

THE ROMANIAN SCHOOL NETWORK SOUTH OF THE DANUBE AT THE TURN OF THE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURIES. SOME ADMINISTRATIVE AND ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS

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ABSTRACT

Romanian cultural efforts in the Balkans were initiated by a number of Aromanian personalities who emigrated to the northern Danube region and, over time, came to hold key positions both in the state apparatus (Anastasiu Panu, Alexandru Diamandi, Eugeniu Carada, Tache Ionescu, Gheorghe Manu), as well as in cultural and economic life (Ioan Kalinderu, Ioan Caragiani, Dimitrie Cozacovici, Menelau Ghermani, Pericle Papahagi, etc.). The Aromanian emigrants from Bucharest who had reached key positions began to demand cultural and educational support for their Balkan communities. In 1864, Alexandru Ioan Cuza allocated 10,000 gold coins from the Monasteries Fund to be used to open schools for the Aromanians in the Balkans. This marked the beginning of the Romanian state's cultural action in the Balkans, a process that would cause countless tensions, especially between Romania and Greece. The largest part of the financial resources allocated by the Romanian state to the Aromanian communities south of the Danube was directed towards the establishment of new schools and the support of teaching staff in the area.

Keywords: Balkans, Aromanians, Bucharest, schools, Ottoman Empire.

1. INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Ottoman Empire was administratively divided into vilayets, which were subdivided into sandjaks (mutesaraflâcuri), which in turn were divided into kazas, the smallest administrative division being the nahia. The heads of these administrative divisions: the valis, mutesarifs, and caimacams, apart from the head of a nahia, the mudir, were supported in their work by an advisory body called the administrative council.

The members of the administrative councils were of two categories: ex officio (1. Valiu, 2. Muavin – deputy valiu, 3. Mektubiul – secretary general, 4. Teftedarul – chief accountant, 5. Cadiul – president of the religious court, 6. Muftiul – local religious leader, 7. Religious leaders of non-Muslim communities residing in the capital of the vilayet) and six elected members, half Muslim and half non-Muslim. These included all recognised Christian nationalities, with the

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exception of the Aromanians, who until 1905 had no consultative or decision-making power. The *cadi* had precedence in the council after the *vali*, followed by the *mufti*, then the Christian bishop, with the Greek hierarch having priority.

The administrative councils had two types of responsibilities: judicial and administrative. Among the latter, we can list the following issues with direct implications for the Aromanian communities: setting the minimum price of taxes, leasing forests, deciding on the construction of new public buildings, setting taxes, the right to control municipal decisions, establishing the land to be used as cemeteries, appointing or electing new mayors (turkish means-*muhtar*), etc.²¹.

The eligibility requirements for candidates for the administrative council were as follows: to be an Ottoman subject, to be reputed as a notable, to reside in that vilayet (*sandjak*, *caza*, etc.), and to pay a minimum tax of 500 piastres per year. The members of the vilayet council were elected by the administrative councils of the *sandjaks* of that vilayet, the *sandjak* councils elected by the *cazas'* councillors, etc. The election was for a period of two years, but each year half of the members were renewed, so elections were held annually²².

These advisors had a strong influence on Ottoman decision-makers, with numerous cases in which the Ottoman authorities acted openly against Romanian school activities on the instructions and rumors of Greek prelates or notables who accused "foreign interference" that undermined the state by opening or operating these Romanian schools, whose status was contested until 1905.

With regard to education, the first law organizing public education in the Ottoman Empire did not appear until 1868 and remained almost unchanged until the Balkan Wars. The law divided existing schools into two broad categories: a) public schools, whose supervision and maintenance belonged to the state, and b) private schools, whose maintenance remained the responsibility of communities or individuals. Education comprised five cycles, namely: 1) beginner or preparatory course, 2) primary or semi-secondary, 3) secondary or lower secondary, 4) upper secondary, 5) higher education-university. The preparatory course could be established in any commune or neighborhood, and the primary course in any commune with at least 500 houses, while in cities the limit was 100 houses. The law stipulated that Muslims should attend schools separate from those of Christians, and Article 6 stated that lessons would be taught in the language of each nation. Under the same organizational law, the mayor had the right to supervise the running of the school. Christians were admitted to state secondary schools with certificates from private primary schools, which were practically recognized by the Ottoman state. However, Christian secondary schools were not recognized, and their graduates were theoretically unable to enroll in public higher education institutions.

