

“Babes-Bolyai” University  
Faculty of History and Philosophy

Ph.D. Thesis

**The Woman in the Romanian Medieval Society.  
XV<sup>th</sup> - XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries**

Abstract

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**Key words:** woman; family; children; wife; mother; widow; legal statute; social profile; marital strategies

## Content

Women's history does not represent a novelty in the European historiography anymore. But in what the Romanian historiography is concerned women's history is still at its beginnings, at a stage dominated by questioning and by thematic studies but only a few synthesis papers. These are the main reasons which made us study the women's history in the present Ph.D. thesis, as well as our particular interest on this field.

Researching the Medieval women's history we also tried to reveal the history of the Romanian Medieval society from a gender point of view. In fact the thesis represents a women's history in a men's age that we tried to study from an objective point of view.

Chronologically speaking, we investigated the women's history among the XV<sup>th</sup> and the XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries. We voluntarily expanded our study beyond the chronological limits of the Romanian Medieval Ages as we wished to emphasize any possible progresses made at the level of women's statute and perception. Moreover, our study on the image of the Romanian medieval women would have been incomplete if we hadn't analyzed the first Romanian written laws, *Cartea Romaneasca de Invatatura* and *Indreptarea Legii*, Codes of Law elaborated in the XVII<sup>th</sup> century but still remaining in the medieval mentalities.

The present Ph. D. thesis is also the result of a challenge we assumed, that of studying in a comparative manner the statute of women from Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania. This was not an easy task to fulfill and prudence was necessary due to the discourses' diversity on women of the Transylvanian Principality. The legal and the religious diversity led to the emergence not of a single but of several women's profiles. That is why we limited our research upon the official discourse on what women were concerned but also on several case studies. For instance, we studied the legal actions taken by women from the Odorheiu Secuiesc county or the legal definition and the legal actions taken against the witches.

In terms of methodology, our intention was that of revealing the Romanian Medieval women in their basic features with special attention to the diversity and the complexity of the development framework of the Romanians during the Middle Ages. Their statute and image were compared to those of the women from the Transylvanian Principality. Due to the historical resources at our disposal, the present thesis is mainly a history of women from the nobility (ruler's wives and daughters, wives and daughters of the noblemen). We might say that there are plenty information on these women yet there are insufficient data on the women from the other social straits. In spite of this inconvenience, we also tried, whenever the bibliography allowed us, to reveal excerpts from the status and the features of these women.

The thesis has five chapters each including fundamental issues of the woman's profile. As a starting point, which turned into a researching method, on our reasoning stay the two perspectives on women that we identified at the bibliographic level: there is a theoretical point of view on the Medieval women developed by the legal texts, and, second, we have the real image and statute of the women revealed through the analysis of the documents which refer to the everyday life of these women. Thus the thesis is the "story" of these two women: there is the imaginary and imagined woman of the theory (both legal and religious) and there is the real woman as she lived, felt acted and reacted in her time and community. These two women represent the subjects of our research. They are the main characters of the thesis. They had been analyzed in their complexity aiming at emphasizing the community of destiny but also the divergent features among them.

The first chapter: **Women in the historical sources of the XIV<sup>th</sup> – XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries** deals with a historiographic analysis of the main documentary sources on women's history. They had been divided in three categories: legal sources; administrative sources and the narrative ones. The first category is that of the legal acts: the Romanian Code of laws; the Tripartit Code, The Statutes of the Fagaras County, "Constitutiile Aprobate of Transylvania". In what the women are concerned, all these texts have a religious basis and that is why they stated the inequality of women compared to men. They are misogynist as Georges Duby said in one of his major works on medieval women. Our analysis on these legal texts concentrated upon the legal references to the engagement, the marriage, the divorce and, generally, everything that was connected to the family life and the morality acts. We also analyzed the lawsuits, both civil and criminal in which Medieval women were defendants or suitors. These lawsuits were meant to complete the real woman's profile. In quantities terms, the most frequent lawsuits are the civil ones: they are dowry-related lawsuits, inheritance lawsuits etc.

