

FRAME CONDITIONS AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN SPAIN IN THE 19th CENTURY

The nineteenth century witnessed some of the most dramatic events and developments in the history of Spain: European nationalism, alliances and old rivalries. It was a time of turning points which marked a before and after. Above all, during the reign of Isabel II, it saw the beginning of modern Spain.

The Spanish Constitution of 1812 incorporated, with some slight touches, many of the principles of the French Constitution of 1791, such as the equality of all before the law or the division of powers. Privileges were abolished, such as the Inquisition. However, despite its modernity and importance there was no change in the status of women and there was not a revolution in gender relations similar to what happened to social and political level. The liberal model that was imposed after the old regime was characterized by a weak Parliamentary representative system which excluded women.

A poor industrial development that involved the lack of relevant and progressive middle class and the high rates of female illiteracy contributed to maintain the unequal status of Spanish women in society.

An important aspect to consider in any historical analysis on 19th Century Spain is the important influence of the Catholic Church responsible, exclusively, for the education of the upper classes, promoting types of ideology that underlined both differences between sexes and the unique role of woman as a wife and mother.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, women's movements were articulated and expanded under the formulas of suffrage and feminism. In Spain, these movements were slow to arrive due to unfavorable social and cultural conditions although concerns about feminine condition were not entirely absent. This is the case of women included in our list as is the case of Concepción Arenal and others as Emilia Pardo-Bazán. On the other hand, these considerations were assumed by socialists, communists and a group of reformer intellectuals got together at the "Institución Libre de Enseñanza" who advocated Spanish women's rights of both education and work out of home.

At the end of the 19th century, we can see a country which had proved unable to make itself an industrial power and that now paid the consequences, a country entering the twentieth century amid intense, unresolved social and ideological conflicts. The scene had been set for a future of political violence and military intervention that would erupt, brutally, in the Civil War of 1936-1939. The situation of Spanish women in 19th

century shows a panorama in which they were excluded from the public areas and their main task was to transmit the traditional moral values and to educate children.

Milestones

1857: General Law of Public Instruction: Primary education was considered compulsory .

1871: Maria Elena Maseras, first woman who could go to the university and finish a career in medicine by a royal official permission of the King, but she was not allowed to pursue her profession.

1883: The secondary school was open to women.

1888: Women were allowed to study at the university but they cannot practice their profession.

Bibliography

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