²¹ Constantin Metta, „Consiliile administrative provinciale” [“Provincial administrative councils”], in *Grai bun*, Year III, No. 12, December 1906, pp. 356–358.

²² *Ibidem*, pp. 135–137.

At least three conditions had to be met in order to open a private school:

- a) Obtaining prior authorization from the Ministry of Public Instruction, then from the local Vali after initial approval by the Directorate of Public Instruction.
- b) Teachers had to hold certificates legalized by the Ministry or the Directorate of Public Instruction.
- c) Prohibition of teaching lessons contrary to public morals and order. At the beginning of each year, the curriculum and textbooks were submitted to the authorities for review and approval by the Ministry or the Directorate of Education. If these conditions were not met on a consistent basis, the state reserved the right to order the closure of the school.

By virtue of the privileges enjoyed by religious communities in the Ottoman Empire, authorization to open schools was granted in the name of the religious leader of the community, who administered them and was responsible for them before the authorities. There was thus an important difference between community schools and those of a private individual. For the latter, authorization was granted in the name of the teacher or founder, who would then administer and represent them before the authorities. However, upon the death of the founder or change of teacher, a new operating license had to be requested. In the case of Romanian schools, the law required the collection of 25 signatures for new authorizations²³.

Unlike other religious communities, the Greek millet enjoyed some exceptional privileges granted by Sultan Abdul Megid, with teachers at those schools not being required to legalize their certificates of competence and not having to undergo preliminary checks of their ability, honesty, etc., an appointment order issued by the local Greek bishop being sufficient.

At the end of the 19th century, Macedonia²⁴ was experiencing a veritable effervescence of educational projects: outside of Greek supremacy, the battle for the minds and souls of students was also being waged by Bulgarian propaganda. According to statistics compiled by Take Ionescu, in 1887 the Bulgarians had 414 schools of various levels attended by 23,772 pupils, and in 1893 they had 524 primary schools and almost 50 secondary schools. The Greeks had 333 schools in 1887 and 400 in 1893. Romania had 47 schools in Macedonia in 1890, which increased to nearly 100 in 1898²⁵.

²³ Constantin Metta, „Organizarea instrucțiunii publice în Turcia”, [“Organization of public education in Turkey”], in *Grai bun*, Year II, No. 5, May 1904, pp. 135–137.

²⁴ Macedonia did not exist in Turkey’s administrative nomenclature at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. From an administrative point of view, the territory of the Ottoman Empire was divided into 30 vilayets, and its European part corresponded to seven vilayets: Adrianople, Thessaloniki, Ioannina, Monastir, Shkodra, and Kosovo. Macedonia, perceived at the time as a region disputed mainly by Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece, consisted of the vilayets of Monastir and Thessaloniki, as well as the southern part of the vilayet of Kossovo, more precisely the sanjak of Uskub.

²⁵ Take Ionescu, *Un conservator [A Conservative], Liberalii și Macedonia [The Liberals and Macedonia]*, Bucharest, 1901, pp. 98–99.

According to some Greek researchers of the time, around 1903-1904, there were 1,009 Greek primary and secondary schools operating in Macedonia, more precisely in the vilayets of Thessaloniki, Monastir, and the sandjak of Uskub in the vilayet of Kossova, with 1,664 male and female teachers and 60,988 students²⁶.

Also, in the Monastir vilayet, there were 273 Bulgarian schools, 481 Greek schools, with 424 Bulgarian teachers and 687 Greek teachers, and 15,161 Bulgarian students enrolled, while there were 27,654 Greek students. In the vilayet of Thessaloniki, there were 319 Bulgarian schools, 520 Greek schools, 493 Bulgarian teachers, and 787 Greek teachers. There were 14,856 Bulgarian students and 32,534 Greek students enrolled. For the two vilayets (Spiliotopoulos adds 5 schools from the Uskub sandjak), we have a total of 529 Bulgarian schools, 1,009 Greek schools, 917 Bulgarian teachers, 1,664 Greek teachers, 19,348 Bulgarian students, and 60,988 Greek students²⁷.

