




Liviu Marius Ilie (Craiova)

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-3158-5291>

NUNNERY LIFE IN 16TH CENTURY WALLACHIA – MUȘA/MAGDALINA BEFORE AND AFTER TAKING VOWS

Abstract. The Wallachian monasteries are very well documented in the 16th century, but the life of nuns or monks after joining the monastery is a lesser-known aspect. Various details can be found in the life of a noblewoman (taking the name of Mușă), who decided to become a nun (Magdalina) during the first years of the 16th century. Mușă's life before entering the monastery is not very well known. Although many researchers tried to link her to the Craiovescu family, one of the most influential families in Wallachia at that time, this paper argues against this opinion. The historical sources describe her as a relative of a Wallachian nobleman, Cârjeu, and as the wife of Hamza, another important nobleman from the first decades of the 16th century. Mușă took vows in the monastery, which she built, and even after she became a nun, she preserved some of her former habits. Thus, the nun Magdalina kept in her possession villages and Roma families, which she donated to different monasteries, a widespread situation in the Byzantine monasticism. Although the sources did not describe her everyday life as a nun, they documented her relations with the political and ecclesiastical elites.

Keywords: monasticism, Wallachia, 16th century, donation, charter

Leaving the ordinary life and entering a monastery was a common theme in the history of Christianity. Either rich or poor, young or old, men or women, those who decided to take vows had to obey strict rules and abandon their former lifestyle. How did a person behave when facing this change in their personal life? Several documents, most of them from the first half of the 16th century Wallachia, might offer a possible answer to this question. The charters describe Mușă, a noblewoman who decided to become a nun and consequently changed her name to Magdalina; she inherited various properties which she used during her monastic life to build a monastery and donated goods and slaves to others. Such was also the situation in the Byzantine Empire, after choosing the monastic life, wealthy persons kept at least some of their estates. From this point of view, Magdalina acted according to common practice, since there were several cases of nuns or monks in the 16th century Wallachia who did the same. The traces of her life can be followed in different Wallachian documents; they describe when

and where she became a nun, how she lived after taking vows, and when she died. The sources which depict her life are mostly charters written in the Wallachian princely chancery; however, the document issued by Magdalina offer a more personal view of herself. Beyond her interesting life, Muşa/Magdalina illustrates the monastic transformation in Wallachian late Middle Ages and early modern era. The relationship with her family was not abandoned after entering the monastery, as she received estates together with her former husband and sons.

The names

Her name before taking vows was Muşa. A charter issued by Radu the Great (1495–1508)¹ on June 11th, 1503, was given to ‘Muşa from Corbi’ and attested her possession of villages, gypsies (Roma slaves), and a mill². Moreover, a diptych from the monastery Bistriţa³ mentioned the name ‘Muşa’⁴ with no other references to a family name; as in many other cases in Wallachian history, the diptych recorded only the baptismal names.

Her monastic name, Magdalina, was firstly recorded in another document issued by Radu the Great on September 1st, 1506⁵. When she entered monasticism, she kept the first letter (‘M’) of her former given name in the monastic one. This was a common practice during the previous centuries in the Byzantine Empire and might have passed to the Byzantine Commonwealth. Alice-Mary Talbot and Stamatina McGrath analysed the practice of *metonomasia* (the change of name) in the Byzantine monasticism and, for the Palaiologan period, they concluded: ‘A change of name is recorded for approximately 210 individuals of whom 188 or ca. 90% took a new monastic name beginning with the same letter as their baptismal name’⁶. In this context, Muşa/Magdalina is an example of this common practice in the Orthodox Church from the end of the medieval period to the modern times.

¹ On the dates of reign of the Wallachian princes from the 15th and 16th century, cf. C. REZACHEVICI, *Cronologia critică a domnilor din Ţara Românească și Moldova, a. 1324–1881*, vol. I, (Secolele XIV–XVI), Bucureşti 2001.

² *Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Ţara Românească*, vol. II, (1501–1525), ed. Ş. ŞTEFĂNESCU, O. DIACONESCU, Bucureşti 1972 (cetera: DRH, B, II), p. 56. On the history of the Roma people in Romania, cf. V. ACHIM, *The Roma in Romanian History*, Budapest 2004.

