National in Difference: Primary Schooling, Citizen-Subjects, and Imperial Notions in Romanian-Administered Dobruja, 1878-1920

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This dissertation explores the relationship between universal schooling and nation-building in a (purportedly) post-imperial borderland. Building on recent literature on national indifference, which presents borderland actors as culturally and politically fluid, this project shows the nation-state to have been as adaptive as its citizens. Like the communities that attended the Islamic, Bulgarian, German, Greek, Russian, Armenian, French, and Jewish schools in the formerly Ottoman maritime region of Dobruja, the Romanian state constantly evaluated the viability of cultural nationalization. By emphasizing the ambiguity of legal language, the flexibility of regional policies, and the responsiveness of central actors to geopolitical pressures, this project presents the nation-state as a practically agnostic actor that used nationalism much as borderland actors did – strategically and selectively. It argues that the Romanian nation-state governed its composite parts via a dynamic differentiated rule inspired by, and reflective of, imperial norms and strategies of governance. In so doing, this project emphasizes the imperfect transition from a Europe of empires to one of nation-states and dissipates the smoke and mirrors of nationalist rhetoric and legislation to better understand the pragmatic considerations underpinning state-minority interactions within the context of expansionist nation-building.

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1.0 Introduction: Heretics, Mercenaries, and Colonizers in a Maritime Borderland

1.1 Snapshot

Constanţa, Romania, 1912: A bustling, still coming-of-age port on the north-western shore of the Black Sea, guarding the purported "gates to the Orient, where everything is easy-going."[1] A newly disembarked visitor is greeted by a sparse yet eclectic skyline: the cupolas of an Orthodox Cathedral, the minarets of an Islamic mosque, and the domes of a Jewish synagogue sketched above the sapphire waves of a sea the ancient Greeks had characterized as dark and somber (*Pontos Axeinos*) before their conquest of its shores and hospitable (*Euxeinos Pontos*) thereafter.[2] Women in the latest Parisian fashions promenade along a wooden boardwalk lined with benches upon which men with thick mustaches, *shalvars*, and red fezzes exchange news between puffs of their pipes. Ascending from the shore to the central piazza, the visitor is greeted by a pensive statue of the Roman poet Ovid – an homage to the area's purported Latinity, cast in the bronze shape of a wretched exile for whom these tempestuous shores signified as much an intellectual as a physical banishment.[3] Yet the scene surrounding this morose castaway is more vibrant than it had been when Ovid still roamed free of his unsolicited pedestal.

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[1] Upon his visit to Bucharest in 1908, soon-to-be French president (1913-1920) Raymond Poincaré declared: "Que voulez-vous? Nous sommes ici aux portes de l'Orient où tout est pris à la légère."

[2] Charles King, *The Black Sea: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 12.

[3] In the first century ACE, the Roman poet Ovid, who had been banished to these shores by emperor Augustus, wrote the following verses describing his experience there: "How do you think/ I feel, lying here in this godforsaken

Greek-, Armenian-, and German-speaking merchants discuss business and peddle their wares over the noise of carriage wheels transporting raw materials to construction sites across the developing peninsula. Ethnically Italian and Romanian laborers work side by side to erect fin-de-siècle buildings and lay picturesque boardwalks and boulevards at the direction of British investors and French architects, while others toil on a grand Danubian steel truss bridge, originally designed by the engineering firm of the renowned Gustave Eiffel and commissioned by Romania's Hohenzollern regent, King Carol I, to link the newly-acquired Ottoman province of Dobruja to the capital city of Bucharest, the heart of the nascent Romanian nation-state.[4] Guarded by two imposing bronze *Dorobanţi* (Romanian infantrymen), designed by a French architect and partially funded by the French Embassy in Bucharest, the bridge honors the fallen heroes of Romania's War of Independence from Ottoman suzerainty – known to most as the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 – by breathing life into its newly transplanted "lung," the Black Sea.[5] Its rail-line also makes Constanţa, the region's largest port city, the penultimate stop on the Orient Express.

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region…? / I can't stand the climate, I haven't gotten used to the water / even the landscape somehow gets on my nerves. / There's no adequate housing here, no diet suited / to an invalid, no physician's healing skills, / no friend to console me, or with a flow of conversation / charm the slow hours away: weary, stretched out / among frontier tribes, in the back of beyond, I'm haunted / in my illness by all that's not here." See: King, *The Black Sea*, opt. cit. 23.

[4] The province with which this project is concerned has gone by several names – "Dobruca" when under Ottoman administration and "Dobrogea" / "Добруджа" ("Dobrudja") when under Romanian and Bulgarian administration. To avoid confusion, I will be employing the more neutral English term "Dobruja" regardless of the period to which I am referring and, unless I indicate otherwise, I will be referring solely to the part of Dobruja that passed under Romanian administration.

[5] In the midst of the Balkan Wars, engineer Bazil G. Assan pleaded the case for the importance of Dobruja to Romania in his *Quadrilaterul dobrogean* [*The Dobrujan Quadrilateral*, i.e. Southern Dobruja] (1912), proclaiming Dorbuja to

Our visitor is thus greeted by a Babylonian array of tongues, the various pieces of Dobruja's "kaleidoscopic" population seemingly all congregating in its port cities after voyages by ship, horse, and rail brought them there from all corners of Eurasia.[6] As our sojourner travels along the coast and further inland, he sees Crimean Tatar and Anatolian Turkic farmers sharing the landscape with their ethnically Romanian counterparts, tsarist-sympathizing Old Believers vying with Ottoman-leaning Cossacks over the Danubian fishing market, and transient Greek merchants competing over customers with their more settled German, Jewish, and Armenian counterparts. What one French traveler had remarked in 1864 of this borderland located at the maritime fault lines of the Ottoman and Russian empires – that all the populations of the "Orient" seemed to "*rendezvous*" there – still reflects Dobruja's reality a half century later.[7] As our visitor can readily confirm, Romanian Dobruja's port cities along the Black Sea coast and the banks of the Danube remain microcosms of all the worlds to which they give access.[8]

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be "Romania's lung," as without it Romania "would not be able to breathe, its commerce would be destroyed" (7). As quoted in Lucian Boia, *Balcic. Micul paradis al Romaniei Mari* [*Balchik: Greater Romania's Small Paradise*] (2014), ch. 2.

[6] I borrow the descriptor from Mark Mazower, who in *Salonica, City of Ghosts : Christians, Muslims, and Jews, 1430-1950* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005) refers to a similarly diverse (yet geopolitically less liminal) area – Ottoman Salonica – as a place of "almost kaleidoscopic interaction," in which Greeks, Anatolian Turks, Jews, Albanians, Bulgarians, Serbs and Vlachs interacted with each other on a daily basis in both intimate and structural ways.

[7] Camille Allard, *Souvenirs d'orient. La Bulgarie orientale* (Paris, 1864), 49.

[8] Ottmar Ette describes port cities as "encapsulating at the same time the spaces to which they give access." See Ottmar Ette, "Paris / Berlin: Alexandre von Humboldt, la liberté du voyage et les perspectives d'un concept scientifique relationnel des Trans Area Studies," in Anja Bandau, et al. *Les mondes coloniaux à Paris au XVIIIe siècle. Circulation et enchevêtrement des savoirs* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 2010), 135.

1.2 Setting the Scene

This dynamic mosaic had been pieced together over centuries of conquest, settlement, trade, and migration at the "shatterzone" of a motley of large and small Eurasian land empires.[9] Dobruja's geographic location, at the crossfires of overlapping imperial ambitions – first Greek and Roman, then Byzantine, Ottoman, and Russian – had made it, for much of its history, a quintessential borderland. In ancient times, the Greeks founded the colony of Histria, constructing a (now landlocked) port that, in their view, extended "civilization" to a region that was always flirting rather dangerously with the "barbarism" on the other side.[10] In subsequent centuries and between intermissions of Getic and Thracian rule and invasions of Dacians, Goths, and Ostrogoths, the region came within the orbit of the Romans, whose influence has been the subject of aggrandizement and mythologization – facilitated by Byzantine parlance, which identified the

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[9] I borrow this term from Omer Bartov, et al., eds. *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013) with the same sense – an area of (potential but not necessarily violent) fissure and rupture.

[10] Just as the Greeks changed the name of the Black Sea from "inhospitable sea" to "hospitable sea" after their colonization of the region, so they designated this area as (at least nominally) civilized once they extended their control over it, labeling all those on the other side of this far edge of ancient Greece as "barbarian." Following in the tradition of post-structural scholarship, I place these terms in quotation marks to emphasize their situational and constructed nature. See: Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) and Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976* (New York: Macmillan, 2003) for elaborations on the socio-historic construction of the opposing yet interrelated concepts of "civilization" and "barbarism" and their relationship to systems of power.; For more on ancient Greek settlements in the Black Sea region, as well as the extensive Greek mythology mapped onto its shores, see King, *The Black Sea*, Ch. 2.

inhabitants of Byzantium as "Romaioi" and the Byzantine empire as "Romania" – on the part of generations of Romanian nationalists (among them, those who erected the aforementioned statue of Ovid).[11] Scythia, as the region was called by its Roman administrators, had as a regional hub the maritime town of Tomis, originally a Greek colony, and today the nickname locals give to Constanţa's old city center. After a couple of stints of alternating Byzantine and Bulgarian administration, a half century of plunder by the Golden Horde, an interlude of independent rule, and a few decades changing hands between Wallachians and Ottomans, the region was absorbed into the Ottoman Empire in 1420, there to remain, uncomfortably nestled between the Sublime Porte and the tsarist colossus, until the year with which this project begins: 1878.[12]

This history naturally gave rise to myriad, often overlapping, waves of voluntary migration, involuntary exodus, and military action, all of which contributed to the region's Dadaesque demographic collage. Dobruja's most prominent groups – Islamic Anatolian Turks and Crimean Tatars, Eastern Orthodox Romanians, Greeks, and Slavs (a potpourri of Bulgarians, Russians, Old Believers, and Ukrainians), Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews, Catholic Frenchmen and Italians, Evangelical Germans, and Gregorian Armenians – each represented a different crest of these

[11] At the same time, the Orthodox Christian legacy of Byzantium would play a significant role in defining the official religious orientation of the future Romanian nation. See: King, *The Black Sea*, 65.

[12] "Wallachian" (not to be confused with Vlach) refers to the inhabitants of the Romanian Principality of Wallachia, which has been considered by generations of Romanian nationalists to be the core of the Romanian nation-state. For more on the successive waves of settlement, colonization, and warfare in the Black Sea's north-western shores, see King, *The Black Sea*. For more on how this region has figured in Romania's early national history, see Keith Hitchins, *The Romanians, 1774-1866* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

waves, crashing, at different times and in different places, on the shores of this unique maritime borderland found at the confluence of warring empires and variegated models of "civilization."

While Anatolian Turks arrived in the region as a result of successive Ottoman colonization efforts, as soldiers, settlers, and administrators, most Crimean Tatars settled there after the tsarist state absorbed the Crimean Khanate in 1783.[13] Old Believers similarly fled to Dobruja to escape persecution by Russian tsars in the aftermath of the mid-seventeenth-century *Raskol*, yet remained largely sympathetic to their ethno-linguistic background, unlike their Cossack neighbors who denounced the Russian tsars and became mercenaries for the rival armies of Ottoman sultans in the eighteenth century.[14] Smaller contingents of Orthodox Russians and "Little" Russians (Ukrainians) also settled in the region after the many tsarist incursions into Dobruja, laying down

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[13] For more on the history of Turkic peoples in Dobruja, see Mehmet Ali Ekrem, *Din Istoria turcilor dobrogeni* (Bucharest: Editura Kriterion, 1994).; Metin Omer, "În căutarea spaţiului identitar: emigrarea turcilor şi tătarilor în viziunea elitelor comunităţii (1878-1940)," in Adriana Cupcea, ed., *Turcii şi tătarii din Dobrogea* (Cluj- Napoca: Institutul pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităţilor Naţionale, 2015).; Nuredin Ibram, *Comunitatea musulmană din Dobrogea. Repere de viaţă spirituală* (Constanţa: Ex Ponto, 1998); Stelian Dumitrescu, *Comunitatea turco-musulmană din Dobrogea în cadrul statului român (1878-1918)* (Brăila: Editura Istros, 2015).

[14] "Raskol" refers to the seveenteenth-century schism of the Russian Orthodox Church over reforms in matters of liturgy and worship. Those who resisted these reforms are referred to as the "Old Believers" in English and, in Romanian, as "Lipoveni." For more on the history of Russian Old Believers, see Svetlana Moldovan, *Comunitatea ruşilor lipoveni* (Bucharest: Editura Ararat, 2004); Filip Ipatiov, *Ruşii-Lipoveni din România. Studiu de geografie umană* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2001). For more on the Cossacks of Dobruja, see Mihai Tiuliumeanu, *Cazacii din Dobrogea: O istorie uitată* (Bucharest: Editura militară, 2015); Dumitru-Valentin Pătraşcu, *Dobrogea: Evoluţia administrativa* (1878-1913), (Yassy: Institutul European, 2014); Alex P. Arbore, "Aşezările Ruşilor şi Lipovenilor din Dobrogea," *Arhiva Dobrogei* 3, no. 1 (1920), 6.

their weapons in favor of hoes and fishing rods; they would be joined there by ethnic Bulgarians, who settled in the area at the beginning of the nineteenth century, just north of what they had until then called home.[15] Meanwhile, ethnic Germans arrived in Dobruja in the mid-nineteenth century from Bessarabia (now part of the Republic of Moldova) and present-day Ukraine, where the economic incentives promised to them a century earlier by Empress Catherine the Great of Russia had failed to materialize.[16] Making up demographically smaller yet economically significant contingents, Greek, Jewish, and Armenian communities settled in Dobrujan towns beginning in the fifteenth century, attracted there by opportunities for maritime trade with the Ottoman Empire.[17]

True to this history, the Ottoman province of Dobruja remained a virtual frontier at the conclusion of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78. For the time being, the smaller, southern third of this region was absorbed into the pseudo-autonomous Principality of Bulgaria and would constitute a bone of contention that the Romanian state would pick during the Second Balkan War (1912-13), annexing this region from its southern neighbor and holding onto it, with the exception

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[15] For more on Slavic groups in Dobruja, including Orthodox Russians, Ukrainians, and Bulgarians, see: Milan Markov, *Bulgaria's Historical Rights to Dobruja* (Bern: P. Haupt, 1918); Pătrascu, *Dobrogea: Evoluţia administrativa*; C. D. Pariado, *Dobrogea şi dobrogenii* (Constanţa: Tipăria Ovidiu, 1905); Arbore, "Aşezările Ruşilor şi Lipovenilor din Dobrogea."

[16] For more on Germans in the Black Sea region, see Alex P. Arbore, "Coloniile germane din Basarabia şi Dobrogea" ["The German Colonies in Bessarabia and Dobruja"], *Analele Dobrogei* 2, no. 4 (1921): 475.

[17] For other ethno-confessional groups in Dobruja, see: S. Mehedinti, "Observări antropogeografice asupra Dobrogei" ["Anthropological Observations Regarding Dobruja"], *Analele Dobrogei*, no 2 (1920), 193; Constantin Moisil, "Din Istoria Dobrogei," ["From Dobruja's History"], *Arhiva Dobrogei* 3, no. 1 (1920); Allard, *Souvenirs d'orient* (1864); Pătraşcu, *Dobrogea: Evoluţia administrativă (1878-1913)* (2014), 113.

of a brief wartime interlude (1916-18), until the latter permanently re-annexed it in 1940.[18] Meanwhile, the larger, northern two-thirds of Ottoman Dobruja was ceded to the Kingdom of Romania as an unwanted consolation prize for the Russian Empire's annexation of the much more highly coveted region of southern Bessarabia.[19] Unlike the portion of land it now had to return to the tsarist state after having briefly regained possession of it by the treaty that ended the Crimean War (1856), Dobruja was much more ethnically heterogeneous, had far looser ties to the core regions of the Romanian state – the Danubian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia – and was considered by many Romanians to be a geographical and cultural "Other," separated from them both by the Danube River and by the region's four-and-a-half centuries of Ottoman rule.

Yet this "Orient in miniature," unwanted by contemporaries and overlooked by history, would not only grant the Kingdom of Romania its independence from Ottoman suzerainty, gaining it international acknowledgement of its sovereignty (1878) and thus turning it into a *bona fide* nation-state, but would also come to serve as its first experiment in national integration, decisively

[18] For more a more detailed overview on Southern Dobruja in Romanian national history and consciousness, see: Lucian Boia, *Balcic* (2020), chs. 1-5.

[19] Romanian statesmen virtually unanimously opposed this exchange in territories despite the slightly larger surface area of Northern Dobruja as compared to Southern Bessarabia. The primary reason for this was a concern with the territorial inviolability of the Romanian state, which had been encoded in Article 2 of Romania's 1866 Constitution and agreed upon by the tsarist state through the Military Convention signed in April 1877. Furthermore, Southern Bessarabia held a much more firmly-rooted place in the Romanian national imaginary and was a better-developed maritime commercial outlet. See: Constantin Iordachi, "Diplomacy and the Making of a Geopolitical Question: The Romanian-Bulgarian Conflict over Dobrudja, 1878–1947," In Daskalov et al., *Entangled Histories of the Balkans* - Volume Four, Vol. 18 (Brazil: BRILL, 2017), 316.

shaping its understanding and implementation of national citizenship.[20] For, once the ink dried on the hotly-contested Treaty of Berlin (1878), Romania's King Carol I and his cabinet had quite the task ahead of them. The Great Powers' acknowledgement of the Kingdom's sovereignty was from the start contingent on it accepting the concession of Northern Dobruja and revising its citizenship legislation to allow for the naturalization of non-Christians, of which Dobruja had in spades.[21] To

[20] Mihai Eminescu, considered at the time and today to be Romania's "national poet," described Northern Dobruja as "an Orient in miniature" upon his ten-day visit to Constanţa in summer of 1882. Indeed, a bust of Mihai Eminescu was inaugurated in 1934 on the principal corner of the main boardwalk in Constanţa, overlooking the wide expanse of the sea. The inscription, added to the monument by the tellingly-named Cultural League for the Unity of Romanians Everywhere on the 160th anniversary of the poet's death, declares Eminescu the "founder of the Romanian language and national consciousness, chronicler of the Dobrujan land." See: Mihai Eminescu, "Anexarea Dobrogei" ["The Annexation of Dobruja"] in *Opere* [*Works*], (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1989), 10:97, as cited by Constantin Iordachi in "Citizenship, Nation- and State-Building: The Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania, 1878-1913," *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies* (2002), 1.

[21] See: Articles 43-45 of "The Treaty of Berlin, 1878," *Modern History Sourcebook*, Fordham University, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1878berlin.asp.; Despite the large Muslim emigration from Northern Dobruja as a result of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 (estimated by some to have been at around 90,000 people), Islamic Turks and Tatars still held a plurality in the region by the time of its annexation by Romania. Although figures are still debated, the highest estimate of Northern Dobruja's population in 1879 included 134,662 Muslims and 87,900 Christians, while more conservative estimates identified 56,000 Muslims and 54,726 Christians. The Romanian census of 1879 counted Turks and Tatars at 32,033 individuals and Romanians at 31,177, from a total population of 106,943. Figures cited from Constantin Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities: The Making of Romanian Citizenship, c. 1750-1918* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 458. In this same chapter, "The Dobrudjan Question: Constitutional Nationalism and the Assimilation of a Border Region, 1878–1914," Iordachi details the ways in which

top this off, residents of Dobruja had long been accustomed to a largely laissez-faire administration organized along ethno-religious lines by the post-Tanzimat Ottoman *millet* system, which had allowed them a great degree of communal autonomy in their cultural affairs.[22] As a result, Northern Dobruja would test the Kingdom of Romania's resolve to uphold the stipulations of its independence even before King Carol I sailed across the Danube into its borders to declare it Romanian territory, its local conditions clashing with most Romanian statesmen's visions of how their newly independent nation-state ought to have looked and functioned. Romania's acquisition of Northern Dobruja from the Ottoman Empire – and, thirty-five years later, of Southern Dobruja from Bulgaria – was, therefore, inextricable from its national sovereignty and would significantly influence the development of Romanian state-citizenship.

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the annexation of Northern Dobruja challenged Romanian citizenship law and how Romanian statesmen tried to get around the Great Powers' imposed requirement of a citizenship free of religious requirements.

[22] The term "millet" is drawn from the Quran and referred initially to members of the Judaic and Christian faiths. For much of the history of the Ottoman Empire, the term was used loosely to refer to any non-Muslim community, organizing interactions between the imperial state and its non-Muslim subjects on the basis of religious denomination. Following the empire-wide Tanzimat ("Reorganization") reforms of the early nineteenth century, the millet system became simultaneously more inclusive – expanding to grant separate recognition to Catholic and Protestant groups – and less autonomous. As a long-time border province of the Ottoman state, Dobruja operated under the same so-called "system," with communities being governed and organizing themselves, first and foremost, on the basis of religious identification. This would continue after Romania's annexation of the region, as we shall see in Ch. 3. In *Rediscovering the Umma: Muslims in the Balkans Between Nationalism and Transnationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) Ina Merdjanova uses the concept of the "quasi-millet" to describe how new Balkan nations maintained faith-based collective identities and dealt with Muslim minorities as separate, quasi-autonomous entities.

How this unfolded, what its implications were for Romanian nationhood, and why it may add to our understanding of European nation-building more broadly is the subject of this dissertation. Due to the entanglements between Romania's citizenship legislation and its universal schooling policies – and, indeed, between many other nascent nation-states' citizenship and schooling laws – it is a story that can best be told from the wooden benches, crates, and dirt floors of Dobrujan primary schools. Romanian administrators who begrudgingly took up their posts first in Northern Dobruja in 1878 and then in Southern Dobruja in 1913 did not need Eugen Weber (himself a native of Bucharest) to tell them that universal schooling held the key to centralization and assimilation; they had long understood this to be the case, the Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia having legislated compulsory primary education (1861) while still in vassalage to the Ottoman Empire and long before many other European nations took this step – including Weber's France, who waited for Jules Ferry to turn its peasants into Frenchmen during his term as Prime Minister of the early Third Republic (1870-1940).[23] Regional school inspector

[23] For more on how the Romanian Principalities legislated primary schooling in an attempt to foster national unity, see: Mirela–Luminiţa Murgescu*, Între "bunul creştin" şi "bravul roman": Rolul scolii primare in costuirea identitatii nationale romanesti (1831-1878)* [*Between the "Good Christian" and the "Brave Romanian": The Role of Primary School in the Construction of Romanian National Identity, 1831-1878*] (Bucharest: Editura Iaşi, 1999). Murgescu focuses on textbooks and therefore more on the intentions than on the results of primary schooling, which were, until the late nineteenth century, largely disappointing to nationalists who were unable to contend with the many practical roadblocks of education in the Romanian Principalities. Meanwhile, out of Europe's leading "imperial nations," the United Kingdom did not mandate compulsory universal schooling until 1880 and France only in 1881, laws that would also extend to these nations' colonial holdings. For more on the motivations, successes, and pitfalls of universal schooling in (mainland) Third Republic France, see: Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1976).

Ion Bănescu therefore echoed the concern of many a Romanian statesman when he declared, in his rather frantic memorandum to the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction in the fall of 1892, that "the great cause of Romanianism on the right side of the Danube" demanded the establishment of state-funded schools to "give a Romanian figure" to the Dobrujan "ethnographic harlequin."[24]

While this may by now sound like a trite nationalist concern, the conditions that informed it, as well as the schemes it did (and did not) inspire reveal the imperfect nature of the transition from a Europe of empires to one of nation-states. The frenzied redrawing of lines on the map of East Central Europe, whose neatly demarcated colors showed small nation-states progressively chipping away at the frayed edges of large empires, obscured the much more muddled reality of policy and practice, in which old imperial norms and institutions bled into both the more legislatively remote and the tangibly mundane realms of life in newly-minted nation-states. Romanian school inspectors' perennial preoccupation with ensuring that the maps adorning the walls of regional primary schools – especially those walls fortifying particularly well-endowed Dobrujan private schools – matched the diplomatic terms that placed them under Romanian administration is further proof of the precariousness not only of Romania's territorial sovereignty along those borders but also of the practical difficulty of conceptualizing those areas as truly national. Dobrujan primary schools contributed to a large extent to this perception, the ambiguous citizenship status of their pupils, the semi-autonomous nature of their administrations, and the trans-regional nature of their education networks all demonstrating that imperial practices and mentalities were not so much dormant legacies as lived realities.

[24] Romanian National Archives, The Ministry of Public Instruction (MCIP) collection, 71/1892, f. 59v.

This project will therefore use the seemingly unassuming case study of primary schooling in Romanian-administered Dobruja to address questions with implications for European nation-building more broadly: Was cultural homogenization – and its related strain, legal standardization – part of the pathology of nation-states, or was it more so a symptom of diplomatic and geopolitical circumstances? How can imperial subjecthood contribute to our understanding of state-citizenship in nascent nation-states? Was European nation-building in the long nineteenth century simply a sluggish precursor to a more determined, better-endowed Wilsonian postwar world order, or did it represent something qualitatively different? Examining how school censuses defined and classified Dobrujan students' citizenship and nationality, as well as what dynamics governed interactions between the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction and Dobrujan private school administrations before and immediately after the First World War, will assist in formulating these answers.

1.3 Mapping the Terrain

Dobruja constitutes a virtual lacuna in the historiography of Romanian nation-building, remaining in this instance as symbolically cut off from the "mainland" of the Romanian nation-state as it was upon its annexation in 1878. Following in the footsteps of nineteenth-century nationalists, historians writing from within Romania's contemporary borders have long privileged the "historic" regions of Transylvania, Bukovina, and the Bessarabia, and scholars outside

Romanian academia have been close on their trails.[25] Much has been written about these regions' annexations by Romania – euphemistically referred to as "re-incorporations" or "re-stitchings" (*re-alipiri*) in traditional national historiography, an implicit acknowledgement of Romania's purported right over these lands – as well as of the rival ethno-national claims on these areas, and of the cultural and ethnic (sometimes, cleansing) policies implemented there.[26] And, indeed, there

[25] The most renowned international scholarship on Romanian nation-building foregrounds the core regions of the Romania state – Wallachia and Moldavia – and those regions annexed after the First World War, in particular the highly-contested Transylvania, which has garnered the greatest deal of attention from historians both in and outside of Romania. For representative studies, see: *Keith Hitchins, A Nation Affirmed: The Romanian National Movement in Transylvania, 1860-1914* (Bucharest: Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1999), which has had great staying power within Romanian studies internationally despite the fact that its general acceptance of the Romanian national narrative – as evidenced by the book's endorsement by the Romanian Ministry of Culture – has received its share of criticism. More measured works of international acclaim include Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006) and Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea During World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[26] A related trend in the historiography of Romanian territorial expansion by Romanian scholars is to refer to "Greater Romania" as "România întregită" ("Romania made whole"), with a similar implication that the annexations undertaken by Romania, particularly those made in the aftermath of WWI, were justified by Romania's purported historical rights over these regions. For a representative example, see: Svetlana Suveică, *Basarabia în primul deceniu interbelic (1918-1928): Modernizare prin reforme* [*Bessarabia in the First Interwar Decade (1918-1928): Modernization through Reforms*] (Facultatea de Istorie și Geografie, Universitatea Pedagogică de Stat „Ion Creangă", 2010). For a more balanced, internationally-acclaimed example of scholarship on Romania's post-WWI territorial expansion, see Irina Livezeanu's landmark study, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), which details the ways in which Liberal elites in interwar Romania undertook a "cultural offensive" intended to Romanianize the nation's newly-

are good reasons for this focus: these regions fit much more neatly within the cohesive geography and imaginary of the Romanian nation-state and their more hotly-contested nature made them simultaneously bigger prizes and greater liabilities to Romanian statehood in the twentieth century; these regions' histories had also been more closely entwined with those of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, the two regions that would form the core of the Romanian nation-state upon their joint election of one ruler, Alexandru Ioan Cuza, in 1859; and, as rival national claims over these territories intensified after the First World War and their larger Jewish contingents became targets of increasingly vitriolic suspicion and envy, these regions would come to see episodes of ethnic cleansing and genocide that would not air in Dobruja.[27]

By the same token, international literature on European nationalisms and nation-building has similarly relegated Romania to a virtual footnote, its typical designation as an ethno-national state clustering it together with other Balkan and East Central European nations whose intricate trajectories of state-building have likewise been all too frequently dismissed as different iterations of the same ethno-chauvinist project.[28] This, too, may be explained by the overwhelming scholarly

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acquired regions of Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina via extensive education campaigns. Livezeanu did not include either Northern or Southern Dobruja in her analysis and maintained these regions' distinction from the Romanian nation-building project in the preface to the new edition (2018) of her book. See: Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics* (2018), xiv.

[27] See: Waitman Wade Beorn, *The Holocaust in Eastern Europe: At the Epicenter of the Final Solution* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2018).

[28] Representative of this latter scholarship is T. Iván Berend's *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), which argues that East Central European nation-building was distinguished from west European state-building by its emphasis on emotion and cultural homogenization over reason and civic duty. Balkan nations have been especially susceptible to this historical

attention bestowed on Romania's post-1918 state-building – another legacy of interwar nationalism, for which the territorially augmented "Greater Romania" became a subject of nationalist hagiography; a form of state-building that, as I will emphasize in subsequent chapters, was different, yet closely related to, its prewar manifestations.[29] Taken together, these historiographic trends have constituted a logical yet considerable blind spot that has detracted from the larger picture of both Romanian nation-building and (purportedly) post-imperial European state-building writ large.

Taking a cue from two scholars whose recent works have served as corrective bifocals to these tendencies, this project foregrounds the Dobrujan case study to add depth to the usual picture of Romanian nation-building and, by extension, to scholarship highlighting the imperfect transition from a Europe of empires to one of nation-states. Historians Constantin Iordachi and Cătălina Hunt

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"othering," popularized in the (in)famous Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (New York: Vintage books, 1994), whose notion of "ancient ethnic hatreds" in this region influenced Presidents Bill Clinton's and George W. H. Bush's policies towards the Balkans. This "Orientalization" of nation-building in the east of Europe has been widely criticized by scholars of the region without, however, inspiring much in the way of comparative studies that bridge the East-West divide in the historiography of state-building. For a representative critique, see: Maria Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism," *Slavic Review* 64, no. 1 (2005): 140-64.

[29] One notable recent exception to this trend is Roland Clark, *Sectarianism and Renewal in 1920s Romania: The Limits of Orthodoxy and Nation-Building* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), which does include Dobruja, to an extent, in its analysis.; The argument has already been made – for instance, by Livezeanu (1995) – that Romania's wide and eclectic postwar territorial enlargement changed the dynamics of Romanian nation-building. Nevertheless, a paucity of studies on nineteenth-century Romanian state-building has obscured exactly *how* postwar nationalization differed from its prewar iterations.

have both recently demonstrated the importance of Dobruja to understanding turn-of-the-twentieth-century Romanian nation-building and its relationship to the development of state-citizenship in Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Iordachi's comprehensive study on the development of constitutional nationalism in the Romanian lands highlights the important role the hitherto overlooked two Dobrujas played in defining the bounds of Romanian state-citizenship, comparing this case with that of French Algeria, as well as integrating it into the larger story of antisemitic citizenship legislation in continental Europe.[30] Focusing specifically on the Muslim contingent in Northern Dobruja, Hunt adds further dimension to discussions of state-citizenship in the post-Ottoman Balkans by detailing the many ways in which Dobrujan Muslims negotiated their state-citizenship by playing the Romanian and Ottoman states against each other.[31] Like them, I use Dobruja as a jumping-off point to an assessment of how the gradual dissolution of the great Eurasian land empires over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries impacted the subsequent consolidation of the nation-states that slowly pushed them off the map.

As its title suggests, this project also engages with literature on national indifference, which has destabilized nationality as a category of analysis and has revealed the limits of nationalization, particularly in ethno-linguistically diverse areas. This scholarship, pioneered by historians of the

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[30] See: Constantin Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities* (2019), opt. cit. and in particular Ch. 11, "The Dobrudjan Question: Constitutional Nationalism and the Assimilation of a Border Region, 1878– 1914."

