

# The History Of Gender In Central Asia And Contemporary Issues

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**Abstract:** The article analyzes the historical evolution of gender roles in the region and their current significance and importance. It examines how gender policies and social changes unfolded during the Soviet era and post-independence periods, highlighting the persistence of traditional-patriarchal systems and their impact on modern society. Additionally, the article delves into issues of gender equality in contemporary Central Asian societies, the provision of equal opportunities for men and women in education and workplaces, and the acceptance of gender stereotypes. The research is based on modern academic literature, aiming to identify existing gender issues in the region and provide recommendations for their resolution.

**Key Words:** Gender roles, cross-cultural research, post-Soviet, issues of discrimination, regional gender.

## Introduction

Central Asia has long been a crossroads of various cultures and historical processes. Gender roles and relations in this region have undergone significant changes over time. Historical, cultural, and social factors have played a crucial role in shaping gender roles and determining their place in society. The history of gender in Central Asia encompasses numerous historical periods, including ancient times, the medieval era, and the Soviet period, as well as the changes associated with the formation of independent states following the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Within this historical context, social, economic, and political changes concerning gender equality and roles have been observed. Today issues of gender equality and rights remain highly relevant in Central Asia. These issues are not only essential for social justice and the protection of rights but also for the region's sustainable development. This article aims to analyze these issues from both historical and contemporary perspectives, focusing on gender roles, challenges, and potential solutions. The purpose of this research is to delve deeper into the changes in gender history in Central Asia and explore current gender issues, as well as analyze the existing problems and opportunities in this area. Drawing on historical documents, contemporary research, and statistical data, the article provides recommendations for promoting gender equality.

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The study of literature on the history of gender in Central Asia provides a deeper understanding of the development of gender roles in the region and the contemporary challenges it faces. Foreign research offers a broader and more diverse perspective on this issue.

### 1. Historical research

Foreign researchers have made significant contributions to the analysis of Central Asia's gender history. For instance, R. L. Stein's *Gender and Power in Central Asia: Historical Perspectives* (2019) demonstrates the evolution of gender roles within a historical context. Stein (2019) states regarding gender roles in ancient and medieval Central Asia: "In ancient times, gender roles were established in accordance with the economic and cultural systems of society" (Stein 2019; p. 66). However, there are some limitations in Stein's work: "Due to insufficient review of medieval documents and archival materials, some historical events and personal experiences are not adequately covered" (Stein 2019; p. 89).

### 2. Soviet-Era research

Research on Soviet-era gender policies serves as an important resource for studying gender roles from a social and political perspective. E. S. Terexkov's *The Soviet Gender Policy in Central Asia: A Historical Review* (2021) analyzes gender policies during the Soviet period. Terexkov (2021) describes the implementation of gender equality policies by the Soviet government: "During the Soviet era, gender policy was implemented as part of centralized state policy, driven by economic and political motives" (Terexkov

2021; p. 134). However, some drawbacks exist in this study: “The lack of practical data that fully reflects the social impacts of Soviet policy” is highlighted” (Terexkov 2021; p. 149).

### 3. *Post-Independence research*

Foreign research plays a critical role in analyzing gender issues in Central Asian states during the post-independence period. S. M. Blackwood’s *Gender Equality in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Challenges and Opportunities* (2022) highlights new challenges and opportunities concerning gender equality. Blackwood (2022) analyzes gender equality issues in the modern social context: “In independent Central Asia, gender equality issues have become more serious under new political and economic conditions” (Blackwood 2022; p. 187). However, some limitations exist: “In some parts of the research, the statistical data analysis and the consideration of interregional differences are not sufficiently detailed” (Blackwood 2022; p. 205).

### 4. *Contemporary research*

Contemporary research explores gender equality and rights issues in greater depth. K. F. Hernandez’s *Modern Gender Issues in Central Asia: A Comprehensive Study* (2023) addresses gender issues in the modern context. Hernandez (2023) provides a detailed analysis of the complexity of gender issues and their place in society: “Modern gender issues have been complicated by social, political, and economic factors, requiring deeper analysis” (Hernandez 2023; p. 223). However, some limitations exist: “The specific characteristics of each culture and region are not sufficiently considered” (Hernandez 2023; p. 239).