³ *Inscripții din bisericile României*, vol. I, ed. N. IORGA, Bucureşti 1905, p. 202. Bistriţa monastery was founded by the Craiovescu family in Vâlcea county at the end of the 15th century (N. STOICESCU, *Bibliografia localităților și monumentelor feudale din România*, vol. I, *Ţara Românească (Muntenia, Oltenia și Dobrogea)*, pars 1, (A–L), Craiova 1970, p. 71).

⁴ On the origin of the name Muşa, cf. N.A. CONSTANTINESCU, *Dicționar onomastic românesc*, Bucureşti 1963, p. 329.

⁵ DRH, B, II, p. 105.

⁶ A.-M. TALBOT, S. MCGRATH, *Monastic Onomastics*, [in:] *Monastères, images, pouvoirs et sociétés à Byzance*, ed. M. KAPLAN, Paris 2006, p. 89–118 (Monastères, images, pouvoirs et société à Byzance – Monastic Onomastics – Éditions de la Sorbonne (openedition.org) [8 IV 2023]).

The sources recorded Mușă/Magdalina with a third name: Cârjeovița⁷, Cârjeoane⁸/Cârjoane⁹, Cârjăoae¹⁰. These linguistic versions come from the masculine name Cârjeu¹¹, who was a relative of Mușă. Even if she did not have a family name, this third version demonstrates that women could have names derived from their male relatives.

Mușă – the noblewoman

Few sources refer to Mușă's life before entering the monastery. A late document from April 23rd, 1615, issued by the Wallachian prince Radu Șerban (1601; 1602–1610; 1611)¹², mentioned 'the nun Magdalina, Cârjeu's noblewoman (jupanița)'¹³. Cârjeu was dead during Vlad the Monk's reign (1481, 1482–1495)¹⁴; the long period between his death and the document issued by Radu Șerban (1605) prompted some researchers to question the matrimonial relationship between Mușă and Cârjeu; a possible father–daughter kinship was proposed¹⁵.

A long debate between the owners of the mills on Râul Doamnei (Princess' River) brought to light more details about Mușă. The mills had been possessed by Cârjeu and after his death the land nearby was occupied by the inhabitants of a neighbouring village. They offered the mills to Pârveu Craiovescu, a boyar from the most influential noble family in Wallachia at the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century¹⁶. Few years later, Mușă claimed that the land nearby

⁷ In a document issued by the Wallachian voivode Neagoe Basarab on July 30th, 1512 (DRH, B, II, p. 218).

⁸ In a document issued by Vlad Vintilă on February 12th, 1533 (*Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească*, vol. III, (1526–1535), ed. D. MIȚOC et al., București 1975 (cetera: DRH, B, III), p. 238–239).

⁹ In a charter issued by Peter the Young on January 8th, <1563> (*Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească*, vol. V, (1551–1565), ed. D. MIȚOC, M. ADAM CHIPER, București 1983 (cetera: DRH, B, V), p. 283).

¹⁰ In a charter issued by Mircea the Shepherd (1545–1552; 1553–1554; 1558–1559) on 7058 <September 1st, 1549 – August 31st, 1550> (*Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească*, vol. IV, (1536–1550), ed. D. MIȚOC et al., București 1981 (cetera: DRH, B, IV), p. 336).

¹¹ A. BERCARU, *Derivarea numelor feminine în limba română*, RSLa 41, 2006, p. 200–201; for more details on the name Cârjeu, cf. R. LAMBRU, *Nume de persoane la români în secolele XIV–XV (Țara Românească)*, București 2022, p. 92.

¹² On the dates of reign of Radu Șerban, cf. *Istoria românilor*, vol. V, *O epocă de înnoiri în spirit european (1601–1711/1716)*, ed. V. CÂNDEA, C. REZACHEVICI, N. EDROIU, București 2012, p. 1039.

¹³ *Documente privind istoria României. B. Țara Românească. Veacul XVII*, vol. II, (1611–1615), ed. I. IONAȘCU et al., București 1951 (cetera: DIR, B, Veac XVII, vol. II), p. 382.

¹⁴ DRH, B, III, p. 240.

¹⁵ D. BARBU, *O mărturie a relațiilor artistice româno-grecești: Corbiile de Piatră (datare și încadrare stilistică)*, CICSEE 4, 1987, p. 119.

