

THE GREEKS AND ROMANIA'S MINORITY POLICY

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The aim of this article is to analyse the dynamics of the Greek immigrants' integration in Romania during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the context of the nation-state building, the Greek emigration in Romania was institutionalized. The communities wanted to obtain full autonomy in relation to the authorities of the Romanian State. The official documents of the Romanian State used the term of 'Greek communities', although they were not treated like legal entities.

The Greeks feared not only the interference of the Romanian or Greek authorities in their domestic problems, but also any conflicts within the community that could have caused legal problems related to the ownership right over real estate goods. The matter of acknowledging the legal person capacity of the Greek communities was not only an issue of legal nature, but rather a political one. In 1900 and 1931, the Romanian government signed the bilateral commercial conventions and the attached protocols to acknowledge the legal status of the Greek communities in Romania.

Keywords: Greek immigration, Romania, minority, Greek communities, the nation-state building.

I.

The emigration of the Orthodox Christians from the South of Danube – the Balkans, the Aegean and Ionian Islands, and Anatolia – to the two Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia has got a history of several centuries. Its causes are several: trade exchanges, wars, political and religious persecutions¹.

In the eighteenth century, the Danubian Principalities, Moldavia and Wallachia, were governed by Phanariotes, Greek or Greek-identified families of Constantinople. At that time, between the Danubian Principalities and the Ottoman Empire there were no State borders, even if the Sultan offered the princes privileges that granted them position of absolute rulers in their country.

The eighteenth century meant the increase of trade exchanges in this part of Europe marked by numerous conflicts and wars between the three empires, Ottoman, Habsburg, and Russian, located in the neighbouring area of the Principalities.

¹ See N. Iorga, *Romains et Grecs au cours des siècles*, Bucarest, 1921; idem, *Byzance après Byzance*, Bucharest 1934; Elena Siupiur, *Emigrația: condiție umană și politică în Sud-Estul European* [Emigration: a Human and Political Condition in Southeast Europe], Bucharest: Romanian Academy, 2009.

The close relationship between the Phanariot regime and Greek merchants gave them precedence in the Wallachian economy.

In 1821, the Phanariote rulers were removed from power. In 1829, while Greece was claimed independent, as the first nation-state in the Balkans, Serbia, Moldavia and Wallachia became autonomous principalities.

In the Ottoman Empire the populations of Orthodox Christian confession – Greeks, Aromanians (Vlachs), Bulgarians, Serbians, Albanians – were organized in Rum-millet. The Ottoman authorities rarely used the ethnic criteria to differentiate this conglomerate. The connection bridge between these groups was the religion and the use of the Greek language in the church, at school and in the scholarly activities. The phenomenon of migration was interlinked with the hegemony of the Greek culture in the Southern-Eastern Europe. As Paschalis M. Kitromilides points out, the politics of modernity put an end of ‘Byzantine ecumenism’ transforming the Orthodox Christian societies of this area into modern nations².

The Treaty of Adrianople in 1829 and the Treaty of Paris in 1856 established free trade for European countries in the Black Sea and the Danube. The Greek grain trading companies settled in the main port-cities of the Danube.

By increasing the trade exchanges in the Danube and Black Sea, the migration flow also increased. The nineteenth century marked a new wave of Greek immigrants to the Principalities³.

According to the official census of 1899 43 045 Greek and Ottoman subjects lived in Romania (the country had a population of 5 956 690)⁴. Less than 20 per cent of the population lived in towns and cities and the foreigners made up almost 30 per cent of the urban population (the Greeks accounted 8.75 per cent of the total population in Brăila, and 37.64 per cent in Sulina)⁵.

The merchants were the key actors of the migration. Trade was in the hands of foreigners including Greeks, Aromanians, Armenians, Jews, etc. The Greeks were an important segment of the bourgeoisie in the Danube cities-ports. In the cities where they were carrying out their activity, there were stores, barbershops, coffee shops, schools and charities that served the daily needs of the Greek community.

² See Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *An Orthodox Commonwealth. Symbol Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe*, London: Ashgate & Variorum, 2007, p. XII, XIV.

³ On the economic development and Greek emigration in the Danubian Principalities after the Treaty of Adrianople, see Spiridon Fokas, *Οι Έλληνες εις την ποταμοπλοΐαν του Κάτω Δουνάβειος* [The Greeks in the Navigation of Lower Danube], Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1975; Constantin Bușe, *Comerțul exterior prin Galați sub regimul port franc, 1837–1883* [Foreign Trade in Galati Port under Porto-franco Regime, 1837–1883], Bucharest: Academy of RSR, 1976; Constantin Ardeleanu, *Evoluția intereselor economice și politice britanice la gurile Dunării (1829–1914)* [The Evolution of British Economic and Political Interests at the Danube Mouths (1829–1914)], Braila: Istros, 2008.

⁴ Leonida Colescu, *Recensământul General al Populației. Rezultate definitive* [General Census of Population. Final Results], Bucharest: Editura Institutului General de Statistică, 1905, p. 101.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 103.

