

THE CONCEPT OF LEGACY IN WOMEN'S FOUNDATIONS: A TÜRKİYE-ROMANIA COMPARISON

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ABSTRACT

Research Background: Legacy is a central area of inquiry in contemporary management science, with significant implications for organizations and society in general. We define legacy as enduring meaning tied to an individual actor's identity, evident in behaviors that are intended to have an impact after the actor is gone. Legacy is a conceptual expression of values and practices that apply to long-term organizational structures. It is one of the most important but least understood constructs of management research and practice. Heritage studies are primarily concerned with current organizations and management. The primary components of the inheritance of different knowledge are psychological knowledge, beliefs, values, and norms. One way to promote the vision of the organization as a long-term temporal perspective and a channel for an institutional legacy is to make the concept of legacy pervasive within the organization. In this context, legacy studies are limited to contemporary management theories and organizational structures. The concept of inheritance in foundations, an integral part of public administration that has existed in almost all periods of history and continued its existence for centuries, has not yet been sufficiently analyzed. Another noteworthy aspect of historical foundations is that their founders or their heirs and trustees are women.

Purpose of the article: The aim of this article is to deepen and compare the legacy practices of women in historical foundations in Turkey and Romania, providing an in-depth analysis and a comparative perspective on the management and perpetuation of heritage in these two countries.

Research Methodology: In pursuit of this objective, qualitative methodologies were leveraged, including historical document analysis, archival data collection, interviews with descendants or heirs of foundation founders, and an exhaustive review of relevant literature in the field to assess women's legacy practices in built foundations throughout history, especially during the Ottoman period.

Findings and added value: Our research revealed the distinct ways in which women in Turkey and Romania contributed to organizational legacy by establishing and managing historical foundations. This comparative analysis provides a more comprehensive view of the role of women in the administration and perpetuation of heritage in different cultural and historical contexts. It adds significant value to the understanding of how heritage is transmitted and preserved within organizations and can inform the development of more informed strategies for the preservation and propagation of organizational heritage within foundations and similar entities.

Historically, while individuals cannot achieve immortality in real life, symbolic immortality refers to the sense of self-expansion that individuals achieve when they create a lasting legacy by associating with other individuals and institutions. Women, one of the organizational equivalents of individuals who attain symbolic immortality, have two inherited methods in their foundations. Women either created a strong legacy by establishing a foundation or took over or managed an established foundation and kept the legacy alive.

KEYWORDS: *Legacy, inheritance in foundations, women's legacy practices*

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INTRODUCTION

Legacy has been a topic of increasing interest in management science studies. The accumulations of organizational structures during their lifetime create a set of values legacy over time. The value system formed in managerial structures is an indispensable treasure for future generations. Perhaps most importantly, a dynamic, resilient value system is the most enduring living legacy one generation can leave the next (Edgell, 2020). The concept of legacy, which has such an important place in management science studies, has not yet been addressed in historical organizational structures at the macro level. The legacy of historical, comprehensive organizational structures working for the public good has not yet been examined.

Foundations have been established under different names in different periods, societies and cultures throughout the centuries. Foundations, which constitute a large part of the foundation institution, were established for religious, political and economic reasons, especially by statesmen, lady sultans, valide sultans, ulema and people from the public who owned land and property (Allahverdi, 2016). When historical documents are analysed, it is seen that a significant portion of the founders and managers of foundations, which have successfully maintained their existence for centuries, are women. In addition to establishing many foundations, women played a role in social life as both employers and employees by fulfilling the duty of trustees (Şahin & Kaya, 2016). Women at all levels of social life supported public administration by establishing foundations. The foundations established by the sultan, women sultans and administrators at almost every level for social life have been one of the structures that ensure the loyalty of large masses to the administration by establishing the state-citizen bond (Taşkesen, 2017). When the studies on foundations are analysed, it is noteworthy not only the high rate of foundations established by women but also their activities in social life. Women not only established foundations but also took part in the management of established foundations. Although some women did not establish foundations, they took charge when their husbands or fathers transferred the management to them, and some foundation founders appointed their daughters as administrators in case the generations of their sons did not continue (Öztürk, 2015, 9). When historical documents are analysed, it is understood that women working in foundations maintained social communication in the best way, made decisions, and actively served and took responsibility in many areas, from an appointment within the foundation to keeping the economic records of the foundation (Karagöz, 2022, 207).