¹⁶ About Pârveu Craiovescu, cf. N. STOICESCU, *Dicționar al marilor dregători din Țara Românească și Moldova (sec. XIV–XVI)*, București 1971, p. 18.

the mills was her inheritance from Cârjeu. The trial was judged by the Wallachian prince Radu the Great and the land was given to Muşa, who did not keep the mills for herself, but gave them to Bistriţa monastery, built and dedicated by Pârveu Craiovescu and his brothers (Barbu, Danciu and Radu)¹⁷. No details about the kinship between Cârjeu and Muşa is revealed by the charter, but they were obviously her relatives, since Muşa inherited the mills and the land. After donating the mills to the monastery, Muşa's name was written in a diptych of Bistriţa monastery¹⁸. The document issued on February 12th, 1533 was very clear when mentioning this situation – immediately after describing the donation to Bistriţa, the scribe added: 'And [her name] was written in the holy diptych'¹⁹. Without paying too much attention to this text, many Romanian researchers considered that Muşa was a sister of the founders of Bistriţa – the Craiovescu brothers – as her name was written in the diptych of this monastery²⁰. They must have confused her origin with the later donation. Moreover, it is very unlikely that she was a member of the Craiovescu family because she was not mentioned when the Wallachian prince Mihnea Turcitul (1577–1583; 1585–1591) strictly analysed the division of the huge domain of this family in a charter issued on May 17th, 1589²¹; only the four brothers Barbu, Pîrvu, Danciu, and Radu inherited estates from their father²². It is obvious that women could receive parts of their family domain, as many women were among the descendants of the four brothers at the trial in 1589. The fact that Muşa entered a monastery did not mean that she lost her fortune; as a nun she donated villages and slaves to different monasteries.

Before taking vows, Muşa was married to Hamza, an influential boyar who was a member of the princely council of Wallachia during the first decades of

¹⁷ DRH, B, III, p. 240; about the foundation of Bistriţa monastery by Pârveu and his brothers, a very important document was issued by Vlad the Monk on March 16th, 1494, cf. *Documenta Romaniae Historica. B. Țara Românească*, vol. I, (1247–1500), ed. P.P. PANAITESCU, D. MIȚOC, București 1966 (cetera: DRH, B, I), p. 401–405.

¹⁸ *Inscripții din bisericile României...*, p. 202.

¹⁹ DRH, B, III, p. 240.

²⁰ As this opinion passed from a researcher to the other without a critical analysis of the primary sources, I quote only those who wrote strictly about the Craiovescu family or Muşa: Ș. ȘTEFĂNESCU, *Bănia în Țara Românească*, București 1965 (the genealogical tree of Craiovescu family); N. STOICESCU, *Dicționar...*, p. 62; R. OPREA, *O călugăriță din neamul Craioveștilor și ctitoriile sale muscelene*, Arg 14, 2005, p. 356; I. CÎRSTINA, *Neamuri boierești și patrimoniul lor funciar în Țara Românească (secolul al XVI-lea)*, Târgoviște 2015, p. 155–156, 188 (I. Cîrstina quotes a diptych from Govora monastery, which mentioned the name Muşa; it is very difficult to identify this name from the diptych with Muşa/Magdalena, because the diptych was preserved in a copy from 1777; moreover, its editor noted that it recorded 1272 names of noblemen and noblewomen, probably written in different periods – A. SACERDOȚEANU, *Pomelnicul mănăstirii Govora*, MOLT 13, 1961, p. 789–790).

²¹ *Documente privind istoria României. B. Țara Românească. Veacul XVI*, vol. V, (1591–1590), ed. I. IONAȘCU et al., București 1952, p. 402–407.

²² About the large Craiovescu domain, cf. I. DONAT, *Domeniul domnesc din Țara Românească (sec. XIV–XVI)*, ed. G. LAZĂR, București 1996, p. 153–190.

the 16th century²³. Several documents issued by the Wallachian prince Neagoe Basarab (1512–1521) mention the nun Magdalina as the former wife of Hamza. During the first year of his reign, two charters from June 23rd and September 29th 1512²⁴ refer to ‘Hamza’s noblewoman (*jupanița*), the nun Magdalina’; on September 5th, 1519, Neagoe gave a charter to Magdalina, Hamza and ‘their sons’²⁵.

