

## SOME CONSIDERATIONS RELATED TO THE FINANCING OF ROMANIAN EDUCATION SOUTH OF THE DANUBE

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### ABSTRACT

*Romania's involvement in the Aromanian issue was a novelty for its foreign policy. While in Transylvania or Bukovina, Bucharest was involved in supporting a cultural nationalism, which took various forms and to varying degrees, in the case of the southern Danube Romanians, support was given to communities with which Romania had no direct geographical continuity. Most of the financial resources directed by the Romanian state to the communities south of the Danube were used to set up new schools and to pay the salaries of the teaching staff in the area, as well as to support priests and churches. The Romanian cultural effort in the Balkans was eventually initiated by a number of personalities of Aromanian origin who had emigrated to the northern Danube area and who, in the course of time, held key positions both in the state apparatus (Anastasiu Panu, Alexandru Diamandi, Eugeniu Carada, Tache Ionescu, Gheorghe Manu) and in cultural and economic life (Ioan Caragiani, Dimitrie Cozacovici, Menelau Ghermani, Pericle Papahagi). Under the influence of these personalities of Romanian Aromanian origin, but also at the request of several Aromanian leaders in the Balkans, the support of the Romanian state will be materialized through constant financial allocations from the state budget to the cultural and educational needs of the Aromanian communities in the Balkans.*

**Keywords:** Roumania, Aromanians, Balkans, Financial Aid, Schools, Churches.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Romania's involvement in the Aromanian issue was a novelty for its foreign policy. While in Transylvania or Bukovina, Bucharest was involved in supporting a cultural nationalism, which took various forms and to varying degrees, in the case of the southern Danube Romanians, support was given to communities with which Romania had no direct geographical continuity. This also led to reactions of surprise and suspicion from the Great Powers and real anguish on the part of the surrounding states, namely Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, which did not understand the substance of Romanian actions. Not infrequently, Romania's involvement in the region was seen as having the effect of a detonator on the Balkan scene, already complicated by the wave of radicalised nationalism.

The year 1905 was a watershed for the region. The diplomatic success achieved by Bucharest, that of the recognition by the Ottoman state of a new ethnic community among its frontiers, the Romanians, was the signal of an increasingly consolidated

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effort by the chancellery of King Charles I in the area of the Macedonian and Epirus provinces. The inclusion in an official act of the ethnic denomination of Romanians applied to the Ottoman area also meant a consecration of the legitimacy of Romania's actions, which could now intervene in the area on behalf of the Aromanian communities as a kin-state.

Against this backdrop, Romanian-Greek relations are constantly strained to the point of total cancellation of diplomatic dialogue. This further complicated both Bucharest's involvement in supporting the Aromanians south of the Danube and Athens' support for the Greek communities in Romania.

### **FINANCIAL AID. EVOLUTION (1864–1934)**

The present study attempts to trace Bucharest's official financial effort in the Balkans in support of the Aromanian communities. Outside these transparent routes, less visible corridors of aid often operated.

The annual amount provided for in the Romanian state budget for cultural action south of the Danube came from the Ministry of Public Instruction, under which the schools and churches in the Balkans were subordinated. The latter remitted the amount to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and from there, through the National Bank of Romania and private banks in the Ottoman Empire, the funds were exchanged into local currency. After this stage they reached the Romanian consulates where they were distributed through inspectors and revisors to each teacher or priest paid from the aforementioned fund. Between 1906 and 1919, the administration of the Administration of Schools and Churches in the Balkans was transferred from the Ministry of Public Instruction to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to better supervise educational activity in the region.