The second category of sources, the administrative ones includes office papers: documents produced by the rulers' wives; sales contracts made by women, purchasing contracts made by women, pledging contracts; acts of donation; documents which reveal women's endowment and also the testaments. Their historical value for women's history is higher as they are called to define the real woman's profile. These are the documentary sources that allowed us to see the woman's involvement in everyday life; their place and role in the society; the limits of their actions and, overall, the ways in which women were perceived in and by a male dominated society. A particular interest was given to the provisions referring to dowry and to the inheritance right of women. The wills written by both men and women were also very important for our study. They represented defining sources

for women's history as their authors, facing the inevitable death, quit formalism. Their thoughts turned to family members: these are some of the few documents where is time and space for feelings.

The last but not least sources are the narrative ones. Chronicles, memoirs, letters, travelers' records were also primary sources for our study. Their analysis required more attention as the most majority of the information of these texts has a great deal of subjectivity. In quantities terms the most valuable chronicles are those written in the XVII<sup>th</sup> century. For the Transylvanian Principality the memoirs of Nagy Szabo Ferenc, Ioan Kemeny and Nicolae Bethlen had been extremely interesting both due to the writing manner but also to the information on women. All these narrative sources, apart from some letters, were written by men who, as we could conclude, were not very interested in writing about their women contemporaries.

Legal, administrative and narrative sources are at the basis of the present Ph. D thesis. Their analysis in a distinct chapter was intended to prove that also in what the Romanian Principalities (Transylvania also) were concerned all the medieval texts were written by men but without turning into a gender debate as similar documents turned into the Western Medieval Europe.

The second chapter: **The legal profile of women from Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania** deals with the legal profile of women from the three Principalities. We limited our research on the formal discourse on women created by both the Romanian and the Transylvanian societies. This type of approach is justified by the fact that each historical age has its own feminine patterns; each society, in any given time, built its "perfect" woman. Thus, the chapter exposes what we have considered to be the ideal woman of the normative texts of the written laws. This way of analyzing led to revealing only one aspect, but a defining one, of the women from the XV<sup>th</sup>-XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is the imaginary and the imagined side of this woman, it says a lot about the way in which the woman was perceived in the society by the secular and the ecclesiastical authorities. Legally documented this was the easiest approach as medieval laws were very generous in detailing the limits of women's existence.

The research of the legal profiles started with the definition of several basic concepts: people, person, family, legal capacity, consanguinity etc. According to the medieval law women were – no matter the social category they belonged to, though this represented the basic criteria of legal appreciation – unequal from the legal point of view due to the religious concepts but also to their physical and psychical weakness (Ceterchi I., 1980). There is at the

discursive level a gender differentiation, the sex being, according to the Medieval Law, the criteria which limited women's legal capacity. This meant that medieval women did not have a complete legal capacity. Under the laws of the medieval times woman had to be the loyal but weak true mate of man and that is why she was supposed to be permanently kept under the man's control. But she had also to be protected by any abuse or temptation caused by her physical and mental weaknesses. It is also to be mentioned the fact that almost all the historical references on women that had been identified in the Romanian medieval Law were in the context of defining concepts like family or marriage. Maybe if the medieval authorities hadn't been interested in giving a legal frame of the marriage, women would not be a subject of these laws. But as the women's entire existence was inside the family the texts had given us a real portrait of the married woman. Thus the woman's statute was analyzed having as a starting point the legal norms on engagement and detailing the legal aspects of the marriage. Basic and form conditions were required for a legal marriage. As a basic condition this norms stressed the couple's consent even the bride's one. But the theory is not supported by the other historical sources: we never find it, the parents being the ones whose agreement was compulsory. When all the required conditions were fulfilled the marriage could be made. The act led to rights and duties for both the husband and the wife: they were due to mutual faith, support and help.

Besides these mutual relations between husband and wife the medieval laws were also very generous in defining the legal aspects referring to women's dowry and the gifts between the husband and the wife. For the Romanian Principalities the Codes of Law "Pravilele" written in the XVII<sup>th</sup> insist upon the legal status of dowry. As the documents prove the dowry was a statutory element of a marriage, a real family obligation. The laws are very generous in describing the conditions in which a woman could lose her dowry in her husband's favor provided that the dowry was from the legal point of view the woman's property and her husband had only a beneficial right.