Taking the vows of monasticism

On June 11th, 1503, Radu the Great confirmed the possession of ‘Muşa from Corbi’ over two villages, Corbii de Piatră (Stone Ravens) and half of Mălureni, as well as over several families of gypsies²⁶. On September 1st, 1506, Radu the Great gave another charter to ‘Valea monastery [the Valley], where the nuns live, which was built, refurbished, and fortified by the nun Magdalina’; the monastery received the ‘princely buckets’ from the same two villages mentioned three years earlier (Corbii de Piatră and Mălureni)²⁷. Both charters refer to the same person, the wife of Hamza, who was mentioned as Muşa in the first one, and as Magdalina in the second. It is certain that between these two dates – June 11th, 1503, and September 1st, 1506 – she decided to take vows²⁸.

In which monastery Muşa became the nun Magdalina? The answer is found in two charters issued by the Wallachian princes Radu Paisie (1535–1536; 1536–1539; 1539–1544; 1544–1545) and Peter the Young (1559–1568); as the documents preserved only the day and the month in their original versions, their editors proposed two dating solutions – September 6th, 1536–1539 for the first one²⁹ and January 8th, 1563 for the second³⁰. In the first charter, Radu Paisie ordered the abbot of Argeş monastery to leave three Roma families at Valea monastery, because they were settled there by the nun Magdalina, who ‘received her tonsure there’³¹. After two decades and a half, Peter the Young confirmed, for his part, that five gypsy families should remain at the same Valea monastery, because they were given by Muşa (the document calls her ‘Cârjoane’), who became a nun in

²³ N. STOICESCU, *Dicționar...*, p. 62–63.

²⁴ DRH, B, II, p. 206, 232.

²⁵ DRH, B, II, p. 357.

²⁶ DRH, B, II, p. 57. A recent contribution that analyses the village Corbii de Piatră is R.E. SZILÁGYI, L. NAGY, *Câteva date noi despre genealogia familiilor Olahus, Hunyadi și Dracula (Vlad Țepeș)*, SMIM 40, 2022, p. 141–143.

²⁷ DRH, B, II, p. 105. The ‘princely bucket’ was a tax collected for the Wallachian voivodes; the prince could give this tax to a monastery, a practice which was widespread in Wallachia at the beginning of the 16th century (DRH, B, II, *passim*).

²⁸ For a recent scientific contribution to this subject, cf. D. OLTEAN, *Devenir moine à Byzance. Coutumes sociales, règles monastiques et rituels liturgiques*, Leuven 2020 [= BBy, 24].

²⁹ DRH, B, IV, p. 39–40.

³⁰ DRH, B, V, p. 283–284.

³¹ DRH, B, IV, p. 39.

the monastery and her monastic name was Magdalina³². The word used in the Slavonic documents to designate the entry in the monastery was *postrig*³³. The word *postrig* passed from Slavonic to Romanian, having the same meaning – ‘the ceremony of becoming a monk or a nun’³⁴. Therefore, Magdalina became a nun in Valea monastery, which she founded at the beginning of the 16th century³⁵.

Magdalina – the nun

The earliest document which mentions Magdalina as a nun was issued on September 1st, 1506³⁶. In this Slavonic charter, the words used for the nuns from Valea monastery were *inokine*³⁷ and *calugeritze*³⁸, while Magdalina was *monahia*³⁹. According to this charter, Radu the Great renounced his privilege of receiving the ‘princely buckets’ from the villages Corbii de Piatră, and Mălureni⁴⁰; the voivode gave this privilege to Valea monastery. As these two estates were owned by Mușă before entering the monastery, a legitimate question is what happened with these two villages when she took her vows – did she give them to the monastery or keep them for herself? On June 23rd, 1512, the village Corbii de Piatră was ascribed by Neagoe Basarab to the monastery founded by Magdalina; this time the monastery was no longer named Valea, but Corbii de Piatră⁴¹. As Daniel Barbu noticed, the names Valea and Corbii de Piatră refer to the same monastery built by Magdalina⁴². It is obvious that the village Corbii de Piatră was given to her ecclesiastic

³² DRH, B, V, p. 284.

³³ On the origin of the monastic tonsure, cf. D. OLTEAN, *Les origines de la tonsure monastique. Les sources grecques*, B 87, 2017, p. 259–298.

³⁴ *Dexonline. Dicționare explicative*, <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/postrig> [13 IV 2023].