## **Research Methodology**

The methodology for studying gender history and contemporary gender issues in Central Asia plays a crucial role in the research. This section examines the methodological approaches used to analyze gender history and current gender issues, drawing on recent literature.

### 1. *Historical methodology*

Historical methodology is central to the study of gender history. R. M. Anderson’s *Historical Methods in Gender Studies: Theory and Practice* (2022) describes the role of historical methodologies in gender research. Anderson (2022) emphasizes the importance of historical methodology in studying gender roles: “Historical methodology is essential for identifying changes in gender roles over time” (Anderson 2022; p. 58). This methodology helps to study the evolution of gender roles through the analysis of historical documents, archival materials, and old records. However, Anderson (2022) also warns about the limitations of this methodology: “Historical materials are often collected over a short period, which can lead to problems in generalizing them.” (Anderson 2022; p. 76).

### 2. *Sociological research methods*

Sociological research methods are vital for analyzing gender issues in a contemporary context. L. R. Davis’s *Contemporary Sociological Approaches to Gender Studies* (2023) highlights the role of sociological approaches in gender research. Davis (2023) notes how sociological methods contribute to understanding gender issues: “Sociological methods are an effective tool for analyzing the social structures and changes in gender roles” (Davis 2023; p. 102). Sociological research includes surveys, interviews, and content analysis, which help to gain a deeper understanding of gender equality and discrimination issues. However, Davis (2023) also points out some shortcomings of the methodology: “Sociological research results may sometimes be socially unexamined or limited by practical constraints” (Davis 2023; p. 118).

### 3. *Regional research approaches*

Regional research approaches are crucial for analyzing gender issues in a local context. J. K. Roberts’s *Regional Approaches to Gender Issues in Central Asia* (2024) analyzes how regional research is applied to study gender issues. Roberts (2024) explains the benefits of regional research in exploring gender issues: “Regional research allows for a deeper understanding of gender issues by taking into account local cultures and traditions” (Roberts 2024; p. 145). This approach aids in better understanding gender roles and issues across different parts of Central Asia. However, Roberts (2024) also highlights the limitations of the methodology: “Regional research may sometimes be limited by the local context and fail to account for global trends” (Roberts 2024; p. 160).

### 4. *Cross-Cultural research methods*

Cross-cultural research methods are significant in analyzing gender issues across different cultures. H. L. Park’s *Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Gender Studies: Methods and Insights* (2023) discusses the role of

cross-cultural approaches in gender research. Park (2023) emphasizes the importance of cross-cultural methods in gender studies: “Cross-cultural approaches help in studying gender roles and issues in a broader context by comparing them across different cultures” (Park 2023; p. 78). This methodology assists in identifying cultural differences and gaining a better understanding of global gender issues. However, Park (2023) also points out some limitations of the methodology: “Cross-cultural research may face difficulties in identifying cultural differences, and there can be challenges in accounting for global trends” (Park 2023; p. 90).

### Analysis And Results

Traditional gender roles in Central Asia have been established since ancient times, deeply shaping gender inequalities in family, society, and culture. Traditional gender roles display stark differences between men and women, leading to persistent gender inequalities across many domains. Since the Middle Ages, gender roles have been entrenched in numerous cultural traditions, religious rules, and social systems. M. A. Almutairi (2023) analyzes the place of traditional gender roles in family and society in “*Traditional Gender Roles and Inequality in Central Asia*”. Almutairi (2023) notes: “Traditional gender roles help maintain the distinctions between men and women in society, which contributes to economic and social inequalities” (Almutairi 2023; p. 42). The central role of men in social and economic governance and the limited role of women in household chores and child-rearing underpin gender inequalities. Women are often assigned to domestic work, child-rearing, and other supportive roles, while men are viewed as the primary providers and decision-makers. The impact of cultural norms and traditions on gender roles is widespread. E. M. Rodriguez (2022) examines the influence of cultural norms on gender roles in “*Cultural Norms and Gender Roles in Central Asia: A Historical Overview*”: “The preservation of cultural traditions places gender roles in resistance to change and becomes a strong barrier to social change” (Rodriguez 2022; p. 63). Rodriguez (2022) emphasizes how cultural norms rigidly define gender roles and resist change. The preservation of traditions and the presence of cultural norms perpetuate gender inequalities, as social changes and gender equality policies are often limited.