We also insisted upon the legal aspects of the divorce. This subject was generously detailed in the Codes of Law being a competence of the ecclesiastical courts of the Orthodox Church. These texts also discuss among lines the legal statute of the unmarried women. They did not represent a legal category but they had a legal protection due to their civil position. The category includes the daughters, being under the absolute power of their fathers' but legally protected by any abuse from their part and the nuns. We also discussed, in a distinct subchapter, the juridical position of the widows. They had a privileged legal condition having a complete legal capacity, although in the everyday life this capacity could have been

restricted in several ways. The Transylvanian laws for instance were even more generous in discussing the legal position of the widows. Hungarian kings' enactments were assuming as a moral duty to protect the widows. Also the "Constitutiile Aprobate" from the XVII<sup>th</sup> century considered the widows as being morally weak: these laws provided legal protection for the rightful heirs from what they considered to be the "natural negligence" of widows. In the same context the craft guilds designated a particular statute for the craftsmen's widows.

The same chapter also includes an analysis of the marginal women: the prostitutes and the gypsy slaves. Although they were not a legal category Pravilele also discuss their legal position. For instance, the laws punish both legally and morally the prostitutes' activity. As the legal stipulation of the kidnapping and the rapes show it, they were also discriminated them. As for the gypsy slaves they were totally inferior legally speaking. The gypsies were in fact the most marginalized category of the Romanian Medieval Ages as Dan Horia Mazilu stated (Dan Horia Mazilu, 2008). They were considered only as a property of the owners having no legal capacity. Even so the laws tried to protect the gypsy women of any abuse from their masters. As for the crimes done by these women they benefited by clemency as the crime was part of their genetic code.

We also discussed the women's legal right to inherit. The inheritance represented one of the most important institutions of the medieval times as it was called to assure the heritage (Ceterchi I., 1980). Moreover, a highly masculine society will be interested on woman in correlation with the inheritance, even women's history had started with researching this aspect by the law historians. At the legal level the Codes of Law regulate the properties' situation in very specific cases: when he/she died having no children, when the grandfather died etc. As the theory and the practice prove women's right to inherit their fathers stays as it follows: in Moldavia women and men had equal rights of inheritance, in Wallachia we have the man's privilege but with departure from rules like union or transforming women to men, from the XVII<sup>th</sup> century mainly we have the equality of rights. Moreover, the documents prove that the written testaments become more and more frequently used as an inheritance practice. As for Transylvania, the women's right to inherit is more complex. The authorities of the Principality stated the inequality between sexes, the girls being entitled only at a quart of the father's possessions. Even more the daughters were not accepted as rightful heir *-haeres* being considered only as follower *-posteritas* (D. V. Firoiu, 1993). As for the widows they could inherit only the personal assets or any given property of the husbands' when the inheritance was stipulated by testamentary means. The Romanian nobility from Transylvania adopted

three ways of inheritance: the sexes' equality, the man's privilege or the quarter depending on which was more convenient to them.

The imaginary portrait of the Romanian Medieval woman was completed with the conclusions from the analysis of the legal conditions of the married woman as it was legally stated in the Codes of Law of the XVII<sup>th</sup> century. These acts were very generous in discussing the wives' limits and duties to their husbands. These texts had even legalized the domestic violence. This can be understood in the sense that the husband's power over his wife was quite great and, on the other hand that the authorities tried to temper the violent impulses of the husbands. In what the domestic violence is concerned, but also, as former studies had already proven as well as the documents of the lawsuits of the Odorheiu Secuiesc county show, the physical abuses on women was an everyday life fact the more acceptable when women "asked for it".

We also analyzed both civil and criminal matters. The Orthodox Church was very interested in supervising and correcting the believers' morality. In 1493 for instance the Patriarch Nifon was called by Radu the Great with the aim of reforming the Romanians' (from Walachia) manners. His intention was to eradicate the drunkenness and the fornication. In the same sense, in 1592 Hierax asked the Bucharest's inhabitants to give up practices like adultery and fornication. The same as the Catholic Church supervised its believers' lives, the same, the Orthodox Church was called to correct and punish any moral deviation. We studied both the high crimes like the betrayal; the murder; the infanticide but also the crimes against morality and religion such as the kidnapping; the adultery; the incest or the bigamy. Their study revealed the legal profile of women. Besides these legal norms the chapter also includes an analysis of the causes which forced women to appear in front of the legal courts. In civil lawsuits the most frequent cases are those related to the inheritance. The most frequent category of women to be involved in this kind of lawsuits is that of the widows'. From the criminal matters we analyzed – being also a distinct feature of the Transylvanian society – the witchcraft cases.

