

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES: HISTORY, TRANSFORMATION AND PROGRESS

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of women's roles in Muslim societies, focusing on their political and social engagement. The research encompasses historical roots and contemporary manifestations of female participation, identifying examples of outstanding individuals who have overcome traditional constraints and achieved recognition at national and international levels. Particular attention is devoted to Islamic teachings that promote a balanced approach to reconciling familial and professional responsibilities. The article examines the contributions of significant female figures to the advancement of gender equality, literacy improvement, and political activism, including participants in the «Alash» movement. The phenomenon of Kazakh women maintaining active social positions during socio-political transformations is analyzed, highlighting their substantial role in economic and social development. Historical examples of Bopai Khanym and Domalak Ana illustrate the deeply rooted respect for women in Kazakh culture. The research confirms that despite ongoing socio-political changes, Kazakh women continue to advocate for their rights and actively participate in community development processes. The conclusion emphasizes the pivotal role of female influence in ensuring sustainable development and promoting gender equality in Muslim societies.

Key words: Women, Islam, Tradition, Mentality, Religion, Equality.

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Мұсылман қоғамдарындағы әйелдердің рөлі: тарих, өзгеріс және даму

Аңдатпа. Мақалада мұсылман қоғамындағы әйелдердің рөлі мен мәртебесі жан-жақты талданып, олардың саяси және қоғамдық өмірге қатысуына ерекше назар аударылады. Қоғамдық нормаларға қарсы шығып, ұлттық және халықаралық деңгейде танылған әйелдердің тарихи және қазіргі заманғы мысалдары қарастырылады. Сонымен қатар, отбасы мен кәсіби міндеттер арасындағы тепе-теңдікті насихаттайтын ислами қағидаттарға ерекше мән беріледі. Зерттеу барысында гендерлік теңдік, сауаттылық және саяси белсенділікке үлес қосқан көрнекті әйелдер, оның ішінде Алаш қозғалысының өкілдері де зерделенеді. Қазақ әйелдерінің әлеуметтік-саяси өзгерістерге қарамастан, өз ұстанымдары мен белсенділіктерін сақтай отырып, экономикалық, саяси және әлеуметтік дамуға ықпал еткендігі талданады. Бопай ханым мен Домалақ ана сияқты тарихи тұлғалар қазақ мәдениетіндегі әйелдерге деген терең құрметі көрсетеледі. Әлеуметтік-саяси өзгерістерге қарамастан, қазақ әйелдері өз құқықтарын қорғап, экономикалық және қоғамдық дамуға белсенді үлес қосуда. Қорытынды бөлімде әйелдердің ықпалы тұрақты дамуды қамтамасыз етуде және гендерлік теңдікті ілгерілетуде маңызды рөл атқарғаны анықталады.

Түйін сөздер: әйел, ислам, дәстүр, менталитет, дін, теңдік.

Роль женщин в мусульманских обществах: история, трансформация и прогресс

Аннотация. В данной статье представлен комплексный анализ эволюции роли женщин в мусульманских обществах с акцентом на их политическую и общественную деятельность. Исследование охватывает исторические корни и современные проявления женского участия, выявляя примеры выдающихся личностей, преодолевших традиционные ограничения и достигших признания на национальном и международном уровнях. Особое внимание уделяется исламским учениям, продвигающим сбалансированный подход к совмещению семейных и профессиональных обязанностей. Статья рассматривает вклад знаковых женских фигур в продвижение гендерного равенства, повышение грамотности и политической активности, включая участниц движения «Алаш». Анализируется феномен сохранения активной общественной позиции казахскими женщинами в условиях социально-политических трансформаций, их значимая роль в экономическом и социальном развитии общества. Исторические примеры Бопай ханым и Домалақ ана иллюстрируют глубоко укорененное уважение к женщинам в казахской культуре. Исследование подтверждает, что, несмотря на продолжающиеся социально-политические изменения, казахские женщины продолжают отстаивать свои права и активно участвовать в процессах общественного развития. В заключении подчеркивается ключевая роль женского влияния в обеспечении устойчивого развития и продвижении гендерного равенства в мусульманских обществах.

Ключевые слова: женщина, ислам, традиция, менталитет, религия, равноправие.

