

Abstract

The diploma thesis focuses on how the lives of women of the underprivileged social class transformed during the fall of the empire and after the accession of the Republic of China and its modernization endeavors. The main source is the "autobiography" of old Mrs. Ning, which was recorded by the American missionary Ida Pruitt. Based on this source, it presents the way of life of a "traditional" woman in Beijing, her job, the values she professes, her view of the world, including meetings with various employers, and also her view of the emancipation of younger women. These facts are set in the historical context (the role of women in traditional society, in that period of time contemporary social changes in the perspective of the status of women) and especially in the context of the discourse of the May Fourth Movement. In addition to secondary literature, this part of the thesis also takes into account Lu Xun's short story *New Year's Sacrifice* (*Zhufu* 祝福). The thesis also includes a presentation of the author of the analyzed autobiography, the circumstances of the origin of her work and reflections on the authenticity of this unique source.

Key words:

Gender issues in Traditional China, Ida Pruitt, working women, Women's emancipation, May Fourth Movement, missionaries in China