2. THE NETWORK OF ROMANIAN SCHOOLS ESTABLISHED SOUTH OF THE DANUBE UNTIL 1904

PRIMARY SCHOOLS²⁸

The Vilayet of Ioannina:

Location	Year of establishment	School history and related information
Avdela	1866	Founded by Apostol Mărgărit. From 1867 to 1903, Ioan Șomu Tomescu was the schoolteacher. In 1904, there were six teachers. During the winter, one teacher traveled to the localities in Thessaly where Aromanian families settled due to transhumance.
Băiasa	1880 (the building was erected in 1890).	At first, it was a co-ed school, but in 1899, the girls' school separated from the boys' school. In 1896, teacher Sterie Popa Ioan transferred from the Greek school to the Romanian school, taking his students with him.

²⁶ Antoine Th. Spiliotopoulos, *La Macedoine et l'hellenisme sa force et ses droits [Macedonia and Hellenism: its strength and its rights]*, Athena, Imprimerie Apostolopoulos, 1904, p. 95.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 98–100.

²⁸ The records of these schools were obtained by corroborating several published sources, such as:

1. Mihail Virgiliu Cordescu, *Istoricul Școalelor Române din Turcia, Sofia și Turtucaia din Bulgaria [History of Romanian Schools in Turkey, Sofia, and Turtucaia in Bulgaria]*, Bucharest, 1906.

2. Simion Măndrescu, „Școli și biserici românești în Albania” [“Romanian schools and churches in Albania”], in *Graiul românesc*, Vol. I, No. 2, February 1927, pp. 44-45, weather press (Lumina, Aromânul), but also from the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest (Athena Fund Vol. 236).

Berat	1891	Coeducational primary school.
Cosina	1895	Later transferred to Premeti.
Breaza	1894	
Cerneși	1891	The schoolteacher, Carasi, joined the majority Greekoman community in the locality in 1897.
Fearica	1895	
Frășari	1893	School history and related information
Furca	Late 19 th century (the exact year is unknown).	
Floru	1887	Classes are interrupted by repeated interventions by the Metropolitan of Ioannina.
Ianina	1886	Coeducational school with four grades per cycle.
Lânca	1899	
Lușnia	1892	
Mețovo	1891	Discontinuous educational process due to administrative obstacles in obtaining operating authorization.
Paleoseli	1891	In 1894, at the instigation of the bishop of Konitsa, it is closed and then operates intermittently.
Perivole-Grebena	1870	Before Romanian cultural efforts made their presence felt, a group of local young people led by Mihail Economu, Ștefan Cuțuleapu, Panaioti Perdichi, Gima, and Gh. Perdichi, among others, translated a number of commonly used prayers (the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, etc.) into the local dialect. In 1870, the Romanian school opened, and six years later, teaching moved to the communal premises, with the number of students exceeding 120. In 1903, a girls' school was also established.
Valona	1898	

Vilayetul Monastir

Location	Year of establishment	School history and related information
Beala de jos	1890	
Belcamen	1881	
Bitolia	1866	The first attempt to establish the school failed in 1866. In 1878, Filip Apostolescu succeeded in obtaining the first operating license for the boys' school. The second school, this time co-ed, was established in 1903 in the Rocica neighborhood (Roșca slum).

Crușova	1869	The first attempt to establish the school dates back to 1869, when teacher Sterie Cionescu was forced to leave the city only a week after classes began due to pressure from Greek Archbishop Meletios. Cionescu tried again in 1873, but after eight months of operation, he was forced to leave once more. In 1876, Cionescu succeeded in opening the school on his third attempt. The second primary school in the Cireș neighborhood was established in 1889.
Corcea	1884	It was founded by Priest Haralambie Balamace. It operated until September 1895 as a co-ed school, then a girls' school was added.
Ceariceani	1890	Coeducational school
Damași	1868	
Damașuli	1898	
Elasona	1893	
Elbasan	1899 boys' school, 1902 girls' school.	Priest Spiridon Iugati, the school's founder, was excommunicated by the Greek prelate, and in December 1905, Professor Efrem Ghini from the Greek gymnasium in Coritza was sent to the Elbasan area with the mission of distributing a series of compromising letters addressed to Romanian teachers. However, he was arrested by the Ottoman authorities.
Grabova	1898	
Gramaticova-Fetița	1888	
Gopeși	Two boys' schools from 1868 and one girls' school from 1879.	
Grevena	1880	
Hrupiște	The boys' school was founded in 1881, and the girls' school in 1903.	
Iancoveți	1898	
Magarova	The boys' school in 1890, the girls' school in 1895.	
Moscopole	1890	In 1893, another school for girls was established.