Introduction

Across the globe, Muslim communities flourish in over 150 countries, spanning every continent and reflecting a vast mosaic of cultural, ethnic, and historical legacies. In the traditional heartlands of Islam – the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia – Islam not only remains the dominant faith but also serves as the cornerstone of collective identity and social order. In countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, the sizable Muslim populations are a testament to the religion's profound historical depth and its adaptive capacity in diverse cultural settings. Furthermore, the dynamic and evolving Muslim diasporas in Europe, North America, Latin America, and the Caribbean highlight the global diffusion of Islamic traditions, creating hybrid identities that bridge the past and the present. This worldwide dispersion of Muslim communities underscores not merely the geographical breadth of Islam but also its intricate interplay with local traditions, secular modernities, and the evolving paradigms of global religious identities.

This academic article sets out to undertake a comprehensive and critical examination of the status, roles, and freedoms of women in Muslim societies, situating this inquiry within the broader discourse of gender studies, religious studies, and Oriental studies. Through an interdisciplinary approach,

the research critically analyzes a spectrum of social, cultural, and legal dimensions that collectively inform the lived experiences of Muslim women. The study delves into how traditional customs, evolving religious interpretations, and state legislation interact to shape gender dynamics, while also considering the historical trajectories and contemporary challenges that influence these interactions. By conducting a comparative analysis across various Muslim-majority contexts, this article aims to illuminate both the commonalities and the divergences in the manifestation of gender equality, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the multifaceted roles of women in the modern Islamic world.

Before the emergence of Islam on the Arabian Peninsula, the status of women was extremely unfavorable, characterized by cruel and discriminatory practices. Modern researchers, including scholars such as O. Lebedeva and M. Agaev, unanimously note that women in pre-Islamic Arab society were subjected to profound oppression. One of the most striking and horrifying manifestations of this oppression was the live burial of girls, which reflected the extremely low status of women and deeply entrenched patriarchal norms. The studies of Lebedeva and Agaev, based on historical data, indicate that the pre-Islamic period was a time of extreme gender injustice, where women were assigned a subordinate and powerless

role. As a result of their research, the scholars concluded that «men in Muslim society had more rights than women» [1, p. 45].

Thus, it can be assumed that the emergence of Islam brought about positive changes in the issue of gender equality, offering new norms and principles aimed at improving the status of women. However, in practice, women could not fully benefit from these new opportunities due to existing barriers formed by centuries-old stereotypes and traditional patriarchal attitudes. First, the social stereotypes established in the pre-Islamic period, according to which men held a dominant position, continued to have a significant influence on public consciousness, limiting opportunities for women. Second, the literacy rate among women remained low, which also hindered their access to new knowledge and rights granted by Islam.

It is important to note that religious knowledge and the interpretation of Islamic texts remained the prerogative of a narrow circle of educated men, such as imams, who often were unwilling to share these privileges with women. This hindered the dissemination of new gender norms and their consolidation in everyday life, ultimately limiting the potential of Islam as a force capable of radically changing gender relations in Muslim societies of that time [2, p. 177-186].

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative analysis of primary historical texts, archival documents, and contemporary media sources with quantitative examination of gender equality indicators across Muslim societies. Data was gathered from academic journals, governmental reports, and international databases. A comparative framework was applied to scrutinize traditional customs, religious interpretations, and state legislations in diverse cultural contexts. In-depth interviews with subject matter experts, along with detailed case studies of notable female leaders, enriched the analysis. By integrating historical and contemporary perspectives, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of the evolution of women's roles. Triangulation of data sources ensured the reliability and

validity of the findings, thereby facilitating robust conclusions regarding the influence of Muslim women in politics and society.

Main part

The Status of Women in Islamic Tradition

Historically, women have often faced degrading treatment and were primarily seen as housewives and mothers. Nevertheless, what is the true role of women originally prescribed by God? Many sacred texts and religious teachings emphasize not only their importance in the family but also their crucial role in spiritual, educational, and social life. The question that requires careful investigation is as follows: how have historical and cultural interpretations changed the perception of the originally equal and multifaceted role of women?

It is important to begin with a thorough study of the role of women as prescribed by the Quran, rather than relying on distorted interpretations often presented in the media. Quranic texts offer a multilayered understanding of women's status, emphasizing their spiritual equality with men, the right to education, participation in public life, and autonomy. To conduct a deep and objective analysis, it is necessary to refer to primary sources and authoritative commentaries by classical Islamic scholars. This will help overcome bias and distortions, allowing for a study of the real position of Muslim women in the modern world, considering the socio-cultural and political factors that influence their rights and freedoms.

