

To cite this article: Untila Kaplan, O. (2023). “Lumina” Folk Magazine of the Romanians in the Ottoman Empire: An Attempt to Draw the Ethnopsychological Profile of the Aromanians (Vlachs) Under the Ottoman Rule. *International Journal of Social and Humanities Sciences (IJSHS)*, 7(3), 149-172

Submitted: November 14, 2023

Accepted: December 17, 2023

**“LUMINA” FOLK MAGAZINE OF THE ROMANIANS IN THE
OTTOMAN EMPIRE: AN ATTEMPT TO DRAW THE
ETHNOPSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE OF THE AROMANIANS
(VLACHS) UNDER THE OTTOMAN RULE¹**

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ABSTRACT

This article conducted an ethnopsychological analysis of the Aromanians under Ottoman rule in 1903-1908, based on research regarding the *Lumina* publication - the only folk Romanian magazine in the Ottoman Empire. The aim is to highlight the special contribution of this magazine in preserving the ethnic identity of the southern branch of the Romanian people during a complicated and little studied period, -when the empire that ensured its unity fell apart and the creation of nation states further accentuated the problem of its existence of the one who in 1905 was named *Ulah Milleti*. The importance of the study lies in offering its own interpretation of the fate of the Aromanians, taking into account some theoretical landmarks of the Romanian authors Mircea Vulcănescu and Mihai Ralea. Vulcănescu’s “temptations” and Ralea’s “adaptability” are the main indicators selected in order to outline the psychological profile of the Aromanian ethnic group within the Ottoman millet system.

Keywords: Romanian Press in the Ottoman Empire, Ethnic Psychology, Lumina Magazine, Vlachs, Ethnic Identity

¹ This article was presented at the 12th International Congress on the History of the Press – “190 de ani de presă în spațiul de limbă română (1829-2019)” / “190 years of press in the Romanian language space (1829-2019)”, held in Iași (Romania) on 12-13 April 2019.

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INTRODUCTION

Ethnic psychology is a subject that involves the discovery and description of as many ethnic characteristics as possible specific to a nation. The Aromanians - the southern branch of the Romanian people³, nicknamed in turn “the natives of the Balkans”, “mountaineers”, “pawns of civilization in the Balkan Peninsula”, by their great cultural resistance in time and space, by the ethnopsychological peculiarities they manifested throughout history, represent, one of the most enigmatic and least studied ethnic elements in the Balkan peninsula. The spiritual evolution of the Aromanians has been marked over time by a strong sense of *preservation of ethnic consciousness*, manifested especially in the turning points of history. One of these moments refers to the last decades of Ottoman rulership - an extremely difficult period for the Ottoman Empire and decisive for the Aromanians within its borders. The struggle of the peoples for national emancipation at the beginning of the 20th century brought with it the transition from the traditional *millet* concept, which constituted the basic pivot in the administration of non-Muslim communities in the empire for several centuries, to the modern *nation* - process, which had a double connotation for the one named

³ Matilda Caragiu Marioțeanu: “Aromanians have always been from the territory to the south of the Danube. They descend from the Romanized south-eastern European population (Macedonians, Greeks, Thracians, and Illyrians) or from the population colonized by Romans (in any case, there was nothing Slavic in that era): Latin was assimilated by a part of their autochthonic languages. This process took place in a fairly large yet compact territory stretching between the northern Carpathians and the southern part of the Balkans. The ancient Romanian nation emerged in this territory, and it was rather unitary from the start (until the 7th – the 9th centuries), especially from the point of view of the language. The unity of the territory where the common Romanian language was spoken was split after the Slavs arrived between the Danube and the Balkans. A large part of the old Romanian population was denationalized, and the others were pushed to the north/west/south (probably starting from the 6th century). As a result, 4 groups of old Romanians emerged; over the centuries, they transformed into ROMANIANS from the north of the Danube or DACO-ROMANIANS (residents of Dacia), AROMANIANS (MACEDO-VLACHS), a term we prefer to use in order to avoid confusion: there were no northern Danube Romanians in the territories where Aromanians/Rrămăni resided; however, V(a)lachs lived there, because it was the name the neighbors used to call and still call all the Romanians from the north and the south of the Danube, MEGLENITES (MEGLENO-ROMANIANS/-VLACHS closely related to Aromanians, from the Meglen Plain, to the north of Sărună (Thessaloniki), and ISTRINIANS (ISTRO-ROMANIANS/-VLACHS) from the Istrian Peninsula.” For details see: Matilda Caragiu Marioțeanu, *Un dodecalog al aromânilor sau 12 adevăruri incontestabile, istorice și actuale, asupra aromânilor și asupra limbii lor*, Editura Sammarina, Constanța, 1996, pp. 439-440; Gheorghe Zbucă, *O istorie a românilor din Peninsula Balcanică (secolele XVIII-XX)*, Editura Biblioteca Bucureștilor, Bucharest 1999, pp. 5-6.

Ulah Milleti - recognized by the sultan upon the categorical insistence of Romania.

