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The public perception in Dobrogea of the role of Muslim women within the family

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Abstract

Since in many Western newspapers Islam is considered a symbol of women subordination, the question arises whether the same label is accepted in Romania. Taking into account that the core of the Muslim community in Romania is in Dobrogea, this study was conducted in this area. Islam has restored women a great number of their rights: for instance, a Muslim woman has the right to divorce, to leave their houses or drive; in terms of education, a woman is forced to seek knowledge. Those Muslim countries imposing tougher rules for women, do not truly respect the teachings of the Quran.

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1.The attitude towards women in society throughout history

If history is anything to go by, we could illustrate the attitude towards women in different societies in the past as it follows: During the Roman civilization, for example, the woman was regarded as a slave. *The Greeks saw her as a good that could be bought and sold*^f. The early Christians saw women as some alluring beings, responsible for the

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fall of Adam. In India, Hindus, until recently, regarded women as being worse than death, pestilence, snakes or even hell. The life of a wife ended with her husband's life. In the past, the widow had to jump into the flames of her husband's funeral pyre. In the pre-Islamic Arab state, the woman was considered a cause of pain and misery, and the girls were sometimes buried alive after birth. In France, in 587, there was held a meeting to determine whether or not a woman can be truly considered a human being.

2.The status of women in Islam

Women play a very important role in the Islamic society. Unlike other religions, Islam takes the woman to great fame. Her importance as a mother and wife was clearly shown by the Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet said that: "The Paradise lies under the feet of our mothers" (Sarwar, 1992). Someone once asked the Prophet: "Who deserves my greatest care?" The Prophet replied: "Your mother, then your father, then your nearest relatives." In one of his speeches, the Prophet said: "Oh, people, your wives have certain rights over you and you have certain rights over them. Treat them well and be kind to them for they are your partners and support" (Sarwar, 1992). In Islam, the woman has a distinct and separate identity. Islam gave women the right to own personal property. She owns her own goods. Nobody has any right over them as he/she wishes. The woman has the right to choose her husband and no one can oppose a decision over her will. She has the right to demand the separation from her husband if their marriage becomes impossible to bear. Islam pays a great importance to the family, because the family is the first brick on which society is built. And if this brick is strong, the building will be well strong and steady. When the family is better, the society is better too, and if the family is shaky and the society is also shaky.

The Prophet accepted the women's oath of allegiance in Islam, as he had accepted it from men. The covenant of faith made by women was different from the one made by men and had not been fulfilled as an act of blind obedience. This is a confirmation of the independence of the Muslim woman's identity and of the power to bear the responsibility involved by the oath of faith and the confession of being subjected to Allah and devoted to Him and to His Messenger. All these had taken place centuries ago, before the modern world recognized the women's right to freedom of expression and the right to vote. This is an addition to other important rights, such as the right to have her own fortune, to release her from the responsibility to spend for others, even if she is wealthy, the equality with men in terms of worldly affairs, education and religious and legal duties.

3.Method

3.1. Objectives and research instruments

The research objectives were: knowledge of the perception of the role of Muslim women within the family; highlighting perception differences associated to the biological gender of subjects; highlighting the perception differences associated to the religious affiliation.

The main research method used within this study was the questionnaire, which consisted of 20 questions. There were both multiple choice questions (with 2 to 6 possible answers) and open questions. For the analysis and interpretation of data, the results of the questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively.

3.2. Hypotheses

It is supposed that the Romanian public perception of the role of Muslim women in the family is influenced by religious precepts; it is supposed that perception differences are influenced by the biological gender of respondents.

3.3.Participants

The study involved 60 people, both from the urban and rural environments, with secondary and higher education studies, from the Romanian majority community, of Christian religion, and from the ethnic Turkish and Tatar minority community, of Muslim religion. The number of Christian subjects was the same as the number of Muslim

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