All foundations established in the historical process were basically managed by adhering to the main principles determined by the founders of the foundation in the foundation deed within the administrative mechanism organized by the state over time. The legacy created by the principles determined during the establishment has been the management principles of foundations that have lived for centuries. In this context, foundations have been in a sustainable structure.

In management science, almost all studies on Legacy are micro-level. Except for long-term, multi-generational studies such as trans generationally (Jaskiewicz, Combs & Rauc, 2015), the transfer of legacy has not been adequately addressed. Studies on Legacy are mostly about similar sectors and businesses, organizational structures. Organizational structures and their founders and managers, who have performed very important services in social life for a significant part of the historical process, have not yet been sufficiently examined. Especially foundations established or managed by women in the performance of public services need to be examined from a legacy perspective. In this context, the concepts of organizational women foundations and legacy in different geographies, cultures and belief systems should be examined.

From this perspective, Romania offers a relevant case study, as the post-communist transition was accompanied by major challenges in the field of public services and health institutions, where elements such as the legacy of organizational values and public service ethics were often weakened or ignored (Carra, Burlacu & Faggianelli, 2017). The lack of a coherent institutional culture in some

health organizations has generated dysfunctions and even symbolic violence, highlighting the absence of a positive organizational legacy that provides stability, continuity and trust in the services offered. On the other hand, the comparative analysis of the quality of life in Romania reveals that institutions that manage to create and maintain a coherent framework of values and good practices – even in the absence of abundant resources – contribute significantly to the well-being of the community (Androniceanu, Sabie & Burlacu, 2018). Such findings reinforce the idea that institutional legacy, when cultivated and transmitted, has a direct impact on the administration's ability to provide quality services.

1. LEGACY

Although legacy is an important phenomenon in management science and social life, it has not yet been sufficiently analysed and addressed in different dimensions. Legacy is the effects of the past that we feel the developmental and restrictive effects of the past in today's business and social life. Legacy shows its effects on individuals, organizational structures and community life. The concept of legacy can take different forms in managerial dimension. It may take the form of either tangibles, such as heirloom gifts, artifacts and real property, or intangibles, such as traditions of practice, cultural norms, ideological beliefs or claims of identity attributes (Walsh & Glynn, 2008). We define a legacy as an enduring meaning attached to one's identity and manifested in the impact that one has on others beyond the temporal constraints of the lifespan (Fox, Tost & Wade-Benzoni, 2010). Legacy removes the pressure of time from individuals, organizations and societal life, ensuring that the past, present and future are unified. Legacy is the guidance that the past provides for the future. Legacy, the capacity to manage perceptions of the past, present and future, is a critical cognitive capacity that supports the micro-foundation of any dynamic capability (Suddaby et al., 2020).

Intergenerational transmission of generativity is a process whereby one generation passes on elements of its productive potential, such as values and behavioural patterns, to the next. (Millová, Malatincová & Blatný, 2023). Legacy has a positive effect on productivity that will have consequences for future generations (Faßbender, Wiebe & Bates, 2019), but it also has restrictive effects by hindering openness to innovation (De Massis et al., 2016).

Legacy is a managerial phenomenon that immortalizes a mortal personality. Legacy beliefs involve individuals' convictions about whether they and their actions will be remembered, have an enduring influence, and leave something behind after death (Zacher, Rosing & Frese, 2011). Individuals create a symbolically lasting legacy by associating themselves with other individuals and institutions (Fox, Tost & Wade-Benzoni, 2010). In this way, the person continues to live symbolically in wider areas after his death with the legacy he creates with a sense of self-expansion. In the study of management science; personal legacy; luxury brands and products (Lacroix & Jolibert, 2017), entrepreneurial legacy (Barbera, Stamm & DeWitt, 2018, 354; Fox, Tost & Wade-Benzoni, 2017, 168; Jaskiewicz, Combs & Rauc, 2015), values of legacy (Edgell, 2020, 23), ethical behavior (Fox, Tost & Wade-Benzoni, 2010, 153), leadership (Hogg & Terry, 2000), founder-CEO (LeCounte, 2022), career development process (Achtenhagen et al., 2022) as an important part of the process.

Although the concept of legacy has not yet been sufficiently understood and addressed in the managerial dimension, existing studies can be addressed under two main headings. “Related streams of research that rely on the notion of “legacy” focus not on local history but rather on individual or organizational history” (Suddaby & Foster, 2015). At the individual level, legacy has a meaning beyond material elements. Legacy is a managerial concept that helps a person to last for generations, centuries. “The intention that the legacy persists after the actor is gone is another critical element of this definition, which distinguishes legacies from more fleeting kinds of impacts that a person may wish to have” (Fox, Tost & Wade-Benzoni, 2017).