The recognition of the Aromanians by the decision dated 9/22 May 1905 meant, on the one hand, the establishment of a legal foundation for the better organization and strengthening of the Aromanian community. On the other hand, however, the recognized rights⁴ that had been granted to them caused vehement protests among the Greeks, under whose religious authority⁵ they were forbidden to pray in their mother tongue. The revival of national sentiment among the Balkan peoples brought with it the danger of forced assimilation into one of the cohabiting ethnic groups, which meant, in fact, the destruction of Aromanian unity south of the Danube. There was a need for an extensive program of cultural activities and enlightened and energetic minds to implement them. The Aromanians were entering a critical phase of their existence in the Balkans. The sense of preserving the ethnic consciousness generated efforts sustained by the Romanians from the North of the Danube, catalysing actions and people in order to assert, more than ever, the Romanian identity among the Aromanians. This is how Tache Papahagi describes this period in his paper *Aromânii (Aromanians)*, written in 1932:

“Governed until 1903, in the fight against mad values, by the great and wise Apostol Mărgărit⁶, the conscious national manifestation of the Aromanians entered bloodily the phase of annual sacrifices. Leaders killed or butchered; houses, churches and villages set on fire; the struggle for life and death - this is what their existence was until 1908 or, better said, until 1912, when the Ottoman

⁴ According to the Decree signed by Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1905, “they shall have the right to appoint mayors for their own communities, pursuant to the law, following the example of the other communities represented in administrative councils; in addition, they shall have their own members in these councils, also pursuant to the law; the teachers appointed by the Vlach communities for inspections, pursuant to the laws of the Empire, at their schools, as well as at those which are still to be established, shall be offered the same facilities by the imperial authorities.” See the text of the Decree in French and Romanian published in: *Ibid.*, p. 282. The full text of the Decree is also published in the *Lumina* magazine accompanied by the words of gratitude from the editors titled “Padişahımız Çok Yaşa!” *Lumina. Revistă populară a românilor din Imperiul Otoman*, No. 5, May, 1905, pp. 129-131.

⁵ Aromanians were subordinate to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul. For details see: Neagu Djuvara, “Diaspora aromână în secolele XVIII și XIX”, *Aromânii, istorie, limbă, destin*, Humanitas, Bucharest 2012, 135.

⁶ Apostol Mărgărit (1832-1903) was the national leader of Aromanians in the Ottoman Empire, teacher and school inspector for Macedonia. He campaigned for establishing closer diplomatic relations between Romania and the Ottoman Empire.

Empire was faltering, because with its demise from the peninsula, the star of the Aromanian entity was setting also” (Papahagi, 1932, 37).

If we look at the national Aromanian movement that Tache Papahagi talks about in terms of ethnic psychology, we can conceive its actions as motivated by the strong aspiration to cultivate the people, as an essential way of forming the national spirit. Undoubtedly, the Romanians preserved their ethnic, religious and even state identity, but they also had to endure the influence of the Ottoman imperial culture (Schifirneț, 2007, 259), which represented a mixture composed of people of different religions and ethnic origins. In the midst of these heterogeneous groups, the Aromanians were subjected to several influences, which left their mark on their ethnic evolution.

It is worth mentioning that, through their kinship with their brothers in the north of the Danube, the Aromanians interfered with the West, and the geographical positioning of their habitat and historical conditions spoke for themselves near the Orient, with all its ethnocultural variations. In the view of Mircea Vulcănescu, the mentioned influences are “temptations”, from the combination of which a balance is born, called by Mihai Ralea “adaptability” - soul structure with intermediate value between psychological extremes. In his work entitled *Fenomenul românesc (The Romanian phenomenon)*, Mihai Ralea explains how the Romanian managed to resist as an ethnic being “under so many storms that passed over his head”, how he was able not to lose his national feature, under so many attempts at denationalization (Ralea, 1997, 88). In the author’s opinion, the Romanian’s ability to adapt easily to circumstances is the main factor of the resistance movement through culture: “Ethnic psychology is done by studying the cultural productions of a nation, in which its soul has expressed itself objectively, condensed as an abstract essence” (Ralea, 1997, 69).

In our attempt to define the structure of the Aromanian soul, we will identify the main “temptations”, to the interference of which the manifestations of the ethos of this Balkan branch of the Romanian people were moulded, having as object of study the Aromanian community from Bitola and as means of research the magazine *Lumina. Revista populară a Românilor din Imperiul Otoman (The Light. Folk magazine of the Romanians in the Ottoman Empire)*⁷ - a precious source in discovering the specific features of the Aromanians under the rule of the

⁷ The magazine is kept at the National Archive of Macedonia. It was there that we were offered access to 40 issues of the magazine which we studied in accordance with the purpose of this article.

Ottomans. The main purpose of this paper is to highlight through the example of *Lumina* magazine the special contribution of periodicals in preserving the ethnopsychological character of the southern branch of the Romanian people in a complicated and little studied period, when the empire that ensured its unity fell apart, and the creation of national states accentuated even more the issue of the existence of the Aromanians.

THE OTTOMAN MILLET SYSTEM AND THE AROMANIANS

Throughout its six centuries-long history, until the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire had successfully managed masses of different ethnic and religion members. Within the Ottoman governance approach, each of these elements was given the name of the *nation*, and the system that was created was named the nation system (Ulutürk, 2012). Enver Ziya Karal's *Ottoman History* expresses the Muslim people, *Muhammet Ümmeti*, and the non-Muslim people according to their church struggle with the word “group” (*taife*) or “nation” (*millet*). Like the Greek group or the Greek nation, the Armenian group or the Armenian nation, the Jewish group or nation (Karal, 2007, 197). Divided into two as Muslims and non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, the communities were organized and governed on the basis of religion or sect and maintained the sacred character almost unchanged until 1839 (Karal, 2007, 177). During this period, the administrative, secondary and legal primary structure of the empire was established for non-Muslim communities, supporting the economic, legal, religious, linguistic and cultural development of every nation recognized by the state, and preserving their unique identities (Kurtaran, 2011, 60). After 1839, under pressure from European powers, a number of reforms were carried out in which Muslims and non-Muslims were declared equal before the law.

