

FIRST BRITISH ANTHROPOLOGIST WOMAN IN TURKESTAN: A. M.B. MEAKIN'S GREAT CONTRIBUTION IN LEARNING WOMEN'S LIFE IN TURKESTAN

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Abstract: *The history of women's life in Turkestan until the beginning of the XX century is one of the understudied topics. There are many reasons such as the deficiency of sources and poor activity of women in political and economic life. The only sources that provide information about Turkestani women are few waqf documents, jung works and some qadi books. These sources mainly disclose the issues connected with women's donation, heir and divorce. Occasionally, the works of poetesses could be sources. Opening the routes to Central Asia by European travelers created a favorable condition for European female scholars and enthusiasts' penetration into Turkestan. This resulted the appearance of historical information about Turkestani women in travelogues and other books.*

Between XVI and early XX centuries, there were no direct participation of women in political and economic policy of the country despite their status. Even female representatives of royal families were aside any state policy. This is also one of the factors why there is very little information about Turkestani women in historical sources.

Being a woman, A. Meakin had an opportunity to be close enough to women's life. One can find hardly any information about women scattered in various sources. For instance, Ujfalvy provides basic description, Mac Gahan gives some information about women's life in Khivan harem, M. Rickmers gives about their housing and etc. Unlike abovementioned authors, A. Meakin gives detailed information about Turkestani women such as their housework, make-up, dressing, appearance and types, women baths, and samples of stories about women. Describing girls'

education, she eliminates the view that all Turkestani women were illiterate and they were not allowed to go to schools.

Keywords: *Annette Meakin, women, waqf, household economy, girls schools, education, bath, cooking, Turkestan*

Though women had great role and influence on political, social and economic life of Turkestan, little was written about them in the sources that were familiar to Europeans in the late XIX – early XX centuries. However, the interest of westerners to oriental women, in particular the women of Turkestan was high due to the highly skilled descriptions of eastern poets. Since eastern poetry started to be translated in western languages, the description of women and expression of love towards them rose the interest in western world. Representations of Muslim women depended on the aesthetic tastes, education, and cultural and socio-political ideas of the observer. Many Europeans imagined oriental women within the dreamy space of the harem (Melentev, 2020. P. 50.). British traveler and state official G.N. Curzon notes as follow: “I have frequently been asked since my return is women. it is the question which an Englishman always seems to ask first what the women of Bokhara were like? I am utterly unable to say. I never saw the features of one between the ages of ten and fifty” (Curzon. 1889. p. 174). The writings of Alexander Burns (Bukhara) might also arise the interest of the westerners to Central Asian women. He stated the well-known couplet of Hafiz, that paints the beautiful Toorkee girl of Shiraz, near Samarcand, ... Roxana, whom Alexander married in Transoxiana, was the most beautiful woman whom the Greeks had seen in Asia, after the wife of Darius (Burns, 1834. P. 265). The marriage of Roxana with Alexander is given many studies.

Although some researches have been held on the women's history in Turkestan in the late XIX – early XX centuries, they do not cover the analyses of the description of female life in the area. Of the contemporaries, D.A. Alimova studied women's life in Central Asia (Alimova, 1991), G. Sultonova and S. Shadmanova (2017) classified and thoroughly analyzed descriptively the sources illustrating women issues. Besides that, D.Kh. Ziyaeva, S. Shadmanova contributed to the study of women's education and medical care in the late XIX – early XX centuries.

However, these sources partly or sometimes hardly any cite to the information given in the works of western travelers.

It should be exceptionally emphasized the works devoted to the role of women in economic and charity works. In particular, N. Khidirova works in family marriage relations, and her and N. Ismatova's researches on women of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand khanates, who endowed their property such as land, stores, handicraftsmanship shops as waqf of madrassas, mosques and other institutions, written on the basis of archival documents, manuscripts and qadi registers are clear example of it.

Furthermore, in the works of foreign scholars, the sense of researches on women of XIX – early XX centuries are considerably distinctive from the ones above. For instance, Melentev attempts to discuss the use of native women in the context of erotic life without the study of local sources. It is seen high exaggeration in the Melentev's work. Though he uses "eroticism" in the title, the text does not fully cover information discussed in the article. Despite this, his article is very good since the author analyzes whether the photos were spontaneous or staged. He notes that it is not difficult to notice that the models are frozen in uncomfortable positions. The appearance of Muslim women, presented with exposed faces and heads covered with only headscarves or skullcaps, and their placement at home, against the background of a plain, clean wall, emphasizes this artificiality (Melentev 2020, p. 54).

