women to national enlightenment and social progress.

Maryam Sultonmurodova's educational path in Germany developed through several successive stages rather than through a single institution. After arriving in Germany, she first completed preparatory language training connected with Berlin University during 1922–1923. This stage was

essential because further professional study required a sufficient command of German. In 1924, she entered the Victoria Teachers' Seminary in Darmstadt, where she studied until 1926. The choice of teacher training was closely related to the practical needs of Central Asian society at the time: modern schools required instructors familiar with European teaching methods, languages, and new approaches to education. Her studies therefore prepared her not merely for personal advancement but for professional work in education and public enlightenment.

Maryam's years in Germany were also marked by considerable financial difficulties. Evidence from the period shows that the students sent abroad did not always receive stable financial support. Sattor Jabbor, one of the Turkestani students in Germany, wrote under the pen name Ertoy in the September 2, 1924 issue of Turkiston that Maryam was experiencing material difficulties despite continuing her education. This contemporary evidence is significant because it demonstrates that her European education was achieved under conditions of uncertainty rather than privilege. Her persistence therefore reflected a strong commitment to completing professional training despite economic obstacles.

After her studies in Darmstadt, Sultonmurodova continued practical teacher training at a women's school in Potsdam in 1926–1927. This component of her education provided direct exposure to classroom practice and the organization of girls' education in Germany. Her professional interests subsequently broadened beyond pedagogy. In the autumn of 1927 she attended a six-month nursing course in Berlin associated in Uzbek historical sources with Professor Finkelstein. This combination of pedagogical and elementary medical training is important for understanding her later activities in Uzbekistan, where she worked not only in education and journalism but also briefly in the field of maternal and child health.

Khayriniso Majidkhonova followed a similarly multidisciplinary educational trajectory. Sources indicate that in 1923–1924 she studied at a German-language school for foreigners in Berlin and obtained a certificate confirming her secondary-level preparation. Between 1924 and 1926, she studied German language and literature at a teachers' seminary in Darmstadt. During the following two years, she completed practical training in educational institutions in Berlin. At the same time, she attended a private school for the training of medical personnel associated with Dr. Fekkelmann. Thus, the available evidence suggests that her education in Germany combined language preparation, pedagogy, and practical medical instruction rather than consisting exclusively of university-level medical education.

This distinction is particularly important for an accurate interpretation of Majidkhonova's biography. Her German training introduced her to medical knowledge and professional practices, but her formal medical education continued after her return to Uzbekistan. She later studied at the Tashkent Medical Institute and completed her education there in 1935. Therefore, Germany should be regarded as the formative stage of her professional development, while her qualification as a physician was consolidated through subsequent medical study in Tashkent. Such a trajectory illustrates how knowledge acquired abroad could be combined with local institutional training.

The German experience of the two women was distinguished by its practical orientation. Their study programs included language acquisition, professional specialization, and direct practice in educational or medical settings. This structure differed significantly from a purely theoretical education.Maryam acquired experience in teaching and nursing, while Khayriniso combined

pedagogical preparation with medical training. Their educational paths consequently reveal the broader logic behind sending young Central Asians abroad: the objective was to return with skills that could be applied directly in schools, healthcare institutions, publishing, and other areas of public life.

A notable feature of both women's experiences was their exposure to European institutional culture. Living and studying in Berlin, Darmstadt, and Potsdam placed them in environments where women were considerably more visible in education and professional life than in the society from which they had come. This experience likely expanded their understanding of women's social possibilities. However, their subsequent careers demonstrate that they did not simply imitate European models. Instead, they attempted to employ the professional knowledge gained abroad within the specific educational, cultural, and healthcare needs of Uzbekistan.

Their intellectual development also extended beyond their official courses. During the summer of 1927, Maryam Sultonmurodova and Khayriniso Majidkhonova travelled to Paris between late July and August. Historical accounts record that they briefly encountered émigré political figures Ahmad Naim and Mustafa Chokay during this trip. There is no reliable evidence that this short encounter constituted political cooperation. Nevertheless, the episode would later be interpreted by Soviet security institutions as evidence against them. The fact that an ordinary European journey could later be transformed into a political accusation reveals how the meaning of international education changed dramatically under the increasingly repressive Soviet political environment.

After returning in 1928, the two women pursued different professional paths. Maryam initially faced difficulties obtaining stable employment. In February 1929 she found work as a nurse at an institution under the Uzbek health authorities concerned with the protection of mothers and children. Her German nursing preparation thus had a direct practical application. She subsequently worked in educational institutions before becoming increasingly involved in journalism and literature. By the mid-1930s, she was associated with Guliston and later worked as a literary employee for the women's magazine "Yorqin turmush".