The reforms and development of events of the time contributed to a new meaning of the concept of “group” (*taife*) or “nation” (*millet*). This is the description given by the historian İlber Ortaylı: “*Nation* means not a concept, but an intimacy, an organization, a state of mind and a citizen’s view of one another. The word *minority* or ‘minor’ started to enter our state and society during the last decades of the empire. Members of the Nation’s Compartment shows some behavior and attitude, in contrast to the minority in modern society. This belonging gives security and even dignity to the members of the family and the community. Individuals live in their own culture of tradition and father’s verbal culture within their own social group. There is little association between compartments and there

is little conflict. There is no such thing as quarreling with the environment, proving identity, being assimilated (absorbed by the majority) or engaging in conflictive behaviors due to resistance to assimilation, like the minority member in modern society. There is no competition regarding the groupings in the open society, the industrial community. Attitudes such as competition and confrontation started with nationalization and modernization in the Ottoman society over the last century” (Ortaylı, 2002, 394).

Considering these important historical accounts, the recognition of the Aromanians (Vlachs) as a *nation* during the Ottoman era proves the importance of this ethnic group. The Vlachs, who are Christian Orthodox, has been known as a separate ethnic group since the Byzantine period. After the Ottoman Empire took over the region, they accepted the Vlachs as a separate ethnic group from the Greeks and the Bulgarians. The Vlachs, who had their cultural and religious autonomy rights, were given further privileges and responsibilities by the Voynuk Laws, introduced and put into effect by Sultan Selim I in 1516 (Arslan, 2008, 29). During the Ottoman period, the Vlachs who lived massively in Thessaloniki, Serres, Ohrid, Skopje, Monastir, Pindus and Kosovo, were also found in other parts of the Balkans. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the number of Vlachs, according to the Ottomans records, was of 99,000 people. According to other records, the estimate was almost the same. This figure did not include the whole number of Vlachs, but only those who considered themselves a separate ethnic group from the Greeks (Arslan, 2007: 29). The Vlachs became subject to the Hellenization policies of the Greek and the Greek influenced Orthodox Patriarchate in the nineteenth century. When the Vlachs identified themselves as a separate community, the Ortodox Patriarchate opposed their demands, but the Bulgarian Exarchate supported them just to weaken the Greeks. When the Greeks, the Bulgarians and the Ottomans, with their different approaches, started to turn the Aromanian question into a political issue, they contributed to strengthening the Vlachs’ identity (Arslan, 2007, 30).

The aspirations of the Aromanians in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire were best illustrated, we believe, by the great intellectual Nicolae Batzaria - the Aromanian, who was one of the two Aromanian members in the Ottoman Parliament:

“At the beginning of the 20th century in Macedonia, in a dispersed form, lived about 500,000 Aromanians. Given that they did not make up the majority in any region, the Aromanians were not recognized by the Greeks, Serbs, and Bulgarians

as a separate ethnic group. That is why the Aromanians saw in the Ottoman Empire the only power that would ensure their existence” (Sert, 2019, 22).

Since the 1880s, as the Bulgarian-Greek conflict intensified in Macedonia, Greeks accelerated their efforts to assimilate Aromanians in order to increase their effectiveness in the region. Romania has sided with the Aromanians during this period and has taken initiatives before the Ottoman Empire in order to gain national recognition (Ünlü, 2009, 15). As a result of more than three years of negotiations (Lahovary, 1935, 93), Sultan Abdülhamid II announced to the public in May 1905 the right of the Aromanians to benefit 9/22 from rights and privileges equally enjoyed by other ethnic groups operating in the Ottoman Empire. In his book *Istoria aromânilor (History of the Aromanians)*, German ethnographer and ethnolinguist Thede Kahl explained the recognition of Aromanians as a nation by the Sultan in 1905:

“The Greek-Romanian conflict reached its peak during the 1903-1908 riots, which led to a bloodshed, when most Aromanian groups were on the side of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. The increased tension between various groups in 1906 resulted in the breaking of diplomatic relations between Romania and Greece. Since then, the Vlach Millet has been proclaimed as a Romanian minority, and Aromanians are no longer divided as pro-Greek and pro-Romanian, but as Greek and Romanian” (Kahl, 2006, 123).

THE AROMANIANS OF BITOLA (MONASTIR) AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

The national movement of Aromanians in the Balkans began in the 1860s with the opening of schools and churches. This process gained momentum after Romania became independent from the Ottoman Empire in 1878. At first glance, the Aromanians' actions seemed to be in line with the goals of the increasingly hardening Balkan peoples facing the Ottoman Empire, but in the words of Max Demeter Peyfuss, the Aromanians' “demands were not to become members in Romania, nor initially to establish their own state, but to have civil rights that are within the borders of one state, namely to meet the demands of cultural and religious autonomy in Turkey.” (Peyfuss, 1994, 19). According to Adina Berciu-Drăghicescu, “in the political turmoil that has shaken and still shakes the Balkans, the Romanian element has no claim other than the right to a national school and church in which to train their mother tongue” (Berciu-Drăghicescu, 2012, 511).

It is possible to explain with Thede Kahl's view the truth behind these words. Significant information is shared in his book *Istoria Aromânilor (History of the Aromanians)* about the identity of this ethnic group. According to Kahl, *“Aromanians did not establish their own nation, but to a great extent helped neighboring ethnic groups achieve that goal. Economically and politically, Aromanians had the opportunity to develop their own nation, but their widespread, non-homogenous expansion and mixed population were the main obstacles to achieving national goals. Their identities, cultures and lifestyles have never contradicted the values of the majority. Thus, they participated in the national movements of these states and became part of the Balkan bourgeoisie. By integrating with or identifying the ‘host nation’, the Aromanians have not only chosen a way of assimilation, but also a form of modernization”* (Kahl, 2006, 122).