³⁵ On the Byzantine female monasticism, the works written by A.-M. TALBOT are very useful (*Late Byzantine Nuns. By Choice or Necessity?*, BF 9, 1985, p. 103–117; *An Introduction to Byzantine Monasticism*, ICS 12, 1987, p. 229–241).

³⁶ DRH, B, II, p. 104–106.

³⁷ The word *inokina* comes from the Slavonic root *in* (“one”; “alone”; “isolated”) (M. VASMER, *Russisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, vol. I, (A–K), Heidelberg 1953, p. 484; I. BILIARSKY, *Word and Power in Mediaeval Bulgaria*, Leiden–Boston 2011 [= ECEEMA, 14], p. 78).

³⁸ The word is the feminine form of the Slavonic transliteration of καλόγερος (‘a good old man’) (I. BILIARSKY, *Word and Power...*, p. 79). In the document from September 1st, 1506, the words *inokine* and *calugeritze* are used as synonyms.

³⁹ The word is the feminine form of the transliteration of μοναχός; μοναχός comes from μόνος (‘alone’) (I. BILIARSKY, *Word and Power...*, p. 93; M. VASMER, *Russisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch...*, p. 154).

⁴⁰ DRH, B, II, p. 57.

⁴¹ DRH, B, II, p. 206.

⁴² D. BARBU, *O mărturie a relațiilor...*, p. 119; cf. E. CINCHEZA-BUCULEI, *Prezentarea monumentului, [in:] Corbii de Piatră – studiu interdisciplinar*, ed. D. MOHANU, București 2010, p. 54–55. D. BARBU drew up a rigorous chronology of Magdalina’s life, based mainly on princely charters; in the part dedicated to the art history, he also commented on two articles written by C.L. DUMITRESCU (*Biserica*

foundation, but it is difficult to understand at what point this donation was made – when she took the vows or few years later.

Half of the village Mălureni that was confirmed to Magdalina in 1503, was probably in her possession or in possession of her monastery three years later, in 1506, when Radu the Great renounced his privilege and gave it to Valea. After six years, on June 23rd, 1512, Mălureni was not confirmed to Valea monastery by Neagoie Basarab, as it happened with Corbii de Piatră. An explanation could be found in a charter issued a month later, on July 30th, 1512⁴³; Neagoie confirmed the whole village Mălureni to Bistrița monastery. Mălureni was given to Bistrița monastery by its founder Barbu Craiovescu, who exchanged it for another village with a Wallachian boyar, Oancea. Oancea himself had bought half of the village Mălureni from ‘Magdalina Cârjoia’ for 4,500 *akçes*⁴⁴ and vestments from London and Mechelen. The conclusion is that sometimes between 1506 and 1512 the nun Magdalina sold the village Mălureni to a Wallachian nobleman.

Several remarks can be made on this conclusion: after becoming a nun, Magdalina kept at least a property for herself – the village Mălureni (the situation of Corbii de Piatră is not so clear); she received and kept money for the village she sold; as part of the payment for it she received expensive vestments. A study made for the Byzantine Empire reveals a similar situation. Although the monastic ideal involved poverty as a virtue, the nuns and the monks kept different goods for themselves, bought, sold or donated them after entering the monastery⁴⁵. From this point of view, Muşa/Magdalina was not a singular case in the first half of 16th century Wallachia. On May 10th, 1537, Theodor, the abbot of Nucet monastery and the monks from the same monastery sold a vineyard to another monk, Ephrem⁴⁶.

What else did Magdalina keep after taking vows? In Wallachia, the Roma people were frequently owned as personal slaves both by the nobles and the monasteries. Several Roma families were in Magdalina’s possession on June 11th, 1503, and some of them were on September 29th, 1512⁴⁷ in the possession of the monastery she had built⁴⁸; those Roma families surely passed from her to the monastery. A very interesting situation is described in a charter issued on March 31st, 1526⁴⁹ by the

rupestră din Corbii de Piatră, cel mai vechi ansamblu de pictură – cunoscut astăzi – din Țara Românească, SCIA 22, 1975, p. 23–51; *Chronique et monument témoin. Une hypothèse à propos d’une église rupestre à deux absides en Valachie*, BBRF 11 (15), 1984, p. 15–54.

⁴³ DRH, B, II, p. 218.