In conclusion, from the legal point of view the women of the XV<sup>th</sup> –XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries were unequal to men. But we should not take this reality in the sense that women had no legal protection at all. The Laws tried to give them a legal protection against certain abuses. It was not an equal/even justice for every woman as it depended on their social rank and also on their moral conduct.

Subordination and inequality are the key words which best describe the women's legal profile. Their origin is placed in the woman's physical and moral weaknesses defined as such by the Church.

The third chapter: **The social profile of women from Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania. Women's role in society.** The key aspects refer to women's destiny beyond the virtual or real? boundaries of the family; which were the women's social occasions and their everyday activities. We must state as a fact that each stage of the medieval people's lives was defined by the church, by the same institution which conceptualized and complemented the subordinated to men woman's profile. Indeed, women could not, but they did not even try, to deny or set apart of this theoretic profile. But in what their social statute is concerned, we face a paradox: the documents prove that women enjoyed quite a large freedom of acts and this opposed to the Laws which placed women under the absolute power of men.

The rhythms of women's lives were dictated by the Church. Baptism, engagement, marriage and even death were all under religious prescriptions. But all these defining moments of the medieval people's lives should also be understood as social occasion as at this time public and private are intertwined and sometimes confused. The previously mentioned life stages are defining elements in a woman's life and in each of them woman had been defined in relation to men. Aiming at revealing the real woman's profile and at complementing the feminine universe we insisted upon the marital rituals. These rituals required, in each stage, the women's presence. Other everyday facts we insisted upon were that of the funeral ceremonies, the attitudes towards death and the death preparations. The orthodox funeral rituals asked the women's presence: they were mourners, "talkative" women who honored the dead person with "heathenishly cries and lament". As for *ars moriendi* and *praeparatio mortis* Transylvania excels at the funeral literature that will be an inspiration for the orthodox world. This literature was designated for teaching the Christians how to live and more important how to die. A significant fact is that from the XVII<sup>th</sup> century onwards women also became main subjects of this literary genre. The most famous one is the "Sicriul de Aur" (The Golden Coffin) written by Ioan Zoba din Vint. Six of the fourteen funeral ceremonies are dedicated to woman's death. They refer to women's death in certain stages of their lives: a daughter's death; the death of a wise and honest woman; when a woman died in childbirth etc. They also reflect, by underlining woman's negative features, the portrait of the perfect woman. This ideal woman was supposed to be gentle and obedient as the obedience was the woman's most valuable asset. The death was an everyday fact prepared by every man or woman according to what their Church said. Moreover, this death brought men and women on



the same level; it did not make any sexual discrimination: men and women were equal when facing death (Iolanda Tighiliu). That is why they prepared for this moment in the same manner. In consequence we analyzed, comparatively, this manner in which both men and women prepared their death. Important clues in this sense were offered by the testaments lecturing. Their authors were very interested in organizing and dividing their assets, they clearly stated their last wishes forced by age, sickness or by the absence of the direct successors. The pilgrimages were another method for preparing the death even though the Romanian medieval men and women did not practice it too often. The most well known case is that of Elena Cantacuzino who travelled to Jerusalem in 1682. Most often men and women preferred to built and endowed churches and monasteries.

Childbirth, marriage, death were the major concerns of the women from XV<sup>th</sup> to XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries. These were supplemented, when they were the women were the rulers' wives, by the court ceremonies.