Legacy is one of the most utilized theories by management history researchers. Organizational Legacy, a second bridging construct for historians and organizational theorists is the concept of “organizational legacy. (Suddaby & Foster, 2015). In the organizational dimension, legacy formation

takes time and is unique to the organization. Legacy, as a sense of an organization's historical heritage, has long been considered a part of an organization's identity (Walsh & Glynn, 2008; Jones, Pitelis, 2015, 309). An organization's identity is a legacy beyond the resource organization's existence, a legacy of activities and artifacts that clearly attract central and valued organizational identity elements from the past to the present and that are shared collectively on a regular basis (Walsh & Glynn, 2008). "A fascinating manifestation of the legacy motive in organizational settings is that the organization itself can function as either the beneficiary of an individual's legacy or as the legacy itself" (Fox, Tost & Wade-Benzoni, 2010).

A bridge structure for historians and organizational theorists, the theoretical focus of the concept of "organizational legacy" is on identifying structures that explain resilience and stability in a world prone to change (Suddaby & Foster, 2015). The studies on Organizational Legacy generally focus on the fact that the characteristics of businesses continue to be effective in their life cycle. Organizational Legacy is the process of emergence and maintenance of old organizational identities (Walsh & Glynn, 2008). Organizational Legacy can be defined as family businesses, recruitment of children in SMEs, succession planning (LeCounte, 2022), spatial characteristics that organizational structures live and inherit (Vaujany et al., 2021), entrepreneurial imagination in the form of relevance/legacy in historical context and cross-border organization (Jones & Pitelis, 2015), project legacy consisting of people, product and process legacy (Cooper, Hecht & Majchrzak, 2003).

2. FOUNDATION

One of the organizational structures that have existed in the historical process is foundations. Foundations have operated in different forms in many of the civilizations that left traces in human history (Köprülü, 1942). There are various applications of foundation organizations in Hittite, Egyptian, Indian, Mesopotamian, Greek, Roman and Byzantine civilizations. One of the most comprehensive applications of foundation organizations is found in Turkish civilization. During the period of the Principalities and the Ottoman Empire, tens of thousands of foundations were established over the centuries.

The main motivating phenomenon that leads individuals to establish and manage foundations stems from personal characteristics. Individuals establish foundations as a result of their social responsibility and virtues or belief norms. It is an indication of high character traits to open what they have for the benefit of society for a specific purpose, to offer it to those in need, and to ensure that society reaches a healthy and strong structure in different fields (Aydemir & Mert, 2018). Individuals have transformed their assets into an organizational structure in order to realize their virtue and solidarity purposes. The name of this organizational structure in the historical process is foundation. In a general sense, waqf means "withholding, stopping, arresting, stopping, not moving, giving completely, giving completely, giving completely, donating" (Ballar, 2008). In historical practice, the foundation has met a significant part of social needs by donating one's income or property without expecting anything in return. In other words, a waqf is the donation of a good or property to charity in such a way that it cannot be purchased, thus abandoning the right to private property (Aydın, 2003). In legal terms, the foundation legally prevents the individual benefit right or ownership of something from being allocated for the public benefit, opening it up to the benefit of others in a continuous manner and taking it individually, thus ensuring its continuity by allocating the right or ownership on the property to people (Işık, 2009).

Foundations have different founding purposes. The common point of the different founding purposes of foundations is to meet social needs. In the literature, the founding purposes of foundations are as follows: to prevent the founder's wealth and money from being spent in vain and unnecessary places, to provide financial assistance to those in need, including their social needs, to build places of worship or facilities to meet the religious needs of the society, to prevent the state's national assets from remaining idle by operating them (Berki, 1965), helping to meet the state's infrastructural needs, providing health services (Berki, 1962), training civil servants who will turn the wheels of the state

and training the personnel needed by a strong central army and an effective bureaucracy (Ramazanoğlu, 2008), providing power, prestige, preventing the extortion of property, being exempt from taxation, helping the poor and carrying out construction activities (Akyıldız, 2016). The social services provided by foundations include social services provided by foundations are classified as religious services, education services, health services, urban services, public works services, and military services (Ertem, 2011).

People who establish foundations may be low-income earners, or they may own large tracts of land and commercial enterprises that generate income. Rulers with high economic power or prominent members of society and their families established foundations. When foundations were established, issues such as income sources, management structure, establishment purposes, and sustainability principles were prepared in writing. The documents called Vakfiye are the most utilized historical documents about foundations today.