[31] See: Cătălina Hunt's dissertation, "Changing Identities at the Fringes of the Late Ottoman Empire: The Muslims of Dobruca, 1839-1914" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015) and related articles. For how Dobrujan Muslims navigated the Romanian primary school system, see: Hunt, "What the Motherland (Patria) Wants is Enlightened, Honest, and Respectable Citizens: Muslim Children in Ottoman and Romanian Schools before the Great War," *Irish Slavonic Studies* 26 (2017): 42-56.

former borderlands of the Habsburg Empire, has persuasively demonstrated that many non-elites, and especially geographically peripheral actors, were often "indifferent" to centralizing nationalist projects in turn-of-the-twentieth-century East Central Europe, defying narratives about primordial ethnic sentiments.[32] In a similar vein, cultural and political histories of those post-imperial lands that would so frequently change hands have shown that individuals in these areas capitalized upon the contested nature of national politics to shape-shift between two or more national affiliations.[33] These "political amphibians" were thus able to maneuver within an unstable geopolitical landscape and exercise a degree of agency over their lives even under the most authoritarian of regimes.[34]

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[32] For pioneering studies on "national indifference" in Habsburg borderlands, see: Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); James Bjork, *Neither German Nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008). Tara Zahra has also written on the topic in her monograph, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), as well as interrogated the usefulness of "national indifference" for nationalism studies in her article, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010): 93-119.

[33] For an example of how a minority group in a new Balkan nation-state instrumentalized their various, fluid, and dynamic cultural and political affiliations, see: Theodora Dragostinova, *Between two motherlands: nationality and emigration among the Greeks of Bulgaria, 1900-1949* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011). For a comparative analysis of the impact border changes had on those living along them, see: Irina Marin, *Contested Frontiers in the Balkans: Ottoman, Hapsburg and Communist Rivalries in Eastern Europe* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

[34] In *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), Chad Bryant uses the term "political amphibians" to refer to those peoples who found themselves having to navigate between Nazi Germanization policies and Czech nationalization efforts during and after the Second World War.

Implicit in these discussions is the idea that regime change – and, in particular, the transition from empires to nations – was, on the ground level, messy and incomplete. This project will make this claim explicitly, using the historiographic backing of national indifference scholarship to more decisively bridge the literature on European land empires with that on European nation-building, as well as to extend the framework of national indifference to the nation-state itself. For in highlighting the indifference of newly-minted citizens to nationalizing projects, the existing literature has tended to overlook new nation-states' own conflicting stances toward nationalization, focusing more on the rhetoric and policies of central actors than on the institutions and practices that accompanied them.

In order to flip the script on this field-changing scholarship, I will bring it into conversation with two separate yet interrelated bodies of literature – one a post-mortem on the "end of [European land] empire," the other an exploration of how maritime empires successfully rebranded themselves as "imperial nations."[35] The first of these focuses on the proverbial "sick men" of Europe, the multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Russian, Ottoman, and, to a lesser extent, Habsburg empires in the long nineteenth century as they implemented reforms intended to increase their competitive advantage over the nations that began to challenge their sovereignty.[36] It

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[35] Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper's chapter "End of Empire?" in their volume *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010) questions the idea that imperial notions and structures disappeared along with empires' erasure off the world map.

[36] Exemplary of the first type of scholarship is Dominic Lieven's "Dilemmas of Empire, 1850-1918" in the *Journal of Contemporary History* (1999), which presents the Russian empire as a "hybrid" between "unequivocally successful" maritime empires like the British empire and continental empires like the Ottoman empire that were "doomed […] to extinction," arguing that the tsarist government's pursuit of russification and centralization is what

elaborates upon these empires' attempts to co-opt the usable aspects of nation-building – legal standardization, universal conscription, mass schooling, the expansion of bureaucracy, unifying cultural symbols – in an effort to stave off territorial decline and political unrest. A flip side of the same coin, scholarship on imperial nations privileges maritime empires and details how, in response to similar threats facing their continental counterparts, imperial powers such as Britain and France rebranded themselves "nations" while still maintaining their overseas colonies and governing their colonial subjects with constitutional regimes of exception that created a *cordon sanitaire* around mainland citizenship.[37]

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ultimately led to its downfall (164, 163, 197). In a conscious attempt to move past this dichotomy, Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen's edited collection, *Comparing Empires: Encounters and Transfers in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012) explores the various ways in which the Habsburg, Russian, Ottoman, and British empires all adopted certain "nationalizing" strategies of rule in a bid to extend their relevance and safeguard their sovereignty – strategies that often ended up having the opposite effect by creating the language and institutional framework that nationalists would use to subvert the imperial powers under whose rule they chafed.

[37] Josep Maria Fradera and Ruth MacKay's *Imperial Nation: Citizens and Subjects in the British, French, Spanish, and American Empires* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018) persuasively details the rhetorical and institutional transformation of Atlantic empires into "imperial nations," as colonizing states sought to reconcile new notions of citizenship in their metropoles with continuing exploitation and subjugation in their colonies. While Fradera focuses on Atlantic empires and distinguishes them from the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg land empires due to the different processes of reform they experienced, Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller's edited collection, *Nationalizing Empires* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015), shows that these land empires underwent similar processes of nationalization, using nationalism as a justification for expansion in the midst of ever-increasing inter-imperial competition and the growing needs of the fiscal-military state. Similarly, Benno Gammerl and Jennifer Walcoff Neuheiser's *Subjects, Citizens and Others Administering Ethnic Heterogeneity in the British and Habsburg Empires, 1867–1918* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2017) details the different ways in which the British and

Taken together, these historiographic trends have gone a long way toward exposing the illusion of a linear progression from imperial to national states; even so, this literature has privileged card-carrying empires over the "Small," geopolitically-contingent powers of Europe whose national contours did not extend over broad swathes of territory yet whose demographic makeup, expansionist ambitions, and scarce resources prompted them to cash in on their intimate familiarity with imperial norms and institutions all the while decrying the "legacies" of empire.[38] This dissertation will spotlight one such nation – the only one decisively carved out of all three major Eurasian land empires at the turn of the twentieth century – to explore how the concept of the "imperial nation" may be used to better explain the transition from land empires to nation-states in turn-of-the-twentieth century East Central Europe. In particular, it will focus less on territorial expansion itself – whether de facto or desired – than on the institutions and practices that

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Habsburg empires each employed the statist principle of ethnic neutrality when attempting to reconcile burgeoning principles of nationality with their "imperial formations."

[38] A notable exception to this trend is Maurus Reinkowski and Gregor Thum's edited collection, *Helpless Imperialists: Imperial Failure, Fear and Radicalization* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), which includes discussions of the frantic imperial ambitions of East Central European nations such as Germany that did not (any longer) boast of colonial holdings but still aspired to lead "civilizing missions" in geographically proximate lands. See Gregor Thum's chapter, "Imperialists in Panic: The Evocation of Empire at Germany's Eastern Frontier around 1900" for the role of Germany's eastern borderlands in German imperial imagination. For a study of Polish "civilizing" missions in the multiethnic borderland of Volhynia in the decades prior to the Second World War, see: Kathryn Clare. Ciancia, "Poland's Wild East: Imagined Landscapes and Everyday Life in the Volhynian Borderlands, 1918-1939," ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2011.

the Romanian nation consciously and pragmatically adopted from its imperial neighbors much as the latter had borrowed from the nation-states around them.[39]

In engaging with conversations with the above-mentioned bodies of literature, this project will also set a place at the table for scholarship on minority rights in modern Europe and the related rise of interwar fascism, which has traditionally portrayed twentieth-century ethnic cleansing as the foregone conclusions of nineteenth-century ethno-national aspirations ascribed to, and professed by, the lesser powers of East Central Europe. In recent decades, newer scholarship has shed the spotlight on the role the European Great Powers (after the Congress of Berlin, 1878) and Wilsonian America (after the Paris Peace Conference, 1919) played in inventing the modern concept of "minorities" and endowing it with a decidedly ethno-national connotation.[40] This literature has thus helpfully revealed the central role played by Western powers in galvanizing the ambitions of East Central European nations toward ethnic cleansing without absolving the latter of their decisive roles as willing and eager co-conspirators. The present project will add to our understanding of these dynamics as well as suggest another avenue of exploration by digging up

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[39] More recent studies on empires' application of certain "nationalizing" policies have cast these more so as pragmatic "modernization" attempts that had their own internal logic and contextual applicability. For an example of this line of argument as applied to the most maligned of Eurasian land empires, see: Yonca Köksal, *The Ottoman Empire in the Tanzimat Era: Provincial Perspectives from Ankara to Edirne* (Milton: Routledge, 2019).

[40] For a comprehensive and balanced evaluation of the role Western powers have played in the creation and elimination of minorities, see: Philipp Terr, *The Dark Side of Nation States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe,* Trans. Charlotte Kreutzmüller (New York: Berghahn, 2014). Terr's work was inspired, in part, by Michael Mann's critique of the idealized concepts of "democracy" and "civilization" writ large, which Mann argues are integral to understanding justifications for the extermination of groups of people across time and space. See: Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

some long-forgotten blueprints drawn up by interwar Romanian nationalists who wished to turn the rhetoric of minority rights to their advantage, inspired by the imperial strategies of rule that had by then been seemingly relegated to the old curiosity shop of history.[41]

1.4 Reconnaissance

The arguments in the following chapters are based on archival research in the Romanian National Archives in Bucharest (ANR), in the Ion Roman Library and the Municipal Branch of the Romanian National Archives in Constanţa (ANJC), and in digital collections of Romanian and, to a limited extent, Bulgarian periodical publications. The nature of these sources naturally privileges state actors and those writers, educators, and politicians with access to public platforms. At the same time, the vast collection of the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction that forms the core of this project's source base amasses letters and petitions from ordinary parents and pupils and also provides rich insight into the experience of the latter through detailed school inspection reports, sample exams, and correspondence between central officials and local school boards. In one instance, a school inspection report from Southern Dobruja includes an annex of maps hand-

[41] More recent scholarship has foregrounded the relationship between the creation of minority rights, imposed after WWI by the Western powers onto the smaller nations of East Central Europe, and the imperial ambitions of the former. For a comparative analysis of how the architects of the post-WWI minorities treaties employed them as a means of codifying sovereignty along racial lines, see: Laura Robson, "Minorities Treaties and Mandatory Regimes: The Racialization of Sovereignty after 1919," *Comparative studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 41, no. 3 (2021): 332–339.

drawn by third-grade students at a Bulgarian school that displayed, quite literally, the lack of practical control the Romanian state had over both the physical and the mental maps in Dobrujan private school classrooms.[42] This project therefore privileges Romanian state actors by default while emphasizing at every turn how their interactions with Dobruja's residents informed the former's policies and practices.

The story will naturally have its gaps, the voices of non-state – and, in particular, of non-ethnically Romanian – actors being not just less audible but also curated by Romanian national archivists who, by definition, worked in service of the Romanian nation. Furthermore, the principal collection upon which this project is based belongs to a branch of government that itself oversaw the genesis of the Romanian national archive even before the de jure birth of the Romanian nation-state, when in 1862 the Ministry of Justice, Confessions, and Public Instruction, newly created after the codification a year earlier of the first Law for Public Instruction (1861) in the Danubian Principalities, was placed in charge of the administration of Wallachia and Moldavia's central archives.[43] Add to this several regional (and world) wars, some urban sieges and bombings, and a repressive communist regime, and the result is an incomplete and heavily skewed archive. Published periodical sources also naturally suffer from their own holes and biases. While, for instance, *Revista generală a educaţiei* (*The General Journal of Education*) was founded under the patronship of Romania's leading Liberal Minister of Public Instruction, Spiru Haret, the Bulgarian newspaper *Dobrudjanski glas* (*Dobrujan Voice*), which we will find advocating for Southern

[42] See Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

[43] "Istoricul ANR" ["History of the ANR"], *Arhivele Naţionale ale României*, Accessed 29 Sept. 2022: http://arhivelenationale.ro/site/despre_anr/istoricul-anr/

Dobruja's return to the Kingdom (or Tsardom, as its officials referred to it) of Bulgaria after the First World War, had its own clearly partisan agenda.

Without losing sight of these challenges, the following chapters will aim to quiet the statist fervor drowning out the voices of ordinary, non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans and bring their interlocutors as much as possible to the foreground. It will do so both by incorporating these actors' own words into its narrative, as well as by reading state reports about these individuals and groups against the grain, being sensitive to how the context of their interactions – one in which central actors did not hold as much sway as they would have liked but in which Dobrujans were at a clear disadvantage – guided their rhetoric and vocabulary. Indeed, these exchanges often seemed to follow a predetermined script, both sides "speaking national" while putting forth often competing agendas, a fact that in itself exposes the consciously performative nature of nation-building.[44] While much work remains to be done to acknowledge and analyze the experiences of non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans through archival work in more regional and local archives within Romania and neighboring states, this project uses the sources at its disposal to increase the awareness – raised by skilled regional historians, yet still overlooked by national and international historiography – of these actors and their impact on nation-building along the fading contours of the great Eurasian land empires.

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[44] Inspired by Stephen Kotkin's notion of "Speaking Bolshevik" – using official Soviet parlance to integrate into Soviet society – Cătălina Hunt employs the concept of "speaking national" to describe Dobrujan Muslims' invocation of the nation as a means of social integration into the Romanian state. See: Stephen Kotkin, "Speaking Bolshevik" in *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 198-237.; Hunt, "'Speaking National' in Dobruca: Muslim Adaptation to Romanian National Policies during the Long Nineteenth Century," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* LII/1-4 (2014): 145-69.

1.5 Itinerary

The chapters to follow are organized chronologically. They begin with the first efforts of the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction to instrumentalize state-citizenship in order to extend its reach over Dobrujan schoolchildren in the aftermath of the Treaty of Berlin (1878) and end with a look at "Greater" Romania's invocation of minority rights in its increasingly determined postwar efforts to restrict the cultural life of the non-ethnically Romanian citizens living in its annexed territories.

Ch. 1, "National Subjects: Citizenship, National 'Speak,' and Primary Schooling in Northern Dobruja, 1878-1913," details the constitutional regime of exception employed by the Romanian state in Northern Dobruja and highlights the entanglements between Romania's citizenship legislation and its universal schooling policy. It argues that, similarly to its Russian imperial neighbor, the Romanian state employed an ambiguous and manipulable rights regime that allowed it a degree of flexibility and control in shaping the cultural life of its new citizen-subjects.

Ch. 2, "The Educational Harlequin: Imperial Legacies in Northern Dobrujan Primary Schooling Institutions, 1878-1916," highlights how Romania's ambiguous citizenship legislation was reflected and reinforced in its primary schooling system, which was characterized by differentiation and flexibility. It argues that, while these characteristics – and the existing schooling infrastructure inherited and adapted from the Ottoman Empire – permitted Romanian officials to make inroads into non-ethnically Romanian communities via private schools that it incorporated into its education bureaucracy but did not fund, they also allowed Dobrujan communities to evade central directives by manipulating institutional labels.

Ch. 3, "Schooling across Borders: Millet Mentalities, National Amphibians, and Imperial Networks in Northern Dobruja, 1878-1914," further elaborates upon the Romanian state's use and

adaptation of imperial strategies of rule, focusing on its uncodified use of religious elites as intermediaries between itself and its non-ethnically Romanian citizen-subjects. It also traces Dobrujans' trans-regional networks, highlighting both the opportunities and the challenges these presented the Romanian state, and argues that these networks provided a deterrent to excessively oppressive Romanian cultural policies in Dobruja.

Ch. 4, "Nesting Imperial Legacies: Assimilating Schooling in Southern Dobruja, 1913-1920" details how the Romanian state's annexation of Southern Dobruja from Bulgaria in 1913, in conjunction with this region's particular internal dynamics and the First World War's impact on regional geopolitics and minority rights, caused Romanian officials to reassess their approach to minority schooling in its annexed territories. It argues that primary schooling in Southern Dobruja presented the new Romanian administration with an amalgam of overlapping imperial and national legacies that made cultural assimilation seem both a more desirable and a more difficult policy to undertake than in Northern Dobruja.

Ch. 5, "Empire after Empire: Nationalism, Irredentism, and the Rhetoric of Minority Rights, 1913-1921" flags the radicalization the regional wars inaugurated in Romanian assimilationist policies while continuing to emphasize the impact that imperial strategies of rule and the legacy of the Congress of Berlin had on postwar Romanian nation-building. It argues that the Romanian state continued to pursue a modified differentiated rule in cultural matters even as it became more intent on implementing an aggressive policy of Romanianization. Using the case study of schooling in the newly-annexed Bessarabia region, this chapter shows that the Romanian state sought to do so, in part, by turning the Wilsonian rhetoric of minority rights on its head and positioning itself as neutral arbiter between competing ethno-confessional groups.

The concluding chapter provides a synopsis of the project's central arguments and presents avenues for future research.

2.0 National Subjects: Citizenship, National "Speak," and Primary Schooling in Northern Dobruja, 1878-1913

In the brisk April weather during the Easter holiday of 1894, municipal administrators appointed by Constanţa's city hall set about knocking on doors to undertake a census of the county's school-aged children.[45] The census-takers began their count in the heart of Constanţa, right off of Ovid Piazza, on Marcus Aurelius Street. Likely feeling the sting of the salty spring breeze wafting up from the Black Sea – which was, quite literally, a stone's throw away – they walked along modest cobble-stoned streets and through unpaved alleyways to reach self-segregated neighborhoods, each of which housed its own microcosm of south-eastern Europe's variegated peoples. Counting themselves lucky if they were able to communicate with the children's parents, and even more so if they managed to acquire a child's baptismal records, these weary municipal employees had to use their best judgment when filling out the columns on the sprawling, hand-drawn charts they had been charged with completing.

Walking from home to home, they interrogated parents from diverse backgrounds, trying to parcel through the vast array of tongues that greeted them. Many of the parents were able to converse in Romanian – the official language of their state for the last sixteen years – while others had their children act as intermediaries, putting to use the language skills they were legally obligated to acquire in the city's primary schools. Some of them worked in trades, as painters, cobblers, butchers, or bricklayers, while others were state functionaries, soldiers, merchants, and

[45] Direcția Județeană a Arhivelor Naționale Constanţa (ANRC), Primăria Constanţa 35/1894, ff. 76-93: Census of all school-aged children in the city of Constanţa in the year 1894.

café owners. A few were mullahs and priests. Their children had for the most part been born during the 1880s, right after Dobruja had been annexed, some of them in Constanţa, but many others in other places. The baptismal records available listed some towns and villages within Dobruja, but even more were located in Romania's two core regions, Wallachia and Moldavia, and outside of Romania's borders – places as distinct (and inconsistently labeled) as Constantinople, Sofia, Greece, and Transylvania (a region coveted by Romanian nationalists that was still, for the time being, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). From this unreliable documentation, the census-takers were instructed to parcel out what each child's civil status was in order to know which box to tick – "Romanian" or "foreigner" – under an unlabeled section of the census tucked between the far more extensive columns designated "Religion" and "Vaccination."

Why this visually unassuming, bifurcated column was key to the census-takers' entire mission is the subject of this chapter. Just as map-makers and administrators followed on the heels of imperial armies in conquered territories, so school inspectors appeared in Dobruja after its annexation in 1878, dispatched by Romania's Ministry of Public Instruction to "give a Romanian figure to the "ethnographic harlequin" that was the freshly post-Ottoman borderland region of Northern Dobruja.[46] While on the surface an exercise in national assimilation, this was, at its inception, more so an attempt to assert control and extract duties than to turn Dobrujans into Romanians.[47] For, as much as the newly-independent Romanian state (1878) sought to present

[46] Arhivele Naţionale ale României (ANR), Ministerul Cultelor şi Instrucţiunii Publice (MCIP) 71/1892, f. 59v: Report by the regional state inspector of Dobruja regarding the state of rural instruction in the region and the need to establish more public schools in order to counter foreign education.

[47] Eugen Weber's seminal *Peasants into Frenchmen* (1976) designates the modernization schemes undertaken in Third Republic France as a form of "colonization" by the urban center of the rural peripheries. Constantin Iordachi describes

itself as a bona fide nation, its acquisition of Dobruja compelled it to cling a little longer to the imperial strategies of rule to which it had, until recently, itself been subjected. Dobruja's multi-confessional, multi-ethnic population cast even more divisions within the already deeply fissured Romanian ruling elite and made it more difficult to determine the boundaries, duties, and rights to be ascribed to Romanian citizenship.

This chapter will explore the divisions and contradictions within Romanian nation-building that were exacerbated by Northern Dobruja's annexation and argue that primary schooling became a crucial tool for both state and non-state actors in defining and instrumentalizing Romanian citizenship. Long assumed to have been a critical means of cultural assimilation in nascent nation-states, primary schooling has not been fully considered for its complex and multi-faceted relationship to citizenship-formation.[48] As this chapter will show, in the Romanian case, mass

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Romania's administration of Dobruja in a similar fashion, as an exercise in "internal colonialism." See: Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976) and Constantin Iordachi, "Citizenship, Nation-and State-Building: The Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania, 1878-1913," *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies* (2002): 1-68.

[48] Scholarship on mass education has aptly demonstrated the ways in which new nation-states, in particular, employed education, and in particular universal primary schooling, as a way of shaping the masses along the lines of the official national culture, as well as of creating literate and loyal citizen-soldiers. For examples of such scholarship in the Romanian and broader East Central Europe region, see: Mirela–Luminiţa Murgescu, *Între 'bunul creştin' şi 'bravul roman': Rolul şcolii primare în construirea identitâţii naţionale româneşti* [*Between the "Good Christian" and the "Brave Romanian": The Role of Primary School in the Construction of Romanian National Identity*] (Yassy: Editura A '92: 1999); Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture : Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006); Laurence Brockliss and Nicola Sheldon, eds. *Mass Education and the Limits of State-Building, c. 1870-1930* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

education served as a testing ground for the development and articulation of state-citizenship through exchange and negotiation between state and non-state actors. Primary schooling and its yearly censuses allowed state officials to experiment with the boundaries of citizenship while inadvertently giving Dobrujan actors opportunities to exert some level of control over the process. In so doing, primary schooling became an institution that did not simply reflect conceptions of citizenship emanating from Bucharest, but instead actively shaped them. While this institution was advertised by some ardent nationalist politicians as a means of culturally assimilating Dobrujan residents, its primary function was more rudimentary – to classify and order Dobrujans as a way of projecting centralized control over a historically decentralized borderland province and of extracting duties from former imperial subjects. In the process of these negotiations between diverse and divergent sets of central and local actors, primary schooling in Northern Dobruja shaped the ideological and practical implications of Romanian state-citizenship, which blurred the lines between national citizenship and imperial subjecthood.

From its annexation by the Romanian state until the shifting geopolitical circumstances of the Balkan Wars, Northern Dobruja comfortably straddled old imperial models and new national ones. In a similar yet inverse way to what literature on "imperial nations" has so far shown, this case demonstrates that this distinction is more so one of degree than of kind, with "national indifference" – understood here as a pragmatic, ambiguous, and seemingly contradictory approach to nationalism – being as much a feature of nation-states themselves as it was of their citizenry.[49] It shows that small powers, as much as "Great" ones, co-opted imperial models, sometimes intentionally, oftentimes by necessity, adapting them to local and regional conditions unsuitable

[49] See footnotes 36 and 31 in this dissertation's introductory chapter.

to homogenization and centralization. Through the institution of primary schooling and its guiding legislation, which was intimately intertwined with Romanian constitutional law, state and Dobrujan actors translated an imperial social contract, based on an uneven yet dynamic exchange of obligations and privileges, into the language of national citizenship.

2.1 Romania's Wild East

For Romania's statesmen, already divided among increasingly fractured political parties, the conditions, circumstances, and implications of Northern Dobruja's annexation raised the stakes of mass education for nation-building while simultaneously making it more difficult to define and shape its contours. As the pressure exerted on Romania from the Great Powers to accept the terms of the Treaty of Berlin increased, some of the nation's political elite undertook a swift pivot in favor of annexation, arguing that, far from placing Romania more firmly within "the Orient," Northern Dobruja – now hailed as the ancient cradle of Romanian Latinity – would make the new nation-state guardian of west European interests in the Balkans. By granting it access to the Black Sea and control over the Danube Delta, Northern Dobruja would make Romania the first line of defense against Russian interests in the region and serve as peacekeeper in Southeastern Europe.[50] Yet, while some have rightly identified this PR campaign as one built upon the premise that the Romanian state would undertake a quaintly European "civilizing mission" at the mouths of the

[50] This was the argument put forth by Romanian statesman Mihail Kogălniceanu. See: Iordachi, "Citizenship, Nation- and State-Building" (2002), p. 15.

Danube, Northern Dobruja's local conditions reduced such plans to stilted and often confused efforts at bureaucratization.[51]

From the outset, the region's demographic mosaic clashed with the historical narratives of Romanian Latinity and Christian Orthodoxy embraced by most leading statesmen and tested the resolve of those who wished to turn Romania firmly westward in its cultural and political life. When Romanian troops marched into Northern Dobruja, they found a patchwork of ethnicities and creeds, of which ethnic Romanians made up less than a third (27.5%).[52] The local Muslim population, composed of Anatolian Turks and Crimean Tatars, had, despite its recent devastation, a plurality (30.2%) in the region. Bulgarian-speakers were the third largest contingent after ethnic Romanians, accounting for just under one-fifth of Dobrujan residents, and the other groups listed on Romania's 1880 census – Greeks, Jews, Germans, and Armenians – each made up less than 5% of Dobruja's population; they had, however, an outsized impact as a result of their engagement in commerce. The remaining 12.5% was a mixture of Italians, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Dutch, Danes, Albanians, Serbs, Montenegrins, Poles, and Egyptians. These statistics, based on imperfect

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[51] See: Iordachi, "Citizenship, Nation-and State-Building" (2002).

[52] The census performed by the Romanian state in Dobrogea in 1880, less than two years after Romania gained Dobrogea in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78, indicates the following demographic information that the region had 147,247 inhabitants, of which 44,354 (30.2%) were "Turks" and "Tatars," 40,449 (27.5%) "Romanian," 29,440 (19.9%) "Bulgarian," 9,683 (4.5%) "Greek," 3,147 (2.7%) "Jews," 3,030 (2.6%) "German," 971 (0.7%) "Armenian," and 12.5% "other." I collected this data from Robert Stanciugel and Liliana Monica Balasa, *Dobrogea in secolule VII-XIX* [*Dobruja in the 17th-19th Centuries*] (Bucharest, 2005), 37, as cited in Dumitru-Valentin Pătrașcu, *Dobrogea: Evoluţia administrativă* (1878-1913) [*Dobruja: Administrative Evolution (1878-1913)*] (Yassy: Institutul European, 2014), 113.

methods and hotly contested over the years, should be taken much like Dobrujans took King Carol I's promise to respect and protect all ethnicities and confessions in Dobruja equally – with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, the picture that emerges is one in which ethnic Romanians, even with padded numbers, made up less than one third of Dobruja's total population. This in spite of the massive Muslim emigration during the war, which has been estimated by some to have amounted to 90,000 people.[53] Northern Dobruja was, therefore, a veritable "ethnographic harlequin" with no one dominating color in its quilted uniform, its patches so diverse that one would be hard-pressed to find its equal in another corner of the European subcontinent at the time.

The school inspectors that soon followed found a comparative paucity of established Romanian schools, with most ethnically Romanian children learning to read in makeshift classrooms held in local churches, many of them by ethnically Romanian *mocani* (shepherds) from Transylvania who came of their own accord in the last decades of Ottoman rule to nationalize Dobruja's Romanians.[54] The region's Muslims, meanwhile, had some Quran and primary schools, usually attached to mosques. As for Dobruja's other ethno-confessional groups, information is even harder to come by. Early childhood education for children in Ottoman Dobruja seems to have been sparse in urban areas and largely nonexistent in rural ones. This was likely due to Dobruja's distance from Istanbul, its low population density, and the agricultural work in which most rural Dobrujans engaged, which required children's helping hands throughout the growing season – an

[53] Iordachi, "Citizenship, Nation-and State-Building" (2002), 8. While some returned, Northern Dobruja's Muslim population decreased substantially after Romania's annexation of the region.

[54] Constantin Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities: The Making of Romanian Citizenship, C. 1750-1918* (Boston: BRILL, 2019), 484.

issue that would continue to plague rural schooling in Dobruja throughout the first decades of Romanian administration.

The problems raised by the region's demographic heterogeneity and lack of schooling infrastructure were compounded by Dobruja's paucity of main roads and anemic railway system, which made travel and communication between its towns and villages difficult. Most inhabitants of Dobruja got by on foot or via horse-drawn buggy on dirt roads that never brought them too far from their own doorsteps. Those living in the region's port cities were a bit more mobile, although they moved more across the surfaces of the Black Sea and the Danube than along land. And who could blame them when, at the time of annexation, Dobruja had only one railway line, measuring across its waistline from the port city of Constanţa to the Danubian town of Cernavodă. A vestige of the Ottoman Empire's alliance with the British Empire in the Crimean War (1853-56), the railway was built by the English engineering firm Liddell, Gordon, and Berkley between 1857 and 1860, making it the first completed railway line in the Ottoman Empire.[55] Nevertheless, despite the benefits this brought to trade in the region – especially for English investors – the railway line was not sufficient for establishing administrative continuity between Northern Dobruja and the core regions of Wallachia and Moldavia.

Northern Dobruja, then, presented the Romanian nation with roadblocks similar to those faced by imperial powers seeking to govern vast and diverse territories; at the same time, Romania's decidedly fractured political landscape made centralization particularly elusive. Like the land empires from whose borders it sought to carve its own, the Romanian nation-state had to

[55] Constantin Ardeleanu, "Efectele construirii căii ferate Cernavodă – Constanţa asupra navigaţiei dunărene (1859-1860), *Analele Universităţii Ovidius Constanţa*, seria "Istorie," t. III (2006), 41-54.

contend with the annexation and administration of a territory remote from its center both by virtue of its geography and infrastructure and of its demographic and institutional profile. While the scale of this endeavor was, admittedly, much smaller, Romania's lack of a unified legislature made it vexingly difficult to translate central directives into centralized control. Although the Romanian nation was designed as a constitutional monarchy with a sovereign leader, Romanian nation-building in the second half of the nineteenth century was defined by lack of legislative consensus, with the competing and increasingly fractured Liberal and Conservative parties disagreeing, sometimes fundamentally, on the general contours of the germinal nation.[56] Paralleling the acrimonious debates between Westernizers and Slavophiles in tsarist Russia, the dynamic Liberal and Conservative parties in the Romanian Principalities argued bitterly about not just politics and economics, but also about the ethno-cultural features of the nation they sought to build, with the former championing Romanian Latinity and west European models and the latter advocating for a whole-hearted embrace of Eastern Orthodoxy and autochthonous institutions.[57] Although the two poles grew closer by the time Romania unified and gained its independence in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, their fundamental differences prompted ongoing stalemates and frequent changes within Romania's legislature and civil service.

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[56] For an overview of these political controversies, see Keith Hitchins, *The Romanians, 1774-1866* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

[57] "Slavophiles" and "Westernizers" denote two oppositional intellectual camps in the mid-nineteenth-century tsarist state. While the former believed that the empire ought to be governed according to autochthonous traditions, based around Christian Orthodoxy and peasant mores, the latter saw Western models of modernization and constitutionalism as the key to Russia's future. See: Susanna Rabow-Edling, "Introduction" in *Slavophile Thought and the Politics of Cultural Nationalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006).

Thus, Foreign Minister Mihail Kogălniceanu's declaration to Parliament that "the only works" the Romanian state would undertake in Northern Dobruja pending the latter's annexation would be "schools and roads" highlighted a civilizing mission about which most statesmen could agree; yet it obscured the complications plaguing its undertaking.[58] Northern Dobruja's local conditions and the Romanian legislature's ideological fractures made it difficult for the Romanian state to follow in the footsteps of its most frequently invoked western models – France and Germany – whose internal (mainland) heterogeneity was by that point more easily tempered by greater cultural cohesion and stronger, more unified central governments.[59] In Northern Dobruja, which had been annexed as a spoil of war and whose citizens were automatically naturalized without a referendum, these factors led to the perpetuation of imperial practices and institutions by a Romanian administration whose polarized and frequently changing members could agree on little else than the importance of protecting (and expanding) the nation's territorial sovereignty.