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, financial aid came from Bucharest via the Ministry of Public Instruction to the Legation in Constantinople. The latter directed the sums to the consulates, which remitted the money to the bankers (the Kondoff brothers) who in turn sent the sum by bank transfer to other bankers in Bitholia and only then did the money reach the rightful owners. Constantin Kogălniceanu, the Romanian consul in Thessaloniki, complained that this procedure was causing long delays in paying the salaries of the teaching staff<sup>74</sup>.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the budget for the payment of teaching staff was fixed at 60 lei per month for teachers and 50 lei per month for governors. A bonus of 10 lei per month was added for every 5 years of service. Staff working in the vilayet capitals, and 7 other category II towns also received a financial

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<sup>74</sup> Mihai Regleanu and Victor Papacostea, *Documentele redeșteptării macedoromâne [Documents Related to the Awakening of the Macedo-Romanians]*, Bucharest, Predania Publishing House, 2012, p. 220.

allowance for accommodation. Secondary school teachers with the status of beginners were paid 200 lei/month, with an additional 20 lei added to a threshold of 5 years seniority<sup>75</sup>.

These amounts were converted into French francs, until 1921 the teaching staff of Romanian schools in the Balkans were paid in this currency<sup>76</sup>.

The evolution of the budget allocated by the Romanian Kingdom  
for schools and churches south of the Danube<sup>77</sup>

Year	Expenditure Budget <sup>78</sup>	The budget allocated to schools and churches south of the Danube	Percentage %
1864	63.312.000	14.000	0.022
1868	78.432.000	10.000	0.0127
1869	81.073.000	10.000	0.0123
1870	72.430.000	14.000	0.0193
1871	74.235.000	9.920	0.0133
1872	85.222.000	9.996	0.0134
1873	91.568.000	9.996	0.0109
1874	90.062.000	12.996	0.0144
1875	105.394.000	12.996	0.0123
1876	103.132.000	10.000	0.0096
1877	115.985.000	20.765	0.0179
1878	128.126.000	21.000	0.0163
1879	127.097.000	36.560	0.0287
1880–1881	149.562.000	32.000	0.0213
1881–1882	135.974.000	72.000	0.0529
1882–1883	136.854.000	80.000	0.0584
1883–1884	135.557.000	80.000	0.0590
1884–1885	130.364.000	80.000	0.0613
1885–1886	128.971.000	78.687	0.0610
1886–1887	129.418.000	144.500	0.1116
1887–1888	140.093.000	144.500	0.1031
1888–1889	161.173.000	144.500	0.0896
1889–1890	158.770.000	145.180	0.0914
1890–1891	162.116.000	180.000	0.1110
1891–1892	168.404.000	332.500	0.1974
1892–1893	178.532.000	446.754	0.2502
1893–1894	186.734.000	524.922	0.2811

<sup>75</sup> George C. Ionescu, *De la Românii Macedoneni Lui Spiru Haret – Ale tale dintr-ale tale [From de Romanians in Macedonia to Spiru Haret]*, Bucharest, Graphic Arts Institute, 1911, p. 1202.

<sup>76</sup> Romanian Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [R.A.M.F.A], Fund Problem 15, Vol. 4, f. 230.

<sup>77</sup> Alexandre Rubin, *Le Roumains de Macedoine [The Romanians of Macedonia]*, Bucharest, Dem. C. Ionesco Publishing House, 1913, pp. 234–235.

<sup>78</sup> Victor Axenciuc, *Evoluția Economică a României. Cercetări statistico-istorice 1859–1947 [The Economic Evolution of Romania. Statistical-Historical Research 1859–1947]*, Vol. III, Bucharest, Romanian Academy Publishing House, 2000, p. 618 and next.