Turkestan became one of the destinies where hundreds of Europeans and tens of Americans visited in XIX – early XX centuries and more accurate data is given by S. Gorshenina. According to her, while in the first half of the 19th century (1800-1850) only 36 men visited Central Asia, in the 1890s alone there were 289 (not to mention the numerous tourists, who were not registered by name, but only under the name of their guide, with a brief mention of their approximate number). Among the foreigners travelling around the Bukharan Emirate and Turkestan in the period, 1890-1898, there were: 75 Englishmen, 70 Germans, 57 Frenchmen, 24 citizens of Austria-Hungary, 15 Americans, 7 Danes, 4 Belgians, 4 Italians, 3 Swiss and 1 Spaniard (Gorshenina 2004, p. 78). As a result, there have been published 100 of books, 1000 of articles in journals and newspapers which was a lot more than all books written on Turkestan by European prior to that (Ziyaeva 2018. p. 8).

Of course, these works provide data and information about almost all issues of Turkestan. One can find ethnographic chapters, trade routes, markets, taxes and customs tariffs, daily life, reception ceremonies, governance, hospitality, native skills of preserving different sources for other seasons, historical buildings, environment, mountains, flora and fauna, peasantry, horticulture, sericulture, stock breeding etc. However, women's issue is one of the least illustrated topics among them. There are several factors of the issue: 1) Most travelers were men and they did not have any chance to have a conversation with women; 2) religious factor; 3) involvement of women in household tasks and to go out under a veil in high need. However, it was only Annette Mary Budgett Meakin among western travelers who was able to overcome these barriers.

Annette Meakin with her mother are described the first British women reaching Japan through the Siberia. She came to Central Asia twice in 1896 and in 1902. She was accompanied by her brother in the former travel and by her mother in the latter. She is the author of more than a dozen of books such as "A Ribbon of Iron" (1901), "In Russian Turkestan: A Garden of Asia" (1903), "Russia Travels and Studies" (1906), "Women in Transition" (1907), "Galicia, the Switzerland of Spain" (1909) etc.

Outdoor dressing was one of the most discussed issues on women in the works of European travelers. Almost all of them spent some words and ink on the issue. The outdoor clothing style of women varied on the basis of the lifestyle they had. Therefore, the description of settled women's fashion and values differed from nomadic people who mostly followed adats [customs]. A. Meakin commences her chapter with the description of women in which she provides an argument with a Russian on their clothing [Meakin 1903. P. 106]. When she rose the question on the future of sart [the term sart was used for the native people living mostly in urban and settled areas] women to her Russian acquaintances, the answer was astonishing. "They can have no future as long as their women are veiled", was the reply. "Russia should have commanded them to unveil their women from the first; now it would be a more difficult matter". This indicates what Russians expected from their government relating to native women. Besides that, the author's contribution on women's clothing on the basis of conversation with an educated mudarris of a madrassa in

Kokand illustrates the viewpoint and thought of native scholars and sharia on the issue. For instance, the mudarris stated that it [veiling] was coming from Muhammad's (pbuh) daughters who had done so. Among the settled Muslim women, only the girls aged under 10 or women aged over 50 could go out unveiled (Curzon 1889, p. 175). Burns, while describing Turkmen women, notes them to be remarkably fair, and often handsome in appearance, the men and women's separately having meals (Burns 2, pp. 61-62). Besides, he states that the customs of the Toorkmuns did not differ from those about Bokhara, only that they more nearly resembled citizens. The women concealed the face below the mouth (Burns 2. 1834. P. 112). Mir Izzat-Ullah coming to Central Asia in 1812-1813 by the request of W. Moorcroft attempted to give a short contribution on women's outdoor clothing. According to him, women were dressed in an under-shirt, open from the neck downwards; this was braided round the edge with black, and over it is a large garment called a "furjee"; their feet were covered with stockings and boots, the latter either of cloth or leather, beautifully embroidered. The hair was worn in two plaits hanging down behind, and a silk handkerchief completes the head-dress. Covered with a large sheet to conceal the face they wander about the town at will either on foot or on horseback (Mir Izzat-Ulloh. 1872. Pp. 67-68)

However, Annette Meakin missed the description of outdoor clothing of nomadic women and settled unveiled women. It could be linked with the areas and means she travelled through and by respectively. Thus, the other sources are supportive on the issue. For example, Ronalshay states that The Kirgiz women were bright and hospitable, and, though Mohammedans, did not cover the face in the presence of a stranger, but, on the contrary, welcomed him and entertained him hospitably (Ronalshay, 1904, p. 218). Mac Gahan provides an unveiled mature women's painting too (Mac Gahan, 1876). It should be noted that it was possible to meet unveiled women in urban areas. It is mostly connected with liulis [gypsies] living or wandering there (Schuyler, 1875, V. I. P. 36; Clarke, 1879. P. 6). Isabelle Phibbs states the Turcoman women to be unveiled (Phibbs, 1889. 69.), but wear a shawl over their heads (Phibbs, 1899. 97.).