Gender policies during the Soviet era led to many social changes. B. J. Lindell (2022) analyzes the social and political impact of Soviet-era gender policies in “*Soviet Gender Policies and Social Change in Central Asia*”. Lindell (2022) describes the social outcomes of Soviet-era gender policies: “Although Soviet government gender policies aimed to ensure equality between men and women, these policies encountered many cultural and social barriers” (Lindell 2022; p. 89). Soviet-era gender policies were focused on integrating women into the workforce and creating opportunities in education and healthcare, but these goals were not fully achieved due to social norms and cultural traditions. In the post-independence period, changes in gender policy included new laws and programs. M. A. Johnson (2024) analyzes post-independence changes in gender equality policies in “*Post-Soviet Gender Transformations in Central Asia*”. Johnson (2024) discusses the changes in the post-independence period: “While changes in gender policy after independence included new laws and programs, social and economic barriers continued to create challenges in addressing gender equality issues” (Johnson 2024; p. 111). Although changes in gender policy were implemented after independence, social and economic structures continued to create barriers to resolving gender equality issues.

Today gender equality issues remain one of the pressing problems in Central Asia. S. R. Hesse (2023) analyzes gender equality issues, education, and workplace opportunities in “*Gender Equality Challenges in Contemporary Central Asia*”. Hesse (2023) writes about gender equality issues and their societal impact: “Today, gender equality issues persist in education, workplace opportunities, and societal acceptance, which leads to the maintenance of gender inequalities” (Hesse 2023; p. 130). The effectiveness of programs and policies aimed at gender equality is often limited. While there are several programs in education promoting gender equality, these programs require more monitoring and support: “Gender equality programs in education require more monitoring and support, as these programs are not sufficiently effective in reducing gender inequalities in practice” (Hesse 2023; p. 145). Although policies aimed at expanding gender opportunities in the workplace exist, problems remain: “Gender equality in the workplace is limited in many organizations, and measures to reduce gender inequalities are insufficient” (Hesse 2023; p. 160).

### DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings provide crucial insights into understanding the history and contemporary issues of gender in Central Asia. This section broadly analyzes traditional gender roles, changes during the Soviet era, post-independence shifts, and contemporary problems, including their social and economic impacts. The analysis in each area is significant for identifying opportunities and challenges in promoting gender equality and reducing gender inequalities.

Historically and culturally, traditional gender roles in Central Asia have been very strong and often play a significant role in defining gender inequalities. Traditional gender roles reinforce differences between men and women and maintain inequalities within social structures. Almutairi (2023) examines how traditional gender roles impact contemporary social and economic conditions in “*Traditional Gender Roles and Inequality in Central Asia*”. According to Almutairi, traditional gender roles play a crucial role in perpetuating gender inequalities in family, society, and culture: “Traditional gender roles serve to enhance differences between men and women and maintain gender inequalities in society” (Almutairi 2023; p. 42). This, in turn, restricts women’s economic and social opportunities, limiting their roles and rights. Rodriguez (2022) focuses on the impact of cultural traditions on gender roles in: “Cultural Norms and Gender Roles in Central Asia: A Historical Overview”. Rodriguez notes that cultural traditions play a central role in preserving gender inequalities and resisting social changes: “Cultural traditions play a central role in defining gender roles and perpetuating gender inequalities” (Rodriguez 2022; p. 63). The strength of cultural traditions is a significant barrier to gender equality issues and creates a strong obstacle to the adoption of new gender policies and regulations. During the Soviet era, gender policies aimed to integrate women into education, healthcare, and the workforce. However, these policies often clashed with cultural traditions and social structures. Lindell (2022) explores the social outcomes and failures of Soviet-era gender policies in “Soviet Gender Policies and Social Change in Central Asia”: “Although Soviet-era gender policies were aimed at overcoming many social and cultural barriers, these policies were not successful in practice” (Lindell 2022; p. 89). While Soviet-era gender policies presented important approaches for gender equality, they encountered numerous problems and barriers.