2.2 National Subjects

When Romania's sovereign sailed across the Danube into Northern Dobruja in November 1878, he declared all of its residents citizens of the Romanian nation. On the surface a symbolic

[58] Mihail Kogălniceanu, as cited in Iordachi, "Citizenship, Nation-and State-Building" (2002), 13.

[59] These nation-states themselves faced great challenges on this front, as Eugen Weber's acclaimed *Peasants into Frenchmen* (1976) aptly demonstrates. Nevertheless, despite the internal heterogeneity within these nations – particularly as regarded federalism, regional differences, and the urban-rural divide – their greater levels of ethno-confessional homogeneity removed some of the roadblocks faced by Romanian administrators in Dobruja.

fusion of Northern Dobruja's population to the former Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, by which Dobrujans became "sons of Romania" privy to equal rights under the nation's constitution, the accompanying legislation stripped Dobruja's residents of choice and subjected them to an extraconstitutional regime of exception that limited this citizenship to "duties without rights."[60] The 1880 *Law for the Organization of Dobruja*, also known as "Dobruja's Constitution" – reflecting this region's administrative separation from the core regions of the Romanian state – created a local form of citizenship whereby residents of Northern Dobruja at the time of annexation would have their economic and political participation limited to their regional counties for an unspecified transition period, while their duties would be, from the start, the same as those expected of full citizens.[61] The annexation of Northern Dobruja would significantly complicate Romanian legislators' already contradictory and vaguely-defined notions of state-citizenship and national belonging, making it simultaneously more pressing and more difficult to reach consensus about what and who a "Romanian" would be and what this would mean for one's relationship to the newly-independent nation-state.

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[60] For more on Carol I's proclamation, see: C. Brătescu and I. Georgescu, eds. *Dobrogea: Cincizeci de ani de viaţă românească, 1878-1928* [*Dobruja: Fifty years of Romanian Life, 1878-1928*] (Bucharest: Cultura Naţională, 1928), 609; Constantin Iordachi describes the status of the Jewish population in the nascent Romanian state as one of "duties without rights." He describes the extraconstitutional status of Dobrujans in a similar fashion. See: Iordachi, "Duties without Rights: Jews under Constitutional Nationalism, 1879–1913," in *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities* (2019), 352-399.

[61] Ion Roman, *Dobrogea şi drepturile politice ale locuitorilor ei* [*Dobruja and the Political Rights of Her Inhabitants*] (Constanţa: Ovidiu, 1905), 25-26.

As we saw in the introductory chapter, the stipulations of the Congress of Berlin (1878) made international recognition of Romania's sovereignty contingent on the modification of its Constitution to allow for the naturalization of its non-Christian inhabitants. This served to further divide its fractured legislature, many of whose members bitterly fought back on the grounds that this would lead to the "civic baptism" of Romania's entire Jewish population – the ethno-confessional minority that posed the largest threat in the eyes of Romanian statesmen, who saw the nation's Jewish population as the greatest economic competitors to ethnic Romanians.[62] Many a Romanian statesman resented the Great Powers' intervention in their national affairs and saw the Treaty of Berlin as an attack on Romania's sovereignty, throwing a wrench both in their plans for national integration and in their conception of what "Romanianness" entailed. What little Romania's political elite could agree on was that the forced cession of southern Bessarabia to the tsarist state, to whose success in the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War Romania had contributed, violated the nation's territorial sovereignty and the pre-war agreements guaranteeing its integrity.[63] The consolation prize of Northern Dobruja, with its plurality of Muslim inhabitants and its four centuries of Ottoman rule, served the Great Powers' interests of staving off Russian influence in the southern Black Sea region yet it could not make up for the loss of an area that many of Romania's political elite considered to be an integral component of their nation's ethno-territorial

[62] Deputy Nicolae Blaremberg, Sept. 4, 1879, as quoted in Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities* (2019), 460. See: Iordachi, "Duties without Rights" in *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities* (2019), 352-399.

[63] For an overview of the political discussions surrounding Northern Dobruja's annexation, see Iordachi, "Citizenship, Nation-and State-Building" (2002), 9-16.

heritage.[64] That the Treaty of Berlin also made Romania's independence contingent on its no longer discriminating against the nation's growing numbers of non-Christian inhabitants added insult to injury for an already outraged Romanian legislature, who saw Romania's sovereignty being doubly violated, from a territorial and a constitutional perspective.[65] As we will see in later chapters, this set the stage for international conflicts regarding minority rights and national self-determination in East Central Europe following the First World War.

The heated debates that ensued within Romania's legislature after the Congress of Berlin were therefore fueled both by existing internal divisions and resentment at novel external factors, and ultimately concluded with vaguely worded amendments to Article 7 of Romania's Constitution, which made national citizenship more inclusive while leaving plenty of room for semantic interpretation. Besides making provisions for the naturalization of non-Christians through a combination of *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* principles, the revised 1879 Constitution also differentiated between a "Romanian by birth" and one who acquired "the quality of being a Romanian" – without, however, defining what this "quality" entailed. By using "citizen" and "Romanian" interchangeably at times and differentiating between the two at others, the revised Constitution signaled its signatories' inability to reach consensus about the relationship between nationality and citizenship, as well as their efforts to retain a degree of control over a core facet of their national sovereignty upon which the Great Powers had infringed. Part product of a fractured legislature, part pragmatism in the face of international pressure that conflicted with national

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[64] Even today, it is quite common to see graffiti on bridges in Dobruja, and throughout other parts of Romania, with the words: "Basarabia e Romania" ("Bessarabia is Romania").

[65] See: Articles 43-45 of "The Treaty of Berlin, 1878," *Modern History Sourcebook*, Fordham University, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/mod/1878berlin.asp.

public opinion, this legislative ambiguity allowed for experimentation with the form and substance of state-citizenship in the germinal nation-state.

In Northern Dobruja, with its multiethnic, multi-confessional, majority non-Romanian population, the blurry contours of Romanian state-citizenship thus perpetuated Dobrujans' status as "political amphibians," able to navigate between different, often conflicting affiliations; at the same time, it allowed the Romanian state more flexibility in deciding who could qualify for rights and who for duties.[66] While Art. 3 of the *Law Concerning Dobruja's Administrative Organization* (1880) stated that "all inhabitants of Dobruja who on April 11, 1877 were Ottoman citizens, had become Romanian citizens," determining former civil status was no small task in the aftermath of war and with new borders making travel and communication between Dobrujans and the Ottoman state more difficult to undertake.[67] Adding to these practical difficulties was some Dobrujans' decision to reject Romanian citizenship in favor of their Ottoman subjecthood, as well as the indeterminate status of those who arrived in Dobruja after annexation and of these latter's children.[68] Even those born in Northern Dobruja immediately after annexation posed challenges,

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[66] In *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), Chad Bryant uses the term "political amphibians" to refer to those peoples who found themselves having to navigate between Nazi Germanization policies and Czech nationalization efforts during and after the Second World War.

[67] Art. 3, "Lege pentru organizarea Dobrogei," in C. Hamangiu, *Codul general al României*, 1856-1907, v. 3 (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Leon Alcalay), 266.

[68] Dobruja's Muslims felt this challenge acutely. For more on their negotiation between Romanian national citizenship and Ottoman imperial subjecthood in the aftermath of 1878, see: Cătălina Hunt, "Speaking National in Dobruca: Muslim Adaptation to Romanian Policies between 1878 and 1914," *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, 1–4, (2014): 145–169.

as the Romanian state did not begin distributing civil status documents in this region until two years later.[69]

The uncodified solution Romania's legislature reached as a result of this jumbled state of affairs was to employ an intermediary, umbrella category of state-citizenship that would account for all those who were not "foreign subjects" belonging to another state, but who could also not decisively receive the label of "Romanian citizen." Children born on Romanian soil to foreign subjects or permanent residents who had arrived there after Northern Dobruja's annexation, as well as Dobrujan residents whose state-citizenship could not be clearly determined, all came to be unofficially referred to as "Romanian subjects," whose legally ambiguous status could be manipulated by Dobrujan and state actors alike. A permanent resident privy to a Romanian passport but lacking all citizenship rights, the Romanian subject could be subjected to the duties of citizenship without benefitting from most of the rights associated with it.[70] Absent from the language of Article 7 of the revised 1879 Constitution, the loose category of "Romanian subject" both semantically and practically reflected the continuity of imperial norms and practices in national contexts by the end of the nineteenth century, demonstrating new, composite nation-

[69] ANR, MCIP 573/1894, f. 5: The birth certificate of a Dobrujan child whose father was seeking admission to a boarding school could not be procured as the boy was born in the (since dissolved) county of New Silistra in 1878 in Northern Dobruja and the Romanian state did not, at that point, distribute civil status documents, enforcing these in the region only after April 1st, 1879.

[70] ANR, MCIP 2449/1915, f. 7: Letter from the director of Constanţa's Armenian school to the Ministry indicating that Dobruja has "three categories of citizens" – Romanian citizens, Romanian subjects, and foreign subjects – and asking if the children of Romanian subjects – i.e. of residents who were granted Romanian passports but not citizenship – are subject to the law requiring the passing of an annual exam for private school students.

states' inability to clearly define and identify their citizenry and, by extension, their citizenship dogma and legislation. Taken in conjunction with Northern Dobruja's constitutional regime of exception, the vague, uncodified category of "Romanian subject" points to the resilience of imperial strategies of rule in composite nation-states and to the lack of a clearly defined – and an even more loosely enforced – strategy of national assimilation.

An "imperial nation" on a smaller scale, the newly-independent Romanian state was not, after all, that qualitatively different from the great land empires around it, whose governing bodies adopted some of the principles of citizenship in the nineteenth century without, however, ceding their imperial understanding of civil status as a dynamic and multilayered relationship between the state and its subjects based on an uneven, and mutable, exchange of duties and obligations. It is perhaps no coincidence that the approach to citizenship adopted by Romania's legislature in the aftermath of Northern Dobruja's annexation resembled in its function that of the Ottoman Empire, whose 1869 Nationality Law, often misunderstood as a citizenship law, in fact "support[ed] various shades of meaning: nationality, subjecthood, affiliation, allegiance, 'under the sovereignty of.'"[71] This made it so that "everyone was either an actual or a potential Ottoman" and, as such, could be conscripted, taxed, and obligated to attend primary schools.[72] Rather than serving to extend sweeping rights to former imperial subjects, "liberal," universalizing citizenship, loosely defined and broadly applied, thus became another means of expanding the pool of individuals subjected to duties by an aspiring fiscal-military state seeking to defend its sovereignty.

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[71] Will Hanley, "What Ottoman Nationality Was and Was Not," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 3, no. 2 (2016), 278.

[72] A. Ebru Akcasu, "Nation and Migration in Late-Ottoman Spheres of (Legal) Belonging: A Comparative Look at Laws on Nationality," *Nationalities Papers* 49, no. 6 (2021), 1128.

2.3 Nationality by Any Other Name

Itself a (seemingly) universalizing institution, primary schooling became a cornerstone of the development and articulation of Romanian state-citizenship, actively shaping how the Romanian state would "see" and define its citizenry.[73] Like a typical nation-state of its time, the newly independent Kingdom of Romania increasingly directed its efforts toward educating its youngest citizens to respect and ably undertake their duties toward the nation. However, unlike most nation-states, it had to contend with highly concentrated, ethno-confessionally diverse populations whose geographic proximity to its center – as well as to precarious borders – only made the challenges they posed more difficult to ignore. In this context, primary schooling became a means of not only forming, but also of "seeing," the populations of Romania's first annexed territory. Similarly to the composite land empires surrounding it, the "imperial nation" of Romania sought to find ways to track ethnicity and its accompanying, and increasingly vexing, sister concept of nationality without explicitly recognizing, and therefore reifying, difference within its borders. The comprehensive but inconspicuous school censuses and rosters closely administered and inspected by Ministry of Public Instruction personnel in Northern Dobruja provided the Romanian state with just such a means.

When Dobruja's residents acquired Romanian citizenship in the spring of 1877, they also, by default, acquired the right – and duty – to attend primary school. Like all other citizens of the Romanian nation-state, residents of Dobruja at the time of annexation had to comply with Article

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[73] See: James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999). Scott provides a schema of the various tools states have employed in their attempts to make their populations "legible" and, by extension, easier to shape and oversee.

31 of the *Law Regarding Public Instruction* (1864), which declared primary schooling "mandatory and free for children of both sexes between the ages of 8 and 12."[74] Fifteen years later, the sweeping education reforms of Liberal-turned-Conservative Minister of Public Instruction Take Ionescu slightly, but tellingly, amended the law in response to the demographic and legislative changes brought about by Northern Dobruja's annexation, specifying that primary schooling would henceforth be "mandatory and free *for Romanians*" (emphasis mine). Whereas the original law for public instruction made primary schooling mandatory with the implicit understanding of its applicability to all children regardless of legal status, the revised 1893 *Law Regarding Primary and Pedagogical Schooling* decisively bound primary schooling to state-citizenship, plainly stating that "the parents and guardians of children of *Romanian citizens* [were] required to send them to *public* primary school" between the ages of 7 and 14 (emphasis added).[75] This change of a few words served both to crystalize public primary school attendance as a duty of Romanian citizenship and to drastically reduce the number and type of students private primary schools could admit, emphasizing a *de jure* divide between a public primary education for citizens and a private one for non-citizens.[76]

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[74] Art. 31, "Legea instrucţiunei din 1864" in Gabriela Alecu et al., *Antologia legilor învăţământului din România* (Bucharest: Institutul de Ştiinţe ale Educaţiei, 2004), 26. file:///C:/Users/anafu/OneDrive/Documents/Readings/Dobrogea/ANTOL_LEG_RO_2004.pdf

[75] Art. 1, "Legea asupra învăţământului primar şi normal primar," in Alecu et al., *Antologia legilor învăţământului din România* (2004), 51.

[76] Besides public and private primary schooling institutions, children could also be homeschooled, pending approval by the Ministry and adequate performance on the annual state exam for children prepared outside of the public primary school system.; ANR, MCIP 1690/1908, f. 24: As an example of this divide and its policing, marginalia on a report

Practical matters and limitations of the Ministry's powers of enforcement, however, made this distinction far less stark in Dobruja's classrooms than it appeared in the neat subheadings of this legislation. The children of merchants and functionaries who passed through Dobruja temporarily were difficult to keep track of and the nature of their parents' occupations made private schools – and in particular those focusing on preparing students for careers in commerce, such as Constanţa's German Evangelical School – a more attractive option than public schools.[77] The primary school statutes also made a particular exception for the new territory, stating that "foreigners, *except those who live in Dobruja*, [would] pay a tax" (emphasis mine), as a means of incentivizing the enrollment in state schools of foreign subjects, for whom the law for mandatory primary school attendance could not be enforced. In addition, although no clear statute on this matter existed within the primary school legislation, Muslim girls, including daughters of Romanian citizens, were not (at least initially) forced to attend school, as this would have constituted an infringement on Islamic mores, which the Romanian state had vowed to protect. Finally, where "Romanian subjects" would fit into this schema was, as we will see, subject to interpretation and change.

Determining who would be subjected to the law for mandatory primary school attendance therefore became a significant undertaking in Northern Dobruja, both in terms of scope and of its implications for Romanian state-building. Following the territory's annexation, school censuses

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about the didactic program at Constanţa's German Evangelical School states that the school could not enroll "sons of Romanian citizens."

[77] ANR, MCIP 381/1906, ff. 6,46: Report regarding the low primary school enrollment numbers for girls in the town of Cernavoda, which was attributed to the state's inability to enforce school attendance for foreign subjects, to the frequent movement of functionaries, and to poverty, which compelled parents to engage their daughters as servants.

became both a means and an end in Romanian legislators' efforts to protect and project their nation's sovereignty, the very act of counting and labeling the region's school-aged children serving to create a façade of control where it was only nebulously extant. More limited in reach and, by extension, easier to undertake than national censuses, school censuses, which were prescribed by Article 5 of the same 1893 law mentioned above, were to be compiled by city hall employees and schoolteachers on an annual basis during the Eastern Orthodox Easter holiday; failure to comply on the part of local administrations would result in fines for the individual(s) responsible. Ambitious in their scope, these censuses, compiled through an inspection of children's baptismal records and their parents' citizenship documents, took note of children's ages and sexes, confessional backgrounds, civil statuses, places of domicile, and parents' occupations – and, therefore, served to amass information not only about schoolchildren, but, indirectly, about their parents as well. These vast surveys were to be reinforced and supplemented by regular inspections of school archives, which were required by law to house and keep up to date the civil status documents upon which school censuses were based, and of school rosters, which were more idiosyncratic but always kept track, at the very least, of students' civil statuses.

The extensive categories on Romania's school censuses and rosters, which gradually expanded to include a visually unassuming yet critically important column – "Nationality," as distinct from "Citizenship" or "Protection" – by the turn of the twentieth century, served to convey an augmented sense of the Romanian state's rather feeble administrative reach, while also providing valuable demographic information that would allow the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction to better determine towards which communities its efforts would best be directed. In conjunction with local and regional maps created by state surveyors, these censuses and their accompanying school rosters allowed the Ministry to understand the distribution of populations in

Dobruja and to target communities it believed to be most in need of central oversight.[78] At the same time, school censuses also helped identify competition from private primary schools, as well as the most suitable locations for new public school constructions to attract pupils away from local private schools that were, as later chapters will show, subjected to less direct oversight from the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction.[79]

As we have seen, the annexation of Northern Dobruja, with its vastly diverse population and its admission of non-Christians to naturalization, challenged the Romanian state's previous conceptions of who ought to be a "Romanian" and/or "Romanian citizen," and made it so that outward discrimination towards certain individuals or groups would endanger the international recognition of Romania's national sovereignty. As the meaning of "Romanian" became, in the eyes of Romania's statesmen, diluted and problematized by the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, citizenship came to be increasingly, albeit inconsistently, divorced from nationality. Beginning to conceptualize citizenship as acquired and nationality as inherent – as of yet unofficially, within less visible yet crucially significant institutions such as primary schooling – Romania's political elite and the civil servants it directed landed upon a handy means of eating their cake and having it, too.

Within this context, primary school censuses, with their increasing use of distinct categories for "civil status" (*protecţie*) and "nationality," could be utilized as a means of

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[78] ANR, MCIP 1519/1914, f. 5: Ministry request for a map of Dobruja from the state surveyors in order to ascertain how best to undertake the organization of Islamic confessional asylums.

[79] ANR, MCIP 864/1915, ff. 54-55: Letter from Constanţa's mayor to the Ministry alerting it of the competition posed by local German, Armenian, Bulgarian, and Islamic preschools, which had also attracted Romanian children for whom there were no available spots in the existing state preschools.

inconspicuously identifying and differentiating between the various categories of "Romanian" obscured by the nation's vaguely universalizing revised Constitution; this without openly countering the conditions established by the Congress of Berlin or the veneer of internal homogeneity propagated by Romania's Constitution and national censuses. School inspectors' reporting on schools' ethno-national composition was gradually supplemented by scribbled marginalia about students' nationality on school censuses and, by the early twentieth century, by clearly labeled and distinct categories of "Nationality" and "State-Citizenship" (*protecţie*) on mass-produced school census scrolls. Meanwhile, the Romanian Constitution continued to blend civic and ethnic definitions of "Romanian," while national censuses similarly differentiated only between "Romanians" and "foreigners" under the rubric of "citizenship," holding no separate space for nationality.

Leonida Colescu, the director of Romania's General Statistics Office at turn of the twentieth century, hinted at the rationale for the ongoing conflation of nationality and citizenship in formal legislation despite the increasing separation of the two terms in daily usage. In his 1905 report on the 1899 census – published during the same year that tsarist Russia released the results of its 1897 census and had its warm-up for revolution, which brought nationality issues to the fore – he insisted that "in the Romanian Kingdom there thankfully [did] not exist the 'nationality' question nor could it [have] exist[ed]," because there "there [was] not even a question about the unity and homogeneity of the Romanian nation."[80] He claimed that Romanians made up more than

[80] On the nationalities question in the tsarist state in 1905, see: Juliette Cadiot, "Searching for Nationality: Statistics and National Categories at the End of the Russian Empire (1897-1917)," *The Russian Review* (Stanford) 64, no. 3 (2005), 446. On the release of the 1905 census results in the tsarist state, see: Cadiot, 449. Quote from Leonida Colescu,

ninety percent of the country's total inhabitants, leaving little interest as to the issue of nationality, which term could not, as he saw it, be applied "in a strictly scientific sense" to Romania's various inhabitants.[81] Colescu therefore insisted that his goal in organizing the census was to only distinguish "*Romanians* – understanding this term in a strictly national and political sense – from all other *foreigners* who live among them."[82] Although he did instruct his census-takers to differentiate, via marginal notes, those "foreigners" with foreign protection from those "foreigners" settled in Romania who lacked foreign protection as well as any Romanian citizenship rights – i.e. Romanian subjects – he was not interested in ethnic variations among those who had been granted citizenship.[83] Intent on driving the point home, Colescu re-emphasized that "this was not the object of the census because […] this issue held no particular importance, as the majority of Romanians [were] aboriginal and the foreign elements constitute[d] only a weak minority in comparison with the wide spread of the autochthonous [population]."[84] While he conceded that in Dobruja "elements of foreign origin" were more numerous than ethnic Romanians, he quickly glossed over this unpalatable fact.

Colescu's rejection of the applicability of nationality as a category distinct from citizenship within the Romanian context and his resulting denial of the great ethnic diversity within Romania was part of a broader international context in which the viability of composite states was

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Recensământului general al populaţiei României (Bucharest: Institutul de arte grafice "Eminescu," 1905), 91. file:///C:/Users/anafu/OneDrive/Documents/Research/Dobrogea/Recensamantul%20Romaniei%201899.pdf

[81] Colescu, 91.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid., 92.

[84] Ibid., 93.

increasingly called into question. An empire in miniature, newly-independent Romania had to toe the line between cultural homogeneity and civic universality on the one hand, and the identification and instrumentalization of ethnic diversity and legal differentiation on the other. "Nationalization," in terms of a concerted assimilation within the cultural and civic realms, was not practical nor possible while Romania had to contend with international sanctions and the possibility of reifying and militarizing ethnic distinctions. "Nationality," therefore, had to be employed judiciously, much as in the neighboring multi-ethnic empires. So, just as the tsarist state avoided including the category of nationality on its 1899 census, opting instead to unofficially survey the empire's ethnic composition via a combination of spoken language, *soslovie*, and confession, so the Romanian state left nationality – and even spoken language – out of its 1897 census all the while tracking it via school censuses and rosters.[85] Doing so helped reinforce the idea of national homogeneity while allowing the state to consider ethnic composition in the formulation of its resources and policies.

[85] On the factors used by statisticians to determine the ethnic makeup-up of the tsarist empire for the 1897 census, see: Juliette Cadiot, "Searching for Nationality," 442. For a discussion of how ethnic designations on the Habsburg census helped reify the very national identifications imperial officials were attempting to temper, see: Rok Stergar and Tamara Scheer, "Ethnic Boxes: The Unintended Consequences of Habsburg Bureaucratic Classification," *Nationalities Papers* 46, no. 4 (2018): 575–91.

2.4 Speaking National

The increasing incidence of "Nationality" as a category distinct from "Citizenship" in school censuses, rosters, and inspection reports did not, however, indicate a clear understanding of this concept either on the part of Romanian state functionaries or of Dobrujan actors – far from it. When one looked beyond the neatly demarcated column headings on school census rolls, it quickly became apparent just how ambiguous and fluid a concept "nationality" was within the self-professed nation. Due to the practical difficulties discussed in previous sections, as well as the lack of consensus at the top of Romania's governance structure, "nationality" was an unstable concept used idiosyncratically by administrators and school inspectors who seemed to understand the importance of this term but were unable to clearly define it. Like the term "Romanian subject," the nebulous concept of "nationality" could help state functionaries invoke and impose the duties of citizenship while at the same time providing non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans with a means of skirting civic obligations. Within the context of primary schooling – whose attendance some ardent nationalists claimed should be enforced as seriously as military service – the language of nationality allowed, in its ambiguity, for the articulation and negotiation of Romanian state-citizenship through a predictably scripted yet dynamic dialogue between central and local actors.[86]

By the turn of the twentieth century, and in particular following the international reorganization wrought by the Balkan Wars, nationality made its way onto more and more school censuses and rosters; its meaning, however, remained vague. At times, the term continued to be used synonymously with "protection" or "citizenship," lacking a distinctly ethnic connotation.

[86] G. Iuga, "Învăţământul particular," *Revista generală a învăţământului*, IX, no. 3 (Oct. 1913), 117.

This was particularly apparent in private schools with foreign subjects belonging to the neighboring composite empires, who would be labeled as having "Ottoman" or "Austrian" nationality – a contradiction in terms that nevertheless substantiated efforts by those imperial states to create all-encompassing, civic "nationalities" as a means of encouraging the same kind of allegiance popularized by nascent nation-states.[87] In other instances, the "nationality" visible in Dobrujan school rosters seemed to reify as of yet still distant nationalist aspirations; this was the case for the Israelite Confessional Asylum in the city of Tulcea, whose rosters identified all pupils as being of "Israelite" "nationality."[88] Still others contained an amalgam of these interpretations, with the French primary school of Sulina, in Tulcea County, identifying its students as having "Russian," "Israelite, "German," "French," "Austrian," and "Bulgarian" nationalities.[89] In most of these instances, "nationality" could be interpreted in a civic sense, determined according to state-citizenship.

As schools transitioned to a more visible differentiation between nationality as civil status and nationality as ethnic marker, the identification of students became an even more complicated

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[87] ANR, MCIP 1991/1914, f. 77-78: Roster for the Greek Boys' School in Sulina, listing students as having either "Greek" or "Ottoman" "nationality. For more on how the concept of nationality functioned within the late Ottoman Empire, see: Michelle U. Campos, "From the 'Ottoman Nation' to 'Hyphenated Ottomans': Reflections on the Multicultural Imperial Citizenship at the End of Empire," *Ab Imperio* 2017, no. 1 (2017): 163-181. For more on the role nationality played in the late Habsburg Empire, see: Pieter M. Judson, "Whose Empire? The Revolutions of 1848-1849," in *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016).

[88] ANR, MCIP 2312/1916, f. 6: Roster for the Israelite Confessional Asylum in the city of Tulcea.

[89] ANR, MCIP 2310/1916, f. 4: List of students enrolled in Sulina's French boarding school for girls during the 1915-16 school year. See Fig. 1 at the conclusion of this chapter.

undertaking. A telling example is that of the Italian Catholic boys' school in the city of Sulina in Tulcea County, which in 1914 submitted to the Ministry of Public Instruction a roster with only two columns – "Nationality" and "Religion" – but by the following year had added a third labeled "Citizenship."[90] In the 1914 roster, the "Nationality" column was populated with the labels "Greek," "German," and "Italian," but also the umbrella term "Slavic," which failed to precisely denote either ethnicity or civil status.[91] These labels changed somewhat the following year and were joined by a few new ones; the handwriting on the roster having remained unchanged, it is clear that the discrepancies were not due to different observers but to the confusion of the same. "Greek" nationality became "Hellenic" – in all but one case – and the labels "Israelite," "Bulgarian," and "Croat" were also added to the nationality column.[92] Meanwhile, in the new "Citizenship" column, those students designated as having "Hellenic" nationality were also ascribed "Hellenic" citizenship, while the one student identified as being of "Greek" nationality was recorded as having "Romanian" citizenship. All those of "Slavic" nationality were labeled as having "Austrian" citizenship, the "Italian" as having "Italian" citizenship, and the "Croat" and "Israelite" as having "Hungarian" citizenship. One student of "German" nationality was ascribed "Austrian" citizenship and the other "Hungarian," while the "Bulgarian" student had "Romanian protection" – an umbrella term for state-citizenship, which in this particular case likely indicated "subjecthood" – written next to his name. This bricolage of terms hints at just how jumbled and,

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[90] ANR, MCIP 1992/1914, ff. 23-23v: List of students enrolled in Sulina's Italian Catholic School in the 1914-15 school year.; ANR, MCIP 2733/1915, f. 14: List of students enrolled in Sulina's Catholic primary school in the 1915-16 school year. See Fig. 2 & 3 at the conclusion of this chapter.

[91] ANR, MCIP 1992/1914, ff. 22-23.

[92] ANR, MCIP 2733/1915, f. 14.

at times, contradictory the semantics of Romanian state-citizenship were and how easily terminology could be (mis)interpreted by interested parties, even as there seemed to be a growing consensus within Romania that "nationality" held ethnic connotations and was distinct from the legal category of state-citizenship. And, indeed, there was plenty of incentive on both sides of the school fence for a loose and fluid usage of these labels.

As concerned Romanian state functionaries, the headache caused by attempts to identify schoolchildren's civil status without a clear guide were offset by the ease with which they could employ this ambiguity to invoke duties. Private schools with Romanian subjects, or with children whose citizenship status could not clearly be ascertained, could thus have their affairs arbitrarily imposed upon. This was what befell the private Russian school "Schimbarea la Faţă" ("Transfiguration of Jesus") in the northern Dobrujan port city of Tulcea – positioned precariously close to Romania's new border with the Russian empire – in October 1909. Having reviewed its rosters, Inspector Inga initially reported that the school was "attended by students of Russian nationality, but Romanian subjecthood," and "therefore operate[d] with the state curriculum, having a complementary Russian language course."[93] However, upon closer observation, the inspector concluded that the school in fact taught reading and writing in the Russian rather than in the Romanian language, which prompted the Ministry to order that the school send its students to the yearly examination required of children who were homeschooled or attended private schools. Just a couple of weeks later, contradicting inspector Inga, the chief regional inspector wrote to the Ministry that the school's students, "being considered sons of Dobrujan citizens, in other words,

[93] ANR, MCIP 1642/1909, f.13: Inspection report of Tulcea's Russian school, "Schimbarea la Faţă" ("Transfiguration of Jesus") in October 1909.

Romanians" did not, after all, need to be subjected to the yearly examination.[94] The Ministry, however, persisted in its request. In a directive which relayed the news about the fate of these "sons of Romanian citizens," the Ministry enjoined the school to send all of its "Romanian subjects" to the annual examination in conformity with the law for private instruction.[95] In this case, as in many others, the semantic and legal ambiguity related to the labels "Romanian" and "Romanian subject" allowed the Ministry to use a private – and, as the next chapter will show, self-funded – institution to serve the interests of the state. In this fluid state of affairs, each pupil was, after all, an actual or potential Romanian.

Yet Dobrujan private school administrations also seemed aware of how they might employ this lack of clarity to skirt central directives and thereby keep the Ministry of Public Instruction at a greater distance from their internal affairs. The unclear nature of civil status categories, along with a deficient local bureaucracy that made the acquisition of civil status paperwork a far from straightforward undertaking, allowed Dobrujan actors to delay compliance with central directives and vex state officials' quest to bring private instruction firmly under the Ministry's control. A case in point was Constanţa's Bulgarian private school, whose rosters were found in October 1911 to have included name changes "unauthorized by the law and entirely unjustified," among which an inexplicable change in the surname of one of two brothers enrolled in the school since at least

[94] ANR, MCIP 1642/1909, f. 12: Report on the citizenship status of the students enrolled in Tulcea's Russian school, "Schimbarea la Faţă," submitted to the Ministry in Nov. 1909 by the regional school inspector of Tulcea County.

[95] Ibid., f. 12 v.

the previous year.[96] These puzzling irregularities were exacerbated by the fact that the school's archive only included students' birth certificates – of which several were missing – and did not also contain the passports of parents with foreign subjecthood, "which [was] against the Ministry's directives" and impeded the inspector's duty to ensure compliance with the law for mandatory primary school instruction on the part of "Romanian students."[97]

A year and a half later, in March 1913, the school had gotten no further in complying with inspector Inga's request – only this time the school's administration had a ready-made excuse, citing changes in Romanian constitutional law. As the Romanian state at last began to extend full citizenship rights (1908-12) to those residents of Dobruja who had been in the region since annexation, as well as to ethnically Romanian colonists, the new administrative changes undertaken by a still underdeveloped bureaucratic apparatus perpetuated the jumbled nature of civil status in Dobruja, which was further compounded by the demographic movements and administrative restructuring prompted by the Balkan Wars (1912-13).[98] Therefore, when the new inspector appointed to Constanţa's Bulgarian school confronted the administration about this, the school's director explained that his administration was unable to ascertain all its students' citizenship statuses because "many of the students' parents [had not] definitively regulated their

[96] ANR, MCIP 1671/1911, ff.15v, 16: Elaboration by the regional school inspector of Constanţa County on the proceedings from Oct. 1910 through which Constanţa's Bulgarian school was called to trial by the Permanent Education Council due to irregularities found in the school's administration.