Vambery writes that he met women wearing lofty globular turbans, consisting of from fifteen to twenty Russian kerchiefs (Vambery, 1864.

133) and the wearing turbans is also mentioned by E. Schuyler (Schuyler V. I, 1875. p. 36). Meeting women in streets was not frequent and describing their attire required thorough observation and collecting information. Turkmen women dressed themselves for holidays, they were accustomed also to bind a shawl round the waist over their long shift, which hangs down in two slips; high-heeled boots, red or yellow, are also indispensable; but the objects that were most coveted, and that gave them most pleasure, were the trinkets, rings for neck, ear, or nose, and etuis for amulets, and resembling cartouch-boxes, which were often seen hanging down on their left side and on their right: as with us the ribbons which were used in the different orders of knighthood. These accompany every movement of the body with a clear sound, as it were, of bells (Vambéry, 1864. 315). Besides, the women in Khiva Khanate were dressed the same as the men, but had their heads and necks swathed in loose folds of white cotton cloth, so as to make a sort of bib and turban at the same time. There was an influence of women's clothing on the style of girls' attire (Schuyler, 1875, V. I. P. 36).

The education of native women in Turkestan is insufficiently highlighted in the works of most European travelers. It was an obscure until recently due to the ideology of communistic regime since they wanted to justify Russian invasion as civilization bringers. Even it was inappropriately interpreted to western visitors by Russian officials in Turkestan. This could be associated with such factors as the lack of access to direct communication with women, finding their education uninterested for their readers and purposes, Russians' effort to stress and notify discriminating information to the travelers about women's education. However, the third one was not completely efficacious for considerate Europeans.

Education was taught women in different ways such as teaching certain handicraftsmanship, how to read and write at home, at school or at a shop. The information provided by British H. Lansdell matches to the first factor. Being a man and having no wide opportunity to direct communication with native women, he states very rough information. According to him, education among the Mussulman women was at a very low ebb. There were, nevertheless, in most towns one or two bibi-kalfas, whose duty it is to teach girls, for the most part those of the rich (Lansdell

II. Pp. 123). However, A. Meakin, being a woman and breaking many barriers, provides opposite information. Here it becomes clear that Russians misinformed the guests in order to justify their invasion. For instance, when she wanted to get information and native women's school, she was disparagingly answered by many Russians living in Turkestan assuring her that such a thing as a girls' school did not exist among the Sarts (Meakin, 1903. P. 87.).

She could not hide her astonishment when she was shown girls schools in Samarkand and Kokand. One of the factors that surprised her was ladies of the native higher class, that each had been to school in her time, and that some had even kept up their studies after marriage. For example, when she was in Samarkand, she was able to meet the chief qadi whose wife was a schoolmistress. He boasted of his wife to read a lot of books and having read more than 2000 ones. This is a prove that some women in Turkestan acquired considerably deep knowledge.

The author also gives the method how female schoolmistress were prepared and the hierarchy of the system. For instance, the schoolmistress in Samarkand was the daughter of a learned woman, who in her time had a learned mother, who also had kept a school. The profession of schoolmistress passed down from mother to daughter. When a schoolmistress had no daughter of her own, she trained one of her pupils to help her when she grew old, and took her place when she died (Meakin, 1903. P. 87).

There were some occasions that schools were enrolled girls at very early age. This is mostly because it was a preparation, adaptation and foundation period for little girls in that period. They were accustomed to learning school norms and familiarizing with upcoming process. Besides, boys could be met in girl's schools (Meakinn, 1889. P. 88). In this case, boys should nor have reached the age of puberty.

Meakin's experience at girls' school in Kokand also provides interesting information about how fee was paid, schoolmistress's family background and her quick-thinking skills. For instance, the teachers at school did not have any fixed salary. In most cases, teaching fee was not paid in cash. Instead, the fee was paid in presents, clothes and sometimes food. Besides, every success of the boy was granted by presents to

teachers. Having forty five schoolchildren, the schoolmistress in Kokand was paid the tuition fee in clothes (Meakin, 1903. P. 91).

The education in girls' schools normally lasted for 5 years and some studied for 8 years. This is connected with the capability of the attendees (Meakin, 1903. P. 92). Besides that, education was not compulsory. Most girls could halt their education as soon as they married and only some kept studying.