3. TURISH WOMEN AND FOUNDATION

During the Anatolian Principalities and the Ottoman Empire, women were very active in social and administrative life. In addition to an active working life in agriculture and the production system, women were also at the forefront of the establishment and management of foundations, which were responsible for meeting social needs. In the foundation institution, which reached its peak with the Ottomans, it is known that many women, defined as *havâtin-i sultaniye* / dynasty women, pioneered the society by establishing large foundations. Women who established foundations were not only members of the dynasty. Although they were not in the civil service, apart from the wives or daughters of the sultan or high-level bureaucrats, women also established and managed foundations in a small city in Anatolia (Özger, 2012).

Thousands of foundations with different functions and sizes were established during the Anatolian Principality and Empire period. Studies have examined foundations established in different geographies and in different periods. However, all registered foundations have not yet been fully analysed. However, there are a significant number of women's foundations among the foundations analysed. Women's foundations were established not only during the Ottoman Empire but also in previous periods. Durukan (2019) reports the foundations established by women during the Seljuk and Principalities periods as follows: In the Seljuks, 28 women founders in different positions left their mark on 83 buildings, and 1 woman carried out an important building repair. Among the Seljuks, 6 wives of sultans 38, 10 daughters of sultans 20, 3 granddaughters of sultans 9, 1 courtier woman 1, 2 daughters of *sahib/vizier* 2, 1 daughter of *emir* 1, 1 daughter of *kadi* 2, 1 daughter of *hacip* 2, 1 concubine with a minor 3, and 3 women of unknown status built 5 buildings. In the Beyliks, 10 female founders built 26 buildings, while 1 woman had 9 bridges and 1 bastion repaired. 1 angelic 6, 1 *melik* wife 6, 5 *melik* daughters 10, 1 courtier 2, 1 *emir* wife 1, 1 *emir* daughter 1 (Durukan 2019).

Similarly, women's foundations were very active during the Ottoman period. Since the foundation of the Ottoman Empire, women have established foundations and ensured that their charitable works for social welfare took on an institutionalized form. The *Ismihan Sultan Mosque* in Mangalya, Romania, is one of the first examples that comes to mind, and it is a historical fact that women, especially throughout the Ottoman geography, fulfilled very important services in establishing foundations and building charitable works. In the Ottoman period, women's foundations started from the early period. In this period, the rate of women's foundations in the first capital city was quite high. In the first half of the 16th century, the rate of women foundations was around 47% in Bursa (Maydaner, 2019). The proportion of courtier women who established foundations in this period is 4.59%. The remaining rate consists of women from all strata of the society. Of these 100 foundations established by individuals for social purposes on the island of Lesbos, the founders of 65 of them were men, while the founders of 33 foundations were women, and the founders of two foundations were a woman and a man together (Oğuz, 2015). Of the 2517 foundations registered in the Istanbul Foundations Registry Book of 1546, 913 (36%) were established by women (Taş, 2016).

This study was conducted by Yüksel (1990), who studied the powerful foundations of the period. In his study on 1663 foundations, Yüksel found that 29.99% of the foundations were women of free origin (16.35%), 11.72% were women of servant origin (11.72%) and 1.92% were of unknown origin (1.92%) (Yüksel, 1990). In the 17th century, the rate of women who established foundations was 30% (Şahin, 2014). Maydaner (2019) also states that at least 15% of the foundations established in the Ottoman period were founded by women and that this rate varies between 10% and 50% in various cities. As can be seen, the proportion of foundations established by women in a wide geography over the centuries is considerable.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The basic information we can obtain about foundations is the endowments. The founders of the foundations, the purpose of establishment, the immovable properties endowed, sources of income, management structure and sustainability principles are written in the endowments. Some of the endowments, which are the most important source of data on foundations, are still being translated into the current language. Detailed studies on historical foundations constitute a comprehensive database on foundations.

In pursuit of this objective, qualitative methodologies were leveraged, including historical document analysis, archival data collection, interviews with descendants or heirs of foundation founders, and an exhaustive review of relevant literature in the field to assess women's legacy practices in built foundations throughout history, especially during the Ottoman period.

In addition to the analysis of historical documents, Ottoman archives and specialized literature on women's foundations from the Ottoman period, the research also included a component dedicated to the Romanian space, using qualitative methods. Wills, donation deeds, parish records and family archives were analysed, which reflect the involvement of women in the founding of churches, schools, hospitals or charitable institutions.