*(Continued table)*

1894–1895	203.087.000	525.000	0.2585
1895–1896	211.406.000	495.861	0.2345
1896–1897	208.610.000	543.047	0.2603
1897–1898	217.088.000	538.000	0.2478
1898–1899	224.773.000	519.582	0.2311
1899–1900	229.362.000	724.643	0.3159
1900–1901	236.793.000	548.458	0.2316
1901–1902	216.025.000	300.000	0.1388
1902–1903	216.140.000	300.000	0.1388
1903–1904	218.090.000	335.000	0.1536
1904–1905	225.028.000	400.000	0.1777
1905–1906	233.281.000	729.000	0.3124
1906–1907	239.435.000	780.000	0.3257
1907–1908	269.180.000	1.336.840	0.4966
1908–1909	394.779.000	1.206.482	0.3056
1909–1910	417.966.000	881.408	0.2108
1910–1911	448.006.000	939.547	0.2097
1911–1912	464.664.000	796.250	0.1713
1912–1913	487.591.000	798.789	0.1638
1913–1914	512.253.000	815.000	0.1591
1921	7.406.000.000	7.101.732	0.0958
1922	6.818.000.000	8.527.347	0.1250
1924	21.404.000.000	25.878.659	0.1209
1927	33.137.000.000	32.199.268	0.0971
1929	34.607.000.000	35.345.529	0.1021
1930	31.579.000.000	30.975.503	0.0980
1931	34.702.000.000	26.818.500	0.0772
1932	24.891.000.000	21.215.010	0.0852
1933	20.741.000.000	21.215.010	0.1022
1934	19.864.000.000	21.000.000	0.1057

In 1864, the year taken as the first point of reference because it represents the moment of the establishment of the first school with Romanian funds south of the Danube, the amount allocated from the central budget to the Aromanian cause was 14.000 lei, practically 0.022% of the total state finances.

A document from 1869 issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction mentions two sources of funding south of the Danube: the special budget for schools in Macedonia and the budget for extraordinary annual expenses<sup>79</sup>.

In the period 1864–1881 the figure remains relatively constant with a slight upward trend, thus remaining between 0.01%–0.02%. After the proclamation of the kingdom, even though the Romanian budget was lower than the previous year, the amount allocated to cultural and educational efforts in the Balkans increased by

<sup>79</sup> Adina Berciu Drăghicescu and Maria Petre, *Școli și biserici românești din Peninsula Balcanică (1864–1948) [Romanian Schools and Churches in the Balkans (1864–1948)]*, Vol. I, Bucharest, University of Bucharest Publishing House, 2004, p. 107.

125% from 32.000 lei to 72.000 lei. The need to increase its representativeness abroad, but also the narrowing of international policy, with Austro-Hungary and Russia forcing Romania, for geopolitical reasons, to look southwards rather than towards Transylvania, Bukovina or Bessarabia are part of the explanation for this percentage increase. The Romanian Kingdom's interest in Balkan Romanity is also visible in terms of the budgetary funds allocated, with the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century seeing a gradual increase from 0.05% (1881) to 0.3% (1900).

In order to justify the substantial budgetary increase for the schools in Macedonia for the year 1892–1893, Take Ionescu ironically declared that this was necessary because the funds sent to those areas were similar to those spent for the official reception of a foreign prince<sup>80</sup>.

The same politician considered that the financial effort of the Romanian state south of the Danube is not sufficient when compared to the investment of the other Balkan players in the area: the Serbs with a budget of 70 million sent almost one million to Macedonia, Bulgaria with a budget not exceeding 80 million supported propaganda in Macedonia with more than one and a half million. Romania allocated 215.000 lei to cultural action south of the Danube<sup>81</sup>. But none of these states equaled Greek involvement in the Macedonian region. Greek propaganda was quickly organized after 1878 when numerous consulates were established in the Macedonian area in Serres, Skopje, Bitola, Thessaloniki. A multitude of “literacy” associations, subordinate to the Greek Foreign Ministry, and other cultural societies were then established whose aim was to Hellenize the Macedonians by propagating the Greek language, culture and national consciousness. In 1886, the Panhellenic Associations controlled some 836 schools in Macedonia, including three colleges (preparandii) for the training of teachers, several high schools and a theological seminary, all totalling over 45.000 pupils. In addition to teaching activities, the Hellenic associations organised competitions in music, gymnastics, theatre performances and the printing press<sup>82</sup>.