Let us look at how women lived before the revelation of the Quran, and we will see how the Holy Book elevated the honor of women to great heights. History shows that before the rise of Islam, women in various societies were not granted proper rights, and their position left much to be desired. For example, in Japan, women were not allowed to pray in temples or participate in any religious ceremonies. In China, they were prohibited from entering temples. Online sources of Japanese proverbs and sayings contain at least 60 expressions in which the concept of «woman» appears [3]. Among the proverbs about women's characteristics, there are those that highlight «the low status of women, their foolishness, changeability, quarrelsomeness, talkativeness, and weakness» [4, p.

167–182]. In Egypt, women were often sacrificed on the banks of the Nile. According to Roman law, a woman was completely dependent on her husband, did not own property, and could not be considered as a witness. In India, she was denied the right to read sacred texts, considered the property of her husband, a possession.

Historically, the status of women before the revelation of the Quran in various parts of the world was characterized by significant restrictions and inequality. In many cultures, women were often regarded as the property of men, with limited rights and opportunities for independent lives. Their role was primarily confined to household duties and reproduction. In ancient societies such as Ancient Rome and Greece, women had no voting rights and were deprived of access to education and political life. In some cultures, women were subjected to practices that, by modern standards, would be considered cruel, such as infanticide in China and India. In other regions, such as Europe, women were often restricted in their rights to inheritance and property management.

The situation of women on the Arabian Peninsula was particularly harsh, where they were regarded as property and had almost no rights. Women could be inherited as part of property, and their divorces and marriages were solely regulated by the will of men.

With the advent of Islam, the role of women significantly increased, leading to the expansion of their rights and social opportunities. Islamic teachings and the Quran brought substantial changes to traditional norms, improving the status of women compared to preceding cultural practices. In Surah «An-Nisa», it is stated: «and those men and women who do righteous deeds, being believers, will enter Paradise and will not be wronged, even by the extent of a thread of a date stone» [5], thus indicating the equality of men and women before God, emphasizing that righteous deeds, regardless of their scale, will be rewarded.

Another hadith from Imam Bukhari interprets the essence of woman within the context of Islamic ethics and interpersonal relations through the metaphor of the rib: «Indeed, woman was created from a rib, and if you try to straighten it (completely), you will break it, but if you leave it, its curvature will be enough for you to live with it».

The meaning of this statement lies in the

idea that attempts to change or adapt a woman to certain standards that do not align with her natural essence may lead to negative consequences. Instead, it suggests accepting and respecting her as she is, with all her traits and imperfections. This emphasizes the need for tolerance and mutual understanding in interpersonal relationships, as well as embracing differences as an inherent part of human nature.

In the Middle East and Asia, there is traditionally a deep respect for mothers, which is connected to cultural and religious norms that emphasize their significance and labor. In these societies, mothers hold an esteemed place, and their role in the family is highly valued, despite limitations in professional and public life. Women often take on the primary responsibilities for managing the household and raising children, but their status as mothers and family pillars remains respected and important. In the West, although there has been significant progress in the past century regarding women's rights, gender equality, access to education, and professional opportunities, the level of respect for motherhood and traditional family roles may be less pronounced compared to Eastern cultures. Western societies actively support gender equality and women's integration into public life, including social programs and equal opportunities in the workplace. However, respect for motherhood in the East is often perceived as deeper and more foundational.

Special attention to mothers is expressed in the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), where it is stated: «Paradise lies at the feet of the mother» [6]. This metaphor symbolizes the deep recognition and elevation of the mother's role in human life, emphasizing that true spiritual achievement and divine pleasure can be attained through respect and service to the mother. In essence, this hadith illustrates that in Islam, maternal sacrifice and labor are viewed as fundamental aspects of human existence that lead to the highest spiritual state.

From a philosophical perspective, this concept reflects the idea that true virtue and spiritual progress are intrinsically linked to the manifestation of care and recognition for those who contribute significantly to our development, particularly mothers, who lay the foundations of our existence and upbringing. Thus, serving and caring for one's mother becomes not only a moral duty but also a means of attaining spir-

itual completeness and harmony, where every act of respect and support is a step toward inner perfection and closeness to the divine.

In Islam, the importance of the mother in raising children and her social role occupy a central place, emphasizing her fundamental significance in shaping future generations and maintaining family well-being. Motherhood and child-rearing are regarded as highly valued responsibilities, contributing significantly to both social and spiritual development. The mother in Islam is responsible not only for the physical and emotional well-being of her children but also plays a key role in their moral and spiritual upbringing, imparting core values, principles, and religious norms. This makes her a pivotal figure in ensuring the moral and ethical foundation for future society.