[97] Ibid., f. 16.

[98] For more on the extension of political rights to Dobrujans in the second decade of the twentieth century, see: Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities* (2019), 502-510.

citizenship."[99] According to him, many of them had either delayed getting their paperwork in order or had seen their petitions rejected and their appeals gone unanswered after the Romanian state had accorded full citizenship to all Dobrujan residents the previous year.[100] While the director deferentially stated that he understood the necessity of determining the students' legal statuses, as he pointed out, "until yesterday they had known themselves to be Bulgarian and Ottoman subjects … [while] today, until the decision from the [court of] cassation comes, not even they know what they are."[101]

The extension of full political rights to Romanian citizens residing in Northern Dobruja did not, therefore, cause a seismic a shift in quotidian affairs as the legislative language and the public outcries against it would have one believe; on the contrary, citizenship – and its accompanying obligations – became once again more practically difficult to determine, and non-ethnically Romanian residents of Dobruja were able to skirt the accompanying duties of state-citizenship within the field of primary schooling, by invoking, like the director of Constanţa's Bulgarian school, the very real impediments to determining civil status in Dobruja. Even as late as fall 1915, state inspector Costescu reported being unable to ascertain the "nationality" of students in Constanţa's Armenian primary school and adjoining kindergarten due to lack of documentation. Exhibiting an understanding of "nationality" as synonymous with state-citizenship, he enjoined the school's director to ask the students' parents for their passports or "citizenship diplomas" and

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[99] ANR, MCIP 1939/1913, f. 5: Letter to the Ministry from the Director of Constanţa's Bulgarian school addressing the school inspector's complaint that the school's citizenship rosters were irregular.

[100] All Dobrujans finally received full citizenship rights on 3 March 1912, having held, up until that point, only partial citizenship states.

[101] ANR, MCIP 1939/1913, f. 5.

to keep them in the school's archive so that the Ministry could determine which students were required to report to the annual state exam for Romanian citizens attending private school.[102] For his part, the school's director pled ignorance, stating that, since in Dobruja there were three categories of state-citizenship – Romanian citizen, Romanian subject, and foreign subject – he did not understand how the education laws, which did not mention Romanian subjects, applied to this intermediary category of children.[103] Seeing no need to offer an explanation, the Ministry replied simply that the school's Romanian subjects were to also required to submit to the state exam. By the end of the year, however, state inspectors still did not seem to have received the clarification they sought – although the school's administration complied by submitting an enrollment registry with a column identifying students' "nationality," all entries were populated with the decidedly ethnic term "Armenian."[104]

The disagreements regarding the terminology and duties associated with civil status in Northern Dobruja intersected with an ever-present tension between uniformity and differentiation in interactions between the state and its citizen-subjects, creating plenty of opportunities for central and Dobrujan actors to negotiate their positions vis-à-vis each other via a vocabulary of rights and obligations that was reminiscent of sovereign-subject relations in neighboring empires.[105] State

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[102] ANR, MCIP 2449/1915, f. 26: Inspection report from Nov. 1915 regarding Constanţa's Armenian Primary School.

[103] Ibid., f. 7: Letter from the Director of Constanţa's Armenian Primary School to the Ministry asking for clarification regarding which students had to be sent to the annual state exams based on their citizenship statuses.

[104] Ibid., f. 3-6: Rosters of the students enrolled in Constanţa's Armenian Primary School.

[105] See: Jane Burbank, "Legal Culture, Citizenship, and Peasant Jurisprudence" in Peter H. Solomon, Jr., ed., *Reforming Justice in Russia, 1864-1996: Power, Culture, and the Limits of Legal Order* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1997); Scott J. Seregny, "Zemstvos, Peasants, and Citizenship: The Russian Adult Education Movement and World

functionaries and educators, for their part, repeatedly invoked the duties and responsibilities associated with citizenship, proselytizing a seemingly agreed-upon, and universalizing, mantra: "one who has rights also has duties."[106] Dobrujan actors adopted this language yet turned it to their favor. All the while "speaking national," they nevertheless demonstrated that they saw past this simplistic formulation and repeatedly reminded the Ministry of their rights, as well as of the state's differentiated approach to members of the same ethno-confessional groups in other parts of the nation.[107]

Illustrative of this dynamic, which played out in many interactions between Ministry officials and Dobrujan private schools, is the case of Constanţa's German Evangelical School which, in fall of 1908, was enjoined by the Ministry to refrain from enrolling any more students with Romanian citizenship. The school's director, Ernst Meyer, responded to this directive by reminding the Ministry of the authorization it had given to the school in 1901, which rested on the premise that the school would impart the knowledge and instruction necessary to the Evangelical faith and German language in conformity with "the laws and regulations regarding private primary

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War I," *Slavic Review* 59, no. 2 (2000): 290-315.; Valerie Kivelson, "Muscovite 'Citizenship:' Rights without Freedom," *The Journal of Modern History* 74, no. 3 (2002): 465-489.

[106] Gheorghe Adamescu, "Datoria statului faţă de şcoala poporului," *Revista generală a învăţământului*, X, no. 1 & 2 (June and July 1914), 1.

[107] I borrow the term "speaking national" from Cătălina Hunt, who used it to describe interactions between Dobrujan Muslims and the Romanian state in this period. The term, in its original, is "speaking Bolshevik," and describes the notion that, while a state may establish the rules of the game, its constituent population has a margin of leeway in negotiating those terms by adopting the prescribed language of the state. See: Stephen Kotkin, "Speaking Bolshevik" in *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019), 198–237.

education," had simultaneously permitted the school to enroll Romanian citizens, which made up the majority of Constanţa's Evangelical community.[108] Given the above, as well as the fact that the school "ha[d] always and [would] always conform with the legal provisions" – as evidenced by the school's inspection reports and state exam results – Meyer asked the Ministry to "desist from [its] demand […] and to accord [the school] the same regime as that of the evangelical schools in Bucharest."[109] He concluded his letter by reassuring the Minister of Public Instruction of the school's "resolute respect" for the "laws and regulations of the nation" and of their "deep desire to provide to the nation's children all that they require to become good and educated Romanian citizens."[110] The Ministry's response essentially boiled down to the following: If Constanţa's Evangelical community was made up "mostly of Romanian citizens," it could not "be subjected to conditions identical to those of communities made up mainly of foreigners," for "citizenship carrie[d] with it many rights but greater duties (*datorii* – literally, debts) than pure hospitality."[111]

Like many Dobrujan school administrators who wrote similar letters to the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction around the turn of the twentieth century, Director Meyer "spoke national," adopting a predictable bureaucratic script that allowed him to display conformity to the new national regime in Dobruja all the while countering its prescriptions. By citing specific Ministry authorizations, demonstrating knowledge of national legislation, and including

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[108] ANR, MCIP 1690/1908, f. 90: Letter from Director Ernst Meyer of Constanţa's German Evangelical School to the Ministry asking it to desist from its order that the school no longer enroll students Romanian citizens.

[109] ANR, MCIP 1690/1908, f. 90: Letter from Director Ernst Meyer of Constanţa's German Evangelical School to the Ministry asking it to desist from its order that the school no longer enroll students Romanian citizens.

[110] Ibid., f. 90v.

[111] Ibid., f. 90: Ministry's marginalia response to Director Meyer's plea.

predictable expressions of deference to the state's laws and its institutions, Meyer demonstrated knowledge of national "speak" and an awareness of its importance for structuring interactions between his school and the Ministry on whose authorization it depended. These scripted responses allowed Dobrujan actors to "play the game" whose rules were established by the Romanian state but whose terms Dobrujan actors could negotiate by "learn[ing] the terms at issue and the techniques of engagement."[112] In this way, Dobrujan actors, particularly non-ethnically Romanian ones, were able to "'work the system' to their 'minimum disadvantage.'"[113]

At the same time, by citing examples of divergent policies applied to Evangelical schools in other parts of the nation, Meyer, like many other directors of private schools in Dobruja, exposed the illusory nature of legislative uniformity within the Romanian state and, in so doing, caused the Ministry to defend it. As we will see in later chapters, the tension between uniformity and differentiation that accompanied the language of rights and obligations in conversations between Ministry officials and Dobrujan private school administrations would increasingly force the Romanian state to tackle head-on the issue of minority rights raised by the Congress of Berlin (1878) and, by extension, its understanding of what "Romanian" and "citizen" meant and how these notions would be related. For the time being, before the cataclysmic shifts in geopolitics inaugurated by the First World War, Romanian state officials and Dobrujan actors alike continued to employ the remnants of imperial rule that made an ambiguous, fluid, and differentiated relationship between a state and its citizen-subjects a pragmatic and still viable option.

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[112] Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain* (2019), 236.

[113] Ibid., 237.

2.5 Conclusion

The provisions and circumstances related to the Kingdom of Romania's annexation of Northern Dobruja decisively changed the nascent nation-state's approach to state-citizenship, and primary schooling within the region helped inform that change. By making the international recognition of Romania's sovereignty contingent on its opening citizenship up to its non-Christian inhabitants, the Great Powers set the stage for later contestations regarding minority rights in Southeastern Europe; in accepting this perceived provocation, however, the Romanian state found ways to track and weaponize ethnicity by inconspicuously binding it to the related, yet often unclear and increasingly distinct, concepts of "nationality" and citizenship within the field of primary schooling. Itself a vaguely-defined term in Romania's Constitution, "citizenship" was further complicated by the exceptional demographic, infrastructural, and political circumstances of Northern Dobruja, where state-citizenship came to include not only the dichotomous terms "Romanian citizen" and "foreign subject," but also the legally ambiguous intermediate category of "Romanian subject." The practical challenges and opportunities that this de facto differentiation afforded to both central and Dobrujan actors played themselves out within the institution of primary schooling, whose universal prescription to all citizens made it a prime arena for the contestation and negotiation of citizenship rights and obligations.

Primary schooling in Northern Dobruja, therefore, did not simply reflect uniform, centrally-imposed notions of citizenship; rather, it informed the definition(s) and applications of state-citizenship through its censuses and rosters, which allowed central and Dobrujan actors alike to exercise a degree of control over how civil status was determined and what kind of obligations (or lack thereof) it would imply. By using school censuses to inconspicuously track nationality (ethnically defined) and employing the intermediate category of "Romanian subject" to exert a

greater degree of influence over private (and typically non-ethnically Romanian) schooling, census-takers, school inspectors, and Ministry of Public Instruction personnel perpetuated imperial strategies of rule defined by differentiation. A flip side of the same coin, Dobrujan private schools' contestation of civil status categories, their invocation of the very real practical roadblocks to acquiring clear civil status documentation, and their adept use of national "speak" allowed them to exert a degree of influence over the contours of state-citizenship in Northern Dobruja and to skirt the obligations associated with Romanian citizenship. These interactions would set the stage for more acrimonious disputes over citizenship rights and duties in the aftermath of the First World War, when the notion of minority rights subtly introduced by the Congress of Berlin's prescription regarding the boundaries of Romanian citizenship would transform into a bitter regional contestation over sovereignty and national self-determination in East Central Europe.

3.0 The Educational Harlequin: Imperial Legacies in Northern Dobrujan Primary Schooling Institutions, 1878-1916

During his visit to Constanţa's Armenian private primary school in March 1913, state inspector Papahagi was pleased by the students' good grasp on Romanian grammar as they recounted Romanian national mythology.[114] The second-graders seemed well versed, among other things, in the tale of the Argeş Monastery, whose chief architect, Manole, is said to have immured his pregnant wife, Ana, in the monastery's walls after a divine vision instructed him that the only way to ensure the new edifice would not collapse was to encase in its foundation the first woman to visit the site.[115] Although Papahagi lamented the students' struggles with pronunciation, he was nevertheless impressed by the progress they had made in just a couple of years in school, recounting Ana's untimely end with the necessary gravity. He also reported that the thirty-nine young children in the Armenian kindergarten, who spent the second-half of each day being instructed in Romanian, were able to recount short histories and recite poems in the official state

[114] The school was likely named after Armenang Haigazian, a famed Armenian theologian, educator, and musician, who in the 1880s had received several degrees in theology and linguistics from Central Turkey College in Aintab (Ottoman Empire; today Gaziantep in Turkey), which had been established by the American Mission Board, as well as degrees from the University of Chicago, Yale Divinity School, and the University of Toronto.

[115] The Argeş Monastery was built between 1512-17, commissioned by Wallachian ruler Neagoe Basarab, in Wallachia's former capital, Curtea de Argeş, located on the banks of the Argeş river. King Carol I transformed the monastery into the royal family's necropolis, where he and his nephew, Prince Ferdinand I, were subsequently buried. The infamous King Carol II – whose tutor witnessed Ceşmegiu abusing his students in the spring of 1906 – was also repatriated there in 2003 along with Elena Lupescu, the mistress for whom he abdicated the throne.

language.[116] Finally, he found that the primary school's third- and fourth-graders performed well in their history lessons, responding correctly to his questions about medieval rulers Michael the Brave, Stephen the Great, Vlad Ţepes (alias Dracul), and John the Voievode, all of whom were exalted by Romanian nationalists for their defense, at various points in history, of the Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia (and, in Michael the Brave's case, the highly-coveted Transylvania) against Ottoman and Hungarian forces.

Inspector Papahagi's visit to Constanţa's Armenian primary school and its accompanying kindergarten are representative of the Romanian state's efforts to capitalize upon regional private schools whose existence it endorsed but did not financially support. Building upon – sometimes quite literally – the residual Ottoman educational infrastructure in Northern Dobruja, the Romanian state perpetuated a differentiated institutional landscape within primary schooling, allowing for multiple types of primary education bound together by an overarching provision for Romanian language instruction. Romania's primary schooling system made room not just for public and private curricula but also for both secular and religious learning, each type of institution being granted its own particular degree of autonomy (or lack thereof) in curriculum, administration, and enrollment. Doing so was as much necessary as it was practical – without sufficient capital or personnel to build and sustain its own network of state-sponsored public schools, this institutional differentiation allowed the Ministry of Public Instruction to maximize its scarce resources and exercise at least nominal control over populations that remained, for practical or personal reasons,

[116] ANR, MCIP 1938/1913, f. 18: Weekly schedule, subdivided by days and hours, of the curriculum of Constanţa's Armenian kindergarten. The daily schedule showed all subjects, including free play, being conducted in the Armenian language between 9 am and 11 am, and the same subjects repeated again in the afternoon, between 2 pm and 4 pm, in the Romanian language – with the exception of Thursday afternoons, which the children had off.

largely outside the scope of public instruction. Yet, just as with the nation's fluid approach to state-citizenship, its diversified primary schooling system also opened doors for the very fragmentation it had been designed to counter.

This chapter thus highlights the ways in which the Romanian kingdom's malleable citizenship legislation was reflected and reinforced in its primary schooling institutions, which were characterized by differentiation and flexibility. It argues that the new Romanian nation-state's primary schooling system, with its embrace of heterogeneity and pragmatic decentralization, closely resembled those of its imperial neighbors, and in particular of the Ottoman and Russian empires. While these characteristics permitted the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction to make inroads into non-ethnically Romanian communities via private schools which the state incorporated into its education network but did not fund, they also allowed Dobrujan communities to evade central directives by manipulating institutional labels and legislation. As in the land empires surrounding the Kingdom of Romania, this partial autonomy would lay the groundwork for later demands for collective rights among the nation's non-ethnically Romanian communities.

3.1 The Ottoman Imprint on Dobrujan Schooling

Although poorly developed, Northern Dobruja's primary schooling institutions at the time of annexation reflected the late Ottoman state's efforts to centralize mass education via decentralized schooling administration. The few traces of schooling infrastructure Romanian administrators found bore the marks of the Tanzîmat-era (1839-1878) Ottoman education system, characterized by a diversified educational structure and a close relationship between religion and schooling. This was the case both for Islamic schooling institutions and for the schools established

by Dobruja's various non-Muslim communities. It was upon these institutions and accompanying institutional practices that the Romanian state built its primary schooling system and Dobrujan residents expanded theirs, fusing, from the very beginning, the form of a national, centralized public education system with the substance of a heterogeneous and hybrid network of primary schooling institutions that perpetuated imperial forms of interaction between state and local actors.

Ottoman efforts to create a coherent education system were slow to materialize but became a significant concern for reformers in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the empire's ethno-confessionally heterogeneous Balkan provinces forming the focal point of their attention. Sultan Abdülmecid I's 1839 *Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerif* ("The Noble Edict of the Rose Chamber"), which inaugurated the Tanzimat ("Reorganization") Reforms by calling for a restructuring of taxation and conscription and guaranteeing the protection of all Ottoman subjects regardless of religion or ethnicity, also launched reforms of the empire's education system.[117] Slow to take off, these reforms early on targeted Ottoman holdings in southeastern Europe, where the state hoped to avoid unrest and, after the 1850s, gain the loyalty of the region's large non-Muslim populations via educational programs aimed at promoting the new civic culture of Ottomanism (*Osmanlilik*).[118] However, it was not until 1857 that the Ottoman Empire founded its own Ministry of Public Education and only in 1869 that it passed its Regulation of Public Education (RPE), which aimed to reform the empire's primary (*sibyan*) schools.[119] This law established provincial education councils for the supervision of education outside of Istanbul, legislated the founding of state

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[117] Selcuk Aksin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Brill: Leiden, 2001), p. 1.

[118] Ibid., 65.

[119] Somel, 8.

schools for non-Muslim subjects, and sought to integrate Muslim, non-Muslim, and foreign schools into one unified legal framework.[120]

The Regulation of Public Instruction, which was prepared under the influence of French Minister of Education Jean Victor Duroy, combined administrative centralization with the delegation of authority at the provincial level, thus aiming to overcome the organizational, financial, and personnel issues faced by the Ministry of Public Education in its attempts to consolidate the empire's education network.[121] The RPE's establishment of provincial education councils sought to ease the reconnaissance efforts of state inspectors and to provide a system for the raising of funds and materials for the construction and maintenance of schools.[122] These councils would function at the level of the *vilayet* (province) as local branches of the Sublime Council of Education and its members were to be selected by the Ministry of Public Education from a mix of Muslim and non-Muslim, local and government-appointed notables.[123] Councils would be responsible for carrying out the Ministry's directives and overseeing the collection and distribution of funds at the local level, as well as providing the Ministry with annual reports about

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[120] Ibid.

[121] Ibid., 86-87. According to Somel, Duroy "in a sense" acted as a foreign education adviser to the Sublime Porte. His 1867 reform project was subsequently turned into the Ottoman Empire's 1869 Regulation of Public Education. The original proposal listed the reasons for the desired reforms, with a heavy emphasis on the Westernization and secularization of the Ottoman public school curricula. It particularly criticized the fact that sibyan schools taught only religious subjects, with instructors who lacked pedagogical skills. The proposal called for greater pay for instructors across the board, for the establishment of provincial education administrations, and for an education tax that would fund the system.

[122] Ibid., 78-79.

[123] Ibid., 92-93.

the state of education in their province.[124] These provisions in the RPE were part of the Ottoman state's efforts to bring local notables into its grip, integrating them officially into the empire's education system and thus giving them a stake in it.[125] It was also a means of expanding the Ministry's bureaucratic apparatus and passing the financial responsibility for schooling from the state to the provincial administrations in order to implement central directives without expending state funds.

Along the same lines, the RPE also reemphasized the need for a mixed, civic-minded education that would bring the empire's Muslim and non-Muslim populations together under the shared experience of secular Ottomanism.[126] The regulation placed a greater emphasis on primary education and targeted sibyan schools in particular for their purely religious instruction; in a departure from earlier policy, which "treated education as both religious and worldly," the RPE sought to bring a more secular curriculum to all levels of education within the empire.[127] Whatever religious instruction would remain in Muslim institutions would be supervised by the state, in a bid to reduce the influence of the *ulama* (Islamic scholars) – who saw Muslim primary education as within their jurisdiction – over Muslim education and thus dilute the power of religious intermediaries while still using them to fill in where secular state authorities were lacking.[128] The overarching goal was to bring religion into the service of the state, delegate authority to maximize resources, and establish a secular civic culture that could inspire loyalty from both Muslim and

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[124] Somel, 93.

[125] Ibid., 94.

[126] Ibid., 89.

[127] Ibid., 88-89.

[128] Ibid., 88.

non-Muslim subjects. As we will see in the following chapter, this is precisely what the Romanian state would attempt in its semi-official relationship with the leaders and councils of Northern Dobruja's various confessions.

As with most sweeping legislation, the RPE's vision was only dimly reflected in the empire's reality. The state's gamble to extend a certain degree of autonomy to its provincial administrators in the hope of making its lira stretch was a miscalculated one whose fruits would be reaped by its national successor states. Within the empire, this regulation, particularly in the pre-Hamidian period (1878-1908), served only to reinforce the differentiation of the Ottoman education system and entrench the influence of local elites, especially in the Balkan provinces. The Ministry of Public Education's lack of significant administrative authority in comparison to other government bodies, in conjunction with variations in the economic resources of the empire's provinces, led to an uneven expansion of public primary schooling.[129] Primary schools retained their religious aspects and continued to function alongside, and influenced by, the religious institutions that often sponsored them. The population's lukewarm, if not adversarial, response to the state's efforts to centralize primary schooling also posed significant roadblocks to these top-down efforts outside the empire's core regions, such as western Anatolia.[130] Even in areas where locals were receptive to public schooling, financial resources were often lacking, as were instructors, whom the law required to be graduates of teachers' seminaries without providing for sufficient pedagogical institutions of this kind.[131] The state attempted to make up for this lack with

[129] Somel, 84.

[130] Ibid., 84.

[131] Ibid., 85.

local officials or military officers whom it would appoint as temporary instructors; in rural areas in particular, it would train *imams* (Islamic prayer leaders) in provincial seminaries and employ them to impart basic literacy skills to village children across the empire.[132] Nevertheless, these efforts did not have the desired effects. Rather than centralizing schooling in the empire, they gave provincial and local actors more tools with which to enact their autonomy from the center.

Just as the province of Dobruca (Ottoman Dobruja) was chosen as the location for the Ottoman Empire's first stretch of rail-line due to its strategic geographic location, so it was also selected as an initial test case for the empire's education reforms due to its comparatively large (and increasingly restless) non-Muslim, and in particular Bulgarian, population.[133] As part of the Danube vilayet (1864-1878) – comprising, roughly, of what is today southeastern Romania, northern and southwestern Bulgaria, southeastern Serbia, and a sliver of Macedonia – Dobruja was the target of an enthusiastic yet short-lived attempt on the part of the Ottoman state to create a model province on which reforms could be tested and then applied, in revised form, to the empire's other domains.[134] The vilayet's first governor, Midhat Pasha, arrived in the province's capital, Ruse (present-day Bulgaria) in 1864, ready to implement a full-scale reform of local institutions. Within the realm of primary education, Midhat Pasha worked toward the secularization of Quran schools, secured financing for the building and maintenance of new schools, and created a provincial education council in 1869.[135] Pasha's efforts were lauded by reformers and provided

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[132] Somel, 85.

[133] Milen V. Petrov, "Tanzimat for the Countryside: Midhat Pasa and the Vilayet of Danube, 1864-1868" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2006), 66-68.

[134] Ibid., 52.

[135] Somel, 80, 94.

direct inspiration for the provisions of the empire's centralizing Regulation of Public Education (1869).[136] Nevertheless, this eager scheme for a model Danubian province quickly fizzled out; by the mid-1870s, provincial yearbooks made no mention of Pasha's Danubian education council and much of the primary schooling infrastructure in the region remained bent towards religious education and under the control of the local elites and communities that funded it.[137]

This was the state of things when the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction extended its jurisdiction over Northern Dobruja in 1878. Data collected in 1879 identified 270 urban and 37 rural elementary schools in Constanţa County, and only forty-four elementary schools in Tulcea County.[138] These schools were almost exclusively confessional schools, attached to local churches, mosques, and synagogues and funded for the most part by the communities – Romanian, Muslim, Bulgarian, Greek, Russian, and Jewish – they served.[139]As regarded Romanian schooling, this took place in various informal settings under the instruction of Transylvanian and Moldavian revolutionary nationalists and local religious figures whose salaries were paid by Dobrujan parents. Romanian primary schooling in Dobruja especially took off when Transylvanian *mocani* (shepherds) arrived in the region after the Romanian Revolution of 1848 to bring the gospel of

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[136] Somel, 80.

[137] Ibid., 94-95.

[138] Cătălina Hunt, "Changing Identities at the Fringes of the Late Ottoman Empire: The Muslims of Dobruca, 1839-1914" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2015), 237.

[139] Constantin Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities: The Making of Romanian Citizenship, C. 1750-1918* (Boston: BRILL, 2019, 484.

Romanian nationalism to ethnic Romanians in Dobruja.[140] When these instructors were not available, Romanian children in Dobruja were taught to read Romanian translations of the Bible by priests or monks; they learned in makeshift classrooms attached to churches, held in private homes, and sometimes in the local pub.[141] By 1870, the Ottoman state had granted Transylvanian monk Nifon Bălăsescu the authority to organize a network of Romanian schools in Tulcea County, thus expanding Romanian primary education in the northern part of the region. Nevertheless, Romanian primary schooling was still in an elementary stage of development at the time of Dobruja's annexation, due to shortage of funds and personnel, lack of interest among rural Dobrujans, and destruction and emigration due to war.

Romanian authorities therefore had their work cut out for them in this as in other areas of Dobrujan development, and both state and non-state actors built upon the institutions and institutional practices of Ottoman-era schooling. Central authorities constructed public schools on land that had previously belonged to the region's Muslim communities and rural Dobrujans petitioned the state for permission to establish schools in the small mosques that had been abandoned by their fleeing Tatar neighbors.[142] As we will see below, the Ministry of Public

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[140] Mihai Albotă, *Istoria învăţământului tulcean de la începuturi până în 2007* (Tulcea: Editura "Şcoala XXI" Tulcea, 2008), 22.

[141] Ioan Georgescu, "Învăţământul public în Dobrogea," in C. Brătescu and I. Georgescu, eds. *Dobrogea: Cincizeci de ani de viaţă românească, 1878-1928* [*Dobruja: Fifty years of Romanian Life, 1878-1928*] (Bucharest: Cultura Naţională), 641-647.

[142] ANR, Casa Şcoalelor 108/1896, f. 4: Letter from the prefect of Tulcea County petitioning the Ministry for funding to convert a mosque – abandoned after Muslim emigration from a village in Tulcea County and subsequently purchased by the Romanian state – into a school.

Instruction welcomed petitions by Dobruja's various ethno-confessional communities to build private schools to which the Ministry would be under no obligation to disburse state funds. In creating a hybrid system of elementary instruction and borrowing from the Ottoman institutions and practices that had laid the groundwork for primary schooling in Dobruja, state functionaries demonstrated a keen awareness of the kingdom's limitations – limitations which Dobrujan communities would be quick to notice and exploit, working from within the system to subvert it.

3.2 The Educational Harlequin

As within the realm of citizenship legislation, the Kingdom of Romania faced internal disagreements and practical roadblocks as it sought to bring Dobrujan children under the aegis of its law for mandatory primary schooling. The first decades of Romanian administration in Northern Dobruja elicited both assimilationist rhetoric and more tempered calls for civic integration, as statesmen and pedagogues frequently complained of the roadblocks to public schooling in the region, proposing various and varied solutions for how these might be overcome. Unable to reach consensus and lacking the material resources necessary for as extensive an undertaking as the creation of a consolidated primary schooling system, the Romanian state and its functionaries built upon the remnants of Ottoman schooling in Dobruja, embracing and even nurturing the differentiated and decentralized nature of early childhood education that had begun to develop in Northern Dobruja during the final period of Ottoman administration in the region.

Before the wars of the early twentieth century heightened fears of irredentism and prompted the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction to place a greater emphasis on cultural assimilation, primary schooling was conceptualized by many of the country's statesmen and

pedagogues as a basic tool in the formation of a fiscal-military state. Until the Balkan Wars, rhetoric of "nationalization," understood in ethno-cultural terms, was not the norm in pedagogical publications or Ministry of Public Instruction directives and correspondence. Rather, opinions varied and tended to focus more on the ways in which public schooling could cultivate loyal, obedient, and competent citizens who would diligently work for and defend the state. Ministry officials and pedagogues still tended to employ the language of rights and obligations, and spoke of "patriotic sentiment," duty, and the "negation of individuality […] in the superior interest of the state" more often than of "Romanianization," which term would become widespread in the second decade of the twentieth century.[143] Even on the eve of the Balkan Wars, some contributors to the nation's premier education journal referred to the nation as an "organism" to whose "equilibrium" each individual had to contribute, borrowing the language of the organic theory of the state by then enthusiastically adopted by the autocratic tsarist empire while it simultaneously fell out of favor within the liberal nation-states that inspired Romania's own national revolution.[144] While there

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[143] Ana Manoil, "Studiul geografiei in şcoala primară," *Revista generală a învăţământului*, VI, no. 3 (Oct. 1910), 210; I. B.-D., "Idei şi fapte," *Revista generală a învăţământului*, VI, no. 4 (Nov. 1910), 300.

[144] Spiru Haret, "Învăţătorii şi politica," *Revista generală a învăţământului*, VII, no. 4 (Nov. 1911), 190; V. Protopopescu, "Paradoxe pedagogice. Învăţământul istoriei in şcoala primară," *Revista generală a învăţământului*, VII, no. 4 (Nov. 1911), 230.; The organic theory of the state – i.e. the notion that state (or, in ancient times, "city" or *polis*) and society are coterminous, akin to a natural organism – emerged in Plato's *Republic* (375 BCE), was subsequently elaborated upon in Aristotle's *Politics* (350 BCE), and persisted into the medieval era, when it adopted the vocabulary of the "body politic." Although the analogy of the state as natural organism survived in western Europe well into the nineteenth century, bolstered by the professionalization of the medical sciences, it held neither the same level of prestige nor the same extent of application in more liberal states as it did in tsarist Russia. Whereas in the West the idea of the organic notion of the state was "infected" by the theory of liberal contractarianism – by which

were certainly many who wished to "colonize" Dobruja with ethnic Romanians and – like Leonida Colescu in the previous chapter – claimed the nation to be made up of "only Romanians," with all other "nationalities" being "guests" of the nation, many other pedagogues focused primarily on how to equip as many children (of citizens) with the sense of duty and the knowledge necessary for the creation and defense of a "large and powerful homeland."[145]

Opinions also varied as to how best to bring public schooling in service of the state. As regarded Northern Dobruja, whose demographic heterogeneity and infrastructural limitations posed additional roadblocks to an already underfunded and understaffed public schooling system, proposed solutions tended to focus on working with local conditions rather than against them. There was no shortage of lamentations about poorly-equipped or non-existent school buildings and insufficient or inept instructors – Northern Dobruja serving, as for Ovid, as a place of exile for teachers who had either not been accepted in or had been fired from schools in other parts of the country.[146] Capable instructors from within Romania were disincentivized not only by this negative reputation, but also by Northern Dobruja's poor access to the rest of the kingdom, by the

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citizens made up the *artificial* body politic through *voluntary* consent as distinct individuals – in tsarist Russia the ideology of autocracy continued to position imperial subjects as being one with the organism of the state, their interests subjected to the latter. As Laura Engelstein shows in *Slavophile Empire: Imperial Russia's Illiberal Path* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), even those tsarist subjects advocating for liberal reform continued to be shaped by this ideology, demonstrating a greater sense of social responsibility than their western counterparts. See Phillip Goggans, "Political Freedom and Organic Theories of States," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 38 (2004), 531-43 and H. J. McCloskey, "The State as an Organism, as a Person, and as an End in Itself," *The Philosophical Review* 72, no. 3 (1963), 306-26 for overviews on the elaboration of this theory and the misconceptions surrounding it.