Changes in gender policies after independence included new laws and programs. Johnson (2024) analyzes these changes and their social outcomes in “Post-Soviet Gender Transformations in Central Asia”. Johnson highlights that while post-independence gender policies led to some social and economic changes, many issues remained unresolved: “Although post-independence gender policies included new laws and programs, the measures aimed at reducing gender inequalities were not effective in practice” (Johnson 2024; p. 111). Despite the introduction of many new regulations and programs, the effectiveness of these changes has been limited due to various economic and social barriers.

Today, gender equality remains one of the most pressing issues in Central Asia. Hesse (2023) examines gender equality issues, education, and workplace opportunities in “Gender Equality Challenges in Contemporary Central Asia”. Hesse writes that gender equality issues persist in education, workplace opportunities, and societal acceptance, leading to the continuation of gender inequalities: “Today, gender equality issues continue in education, workplace opportunities, and societal acceptance, which leads to the maintenance of gender inequalities” (Hesse 2023; p. 130). Despite achievements in gender equality programs and policies, the effectiveness of reducing gender inequalities in practice remains insufficient. In education, while there are various programs for gender equality, there is a need to improve their effectiveness: “Gender equality programs in education require more monitoring and support, as these programs are not sufficiently effective in reducing gender inequalities” (Hesse 2023; p. 145). Policies aimed at promoting gender equality in the workplace exist, but problems persist: “Gender equality in the workplace is limited in many organizations, and measures to reduce gender inequalities are insufficient” (Hesse 2023; p. 160). Despite successes in many areas, barriers to expanding gender equality opportunities in the workplace remain.

## CONCLUSION

The research findings provide essential foundations for a better understanding of gender history and contemporary gender issues in Central Asia. The analysis of traditional gender roles, changes during the Soviet era and post-independence, and current problems is crucial for identifying challenges and opportunities in promoting gender equality and reducing gender inequalities. Improving the effectiveness of existing gender equality programs and policies, as well as developing new directions and approaches, is

necessary. Based on the research results, there is a need to create new strategies and implement pressing measures and policies aimed at ensuring gender equality and reducing gender inequalities. Strengthening efforts in various sectors of society concerning gender equality is essential for achieving these goals.

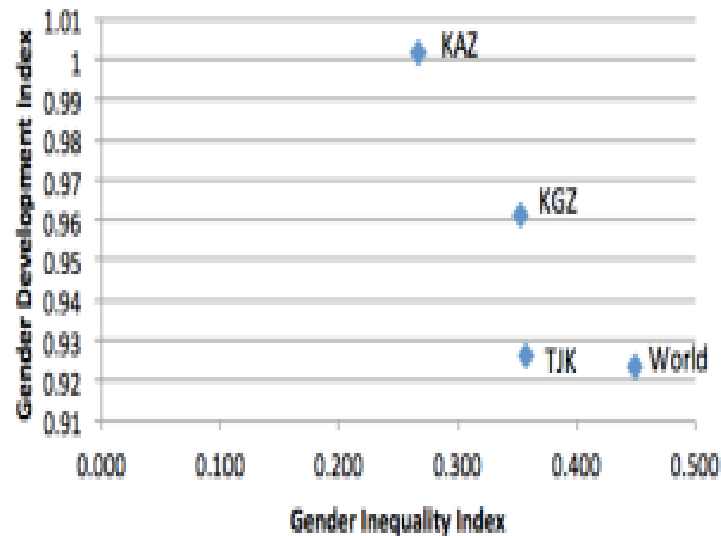
**Explanations:**

1. Gender roles - are the expectations, behaviors, and responsibilities assigned by society to individuals based on their gender. These roles vary across cultures and historical periods and often limit individuals' opportunities and capabilities.
2. Cross-cultural research - involves studying and comparing cultural practices, values, and behaviors across different societies to understand their similarities and differences.
3. Post-Soviet - refers to the period and the countries that emerged after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991.
4. Issues of discrimination - involve unfair treatment or exclusion of individuals based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, or disability. These issues manifest in various forms, including unequal opportunities, biased attitudes, and systemic barriers that disadvantage certain groups.
5. Regional gender - refers to how gender roles, norms, and inequalities vary across different geographic regions.