Such merchant communities existed everywhere in Europe where Greeks were settled. The Greeks from the Romanian countries used to have close commercial relations with other Greeks in Vienna, Odessa, etc. I am referring to the Greek communities in the Habsburg Empire and in Russia. These communities were organized according to the confessional criterion. Even in Russia, where the majority of the population was Orthodox Christian, the same as the Balkan immigrants, the authorities provided for them an institutional frame for their organization and activity, like, for instance, the 'Brotherhood of the Greeks' of Nezhin (the members of this organization called themselves 'Romioi')⁶.

By mid-nineteenth century, in the Principalities, the foreign Orthodox Christian merchants did not constitute organizations with religion and trading privileges. Once establishing their residence in the Principalities, they became members of the local guilds and corporations.

II.

By the first half of the nineteenth century, the Greek language had been taught in public schools and had been used in the religious service in some churches and monasteries, under the protection of the Eastern ecclesiastic communities. In 1830, the Romanian language became compulsory in public schools. In 1863, when the Greek language had been removed from all churches and monasteries and replaced by Romanian, the prince Alexander John Cuza gave to Greeks the right to found own churches and to organize themselves into separated communities.

Between 1859 and 1865, the prince of United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia Cuza was attempting to create the institutional framework for developing a modern nation. One of the main social reforms of the prince was the reorganization of the Church, which mainly aimed at claiming its autonomy towards the ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople.

⁶ On the Greek communities in Russia, see Iannis Carras, 'Community for Commerce: An Introduction to the Nezhin Greek Brotherhood Focusing on its Establishment as a formal Institution in the years between 1692 and 1710', in Victor N. Zakharov, Gelina Harlaftis, Olga Katsiardi-Hering (ed.), *Merchant Colonies in the Early Modern Period*, Pickering, Chatto, 2012, p. 152. About the Greek communities in the Habsburg Empire, see Olga Cicanci, *Companii grecești din Transilvania și comerțul european între 1636–1746* [The Greek companies of Transilvania and European trade in 1636-1746], Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1981; Baso Seirinidou, *Έλληνες στη Βιέννη (18^{ος} – μέσα 19^{ου} αιώνα)* [The Greeks in Vienne, the Eighteen – the middle of Nineteenth centuries], Athens: Irodotos, 2011, p. 37–53; Despini-Irini Tsourka-Papastahi, *Η νομολογία του κριτηρίου της ελληνικής «κομπανίας» του Σιμπίου Τρανσυλβανίας 17^{ος}–18^{ος} αι. Πηγές του δικαίου και των θεσμών του απόδημου ελληνισμού* [The Case-Law of Sibiu' Court in Transylvania, the Seventeenth and the Eighteenth centuries. Sources of law and institutions of the Greek emigration], Athens: Academy of Athens, 2011, p. 18.

In this context, in February 1863, the Greek merchants from Brăila, the most important centre of the Greek diaspora in Romania, established the first Greek community. Their example was followed very soon by the Greeks in Galați, Giurgiu, Calafat (in the Lower Danube area) and in Ismail (in the southern area of Bessarabia, under the Romanian rule between 1856 and 1878; 1918 and 1940)⁷.

The aim of the Greek communities was to build the church in order to benefit from religious services in their language. The church was the pivot of the community. The merchants gave this institution a predominantly secular character. They accepted the authority of the Romanian bishop, but they demanded in exchange the right to choose their own priests from among the Greek clergy coming from dioceses under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople.

Close to the church, which played a determinant role in preserving the national identity and solidarity, the merchants built schools of boys and of girls, where the children of the poor co-nationals could learn their language free of charge. The Ministry of Education appointed directors and made sure the provisions of the law applied on private schools. In these schools, the Romanian language and the Romanian history and geography were compulsory subjects.⁸

III.

In 1878, by the Berlin Treaty which ended the Russian-Ottoman war, Romania became independent. The region between the Danube and the Black Sea, Northern Dobrudja, a border land of the Ottoman Empire, inhabited most by Muslim populations, became part of the country. In the 1860s, the Orthodox Christian merchants obtained from the Sultan the right to build churches in Constanța, Mangalia, Cernavodă, Tulcea and Sulina. Churches were situated in the jurisdiction of the Greek or Bulgarian bishops, subordinated on their turn to the Patriarch of Constantinople. In those years, the Bulgarian bishops were fighting to segregate the Greek Patriarchate, so that, in 1878, the conflict within the Orthodox churches of Dobrudja was complex, and involved to the same extent the Greeks, the Bulgarians and the Romanians.

⁷ See Cristian Filip, *Comunitatea greacă de la Brăila 1864–1900* [The Greek Community of Braila, 1864–1900], Brăila: Istros, 2004, p. 11; Cornelia Papacostea-Danielopolou, *Οι Ελληνικές κοινότητες στη Ρουμανία τον 19^ο αιώνα* [The Greek Communities in Romania during the Nineteenth Century], Athens: EIE, 2010, p. 63–67; Dimitrios M. Kontogeorgis, *Η Ελληνική διασπορά στη Ρουμανία. Η περίπτωση της ελληνικής παροικίας στη Βραϊλα* [The Greek Diaspora in Romania. The Case Study of the Greek Community in Braila], Athens: unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Athens, 2012; Ștefan Petrescu, *Οι Έλληνες ως «άλλοι» στη Ρουμανία. Η εσωτερική οικοδόμηση του ρουμανικού έθνους-κράτους κατά τον δέκατο ένατο αιώνα και οι Έλληνες* [The Greek as Otherness in Romania. The Building of the Romanian Nation-State and the Greeks in the Nineteenth Century], Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2014, 263–264.