The long Liberal government between 1878–1890 meant numerically 14 boys' schools, 9 girls' schools and 3 secondary schools<sup>83</sup>. The period of the Conservative government 1890–1893 was a period of great impetus with the opening of 31 new boys' schools and 13 girls' schools, the minister Take Ionescu being an involved supporter of the whole movement at that time, who used the most original means to attract young Aromanian students. Take Ionescu's idea to send bicycles to Macedonia for young Aromanians so that they could go to schools subsidized by the Romanian state, especially in urban areas, delighted the Romanian press<sup>84</sup>. In 1899,

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<sup>80</sup> Simion Țovaru, *Problema școlii românești din Balcani [The Question of the Romanian School in the Balkans]*, Bucharest, 1934, p. 40.

<sup>81</sup> A Conservative (Take Ionescu), *Liberalii și Macedonia [The Liberals and Macedonia]*, Bucharest, 1901, p. 84.

<sup>82</sup> Andrew Rossos, *Macedonia and the Macedonians. A History*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University Press, 2008, p. 75.

<sup>83</sup> Simion Țovaru, *quoted work*, p. 95.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 31–32 .

on his return to office, the same minister gave his approval for the establishment of another 24 schools<sup>85</sup>.

Returning to the question of Romanian funds directed south of the Danube, it should be noted that in the budget starting from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1903, until April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1904, the amount of 335.000 lei was divided as follows:

	Nature of expenses <sup>86</sup>	No. of Schools	No. of Staff	Amount in lei
1	Primary education staff in Turkey	84	161	95.265
2	Primary education staff in Bulgaria	3	17	11.100
3	Secondary education staff in Turkey	4	75	84.500
5	Church staff in Turkey	20	53	17.696
6	Pensioners	–	12	3.814
7	Rent and materials for primary education in Turkey	60	–	12.475
8	Rent and materials for primary education in Bulgaria	2	–	7.360
9	Rent and materials for secondary education in Turkey	4	–	50.202
10	Scholarships awarded to students in Romania, Constantinople and Galatasarai	–	21	7.301
11	Administration of Schools and Churches and the pension of Mr. Apostol Mărgărit	–	4	17.780
12	Grant to the Weigand Institute in Leipzig	–	–	10.000
13	Commission for amounts sent abroad	–	–	3.000
14	Fund for the opening of extraordinary appropriations, etc.	–	–	14.956
Overall Total = 335.000				

Also, from the series of related expenses sent to the Aromanian communities we mention that in the budget for 1907–1908 some 34.380 lei were foreseen for medical dispensaries (Thessaloniki, Bitolia), medical assistance (Veria, Koritsa, Grebena, Vlaho-Iani-Elasona), midwives and free medicines for pupils and the poor<sup>87</sup>.

However, after 1900, there was a decline in the Romanian state's contributions to the area, also due to the increasingly concerted campaigns against diplomatic and

<sup>85</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>86</sup> R.A.M.F.A., Fund Problem 15, Vol. 4, f. 2.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 96.

teaching staff who had to manage some money in an inspired way, even though it was considerable for that time. More or less well-founded accusations of embezzlement of public money, unjustified expenditure and the emergence of rival factions within the local Aromanian elite made Minister Spiru Haret particularly circumspect and he decided to drastically cut the budget for the Macedonian-Romanian issue. This decision, which was not accompanied by on-the-spot investigations to remedy any possible deviations, was an image coup, skilfully used by the competing propagandists who attacked Romania's action as lacking in continuity, inconsistent and having the air of an experiment initiated by some unprofessionals. The solution devised by Spiru Haret has seriously undermined the entire infrastructure created by the Romanian state in the area and has raised many questions for the actors involved in the cultural and educational process south of the Danube, who will look with justified circumspection at subsequent actions. Here are the reports of the teachers of the Romanian high school in Bitolia addressed to the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction:

“Mr. Minister, the Romanian people here, who are now dismayed by the sad news that has spread here like lightning, that Romania wants to leave the Macedonian thing, but does not want to give it the coup de grace at once, but leaves it in an agony, which, fatally, will lead to perdition”<sup>88</sup>.