Unfortunately, Meakin does not mention the teachers' names and limits herself with illustrating their qualities. Therefore, it is impossible to bring schoolmistresses' names and we have to use "she". For instance, when she was at schoolmistress in Kokand, she asked her to write a sentence and the teacher did so. After a while, A. Meakin showed it for translation to a Russian who knew local language. The response was that it was very well-written and the translation was "My school has had a visitor to-day". It was surprising for her since she had thought it to be a quotation from Quran (Meakin, 1903. 92). Furthermore, the literacy of women is evidenced by a roundtable conversation of A. Meakin with native girls. When she asked a question, a girl did not just answer, but took books from a pile of books in the room and brought them to her (Meakin, 1903. 101).

The value of Annette Meakin's work in researching women's life in Turkistan is that there are other five chapters directly shedding light the child birth, women's housework, marriage, cooking and most interestingly, baths. The chapter "Childhood" makes us familiar with customs and rituals connected with children. It starts with cradles and cradling. Besides, the chapter gives information about the consequences of early marriages, death of both mothers and babies, the celebration of child birth, inappropriate interpretations of early marriages such as making money of the marriage of young daughters, fears of girls' getting spoiled (Meakin, 1903. 97).

Role of women in house hold economy in both nomads and settled people community was immense in that period. It is clearly seen in the works of many westerners. However, the most written issue is carpet making. However, women were main actors of embroidery, sewing, knitting etc. Evidences of A. Meakin are worth getting information. For instance, a woman she met in Kokand acquired the arts of embroidery and

calligraphy. Despite having a child to care and only at her fourteen, she earned a good deal of money. This also testifies the girl's abilities of reading and writing. Embroidery products of girls were very beautiful and thus were a great demand in Russian cities. Some were used as prayer carpets as well. The design was developed by old aged women who were very skilled. Though only the lowest stratum of women was involved in agriculture, they never did digging or other hard work. They gathered the harvest, and mostly picked cotton (Meakin, 1903. Pp. 102-105). Besides, women could make money of facilities they ran for women. For example, a bath owner allowed his wife to run the bath on women's day and all the money she made was hers (Meakin, 1903. P. 155).

None of the works of western travelers gives a readers such rich information about the design, furniture, arrangement of interior houses (women's residential part), home utensils and behavior as Meakin did. For example, when there were two pairs of shoes outside a wife's room, the husband did not enter.

Another interesting fact is about women's hygiene. When it goes about their washing heads, they mostly used katik or boiled sour milk and the splendid of their hair was admired by Russian women and they adopted the sour-milk process. Besides, their teeth were also well preserved and were beautiful. Because they were used to rubbing their teeth after every meal. A. Meakins states: "I do not think I met one who had not pretty and regular teeth" (Meakin. 1903. P. 123). The complexion of native women in Tashkent was charming although they did not use any kind of powder. When they were asked if they had used any, pretty women never paint, only the ugly ones do, was the answer. The best complexions were in Fergana, where painting the face, except on the marriage-day, was a thing unheard of in respectable families. However, paint and powder were used by Samarkand or Bokhara women (Meakin, 1903. P. 125). It was associated with climatic and environmental conditions. Because, the weather is dry, hot winds in the summer, chilly wind in the winter are frequent in these areas. Besides that, the volume of dust has been higher in these areas comparing with Tashkent and Fergana valley. Henna was a widespread powder to paint fingers and palms.

Women clothes in Turkestan varied in fashion in different parts. In Tashkent and in Namangan, ladies wearing short silk tunics over silken

robes, the, last like those worn by the men; others wore loose jackets with sleeves cut after the fashion of those wide ones. In Bokhara no short overgarment was worn, but the robe was much wider and shorter, and shows a great deal more of the high indoor boots, which were especially elaborate in consequence (Meakin 1903, 31).

The concept that native women in Turkestan had oppressive life in the XIX – early XX centuries and they could hardly any go outside should be denied. As is seen in researches, women were active enough in donation, family economy, education and other spheres in Turkestan. Even some of them had the right of voting in elections in the late XIX century. One more point is that they regularly went to baths on a regular day allowed for them throughout Turkestan. For instance, baths in Turkestan cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara had floors covered with marbles (Meakin, 1903. P. 120).

In conclusion, it is noteworthy to state that Annette Meakin's work is very valuable to study women's life in Turkestan in the late XIX - early XX centuries. Analyzing her book, it becomes clear that Turkestan women were not so illiterate as they were described in colonial and Soviet sources. Their life was not totally framed by their husbands and those, who dealt with handicraftsmanship, contributed to increase their family income. Besides, some of them were not only literate, but they acquired other spheres that were economically beneficial. The existence of women baths, the development of other facilities prove women gatherings in the very period.

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