There is evidence of an affinity of the aromanians to the Greek nation in Max Demeter Peyfuss's book *Chestunea Aromânească (Aromanian Issue)*:

“Aromanians have evolved relatively continuously from a consciousness of the individuality of their language, to a consciousness of their Latin origin, and finally, a modern form of national consciousness that involves, though not necessarily, the idea of intimacy with the identity of Dako-Romanians. This consciousness was clearly manifested only in the Aromanians who immigrated to Turkey, those who remained in their homeland, that is, those who became more and more open to Greek influence in the majority. The Greek influence became a magnet, especially after the establishment of a free Greek state. This should not be taken lightly for Christians in the neighboring regions” (Peyfuss, 1994, 29).

This situation has created a confrontational ethnolinguistic ground for the development of Aromanian ethnic consciousness. The language spoken by the Aromanians is at the center of this conflict. According to Thede Kahl, *“the Greek-Romanian conflict on the Aromanian issue divided the Aromanians into different groups. Those who see themselves as Romanians, see themselves as Greeks and consider themselves Aromanians”* (Kahl, 2006, 120). Those who considered themselves as Greek in the assimilation process preferred Romanian rather than Aromanian. This slowed the national-cultural movement initiated by intellectuals in the region and strengthened the struggle to preserve the ethnic identity of those who consider themselves Romanians. Protecting ethnic identity by keeping language, religion and history alive has been the main task of Aromanian intellectuals. The intellectuals knew that the unity of language was the strongest

and at the same time the most accessible, clearest and most convincing proof of the national identity of all Romanians. No more convincing argument can be made for the ethnic unity of Romanians in the north and south of the Danube apart from language and name (Grecu, 2006). Spoken by the Aromanian people, a branch of the Romanian nation, who have lived south of the Danube for two thousand years, Aromanian is a historical dialect of an ancient stage in the history of the Romanian language (Caragiu Marioțeanu, 2012, 219). Aromanian intellectuals in Bitola assumed the responsibility of disseminating this reality in Ottoman Macedonia. The Aromanians in Bitola laid the foundations of the Aromanian education, church and press in the Ottoman Balkans in the early 20th century, beginning the preservation of the ethnic consciousness threatened by the influences of the Balkan peoples, who were increasingly concerned about gaining independence from the Ottoman Empire. Although the Greek influence on the Aromanians proved to be predominant, the opening of schools and churches with services in the mother tongue was supported by the Ottoman authorities⁸, so that even in Istanbul there was a primary school and a boarding school for higher education students (Peyfuss, 2012, 173). Max Demeter Peyfuss called Bitola as “Shanghai of the Balkans”, mentioning that this city “developed as a centre of Aromanian culture: there were Boys High School, Girls’ Superior School, Romanian Royal Consulate, bookstore, library, even a Romanian pharmacy” (Peyfuss, 2012, 173-174). Thus, in the last period of existence of the Ottoman Empire, the province of Monastir, coming forward with its rich socio-cultural texture, was one of the regions with the highest level of schooling in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These institutions (our note: schools), which were extremely effective in increasing the level of education and increasing the literacy rate, ensured the establishment of a group of Enlightened individuals in Monastir (Özcan, 2013, 353). Given the contribution of Apostol Mărgărit, Dimitrie Atanasescu, Nicolae Batzaria, Constantin Belimace, Tașcu Trifon and many other professors, teachers and church leaders of the Aromanian ethnic group in Bitola, in 1903 the *Asociația Corpului didactic și bisericesc pentru învățătura poporului român din Imperiul Otoman* (Association of the Teaching and Church Body for the Teaching of the

⁸ Saffet Pasha’s vizier order dated 1878 and Sultan Abdülhamid II’s Decree dated May 1905 can be mentioned here. In 1878, the Ottoman authorities accepted and guaranteed the Aromanians’ studies in their mother tongue, and in 1905, their rights equal to those of the other minorities in the empire were recognized.

Romanian People from the Ottoman Empire) was founded – the longest published folk Aromanian magazines, through which, during the most uncertain period in the history of the Aromanians, they managed to protect their linguistic, religious and ethnic treasure in a cosmopolitan region in the heart of the Balkans.

AROMANIAN PERIODICALS FROM THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

In 1878, just after the birth of an independent Romania, the Romanian national movement and its educational policy in Macedonia, Thessaly and Epirus started to influence the activities of the Aromanians (Kahl, 2006, 121). At a time when the struggles for national liberation of the Balkan peoples intensified, Romanians in the north of the Danube established a *Macedonian-Romanian Association* in Bucharest to promote the national cultural movements of the Aromanians under Ottoman rule. In 1880, this association published a newspaper called *Frățil'a întru dreptate* (*Brotherhood in the name of Justice*), symbolizing the brotherhood of Romanians on both banks of the Danube. This newspaper was the first periodical publication by the Aromanians.

In the years following the birth of the first Aromanian periodical, an almanac called *Albumul Macedo-Român* (*The Macedonian - Romanian Album*, 1880) was published in Bucharest, as well as *Macedonia* (*Macedonia*, 1888-1889), *Peninsula Balcanică* (*Balkan Peninsula*, 1893-1913), *Gazeta Macedoniei* (*Newspaper of Macedonia*, 1897-1898), *Revista Pindul* (*Pindul Magazine*, 1898-1899) were also published in several periodicals. As can be seen, the beginning of the Aromanian press is related to the initiatives of the Aromanian intellectuals in Bucharest, in close connection with the financial assistance of some well-known Romanian intellectuals and the production of their articles (Lascu, 1995, 406).

