



Women's Emancipation Movement in Old Kingdom Romania. Sequences of a Paradigm Shift

Rusu Alexandra-Andreea

Filipescu-Cesianu House (Bucharest Municipality Museum), Romania

Abstract

The present paper highlights some of the contrasts and inconsistencies accompanying women's emancipation process in the Old Kingdom of Romania. In the second half of the 19th-century, Romanian society witnessed a paradigm shift best translated into the increasingly active role of women in society. It wasn't a sudden change in women's status but a gradual adaptation of the collective mind to new cultural contexts (political, social, economic, and technological). Withal, the women's emancipation movement can be understood as part of the modernization puzzle, "the best of all worlds," requiring the full involvement of both sexes. Urban elite representatives, organized in feminist societies, campaigned for women's civil and political rights, overcoming the official discourse centered on the "natural" differences between men and women. Another battle was fought to dismiss the socially constructed gender differences that destined men to public spaces and power roles while women remained cloistered in their homes. In other words, the Romanian society was willing to cultivate the woman only in her capacity as a mother (metaphorically, mother of the nation), wife, and good Christian, and less as a full-fledged citizen.

As Romanian society matures and culture increases, the "feminist cause" gains more consistency, advocating for legal and economic equality, followed by political rights. Also, by navigating the list of permissions and prohibitions, women found new ways to overcome the sexual division of roles.

Keywords: feminism; biologic determinism; cultural determinism; conflicting morals; social change