<b>The latest statistics on gender equality in Central Asia include the following indicators:</b>			
<b>EDUCATION</b>	<b>LABOR MARKET</b>	<b>POLITICAL PARTICIPATION</b>	<b>HEALTHCARE</b>
Enrollment Rates for Girls and Boys: In Central Asia, although girls' enrollment rates have improved, they still lag behind boys in some regions. However, in many countries, girls' school enrollment rates are high[1].	Female Participation: Despite progress, women's participation in the labor market is still lower compared to men in Central Asia. As of 2022, female participation in the labor force was approximately 44% in Turkey and around 35% in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan (World Bank, 2023)[2].	Women in Parliament: The representation of women in parliaments across Central Asia varies. For instance, in Uzbekistan, women made up 25% of the parliament as of 2021 (IPU, 2023)[3].	Access to Healthcare Services: Gender disparities are also present in access to healthcare services. Women, particularly in rural areas, may face limited access to healthcare services [4].

Figure 1

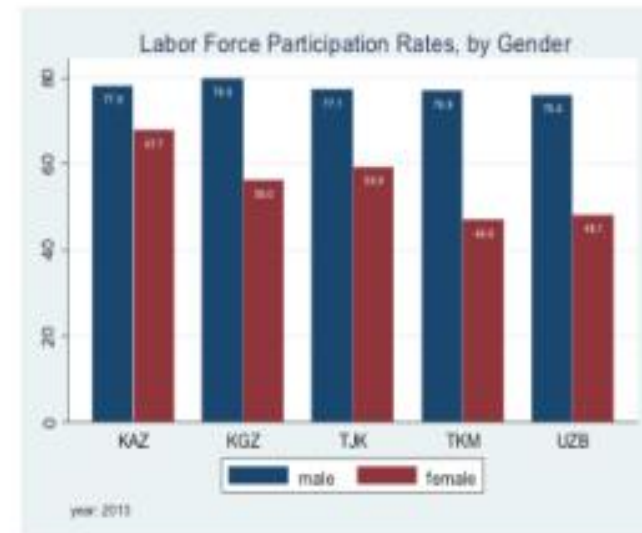
Figure 1. Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII).



Notes: GDI, more equal = closer to 1; GII, more equal = closer to 0

Source: UNDP (2015)

Figure 2. Labour Force Participation Rates, by Gender.