[145] Protopopescu, 245; "Lectura copiilor," *Revista generală a învăţământului*, VIII, no. 8 (March 1913), 438.

[146] T. Gheorghiu, "Şcoala primară în Dobrogea," *Revista generală a învăţământului*, VII, no. 7 (Feb. 1912), 423.

frigid winters of the Black Sea coast and mosquito-laden summers of the Danube delta, and by the high concentrations of diverse ethno-confessional communities that tended to be either suspicious of public schools or unconvinced of their utility.[147] As a result of these difficulties, the Romanian state, led by its pedagogues and Ministry of Public Instruction functionaries, sought to bend to local conditions, finding ways to alchemize impediments into advantages.

This was reflected in the Kingdom's revamped 1896 schooling legislation, which codified a differentiated private primary schooling system running parallel to the public one. The 1896 Regulation for Private Schooling thus formally recognized four main types of private elementary instruction, each with its own distinct enrollment requirements, curriculum, and degree of autonomy, yet all "placed under the supervision and control of the Ministry of Public Instruction," which had the power to grant and revoke school permits, approve instructors and curricula, and police compliance with agreed-upon stipulations for school functioning.[148] Article 21 of the law stated that private schooling could constitute of confessional asylums (preschools) and secular kindergartens for children younger than seven, primary schools with their own curricula, boarding schools, and primary schools with the state curriculum.[149] The first two types of private schooling – confessional asylums and secular kindergartens – were optional, as they were only permitted to enroll children younger than seven and, as such, were farther outside the scope of Ministry intervention than the latter two types, which fell, to varying degrees, under the jurisdiction of the law regarding mandatory primary school attendance. This was particularly the case for

[147] Ibid., 426.

[148] ANR, MCIP 377/1896, ff. 75-76v: Art. 1-20 of the "Regulation for private schools" (June 1896).

[149] Ibid., f. 76 v: Art. 21.

confessional asylums, which were to impart a purely religious instruction and typically operated within or alongside local religious institutions. As we will see below, non-ethnically Romanian communities in Northern Dobruja would take full advantage of these institutional labels to maximize their control over their children's education.

Lacking the finances, infrastructure, and personnel to operate sufficient public primary schools, particularly for the school-aged populations of Northern Dobruja, the Romanian state relied heavily on these private schooling institutions to bear the costs of educating the region's young – much as the tsarist state was doing at the time with its complex network of primary schooling institutions.[150] National education laws made clear that the state would only minimally invest in the type of schooling that it itself had made mandatory for all the nation's children. Even the law regarding public primary schooling maintained that the state would be responsible only for appointing public school instructors and paying for didactic and other materials necessary for the implementation of the state curriculum and the organization of school archives.[151] It therefore left to municipal governments the bulk of responsibility even for public school costs – from financing

[150] After its defeat in the Crimean War, tsarist Russia began instituting a series of reforms. The "Great Reforms" included two primary schooling statutes passed in 1864, which established a complex system of oversight and administration of the region's primary schooling system, with authority split between the tsarist state (which in matters of schooling was represented by five different ministries) and the Holy Synod; it also established the empire's zemstvo (provincial) schools. This legislation reflected the reality on the ground and hoped to get the better of it, with no success. See Stephen Taylor Duke, "Educating non-Russians in late Imperial Russia: An historical study of educational development in a multiethnic setting, 1885-1914" Dissertation (Indiana University, Bloomington, 1998)., p. 102, 105, 108, 117.

[151] Art. 76, "Legea asupra învăţământului primar şi normal primar," in Hamangiu, *Codul general al României*, 1856-1907, v. 3 (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Leon Alcalay), 2372.

the construction and maintenance of school buildings, to paying the rent for administrators' domiciles, the salaries of school employees, the cost of heating and lighting, and the material assistance for students in need.[152] Furthermore, the law put parents in charge of purchasing their children's schoolbooks and any other required pedagogical materials.[153] As regarded private schools, neither the state nor municipalities had any legal obligations. These schools had to rely on charitable donations from prosperous donors and from taxes paid by students' parents to the schools' administrations.[154] The only cost the state incurred in this transaction was that associated with the inspections of private schools and of their didactic materials and personnel, yet even this expense could be buffered by relying on only a few overextended regional inspectors.[155]

Just as the Ottoman state's Regulation for Public Education aimed to employ a partial decentralization to make up for the deficits of the Ottoman Ministry of Public Education, so the Romanian state's Regulation for Private Schools (1896), allowed for different forms of primary schooling with varying degrees of autonomy from the center, yet all under the *de jure* control of the Ministry of Public Instruction. Facing similar challenges in Dobruja as the Sublime Porte had

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[152] Ibid.

[153] Art. 13, Ibid., 2361. The rest of Art. 13 states that in rural areas textbooks would be sold by schoolteachers, "according to the Ministry's instructions." While the law does not specify what would happen to the proceeds from the sales, it is safe to assume that these would go back into the Ministry's coffers or the local school fund.

[154] Constanţa's Greek school, for instance, was financed by the local Greek Church and by school taxes paid by the students' parents. See: ANR, MCIP 1576/1912, f. 95.

[155] MCIP 14/1914, f. 234: Inspection report of the preschools in the rural areas of Tulcea County concluded that the schools require more frequent inspections (their frequency having been impeded by lack of resources and time) and that state inspectors in the region must obtain more training and guidance from central officials.

had to contend with, albeit on a considerably smaller scale and with greater internal fracturing of its legislative apparatus, the Romanian state took the path of least resistance, allowing and even encouraging within its primary schooling system the institutional variations that had begun to crop up in the region during its period of Ottoman rule. Like the Ottoman Empire and its tsarist rival – which also delegated responsibility for primary schooling to local institutions in its sprawling and poorly-accessible non-core areas – the Kingdom of Romania extended its administrative reach over private primary schools while relying on them to bear the full weight of the costs of schooling.[156]

[156] After emancipating its serfs in 1861, the tsarist state created zemstvos, organs of local self-government that toed the line between civil society institutions and organs of the state. Although they were locally elected, they were decreed by the autocracy and the rules governing them (and their elections) were regulated by the center. *Zemstvo* schools were schools within the jurisdiction of these provincial administrations, established beginning in 1864. They included primarily elementary schools, but also a lesser number of secondary schools and vocational schools. As Eklof has shown in "The Myth of the Zemstvo School," *zemstvo* administrations often played a less significant practical role in rural primary education than did the peasants themselves, without whose effort and resources the school expansion campaign might never have gotten off the ground. See: Ben Eklof, "The Myth of the Zemstvo School: The Sources of the Expansion of Rural Education in Imperial Russia: 1864–1914," *History of Education Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1984): 561–84.

3.3 Local Languages in Service of the State

In Dobruja, which had long been a quintessential borderland with the potential to upset the status quo, the Romanian state made special provisions for primary schooling, displaying a pragmatic adaptability to local conditions. While the Romanian language became a mandatory subject of study in primary schooling institutions of all types, local languages also had their place, in public schools as in private ones, both through informal conversations and formal lessons. This was as much to make up for the lack of qualified instructors as to dispel fears of forced cultural assimilation or religious conversion among Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian populations and thereby compel them to willingly enter into the Romanian state's supervisory orbit. As with its approach to state-citizenship, the Kingdom of Romania combined national and imperial models in its system of mass education, guided by an overarching goal of centralization that it pursued, of necessity, through selective decentralization.

Northern Dobruja's extra-constitutional "Constitution," therefore, declared education to be accessible to all so long as it did not "touch upon good morals, public order, or children's health," and stated that individuals and communities were free to open schools under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Instruction, "under the condition that in each of these, alongside the language [of instruction] chosen by the founders or directors, learning the Romanian language be mandatory."[157] Until the First World War prompted the Ministry to clamp down on the use of non-state languages in schools, the hours devoted to the Romanian language would only have to make

[157] Art. 20, "Lege pentru organizarea Dobrogei," in C. Hamangiu, *Codul general al României*, 1856-1907, v. 3 (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Leon Alcalay), 267-68.

up a fraction of the schools' weekly curricula – four to six hours a week for private schools whose students were foreign subjects, and ten hours a week for those whose student body included children of Romanian citizens or subjects, out of a total of roughly forty hours of instruction.[158] Nevertheless, this provision gave the Ministry of Public Instruction greater supervisory powers over non-ethnically Romanian communities in Dobruja. The Ministry was empowered not only to approve the subjects and textbooks taught at Dobrujan private schools, but also to police the distribution of their hours of instruction and test their students' knowledge of the Romanian language during its inspections. These examinations would not be purely linguistic; rather, as we witnessed during Papahagi's inspection of Constanţa's Armenian school, they typically involved questions related to Romanian history and geography, which subjects the Ministry required to be taught in the hours allocated to Romanian language instruction, following the state curriculum. By wedding language with history – as many a nation-state was by then doing – the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction laid the groundwork for later efforts to culturally assimilate Northern Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian residents.

These policies ran parallel with another, related one – the staffing of public schools with instructors knowledgeable in the languages most widely spoken by Dobruja's school-aged children. Beginning early in the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction's tenure in Dobruja, applicants to teaching posts in the region emphasized their familiarity with the various languages

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[158] ANR, MCIP 1646/1909, f. 3: Inspection report for the Catholic private school in the city of Sulina, Tulcea County, which reported that the hours devoted to Romanian instruction did not correspond with the Ministry's directives.; ANR, MCIP 1644/1909, f. 7: Request from Ema Contel, the Director of the French Primary Boarding School in Sulina, that the Ministry approve her curriculum with only 8.5 hours of Romanian instruction weekly as she only had one Romanian language teacher who did not have the time to devote the 10 required hours to Romanian instruction.

spoken in Dobruja, and public school inspection reports from the region were littered with concerns about the need for instructors who could communicate with Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian children in their native languages as a step toward Romanian language instruction.[159] This was prompted both by the practical calculation that multi-lingual instructors would be better able to teach Dobrujan children the Romanian language, and by the fears of some non-ethnically Romanian communities in the region that public schools would attempt to erase their children's culture or religious beliefs. As inspector Ion Bănescu said of a rural primary school in Constanţa County in 1892, the students "being all Old Believers and not knowing the Romanian language, it [was] absolutely indispensable that the instructor know their language, this as much in the interest of education as to attract the children to the Romanian school, as well as to dispel any suspicion of nationalization or religious conversion."[160]

In areas where non-ethnically Romanian communities showed particular resistance to public schooling, the Ministry of Public Instruction would not only rely on multi-lingual instructors to get through to Dobrujan children but would also hire teachers to give supplemental lessons in non-state languages and non-Orthodox religions to non-ethnically Romanian children. Most commonly, in its efforts to remove the basis for Muslim parents' fear that their children would be converted to Christianity by public school teachers, the Ministry appointed Islamic instructors in public schools in areas with large Muslim populations for supplemental lessons in

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[159] ANR, MCIP 71/1892, f. 82: Instructor Emilian Demitriu's request to the Ministry that he be transferred from Putna County to a vacant teaching post in Dobruja. He prefaced his request by saying that he was well versed in three of the main languages spoken in Dobruja – Russian, Bulgarian, and Turkish.

[160] ANR, MCIP 71/1892, f. 60v: State inspector Ion Bănescu's report on the state of primary schooling in Constanţa and Tulcea counties.

Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, as well as for instruction in the Islamic faith.[161] This was less out of concern for respecting religious difference as it was out of pragmatism, and state inspectors like Ion Costescu, whom we met at the beginning of this chapter, were quite transparent in their goal to linguistically assimilate Muslim children and establish their loyalty to the Romanian state.[162] Since this could not (practically) be accomplished by force, state inspectors championed the creation of these supplemental state-sponsored posts for Muslim instructors, whom they advised to "bring as many [Muslim] children to primary school as possible" through "gentle means."[163]

This expenditure on the part of central authorities is all the more significant when placed in the larger context of state spending for education. As we saw above, Romanian schooling legislation charged the state with paying only for didactic materials and school registers (a crucial part of the state's efforts to document and control its population) and the costs of instructors' salaries in public schools, but it left to local municipalities all other costs.[164] The state's offer to

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[161] ANR, MCIP 14/1914, f. 27: Inspection report of the public boys' school "No. 3" in Tulcea, which employed an instructor in Ottoman Turkish for the school's Muslim children.

[162] ANR, MCIP 25/1914, f. 141: Inspector Ionescu's report of the mixed rural school in Hasamcea parish, Constanţa County, where there a existed a large Muslim population. He complained that Tatar children had already missed two days of school that week due to Islamic holidays and requested that the school be made to send a complete list of Islamic holidays to the Ministry for approval.

[163] Ibid., f. 141v: Inspector Ionescu's report of the mixed rural school in Hasamcea parish, Constanţa County, where there a existed a large Muslim population. His recommendation to the school's Muslim instructor to lure Muslim children to public schools mentioned Tatar children specifically. In the quote, I replaced "Tatar" with "Muslim" to reflect the Ministry's concern with Dobruja's Muslim population more broadly.

[164] Art. 76, "Legea asupra învăţământului primar şi normal primar," in C. Hamangiu, *Codul general al României,* 1856-1907, v. 3 (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Leon Alcalay), 2372.; ANR, MCIP 1671/1911, f. 4: Example of the

fund these supplemental language instructors is therefore an indication that it judged this a worthwhile expenditure – at least in areas in which public schools faced competition from private ones. In small rural areas where private schools were insufficient or nonexistent, the Ministry lacked the incentive to do so. When, for instance, five Muslim fathers in a rural town in Constanţa County petitioned the Ministry in April 1915 for a Turkish language instructor at the public school to which they were forced to send their children after their local mosque closed down, their plea was rejected by a brief note that stated the request would not be granted "due to lack of funds."[165] Cases such as these demonstrate the pragmatic, rather than progressive, nature of the Ministry's policy regarding instruction in non-state languages.

While the fusing of language and history, particularly within the context of schooling, had by then become a classic tool of nationalism, the idea of nationalizing minoritarian groups via instruction in their own languages was one drawn from the repertoire of multi-ethnic empires that had an abundance of demographic heterogeneity but a paucity of resources. This slow infiltration of the state into minority communities, "not with force but with persuasion," had direct parallels in the Russian empire, which had earlier attempted to use local languages to assimilate the empire's

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importance of school registers. The inspector of Constanţa's Bulgarian school instructed the administration to regulate its archive and maintain in order its passport register "so that the exact civil state of the students may be known and the law of mandatory instruction applied to sons of Romanian citizens."

[165] ANR, MCIP 864/1915, f. 58: Petition to the Ministry by five Muslim citizens of Deleorman, who requested a Turkish language instructor at the local public school, no longer having a private school to which they could send their children.; ANR, MCIP 864/1915, f. 58v: Response to the petition of Muslim parents in Deleorman for a Turkish language instructor at the local public school.

non-ethnically Russian subjects.[166] The tsarist state, which had itself encoded a heterogeneous primary schooling system (1864) during its Great Reforms (1861-1874), selectively adopted native-language instruction (1870) to target non-core groups in geo-strategically vulnerable areas after efforts to force non-ethnically Russian children to receive their primary schooling in the Russian language had failed.[167] The 1870 regulations for the schooling of non-Russians in the provinces of Odessa and, in particular, in the more Islamicized Kazan, drew on the philosophy of Nikolai Ivanovich Il'minskii – a champion of using vernacular languages in the Cyrillic script to combat apostasy among baptized non-Russians in the Kazan – to convert and gain the loyalty of children of non-ethnically Russian pagans, Muslims, and converts to Eastern Orthodoxy.[168] The tsarist state thus marshalled its few resources towards the vernacular schooling of those communities it deemed most in need of assimilation, lacking the funds and bureaucratic apparatus

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[166] Wayne Dowler, *Classroom and Empire: The Politics of Schooling Russia's Eastern Nationalities, 1860-1917* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 40.

[167] Ibid., 42-43; 76-79. The 1864 Education Statute created a heterogeneous system of primary schooling composed of a wide range (almost a dozen) forms of primary schooling, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, the Holy Synod, and several other state ministries. With the exception of schools under the jurisdiction of the Holy Synod, all forms of primary schooling had to follow the state curriculum, which made instruction in the Russian language a requirement. By 1867, the state had placed all the empire's school, with the exception of those overseen by the Church, under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education, and would further entrench that control with its 1874 primary school legislation. Nevertheless, the state had little money to invest in these schools, and therefore left their running mainly to local initiative.

[168] Ibid., 18, 76-79.

to effectively impose forced linguistic Russification.[169] The Romanian state would attempt the same in Northern Dobruja and, by the First World War, would be faced with similarly counterproductive results.

3.4 Glitches in the System

On paper, outsourcing much of the responsibility for education to local communities and private schools that were answerable to the Ministry of Public Instruction and required to teach the Romanian language seemed like a practical solution to the many roadblocks facing Romanian administration in Northern Dobruja. Dobrujan communities, however, were also keenly tuned in to the state's limitations and used its schooling system to exploit them. Non-ethnically Romanian communities in Dobruja manipulated institutional labels to expand the autonomy of their schools and took advantage of the Ministry's weak reach in the region by formally participating in the central schooling system while informally bolstering private education. And, as we saw in the last chapter, they did so by employing "national speak" and invoking the rules and limitations of the system that had been imposed on them. Doing so proved to be a fairly effective strategy prior to the First World War, allowing non-ethnically Romanian communities in Dobruja to keep the

[169] Ibid., 80-82. As Dowler points out, the French and British empires managed to marshal the resources needed to impose the core language onto children in its colonial holdings. It was only once the French Empire began to feel its grasp on its colonies slipping in the aftermath of the First World War that it began allowing for primary schooling in the vernacular language in Indochina (Vietnam).

Ministry of Public Instruction at arm's length and retain the autonomy they had experienced under Ottoman administration.

Part of the answer in accomplishing this lay in Romania's four-pronged private schooling system, which initially placed pre-school institutions on a lower rank of importance and thus left them farther outside the scope of Ministry supervision. Non-ethnically Romanian communities identified this opportunity and used it to maximize instruction in their own languages and faiths. Confessional asylums, which were intended to provide a purely religious instruction for children younger than seven, were particularly useful in this regard, their religious nature providing Dobrujan communities with a shield – the Treaty of Berlin's stipulation that the Kingdom of Romania must not discriminate among its citizens on religious grounds to maintain its sovereignty. Ethno-confessional communities that were concentrated geographically and significant demographically, like Dobruja's Muslims, found this particularly useful. In the case of this group, the Romanian state's efforts to maintain a cordial relationship with the Ottoman state offered Dobrujan Muslims additional means of keeping state intervention at arm's length in matters of primary schooling.

It is for this reason that, even on the eve of the First World War, state inspector Costescu reported that Constanţa's Mahommedan School and accompanying confessional asylum were only posing under the institutional labels under which they had been approved. Costescu's two inspections in spring of 1914 led him to conclude that, although "in appearance a primary school with the state curriculum," this institution was "in reality a place of vast Islamic learning," with "the Ottoman religious and national culture" being "the principal and fundamental" object of

study.[170] The inspector was frustrated by the negligeable space given to Romanian language instruction in comparison to the Turkish, Persian, and Arabic languages and instruction in Ottoman history, as well as by the fact that Muslim girls in the school's adjacent confessional kindergarten were prohibited altogether from learning Romanian.[171] He claimed that, if the Romanian state had "to respect the religion and language of the Ottoman population," it was also its "right" to oppose "manifestations of indifference and hostility towards the language and culture of the Romanian state," which had "defended" this population and "called it to political life."[172]

The state inspector was particularly outraged by the confessional asylum which, besides not teaching Muslim girls the state language, also acted in every respect as not only a primary school, but an *Ottoman* primary school. Contrary to the 1896 Regulation for Private Schools, the kindergarten enrolled children older than seven – some as old as twelve and thirteen – who were taught not only the Quran, but also "writing, reading, Turkish script, arithmetic, and other practical knowledge" – "exactly the objects of study that [were] taught in the Ottoman primary school in Turkey, the school called 'sibyan.'"[173] According to Costescu, "the Muslim Council in Constanţa intentionally gave the designation of confessional asylum to a primary school" where, with no mandatory state curriculum, "they could get away with only four hours of Romanian language instruction a week and, under the pretext of religion," give complete courses in Ottoman

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[170] ANR, MCIP 1688/1914, f. 29: State inspector Gh. Costescu's April 1914 report concerning his observations and recommendations from his two visits to Constanţa's Mahommedan School that spring.

[171] Ibid., f. 29v.

[172] Ibid.

[173] ANR, MCIP 1688/1914, f. 51: State inspector Gh. Costescu's letter to the Ministry concerning Constanţa's Mahommedan School's continuing infractions.

instruction.[174] Muslim children, then, abandoned school early on, "content with the Turkish education they possess[ed]."[175] As Costescu saw it, this did not just deprive those children of a national education, but also rendered the state's expenditure for the school's Romanian language instructors largely a sunk cost.[176] As this illustrative case demonstrates, Dobrujan communities took advantage of the variations in institutional autonomy built into Romania's primary schooling system and manipulated institutional labels in an attempt to evade closer scrutiny by the Ministry of Public Instruction and widen the scope of the non-state education they could offer their children.

Lacking both the resources and the incentive to crack down on these activities, the Ministry of Public Instruction was, until the First World War, largely powerless in the face of such infractions. Not only did the numerically larger and more cohesive communities in Dobruja have, as we shall see in the next chapter, the backing of a trans-regional network of institutions, but they also benefitted from the shortcomings of the public schooling system. In relying to an extent on private schools to extend education to Dobruja's young, the Romanian state not only bolstered the region's private schooling infrastructure – with many such institutions having been established *after* Romania's annexation of Northern Dobruja – but also neglected the extension of its own public schooling system in the region.

As a result, Romanian citizens and subjects in Dobruja often found themselves, like foreign subjects, enrolled in private schools as a result of a lack of space in the region's public schools. This was the case in religious preschools such as the Mahommedan Confessional Asylum in the

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[174] Ibid.

[175] Ibid.

[176] Ibid., f. 51v.

Islamic center of Babadag, whose administration claimed it had admitted boys older than seven in the 1910-1911 school year because the latter had been turned away from the local boys' primary school for lack of spots.[177] In rural areas, where public schools were often non-existent, this was an even more widespread practice. State inspectors frequently complained that confessional asylums in such places far exceeded their allotted enrollment numbers, as was the case with one such Islamic institution in a village in Constanţa County, which was reported to have enrolled sixty girls and twenty boys, far exceeding the thirty-student cap on enrollment.[178] This was, however, an outcome of the very system created by central authorities – not only were public schools insufficient, but the Romanian state's own legislation tied public primary schooling to citizenship and explicitly stated that, "in the case of insufficient spots, preference will be given to the children of Romanians," creating the conditions for non-state institutions to thrive.[179]

Even some of those who held citizenship and found space for their children in local public schools, however, found ways to benefit from private education by formally enrolling their children in state schools while informally sending them to private school. As tended to be the case, these ways of making the most out of the centrally-imposed system were most commonly practiced in urban areas with high concentrations of particular ethno-confessional groups whose demographic and financial resources allowed them to find ways around central directives. Like

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[177] ANR, MCIP 1923/1911, f. 4: Inspection report regarding the Mahommedan confessional asylum in the city of Babadag.

[178] ANR, MCIP 1697/1914, f. 25: Inspection report regarding the Mahommedan confessional asylum in Karatai village, Constanţa County.

[179] Art. 1, "Legea asupra învăţământului primar şi normal primar," Gabriela Alecu et al., *Antologia legilor învăţământului din România* (Bucharest: Institutul de Ştiinţe ale Educaţiei, 2004), 51.

Babadag, for instance, the city of Medgidia – another Islamic stronghold in Northern Dobruja – had, at the turn of the twentieth century, an unauthorized Islamic school with one hundred students in attendance. According to the inspector reporting on the school in 1906, some of the children were also enrolled in the local public school, which had an imam, paid for by the state, to offer lessons in the Ottoman Turkish language and the Islamic faith "with the sole aim of [encouraging] Muslim children to attend the state school, only they [did] not attend it."[180] The inspector, acknowledging that the local public school did not have the capacity to enroll all these children, proposed that the Islamic school be transformed into a branch of the local public school, that the imam paid for by the state be fired, and that a Romanian language instructor be hired to supplement the lessons taught in Turkish so that those children who were "sons of Romanian citizens" could learn "the language of the fatherland."[181]

While the Romanian administration's decision to build upon remnants of Ottoman schooling in Northern Dobruja was a pragmatic and, given the state's limitations in the region, a necessary one, the very system built by central authorities in an attempt to groom new generations of workers and soldiers gave Dobrujan actors the means by which to subvert state schooling. As with its ambiguous state-citizenship legislation, the Romanian state's diversified and decentralized primary schooling system provided many opportunities for private education in non-state languages to thrive. Private school administrations in Dobruja manipulated institutional labels in order to maximize their administrative autonomy and Dobrujan parents profited from the lack of

[180] MCIP 381/1906, f. 20: Inspection report regarding an unauthorized Islamic school in Medgidia, funded by the municipality.

[181] Ibid.

availability and oversight of public schooling to continue pursuing a private education for their children. Until the First World War, the Ministry of Public Instruction tended to only superficially address such infractions, the Romanian state largely lacking the resources, consensus, and incentive to stifle them.

3.5 Conclusion

Facing an internal heterogeneity similar in scope, if not in scale, to that of the land empires surrounding it, the Kingdom of Romania took the path of least resistance in Northern Dobruja, coopting local knowledge and institutions. Like the Ottoman Empire before it, the Romanian state attempted to achieve centralization in this region through selective decentralization, codifying Dobruja's diversified primary schooling landscape and delegating to private schools much of the responsibility of educating the region's young, while imposing an umbrella mandate for Romanian language instruction in all primary institutions. While the hope – as reflected in national education legislation – was to bring all forms of primary schooling under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Instruction, the reality saw the tenuous system legislated by central authorities thwarted from within by Dobrujan actors with the local knowledge and resources to formally work within the system while informally subverting it. Non-ethnically Romanian actors in Dobruja proved adept at expanding non-state curricula under the aegis of carefully-selected institutional labels, exploiting the central administration's lack of resources, and, in another manifestation of "national speak," outwardly complying with the system while practically circumventing it. As we will see in the following chapters, the Romanian state's attempt to employ a selective decentralization within primary schooling not only enabled Dobrujan actors' early manifestations of autonomy

within the field of primary education, but also gave rise to later calls for collective rights in the wake of the First World War. As within the land empires at whose confluence it stood, it would not be "nationalization" but rather the Romanian nation-state's pragmatic modernization efforts that would lay the groundwork for postwar contestations over minority rights.

4.0 Schooling across Borders: Millet Mentalities, National Amphibians, and Imperial Networks in Northern Dobruja, 1878-1914

It was February of 1912 when Romanian schoolteachers in Northern Dobruja received at their snow-covered doorsteps the paper-bound spring edition of the nation's top pedagogical periodical, the *General Journal of Education*. Leafing through the bulky pages in their modest and sparingly warmed homes, they would likely have paused at contributor T. Gheorghiu's article, "Primary schooling in Dobruja," glad to see their peripheral region at last addressed in the journal's pages yet wary about how their efforts would be portrayed therein.[182] Not surprisingly, Gheorghiu lamented the insignificant inroads Romanian education had made into the region. Writing just over a year before Romania would declare war against Bulgaria and annex Southern Dobruja, he proclaimed that "the spirit of Dobruja's populations [was] just as distant," if not more so, from the

[182] As we learned in the first two chapters, Northern Dobruja was a last-resort destination for most Romanian instructors due to its linguistically and ethno-confessional diverse population, its anemic infrastructure, and the low standard of living it offered to public school teachers until the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction began to make more efforts to attract teachers via wage increases, travel vouchers, and land allotments at the start of the twentieth century. Even then, life for Dobrujan public school teachers – at least those who came from Romania's other regions (Wallachia and Moldavia) and typically lacked a local support network – tended to be described by these state employees as rather bleak.

Romanian nation at the time of his writing as it had been thirty-five years prior at Northern Dobruja's "re-annexation" from the Ottoman Empire.[183]

Tellingly, Gheorghiu focused on rural schooling in Tulcea County, the northernmost of the region's two administrative counties, bordering the Russian Empire's coveted Bessarabia region, and his observations accordingly sounded a warning for Romanian education along this perpetually precarious border.[184] Having presented tables amassing primary school enrollment data for the county's main ethno-confessional groups – Romanians, Bulgarians, Russians, Old Believers, and Germans – Gheorghiu concluded that Tulcea's Russians and Old Believers had the lowest rates of enrollment.[185] While in the case of Old Believers he faulted their "primitive" religion for "opposing the cultivation of mind and soul," he identified a more insidious reason for local Slavs' general hostility toward Romanian instruction: Slavic fishermen's "tie[s] to their brothers" from across the Danube.[186] These afforded Dobrujan Slavs "new means of resistance" and even encouraged the "Russification" of ethnic Romanians through intermarriage.[187] Gheorghiu ended his article with an impassioned plea – that Romanians understand once and for

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[183] T. Gheorghiu, "Şcoala primară în Dobrogea," *Revista generală a învăţământului*, VII, no. 7 (Feb. 1912), 422. *Note: The primary sources featured in this chapter are all translated by me from the original Romanian and, in fewer instances, German and French.

[184] The Treaty of Berlin (1878), which granted Romania its independence from Ottoman suzerainty and awarded it Northern Dobruja, also required that it cede Bessarabia back to the Russian Empire. Romanian public opinion was outraged, considering Bessarabia to be a much more geopolitically strategic and ethno-culturally assimilable region than Northern Dobruja.

[185] Gheorghiu, "Şcoala primară în Dobrogea," 423.

[186] Ibid., 425.

[187] Ibid.

all that "only school, helped along by a conscientious administration, [could] transform the mentality of those foreign from [them] and ensure that their children [would] not just speak Romanian, but feel Romanian, too."[188]

This chapter addresses the larger context of Gheorghiu's warning about the "great Northern colossus," which signaled a top concern of Romanian central authorities regarding the new nation-state's first annexed territory and went a long way toward explaining the Romanian state's primary education policies and practices in Dobruja.[189] For, implicit in Gheorghiu's fears, was not so much worry over the failure of "nationalization" or "Romanianization" per se – terms which each only appear once in his six-page article – but rather an underlying anxiety about outward threats to the nation's sovereignty.[190] As a maritime borderland long caught between the Russian Scylla and Ottoman Charybdis, Dobruja's borders were porous and its inhabitants "amphibian."[191] Directives

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[188] Ibid., 427.

[189] Ibid., 425. Gheorghiu referred to the looming Russian Empire to the north as the "great Northern colossus" threatening Romanian territorial sovereignty along the banks of the Danube.

[190] As discussed in the first chapters of this dissertation, I understand "nationalization" in the same way the state actors in my study did – as assimilation to a national culture, defined (usually in terms of language, patriotism, and civic mores) by the governing elites of the nation. "Romanianization" is similar to nationalization but involves ethno-cultural, rather than simply civic, assimilation and implies greater coercion.

[191] The region of Dobruja (Ottoman Dobruca) had been part of the Ottoman Empire for approximately four hundred years before it was granted to Romania (Northern Dobruja) and Bulgaria (Southern Dobruja) in the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78 (at which point the Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia gained independence from Ottoman Suzerainty and, together with Dobruja, formed the newly sovereign Romanian nation-state). For much of its imperial, and part of its national, history, Dobruja was a corridor of war in the perennial conflicts between the Ottoman and Russian Empires due to its strategic geographic position on the northwestern banks of the

handed down from Bucharest had long, poorly-maintained roads to travel and traces of empire were to be seen in every interaction, less an imperial legacy than a palpable, lived reality. Dobrujans' networks of cultural, economic, and diplomatic exchange with the empires and nations to which the Black Sea and Danube gave them access were not severed by Northern Dobruja's annexation but rather became more consciously guarded, affording them resources and protections they would be hard-pressed to receive from their new sovereign. These networks presented Romanian authorities with both opportunities and challenges and they exemplified, better than any other facet of Dobrujan schooling, the pragmatic tightrope the Romanian state walked as it sought to adapt its expansionist ambitions to its modest national form.