⁸ See Leonidas Rados, *Școlile grecești din România 1857–1905. Restituții documentare* [The Greek Schools in Romania 1857–1905, Documents], Bucharest: Omonia, 2006, p. 7–41.

The Orthodox Church of Cernavodă was won by the Romanians, while the churches of Tulcea, Sulina, Constanța and Mangalia remained in the hands of the Greeks.⁹ The Constantinople Patriarch Joachim III believed that the Orthodox churches should be treated according to article 44 of the Berlin Treaty regarding the rights of the religious communities¹⁰. The Minister of Greece in Bucharest, Markos Dragoumis, did not share the patriarch's position, because the Greeks were not a religious minority, and consequently the churches could not benefit from a privileged status in reference of the Romanian Church and of the Romanian State¹¹.

According to Law on Administrative Organization of Dobrudja, all the inhabitants had turned, from Ottoman subjects, into Romanians regardless of their religion, language, and ethnicity¹². Nevertheless, the same as in other Romanian provinces, the Greeks of Dobrudja were not Ottomans *in corpore*, some were Greek, British subjects, etc. The government was willing to acknowledge specific collective rights for the foreigners, such as, for instance, were considered the Greeks from Brăila, but not for the Romanian citizens.

In 1880, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania and interim of Cults, Vasile Boerescu, put an end to the troubles arising in the matter of Orthodox churches of Dobrudja. In his address to the Minister of Internal Affairs, he showed that these private churches (*églises particulières*) belonged to private persons or to associations of private persons, and in that case, these were foreigners. These churches were not governed by the provisions of the law on the organization of local administration, and therefore could not be placed under the control of the mayors¹³.

IV.

The Greek churches in Romania were built and maintained exclusively out of merchants' money. Until the first decades of the nineteenth century, Greece has not financed the churches and schools of the Greeks living abroad, except those from the Ottoman territories. In 1900, in the annual report of Brăila community it was

⁹ See Ștefan Petrescu, *Oi Έλληνες ως «άλλοι» στη Ρουμανία...*, p. 266–270.

¹⁰ Cf. Daniela Bușă, *Modificări politico-teritoriale în sud-estul Europei între Congresul de la Berlin și primul război mondial (1878–1914)* [Political and Territorial Changes in South – Eastern Europe between the Berlin Congress and the First World War], Bucharest: Paideia, 2003, p. 25; Ιστορικά Αρχεία του Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών = IAYE [Greek Foreign Office Historical Archives], box 76.1/1880, report of Marcos Dragoumis, the Minister of Greece in Bucharest, to Greece Foreign Affairs Minister, 15/27 September 1880.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, box aak/1894, Markos Dragoumis (Bucharest) to Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs (Athens), 17/29 September 1884.

¹² See Constantin Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation and State-Building: the Integration of Northern Dobrudja in Romania 1878–1913*, Pittsburgh 2002.

¹³ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale = ANIC [The State Archives of Romania], the Ministry of Internal Affairs, box 5/1880: the Minister of Cults and Public Instruction to Minister of Internal Affairs, on 14 March 1880; IAYE, box 76.1/1880, Kleon Rangavis (the Minister of Greece in Bucharest) to Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, 22 May/ 3 June 1880.

explicitly said that the Greek State did not have the obligation to financially support the communities living abroad, because its purpose and interest was that its citizens should remain in the country, not to ‘renegade’ their nation by leaving abroad. Therefore, the communities did not agree with the interference of the Greek diplomacy in their domestic affairs¹⁴.

The communities wanted to obtain full autonomy in relation to the authorities of the Romanian State. I am specifying that the official documents of the Romanian State used the term of ‘Greek communities’, although they were not treated like legal entities.

The Greeks feared not only the interference of the Romanian or Greek authorities in their domestic problems, but also any conflicts within the community, that could have caused legal problems related to the ownership right over real estate goods. In order to avoid such situation, the Statutes of the Greek community of Giurgiu, drafted in 1863, stipulated that 3 to 5 members of the executive council (ephors) had to be Greek subjects¹⁵.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Romanian politician, of Greek origin, Mihail Grigoriady de Bonachi, the son of Constantin Bonachi who had sold to the Greek community the land on which the church in Galați was built asked before the court to cancel the transaction for the reason that the buyer did not have legal personality. The court pronounced in favour of the community, acknowledging de jure its capacity as legal person¹⁶. Nevertheless, the matter of acknowledging the capacity of legal person of the Greek communities was not only an issue of legal nature, but rather a political one. Between 1872 and 1876, the legal experts from the University of Athens believed that the issue of the legal personality should have been regulated by diplomatic means by a consular agreement¹⁷.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Romanian-Greek relations were affected by the Aromanian issue. The Aromanian-speaking populations – that