Moloviște	The boys' school was founded in 1880, and the girls' school in 1892.	
Nevesca	1875	The first attempt to establish a school dates back to 1875. It was unsuccessful due to the intrigues of the Metropolitan of Florina, who led the Ottoman forces occupying the town, arresting the teachers of the Romanian school and intimidating the local population. After a series of diplomatic interventions, the school resumed its activities in 1878.
Nicea	1894	Interruption of classes between 1901 and 1902.
Nijopole	1881	
Ohrida	1868	The first school in the St. George neighborhood was established under the leadership of teacher Gheorghe Tomara. Until 1871, he taught alongside a Greek teacher favored by Greekoman families, but over time, the Romanian side managed to remove the Greek teacher. The second school in the St. The second school in the Sf. Nicolae neighborhood has been operating since 1897. The premises belong to the Romanian church of St. Nicolae. In 1887, a Greek teacher was expelled from here, and both schools in Ohrida are coeducational.
Pleasa	Boys' school since 1883, girls' school since 1903.	
Murihova	1892	
Pretori	1892	
Perlepe	1878	
Resna	1892	
Samarina	1879	From 1879 mixed until 1900 when a girls' school was also established. Interruption between 1880-1881.
Smixi	1886	
Șipisca	Boys' school since 1882, girls' school since 1904.	The school operated in the communal building.
Turia	1884.	The school operated in the communal building. Coeducational until 1891, when a girls' school was also established.

Târnova	1864	It is the first Romanian school in the Ottoman Empire, opened in 1864 by teacher Dimitrie Athanasescu.
Vlahoclisura	1862	The first beginnings of the Romanian school were made by Apostol Mărgărit himself, a Greek teacher, who, as early as 1862, began to explain in dialect the lessons taught in vulgar Greek and ancient Greek. In 1864, the Patriarch of Constantinople himself issued a letter demanding his removal, considering him a harmful factor, and requesting that he be sent "to his homeland". Due to interference, Apostol Mărgărit opened a separate Romanian language school in 1867. Until 1881, it functioned as a coeducational school, and after that, a separate girls' school was established.
Vlahoiani	1882	coeducational school
Selia Paleani	Coeducational school since 1904.	
Păpădia	Coeducational school since 1901.	

Vilayetul Salonic

Location	Year of establishment	School history and related information
Armiro		Nomadic school.
Birislav	1893	
Caterina	1890	
Cupa	1899	
Doliani	1899 boys' school, 1901 girls' school.	
Ghevgheli	1900	
Giumaia de Sus	1896	
Huma	1890	It is the first Romanian school in the Meglenia region, opened in 1890.
Livezi	1895	Founded by Constantin Canacheu.
Liumnița	1891	
Lugunța	1893	Established in 1893, although Ottoman authorization was issued in 1900.
Neagușta	1881	Coeducational school operating between 1881 and 1882.
Oșani	Coeducational school since 1895.	Between 1898 and 1905, activity was interrupted.

Poroi de Sus	Mixed, 1900.	
Salonic	1900	It was a co-ed school, and another co-ed school was established in 1904.
Serres	1900	
Sporlita	1901, mixed.	
Veria	1870	During its first two years of operation, it was subsidized by the Iași City Hall. Between 1875 and 1877, the school's operation was interrupted. In 1889, a girls' school was added.
Pisuderi	1891	
Tricala		Abolished in 1881 due to the annexation of this city to Greece.