In tracing the contours of these networks, this chapter will argue that they were crucial for promoting both Dobrujans' amphibian status and the Romanian state's tentative approach to nationalization. As we saw in previous chapters, there was no clear consensus about what constituted a "Romanian" as a legal category, and the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction, whose administration changed hands even more frequently than the nation's legislature, displayed rather modest goals of "Romanianization."[192] By unpacking Gheorghiu's fears regarding the

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Black Sea.; The term "amphibian" is a reference to the concept of "political amphibian" employed by Chad Bryant in *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007) to describe those peoples who found themselves having to navigate between Nazi Germanization policies and Czech nationalization efforts during and after the Second World War. Since my project deals primarily with Dobrujans' cultural rather than political identifications, I more frequently employ the term "cultural amphibian" to imply a similar strategic fluidity in the cultural life of Dobrujan residents.

[192] As I show in Ch. 1, the Romanian state granted citizenship to all residents of Northern Dobruja at the time of annexation. However, it governed Northern Dobruja via a constitutional regime of exception that required of

Russification (i.e. de-Romanianization) of Dobruja's populations on the banks of the Danube, this chapter will go further toward explaining the Romanian state's guarded steps toward the nationalization of its ethno-confessional minorities, shifting the analytical lens from internal circumstances to external factors. In so doing, it will add another, critical dimension to this project's overarching argument – that of geopolitics. While the practical limitations faced by Romanian administrators in Dobruja are crucial for understanding central authorities' seeming "indifference" to the cultural nationalization of non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans, they are not in themselves sufficient for explaining why, as the First World War chipped away at Dobruja's still less than robust education infrastructure, the Romanian state decisively shifted from a prewar

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Dobrujans all the duties of citizenship with virtually no political rights for the first thirty-five years of Romanian administration. At the same time, the Romanian Constitution, originally codified in 1866, used ambiguous language to define citizenship and gave conflicting impressions of whether "Romanian" was a purely legal category or one also governed, at least in part, by jus sanguinis. These factors gave way to the unofficial creation of three vague and often overlapping categories of citizen-subjects in Dobruja: Romanian citizens, Romanian subjects, and foreign subjects. For an elaboration on these categories and their implications, see Ch. 1.; The Romanian government was notorious for frequently changing hands between the Liberal and Conservative parties and the Ministry of Public Instruction, whose personnel was appointed by the ruling party, also suffered from chronic administrative turnover, making it difficult to successfully implement and enforce its legislation. It is for this reason that, while I employ the term "Romanian state" as a shorthand for the personnel and institutions making up the administrative apparatus of the Romanian nation, I do so with the understanding – elaborated in my introductory chapter – that the Romanian state was made up of diverse and often conflicting voices.

education policy characterized by institutional differentiation and laissez-faire cultural plurality to a postwar policy of concerted Romanianization.[193]

Having carved out its borders from the great, multi-confessional land empires around it, the Romanian nation, like its Dobrujan inhabitants, continued to borrow from the imperial scripts with which it was so familiar as it sought to expand and consolidate its territory and, by extension, its influence in the Black Sea region.[194] As we will see in this chapter, the Romanian state dealt with its Dobrujan citizen-subjects not just as individuals but, unofficially – and in direct contradiction to its Constitution – as collectives, selectively combining Ottoman, Russian, and Habsburg strategies of imperial rule in its dealings with ethno-confessional minorities. Yet, once again, this pragmatic choice constituted a double-edged sword. Filtering its relationship to its Dobrujan citizen-subjects through local religious leaders and ethno-confessional organizations, the Romanian state inadvertently reified these groups' sense of collective belonging and reinforced

[193] I use "indifference" throughout my dissertation in reference to recent scholarship on national indifference, which has described borderland actors as fluid and dynamic in their loyalties and typically agnostic in regards to national affiliation. For representative publications, see: Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans*: A Local History of Bohemian Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); James Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); and Tara Zahra, "Imagined Non-communities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010): 93-119.

[194] After gaining its independence from Ottoman suzerainty in 1878, the new Romanian nation-state began annexing territories from the former margins of the Ottoman, Habsburg, and Russian empires, reaching its greatest territorial extent at the conclusion of the First World War.

the ties they had to like communities outside of Romania's borders.[195] At the same time, the Romanian state itself had schools within neighboring polities and understood these institutions' status as diplomatic bargaining chips. In this sense, it is useful to conceptualize Romanian administration in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Dobruja as some scholars have envisioned early modern empires – "politically fragmented; legally differentiated; and encased in irregular, porous, and sometimes undefined borders."[196] The trans-regional education networks into which central and local actors alike were plugged served to strengthen Dobrujan minorities' negotiating positions vis-à-vis the Romanian state by hitting at the core of the nation-state's primary preoccupation – its sovereignty.[197]

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[195] As we will see later in this chapter, the Romanian state's approach to its non-ethnically Romanian citizen-subjects was modeled on and adapted from Ottoman, Russian, and (to a lesser extent) Habsburg policies that relied on religious intermediaries and granted partial recognition of collective rights to their ethno-confessional minorities.

[196] Some scholars of early modern empires have described these polities' territorial sovereignty as one of uneven nodes of legal plurality rather than of uniform, geographically contiguous legal space. I borrow this concept to explain the Romanian state's uneven and precarious control over its first annexed territory. Although the Romanian state claimed full absorption of Northern Dobruja into its national body, Romanian administration was characterized by legal differentiation, uneven resource and personnel distribution, and precarious borders. See: Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

[197] I understand the term "sovereignty" in a broad sense, as not just internationally recognized legal authority over a territory, but also de facto administrative control over that space.

4.1 A Millet Mentality

Just as in the last chapter we saw the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction co-opting Ottoman schooling infrastructure and tsarist language policies, in this chapter we will see how Romanian authorities drew inspiration from the Ottoman millet system through which the Ottoman state, similarly to its Russian rival, structured its interactions with its non-core groups via religious elites. And, just like the Ottoman Empire looked toward the more rapidly modernizing Habsburg state for an updated ruling strategy that would respond to the rise of nineteenth-century nationalisms, increasingly differentiating among religious millets by ethnicity, so the Romanian state unofficially organized Dobrujan communities according to a combination of confession and ethnicity.

As a result, Romanian authorities filtered their engagement with non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans through community "presidents," who often doubled as spiritual leaders for the groups in question. Without fully codifying this collective organization, the Romanian state hinted at it in its primary schooling legislation when it stated that children belonging to faiths other than the official state religion (i.e. Eastern Orthodoxy) would be excused for absences motivated by the major holidays of their faiths, which holidays would be determined by the Ministry in collaboration with "the leaders of the various confessions."[198] This vague acknowledgement of the intermediary role of these religious elites was, like the Romanian state's other flexible institutions, a means of using local resources as long as national ones were scarce. By giving these actors a stake in local

[198] Art. 27, "Regulament pentru aplicarea legii asupra învăţământului primar şi normal-primar, April 1904" in C. Hamangiu, *Codul General al României, 1856-1907*, 2914.

governance, the state sought to convert them to its cause; by leaving this stake ambiguously defined, the state – as we will see in Chapter 5 – gave itself the freedom to withdraw these privileges when desirable and possible.

In Dobruja, which had had a long history of structural entanglement between religion and education, this consultative role extended to all aspects of primary schooling, with heads of the region's various ethno-confessional groups acting as intermediaries between their community members and the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction and at times serving as directors of their community's primary schools. This was most often the case in the cities of Constanţa and Tulcea, Dobruja's two largest cities and administrative centers, whose primary schools were under much more direct control by regional and local religious elites than schools in more remote rural areas. In these urban centers, all the major ethno-confessional communities engaged with the Ministry of Public Instruction through their spiritual leaders in matters of curriculum, enrollment, and general schooling policy, which gave them more leverage in their negotiations with the state than their more segregated rural counterparts possessed. The Ministry communicated directly with the *epitropii* (vestries or religious councils) of Dobruja's various ethno-confessional groups, whose organization did not rest on religion alone – as had been the case in the earlier iterations of the Ottoman millet "system" or the tsarist state's multi-confessional administration structure – but rather, as had begun to be the practice in the Ottoman state by that point, on a combination of confession and ethnicity, in which the former still held precedence but was nevertheless increasingly fused to the latter.[199]

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[199] The Ottoman millet "system" was a loosely-organized administrative approach intended to organize interactions between the Ottoman state and its non-Muslim groups via the institution of the millet, which divided the empire's

By managing its interactions with Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian residents through the intermediary Islamic, Greek (Orthodox), Bulgarian (Orthodox), German Evangelical, and Jewish councils, the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction – and, by extension, the Romanian state – unofficially acknowledged the collective rights of Dobruja's most numerous ethno-confessional groups.[200] This went in direct contradiction to the nation's Constitution, which explicitly stated, in its 1879 modifications to Article 7, that naturalization would be granted only to individuals, not to collectives.[201] As we will see in the final chapter, this decision would come

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subjects by faith, with Christianity and Judaism constituting separate millets. By the second half of the nineteenth century, spurred on by international pressure and internal discord, the Ottoman state began to recognize ethno-national subdivisions among these millets, with a notable case being that of the Bulgarian Exarchate, which in separating as its own church also gained official recognition as a separate ethno-confessional group within the Ottoman state. The tsarist state pursued a similar organization, co-opting religious elites (and in particular Muslim and Jewish elites) into its bureaucracy and, at times, acting as arbiter between these elites and their laypeople. See: Carla L. Klausner and Kemal Karpat, "An Inquiry into the Social Foundations of Nationalism in the Ottoman State: From Social Estates to Classes, from Millets to Nations," *The American Historical Review* 80 (3) (1975): 695-696.; Robert Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar: Islam and Empire in Russia and Central Asia*, (Harvard University Press, 2006); Eugene Avrutin, *Jews in the Imperial State: Identification Politics in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).

[200] I put "Orthodox" in parentheses following "Greek" and "Bulgarian," as these councils did not explicitly state their religious denomination in their titles, but this was, nevertheless, implied in the titles themselves: "Epitropia Greacă" (the Greek vestry) and "Epitropia Bulgară" (the Bulgarian vestry). As these communities were typically Eastern Orthodox and included this faith in their schools' curricula, it is safe to assume that these religious councils were Eastern Orthodox.

[201] As discussed in Ch. 2, Romania's 1866 Constitution was modified – as a condition the Great Powers placed on their recognition of Romanian independence – upon Northern Dobruja's annexation to remove religious constraints on the acquisition of citizenship, making it possible for non-Christians to become naturalized. The modified Article 7

back to plague the Romanian state after the First World War, when Dobrujan groups would appeal to this tradition of *de facto* collective privileges, incorporating it into the new rhetoric of Wilsonian minority rights to call for greater group liberties. For the time being, this informal collective organization, far from being an oversight, was aimed at quelling non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans' fears of forced assimilation and – as we will see in the following section – making use of their resources and institutions when and where the Romanian state lacked its own. Religious leaders had more sway over their communities, from both a practical and a spiritual standpoint, than the Ministry could in most cases hope to have and, by integrating them into the administration of Dobrujan primary schools, the Ministry sought to harness that influence for itself.[202]

It was for this reason that agents of the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction heard petitions by Dobrujan groups regarding matters of schooling and actively appealed to community presidents in their hiring decisions, acknowledging these community-appointed leaders' limited positions of power within the state bureaucracy. Dobruja's religious organizations were well-aware of their leverage and were quick to remind the Ministry of their authority over their community schools. This was the case in fall of 1914, when the Jewish vestry (*epitropie*) and

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of this revised Constitution also explicitly stated that only individuals, not collectives, would be granted naturalization, implying that there would be no recognition of collective rights within the Romanian state. See: Art. 7 of the 1879 Romanian Constitution, as well as Constantin Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities: The Making of Romanian Citizenship, c. 1750-1918* (Leiden: Brill, 2019) for a detailed overview of the elaboration of Romanian citizenship law during the long nineteenth century.

[202] Scholarship on Islam in post-Ottoman lands has highlighted the continuity of Islamic intermediaries in former Ottoman territories. See: Egdunas Racius and Antonina Zhelyazkova, *Islamic Leadership in the European Lands of the Former Ottoman and Russian Empires: Legacy, Challenges and Change* (Boston: BRILL, 2018).

affiliated Jewish school board of Tulcea County wrote to the Ministry requesting that the director of Tulcea's Jewish confessional school be replaced as he had been appointed by the school administration without the knowledge or approval of these councils; the vestry further requested that all official correspondence related to the Jewish school be addressed to them.[203] In turn, the Ministry acknowledged these organizations' intermediary role, agreeing to field school correspondence through their institutions and requesting their nomination of new hires.[204]

By recognizing a consultative role for non-ethnically Romanian communities within its education system, the Romanian state was thus able to quell fears of despotic assimilation and comply with the directives it had received from the Great Powers upon its annexation of Northern Dobruja to not discriminate against anyone on its territory on the basis of ethnicity or religion.[205]

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[203] Arhivele Naţionale ale României (ANR), Ministerul Cultelor şi Instrucţiunii Publice (MCIP) 1998/1914, ff. 6, 7: Telegram from Tulcea's Jewish School Committee asking for the replacement of the director of the local Jewish confessional school; Letter from the Jewish vestry of Tulcea County requesting that all Ministry correspondence related to Tulcea's Jewish confessional school be sent to them.

[204] ANR, MCIP 1998/1914, f. 7v: Ministry's response to the Jewish vestry of Tulcea asking it to nominate a new director for Tulcea's Jewish confessional school.

[205] Article XLIV of the Treaty of Berlin (1878) read: "In Romania the difference of religious creeds and confessions shall not be alleged against any person as a ground for exclusion or incapacity in matters relating to the enjoyment of civil or political rights, admission to public employments, functions, and honors, or the exercise of the various professions and industries, in any locality whatsoever. The freedom and outward exercise of all forms of worship shall be assured to all persons belonging to Romania, as well as to foreigners, and no hindrance shall be offered either to the hierarchical organization of the different communions, or to their relations with their spiritual chiefs. The subjects and citizens of all the Powers, traders or others, shall be treated in Romania without distinction of creed, on a footing

This explains why correspondence between the Ministry and Dobrujan private schools regarding new hires often included rhetoric similar to what we find in the Ministry's response to a 1911 petition by Muslim parents in the Islamic urban center of Medgidia upon their calls that the instructor fired by their community president be reinstated.[206] Although the Ministry agreed to temporarily extend the instructor's contract, it asked the Muslim community to propose a replacement who knew the Romanian language, "and whose appointment may also align with the decency and respect that [was] owed to Islamic mores."[207] Although Dobruja's Muslims were afforded certain special privileges due to the Romanian state's close diplomatic ties to the Ottoman Empire, other groups were also given similar, albeit more lukewarm, consideration. The Russian community in Tulcea is one such example, a state inspector ending his 1909 report justifying his proposal to the Ministry to require a Romanian language instructor alongside the local Russian school's Russian language instructor by saying that this arrangement "could satisfy the requirements of both the state and the local Russian community, which funds the school."[208] Albeit a pragmatic choice of wording, the inspector's use of this rhetoric, even if lacking in substance, pointed to the importance this consultative concept had for governing interactions between the Ministry and Dobruja's various ethno-confessional groups.

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of perfect equality." Fordham University, "Modern History Sourcebook: The Treaty of Berlin, 1878, Excerpts on the Balkans," https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu.

[206]ANR, MCIP 1674/1911, f. 13: Petition from Muslim parents in Medgidia that the instructor at the local confessional school be retained in his post, against the wishes of their community President.

[207] ANR, MCIP 1674/1911, f. 13v: Ministry's response to the petition from Medgidia's Muslim community.

[208] ANR, MCIP 1642/1909, f. 13v: Inspection report of Tulcea's Russian school, "The Transfiguration of Jesus."

Yet Romanian authorities did not always approve these communities' choices and in some instances even used the powers the Ministry had extended to religious intermediaries to make it more difficult for Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian communities to exercise their consultative privileges. Such was the case when, in spring of 1914, the Ministry received a request from a Numan Sadâc Osman that he replace Agiveli Şaşac, then sole instructor at the local Islamic school, on account of the latter's complete lack of knowledge of the Romanian language.[209] Mr. Osman received a prompt response from the Ministry, which informed him that in order for his request to be considered he had to first appeal to the local Islamic community and convince its members to propose his appointment.[210] This petition did in fact soon follow, signed in Arabic and Latin script by seventeen Muslim notables.[211] Alas, it did not suffice to earn Mr. Osman his coveted spot – after requesting that he submit education records and a notarized certificate of good conduct, the Ministry concluded that Mr. Osman could not be approved as he did not possess a diploma from the regional Mufti attesting to his abilities to teach the precepts of the Islamic faith.[212] In this way, the Ministry could hold good on its promise to respect the mores and religious hierarchy of local Islamic communities while simultaneously using that system to impose roadblocks to the exercise of those communities' wills.

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[209] ANR, MCIP 1696/1914, f. 21: Letter by a resident of the Carol I village in Constanţa County addressing the Ministry with a request that he be named as a replacement for the local Islamic instructor due to the latter's lack of knowledge of the Romanian language.

[210] ANR, MCIP 1696/1914, f. 21v: The Ministry's initial response to Mr. Osman's request.

[211] ANR, MCIP 1696/1914, ff. 22-22v: Petition signed by Carol I's Muslim notables requesting Mr. Osman's appointment.

[212] Ibid., f. 30: The Ministry's final word on Mr. Osman's request.

At the same time, the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction sought to groom a new generation of Muslim intermediaries – once more singling out this group for its special relationship to the Romanian state – in order to slowly dilute Islamic religious leaders' influence over the spiritual and cultural life of Dobrujan Muslims.[213] This is did through the state-sponsored Islamic Seminary in the Islamic urban center of Babadag, which institution was intended to serve as the only approved training school for the formation of Dobruja's Islamic religious and pedagogical personnel.[214] As such, admission was restricted to Muslim children, older than twelve years of age but younger than sixteen, who could provide proof of Romanian citizenship via birth certificates and identity cards released by their respective city halls, and who would successfully pass an

[213] This feature of Romanian administration in Dobruja bears striking similarities to the tsarist state's integration of Islam into the administrative structure of the empire. Catherine the Great created the Orenburg Spiritual Assembly in 1788, endowing religious leaders with certain consultative privileges. This allowed the tsarist state to employ Islamic leaders as intermediaries between Muslim laypeople and the state and as co-guardians of Islamic doctrine and practice within the empire, which was to be overseen and regulated by the Assembly. Although the Romanian state had no such formal institution in place, it employed religious – and, in particular, Islamic leaders – in a very similar fashion in order to attract the loyalty of its Muslim citizen-subjects while simultaneously positioning the Romanian state as protector of Muslim laypeople and arbiter between them and their community leaders. For more on how Islam was coopted by the tsarist state, see: Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar* (2009). As Crews noted of tsarist-controlled Crimea, "only the Black Sea separated" Dobruja from the Ottoman Empire, making Dobrujan Muslims a particular priority for the Romanian state's efforts to assimilate and gain the loyalty of its new citizen-subjects, as they had been for the tsarist state. Crews, 13.

[214] Art. 1, "Regulament pentru organizarea seminariului musulman din Dobrogea, 17 August 1904," C. Hamangiu, *Codul General al României, 1856*-1907, 3163.

examination testing their reading of the Quran.[215] Once admitted, students were to receive instruction in Islamic texts, in the Romanian, Arabic, and Turkish languages, and in Romanian history, geography, and civic law, among other core subjects, in order to form a new cadre of Islamic instruction in Dobruja.[216] Meanwhile, their seminary, as an appendage of the state, was to be administered only by directors who held Romanian citizenship, had a good grasp on the Romanian language, and were appointed by royal decree.[217] In this way, Dobruja's Islamic Seminary would be "under the immediate and direct control of the Ministry of Public Instruction and of the inspectorate of secondary education; the mufti of the respective county [having] only the task of overseeing the religious portion" of the program.[218]

The Romanian state's reliance on religious intermediaries whose consultative privileges it only vaguely acknowledged in national education legislation thus allowed it to conserve its meager resources while simultaneously extending its influence over Dobruja's diverse ethno-confessional groups. Religious intermediaries and community presidents generally had greater influence over the laypeople whom they served and were more likely to convince the general population to comply with central directives. These intermediaries benefited by having their authority partially recognized by the state and were thus incentivized to guard this relationship. Their community members, for their part, could have a consultative role in schooling decisions and their collective identity unofficially recognized, serving to quell the fears of some regarding cultural assimilation, while bolstering for many others their sense of group belonging – as we will see in the following

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[215] Art. 6, "Regulament pentru organizarea seminariului musulman din Dobrogea," 3163-3164.

[216] Art. 3, "Regulament pentru organizarea seminariului musulman din Dobrogea," 3163.

[217] Art. 23, "Regulament pentru organizarea seminariului musulman din Dobrogea," 3166.

[218] Art. 34, "Regulament pentru organizarea seminariului musulman din Dobrogea," 3166.

section. From the Romanian state's perspective, therefore, the inheritance of the Ottoman millet system served, with modifications, to help it gain some semblance of oversight and influence over Dobruja's diverse ethno-confessional landscape.

Like the Ottoman and Russian empires in their final centuries of rule, the Romanian nation-state was hesitant to leave behind confession as an organizational principle of its administration and sought to use the existent religious hierarchy of Dobrujan communities to make inroads into their cultural life. Dobruja's main ethno-confessional groups – Muslims, Jews, and various Christian denominations (Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic, Gregorian, etc.) – thus interacted with the Romanian state in much the same way as they had done with the imperial governments under whose protection many had found themselves prior to Romania's annexation of Northern Dobruja.[219] Just as the multi-confessional Ottoman and Russian states had implemented a policy of toleration as a means of "transform[ing] religious authority in each community into an instrument of imperial rule," so the Romanian state recognized the intermediary role of religious elites in a bid to expand its influence over non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans while maximizing its resources.[220] This was not so much an official policy of toleration, as was the case for the Sublime Porte and the tsarist state at that time, but rather an unofficial practice in which the Romanian state sought to have its cake and eat it, too.[221] By adapting the strategies of rule

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[219] For an example of scholarship exploring the role of religious institutions in the collective identification and memory of the post-Ottoman Balkans, see: Theodora Dragostinova and Yana Hashamova, eds. *Beyond Mosque, Church, and State: Alternative Narratives of the Nation in the Balkans* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016).

[220] Crews, *For Prophet and Tsar* (2009), 2.

[221] I employ the term "toleration" to refer to a state policy of recognizing certain basic collective rights of individuals who did not belong to the official state religion (in this case Eastern Orthodoxy). As opposed to "tolerance," which

employed by its imperial neighbors, whose ethno-confessional make-up, if not size, it resembled, the Romanian state hoped to conserve resources, quell fears of forced assimilation, and gain a foothold in communities that may otherwise have been too resistant to its interference – without, however, encoding these groups' privileges firmly into law. As we will see in the final chapter, this institutional flexibility facilitated the Romanian state's post-WWI transition from an education policy guided by relative cultural plurality to one intent on concerted Romanianization.

4.2 Imperial Networks

The Romanian state's use of religious intermediaries thus afforded it with clear practical advantages – chief among them, the delegation of authority and outsourcing of school financing – but it also presented predictable challenges to the Romanian education mission in Dobruja. Local community organizations did not exist in a vacuum and regional religious leadership was not self-sustained. Those individual and institutional intermediaries upon whom the Romanian state relied to maximize its scarce resources in Dobruja often appealed to wider cultural, financial, and diplomatic networks to keep their schooling projects afloat. These networks extended not just within the wider Romanian national space, but also outward, across the Black Sea and the Danube,

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implies a moral dimension that acknowledges an objective parity between various faiths, "toleration" connotes a more pragmatic approach. As we will see below, the historical actors in my study often employed the term "tolerance" even more loosely, to imply goodwill and permissiveness toward non-core (non-Eastern Orthodox and/or non-ethnically Romanian) groups. For more on this distinction, see: Paul Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

into the old empires and new nations bordering the Romanian state, and consisted of familial ties, commercial relations, religious affiliations, and trans-regional organizations that helped sustain the cultural life of Dobruja's various ethno-confessional groups. As a result of these trans-regional ties, non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans were able to maintain the culturally and politically amphibian status they had cultivated as residents of a maritime imperial borderland and have leverage in their dealings with the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction until the geopolitical circumstances inaugurated by the First World War prompted the Romanian state to shift its approach to its territorial minorities.

Since, as we have seen, Dobrujan communities were often defined, by the Romanian state and by their own members, to a great extent according to confession – a practice reflected in these schools' affiliation with local churches, mosques, and synagogues – it was only natural that their trans-regional networks be built, in large part, on ties to religious institutions abroad.[222] Constanţa's German Evangelical school was a case in point. A commercial school clumsily masquerading as a religious institution, Dobruja's largest German school fostered strong and consistent ties with evangelical and commercial institutions in the German Empire and across the Black Sea region. As attested by its detailed and meticulously organized school records, the largest node in its trans-regional network was the Superior Evangelical Church Council of Berlin, which had supplemented local community donations to help establish the school in 1901 through collaboration with Constanţa's Evangelical Church, itself a project financed with the help of the

[222] Constanţa's small Armenian school, for instance, was located on the grounds of the local Armenian church. See: ANR, MCIP 683I/1896, f. 36.

Berlin Council a decade earlier.[223] The school's affiliation with this large religious institution in the heart of the German Empire afforded it financial and material assistance in many forms, not only as direct subsidies from the Berlin Council but also through the Council's wider network of institutional connections and the social influence it exerted, which it often rallied in service of Constanţa's German Evangelical School through individual endowments and community fundraisers.[224]

By tapping into their wider trans-regional networks, which often held religious institutions as their largest nodes, Dobruja's diverse communities were able to secure funding for their private schools to supplement local financing and make up for the Romanian state's general lack of assistance through its national Schooling Endowment (*Casa Şcoalelor*). Schools like Constanţa's German Evangelical School or Sulina's Greek School in Tulcea County, whose commercial leanings were bolstered by their locations in larger urban centers along principal waterways, were particularly adept at cultivating these connections, expanding them outward from religious institutions to foreign enterprises. These provided them with textbooks and pedagogical materials that they would import for use in their classrooms in order to replicate, as closely as possible, the

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[223] Arhivele Naţionale ale României – Constanţa (ANRC), Fondul Comunităţii Evanghelice Luterane din Constanţa (CELC), inventar, 1-2; CELC 7/1889, ff. 224-226v; MCIP 1923/1911, f. 7.

[224] ANRC, Comunitatea Evanghelică Luterană Constanţa (CELC) 17/1905-1915, ff. 1, 12 (loose-leaf, unnumbered): List of donation amounts from the Evanghelicher Ober-kirchenar in Berlin for evangelical societies in Dobruja; Donation to Constanţa's German Evangelical community from a Protestant Consistory in the Anhalt-Dessau principality of the German Empire; ANRC, CELC 16/1909-1915, f. 21 (loose-leaf, unnumbered): List of donation amounts to German schools in Dobruja and Sofia (Bulgaria) from the Central Board of the Evangelical Association of the Gustav Adolf Foundation in Leipzig.

programs of study in their community schools abroad.[225] In turn, the import of textbooks such as the *Volksbuch vaterländischer Dichter* (*Popular Book of Fatherland Poets*) for German schools reinforced the cultural unity of the group in question.[226] This endeavor would also be facilitated by subscriptions to publications circulating outside of Romania's borders, which kept Dobrujan communities abreast of developments abroad and further contributed to the trans-regional exchange of resources on which their schools relied.[227]

In addition, these same networks afforded Dobrujan private schools with instructors and administrators, ensuring an even more direct means of continuity between their curricula and those of community schools abroad. This practice was widespread among Dobruja's various ethno-confessional groups, their trans-regional networks matching them with instructors trained in religious and secular pedagogical colleges outside Romania's borders. It was thus that private school hiring records were littered with the names of applicants from across Europe and the Black Sea region, some who had reached out to these schools after coming across their vacancy ads in newspapers abroad and others who had been solicited by the schools themselves or recommended to their posts by virtue of their affiliation with the foreign institutions with which Dobrujan private schools were associated. Unsurprisingly, Dobruja's urban German and Greek schools, whose

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[225] ANRC, CELC, 20-1911-1914, f. 13 (loose-leaf, unnumbered): Advertisement for a second-grade German reading manual from a publishing house in Leipzig.

[226] ANRC, CELC 16/1909-1915.

[227] ANRC, CELC, 20/1911-1914, f. 18 (loose-leaf, unnumbered): Subscription advertisement for the "Deutsches Orient-Jahrbuch, 1913," a "politico-historical, commercial, and touristic almanac for the Near-Orient"; ANRC, CELC, 15/1908-1910, f. 15 (loose-leaf, unnumbered): Receipt for Constanța German Evangelical School's subscription to the *Teaching Vacancies* newspaper published in Berlin.

communities included many craftsmen and traders, most commonly imported instructors along with pedagogical materials for their schools. Constanţa's German Evangelical School, for instance, posted "Teacher Wanted" ads in newspapers circulating within the German Empire, Austro-Hungary, and other German-speaking areas of Europe and as a result received applicants from places such as Berlin, Leipzig, Vienna, and Breslau, as well as from other European states and various other regions of Romania.[228] Dorbuja's Greek communities also regularly engaged in this practice, staffing their schools with administrators and instructors who received their pedagogical training in Greek-speaking areas of southeastern Europe, most commonly in Athens and Istanbul, but also from less cosmopolitan locations like Izmir and Gallipoli.[229]

Yet these hiring networks did not constitute a closed circuit – instructors solicited from abroad typically remained plugged into the communities from which they came, maintaining connections to their hometowns and pedagogical institutions, as well as participating in trans-regional organizations that put them in touch with colleagues from across Eurasia. The example of Constanţa's German Evangelical School is once more instructive, its faculty participating in organizations such as the Association of Directors and Teachers of German Schools in Romania,

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[228] See: ANRC, CELC, 7/1899, f. 35; ANRC, CELC 15/1908-1910; ANR, MCIP 271/1920, f. 201; ANR, MCIP 2448/1915, f. 26; ANR, MCIP 1690/1908, ff. 10, 13.

[229] ANR, MCIP 2350/1913, ff. 13, 31.; ANR, MCIP 2447/1915, f. 21.; ANR, MCIP 1991/1914, ff. 34, 47; ANR, MCIP 2732/1915, f. 27 verso.; ANR, MCIP 2446/1915, ff. 16, 5: Certificate from a rural mayor in the district of Constantinople (Istanbul) attesting to the good conduct of the director of Constanţa's Greek Boys' School; Request to extend teaching contract of an instructor at Constanţa's Greek Boys' School despite the latter's inability to provide the Ministry with a certificate of good conduct, a failure that he blamed on the (Balkan) war that prevented him from acquiring this documentation from his former place of employment in Gallipoli.

as well as of the Europe-wide Association of German School Teachers.[230] As part of these organizations, they would attend regional conferences, subscribe to newsletters, and contribute to social programs and community fundraisers. These types of membership strengthened Dobrujan Germans' foreign affiliations and their identification to a pan-German culture, which was incentivized not just through employment connections but also by the social safety-nets provided by these organizations in the form of health insurance and continuing education programs.[231] The multi-faceted trans-regional networks sustained by Dobruja's private schools thus afforded the region's various ethno-confessional communities with crucial funding, materials, and personnel, which made possible the perpetuation of their cultural and religious life under Romanian administration.

The Balkan Wars (1912-13) that would erupt in the region after decades of relative peace did nothing to weaken these networks – quite the contrary. These conflicts displaced masses of people across southeastern Europe, among them primary school-aged children, whose parents fled to Dobruja to avoid the bloodier wars that raged in more hotly contested areas. It was thus that the director of Constanţa's Greek boys' school came to write to the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction asking it to approve the graduation of twenty-five students who had come to Dobruja after fleeing their schools on the coasts of "Asia Minor" and "Thrace" (modern-day Turkey, Bulgaria, and Greece) and had been held back two years due to the wars in their homelands.[232]

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[230] See: ANRC, CELC 16/1909-1915; ANRC, CELC 20/1911-1914.

[231] ANRC, CELC, 20-1911-1914, f. 4 (loose-leaf, unnumbered): Statutes regarding the health insurance provided by the Association of German School Teachers.

[232] ANR, MCIP 1689/1914, f. 24: Letter from the director of Constanţa's Greek Boys' School asking for leniency towards the students it had enrolled after they had been displaced from their homelands due to the Balkan Wars.