¹⁴ *Ελληνική κοινότης Βραΐλας. Λογοδοσία της επιτροπής της ελλ. Κοινοτήτος από της 1^{ης} Ιουνίου 1897 μέχρι τις 20 Απριλίου 1900* [The Greek community in Braila. Report of the Greek community’ Committee covering July 1897 to April 1900], Braila: P.M. Pestemaltzioglou, 1900, p. 18: ‘ουδεμία κυβέρνησις έχει αποστολήν και συμφέρον να πράγη δι’επιχορηγήσεων την φυγοπατρίαν και την ταύτη πολλάκις παρεπομένην αρνησιεθνία. Τα άτομα, τα εγκαταλείπονται το πάτριον έδαφος, αυτά και μόνο ευθύνονται επί τη κακοδαιμονία ην υφίστανται πολλάκις εν τη ξένη. Η δε πατρίς αυτών ουδέν άλλο καθήκον έχει προς αυτά είμη να διευκολύνη εκ των ενόντων την παλινόστησιν’.

¹⁵ Dimitrios M. Kontogeorgis, ‘Σύσταση και οργάνωση ελληνικών κοινοτήτων στη Ρουμανία. Η περίπτωση του Τζιουρτζίου και της Τούλτσεας (β’μισό του 19^{ου} αιώνα)’ [The Establishment and the Organize of the Greek Communities in Romania. The case study of the communities in the cities of Giurgiu and Tulcea (in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century)], in *Μνήμων*, 28 (2006–2007), p. 216.

¹⁶ Cf. *Desbaterile Adunării Deputaților* [Official Gazette of Parliamentary Debates: The Chamber of Deputies], meeting on 20 December 1900, p. 251.

¹⁷ Dimitris M. Kontogeorgis, ‘Σύσταση και οργάνωση ελληνικών κοινοτήτων στη Ρουμανία...’, p. 220–221; IAYE, box 76.1 b/1876, the Greek Minister of Public Education to the Greek Minister of Foreign Affairs, 15 January 1876.

lived in the southern lands of the Balkans – were considered by the Romanians, Bulgarians, Serbians and respectively Greeks as being part of their nation. The Romanian government financially supported the Romanian schools situated on the Ottoman territories, thus getting involved in the inter-ethnic conflicts of the area. In 1858, Evangelis Zappas, an Albanian-speaking Greek landowner from Romania, had left his great fortune by will to the Olympic Society of Athens, managed by the Greek government. In 1892, after the death of his executor, his cousin Constantine Zappas, the Greek government made a claim for the execution of the will. The Olympic Society proposed to organize agricultural and industrial exhibitions in Athens, to stimulate the economic development and the technological progress in Greece. In Romania, public opinion believed that this society financed the Greek propaganda in Macedonia, which was channeled towards the Aromanians. The Zappas affair generated a huge diplomatic conflict¹⁸.

Nevertheless, the Romanian diplomacy was aware of the fact that Romania's main enemy in the Balkans was Bulgaria, not Greece. Bulgaria, neighbouring Romania to the south, made territorial claims over Dobrudja. In this context, in 1900, the Romanian government signed the bilateral commercial convention and the attached protocol to acknowledge the legal personality of the Greek communities: four in Dobrudja (Constanța, Tulcea, Sulina, Mangalia) and four in the Lower Danube region (Galați, Brăila, Giurgiu, Calafat)¹⁹. The Greek church of Bucharest was not included in the project, because it had been placed under the protection of the Greek government. The church was built in the yard of the Greek Embassy in Bucharest thanks to the financial help of another Greek, Panaghis Harokopos, a leaseholder of the Romanian Crown's Domains²⁰.

During the protocol debates in Parliament, senator Petre Missir claimed that the foreign citizens enjoyed the same civil rights as the Romanian citizens (except the right to buy land properties, a privilege reserved exclusively to Romanians). In

¹⁸ About the Greek-Romanian relationship and the Aromounian issue, see Constantin Velichi, 'Les relations roumano-grecques pendant la période 1879–1911', in *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, VII, 3 (1969), p. 509–542; Max Demeter Peyfuss, *Chestiunea aromânească. Evoluția ei de la origini până la pacea de la București (1913) și poziția Austro-Ungariei* [Die Aromunische Frage: ihre Entwicklung v. Den Ursprüngen bis zum Frieden von Bukarest (1913) und die Haltung Österreich-Ungarns], Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1994; Ștefan Petrescu, 'Naționalism românesc și grecesc în Turcia Europeană (1878–1913)' [Romanian and Greek Nationalism in the European Turkish], in *Analele Universității București. Istorie*, L (2001), pp. 63–78; Spiridon Sfetas, 'To ιστορικό πλαίσιο των ελληνο-ρουμανικών πολιτικών σχέσεων (1866–1913)' [The Greek-Romanian framework of Political Relationship], in *Μακεδονικών*, 33, 2003, pp. 23–48; Radu Tudorancea, 'The Macedo-Romanian Question within the Romanian – Greek Relations in the Early Twentieth Century', *Romanian Academy Historical Yearbook*, 1 (2004), pp. 214–220; Ionuț Nistor, 'Problema aromână' în raporturile României cu statele balcanice (1903–1913) [The 'Aromanian issue' in Romania's relations with the Balkan States, 1903–1913], Iași: Editura Universității 'Alexandru Ioan Cuza', 2009.