In the Ottoman lands, the publication of Aromanian magazines and newspapers took place in the 1900s. This is why *Frățilia* (*Brotherhood*) was published in Monastir between 1901 and 1902, and in the Thessaloniki province between 1903 and 1908. A magazine named *Lumina* (*The Light*) was published in Monastir by the *Ottoman Empire Romanian Teaching and Religion Society in Macedonia* from 1903 to 1908. After 1908, two more journals were published in Thessaloniki province: *Lilicea Pindului* (*Pind's Flower*, 1910-1912) and *Flambura* (*The Flag*, 1912-1914) journals. *Flambura* magazine started its publication life in Karaferye (today's Veria) city in Thessaloniki province and followed the national goals of the Aromanians during the Balkan Wars.

The first Aromanian newspapers were also published in Thessaloniki province. These dailies, *Deșteptarea* (*Awakening*, 1908-1909), *Lumina* (*The Light*, 1909-1910) and *Dreptatea* (*Righteousness*, 1911-1912), supported the national ideology of the Aromanians at a complex time stemming from the Balkan Wars. According to the interpretation of the Aromanian-style author Maria Pariza, “*The program of the Romanian periodicals in the Balkans generally reflects the preservation of language and ethnicity, recognition of the historical past, obtaining the equal rights with other Christians in the Ottoman Empire, defending the right to church and school in the mother tongue the desire for national revival*” (Pariza, 2019, 43).

Moreover, newspapers and magazines published by Aromanian communities in the Monastir and Thessaloniki provinces are geared towards raising, strengthening and protecting ethnic consciousness in the face of the danger of Greek assimilation.

THE AROMANIAN ETHNOPSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE. CASE STUDY OF THE MOST REPRESENTATIVE FOLK MAGAZINE OF ROMANIANS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE: “LUMINA” (1903-1908)

The *Lumina* magazine appeared in the cultural life of the Aromanians in the year when the national leader of Aromanians in the Ottoman Empire who supporting the resistance against Greek assimilation, Apostol Mărgărit died (Ünlü ve Yadi, 2018: 277-282). It is notable that the journalistic product appeared also with the support of Nicolae Batzaria, who played a special role important in the action of culturalization and coagulation of the Aromanian ethnic unity. The magazine managed to capture the main moments in the historical evolution of the southern branch of the Romanian people. In the Hegelian sense, this is also a spiritual process, in which the people are only the external composition of some spiritual achievements, characteristic for each era in its development (Gârlan, 2011, 24). It is the era in which the Ottoman Empire gets the Balkan region out of control, the struggle for national states turning Macedonia into the “Europe’s powder keg”. Under these conditions, the national cultural movement of the Aromanians was driven at the beginning of the 20th century by a strong sense of *preservation of ethnic consciousness*, a process in which we see the psychological profile of the Aromanian ethnic group in a decaying empire.

The importance of the theoretical benchmarks of Mircea Vulcănescu and Mihai Ralea in the etnopsychological research on the aromanians

“Ethnic psychology is carried out by studying the cultural productions of a nation, in whose soul it has expressed objectively, condensed as an abstract essence” Mihai Ralea was writing in *Fenomenul românesc (The Romanian Phenomenon)* in 1927. Given that the press is also cultural production, we proposed to study the content of the *Lumina* magazine, with a view to the perspective on the existence of Aromanians in a rotting empire. Relying on the theoretical landmarks of the Romanian cultural figures Mihai Ralea and Mircea Vulcănescu, we will outline the psychological profile of the Aromanians in the period 1903-1908, when their ethnic, linguistic and religious existence was threatened by the danger of assimilation in the the Balkan nations’ bossom. The ability to adapt to this situation in a heterogeneous environment from an ethnic point of view, suggested us to approach the subject through the angle of one of the psychological attributes of Romanians, called by Ralea adaptability. In the light of the “temptation theory”, drafted by Mircea Vulcănescu, we will highlight some “temptations”, which, according to the researcher, are nothing but some influences upon the Romanian ethos.

The ethnic existence of the aromanians in the pages of “Lumina” Magazine

The Romanians from the north of the Danube gained their independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1878 and after 30 years from this moment they were at “the beginning of an era of stability, continuity, unity, development” (Drăghicescu, 1907, 423). For Romanians in the south of the Danube this beginning was irreversibly threatened by the final ruination of the “last protector of the Aromanian unity in the region” (Untila Kaplan, 2017, 449). Therefore, the psychology of the two branches of the Romanian people has developed depending on the historical, social and political conditions specific to the habitat area. This is why the ethnic existence of the southern branch of the Romanian people requires a careful approach to adaptability - a process that evolved from the first contacts of the Aromanians with the Turks until the beginning of the 20th century, when the Ottoman Empire lived its last decades among the Balkan nationalism. Adaptability is seen by Mihai Ralea as a cardinal attribute of Romanians, being between the extremes of Western individualism (transformative and creative) and Eastern passivity (which often leads to resignation and fatalism). Adaptability is not a summary one - maintaining a Western-Eastern duality - but a synthesis, however, potentially having both positive aspects (for example, it is accompanied

by intelligence, tolerance, kindness) as well as negative aspects (it can come with duplicity and superficiality). Through this psychological attribute we are more negotiators than oppositionists, a fact which favours compromise and forgiveness, instead of hatred and revenge. Adaptability also reduces the processes of the creative imagination, anchoring us in the present, not in changing it. This attribute is conceptualized by Ralea as a cardinal, the one who helped us survive in the difficult conditions of our history, sometimes going so far as to cause us to simulate death as a nation (for example, we reduced our individualism and combativeness), in order to survive (David, 2015, 40-41).