Although this plea was denied, the school's enrollment of these displaced students and the Greek community's support of them bolstered the ties between ethnically Greek communities in the Black Sea region. In fact, the basis for the Ministry's denial of the director's request reaffirms this point – as the functionary replying to the original petition clearly stated, the Ministry believed that the school's concessions to these foreign students put the Romanian language "on a lower rank of importance" than the Greek.[233]

These trans-regional ties therefore reinforced and – like the Romanian state's use of religious intermediaries – reified these groups' languages and related sense of collective belonging. Being plugged into wider networks of social, economic, and cultural interaction fostered a sense of continuity of thought and experience with others who ascribed to the same language and faith. By employing similar pedagogical materials, curriculum, and instructors and engaging in mutual aid with like communities outside of Romania's borders, Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian residents were able to transcend internationally recognized borders and continue to act as the amphibians they had been under empire. As we will see in the following section, this activity came to appear increasingly threatening to Romanian sovereignty as the regional wars of the early twentieth century scrambled the geopolitical landscape of the Balkan Peninsula.

[233] ANR, MCIP 1689/1914, f. 24: Margin response from the Ministry to the director of Constanţa's Greek Boys' School.

4.3 Mutually Assured Destruction

Predictably, the important role played by religious intermediaries in matters of schooling, along with non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans' robust trans-regional networks, bolstered the cultural life of Dobruja's diverse ethno-confessional groups and presented the Romanian state with both real and perceived threats to its sovereignty. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Slavic populations along Dobruja's precarious borders – with the Russian Empire to the north and the Bulgarian nation-state to the south – were viewed by Romanian officials with particular suspicion and hostility, their extensive ties to geographically proximate, expansionist polities singling them out as actual or potential enemies of the state. These and other groups in Dobruja whose extensive foreign networks afforded them resources and leverage would come to be viewed with growing concern by the Romanian government, whose officials came increasingly to view ties to foreign institutions as incompatible with loyalty to the Romanian nation. Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian communities were well-aware of these fears and would capitalize on them when the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction would attempt to curtail the pseudo-autonomy of their schools, appealing to these trans-regional networks and diplomatic connections, as well as to Romania's own network of schools in southeastern Europe, to dissuade further action against their collective life.

It is due to such concerns that a contributor to the November 1913 edition of the *General Journal of Education* – published several months after Romania had annexed Southern Dobruja from Bulgaria in the Second Balkan War – doubled down on T. Gheorghiu's warning about the foreign networks of Dobrujan Slavs, calling on the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction to exert a firmer hand in the newly-annexed territory. Outraged by the "enemy" sentiments he ascribed to Northern Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian groups, Brutus Cotovo blamed a too lax

Romanian policy toward private schools for permitting the propagation of these communities' trans-regional ties. Cotovo traced the roots of Bulgarian and Greek schooling along the banks of the Danube to the last two decades of Ottoman rule in Dobruja, during which time these schools had established close ties to their communities' religious institutions, the majority of these schools being located on the grounds of local churches.[234] Of greater concern to him was the fact that these connections facilitated' Greek schools' recruitment of instructors from Athens and Bulgarian schools' employment of "foreigners, missionaries from Bulgaria, some with degrees from Russia."[235] As Cotovo saw it, "the irredentist interests" of Romania's neighbors prompted them to send to Dobruja "such missionaries in order to maintain and fuel the patriotic fire of the [local] Slavic population, and in particular of Bulgarians, in view of their future territorial expansion."[236]

Cotovo, echoing the concerns of many a Romanian statesman and pedagogue, thus explicitly connected the schooling, religious institutions, and trans-regional networks of Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian communities to threats to the nation's sovereignty. He elaborated on the impact of these foreign ties, telling readers how the "cultural unity of the population of Slavic origin" in Tulcea was bolstered by a local club formed in Ottoman times which housed a respectable library with holdings imported from St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Sofia.[237] These communities' cultural unity was also encouraged by their self-segregated neighborhoods in the city, by religious services in their native languages, by a variety of social clubs, and, most

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[234] Brutus Cotovo, "Scoalele din Dobrogea. Influenţa lor asupra populaţiunii, importanţa si rolul grădinilor de copii." *Revista generală a învăţământului*, IX, no. 4 (Nov. 1913), 176.

[235] Cotovo, 176.

[236] Ibid.

[237] Ibid., 177.

ominously, by well-funded and popular private schools, "led by foreign personnel" who "maintained intact their national consciousness and achieved a total cooling for [their] adoptive fatherland."[238]

Like others before and after him, Cotovo blamed this dire state of things on the Romanian administration's tolerance and on the Ministry of Public Instruction's indecisiveness and inefficacy. He declared it "evident" that the Romanian government had shown (*uzat* – literally, overused) too much tolerance toward foreigners, being too permissive in allowing the functioning of "foreign" schools, "whose objective was entirely contrary" to the Romanian's state's interests.[239] He also lamented that efforts on behalf of past Ministers of Public Instruction to curtail the foreign influence on Dobrujan private schools came to naught as a result of too frequent changes in the Ministry's personnel.[240] These criticisms were echoed by other concerned Romanian pedagogues and functionaries, who, by the first decade of the twentieth century, came increasingly to resent the tolerance they believed the Romanian state had shown to non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans. Some even connected the concept of tolerance to that of rights, reinforcing the Romanian state's consistent efforts to cast citizenship as a collection of duties more so than of rights. This is reflected, for example, in the language employed by a concerned and "devoted" "subject" in his lengthy letter to the Ministry in fall of 1907, in which he enumerated the alleged transgressions of Constanţa's Armenian School instructors and declared that the Armenian community, "seeing that [such irregularities] had been tolerated," had come to believe that "such

[238] Ibid., 178.

[239] Ibid., 178, 175.

[240] Cotovo, 179.

tolerance [was] an obligation for the Romanian state."[241] Those concerned by non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans' relative community insularity and trans-regional networks therefore picked up on the potential liabilities of the Romanian state's unofficial acknowledgement of these citizen-subjects' collective rights.

At the same time, however, there seemed to be a general consensus that the Romanian administration was not in a position to decisively impose itself on its subject populations. Cotovo hinted as much when he presented tsarist Russification policies in Bessarabia as an example to follow, yet moderated his enthusiasm with the acknowledgement that the Russian Empire had been "exaggerated" in its complete lack of acceptance of the Romanian language in schools and churches.[242] When praising renowned liberal Minister of Public Instruction Spiru Haret's decision to open a new state school with a Bulgarian course of study just one day after shutting down Dobruja's Bulgarian schools at the start of the 1902 school year – on account of their persistent violation of central directives – Cotovo claimed that this course of action "debilitated" those who would have liked to have "agitated public opinion and exploited the good faith of those of foreign origin."[243] Had the schools remained closed and Dobruja's Bulgarian children entirely deprived of instruction in their maternal tongue, this state of things would have proved "detrimental to the prestige and interests of the state."[244]

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[241] ANR, MCIP 1479/1907, f. 21: Letter from a Dobrujan subject reporting to the Ministry alleged transgressions at Constanţa's Armenian School.

[242] Cotovo, 179.

[243] Cotovo, 177.

[244] Ibid.

This was even more so since Romania fancied itself, in the aftermath of a successful Balkan campaign, as peacekeeper in the Balkans and had its own network of schools in neighboring states. By the final decade of the nineteenth century, Romania had founded primary and secondary schools across the Black Sea region, particularly in the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia.[245] These schools typically had to compete for students with better established schools founded earlier by other ethnic groups and struggled to attract and retain instructors due to the low salaries they offered.[246] Those schools that existed in urban commercial centers, like the Romanian primary school in Sofia, Bulgaria, also contended with an unstable school population, their students being perpetually relocated "due to the instability of their parents, who move[d] from city to city in search of small business opportunities."[247] Such difficulties, along with the subordinate position these schools held within these neighboring polities, contributed to deterring the Romanian state from imposing any particularly oppressive cultural policies at home.[248] Romanian

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[245] ANR, MCIP 161/1898, f. 10: Order to send copies of the popular Romanian periodical *Albina* (*The Bee*) to Romanian schools in the Ottoman Empire through the Romanian Embassy in Constantinople (Istanbul).

[246] ANR. MCIP 166/1898, ff. 179v, 253-254: Report regarding the Romanian primary school in Sofia, Bulgaria, mentioning the difficulties faced by the school's administration due to the school's recent founding (three years prior) and local Romanian children's attendance of the better established Bulgarian and Greek schools in the city; Instructor at the Romanian primary school in Sofia, Bulgaria complaining that his salary was lower that that of his colleagues employed within the Romanian state.

[247] ANR, MCIP 166/1898, f. 179: Report regarding the Romanian primary school in Sofia, Bulgaria from the school's director.

[248] ANR, MCIP 632/1895, f. 69: Letter from the director of Sofia's Romanian primary school to the Romanian Minister of Public Instruction asking that all communication concerning the school be sent through the Bulgarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to avoid any potential conflicts with the Bulgarian state.

schools abroad depended on the goodwill of the states in which they were located, causing the Romanian state to tread carefully in its dealings with Dobrujan private schools. As we will see in the final chapter, although the changed geopolitical circumstances that resulted from the First World War caused the Romanian state to take more dramatic steps to nationalize its minority populations, Romania's own trans-regional education networks continued to impact Romanian education policy at home.

Dobruja's diverse communities were cognizant of the diplomatic concerns that weighed on the Romanian state's mind in its dealings with its non-ethnically Romanian citizen-subjects and reminded the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction of this fact when it seemed to be encroaching too far on their schools. Dobruja's Islamic communities, connected, as they were, to the nearby Ottoman Empire and benefiting from the Romanian state's close diplomatic ties to this polity, did not hesitate to play this card when they felt pressed to do so. Such was the case for Constanţa's Mahommedan School in the spring of 1914, after a scathing inspection report threatened it with disciplinary action. As we saw in the last chapter, state inspector Gh. Costescu reported that, although "in appearance a primary school with the state curriculum," this institution was "in reality a place of vast Islamic learning, with instructors recruited from Constantinople, some licensed, others former professors and directors of the Ottoman pedagogical college."[249] He concluded that "the Ottoman religious and national culture" was "the principal and fundamental" object of study and that Turkish, Persian, and Arabic were given far more weight than the

[249] ANR, MCIP 1688/1914, f. 29: State inspector Gh. Costescu's April 1914 report concerning his observations and recommendations from his two visits to Constanţa's Mahommedan School that spring.

Romanian language.[250] Costescu therefore urged the Ministry to "intervene with all its energy" and stifle the influence of the Mufti of Constanţa County, who considered that Muslim cultural institutions "did not enjoy sufficient tolerance" and who had issued a warning that if the Romanian state did not pull back, there would be, in the Mufti's words, "discontent, unrest … strained relations with the Ottoman Empire."[251]

The Mufti's warning was echoed in subsequent correspondence from Constanţa's Muslim Community leaders, who invoked the Romanian state's declared commitment to religious toleration and its promise to not stifle the cultural life of its non-ethnically Romanian citizen-subjects. The local Islamic community president, Hafiz Rifat, stated that the complex structure of Ottoman Turkish required a lot of instructional time and that ceding more hours to the Romanian language would go against the very purpose for which the school was founded and render in vain the material sacrifices the local Muslim community had made to fund the school.[252] As regarded Romanian language instruction specifically for Muslim girls – which inspector Costescu had also demanded of the affiliated Islamic confessional kindergarten – this was, for all intents and purposes, out of the question. President Rifat stated, in no uncertain terms, that forcing this secular education upon young Muslim girls would go against both Islamic custom and the Romanian state's own promise to uphold it. He reminded the Ministry that the Romanian state, "animated by a spirit of tolerance," promised religious freedom to Dobrujan Muslims in its *Law for the*

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[250] ANR, MCIP 1688/1914, f. 29: State inspector Gh. Costescu's April 1914 report concerning his observations and recommendations from his two visits to Constanţa's Mahommedan School that spring.

[251] Ibid.

[252] Ibid., f. 44.

Organization of Dobruja (1880) and that, "by virtue of this law," Muslim girls were exempt from mandatory schooling "(whether public or private)."[253]

The Romanian state's pragmatic decision to employ religious intermediaries and unofficially recognize collective privileges for Dobruja's various ethno-confessional groups thus came to be seen by state officials as an increasing liability. These practices served to reify the sense of collective belonging of non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans and to provide them with leverage in their negotiations with the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction. The Romanian state's geopolitical considerations, which were amplified by concerns for its own trans-regional network of schools, therefore constituted a deterrent to overly oppressive cultural policies in Dobruja. The region's diverse ethno-confessional groups knew this and acted accordingly. Whenever the Ministry would attempt to encroach on the running of their schools, these populations would appeal to their religious leaders and their extensive institutional networks and warn the Romanian administration of the potential diplomatic consequences of its policies. And, just as non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans capitalized on their ambiguous citizenship status to skirt central education directives, they also invoked the rhetoric of tolerance employed by Romania's sovereign and its Constitution to emphasize the collective rights the Romanian state had claimed to uphold.

4.4 Conclusion

Until the First World War – when, as we will see in the final chapters, the Romanian state sought to curb the influence of religious elites and crack down on cross-border exchanges – the

[253] Ibid., f. 44.

Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction tended to tacitly encourage these intermediaries, relieved that the foreign networks cultivated by non-ethnically Romanian Dobrujans' allowed the Romanian state to take a backseat in financing non-Romanian instruction while avoiding accusations of overt discrimination. As we learned in previous chapters, these strategic delegations of authority allowed the Romanian administration to conserve its scarce resources in the region and make up for its lack of infrastructure and personnel. For, as we have seen, the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction still retained ultimate authority over Dobrujan private schools, being endowed by law with the final say on private school enrollment, curriculum, and staff.[254] It was in its best interest for these schools to function smoothly so that the Trojan Horse of Romanian language instruction that we encountered in the last chapter might help the woefully deficient Romanian administration in Dobruja make inroads into the assimilation of the region's non-ethnically Romanian residents. However, these benefits came with rather high costs – by unofficially acknowledging the collective rights of Dobruja's ethno-confessional groups, the Romanian state unintentionally bolstered these communities' sense of collective belonging and granted them both the vocabulary and the resources to resist excessive interference into their cultural life.

As geopolitical circumstances shifted with the Balkan Wars and decisively transformed as a result of the First World War, the imperial strategies of rule adopted by the Romanian state in Dobruja became increasingly unsuitable for its changing priorities. The issue of sovereignty, which had been at the forefront of Romanian cultural policies in Dobruja, continued to dictate the

[254] ANR, MCIP 377/1896, pp. 75-76v: "Regulament pentru şcoalele private" ("Law regarding private schools), Art. 1-21.

Romanian state's relationship to its non-ethnically Romanian populations, now with a renewed sense of urgency due to the real and perceived threats of irredentism that resulted from the altered geopolitical landscape of the Balkan Peninsula. Romania's approach to private schooling in Dobruja prior to the wars would inform its wider cultural policies in all its annexed territories after the First World War. The religious intermediaries and trans-regional networks on which the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction had long relied would allow Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian residents to more seamlessly transition into the postwar world, the new rhetoric of Wilsonian minority rights building upon and reinforcing the unofficial collective privileges they had been granted by the Romanian state in the past. As we will see in the final chapter, the Romanian state, for its part, was itself an adept amphibian, cloaking prewar imperial practices in the vocabulary of the postwar era to justify its increasingly oppressive cultural policies and hold together the patchwork sovereignty it had stitched together through multiple territorial annexations.

5.0 Nesting Imperial Legacies: Assimilating Schooling in Southern Dobruja, 1913-1920

It was nearing the end of the 1914-15 school year when regional inspector L. Megriu visited the private Bulgarian primary school in Silistra, a town whose undulating outer limits brushed against the lower banks of the Danube, giving residents a clear view of what a year and a half earlier had been, just a few breaststrokes away, the southern limit of Romanian Dobruja. Megriu austerely oversaw the school's geography lessons – a subject whose importance would swell with every expansion of Romania's territory – and called a third-grade student to the blackboard, asking him to draw a map of Bulgaria, the nation-state into which the child had been born and, until recently, raised.[255] Having "fixed all the borders" to Bulgaria's south and west, the student waivered when his chalk reached what was at that point Bulgaria's northern border with Romania, at last deciding to leave it unmarked.[256] When it came time to label Bulgaria's cities, his classmates called out to him to include Silistra on his map. Megriu decided to recreate this exercise with all the school's third- and fourth-grade students; the hand-drawn maps he collected all showed "New Dobruja" (Southern Dobruja, also dubbed the "Quadrilateral"), recently annexed by Romania at the conclusion of the Second Balkan War (1913), as still securely engulfed within Bulgaria's borders.[257]

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[255] ANR, MCIP 4473/1915, f. 3: Report to the Minister of Public Instruction from regional inspector L. Megriu after his visit to Silistra's Bulgarian private primary school in May 1915.

[256] Ibid.

[257] Ibid.

To Megriu's report was adjoined a second from the prefect of Durustor County, who confirmed that all the classrooms in Silistra's Bulgarian school were lined with maps depicting solely the Bulgarian nation-state and the Balkan peninsula with its pre-1913 borders.[258] The prefect asserted that the Bulgarian School Council – which "took every opportunity to overtly impose itself onto the school's administration" despite having been formally dissolved by the *Law for the Organization of New Dobruja* (1914) – had declared it lacked the necessary funds to replace the maps.[259] The report ended by alerting the Ministry of a recent pageant held by the school in honor of its patron saints, Cyril and Methodius.[260] According to the prefect, this celebration had been a "veritable Bulgarian national manifestation, from which there lacked entirely even the most minimal sentiment of respect (*condescendenţă*) towards the Romanian state."[261] Commenting on the same matter, inspector Megriu concluded that it was "clear that the Bulgarians, and in particular the instructors at the Bulgarian private school, [were] trying to affirm their national sentiments … to an extent that [gave one] pause" and that would, "in time," require "rigorous measures" to be taken.[262]

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[258] ANR, MCIP 4473/1915, f. 2: Report from the prefect of Durustor County to the Ministry of Public Instruction reporting on the activities Silistra's Bulgarian private schools.

[259] Ibid.

[260] Saints Cyril and Methodius are considered among the most important saints in the Eastern Orthodox faith, having been credited with the Christianization of the Slavic peoples in the Danube and Black Sea region in the 9th century CE. They translated the Bible into what would become known as Old Church Slavonic and invented the Cyrillic alphabet still in use by many Slavic peoples today.

[261] ANR, MCIP 4473/1915, f. 2: Report from the prefect of Durustor County to the Ministry of Public Instruction reporting on the activities Silistra's Bulgarian private schools.

[262] ANR, MCIP 4473/1915, f. 3v.

When the Kingdom of Romania annexed Southern Dobruja from Bulgaria through the Treaty of Bucharest of 1913, it had to contend with local and geopolitical circumstances that differed considerably from the context of its 1878 annexation of Northern Dobruja following the Congress of Berlin; as a result, its approach to schooling shifted accordingly. Now faced with a more geopolitically contested and less demographically fragmented region whose population had experienced three-and-a-half decades of Bulgarian citizenship, the Kingdom of Romania began to adopt a more defensive cultural policy. Unlike its more laissez-faire delegation of authority in Northern Dobruja, Romanian education policy in Southern Dobruja in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars bore the marks of the shifting geopolitical circumstances in the region and foreshadowed the Romanian state's revised approach toward minorities during the First World War. Concerned about hostility to its rule in Southern Dobruja and the vulnerability of its new borders, the Romanian state and its Ministers of Public Instruction began to pursue a concerted policy of cultural "Romanianization."

Nevertheless, as this chapter argues, primary schooling in Southern Dobruja presented the new Romanian administration with an amalgam of overlapping imperial and national legacies that made cultural assimilation seem both a more desirable and a more difficult policy to undertake than in Northern Dobruja. To the imperial legacies and diplomatic considerations highlighted in the last chapter were added fears of irredentism triggered by the Bulgarian state and of opposition on the part of Southern Dobruja's consolidated conglomerate of ethnic Bulgarians. Bulgarian administration in the region had entrenched the administrative decentralization that had imprinted itself on Dobruja's cultural life during Ottoman times. Furthermore, its extension of citizenship rights to Southern Dobruja's population encouraged its residents to see collective privileges as an extension of individual rights and to advocate for the former in defense of the latter. The

combination of these factors prompted Romanian administrators to champion more repressive cultural policies, while also posing greater roadblocks to their actualization. As this chapter will demonstrate, the dynamics that unfolded substantiate the "millets to minorities" trajectory identified by scholarship on the (*de jure*) post-Ottoman Balkans, while highlighting the interplay of individual rights and collective privileges that undergirded this transition.[263]

5.1 Imperialism in a National Context

While Southern Dobruja had, just a few decades earlier, formed one contiguous whole with Northern Dobruja, the two halves' divergent paths following the Congress of Berlin created new circumstances and, by extension, new challenges, for the Romanian state. Between 1878 and 1913, the two regions' commonalities – similar geographies, anemic infrastructure, and legacies of Ottoman administration – were gradually overshadowed by their increasingly different geopolitical contexts, legislative frameworks, and demographic profiles. This prompted the

[263] Literature on this transition has tended to highlight the ways in which the loosely-defined late Ottoman millet "system" provided the basis for the reification of ethno-confessional difference among the empire's non-Muslim populations. For some examples, see: Stefanos Katsikas, "Millets in Nation-States: The Case of Greek and Bulgarian Muslims, 1912–1923," *Nationalities Papers* 37, no. 2 (2009): 177–201.; Karen Barkey and George Gavrilis, "The Ottoman Millet System: Non-Territorial Autonomy and Its Contemporary Legacy," *Ethnopolitics* 15, no. 1 (2016): 24–42.; Heather J. Sharkley, "History Rhymes? Late Ottoman Millets and Post-Ottoman Minorities in the Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 50, no. 4 (2018): 760–64.; Ergun Cakal, "Pluralism, Tolerance and Control: On the Millet System and the Question of Minorities," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 27, no. 1 (2020): 34–65.

Romanian state to adapt the administrative strategies it had employed in Northern Dobruja to the new regional and international context of its second territorial expansion. As a result, the content and execution of the *Law for the Organization of New Dobruja* (1914) would signal the beginning, in both rhetoric and practice, of a departure from a "nationalization" (civic integration) of Northern Dobruja's population toward a "Romanianization" (cultural assimilation) of the nation's non-ethnically Romanian groups.

On August 10th, 1913, the Treaty of Bucharest concluding the Second Balkan War granted Romania the southern portion of the former Ottoman province of Dobruca which had been, since 1878, part of the new Bulgarian nation-state.[264] Although the annexed territory was only a segment of the geographic and military region referred to as the Quadrilateral,[265] comprising of the counties Kaliakra and Durustor, it nevertheless granted Romania strategic advantages. Romanian Dobruja would now be better defended on its southern border, have greater control of its section of the Danube River, and its bridges and railways would be more tightly secured. At the same time, however, this new territory came with new challenges. Unlike Northern Dobruja, which Romania had acquired from the disintegrating Ottoman Balkans, Southern Dobruja had seen, by this point, more than a quarter century of Bulgarian statehood. Its citizens – composed mainly of ethnic Bulgarians, Ottoman Turks, and Crimean Tatars – had enjoyed citizenship rights, developed their

[264] This resulted from Romania's contestation of the border previously established by the Treaty of Berlin (1878), which Romania argued left its southern border militarily weak and deprived it of the most suitable place (the city of Silistra) to build a bridge linking Northern Dobruja to Romania "proper." See: Constantin Iordachi, "Diplomacy and the Making of a Geopolitical Question: The Romanian-Bulgarian Conflict over Dobrudja, 1878–1947," in Daskalov et al., *Entangled Histories of the Balkans* - Volume Four, Vol. 18 (Brazil: BRILL, 2017), 336.

[265] This name derives from four Ottoman defensive fortifications in the region: Silistra, Ruse, Schuman, and Varna.

own schools and religious establishments, and had a greater sense of nationality than the populations of Northern Dobruja that had been Ottoman subjects preceding their absorption into the Romanian state. The new generation that came along with the annexed territory was, therefore, quite different from that which had come with Northern Dobruja.

When Romania acquired Southern Dobruja, the region had approximately 280,000 inhabitants.[266] The majority (116,856) were ethnic Bulgarians, followed by Turks (106,698), Tatars (11,739), and Roma (10, 114) – the latter three groups adhering mainly to the Islamic faith and therefore giving Muslims a nearly absolute majority (128,551) in the region.[267] Ethnic Romanians, most of whom were *mocani* (shepherds) from Transylvania who had settled in the region in Ottoman times or following the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-78, only numbered 6,259. Some of these, such as the inhabitants of the village Ghaiur Suiuciuc, spoke, by 1913, only Turkish.[268] Besides these populations, there were also smaller groups of Russians (2,102), Armenians (1,825), Greeks (1,177), Jews (864), Serbians (346), Albanians (136), and Aromanians (10).[269] While Southern Dobruja's Greek, Armenian, and (mostly Sephardic) Jewish groups tended to be concentrated primarily in cities, and in particular in Silistra, Dobrici, Balcic, and Turtucaia,

[266] G. Murgogi, "Din Ţara Nouă," *Calendarul Minervei* (1914), 26. These numbers were taken from the last Bulgarian census of the region from 1905.

[267] Murgogi, "Din Ţara Nouă" (1914), 26.

[268] Ibid.

[269] Ibid.

most of Southern Dobruja's population at the time of annexation lived in rural areas and engaged in agriculture.[270]

This local context made the annexation of Southern Dobruja more problematic than that of Northern Dobruja. The lack of an absolute ethno-confessional majority in Northern Dobruja upon annexation lowered the perceived threat of difference to the Romanian state even in the face of a much more demographically diverse population in which ethnic Romanians were, as in Southern Dobruja, at a numerical disadvantage. As we will see in the following chapter, high demographic heterogeneity in Northern Dobruja under Romanian administration – as under Ottoman rule – continued to stave off, rather than elicit, fears of dissent toward a weak central administration. In Southern Dobruja, on the other hand, the greater numerical strength of ethnic Bulgarians, when combined with Bulgaria's contestation of Romania's new borders, raised palpable concerns about irredentism for the Romanian state.

While Bulgaria had been deprived of greater territorial gains after the Treaty of Berlin, its losses after the Second Balkan War, following so closely on the heels of its First Balkan War gains, rekindled resentment and discontentment at the national level. The hopes of a renewed "Bulgarian tsardom" that were revived by the spoils it had gotten from its successes in the First Balkan War were once more quickly dashed by the cessions it had to make to Romania, Serbia, Greece, and the Ottoman Empire through the Treaties of Bucharest and Adrianople (1913). As one correspondent to the 1914 almanac of a major Romanian publishing house pointed out, the general consensus among Bulgarian nationals was that, in annexing Southern Dobruja, Romania had

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[270] Ibid.; Iliescu Dan, "Densitatea populației din Cadrilater" ("The Density of the Quadrilater's Population"), *Analele Dobrogei* (1938) XIX. Vol. 2, 206.

"torn" this piece of land "from Bulgaria's body" and Bulgarians would never forgive it.[271] This bore out in the Bulgarian press, which contained vitriol against the Romanian state and its new administration in Southern Dobruja. Just at Romania's new southern doorstep, for instance, in the large maritime city of Varna near the revised Romanian-Bulgarian border, the Bulgarian newspaper *Svoboden glas* (*Free voice*) told its readers only a month after the Treaty of Bucharest went into effect that its aim was to report "in the greatest of detail" on the "regime of brutality," "outrages," and "abominations" of the Romanian administration in Southern Dobruja. This, as the editors clearly stated on the front page, with the intent of contributing to Bulgaria's "revanche" which, according to them, "[would] not be delayed."[272]

The *Law for the Organization of New Dobruja*, proposed by the ruling Liberal party and voted on March 14, 1914 built upon "Dobruja's Constitution" (1880) but reflected, as well as fed into, the more volatile regional and geopolitical circumstances of this second annexation. Thus, the Romanian state revised the previous *Law for the Organization of Dobruja* (1880) to impose harsher restrictions on the cultural, political, and economic life of Southern Dobrujans. As in Northern Dobruja, the law created two counties – Kaliacra and Durostor – and granted Romanian citizenship to all residents at the time of annexation who had held Bulgarian (and no other foreign) citizenship.[273] The text emphasized that Romanian law "maintain[ed] the unity of nationality

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[271] Murgogi, "Din Ţara Nouă" (1914), 6.

[272] Editorial office, "Na rabota," *Svaboden glas,* 20 Sept. 1913, IX, 1.

[273] Limona Răzvan, "Populaţia Dobrogei în perioada interbelică" ("Dobruja's Population in the Interwar Period"), *Semănătorul*, August 2009, 32; A Pineta, "Cetăţenia română în Dobrogea Nouă" ("Romanian Citizenship in New Dorbuja"), *Analele Dobrogei,* 1938, An. XIX, vol. 2, 158. The law uses the date of 28 June, 1913 (when Romania invaded Bulgaria), and not of 28 July, 1913 (when the annexation was officially recognized through the Treaty of

within the family, between spouses, as well as between parents and children found under parental supervision" – "Naturalization through annexation […] appli[ed] to all members of the family: a collective effect."[274] As we will see later, the language of "collective" nationality would be appropriated by non-ethnically Romanian citizens in Southern Dobruja to call for collective rights within the cultural sphere.

As with its sweeping naturalization of Northern Dobruja's Ottoman subjects in 1878, the Romanian state's blanket naturalization of Bulgarian citizens in Southern Dobruja in 1914 was intended not to extend rights as much as to extract obligations. The lack of political representation in Parliament that characterized the original *Law for the Organization of Dobruja (*1880) was extended to Southern Dobruja – only now, those affected were not former Ottoman subjects but rather recent Bulgarian citizens who had previously enjoyed voting rights.[275] Taking this constitutional regime of exception a step further, the *Law for the Organization of New Dobruja* stripped Southern Dobrujans of even the right to administer their local affairs and elect local councils and imposed on them taxes to which no one in any of the other parts of the nation was subjected.[276] This led one conservative Romanian journalist to comment that the law seemed to

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Bucharest). Southern Dobrujans could opt out of Romanian citizenship without "forced transport […] to the state for which they opted." According to Article 4 of the law, women would have the same legal status as their husbands and children the same legal status as their parents; minors whose parents declined Romanian citizenship would be allowed to re-gain it through a declaration they could make to the head of their local tribunal in the first year after they reached the legal age of 18. See: Pineta, "Cetăţenia română în Dobrogea Nouă" (1938), 160-161.

[274] Pineta, "Cetăţenia română în Dobrogea Nouă" (1938), 160.

[275] Rp. "Cetăţeni clasa doua" ("Second-Class Citizens"), *Adevărul,* 29 Mar. 1914, An. XXVII, no. 8815, 1.

[276] Ibid.

take Romania back to "medieval times, when conquered peoples were extorted through tributes imposed only on them."[277]

5.2 Centralizing Decentralization

Cultural life did not fare any better under the new law; the liberty of the press was stifled, the right of assembly was reduced, and ethno-confessional communities' previous autonomy over their educational and religious affairs was curtailed. Unlike in Northern Dobruja where non-ethnically Romanian communities had been left a degree of autonomy and consultative privileges over their cultural affairs, in Southern Dobruja the Romanian administration legislated the disbanding of local school councils and the replacement of private school curricula with a centralized program of instruction in the Romanian language. This drastic and sweeping attempt at the cultural assimilation of Southern Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian residents tried to push against, rather than to coopt, local schooling institutions and infrastructure. As a result, the very threats the Romanian state had hoped to neutralize were amplified by the entrenched imperial institutions and practices that had dominated Southern Dobrujan schooling under Bulgarian administration.

Southern Dobruja's stint under Bulgarian rule had seen the official recognition of decentralized Ottoman-era schooling.[278] During Bulgarian administration, primary schools had

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[277] Ibid.

