



Introducing *Aspasia*



ASPASIA Statement of Purpose

It is a great pleasure to present the first volume of *Aspasia*, an international peer-reviewed yearbook that seeks to bring out the best scholarship in the field of interdisciplinary women's and gender history focusing on, and especially produced in, Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe.

As its name suggests, *Aspasia* brings together the three parts of Europe that the yearbook will primarily deal with—Southeastern, Central, and Eastern Europe. Aspasia of Miletus was a learned and independent woman, famous for her intelligence and wit, who lived from c. 469 to c. 406 BCE.¹ While her knowledge influenced famous thinkers like Plato, Pericles, and Socrates, her work 'survived only through the voices of the men she had inspired'. In 1876, the Austrian writer Robert Hamerling published a cultural-historical novel about Aspasia, which was apparently widely read. His book inspired the Latvian poetess and feminist Elza Pliekšāne-Rozenberga, who took 'Aspazija' as her pen name—thus creating a link between Southeastern, Central, and Eastern Europe.²

Aspasia's main goal is to stimulate innovative interdisciplinary historical research about women and gender in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, parts of Europe where the field of women's and gender history has developed unevenly and remained marginally represented in the 'international' canon. In particular, we hope that 'European women's history' will come to mean more than Western European women's history—which is still often the case, and that the work published in *Aspasia* will contribute to the expansion of comparative historical research on women and gender across Europe. This is not simply a matter of making the case studies presented here visible, but rather integrating, as done by the authors in this volume, original research with analysis that takes into account existing scholarship on women's and gender history, and also examines critically the assumptions of this historiography.

Each volume of *Aspasia* will contain a section with articles (generally, but not always, focused on a specific theme), a discussion Forum (whose topic will mainly be related to the central theme of the volume), and book reviews and essays. In the future, more rubrics will possibly be added.