For the Aromanians, the adaptability to the changes caused by the ruin of the Ottoman Empire meant first of all keeping the Romanian soul intact in the extreme conditions of existence, implying a dose of resistance to ethnic influences and assuming in Ralea's acceptance "a satisfaction and a thanking, thus a beginning of freedom", about which the Romanians wrote with great pride in the pages of the newspaper *Lumina* (1903-1908). Here are some examples. In the article "Românii din Tesalia și Epir" ("Romanians from Thessaly and Epirus"), Gheorghe Zuca writes about the impossibility of the Greeks to denationalize the Romanian element in the empire due to its superiority:

"In European Turkey, except for small exceptions, all the mountainous parts are inhabited exclusively by Romanians. The number of Romanians in Epirus alone amounts to at least 120,000 souls and they are all compact, unmixed with another nation, having the customs, speech and clean Romanian dress, sealed by the most striking originality" (Zuca, 1903, 257-258).

Another example is the article "Him Aromâni?" ("We are Aromanians"), signed by Theodor Capidan: "Him Aromâni, s'cġiamă frați di un sândze cu Români din România și di tu alante locuri? La această întrebare Th. Capidan răspunde da him un trup și un suflet cu nêși. In the article "Numerlu a nostru" ("Our Number"), N. Constantinescu writes about the ethnic unity of the Romanians: "Noi nu putem s'nê numirăm dispărțit de alantî Români, ditr'ăcea, că noi cu nâși him un trup și un suflet, di care nê leagă numa, limba, istoria și adeturile"⁹.

⁹ Translation from the Aromanian dialect of the Romanian language: "To be Aromanians means to be blood brothers with Romanians from Romania and with those from other regions. To this question, Mr. Capidan answers yes, we are one body and soul with them." Theodor Capidan, "Him Aromâni?", *Lumina. Revistă populară a românilor din Imperiul Otoman*, No. 5, May 1904, p. 144. Translation from the Aromanian dialect of the Romanian language: "We cannot consider ourselves separated from other Romanians because we are one body and

With the publication of the article “Cine am fost noi macedonenii” (“Who were we Macedoromanians?”) by I.D.A., in the efforts to keep the Romanian soul intact, it is observed a passing from that “beginning of freedom” to a beginning of “preservation of national identity” (Ralea, 1997, XXI), the adaptation playing an important role in this process: “From now on begins the era of enlarging the Romanian element in the Balkans, in which Romanians have achieved the highest political manifestation, which a nation can reach on this earth” (I.D.A., 1905, 47). We mention that this article was written in 1905, on the eve of the sultan’s recognition of the rights of the Aromanians from the Ottoman Empire.

The fact that the Aromanians have entered an irreversible process of preserving their national identity is demonstrated by the articles, in which the verbs “to forget”, “to denationalize”, “to lose” are frequently used. Also, the articles published in the 1907-1908 issues of the magazine are an argument in this regard, highlighting the strong attachment of the Aromanians to the sultan: “We can have no other ideal as a nation than unsurpassed in faith and devotion to the Imperial throne, unsurpassed in culture and civilization. Otherwise our living has no meaning” (Lumeanu, 1907, 6). Following this idea, in the article “Organizațiunea școlară” (“School organization”) Lumeanu mentions: “Our only ideal is: to preserve ourselves as a nation, to preserve our ancestral language and morals with sanctity, to be useful to the homeland and nation of which we are part of, and to be the agents of civilization as true members of the Latin gens” (Lumeanu, 1907, 194).

The preservation of the national idea turned at the end of 1908 - the last publication year of the *Lumina* magazine - into a national despair, the explanation of which, as Mircea Vulcănescu remarks, must be sought in what makes people always turn on themselves and research the mind: pain (Vulcănescu, 1943, 52). Significant in this regard is the conclusion made by I. Foti in issue 3 of April 1908: “*We are a very small people, a branch of the Romanian trunk, an abandoned and forgotten branch, struggling with the wicked needs of the period. We are neither so strong nor so numerous as to be able to preserve ourselves without our own culture. The Romanian literature at the moment cannot provide us with enough soul food for the reawakening of the national consciousness. We are so far from each other, for centuries we had a special history, special influences, our soul was changed, alienating us ever more, living in different ways, leading a special*

soul with them through name, language, history and customs.” N. Constantinescu, “Numerlu a nostru”, *Lumina. Revistă populară a românilor din Imperiul Otoman*, No. 6, June 1904, p. 17.

life. After all, we cannot hope for an immediate influence of Romanian literature, the distance is great, the ground unprepared. Serious motives lead us to our own culture, a necessary cultivation of the dialect becomes indispensable” (Foti, 1908, 28).

Linguistic existence

In *Dimensiunea românească a existenței* (*The Romanian dimension of existence*) (1943) Mircea Vulcănescu begins in the deep exploitation of the Romanian soul, guided by the phenomenological method, by studying the language. From such a perspective, he reveals the features of the profile, of the Romanian’s spiritual face. Given the fact that Aromanians are the Balkan representatives of Romanians, and Aromanian is a dialect of the Romanian language, we will try to research the content of the *Lumina* magazine from the perspective of Vulcănescu’s “theory of temptations”, in which we will highlight the place and role of Dacian temptation within the Romanian ethos. Since the Romanian soul is a complex thing, the product of a series of influences (Vulcănescu, 1943, 41), we will limit our research to a brief analysis of external influences, namely of the Turkish temptation and of the Greek temptation, the latter being for some Aromanians superior to the Dacian temptation. This facilitated the process of linguistic assimilation of the Aromanians in the Ottoman Balkans in 1903-1908.

In order to unravel this process, we need to take a look at what Mircea Vulcănescu called “temptations”. In his view,

“these temptations are the present remnant of the trials that a nation has gone through. These temptations are not dominant characters because they do not manifest as full existences, but only as whims, as tendencies to overcome and come out of you to complete yourself by adding an external reality, which subjugates you and in which you seem to recognize a primordial formative identity, a kind of return to the springs, to the balance of the initial visions that the element of the soul landscape disturbs” (Vulcănescu, 1943, 43).