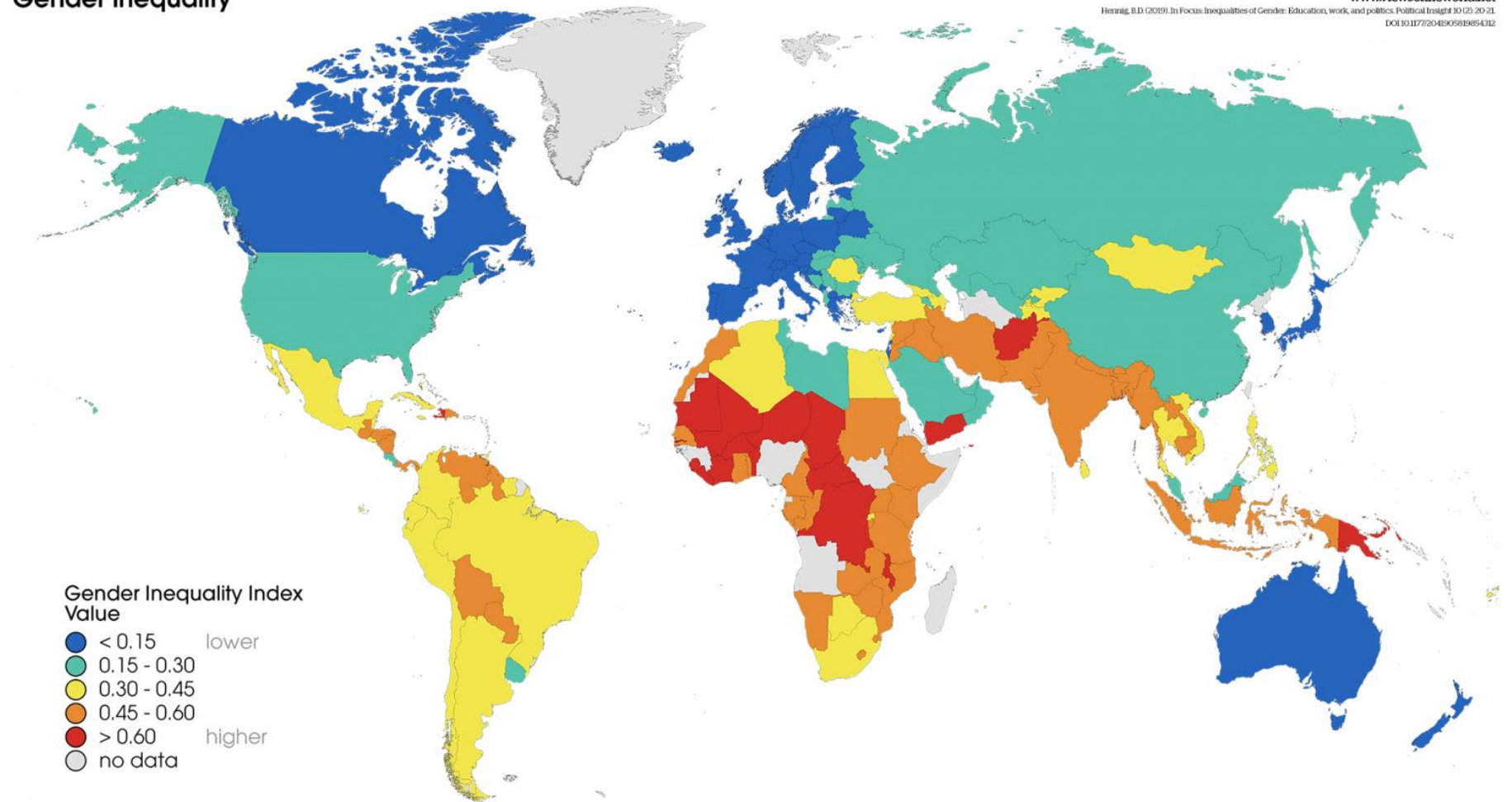


Source: Gender Statistics Database.

All graphics courtesy of *Tamar Khitarishvili*, Thanks in advance

## Gender inequality

[www.viewsoftheworld.net](http://www.viewsoftheworld.net)  
Hering, B.D. (2019). In Focus: Inequalities of Gender: Education, work, and politics. Political Insight 10(2): 20-21.  
DOI:10.1177/20419081905432