¹⁹ *Desbaterile Adunării Deputaților*, meeting on 20 December 1900, p. 251.

²⁰ Evangelia N. Georgitsoyanni, 'Le Palais de l'Ambassade et l'Église grecque de Bucarest', in *Buletinul Societății de Studii Neoeleene*, 1999, p. 209–218.

accordance with the Constitution and the Civil Code, they could exercise their rights individually and collectively. The founder members of the Greek communities and most community members were foreign citizens²¹. Therefore, we cannot speak of the right to self-determination of a ‘national minority’, as the international treaties call them after the First World War.

Another opinion presented itself. Deputy Take Ionescu, who will appear as a promoter of the Romanian-Greek friendship in the context of the Balkan wars of 1912–1913, declared in 1900: “we have enough power in our nation to melt all metals, so we shall not fear a few occasional elements of Greeks or Bulgarians, no, we are not afraid”²².

General George Manu, deputy of the Conservative party that was in power, believed that the recognition of the Greek communities would create an unprecedented situation that other foreign powers and the Jews could use²³.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexandru Marghiloman, in his statement in response to the Opposition’s allegations, said the Greek communities in Romania “exist, we don’t create anything”²⁴.

V.

In 1905, a Romanian-Greek diplomatic conflict started. The Macedonian crisis had reached its climax, the Greek and the Bulgarian rebels had been involved in a bloody battle in Macedonia and in other Ottoman provinces. Some Aromanians with Romanian national feelings had been killed by the Greeks. The Greek government was suspected to send money and aids in Macedonia.

This situation created a diplomatic crisis which had severe repercussions for the Greek communities’ regime in Romania²⁵.

In several cities of Romania manifestations of protest were organized which caused material damages to Greek stores and coffee shops. The Romanian government asked the Greek government to condemn the violence against the Aromanians of Macedonia, and to support their intercession with the Greek Patriarch in order to establish an autonomous ecclesiastical authority. This was impossible, the Greek government would have not recognized officially the fact that it had interfered in the domestic affairs of the Ottoman Empire.

²¹ *Desbaterile Senatului* [Official Gazette of Parliamentary Debates: the Senate], meeting on 21 December 1900, p. 126

²² *Desbaterile Adunării Deputaților*, 20 Decembrie 1900, p. 249.

²³ *Desbaterile Adunării Deputaților*, 20 Decembrie 1900, p. 246.

²⁴ *Desbaterile Adunării Deputaților*, 20 Decembrie 1900, p. 252

²⁵ See Ștefan Petrescu, *Oi Έλληνες ως «άλλοι» στη Ρουμανία...*, p. 249–255; Dimitrios M. Kontogeorgis, ‘Between Party Politics and Social Pressure. The Anti-Greek Movement in Romania (1905–1906)’, in Andreas K. Lyberatos (ed), *Social Transformation and Mass Mobilization in the Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean Cities (1900–1923)*, pp.161–175.

In front of the Romanian government's firm position to recognize the Romanian nationality in the Ottoman Empire, and the wave of anti-Greek violence that invaded the Romanian public opinion, the Greek diplomats left the country²⁶. In September of 1905 the Romanian government denounced the bilateral commercial convention and the protocol of 1900²⁷. The Ministry of Public Education closed down several Greek schools, accusing them of 'propaganda' against the Romanian national interests²⁸. In the spring of 1906, the Romanian Finance minister Take Ionescu proposed a new tax bill which stipulated heavy taxation for the Greeks residences of Romania²⁹. In 1905 and 1906 several leaders of the Greek community and journalists were expelled from the country. Similar anti-Greek movement erupted in Bulgaria during the summer of 1906³⁰.

This state of conflict was gradually ceasing while the violence in Macedonia attenuated. In 1913, the Balkan wars will bring the two countries, along with Serbia, on the same side against Bulgaria.

VI.

In the aftermath of the Balkan wars, the Ottoman territories of the European continent were divided between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. In 1913, the Romanian politicians conditioned the respect of the legal system of the Greek communities in Romania by the settlement of the legal status of the Aromanians in Greece. The Peace Conference of Bucharest has given Romania the opportunity to regulate the situation of the Aromanian community in the Balkan states. However, the situation of the Romanian churches and schools in Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia did not make the object of the Peace Treaty. The matter was regulated by the exchange of letters between the Romanian Prime-Minister Titu Maiorescu and the other government executives of the Balkan states. The result was not the one that the Romanian government wished for. Of all the Balkan states, only Greece

²⁶ *Διπλωματικά έγγραφα κατατεθέντα εις τη Βουλήν υπό του επί των Εξωτερικών Υπουργού* [Official Diplomatic Documents relating to the Greek-Romanian conflict], Athens, 1905: Alexander Tombazis, the Minister of Greece in Bucharest, to Jacob Lahovary, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, on 24 August 1905, p. 19–20.