The Aromanian language has always been a source of persecution by ethnic Greeks in the Ottoman Empire. Due to their bad influences, the school and the Aromanian church suffered greatly, which slowed down the achievement of the ideal proposed by the Aromanian national movement. However, Theodor Capidan mentions in his article “Conservatismul dialectului nostru față de acela al limbii grecești” (“The conservatism of our dialect compared to that of the Greek language”) that

“Among the foreign elements that most influenced our dialect were the Greek ones. Romanians, in general, coming into contact with the Greeks, received Greek words from the earliest times (6th-7th centuries). But this influence was limited only to the lexical part, and the living organism of our language, which consists of phonetics and inflection, remained intact. In our dialect, however, cement is Latin, and any attempt to link the slightest thought with written or spoken material to Greek material is impossible. From here, thus, we can say that the Greek influence failed to contribute in the slightest to the structure of our dialect” (Capidan, 1906, 97).

A similar comparison between the Aromanian dialect and the Romanian language is made by I. Amure in the article “Limba română în școalele noastre” (“Romanian language in our schools”). According to Amure:

“There is almost no fundamental difference between the Romanian literary language. It’s the same etymology, the same syntax and almost the same vocabulary. The difference is in some phonetic phenomena and in some foreign words, gained in our case by the contact with various nations, compared those who lived together with our brothers in Romania” (Amure, 1905, 70).

From these lines emerges a clear confrontation between the Dacian and the Greek temptation, the first being dominant and representing a “return to the springs” of the Aromanian soul, the second being a “will”, complementing it with a Greek linguistic background. Vulcănescu calls the Dacian temptation “the temptation of our anonymous depth”, characterizing it as internal, residual: “You get to the Thracians after you eliminate from yourself everything you manage to identify that you owe to others.” (Vulcănescu, 1943, 46). Through the *Lumina* magazine, every Aromanian is called to discover in his soul the Dacian temptation, which serves as a source of vitality for any Romanian, regardless of the region in which the outside influences are located. Thus, in the article signed by N.B., “Necesitatea culturii naționale” (“The need for nationale culture”), we find the following exhortation:

“And we, Aromanians, who live among so many foreign nations, who constantly suffer the contract and influence of foreign cultures, in order not to disappear among others, in order to strengthen our ethnic situation and in order to look to the future with confidence and security, we are urgently asked that, both ourselves, the enlighteners of the people, as well as in our nation, seek to establish convictions, based on the knowledge of the past of our people and our brothers, on the knowledge of the Romanian language and culture” (N.B., 1904, 131).

In 1905, when the rights of the Aromanians in the Ottoman Empire were recognized as a nation, the Aromanians signalled the growing danger of Greek temptation, returning countless times to reduce its dosage by maintaining the use of the Aromanian dialect. Here is what Ion D. Arginteanu writes about temptations in the article “Importanța limbii materne” (“The importance of mother tongue”):

“For us Macedonians, who are largely under foreign cultural and religious influence and who have lost and are in danger of losing a significant element, the study of the mother tongue, together with the historical one, are the most effective and safe means of life and salvation. The efforts of all the factors that have the destinies of our national future must be clustered around these two branches of education” (Arginteanu, 1905, 3).

In this order of ideas, C. I. Cosmescu makes an important clarification in the article “Însemnătatea dialectului nostru aromânesc” (“The significance of our Aromanian dialect”): “Language is that powerful factor that has preserved our ancestral customs and traditions, and to which we also owe the recognition - now by foreigners, of our existence as a nation on the Peninsula” (Cosmescu, 1905, 106).

After 1905, the linguistic existence of the Aromanians was tangentially dominated by the Turkish temptation, so well observed in the pages of the *Lumina* magazine. We consider it tangential, because it was a “voluntary” gathering, favoured by the intensification of the adaptability of the Aromanians to the Turkish culture. This is evidenced by the placement in the pages of the periodical of photographs of the high Ottoman dignitaries, of the anthem dedicated to Sultan Abdülhamid II, of the articles in which it is underlined the role of the sultan in protecting the Aromanian community in the empire and by the exhortation with suggestive title “Învitați în turcește!” (“Learn Turkish!”):

“What sorrow can be greater for you, the Aromanian, than the failure to learn, not knowing the past of the children and your ancestors, and after that of the ruling nation?! What sorrow can be greater than failure to know the Aromanian language and the Turkish language - the language of His Majesty the Sultan?!” (Baldacci, 1907, 72).

Religious existence

With the support of the Great Powers, on 22 May 1905, the Aromanians obtained from the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II all the rights granted to a *millet*, except for religious autonomy (Kahl, 2006, 122). The recognition of the Romanian nation

provoked violent protests among the Greeks. The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, to which the Aromanians belonged, vehemently protested the freedoms granted to this ethnic group. From this moment on, the actions to defend the religious existence of the Aromanians degenerated into a fierce battle, resulting in the rupture of relations between Greece and Romania, the latter supporting the Romanians of the South Danube with involvements from the people close to the sultan. Taking into account the situation that was created, the *Lumina* magazine supported the Aromanians by publishing articles explaining the great role of the Christian religion in the national life of the Romanian people. An example of this is the article entitled “Creștinismul” (“Christianity”), in which C. N. Adam wrote the following: “Enlightenment of the human mind with useful information about its spiritual life and the development of the will in the name of the common good is the foundation of the Christian religion” (Adam, 1903, 66).