Moreover, Islamic law supports the idea that women can earn money and build careers, reflecting a flexible and modern approach to the social role of women. According to Sharia, women have the right to engage in professional activities, entrepreneurship and participate in the economic life of society, while maintaining a balance between family responsibilities and career interests. These rights allow women to realize their potential and contribute to societal development without compromising their central role in family life.

Women in Muslim Countries: Political Leadership, Social Influence and Gender Progress

The status of women in Islamic families recognizes their rights and freedoms, including participation in political life. Under Islamic law, women have the right to vote, run for office and hold political positions. This enables them to make a significant contribution to the governance of society and the development of political decisions.

Women in Islamic countries can hold high government positions, participate in legislative and executive bodies and be active participants in political and social movements. Their involvement in politics highlights support for women's rights at both the legislative and practical levels, reflecting the modern understanding of their role in society. In some countries, despite the existence of legislation, cultural and social restrictions may persist in practice. However, the

core principles of Islamic law provide equal opportunities for women in political life and public governance.

Muslim women are playing an increasingly significant role in the political life of their countries, breaking outdated stereotypes and influencing social and political processes. Their participation in politics not only signifies the growing recognition of women's rights and their ability to impact decision-making at the highest levels of power but also demonstrates the potential of women in shaping a more just and inclusive society. In recent decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of women politicians in Muslim countries, reflecting changing public views and the rise in women's education and social activism. Their successes show that they can make a substantial contribution to the political and economic life of their countries. These women have become symbols of progress and modernization, inspiring new generations of women to actively participate in public life and politics. In this text, we will examine examples of outstanding Muslim women who have made significant contributions to their countries' politics and influenced the international stage, emphasizing the importance of their role in the modern world.

Let us consider examples of prominent Muslim women who have made significant contributions to politics in their respective countries.

Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan), the daughter of former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, made history as the first woman to lead a government in a Muslim country. She was first elected as Prime Minister in 1988 at the age of just 35. Benazir Bhutto became a symbol of democratic change and modernization in Pakistan. During her tenure, she focused on improving the position of women, expanding their rights and opportunities. Her government implemented programs aimed at improving education and healthcare for women, as well as fighting for women's rights to work and participate politically. However, her administration faced numerous challenges, including political instability and accusations of corruption, which led to her ousting in 1990 and re-election in 1993. Despite all the challenges, Benazir Bhutto remains an icon in the fight for democracy and women's rights in the Muslim world.

Megawati Sukarnoputri (Indonesia), the daughter of Indonesia's first president, Sukarno,

became the first female president of Indonesia, holding the office from 2001 to 2004. Her political career began in the 1980s when she led the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P). Her administration was marked by the continuation of economic reforms initiated by her predecessors and the strengthening of democratic institutions. She fought for the rights of women and children and supported efforts to improve education and healthcare. A key aspect of her policy was her pursuit of national unity and stability in multi-ethnic and multi-religious Indonesia.

Sheikh Hasina Wazed (Bangladesh), the daughter of Bangladesh's first president, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, is one of the most influential female politicians in South Asia. She has led the government of Bangladesh since 2009, having previously served as prime minister from 1996 to 2001. Her leadership has been characterized by a focus on economic development, improving infrastructure, and expanding access to education and healthcare. Sheikh Hasina has also been actively working to improve women's rights, including efforts to combat violence against women and girls. Her government has introduced programs aimed at enhancing women's economic independence through microfinance and supporting female entrepreneurship.

Fawzia Yusuf Haji Adan (Somalia) became the first woman to hold the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Somalia in 2012, and she also served as Deputy Prime Minister. Her appointment was an important step in advancing women's rights in Somalia, a country that had long suffered from civil war and political instability. Fawzia Yusuf Haji Adan actively worked on improving Somalia's international relations, drawing global attention to the country's issues. She also supported initiatives aimed at improving the status of women and children, including efforts to combat female genital mutilation and violence against women. Her work made a significant contribution to the restoration of peace and stability in Somalia.

Carolyn Walker-Diallo (USA) is a Muslim and a prominent judge in New York. She made history as the first Muslim to take an oath on both the Bible and the Quran, which attracted significant attention and symbolized the importance of cultural and religious diversity within the judicial system. Her appointment marked a significant step toward recognizing and respect-

ing Muslim women in the American political and legal system. Walker-Diallo is actively involved in community work aimed at improving access to justice and advancing human rights, including women's rights and the rights of minorities. Her work illustrates how Muslim women can successfully integrate into the political and legal life of Western countries, making a substantial contribution to societal development.