²⁷ C. Velichi, *op.cit.*, p. 538.

²⁸ ANIC, MIPC, 1051/1905, report of Gheorghe Râșcanu on 10 October 1905, p. 7; IAYE, box 66.2/1905: Braila consul' reports to the Greek attaché (Bucharest), 28 November 1905 (no. 494) and 7 February 1906 (no. 24); *Desbaterile Adunării Deputaților*, 10 December 1905, p. 345

²⁹ IAYE, box 4.1, the Greek attaché D. Sisilianos (Bucharest) to Minister of Foreign Affairs Alexander Skouzez (Athens), 20 June 1906.

³⁰ Andreas Lyberatos, 'Confronting the Urban Crowd: Bulgarian Society and the 1906 Anti-Greek Movement', in: A. Lyberatos (ed.), *Social Transformation and Mass Mobilisation in the Balkan and Eastern Mediterranean Cities, 1900–1923*, Herakleion: Crete University Press, 2013, p. 177–193.

committed itself to observe this agreement, which however was not ratified by the parliament of Athens³¹.

The First World War brought major changes in the geopolitics of Central and Southern-Eastern Europe.

The peace treaties of Paris have regulated, among other things, the status of national or ethnic minorities in the Central and Southern-Eastern European countries, successors of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires. Article 93 of the Treaty of Versailles (1919), derived from the example of the Berlin Treaty of 1878, provided rights for all the inhabitants of the national states, regardless of their ethnics, language and religion. The treaty of the minorities of Saint German (1919) has been signed by the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, including Romania. Similar provisions have also been included in the Treaty of Trianon (1920)³². Greece was bound to protect the Aromanians in Greece by the provisions of the Treaty of Sèvres (1920)³³.

Romania incorporated territories with populations of various ethnic origins and religious beliefs. According to the census of 1930, the Romanians represented 71.9% of the total population of over 18 million, and the rest consisted in Magyars 7.9%, 4.1% Germans, 4% Jews, Ukrainians 2.3% and Russians, Bulgarians, and other 9.8%. The weight of the Greeks in the new Romania dropped significantly compared to the pre-war period, representing only 0.1% of the population of the country³⁴. According to several estimations, in the interwar period, in Romania lived almost 50 000 citizens of Greek origin³⁵.

There was a legal difference between the Greeks in Romania and the Aromanians in Greece, but also between the Greeks and the other national minorities in Romania. The Aromanians in Greece, the same as the Hungarians, the Transylvanian Saxons and other minorities in Romania, were citizens of the state that they lived in, while in Romania, most Greeks did not have the citizenship of the state to which they emigrated. In 1930 the Greek subjects totaled 17 606, representing 19.9% of the foreign subjects who lived in Romania³⁶.

³¹ Nicolae-Șerban Tanașoca, 'Aperçu of the History of Balkan Romanity', in Răzvan Theodorescu and Leland Conley Barrows (ed.), *Politics and Culture in Southeastern Europe*, Bucharest, 2001, p. 162; Ionuț Nistor, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

³² Malcom D. Evans, *Religions, Liberty and International Law in Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 54–69.

³³ Hurst Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self Determination: the Accommodation of Conflicting Rights*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990, p. 53. On the status of minority groups after the First World War, see Constantin Jordan, *Minorități etnice în sud-estul european după Primul Război Mondial: dimensiunile unei probleme Europene* [The Ethnic Minorities in Southeast Europe after the First World War: the Dimensions of an European question], Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2002.

³⁴ *Enciclopedia României* [The Encyclopedia of Romania], v. I, Bucharest, 1938, p. 148.

³⁵ Paula Scalcău, *Grecii din România* [The Greeks in Romania], Bucharest: Omonia, 2003, p. 193.

³⁶ Oana Barbălată, *Comunitatea elenă din București. Istorie, economie și cultură (1918–1948)* [The Greek community of Bucharest: History, Economy and Culture (1918–1948)], unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Bucharest, p. 232.

Definition of a national and ethnic minority group in specialised literature can vary depending on specific context. It's important to differentiate between traditional or autochthonous minorities, and old or new immigrant minorities.

The „Megali Idea” started to form roots by the Treaty of Sèvres (1920). The former Ottoman possessions, the Eastern Thrace, the European bank of the Dardanelles, the same as Izmir, with the neighboring region, were becoming Greek territories. The signing of this treaty represented a personal success for Venizelos. He did not only have to face the external enemy, Mustafa Kemal, who had started the fight to save Turkey, but King Constantine as well, whom he had dethroned because the latter had not agreed with Greece entering the war alongside England and France. The constitutional crisis in Greece flared up once more after the death of the young king Alexander, the younger son of Constantine I. In the new political circumstances, the dethroned king asked his sons to refuse the throne. In November 1920, Venizelos, being isolated and lacking constitutional legitimacy, lost the parliamentary election. He quitted at once, leaving the country, while Constantine was preparing to return triumphantly to Athens.