Vilayetul Kossova, Skoder și Constantinopol

Location	Year of establishment	School history and related information
Calini		
Cociani	1895	
Damași		Nomadic school.
Durazzo	1892	
Grădiște	1899	
Kavaia	1895	
Kumanov	1898	
Lipopelții	1900	
Palanca	1904	co-ed school
Prizren	1896	
Tirana	1899	
Uskub	1895	co-ed school
Veles	1893	co-ed school
Constantinopol	1883	It was founded by Tașcu Iliescu. It operated regularly until 1901, when it was closed down by the Romanian government, then reopened at the insistence of Minister Plenipotentiary Lahovari. On September 5, 1905, there were two schools, one for boys and one for girls, the former specializing in commerce and the latter in vocational training.

Secondary schools

Location	Year of establishment	School history and related information
Berat	1893	The gymnasium operated until 1901.
Bitolia	1880	One class was added each year until 1887, when the high school completed

		its 7-year course. The founder and first director of the high school was Vasile Glodariu, a teacher from Braşov. In 1882, the headmaster of the high school was Priest Gheorghiade Murgu, who had previously been headmaster of the Greek gymnasium in the city of Xanti. In 1893, the normal school for girls was established, and in 1902 a vocational section was added.
Ianina	1887	It functioned as a secondary school from 1887 to 1901, when it was converted into a four-class commercial school.
Salonic	1899	The Higher School of Commerce in Thessaloniki operated on the basis of a "rusatname", a special authorization granted by the sultan under exceptionally favorable conditions. The school was called the "Romanian state school" and enjoyed extraterritorial privileges just like the Romanian consulate in the city. Based on these privileges, no Turkish school inspector or gendarme could enter the school. It had six grades per cycle; in the first three years, the subjects studied were typical of high school, and commercial specialization began in the fourth grade.
Constantinopol	1905	The Romanian University Boarding School was established on April 1, 1905, at the insistence of Minister Lahovary, with Nicolae Papahagi entrusted with its management ²⁹ . The purpose of this boarding school was to provide intensive Turkish language lessons to Ottoman state scholarship students who would attend various faculties in the capital, while also providing them with accommodation and meals. The importance of this boarding school lies in the fact that the Romanian state sought to complete the educational cycle with degrees obtained at Ottoman universities, whose subjects would form the Aromanian elite.

²⁹ Mihail Virgiliu Cordescu, *quoted work*, p. 207.

3. CONCLUSION

As the above summary shows, the period up to 1904, essentially the first half-century of school activity regularly subsidized by the Romanian state, generally saw an upward trend, even though the educational process in these schools was not without its discontinuities. This fervor for founding schools at the turn of the century would be unmatched in the future, despite subsequent episodes of legislation favorable to the Aromanian cause. If we look at the map of the 88 primary and 5 secondary schools that operated at one time or another between 1864 and 1904 south of the Danube, we see a greater concentration in areas where there was a consular office belonging to the Kingdom of Romania³⁰. This overlap between diplomatic representation and Romanian schools gave extra authority to the actions of the Aromanian communities, encouraging any local educational initiative. As shown in the table above, the consulates in Monastir and Thessaloniki had most of the schools within their jurisdiction. This should come as no surprise, given that in both centers we find consistent involvement of the diplomatic staff in encouraging the Romanian educational process.

Compared to the vilayet of Ioannina, where only about 19 schools operated, even though the population of Aromanian origin in the area was not insignificant, but rather relatively large, the Greek influence was much more pronounced, given the geographical location and the lack of Romanian diplomatic representation in the area (the Romanian consulate in Ioannina was only opened in 1904), which meant that progress in education was relatively limited. In the Kosovo area, in northern Macedonia, there were only six schools.

A pattern of evolution can be observed in these schools. While mixed schools were established in the last decades of the 19th century, after a few years of consolidation in the territory, they branched out, becoming schools for boys and schools for girls. Of course, this situation only occurred where there was a favorable context. Otherwise, we find a generous casuistry regarding schools that fail to survive more than a year after their establishment or that operate sporadically. Because the educational process for the Aromanians had to consider their specific occupation, so-called nomadic schools were also established, which practically followed the students in the transhumance carried out by their parents.

These are the premises from which the school issue south of the Danube developed between 1905 and 1925.

³⁰ All the localities where these schools operated, some of which have now disappeared or changed their names (in the study, we used their names as they appear in the documents of the Romanian consulates in the Balkan region), are located in the current territory of Albania, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, the Republic of Kosovo, and Turkey.

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