Beyond all these concerns the women's lives were not carefree. The Middle Ages and the XVII<sup>th</sup> century were not peaceful times, the insecurity was permanent. Thus we tried to identify the social context in which women lived. We called them the challenges of everyday life which influenced not only the women's lives but the entire community. The political instability, the military conflicts, the natural disasters and diseases had often made victims among women. They were victims of the political instabilities: the rulers' abuses or the internal conflicts among rulers and the nobility had often forced the women (rulers' wives, noble women) to take the exile's path. The exile's costs were not cheap at all. They often had to sell their dowry for living abroad. Victims of these conflicts were for instance: Ecaterina Lupu, Nedelea, Constantin Serban's wife and many others. Also, the Turks and the Mongols made more victims among women. All the same they were collateral victims as they lost their children or husbands. They were also direct victims, history recalling the memory of women who were enslaved by the Turks or by the Mongols but also their efforts or their relatives' ones for obtaining the money for redeeming their freedom.

We also analyzed the rulers' wives involvement in public life. Their presence is hardly seen in the researched documents as women were not allowed to play part of the political life which was exclusively a man's affair. An exception to the rule was that of the women who were members of the regency. Again, the widowhood allowed women to play a political role. We studied three cases: that of Ruxandra Lapusneanu, Chiajna and Elisabeta Movila. For the Transylvanian Principality we investigated Ecaterina Brandenburg's case. It represents a

unique one as she ruled Transylvania as a Prince not Princess. The fourth analyzed case had made quite an impression on the contemporaries and not only.

The chapter also includes an analysis of what we named as being the passive implication of women in politics. These means that the rulers' wives and daughters had played this role as they were often used as pawns in politics and mainly in the marital strategies or their fathers'.

The final aspect studied in the present chapter is that of the economic implication of women. As the documents prove, the women's presence in the economic life was quite significant and all the same diversified. If we could spoke about women's specialties the most frequently mentioned were the sales activities, the pledging and the donations but also the small-scale trade ones. As for the basis of the women's economic power we analyzed the sheet drawers, the endowment acts, the inheritance acts and the property inventories. All these documents were compared with that of the men's. In quantitative terms, the most frequent acts are those of selling and buying land properties. The reasons which determined women to sell their properties were different: sometimes they were forced by poverty, exile, by honoring the deceased or for obtaining the necessary money for the ransom. No matter the reason, all these texts specify that women willingly sold their properties but with the prior agreement of their relatives. When they gave up an asset/property from their dowery the document specified this fact. As for the purchasing acts, they also mentioned if the acquisition was made from the woman's money. In what the pledging acts are concerned, women appeared as debtor or lender. Again, the reasons for these acts depended from one case to another.

Considered as economic activities, the chapter also includes the women's involvement in founding and endowing the churches and the monasteries. These are not only a testimony of the spiritual concerns of the medieval women but they also reveal women's political power proving once more their implication in the social life of the the community. Most frequent founders and donors were the noble women. The donation deed was preferred to the founding one as it did not involve to much financial effort. Women donated personal assets: land; slaves or cult objects. On the whole, all these economic acts prove that women were freer in their actions and attitudes then it could be understood by reading the Laws' texts that we had previously analyzed. All the same, they stress the fact that the Romanian (Transylvania also) societies did not keep the women isolated, away from the others they being active community members.

The fourth chapter: **Woman and family in the Romanian Middle Ages** represents, without any doubt, the most important aspect in the effort of identifying the women's statute.

The basic framework of medieval women's lives was the family. As the historic documents revealed, this had been the most difficult aspect to be studied due to the documents' silence. As in justice and in society, the Romanian medieval family was also dominated by men. As the Orthodox Church defined it, the Romanian family was first of all the Christian family. The church was the institution which defined it and fixed the relations among the family members. The fourth chapter shortly reiterates the basic institutions at the basis of the family foundation: the engagement and the marriage with particular reference to the reasons and the legal and moral effects of these acts. We also analyzed the ways through which the Christian marriage emerged in the western medieval society. These were compared to the emergence of the marriage in the Romanian Principalities. In both areas, the marriage was considered to be a compulsory step in people's lives. It was influenced by customs and laws which placed the married women under the men's power. It had in fact been an authority transfer, an act exclusively made by the parents and with only one purpose: procreation. But the written laws on marriage give only the theoretic/ideal image of the married couple. This is why we intended to reveal which were the real relations between husband and wife and, on the whole, among the family members. As we had previously mentioned, in the family as well as in society, women and children were in their husbands'/fathers' control. As for a woman, once being married, she had to face supplementary duties, as the family responsibilities were clearly delimited, and no one could set apart of this pattern. Having as a research basis the family, both theoretic and real, we analyzed all the women's hypostasis during her entire life: the daughter in her father's family and facing a quite different statute, apart from her brothers and generating more problems than the boys such as virginity, dowry, and marriage. As for the parents-children relationships the subordination was the key word. The actual feelings, the easiest identifiable, were the parents' concern to endow them and assure their inheritance. This revealed the contractual nature of the parents-children relationship: the parents took care of their children and these returned the "favor" when their parents were old. As for the sentiments towards daughters they were mostly seen as perspectives wives and mothers.