In these troubled years 1919–1923, the Greeks from the diaspora have become an important force in supporting the national project of the Great Idea. In 1919, the jurist Mihail Dendias, who originated from the Greek communities of the Black Sea area, publishes in Athens the first wide study related to the Greek diaspora around the world.³⁷ In 1921, Eustathios Byzanthios, in his study “Greek communities in Romania” published in the newspaper *Ethnos* (in Bucharest), claimed that it was necessary to constitute the Greeks in Romania in a representative organization at the national level. This organization, called *Αμφικτυονία*, would have coordinated the activity of the Greek communities on the entire territory of Romania³⁸.

In the autumn of 1920, King Constantine returned to Athens after several years of exile to Switzerland. The moment generated a fierce fight for power among the Greek communities of Romania. The Greek Legation in Romania asked the Greek churches in the country to celebrate masses for the king and for his family. The leaders of the Greek community from Brăila refused to comply. The Greek consulate of Brăila was not entitled to interfere in the internal issues of the community. The royalists, led by Gerasimos Lazaris, brother of the banker Andreas Lazaris, entered the church by force and asked the archimandrite Pangratis Vatopedinos not to obey to the order of the trusteeship. They promised in writing to offer a significant amount of money in the event the trusteeship had discharged him for not respecting those orders.

In 1921, the campaign to elect the president of the Bucharest community was very agitated. The royalists, led by the banker Andreas Lazaris, have won against

³⁷ Mihail Dendias, *Αι ελληνικάί παροικοίαι ανα τον κόσμω* [The Greek Communities in the World], Athens, 1919.

³⁸ *Το Έθνος* [The Nation], no. 1309, 1 April 1921, p. 2.

Venizelos' partisans. He was not only an eager supporter of King Constantine, but a man with practical initiatives, willing to serve the interests of the Greek communities in Romania³⁹.

The Greek army was defeated by Kemalist forces in August 1922. A vast movement of refugees began to flee and migrate from Anatolia to Greece and other countries, including Romania. A renewal of the Greek-Romanian friendly relations occurred in the context of the Lausanne Conference (1922–1923)⁴⁰.

In August 1931, Romania and Greece signed the Convention of Commerce and Navigation and the Protocol related to the Greek churches and schools in Romania, similar to the protocol signed in 1901. According to the protocol, the head teachers will be free to set their own curricula and to hire teachers with Greek passports. The schools could be attended only by the students of Greek nationality. The protocol included all the properties of the Greek communities in the country. To the list of 1901 were added the properties of the communities of the new territories, Brașov (Transylvania) and Bazargic (Southern Dobruja)⁴¹. In 1931, in Romania there were 8 elementary schools that were operational, with teaching in the Greek language, with 884 students, and 2 secondary schools with 125 students in Bucharest and Galați, with the total number of 47 jobs⁴².

The legal status of the Greek community of Bucharest was unclear. Unlike other Greek communities in the country, the Greek church was owned by the Greek state. Lazaris militated for the incorporation of a Greek high-school in Bucharest. In 1927–1928, the impressive building of 33 Austrului Street was erected. The school was built with the money of the Greeks from Romania, but also with financing from the Greek government. The Greek state was owner of the land. The regulation of the legal status of the Greek community that was to administrate the church and the school was imperative⁴³.

In 1934, a conflict burst between the diplomatic authorities of Greece in Bucharest and the members of the community, militating for autonomy. The latter were constituted in October 1931 in the 'Association of Citizens of Greek nationality and of Greek origin of another nationality', called the 'Hellenic Community of Bucharest'. This organization received legal personality according to the Romanian

³⁹ *Neos Ellinismos* [New Hellenism], no. 80, 12 May 1921, p. 1. The newspaper published in Bucharest.

⁴⁰ Constantin Iordan, *Minoritățile etnice...*, p. 110–117; Oana Barbălată, *Comunitatea elenă din București...*, p. 55.

⁴¹ *Monitorul Oficial al României* [The Official Gazette of Romanian Government], no. 89, 14 April 1932, p. 39; Constantin Iordan, *Venizelos și românii*, Bucharest: Omonia, 2004, p. 338; Radu Tudorancea, *Relațiunile româno-elene în perioada interbelică* [The Romanian-Greek Relations in the Interwar Period], Bucharest: Omonia, 2011, p. 133.

⁴² Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe al României = AMAE (Archives of the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs), box Grecia 86, p. 341.

⁴³ Georgeta Filitti, Lia Brad Chisacof, 'Din viața comunității elene din București în anul 1914' [About the Greek Community of Bucharest in 1914], *Buletinul Societății Române de Studii Neoeleene* (2000–2001), p. 134–158.

law. This deeply dissatisfied the Greek state that owned the properties of the church and of the school. In 1934, the Greek government was involved in the elections for the community committee, setting a new Status, by which only the Greek citizens could occupy management functions in the community. This way, the church and the school were directly administrated by trustworthy people of the Greek Embassy. At the head of the committee elected with the support of the Greek Embassy was Panait Argyropol, manufacturer of halvah, and Nicolas Gerondakis, pub keeper. The opposition was grouped around P.C. Vassalopol, banker, director of the Cereal Producer Bank, and Georges Zervos, medical doctor⁴⁴.