Sultonmurodova's journalistic activity is particularly significant because it demonstrates that her contribution was not limited to formal employment. Historical studies identify her as the author of articles, essays, literary works, and translations from German literature. Works attributed to her include such stories as "Mehr ko'zda", "Qalbim nidosi", "Rahmat desinlar", "Majnuntol, Karvonlar kelganda", "Kutilmagan baxt", and "Betamiz yigit". Her participation in the press created another channel through which the intellectual experience gained abroad could be transmitted to Uzbek readers. Moreover, her engagement with women's social problems linked journalism with the broader educational mission that had shaped her earlier life.

Khayriniso Majidkhonova's professional trajectory was more directly connected with medicine. Following her return in 1928, she began working as a physician in a rest facility for teachers in Tashkent. After completing the Tashkent Medical Institute in 1935, she continued working as a therapist and doctor, including at the outpatient clinic of the Uzbek footwear trust named after Fayzulla Khojayev. Sources also associate her activities with medical examinations of children, including efforts directed toward children living outside major urban centers. These activities show that the knowledge she acquired was translated into practical healthcare work rather than remaining

solely an element of her personal biography.Majidkhonova's career is especially important from the perspective of women's professional history.

At a time when the number of locally trained female medical professionals remained limited, her transition from international study to professional medical practice represented a new model of female participation in public institutions. She belonged to a generation for whom education was becoming a means of entering fields traditionally dominated by men. Her biography therefore connects the history of Jadid enlightenment with the early development of professionally educated Uzbek women. By the late 1930s, the foreign education that had once been regarded as a valuable source of professional expertise became politically dangerous. Soviet repression increasingly targeted intellectuals who had studied abroad, maintained international contacts, or had connections with pre-Soviet and early Soviet reformist circles. Both Sultonmurodova and Majidkhonova became victims of this transformation.

Khayriniso Majidkhonova was arrested in 1937 and accused of maintaining nationalist and anti-Soviet connections, with her years of study in Germany used as a central element of the case constructed against her. Soviet investigators claimed that her foreign education and contacts demonstrated espionage activity. She was eventually sentenced to death and executed on October 9, 1938. Decades later, after the collapse of the Soviet political framework that had produced these accusations, the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan rehabilitated her in 1999.

Maryam Sultonmurodova was also subjected to prolonged repression. Her German education, European contacts, journalistic work, and the brief 1927 encounter in Paris were used to construct allegations of nationalism and espionage. She was imprisoned during the repression period and, after completing a lengthy sentence, was arrested again in 1949 and exiled to the Krasnoyarsk region. Her case was eventually reconsidered after Stalin's death. On August 2, 1957, the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR cleared her of the accusations. She survived the repressions and lived until 1971.

The different outcomes of the two women's lives demonstrate the destructive effect of Stalinist repression on the first generation of internationally educated Central Asian women. Majidkhonova's medical career was ended permanently by execution, while Sultonmurodova lost years of professional and creative activity through imprisonment, exile, and continued political pressure. In both cases, qualifications acquired for the purpose of social development were reinterpreted as evidence of political unreliability.

Recent research has added an important new dimension to the study of their lives. In 2026, reports concerning research conducted in German archives announced the identification of handwritten materials produced by Turkestani students, including essays written by Maryam Sultonmurodova and Khayriniso Majidkhonova while they were studying in Darmstadt. Among the materials are compositions dated November 26, 1925, including texts on the subject of "My Homeland," in which the young women wrote about Khorezm and Tashkent. The importance of these documents lies in the fact that they provide evidence produced by the women themselves during their European education rather than retrospective descriptions created decades later.

These newly identified materials have the potential to change the methodology used to study Jadid women. Earlier accounts were often reconstructed predominantly through Soviet

investigation files, later memoirs, or biographical studies. Handwritten academic work from the period of their education allows researchers to examine their own vocabulary, perception of homeland, intellectual interests, and level of linguistic adaptation. Such sources make it possible to study Sultonmurodova and Majidkhonova as active intellectual subjects rather than only as victims of repression.

The surviving evidence consequently reveals two interconnected forms of historical significance. First, their education demonstrates an early attempt to create a professionally trained female intelligentsia capable of working in education, healthcare, journalism, and public life. Second, their fate shows the vulnerability of this internationally educated generation under an authoritarian political system. Maryam Sultonmurodova and Khayriniso Majidkhonova should therefore be examined not simply as exceptional women who studied in Europe, but as participants in a broader process of transferring knowledge, professional practices, and new models of female intellectual activity from Europe to Central Asia.

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