⁴⁴ The *akçe* or *asper* was a small silver Ottoman coin (Ş. PAMUK, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire*, Cambridge 2003 [= CSIC], p. 34), which was widespread in medieval and early modern Wallachia.

⁴⁵ A.-M. TALBOT, *Personal Poverty in Byzantine Monasticism: Ideals and Reality*, TM 16, 2010, p. 829–841.

⁴⁶ DRH, B, IV, p. 45–46.

⁴⁷ DRH, B, II, p. 57.

⁴⁸ DRH, B, II, p. 232.

⁴⁹ DRH, B, III, p. 7–8.

Wallachian voivode Radu of Afumați (1522; 1544; 1524–1529). The prince confirmed the ownership of various gypsy families by the Govora monastery that ‘were given to the holy monastery by Magdalina, for her soul’. The document mentioned another gypsy family that remained in her possession, ‘for her needs’, ‘as long as the nun Magdalina would live’; after her death they were to be taken by Govora. For Magdalina, the slaves were similar to the land. She kept several gypsy families after becoming a nun and many of them were given, along the years, to different monasteries; in 1526, the year of her death, she kept only one family for herself, probably to serve her personal needs. Another nun with the same name, Magdalina, the former wife of Baldovin, a Wallachian nobleman⁵⁰, acted in a similar manner – as a nun, she kept three Roma families for her needs⁵¹.

Keeping either land or gypsies after entering monastery was common practice in medieval Wallachia and Magdalina made no difference from this point of view. As previously underlined, similar situations were encountered in the Byzantine Empire, where persons who entered monastery partially kept their fortune⁵².

A single document can be personally attributed to Magdalina⁵³. Even if it does not have a date, the act might be dated to the end of her life; its editors considered that it was written before July 6th, 1526. Magdalina donated a piece of land for building a house to Gânștea the Old; obviously, the donation had pious reasons – ‘for my father’s soul and for my own soul’. Among the witnesses of the documents, Magdalina mentions ‘my nephew, abbot Joseph, and the noblemen around us’. Magdalina and Joseph were blood relatives; the word used for him is *anepsei* (nephew), which has a Greek origin⁵⁴. Joseph was the abbot of Argeș monastery⁵⁵ and their kinship was obviously very important, even after both took vows. Magdalina’s document opens with *invocatio verbalis*, a diplomatic formula that was very common in Wallachian private acts issued by different clergymen⁵⁶.

⁵⁰ Her lay name was Maria (Ș. ANDREESCU, *Perspective medievale*, București 2002, p. 27).

⁵¹ About Maria/Magdalina, cf. the document issued on August 29th, 1526 (DRH, B, III, p. 55).

⁵² A.-M. TALBOT, *Personal Poverty...*, p. 829–841. The more extensive documentation kept in the monastic world of Byzantium can offer further information on this topic (J. THOMAS, A. CONSTANTINIDES HERO, *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, vol. I–V, Washington DC 2000).

⁵³ DRH, B, III, p. 40.

⁵⁴ L. DJAMO-DIACONIȚĂ, *Limba documentelor slavo-române emise în Țara Românească în sec. XIV și XV*, București 1971, p. 354.

⁵⁵ He was mentioned as the abbot of Argeș in two documents from January 15th, 1519 and July 11th, 1519 (DRH, B, II, p. 340, 355).

⁵⁶ DRH, B, I, p. 316, 411; DRH, B, III, p. 55–56; DRH, B, IV, p. 45–46; M. LASCARIS, *Influences byzantines dans la diplomatie bulgare, serbe et slavo-roumaine*, Bsl 3, 1931, p. 506–507; L.M. ILIE, *Several Remarks regarding “IO” and Invocatio Verbalis from the Wallachian Documents before 1500*, Eno 18, 2020, p. 73–76, 153–158.