Case studies and historical analyses were included on the role of the female elite in philanthropy, and the comparison with the Turkish model highlighted similarities in terms of inheritance transmission, heritage preservation and involvement in social services.

In addition, the results were correlated with contemporary research on quality of life and institutional dysfunctions in public services, in order to highlight the historical relevance of women's foundations in the configuration of organizational values and institutional sustainability

5. TURKISH WOMEN'S FOUNDATIONS AND LEGACY

How legacy has an impact on making sense of life and motivation for social work, how individuals' social environment can affect the intensity of the legacy motive, and how it can affect legacy creation behaviour are among the issues discussed (Fox, Tost & Wade-Benzoni, 2010). One of the most comprehensive organizational structures that should be examined in this context is foundations. Foundations were established to serve the society beyond personal expectations and interests. Foundations, which have existed for centuries, have operated according to their founding purposes. One of the reasons why foundations have maintained their existence over such a long period of time is legacy. Legacy has ensured the harmony between time and people. Legacy provides a harmony between the interests of the self and the interests of others in the future (Fox, Tost & Wade-Benzoni, 2010, 160).

Another feature that makes foundations, which have a privileged place in legacy research, special is the position of women in establishing and managing foundations. The relationship between women and foundations has two dimensions. First of all, women have established foundations and offered some or all of their assets to the service of society without expecting anything in return. Thus, women have created a strong legacy through the foundations they established. In addition to establishing foundations, women have adhered to the legacy created by serving as managers of the foundations.

By establishing foundations, women also contributed to the transmission of their culture and values (Şahin, Kaya, 2016). Women established foundations for different purposes. The foundations established by Ottoman Lady Sultans constitute the most advanced level of social services ever attempted in human history, including the modern period (Sağlık, 2021). The founders of the foundations not only provided indirect aid to those in need in the areas where they lived, such as food, shelter, maintenance of roads and bridges, but also directly targeted them (Oğuz, 2015). The Mihrişah Valide Sultan Foundation employed 1 physician and 1 surgeon, 1 patient sergeant and 4 nurses at Bostancılar Hospital, and the foundation paid their salaries; it was stipulated that the foundation would not take medicine and treatment money from the needy and poor, and medicine fees were allocated to the patients from the foundation. Foundations established by women were not only established for charity, but also to meet different needs of the society. Turhan Sultan built two fortresses (Seddülbahir in Rumelia/Sultaniye or Kumkale in Anatolia) to the south of the fortresses built by Mehmed the Conqueror on both sides of the strait in Çanakkale (Arslanboğa, 2015). The resources that women used to establish foundations were usually the immovable properties given to them or the income they obtained through marriage. The ways in which women living in Ottoman society acquired property can be listed as inheritance, grants, mehir, earning money by working, salary/ulûfe, and pashmaklık for palace ladies (Maydaner, 2019). Especially the high economic power of the women of the palace was reflected in the foundations they established. Women created a strong legacy with the foundations they established. Because the legacy motive includes the desire to give meaning to one's life, and the legacy itself functions as the carrier of this meaning and spreads the self into the future through the effects on others in the future (Fox, Tost & Wade-Benzoni, 2010). Women not only established foundations but also became a part of them. Women appear as administrators, officials, and sometimes as beneficiaries of the foundation, either in the foundations they established or in the foundations established by another waqf. In the classical period of the Ottoman Empire, these women, who revealed their existence as women administrators in a systematic and important institution such as waqf and who were intertwined with the society, also provide important data for the socio-cultural level (Karagöz, 2022). Women held senior management positions in foundations such as nâzır, clerk, and câbi (financial officer). Another position held by women in foundation management was that of trustee. Generally, the majority of foundation administrators were women who were appointed as trustees during the establishment of the foundation (Öztürk, 2015). There are many women servings as trustees, which is the equivalent of today's board of directors. It is known from the endowments that women were managers of their own foundations, and sometimes they were also managers of the foundations established by their fathers, husbands, brothers or other women in the capacity of trustee/trustee. Inheritance As a result of the distribution of the assets left behind by a person in Ottoman society when he or she died among the heirs, women also had shares that were transferred to them within the framework of legal measures (Maydaner, 2019). In this context, women appointed women from the family as trustees of the foundations they established.