The terror regime against the Aromanians, implemented by the Greeks, was reflected in the press and in diplomatic correspondence, which abounds in details about the bloody actions of the years 1905-1908 (Peyfuss, 2012, 93). The *Lumina* magazine made the necessary comments in several articles, expressing its hope that only under the Turkish protectorate will the Aromanians be able to save their spiritual treasure from extinction:

“The Patriarchate has turned the cross into a weapon. Instead of accepting us, it wants to destroy us because we are Romanians and because we want to remain Romanians. We hope that our generous sultan, who shows a sincere interest in our cultural and religious development, will also solve the problem of the Aromanian church” (Rec, 1906, 29-30).

We mention that the strong defence of the Orthodox faith constituted the key to the crossing from one century to another by all Romanians. This land element also helped the Aromanians, who, making use of this divine means, resisted the absorption by the nations among whom they live (Miclăuș, 2012, 69). Based on these findings, we can draft an explanation of the use of the phrase “we are Romanians and we want to remain Romanians”, in which we see the unstoppable desire of the Aromanians to fight for freedom of religious conscience - characteristic of Dacian temptation, which, through their actions, the Romanians from the south-Danube tried to reach.

CONCLUSIONS

There was a strong Romanian community in the south of the Danube, concentrated mainly around Bitola, the spirit of which was nurtured in the early 20th century by the *Association of Teaching and Church Body for the teaching of the Romanian people in the Ottoman Empire*. This association had important cultural and social contribution also through the only folk magazine of the Romanians that they created, with the suggestive title *Lumina (The Light)*. This magazine was a real mirror of Romanian revival from the Ottoman Empire. Although the Aromanians participated in the national movements of the nations of the empire, they never wanted its collapse. Moreover, they demanded that the sultan protect their ethnic, linguistic and religious rights in the face of the danger of assimilation.

The years 1903-1908 in the historical evolution of the Aromanian community in Bitola were the years in which, against the background of events provoked by the liberation movements of the Balkan nations, we believe, the fiercest struggle for the survival of the Aromanian national idea in the Ottoman Empire was carried out. In order to answer the question “how did the Romanian manage to resist as an ethnic being” in these conditions we tried to paint the ethnopsychological profile of the Aromanians under Ottoman rule, making a content analysis of the *Lumina* magazine - the only written source that periodically reflects the reality of a time segment in the life of the southern branch of the Romanian people, segment which is little studied. Therefore, the Aromanians are blood brothers with the Romanians from the north of the Danube. After the Romanians in the north gained the independence from the Ottoman Empire, the Romanians from the South Danube began to be ever more compelled by the national idea, thwarted and suppressed most often by the Balkan nations, which sought to assimilate them. Aromanian intellectuals, sustained by those in the north of the Danube and by the Ottoman authorities, outlined the main directions of resistance in the fight for ethnic identity: school, church and press. Thus began the work of national revival of the Aromanians, which culminated in the recognition in 1905 of the *Ulah Millet*. This event enraged the spirits of the Greeks, who launched violent actions against the Aromanians. The sense of identity preservation was a response given by the Aromanians to the challenges of the Greeks. From this moment on, the national revival movement entered a phase of continuous resistance in a rotting empire, which weakened the intellectual and spiritual energy of the Aromanians.

This process ended irreversibly with the demise of the Ottoman Empire - the last hope of the Aromanians in a bright future within the borders of a state.

It is easy to understand that the picture presented above constitutes the research framework, from which the facts emerge, around which the Aromanians have shaped their ethnic, linguistic and religious existence, going through a long process of adaptability - variable, depending on the influences with whom they came in contact. For the Aromanians, the adaptability to the changes caused by the ruin of the Ottoman Empire, meant first of all the preservation of the Romanian soul intact in the extreme conditions of existence, implying a dose of resistance to ethnic influences, for which it developed passive and active characters. Passive resistance was manifested by ignoring the past of the common ancestors of the two branches of the Romanian people, indecision, low level of education, distrust, softness of character, inconsistency - traits that led some Aromanians to give up Romanian identity in favour of a foreign identity. Active resistance can be seen in the secular relations of the Aromanians with the Turks, under whose auspices they tried to be free. Confidence in the supremacy of the nation, fighting spirit, strategic and confident, ready to sacrifice in the name of the cause are just some of the psychological qualities of the Romanians of the South of Danube. Called "the balance of the soul" by Mihai Ralea, the perfected adaptability served the the Aromanians at the border among the centuries as a "fighting weapon in existence".

Regarding the "theory of temptations" drafted by Mircea Vulcănescu, we will state that the Aromanian community in Bitola, like the other communities throughout the Ottoman Empire, was subjected to the influences of various nations. We have highlighted only three influences, which have served as the main "temptations" in the ethnopsychological evolution of the Aromanians in the Balkans: "Romanian temptation" ("Dacian temptation"), "Turkish temptation" and "Greek temptation" - all analysed in the context of historical events from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. We also made a classification, according to which "temptations" were categorized as follows: (1) predominant with edifying character, such as "Romanian temptation", (2) predominant with negative repercussions on the formation of the Romanian ethos, by the "Greek temptation" example, transitional intermediaries, whose purpose is to build the sense of strengthening the ethnic consciousness among the Aromanians, manifested by the "Turkish temptation".

In conclusion, no matter how criticized Mihai Ralea's vision regarding the outline of the ethnopsychological profile of Romanians based on the analysis of literary products, we insisted on this approach, which today is the only means of research of an insufficiently studied period in the cultural life of Aromanians. The attempt to perform an ethnopsychological analysis based on journalistic articles allowed us to highlight the great role that the press has, through the example of the *Lumina* magazine in preserving those specific characters of Aromanians in a complicated and little studied period.

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