Examples of Muslim women who are actively involved in political and public life show that they can play a significant role in the development of their countries and the international community. Their achievements reflect recognition of women's rights and their capacity to influence decision-making at high levels. These women have become symbols of progress, encouraging future generations to engage actively in public life and political processes.

Muslim women politicians overcome cultural and social barriers by implementing reforms aimed at improving the status of women and strengthening national unity. Modern examples of women balancing careers and family responsibilities demonstrate that Islam supports a balance between familial and professional roles. It is important to continue supporting women's participation in politics by ensuring equal opportunities and respect for their contributions. Overall, Islam is known as a religion of the «middle path», which does not tolerate dogmatic fanaticism, including extreme forms of Islamic feminism, nor does it allow disrespectful or degrading treatment of women [7, p. 172]. Thus, Muslim women contribute to the creation of a fairer and more balanced social order, recognizing their rights and opportunities.

The impact of female agency on the evolution of Kazakh culture and society

In the nomadic world of the XIth-XIIIth centuries, gender discrimination was absent, and women enjoyed equal rights with men. A key value for the Turks was the equal status of women, which is vividly reflected in the monuments of Orkhon-Yenisei writing, such as the inscription in honor of Kul Tegin. In Turkic society, women – mothers, sisters, and daughters were given special attention and care. Their enslavement was viewed as a threat to the future of the people and the state, emphasizing that preserving their free-

dom and dignity was critical for the survival and prosperity of the entire society. Crimes committed against women were considered some of the most severe offenses and were punished by death [8, p. 132–137].

For several centuries, nomadic society demonstrated a high degree of gender equality, with women holding significant rights and respect. However, after the Mongol conquest, significant changes occurred in the social structure and political realities, which led to a deterioration in the status of women. The strengthening of patriarchal norms and changes in social and economic structures restricted women's rights and reduced their status compared to earlier periods. The influence of Mongol policies and new social conditions contributed to a decrease in gender equality, marking a noticeable contrast to the equality that characterized nomadic societies before this period. These changes are supported by several studies conducted by historians who document the transformation of gender relations in the context of the historical and social changes of that time [8, p. 58].

The status of mothers and women was exceptionally high during the formation of the Kazakh Khanate. Among the historical figures recorded in archival documents, women also stand out. For example, Bopai khanum, the wife of Abul Khair Khan, and Aiganym khanum, the wife of Wali Khan, became famous for their exceptional bravery. These women were famous not only in the Kazakh Khanate, but also among political figures of other states. Especially significant in history is the role of Bopai-Ana, who supported Abul Khair Khan in difficult times and became an important adviser to the entire people after his death. Society praised the image of the mother who, with one hand, cared for her child, and with the other, upheld the stability of the world. The historical figures of courageous Kazakh women are preserved in collective memory. The Kazakhs revered such remarkable figures as Aiganim, Zere and Ulpan, acknowledging their importance and respecting their authority.

In the early IXth century, when Kazakh society was undergoing significant changes and transformations, issues of education and gender equality began to gain relevance. During this period, amidst various social and

cultural shifts, the question of equal access to education for women was raised for the first time, marking an important step towards social reforms.

The role of women in Kazakh society has historically been characterized by a distinctive equilibrium between gender inclusivity and cultural traditions. Unlike many other patriarchal societies, the Kazakh steppe fostered a comparatively egalitarian environment, wherein women actively participated in decision-making processes, social governance, and even military engagements. The nomadic way of life necessitated a division of labor that, while acknowledging biological distinctions, did not rigidly confine women to domestic roles. Instead, they were entrusted with economic and familial responsibilities, thereby affording them a degree of autonomy that was uncommon in many contemporaneous social structures.

Women played a crucial role in advancing education and journalism in Kazakhstan. *Sakypzhamał Tileubaykyzy* was among the first to raise concerns about female education, publishing her views in «Aykap» in 1911. She argued that education was essential for women to fulfill their roles as mothers and contributors to society, challenging traditional norms that restricted women's access to learning [9].