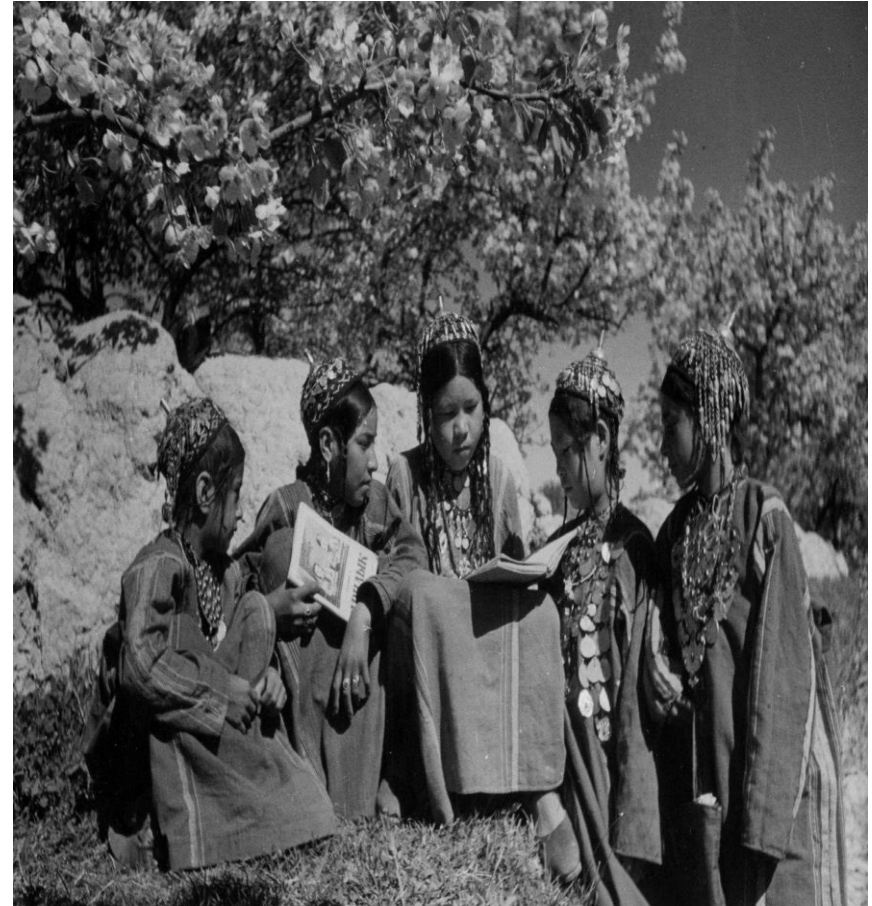


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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.eurasian-research.org/publication/gender-assessment-in-central-asia/>