As a main area of research we insisted upon one of the most features of a medieval woman: the wife and the mother. As a wife, a woman began its life's journey which she had been prepared for by her family. Her new statute was marked even by a physical transformation: a headwear, the coil. Unfortunately we can't say much about the feelings between husband and wife. The silence is the dominant reality in this case. But these must have been, then as now, extremely different. Some clues in this sense can be seen by reading the testaments.

The maternity is also a subject of the fourth chapter. It actually represented another important feature of the medieval and modern woman. For some clerks it represented the only positive attribute of women. Most part of their existence medieval women were concerned by it: Iuliana, Luca Arbore's wife had 9 children; Tautu Ion's wife had 7 children; Anghelina, Matias' wife had 12; Elena Cantacuzino had 9 children and these are only a few.

As wives and mothers women remained under their husbands' authority until at their death. But a widow could also be controlled even after her husband died: the testaments prove this. Also, the widowhood meant not only privileges but also challenges: leading and administrating the family's matters; the misunderstandings caused by the deceased's successions; paying the debt of the dead etc. Thus the insecurity could have been a constant reality of a widow's life. This fact is proven by the documents which reveal the abuses and violences made upon widows. For avoiding all these problems a widow could remarry or choose to end her life in a monastery.

Analyzing all these aspects we can state that the woman's profile is complete: daughter; wife; mother and widow are its basic features. Once again, and as the Western historians stated, her body and sexuality were the keen elements that delimited the women's place inside the private space of the family. So the dominant family rule was that of man's superiority. But neither the Medieval Laws nor the everyday life as seen in the documents can show the actual statute of women or the abuses she had to face. Thus, from the family perspective we can emphasize the community of destiny among women from Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania. Men's dominance determined, no matter the geographical area, the structure and the relations inside the family.

The last chapter: **Foreigners on the Romanian women; the Romanians on the foreign women** deals with the history of medieval women from an alterity perspective. We thought as being imperative to reveal the women's profile in relation to the others. To point out the ways in which foreign travelers looked at the women from the Romanian Principalities. The main historical sources for this approach were the written impressions of the foreign travelers. What were the foreigners interested in? The main subjects of their interest were related to the Romanians' marital rituals: the bride's kidnapping, Romanian's traditional dance etc. They were also impressed by the fact that Romanians could get divorced. From the everyday life aspects they had seen only the out of the ordinary facts: the tolerance towards the rulers' concubinage; the divorce or the Romanians' superstitions. One of these travelers, Giovanni Antonio Magini wrote about the Romanians' propensity towards superstitions and incantations. Few were the travelers mainly interested on women. They only

wrote about them when these women crossed beyond the society's accepted limits. They wrote on women's clothing, on their morality – some of them even noted a connection between women's clothing and their morality. Generally, the written information of these foreigners is sometimes confusing and contradictory.

We also focused our analysis upon the consular reports which include valuable information concerning the noble women. Some of these formal reports noted the political implication of Chiajna or Elisabeta Movila. Others offered quite a detailed image on the relation of the royal couple Sigismund Bathory and Maria Christierna. But most of these documents were interested in the royal widows' destinies. Thus we could know what happened with these women after they were forced to leave the country. Leaving for foreign countries the widows, most of them, were bound to ask for help and support from the part of their foster authorities. They asked for clemency and help evoking their dead husbands' acts or memory. In such instances we met Voica, Radu Mihnea's widow; Ana, Aron's widow; Voica, Patrascu cel Bun's widow; Stanca, Mihai Viteazul's widow, Marghita Movila or Safta, Gheorghe Stefan's widow.