Table 1. FOUNDING OBJECTIVES OF WOMEN'S FOUNDATIONS

	TURKISH FOUNDATIONS	ROMANIAN FOUNDATIONS
Economic objectives	Establishing organizations whose economic power will perform public service	Preserving family wealth and ensuring its transmission within the same family in the event of death
	Ensuring that the wealth accumulated in the family remains in the same family from generation to generation, and ensuring the integrity of inheritance in case of death	Creating sustainable patrimonial structures (estate, land properties, buildings) to ensure the economic autonomy of charitable or religious institutions

Social objectives	Provision of health services (establishment of a hospital)	Supporting hospital establishments and the care of the sick, including donations to monasteries or hospitals
	Fulfillment of infrastructure services (fountains, baths, etc.)	Construction of water fountains, crosswalks, bridges, guest houses and other public works in communities
	Establishment and maintenance of facilities for religious services	Construction and restoration of churches, monasteries, chapels
	Fulfillment of education services (Opening schools)	Supporting denominational education (girls' schools), scholarships for orphans or daughters of priests or widows
	Meeting security needs (building and maintaining fortresses)	Contributions to the construction of fortifications, watchtowers or local defence walls
	Meeting children's rights (opening orphan schools)	Establishing orphanages or supporting existing ones, involvement in the care and education of poor children
	Helping the needy and the poor (opening an alms-house)	Philanthropic settlements for the poor, social canteens, night shelters or direct support through acts of donation

Table 1 provides a comparative perspective between women's foundations in Turkey and Romania, highlighting the economic and social goals they pursue. This highlights a series of structural similarities, but also cultural particularities, which reflect the differences in historical, religious and institutional context in the two spaces.

On the economic dimension, in both cases, women use their personal patrimony to ensure the sustainability of institutional forms oriented towards the common good. In Turkey, the emphasis is on creating autonomous organizations capable of providing public services – an approach that involves visibility and administrative power. In Romania, the desire to preserve wealth within the family, but also to institutionalize charity through religious or educational foundations, is noticeable. This objective reflects a more indirect approach to involvement in the public space, but a profoundly effective one from the point of view of institutional legacy.

In terms of social objectives, both foundations in Turkey and Romania aimed to provide essential services for community cohesion: health, education, infrastructure, religion, social assistance. In Turkey, the concern for children's rights and the need for security is explicit, through the establishment of schools for orphans or the maintenance of fortresses. In Romania, these functions were fulfilled through donations to churches, monasteries or orphanages, and the involvement of women in supporting confessional girls' schools or night shelters is well documented.

Thus, the data in the table reveal that women were institutional actors, who contributed to the development of pre-modern public administration structures. The foundations created by them had not only a charitable function, but also a strategic one, of building a collective memory and a sustainable social heritage.

CONCLUSIONS

Legacy is of growing interest in the history of management and organizational structure research. It is an important step forward that legacy studies, which are mostly conducted at the micro level and on specific organizational structures, are also conducted on foundations, which have been providing most of the public services for centuries. Today, a significant number of foundations that perform

almost all of the public services provided by the state were founded or managed by women. Especially the legacy of foundations established by women adds a new richness to the literature.

While the functions of women in social life were extremely limited in the past, women in different cultures and societies have both established comprehensive organizations and left legacies to future generations or successfully continued the legacy created by managing established organizations. Women who established foundations with the underlying purpose of using their assets for social purposes have supported and facilitated the lives of future generations without expecting anything in return. Women also took part in the management of the foundations and kept the legacy of the founders alive for centuries. The foundations established by women have left legacies that are still cultural values today. Foundations established and managed by women in different societies and at different dates show a great similarity. Future studies examining the historical foundations established by women in other countries and societies will make important contributions to the legacy literature. This general perspective on the institutional legacy of women takes on specific valences in the Romanian context, where foundations created by women have had a notable, albeit less systematically documented, contribution. In a space marked by the interference of tradition, religion, and administrative modernization, the female elites of the Romanian Lands built forms of community support that can be considered precursors of contemporary social public policies.

Romanian women – be they ladies, wives of boyars, nuns, or pious widows – directed their own resources toward educational, religious, and social causes, thus contributing to the emergence of sustainable philanthropic establishments with a coherent institutional logic. These structures often functioned in parallel or complementary to the administration of the time, and sometimes were the only form of support for vulnerable categories – orphaned children, poor elderly people, widowed women, and the sick without income.

In this sense, the institutional legacy created by women in the Romanian space has a double value: historical and paradigmatic. Historically, it attests to the active role of women in public life, in a context in which their access to power was restricted. Paradigmatically, it offers a model of community leadership and intergenerational solidarity, with relevance for the development of sustainable public policies today.

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