In the period between wars, we notice the vertiginous growth of the petitions for naturalization of the foreign citizens. The procedure was simplified. Naturalization was no longer obtained by ways of the law, by the law, but it was administrative, by the decision made by the Council of Ministers. The Law on Naturalization of 1924 excluded the double citizenship. The applicant should 'have lost the foreign nationality or should lose it, according to the laws of its country'⁴⁵. In Bucharest and not only, many Greek merchants, industrialists and bankers requested and obtained Romanian citizenship. Nevertheless, very many Greeks remained foreign citizens. The Minister of Romania in Athens, Constantine Gane, advised the Romanian government to study the issue of mass naturalization of the Greeks in Romania, because only thees the issue of the Aromanian minority of Greece could be solved: 'create an ethnic minority that we may oppose to the one that we have here [namely to Aromanians]. In such conditions, we could talk as equals and I would not risk that, at my first official contact, I may be told that the Romanian government does not have the right of intervene in the domestic affairs of Greece'⁴⁶.

After the Second World War once the communist regime was instituted, important changes occurred in terms of the legal status of the Greek communities from Romania. The government led by Petru Groza encouraged the incorporation of new committees that would be favorable to the communist regime. In 1948, the government closed all the schools of the ethnic and religious communities, including the Greek ones⁴⁷. The Democratic Hellenic Committee assigned its property either to the local authorities, or to the Romanian Orthodox Church. Between 1948 and 1954, many Greeks left Romania to be repatriated to Greece or

⁴⁴ AMAE, box Romania 376, p. 257, 258; Oana Barbălată, 'Cadrul normativ privind organizarea grecilor din București în prima jumătate a secolului al XX-lea. Regulamentele comunității grecești' [*Cadre normatif de l'organisation des Grecs de Bucarest dans la première moitié du XX^{ème} siècle. Les Règlements de la Communauté grecque*], *Revista Arhivelor*, 1 (2008), p. 239.

⁴⁵ Dimitrie G. Maxim, *Naturalizarea în România: după constituțiune și noua lege a naturalizării* [The Naturalisation in Romania: according to the Constitution and the New Naturalisation Law], Bucharest, 1925, p. 50, 91.

⁴⁶ AMAE, box Grecia 15, telegram, November 27, 1940, p. 413.

⁴⁷ Monitorul Oficial al României, no. 167, 22 July 1948: the decree concerning of the foreign schools in the Popular Republic of Romania.

to immigrate to another country. In 1955, once the diplomatic relations between Romania and Greece were re-established, the issue of the Greek church of Bucharest was re-discussed. The Greek state asked to take into possession the chapel of the Greek Embassy. The Romanian Orthodox Church and the Romanian government conditioned the retrocession of the church by the re-opening of Romanian churches and schools from Greece that had been closed between 1945 and 1948⁴⁸.

In Greece, in 1948, a civil war started between the partisans of the king and the communists, who had fought against German occupation. The victory of the nationalist royalists generated a wave of refugees into the neighboring socialist countries. The Romanian state built houses for them and opened schools in Ștefănești (near Pitești), Onești, Bucharest and in other cities.

CONCLUSIONS

In the context of the process of the nation-state building, the Greek emigration in Romania was institutionalized. Religion, other time an important link in the destiny of Orthodox Christian Balkan peoples, become a problem of otherness. Common religious bonds did not count for much in a period of expanding secularisation.

In the name of the religious freedom, the Greeks obtained the right to pray in their language, in their own churches, provided that the Romanian Church should become national, and subordinated to the State. In accordance with the laws of the country, the foreigners enjoyed the same rights as the Romanians. Nevertheless, the State, guarantee of the national interest, by its institutions, supervised the activities carried out by all the inhabitants on its territory. The Greek priests recognized the authority of the Romanian bishop; the teachers functioned in accordance with the provisions of the Minister of Public Education.

On the other hand, in 1900 and 1931 the Romanian state, by signing the protocol concerning the Greek communities, admitted the interest manifested by the Greek State towards the co-nationals living abroad.

The Greek communities, dissolved in 1948, were reincorporated in 1990. Once the democratic regime was instituted, the Hellenic Union of Romania was constituted, which was a non-governmental organization that recovered the patrimony of the Greek communities. The Hellenic Union is participating in the parliamentary elections, obtaining about 10,000 votes. By the electoral law of 1990, all the national minorities are represented in the Parliament by assigning a term of office in the Lower Chamber, regardless of the number of votes obtained during the elections.

⁴⁸ Evantia Bozgan, Ovidiu Bozgan, 'Restabilirea relațiilor diplomatice româno-elene. Între interes național și politică de bloc' [Le rétablissement des relations diplomatiques roumano-helléniques entre l'intérêt national et la politique de camp], *Analele Universității București – seria Istorie*, XLIX (2000), p. 120.