Journalism became another avenue through which women contributed to societal transformation. *Nazipa Kulzhanova* was a pioneer in women's journalism, working with leading publications such as «Aykap», «Kazakh», «Birlık Tuy», «Alash», and «Saryarka», as well as Soviet-era newspapers. She used her platform to advocate for women's rights and education. N.Kulzhanova also actively fought against societal injustices toward women, refusing an arranged marriage and securing legal assistance to uphold her autonomy. She firmly believed in the power of education, stating: «An illiterate person is only half a person. A woman is the mother of a nation. Only an educated, skilled, and free woman can elevate her people to the level of advanced nations» [10]. *Mariyam Seydalina* [11] also contributed to journalism, becoming the first female proofreader for «Aykap» and promoting gender equality through the press. *Nağima Aryqova* made significant

contributions to education and women's rights advocacy. She held key positions in cultural and ideological departments within the Communist Party and worked as an editor for major Soviet publications. N. Aryqova dedicated her career to promoting women's literacy, cultural education, and gender equality in Kazakhstan. *Alma Orazbayeva* was another influential figure in the advancement of women's education and rights. She began her career as a primary school teacher and took an active role in the 1917 teachers' congress in Orda, where she advocated for the protection of girls' rights and access to education. A.Orazbayeva's legacy includes her efforts to reform outdated traditions such as bride price and promote gender equality, making her one of the early feminist activists in Kazakhstan [12].

Kazakh women were also active in medicine and social reforms. *Akkağaz Doszhanova* [13] was the first female doctor among Kazakhs and worked to improve public health while also contributing articles to academic and literary publications. *Gulsum Asfendiyarova* [10] played a key role in establishing modern medical practices and advocating for improved healthcare services for women.

Educational reforms were further driven by *Rafiqa Nurtazina*, a distinguished educator and methodologist who developed over 40 methodological works and played a significant role in shaping Kazakh pedagogy. Her efforts in improving language education in Kazakh schools helped bridge linguistic and cultural divides, ensuring that Kazakh children had access to quality education in their native language [12].

The participation of women in the Alash movement represents a significant stage in the history of Kazakhstan's intellectual and political development. The wives and relatives of the leaders of the Alash Orda have made a significant contribution to the preservation and promotion of national identity, education and political activism. These women actively participated in educational initiatives, charitable activities and the dissemination of reformist ideas that shaped Kazakhstan at the beginning of the XXth century. Their efforts to support literacy programs, protect women's rights, and participate in national discussions about social progress are clear

evidence of their contribution to the development of Kazakh culture, public administration and social transformation [11].

The diverse roles undertaken by Kazakh women throughout history – from governance and education to journalism and medicine – demonstrate their enduring influence in shaping national identity and progress. Despite periods of socio-political transformation that sought to impose limitations on gender roles, women continually found ways to assert their agency and contribute to the development of Kazakh society. Their legacy serves as both an inspiration and a foundation for contemporary efforts to further gender equality and women's empowerment in Kazakhstan.

Conclusion

«A woman is a human being, a great human being. She is the nurturer of society. All people come from the womb of a woman. The happiness and unhappiness of a country depend on a woman. With proper upbringing, a woman creates a human being, and properly raised people create the prosperity of a country. All happiness and well-being begin with a woman; it is from her that happiness must begin» [14]. Despite the principles of gender equality proclaimed in sacred texts and early interpretations of Islam, traditional patriarchal norms have hindered the full realization of these ideals in everyday life over the centuries. However, modern examples of successful female leaders, such as Benazir Bhutto, Megawati Sukarnoputri, and Sheikh Hasina Wazed, demonstrate that a harmonious combination of traditional values and modern gender equality norms can stimulate political, social, and educational reforms. This allows for the integration of historical heritage with the demands of the times and the pursuit of just and sustainable development in Muslim societies.

These historical and contemporary female leaders, among many others, exemplify the diverse ways in which Kazakh women have continually influenced and redefined their societal roles. The history of Kazakh women is deeply intertwined with national identity, education, journalism, and governance. Despite the challenges introduced by various political transformations, they have persistently assert-

ed their agency in shaping society. The balance between traditional values and modern gender norms has allowed Kazakh women to contribute to economic, social, and political development, demonstrating resilience and leadership in every sphere. Recognizing their historical contributions ensures that their role in shaping the nation's future remains firmly acknowledged.

In modern Kazakhstan, the ongoing evolution of gender policies and women's rights is evident through legislative reforms and the increasing representation of women in politics, science, and business. Women continue to play a transformative role in society, upholding their historical legacy while adapting to contemporary challenges. The integration of historical perspectives with modern feminist discourse allows for a more comprehensive understanding of women's roles in shaping a progressive and equitable society.

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