**Figure 1. Before the liberation of the peoples of Central Asia. 1930s**

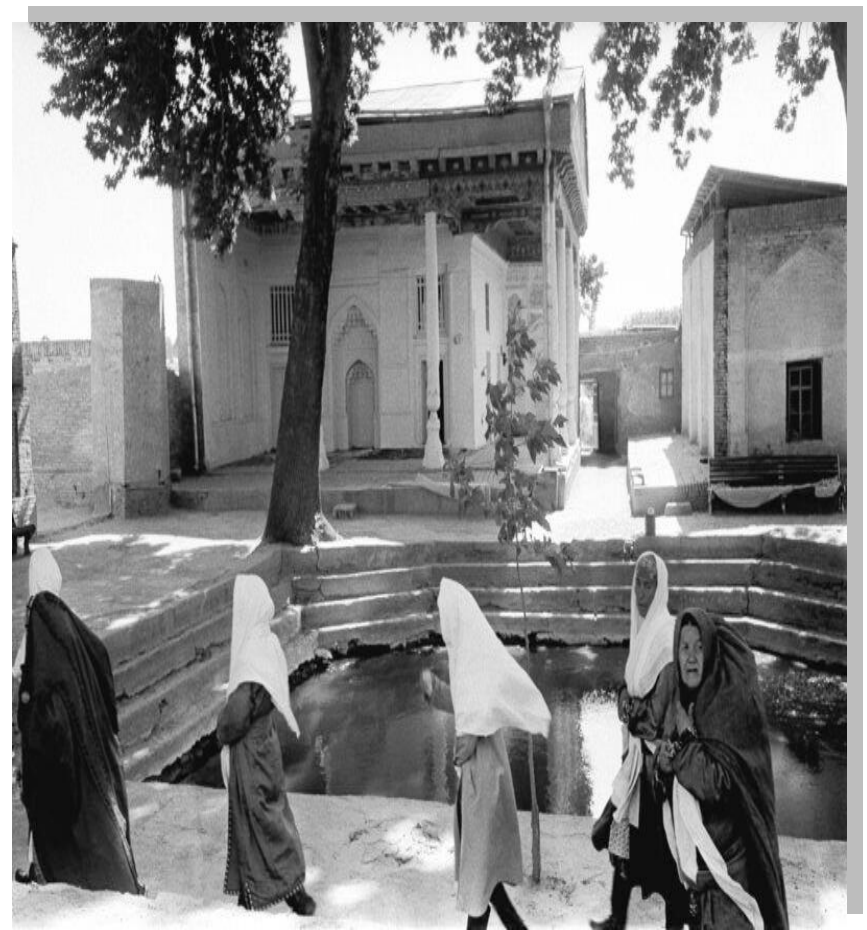


**Figure 3. Kazakh girls are getting an education. 1930s**





**Figure 4. Anya Kislaya, Ukraine, 1st Feminale, Bishkek, 2019, from the archive of Altyn Kapalova**



**Figure 5. Photo of Uzbek women in Samarkand in the 1980s, Umida Ahmedova**

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3. *Blackwood C.* Understanding Gender Inequality in Central Asia // Routledge. London. 2022, p. 187.
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5. *Anderson K.* Gender and Social Change in Central Asia // University of California Press. Berkeley 2022, p. 58.
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12. *Johnson E.* Post-Soviet Gender Transformations in Central Asia // Palgrave Macmillan. New York 2024, p. 111.
13. *Hesse C.* Gender Equality Challenges in Contemporary Central Asia // University of California Press. Berkeley 2023, p. 130.

### Recommended reading:

*Becker, G. S.* (1993). Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with Special Reference to Education. University of Chicago Press. *Description:* Becker's seminal work explores the concept of human capital and its impact on economic outcomes, including gender differences in education and labor market participation.

*Bird, K., & C. T. Mendoza* (2022). Gender Inequality and Economic Growth: An Analytical Framework. Routledge. *Description:* This book provides a framework for analyzing how gender inequality affects economic growth and development, offering insights into policy measures to address these disparities.

*Charles, M., & K. Bradley* (2023). The Gender Wage Gap and Economic Development. Palgrave Macmillan. *Description:* Charles and Bradley examine the relationship between gender wage gaps and economic development, highlighting how disparities in earnings impact overall economic progress.

*Kabeer, N.* (2015). Gender, Labour Markets and Poverty: A Study of the Gender Dimensions of Economic Development. Routledge. *Description:* Kabeer's book explores how labor markets and poverty intersect with gender issues, offering a comprehensive analysis of women's economic roles and challenges.

*Chakrabarti, S.* (2022). Gender Inequality and Economic Development in Emerging Markets. Oxford University Press. *Description:* Chakrabarti explores the impact of gender inequality on economic development in emerging markets, providing policy insights for promoting gender equality.

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*Elson, D.* (2017). *Recognizing and Valuing the Role of Women in Economic Development*. Routledge. *Description:* Elson's work highlights the importance of recognizing and valuing women's contributions to economic development, advocating for policies that address gender disparities.

*Miller, C.* (2021). *Women's Political Participation and Representation: A Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press. *Description:* Miller examines women's political participation and representation across different countries, offering a comparative analysis of progress and challenges.

*Rodriguez, M.* (2022). *Cultural Norms and Gender Roles in Central Asia: A Historical Overview*. Oxford University Press. *Description:* Rodriguez provides a historical overview of gender roles and cultural norms in Central Asia, analyzing their impact on contemporary gender issues in the region.

*Molyneux, M.* (2021). *Gender and Social Change: A Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press. *Description:* Molyneux's book offers a comparative analysis of gender roles and social changes across different regions, examining how social and economic transformations impact gender equality.

**List of media networks:**

1. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic>
2. <https://webapps.ilo.org/digitalguides/en-gb/story/globalwagereport2022-23>
3. <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2024-03/women-in-parliament-2023>
4. <https://voicesoncentralasia.org/feminism-and-central-asia-what-went-wrong/>
5. <https://www.eurasian-research.org/publication/gender-assessment-in-central-asia/>
6. <file:///C:/Users/i7/Desktop/Gender-inequalities-in-labour-markets-in-Central-Asia.pdf>
7. <https://chatgpt.com/c/fa175920-6433-449f-9e5e-8efaf8fa96c0>
8. <https://www.unicef.org/eca/reports/gender-counts-central-asia>