Returning to the first five years of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is a downward curve in the funds sent to the Aromanian communities, a process that overlaps perfectly with the liberal government of D.A. Sturdza. Immediately after the change of government and the coming to power of the Conservatives, the funds directed south of the Danube resumed their upward trajectory. However, the documents we consulted do not suggest that the so-called Macedonian question was a political campaign platform of a single party, but that it was arranged according to the priorities of the ruling party and the personalities who were at the head of the relevant ministry at the time.

From 1907 until the First World War, the percentage of the budget allocated to schools and churches in the Balkans fell steadily, without any depreciation of the leu or reduction in the budget, quite the contrary. The year 1913–1914, the year of the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest, which will be much debated from now on, is the year of the greatest setback. During the Great War, there is no clear record of the sums allocated to the Aromanian communities, the pre-war budget scheme being maintained. For the year 1914–1915, a report found in the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that the amount earmarked for schools south of the Danube was 744.000 lei<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>88</sup> „Domnule Ministru, poporul român de aici, care acum este consternat de trista știre ce s-a răspândit aici ca fulgerul, că România vrea să părăsească chestia macedoneană, dar nu vrea să-i dea deodată lovitura de grație, ci o lasă într-o agonie, care, fatal, va duce la pieire”, in Adina Berciu Drăghicescu and Maria Petre, *quoted work*, p. 158.

<sup>89</sup> R.A.M.F.A., Fond Problem 15, Vol. 4, f. 177.

From another source, however, we learn that the general budget for the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Instruction in 1914–1915 amounted to 58.929.752 lei, of which 815.000 lei were to be allocated to schools south of the Danube, i.e., a coefficient of 1.383%<sup>90</sup>.

If until the war, the leu was convertible into gold at parity with the French franc, maintaining a relatively stable, almost fixed rate throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, after 1919 inflation caused the strength of the Romanian currency to depreciate sharply<sup>91</sup>.

In the period 1921–1934 for which we have relevant data, the percentage sent to schools and churches in the Balkans is between 0.08%–0.12%.

### FINAL REMARKS

Most of the financial resources directed by the Romanian state to the communities south of the Danube were used to set up new schools and to pay the salaries of the teaching staff in the area, as well as to support priests and churches. The Romanian cultural effort in the Balkans was eventually initiated by a number of personalities of Aromanian origin who had emigrated to the northern Danube area and who, in the course of time, held key positions both in the state apparatus (Anastasiu Panu, Alexandru Diamandi, Eugeniu Carada, Tache Ionescu, Gheorghe Manu) and in cultural and economic life (Ioan Caragiani, Dimitrie Cozacovici, Menelau Ghermani, Pericle Papahagi). Under the influence of these personalities of Romanian Aromanian origin, but also at the request of several Aromanian leaders in the Balkans, the support of the Romanian state will be materialized through constant financial allocations from the state budget to the cultural and educational needs of the Aromanian communities in the Balkans.

It can be seen that the involvement of the Romanian state in the Balkans was not conditioned by the political colour of the government in power in Romania. On the contrary, it can be said that it was a constant feature of Bucharest's foreign policy, and even the "competition" between liberals and conservatives was in favour of the cause of the Aromanian question, even if sometimes differences of opinion arose depending on the inherent party affinities.

If until 1913 most of the budgetary stipends went to the Aromanian communities in the Ottoman Empire, after the Peace of Bucharest the budgetary funds will go to the successor states: Greece, Albania, Serbia and Bulgaria. Besides the state budget stipends, the Aromanian communities in the Balkans were also financially supported from other sources such as the Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society – very active at the time – and by other institutions or private individuals interested in helping communities under great assimilationist pressure. The role and

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<sup>90</sup> Central National Historical Archives, Fund Microfilms England, R. 253, f. 171.

<sup>91</sup> Victor Axenciuc, *quoted work*, p. 618 and further pages.



amount of these additional funds are not the subject of this study and will be discussed in a separate article.

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