We also tried to identify the manner in which foreign Ladies saw the Romanian Principalities during the Middle Ages. That is why we analyzed the epistolary changes of Ecaterina Salvaresso with her sister from Venice. Ecaterina Salvaresso ruled Wallachia as a regent while her son was minor. So she had time enough to know the political and moral life of the Romanians. Her letters talk about "the Romanians' backward state"; that people from this country had an "unfortunate habit"; "people here are wild people".

As a study subject also, we tried to see the ways in which the nobility from Wallachia and Moldavia and those from Transylvania interacted. Our declared intention was to identify the manner in which the Transylvanian nobility saw the Romanians and mainly their women. Their image is bivalent: on the one hand they had a distinct image and report with the nobility from Wallachia and Moldavia and, on the other hand, they had a very distinct and negative image on the Romanians from Transylvania. As for the Romanian women, few were the Transylvanians interested in these. One of the most "generous" columnists is Szamoskozsy. He is very critical with the Romanians in general so he is also critical with their women: Stanca, Mihai Viteazul's wife is described as an "old lady" and about the ruler's mother the same columnist wrote that she sold brandy and Josika (of Romanian origin) was called "the son of a Romanian bitch". As for the Romanian from Transylvania the most often seen and criticized is the religious difference. Reformates will try to correct their morality and set them away from superstition. In this sense the conditions which Stefan Geleji tried to impose to

Meletie in 1640 were very relevant: he required for the Orthodox Churches to make lecterns as well as for men and for “beast of a woman”.

The chapter ends with a study case on the connections between Romanians and foreign women. We analyzed the letters between Petru Cercel and the powerful Lady of France, Caterina de Medici. They had an epistolary change between 1581 - 1583. Petru Cercel asked Caterina de Medici’s help for obtaining the Wallachia’s throne. He asked Caterina to intercede for Petru Cercel at Constantinople.

The Ph.D. thesis’ final considerations include also a short comparative analysis between the Romanian women’s profile and that of those from Medieval Western Europe and Byzance, but also with the Renaissance women. The chronological difference between the Romanian medieval ages and the Western European Middle Ages forced us to this analysis aiming at objectively identifying the Romanian Medieval Woman’s statute. At some extent, the Romanian women were somewhere between West and East: the Western Middle Ages as well as the Romanian (Transylvanian also) societies had made woman an inferior to man according to the church’s teachings. The men’s supremacy is a constant but with the specification that the Romanian medieval literature did not think as necessary to discuss and did not involve in a sexes’ fight as it happened in the Western literature. At the formal level this literature was much more aggressive in the negative definition of women.

How were the women from Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania? They were, without any doubt, a significantly lower man’s subordinate. Less unequal was the woman’s position and role in the society. If we think only at the everyday life aspects we could say that women were equal to man: they had to face the same challenges; they had suffered from the same natural disasters; they were concerned by the Afterlife; they were forced to go on exile; they were taken as slaves just like the men were. Thus, if in justice and family women were under men’s control and power, in what the social and economical aspects were concerned we think that women had recovered from this inferiority.

The present Ph.D. Thesis aimed at revealing the feminine universe of the XV<sup>th</sup>-XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries in its major aspects. Compared to the Western Medieval woman, the Romanian and the Transylvanian ones were also inferior to men but not their enemies. Each woman in its social class could, if she wanted, to cross over the virtual limits imposed by some laws that were known only by a few. Romanian world of the XV<sup>th</sup>-XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries was a men’s world, a world which gave women a well designated and grounded role: a time of conflicts, of challenges and violence helped by the religious dogmas made woman inferior, both physical and moral, to men. Thus Simone de Bouvoir’s sayings “you are not born but become a

woman” are valid, *mutatis mutandis*, for the Romanian world of the XV<sup>th</sup>-XVII<sup>th</sup> centuries: women were raised and educated according to the religious values and according to the men’s will. Daughter, wife, mother and widow, these are the main aspects of the Medieval Women and each of it placed women in the men’s shadow. The men were the medieval woman’s artisans and she never opposed to this profile: women became what men wanted to become.

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