After taking her vows, Magdalina was perceived as a founder of the nunnery in Valea⁵⁷; the charter from 1503 underlines that she ‘built, refurbished, and strengthened’ it. A late document issued by Peter the Young added that ‘she was written in the diptych, because she was the founder’ of the monastery. The charter is also important as it gives the Slavonic name for ‘founder’ (*htitoritza*)⁵⁸. In the summer of 1512, Magdalina conceded her monastery to the Wallachian prince Neagoe Basarab. The explanation given in the charter for this situation was that Magdalina was afraid that the possessions of the monastery might be lost after her death and the princely protection should have prevented this⁵⁹. On January 11th, 1515⁶⁰, the same voivode mentioned that the monastery of Corbii de Piatră (another name used for Valea⁶¹) was inhabited by monks. The nuns that were living there three years earlier might have gone to another monastery, Cornet, which is mentioned in the same document⁶². It is very difficult to understand the reason behind this relocation. A possible explanation, or rather speculation, is that Neagoe Basarab perceived the monastery as his own and decided to transform it in an establishment for monks; the harsh conditions and the mountains nearby might have supported this decision. After four more years, on September 5th, 1519⁶³, Magdalina, her former husband, Hamza, and ‘their sons’ received from Neagoe Basarab a piece of land ‘where Magdalina is building a monastery for the nuns’; this land was in the vicinity of Valea monastery. It is very interesting that she received this land, together with her former family – the husband and the sons – a decade after she took her vows. In fact, the documents from 1512 describe her as Hamza’s wife; only afterwards, she was mentioned as a nun – ‘Hamza’s noblewoman (*jupanița*), the nun Magdalina.’ This situation might be explained by the fact that Neagoe had a close relationship with Hamza, who was a member of his princely council.

Even at the end of her life, Magdalina was concerned with her former fortune. A remark on her document, written before July 6th, 1526, might be useful to understand this situation. At the end of the act, in *sanctio*, the scribe added a diplomatic formula that is addressed to those who might disrespect Magdalina’s donation; the person whom the wrath of God would be revealed for disobedience was ‘either a boyar or a monk’⁶⁴. Although she had become a nun decades before, Magdalina was aware that her former fortune could be disputed by lay or religious persons after her death.

⁵⁷ For a general survey of women as founders in Byzantium and around it, cf. *Female Founders in Byzantium and Beyond*, ed. L. THEIS et al., Vienna 2014.

⁵⁸ DRH, B, V, p. 283–284.

⁵⁹ The Slavonic verb used for this action is *pokloniti* (DRH, B, II, p. 205).

⁶⁰ DRH, B, II, p. 231–233.

⁶¹ D. BARBU, *O mărturie a relațiilor...*, p. 119.

⁶² R. OPREA, *O călugăriță...*, p. 360.

⁶³ DRH, B, II, p. 356–358.

⁶⁴ DRH, B, III, p. 40.

Her death

Two different acts – the charter dated March 31st, 1526, and Magdalina's own document – underlined that Magdalina made various donations 'for her soul'. On July 6th, 1526⁶⁵ she was surely alive, while on August 6th, 1526, a charter issued by Radu of Afumați referred to a child, who 'remained from Magdalina's gypsies'⁶⁶; this short text might suggest that some gypsies 'remained' in an unclear situation after her death. Magdalina must have died in 1526⁶⁷, since there is no other source mentioning her still alive afterwards; it is not clear which was the monastery where she died. A document from April 23rd, 1615 specified that Magdalina was buried in the church of Argeș monastery⁶⁸, an account which was not totally accepted by the historians⁶⁹.

The life of the noblewoman (Mușă) that became a nun (Magdalina) at the beginning of the 16th century offers information about monasticism in Wallachia. Although many sources describe the monasteries, their estates or some of their leaders, few documents depict the way a monk or a nun lived after taking vows. Magdalina built monasteries, partially kept her fortune (land and gypsies), some of which she sold or donated. Unlike her monastic life, her lay life is only partially known. She was a relative of a Wallachian nobleman (Cârjeu) and the wife of another (Hamza); her kinship with the Craiovescu family should not be taken for granted anymore. Magdalina's life is very important because it gives details about the monastic life of Wallachia at the beginning of the 16th century; she might be seen as a paradigmatic example for this period, when the sources do not provide detailed data about Wallachian monasticism.

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⁶⁵ DRH, B, III, p. 41–42.

⁶⁶ DRH, B, III, p. 52.

⁶⁷ For her death in 1526 – D. BARBU, *O mărturie a relațiilor...*, p. 118; R. OPREA, *O călugăriță...*, p. 361.

⁶⁸ DIR, B, Veac XVII, vol. II, p. 382.

⁶⁹ R. OPREA, *O călugăriță...*, p. 361.

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Liviu Marius Ilie

University of Craiova
A.I. Cuza Street, No. 13
Craiova, Romania
lvmlie2@gmail.com