[278] As discussed in Ch. 2 of this dissertation, the late Ottoman state's efforts to modernize its education infrastructure relied to a great extent on decentralized primary schooling administration. This sort of centralized decentralization

been overseen by regional committees rather than by a top-down administration riddled with directors of education, sub-directors, and school inspectors, as was the case within the Kingdom of Romania.[279] While the Bulgarian state built public schools, provided them with necessary materials, and paid instructor salaries, it left the administration of schools to regional school boards, many of which tended to serve the interests of a particular ethno-confessional group.[280] As Southern Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian communities would remind Romanian administrators, Bulgarian education laws had appointed these school boards as "masters" of the region's schools, in charge of the budget, property, and upkeep of the schools.[281]

In contrast to Romanian policy in Northern Dobruja, Bulgarian law had construed school councils as "legal person[s]" and therefore autonomous institutions whose members were appointed through an election in which all Bulgarians of legal age and valid citizenship status

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was a feature of Ottoman administration more generally, giving its peripheries a significant level of institutional autonomy. This went on to shape the administrative norms and structure in successor states, among them Bulgaria. See: Miroslav Svirčević, "Local Self-Government in the Municipalities of Serbia and Bulgaria after the 1878 Congress of Berlin," *Serbian Political Thought* 8, no. 2 (2013): 57–84.; Elektra Kostopoulou, "Armed Negotiations: The Institutionalization of the Late Ottoman Locality," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 33, no. 3 (2013): 295–309.; Karen Barkey and George Gavrilis, "The Ottoman Millet System: Non-Territorial Autonomy and Its Contemporary Legacy," *Ethnopolitics* 15, no. 1 (2016): 24–42.

[279] N. P. Duţu, "Deschiderea şcolilor în Cadrilater" ("The Opening of Schools in the Quadrilater"), *Adevărul*, 13 Nov. 1913, An. XXVI, no. 8983, 2.

[280] Ibid.

[281] ANR, MCIP 1604/1914, f. 18v: Petition from the members of the Bulgarian School Council from the village Ai-orman to re-open the local primary school, 14 Feb. 1914.

participated.[282] As such, the school boards had been "entirely independent from the Communal council and at the same time emancipated from the central schooling authority."[283] Significantly, the councils' administrative, financial, and institutional autonomy applied not only to the schools of the nation's ethnically-Bulgarian communities but also to "other nationalities" that had founded their own schools.[284] While the Romanian state's official recognition of religious leaders' consultative privileges in Northern Dobruja's primary schools had made no explicit authorization of school councils, the Bulgarian state's inclusion of these institutions into its education bureaucracy had endorsed the principle of pseudo-autonomy in Southern Dobruja's cultural life.

Once the Romanian state took over, it attempted to integrate primary schooling in Southern Dobruja into the Romanian national schooling administration overseen by the Ministry of Public Instruction, thus vastly reducing the autonomy of local ethno-confessional communities over their children's schooling. The Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction announced the full-scale phasing out of private primary schooling instruction to be replaced by a sweeping Romanian-language curriculum and Chapter II of the *Law for the Organization of New Dobruja* (1914)

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[282] Ibid.; Between 1891 and 1908, school councils in Bulgaria were joined to municipal administrations and local mayors put in charge of their activities. This situation in 1908 when school councils were once more granted an independent administration with their own budgets. See: ANR, MCIP 286/1920, f. 108: Petition to the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction from Silistra's Bulgarian community on the subject of the Romanian state's claims to ownership of Bulgarian school buildings.

[283] ANR, MCIP 1604/1914, f. 18v: Petition from the members of the Bulgarian School Council from the village Ai-orman to re-open the local primary school, 14 Feb. 1914.

[284] ANR, MCIP 286/1920, f. 110: Petition to the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction from Silistra's Bulgarian community on the subject of the Romanian state's claims to ownership of Bulgarian school buildings.

explicitly dissolved the region's school councils and transferred their assets to the national Romanian school treasury.[285] Furthermore, the Romanian state claimed ownership over all property previously owned by the Bulgarian state as a result of annexation, within which category it included Bulgarian public school buildings.[286] As a result, Southern Dobruja's ethnic Bulgarians found themselves stripped both of their cultural autonomy and of their schooling infrastructure.[287] This served to further fuel resentment among the region's ethnically Bulgarian communities and to strengthen their solidarity in pushing back against what they viewed as violations of the collective cultural autonomy to which they had grown accustomed under both Ottoman and Bulgarian rule.

Commenting on the Romanian state's appropriation and closure of Bulgarian schools in Southern Dobruja, which "denied" the people of the region "the most basic educational freedom," the editors of *Svoboden glas* characterized this policy as one of "terror" and "repression," and called on their "brothers there" to fight back against the "despotic regime" of the "Vlachs."[288] Bulgarian instructors in Southern Dobruja heeded these calls – though, as we will see in greater detail in the following section, in a much more measured way. Empowered by the previous

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[285] *Codul general al României* (Codurile, legile și ... v. 8 1913/1919), "Legea pt org Dob Noi", Ch. II, Art. 11.

[286] ANR, MCIP 286/1920, f. 108: Petition to the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction from Silistra's Bulgarian community on the subject of the Romanian state's claims to ownership of Bulgarian school buildings.

[287] N. P. Duţu, "Deschiderea şcolilor în Cadrilater" ("The Opening of Schools in the Quadrilater"), *Adevarul*, 13 Nov. 1913, An. XXVI, no. 8983, 2.

[288] Editorial office, "Iz Dobrudja," *Svaboden glas*, 20 Sept. 1913, IX, 3.; Editorial office, "Na rabota," *Svaboden glas*, 20 Sept. 1913, IX, 1.; "Vlach" here is a reference to "Wallachian," or resident of "Wallachia," considered to be the core region of the new Romanian state.

autonomy and resources of the regional Bulgarian School Council, Bulgarian primary school instructors in Southern Dobruja pledged their loyalty to the Romanian state while simultaneously reaffirming the authority of their school councils and resisting their dissolution.[289] As we saw in this chapter's opening anecdote, despite the Romanian state's *de jure* suspension of these semi-autonomous school boards, their influence in Southern Dobruja persisted in the day-to-day operations of the region's private schools after annexation.

The Bulgarian state's perpetuation of Ottoman-era decentralization within the field of primary schooling had entrenched the principle of cultural autonomy among Southern Dobruja's population and provided the region's residents with the institutional infrastructure and organizational capacity to push back against the Romanian state's repressive cultural policies. It was thus not only in newly post-imperial territories that the new nation-states of East Central Europe had to contend with the institutional and normative legacies of multi-confessional land empires, but in purportedly national ones as well.[290] In the case of Southern Dobruja, the Bulgarian's state's official recognition of school councils made it more difficult to neutralize their organizational capacity. When combined with the legacy of Bulgarian citizenship rights, these

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[289] Anonymous, "Şcoala în Cadrilater," (11 Nov. 1913) XXVI, no. 8981, 2.

[290] Scholarship on the Ottoman "legacy" in the Balkans has begun to question the notion of "legacy" as one that implies an undesirable remnant of imperial rule that persists despite national governments' attempts to eradicate it. As this dissertation and recent scholarship on the "post-Ottoman" Balkans has sought to show, these "legacies" were consciously adopted and adapted to national contexts by both national governments and their constituent populations. For an example of scholarship skeptical about the very notion of imperial "legacy," see: Harris Mylonas, "Nation-building Policies in the Balkans: An Ottoman or a Manufactured Legacy?" *Nations and Nationalism* 25, no. 3 (2019): 866–87.

collective cultural privileges would allow the region's non-ethnically Romanian residents to invoke both individual and collective rights in their bid to resist cultural assimilation.

5.3 A Preamble to Minority Rights

While Southern Dobruja's uninterrupted legacy of semi-autonomous school councils gave the region's ethnically Bulgarian residents the institutional means by which to challenge Romanian cultural assimilation, the legacy of individual rights as a privileged group within the Bulgarian nation-state provided them with a vocabulary to articulate their stance. Like non-ethnically Romanian citizens in Northern Dobruja, those in Southern Dobruja displayed a keen awareness of both the international treaties and national legislation then governing the Kingdom of Romania and used the state's own language of citizenship to advocate for their collective rights. In this new time and context, however, the "national speak" that had been employed in decades prior in Northern Dobruja became increasingly nationalized, the old millet privileges given to non-Muslim ethno-confessional groups during Ottoman times morphing into calls for collective freedoms among groups with a growing sense – and vocabulary – of ethnically-defined nationality.

The region's ethnic Bulgarians were at the forefront of such efforts, attempting to combat the Romanian state's targeted discriminatory policies towards their primary schools by invoking national citizenship legislation and international norms. Less than a month after the Treaty of Bucharest ratified Southern Dobruja's annexation, Bulgarian deputy Babageanof already warned that Romanian governance would depend "in large part on the contentment or discontentment of

the [local] population."[291] As such, the Romanian state "must take into account in its legislation the interests and prestige of the indigenous population regardless of its nationality" and "to put it on the same footing of equality, rights, and duties as the other citizens of the nation."[292] Furthermore, he declared that "parallel with the granting of political rights," the Romanian state ought to allow "the most complete cultural and religious freedom," as its constitution, to an extent, claimed to do.[293] Babageanof pointed out the practical necessity of such measures: the majority of Southern Dobrujans, "and in particular children," did not yet know Romanian; how, then, "could this population be required to become educated and to listen to religious sermons in a language they [did] not know?" "It would be" – Babageanof thought – "a true anomaly."[294]

Being singled out by the Romanian state, whose armies occupied their school buildings and entirely paralyzed their existing primary schooling system, ethnically Bulgarian communities concertedly worked around the heavy restrictions placed on them, all the while professing their "read[iness] to comply to all the dispositions of the law for private instruction" to which other "nationalities" in the country were subjected.[295] Petitions from newly-dissolved Bulgarian school councils to the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction expressed the hope that they, too, would be granted the possibility to benefit from "all the rights and responsibilities enjoyed – in

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[291] Anonymous, "Interviu cu deputatul Babageanof din Silistra" ("Interview with Deputy Babageanof from Silistra"), *Voinţa Nationala* (*The National Will*) XXVII, no. 8237 (1 Sept. 1913), 1.

[292] Ibid.

[293] Anonymous, "Interview cu deputatul Babageanof din Silistra," 1.

[294] Ibid.

[295] ANR, MCIP 1604/1914, f. 18v: Petition from the members of the Bulgarian School Council from the village Aiorman to re-open the local primary school, 14 Feb. 1914.

conformance with current laws – by the different nationalities in the country."[296] Appeals such as this, which deliberately placed the stress on the nation's legislation, echoed the "national speak" employed by Northern Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian communities in their interactions with the Romanian state, while increasingly including the language of "nationality" as separate and distinct from citizenship status. The aforementioned petition emphasized this, explaining that, by "preserving [their] national physiognomy," the region's ethnic Bulgarians would "work together with others as Romanian citizens, for the prosperity of the country."[297] By highlighting the difference between nationality as ethno-cultural characteristic and citizenship as civil status, Southern Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian citizens progressively flagged a distinction between collective and individual rights, echoing both the stipulations of the Treaty of Berlin and the Romanian state's own informal practice of differentiated rule.

This conceptual difference became more explicitly stated by Southern Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian communities as time went on, with these communities becoming increasingly direct in their advocacy for collective freedoms. A year into Romania's administration of Southern Dobruja, the president of the Bulgarian School Board (*Eforia şcolară bulgară*), which still unofficially oversaw the activities of the various Bulgarian school councils, drafted a petition in September 1914 asking that Bulgarians be allowed to operate their own schools.[298] Similarly to other petitioners for private schools, president Patronof ended his appeal by stating that the conduct

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[296] Ibid., f. 19.

[297] ANR, MCIP 1604/1914, f. 19: Petition from the members of the Bulgarian School Council from the village Ai-orman to re-open the local primary school, 14 Feb. 1914.

[298] ANR, MCIP 1604/1914, f. 66: Request from the re-opening of Bulgarian private schools in Durustor County, 5 Sept. 1914.

of his community should have convinced the Ministry that the region's ethnic Bulgarians were "conscious of [their] responsibilities towards the Romanian state" – yet they did not "fail to also declare that [their] educational freedom and their maternal language [were] equally dear [to them] as [their] personal freedom."[299] He concluded that his community members were "convinced" that their request would be "sufficient," since "the other Romanian citizens – Jews, Armenians, Turks – already [had] the authorization" to open their own schools, there being no reason why Bulgarians should be "subjected to an exceptional rule."[300] Patronof's plea thus capitalized upon the distinction between individual and collective freedoms that the Romanian state had itself informally made through its cultural practices and naturalization provisions in the *Law for the Organization of New Dobruja*, and flipped the script, as many of Northern Dobruja's residents had done, on the Romanian kingdom's attempts to employ state-citizenship as a means of extracting duties without bestowing rights.

Although the Romanian state reaffirmed its official conflation of nationality with state-citizenship in its annexation of Southern Dobruja, the collective nature of its naturalization laws in this region served to highlight the distinction between individual and collective rights, particularly when paired with the informal practices of differentiated rule that it employed in its interactions with its non-ethnically Romanian citizenry. Residents of Southern Dobruja, who had been accustomed to the formal collective cultural rights granted to them under Bulgarian administration, were quick to employ this language to reassert their control over their children's

[299] Ibid., f. 66v.

[300] ANR, MCIP 1604/1914, f. 67: Request from the re-opening of Bulgarian private schools in Durustor County, 5 Sept. 1914.

schooling. In the case of ethnic Bulgarians in particular, who had gone from a preferred majority to a highly suspect minority, this form of "national speak" went beyond that which had been employed by Northern Dobruja's various ethno-confessional groups – rather than placing the emphasis on their citizenship status and the state's commitment to freedom of worship, they instead highlighted their ethno-cultural difference and called for collective rights based not on religion but on an ethnically-conceived nationality.

This trajectory followed logically from the stipulations of the Congress of Berlin and Bulgaria's legal and institutional policies towards residents of Southern Dobruja. Coopting Ottoman imperial legacies in Southern Dobruja even more directly than the Romanian state had done in Northern Dobruja, the Bulgarian nation-state made semi-autonomous cultural institutions part and parcel of national citizenship rights.[301] Bulgaria's adoption of the late Ottoman state's decentralized education policies entrenched the notion of collective privileges to which residents of Southern Dobruja had been accustomed as imperial subjects. By simultaneously granting these populations individual citizenship rights, the Bulgarian state wed in principle what in Romanian-administered Northern Dobruja had only been articulated in practice – the mutually reinforcing

[301] This further reflects the entangled Ottoman legacies in the Balkans, whose persistent denial by nationalist historiography in Southeastern European states obscured the intentional and pragmatic way in which the nations created out of Ottoman peripheries coopted the institutions and norms of their imperial predecessor. For more on the contested nature of the Ottoman legacy in the Balkans, see: Alexander Vezenkov and Rumen Daskalov, eds. *Entangled Histories of the Balkans: Shared Pasts, Disputed Legacies* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

relationship between individual rights and collective privileges that would, in the post-Versailles era, form the basis for invocations of minority rights.[302]

5.4 Conclusion

The geopolitical circumstances inaugurated by the Balkan Wars, in conjunction with Southern Dobruja's particular regional profile, prompted Romania's National Liberal Party then in power to employ more restrictive legislation in the nation's second annexed territory with the aim of defusing irredentist threats from the region's non-ethnically Romanian citizens, and in particular of ethnic Bulgarians. The *Law for the Organization of New Dobruja* (1914) amplified the regime of exception inaugurated by Northern Dobruja's "Constitution" (1880) and further served to employ state-citizenship as a means of extracting duties without conferring tangible rights. Among other things, it dissolved Southern Dobruja's school councils and sought to bring the region's primary schooling infrastructure and financing under the control of the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction. Upon annexation, the Romanian administration shut down regional private schools and consistently denied private Bulgarian schools and instructors the authorization to function. While the roadblocks to the practical long-term implementation of such measures were even more pronounced in Southern Dobruja than they had been in Northern Dobruja, growing

[302] For an elaboration of the ways in which Ottoman census categories influenced Bulgarian notions of citizenship immediately after the Congress of Berlin, see: Gayle Lonergan, "Counting Citizens: The Transfer and Translation of Census Categories from the International Statistical Congresses to the Principality of Bulgaria (1872–1888)," *Nationalities Papers* 46, no. 4 (2018): 556–74.

concerns about irredentism kept Romania's ruling Liberal party more steadfast in the actualization of these policies.

Within this context, the language of "nationality" and "nationalization" that in Northern Dobruja had been only infrequently and informally employed by either state agents or local residents became, in Southern Dobruja, part of the regular parlance of state-citizen interactions. The region's ethnic Bulgarians, in particular, employed this language to simultaneously set themselves apart from, and claim their collective rights within, the Romanian body politic. Concerned with this population's unabashed collective self-identification in a geopolitically sensitive area, Ministry of Public Instruction officials increasingly adopted the terminology and doctrine of "Romanianization," which went beyond mere civic integration to include wholesale linguistic and cultural assimilation.

Southern Dobruja's intertwined legacies of Ottoman-era decentralization and Bulgarian citizenship rights, projected against the more volatile geopolitical context of Romania's second territorial annexation, would thus pave the way for the post-WW1 contestations between the Romanian state and its newly-acknowledged minorities. While irredentist threats along contested borders prompted the Romanian state to pursue more repressive cultural policies in the second decade of the twentieth century, the imperial norms and institutions that had survived Dobruja's post-imperial administrative transition continued to safeguard differentiated rule and the invocation of collective privileges. As we will see in the next chapter, these nesting imperial legacies would simultaneously provide the basis for minority protections and the means by which the Romanian state could subvert them.

6.0 Empire after Empire: Nationalism, Irredentism, and the Rhetoric of Minority Rights, 1913-1921

In March 1920, a collection of school inspection reports from the previous fall semester in Durustor County of Southern Dobruja finally made its way to the Bucharest office of the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction. The reporting inspector wasted no time bemoaning the impediments encountered by local state functionaries in that county, declaring in his cover letter that over the course of September 1919 the "entire activity" of Romanian schooling authorities constituted of a "vigorous battle" undertaken in the county, and in particular within the city of Silistra, against Bulgarian recalcitrance.[303] According to this frazzled functionary, Durustor County's "Bulgarian population, due to the circumstances of the time" and to the "widespread propaganda" it spread to those in the neighboring Kaliakra County and to Bulgarians in Bessarabia, "aimed to attract all children to Bulgarian private schooling."[304] The reports in question – the inspector hoped – would demonstrate the zeal with which the local authorities "worked in the interest of state schooling" and for the "prevention" of the national affirmations made by the Bulgarian population "to [the]

[303] ANR, MCIP 13/1920, f. 16: Report on the activity of primary schools and preschools in Durustor County, Southern Dobruja, over the course of Sept. 1919.

[304] ANR, MCIP 13/1920, f. 16: Report on the activity of primary schools and preschools in Durustor County, Southern Dobruja, over the course of Sept. 1919.; Although the inspector did not specify what he meant by "the circumstances of the time," there are many possible contenders for context, including: the Treaty of St. Germain (signed Spt. 10, 1919) which, among other things, dissolved Austro-Hungary; the ongoing Russian civil war; and the impending Treaty of Neuilly (Nov. 27,1919), which would make Bulgarian armistice contingent on Bulgaria's session of lands to Yugoslavia and Greece.

detriment" of the Romanian state.[305] Yet zeal did not prove to be enough. By February 1920, the Bulgarian private schools in Durustor County had attracted more pupils than had the county's public schools, which saw lower enrollment than the previous year. Students from town and country alike were refusing public schooling in protest of the ban on Bulgarian language instruction, which they ought to have been granted "according to minority rights," while Bulgarian private schools went directly against Ministry restrictions and doubled their allotted number of classes. [306]

On the surface a report in the typical "zero-sum logic" associated with nationalist chauvinism, the language in which it was communicated reveals several telling and features of early twentieth-century nationalism in "post-imperial" East Central Europe.[307] The overstretched inspectors assigned with the unenviable task of policing schooling in Southern Dobruja in the aftermath of the First World War were not concerned with just any demonstrations of non-official culture; rather, they fought against "*Bulgarian recalcitrance*" and "national affirmations" made "*to [the] detriment*" (emphases mine) of the Romanian state.[308] In their seemingly losing battle,

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[305] ANR, MCIP 13/1920, f. 16v: Report on the activity of primary schools and preschools in Durustor County, Southern Dobruja, over the course of Sept. 1919.

[306] ANR, MCIP 13/1920, 132v: Report on the activity of primary schools and preschools in Durustor County, Southern Dobruja, over the course of Feb. 1920.

[307] For more on the fierce debates and contestations surrounding this territorial exchange, see: Constantin Iordachi, "Diplomacy and the Making of a Geopolitical Question: The Romanian-Bulgarian Conflict over Dobrudja, 1878–1947," in Daskalov et al., *Entangled Histories of the Balkans* - Volume Four, Vol. 18 (Brazil: BRILL, 2017), 291-393.

[308] ANR, MCIP 13/1920, f. 16: Report on the activity of primary schools and preschools in Durustor County, Southern Dobruja, over the course of Sept. 1919.

they tacitly blamed the exogenous concept of "minority rights" and other indirect forms of meddling – as many of the country's statesmen saw it – in Romania's internal affairs by the Great Powers. These school inspectors, then, did not subscribe to a generalized dogma of nationalist chauvinism, but rather to a nationalist strategy closely informed by the geopolitical circumstances of the time.[309]

As this chapter will demonstrate, nation-building in the Kingdom of Romania continued to unfold in a pragmatic, piecemeal, and heterogenous fashion even as the regional wars of the early twentieth century caused a drastic shift in both internal and external conditions. Rising ethno-national chauvinism and interwar fascism was forged in reaction to changing geopolitical circumstances; yet it did not alone define Balkan state-building. Imperial strategies of rule, appropriated and amended over time in response to various domestic and international factors, continued to inform nation-building in the Kingdom of Romania.[310] While the First World War and its aftermath presented it with acute challenges, the Romanian state responded in newer, but not entirely unfamiliar ways. Building on scholarship that traces the breaks and continuities that the First World War and subsequent minority treaties represented east central European nation-building, this chapter will flag the radicalization the regional wars inaugurated in Romanian

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[309] For an example of scholarship challenging the primacy of ethno-nationalism as an explanatory factor in the Balkan Wars and their aftermath, see: M. Hakan Yavuz and Isa Blumi, eds. *War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913, and Their Sociopolitical Implications* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013).

[310] For more on the rise of fascism in interwar Romania, see: Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*: *Regionalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) and Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

assimilationist policies while continuing to emphasize the impact that imperial strategies of rule and the legacy of the Congress of Berlin had on postwar Romanian nation-building.

6.1 Towards a "Greater Romania"

We have already seen that "nationalization" – and the later, more aggressive, "Romanianization" – of the diverse constituent populations of the new Romanian nation-state was a far from clearcut and predetermined process. Forged as much by geopolitics as by dogma, its larger context was crucial to its formulation. This is particularly true if one is to understand how the regional wars of the twentieth century fueled ethno-nationalist chauvinism and interwar fascism.[311] The waves of destruction and occupation experienced by Northern and Southern Dobruja over the course of the Balkan and First World Wars, the Romanian state's rapid territorial expansions, and the postwar treaties that dissolved the Habsburg Empire and codified the concept of minority rights all closely impacted the Romanian state's interactions with its non-ethnically Romanian populations.

The First World War, which came fast on the heels of the Second Balkan War, compounded the challenges and opportunities of the Romanian state. Although the Kingdom of Romania did not officially join the fighting until fall of 1916, the regional upheavals gave no pause to the complex geopolitical calculations critical to its state-building strategies. Domestic commentators

[311] For an example of scholarship highlighting the ways in which the First World War catalyzed ethno-nationalist conflict in East Central Europe, see: Wlodzimierz Borodziej, Joachim von Puttkamer, and Jochen Bohler, eds. *Legacies of Violence: Eastern Europe's First World War,* Vol. 3 (Germany: De Gruyter, 2014).

well knew that the dissatisfaction of Romania's neighbors with the terms of the treaties of London (1912) and Bucharest (1913) would make the kingdom's self-proclaimed role as a "pacifying" regional power in southeastern Europe a challenging one.[312] At the same time, nationalist statesmen like Liberal prime minister Ion C. Brătianu bid their time in the hope of "reclaiming" the "historical" regions of Romania – and in particular of Transylvania (then part of the Hungarian Crown within the Dualist Monarchy) – whose possession, both from an ethno-cultural and an economic standpoint, was much more highly coveted than that of the two Dobrujas had ever been.[313] The outbreak of war to its east gave it this opportunity, and by August 1916 the Kingdom of Romania picked up arms against the Habsburg Empire and sent its troops into Transylvania, having been promised possession of that region, as well as of the Austrian provinces of Bukovina and the Banat, via a secret treaty with the Entente.[314]

Meanwhile, Dobruja, a region relegated to an (actual) aside in histories of Romania's "War for National Reunification," had a profound impact on Romania's wartime strategy.[315] The

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[312] I. V. Povolni, "Rolul României în Balcani. Arbitrajul român se impune în viitor ca o binefacere permanentă pentru popoarele balcanice" ("Romania's Role in the Balkans: Romanian Arbitration will Impose itself in the Future as a Permanent Good for Balkans Peoples"), *Adevărul*, 10 Sept. 1913, An. XXVI, no. 8619, 2.

[313] Dennis Deletant, *Romania, 1916-1941: A Political History* (Milton: Routledge, 2022), 10.

[314] Richard C. Hall, "War in the Balkans," *International Encyclopedia of the First World War* (Oct. 2014), https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/pdf/1914-1918-Online-war_in_the_balkans-2014-10-08.pdf, 7.

[315] Deletant's *Romania, 1916-1941: A Political History* only makes two, parenthetical references to Dobruja; The First World War has been dubbed, by Romanian nationalists then and since, the "War for National Reunification." For an example of a recent and earnest usage of this term, see the dedication to the commemorative collection, Valentin Ciorbea, et al., eds. *Dobrogea în contextul primului război mondial*, (Bucharest: Editura Top Form, 2017). With

Romanian ambassador in Vienna had hardly had time to get a full night's rest after delivering the kingdom's declaration of war to the Austro-Hungarian foreign ministry at 9 pm on August 27, 1916 before the Central Powers attacked Romania's southern (Dobrujan) border.[316] This move launched the Danubian kingdom instantly into a two-front war that it could not sustain and, after some initial progress in Transylvania, Romania saw Dobruja entirely occupied by the Bulgarian army (Dec. 1916), its capital overtaken (Dec. 6, 1916) by Austro-German forces, and its army so overwhelmed that it exited the war via a preliminary peace treaty (March 5, 1918) – only to re-enter it (Nov. 10, 1918) a day before armistice in order to claim the territories promised to it by the Entente in case of Allied victory.[317] As a result, despite its poor performance in the conflict, the Romanian state got a multi-front revanche, regaining not just the lands that had been occupied by the Central Powers but also annexing the highly-coveted Transylvania, Bukovina, and the Banat from Austro-Hungary and Bessarabia from Soviet Russia. The nationalist dream of a "Greater Romania" was finally, and ever so briefly, realized.[318]

However, in a decision reminiscent of the Congress of Berlin, Romania's official acquisition of these highly-coveted lands was made contingent on its formally accepting the newly-

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similar implications, Constantin Iordachi dedicates his *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), first and foremost, "To the centenary of United Romania (1918-2018)."

[316] Deletant, *Romania, 1916-1941*, 10. Germany was first to declare war, on Aug. 28, followed by the Ottoman Empire on Aug. 30 and Bulgaria on Sept. 1.

[317] Ibid., 11-12.

[318] This vision of a "Greater Romania" was primarily pushed forth by the National Liberal Party, which had been the main proponents behind the original union of the Danubian Principalities in 1859 (and, politically, 1862). See: Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania* (1995), 4.

articulated principle of "minority rights." First applied to Poland in the wake of the Treaty of Versailles concluded with Germany, legal guarantees for the protection of minorities were imposed selectively by the Great Powers and the newly-created League of Nations on the states of East Central Europe with the goal of protecting those nations' newly-acquired populations and their longer-standing and highly persecuted Jewish minorities.[319] Seeing the minorities treaties for what they were – extensions of the Great Powers' requirement that Romania accept non-Christians to citizenship via the Treaty of Berlin (1878) – prime minister Ion C. Brătianu, as well as his immediate successor, resigned at the suggestion.[320] After further revisions that included removing all mention of the Congress of Berlin and of Romania's contingent independence, prime minister Alexandru Vaida-Voevod signed Romania's Minority Treaty into law on December 9, 1919.[321]

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[319] See: Carole Fink, "The Paris Peace Conference and the Question of Minority Rights," *Peace and Change* 21, no. 3 (1996): 273–88.; Lilliana Riga and James Kennedy, "Tolerant Majorities, Loyal Minorities and 'Ethnic Reversals': Constructing Minority Rights at Versailles 1919," *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 3 (2009): 461–82.; Giuseppe Motta, "The Historical Genesis of the 1919 Minority Treaties," in Antonello Biagini and Giovanna Motta, eds. *Empires and Nations from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century: Volume 1* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

[320] Iordachi, 556.; Recent scholarship has begun to highlight the 19th-century antecedents of post-1919 international law and in particular the role played by the Congress of Berlin in first articulating the relationship between minority protections and international recognition of national sovereignty. For examples, see: Adamantios Theodor Skordos, "The Congress of Berlin (1878) – A Southeast-European Milestone in the Modern History of International Law," *Südosteuropa-Mitteilungen* 63, no. 1 (2023): 75-86.; Antonello Biagini and Giovanna Motta, "The Historical Genesis of the 1919 Minority Treaties," in *Empires and Nations from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century* (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014).

[321] Iordachi, 557.

Unfortunately, as the annexations of Northern and Southern Dobruja ought to have indicated, the Kingdom of Romania got far more than it had bargained for. Like a bona fide imperial nation, Romania annexed lands that had belonged, over the course of decades or centuries, to different polities and which housed peoples of numerous ethnicities, creeds, and experiences of state-citizenship. Various waves of wartime occupations, including by the Bulgarian army in Dobruja, as well as an increasingly fractured political landscape and diverse institutions made "unification," as historians have aptly detailed, a fraught and chaotic process.[322] Within the realm of education, the new regions came with different schooling infrastructures and, often, with urban, non-ethnically Romanian populations in possession of higher levels of education than the average Romanian citizen.[323]

In the two Dobrujas, the war brought reversals of Romanian rule through the swift occupation by Central Powers, which saw Bulgarian armies roll back what little progress the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction had made in the region. Romania's entrance into the war naturally drew resources, personnel, and attention away from primary schooling; as the nation mobilized in Transylvania, Dobrujan instructors were called to the front and central authorities had less time and resources to devote to the oversight of schooling in the region, leaving private

[322] The already fractured political landscape of the Old Kingdom was further splintered by the integration of new territories and lack of national political parties as a result of persistent regionalism. See: Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania*, 21.

[323] Livezeanu, 18.

schools more freedom to run as they saw fit.[324] This was exacerbated by the Bulgarian occupation of Dobruja, which had made its way to Constanţa by October of that year, bringing with it material destruction and institutional restructuring. A December 1918 report by the administrative authorities of Constanţa County informed the Ministry that during the invasion the Bulgarian administration had created many Bulgarian schools and changed the style of and permissions given to existing Bulgarian schools "with the aim of providing stronger grounds for the unjustified pretentions they [had] over this Romanian territory."[325]

These "pretensions" abounded as the Kingdom of Romania came out of the First World War with large gains at the expense of several increasingly discontented neighbors, exacerbating the post-Berlin (1878) concern with the inviolability of its national sovereignty and territorial integrity. And, while some Romanian statesmen and Ministry of Public Instruction functionaries' worries verged on paranoia, their fears were far from unfounded. A nation comparable in size with Romania and in possession of the same legacy of Ottoman rule, as well as bound diplomatically and ethno-culturally with Russia, the tsardom of Bulgaria had long presented a threat to Romanian rule on the banks of the Danube. After seeing their gains from the voided Treaty of San Stefano (1878) transferred to Romania and Southern Dobruja subsequently annexed by the same, Bulgarians both within and adjacent to Greater Romania's borders became increasingly vocal in their revanchist calls. The Sofia-based newspaper *Dobrusjanskii glas* (*Dobrujan voice*) was demanding "freedom from slavery" even before the war's end and urging all Bulgarians to "not

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[324] ANR, MCIP 271/1920, f. 145: Submission of required paperwork for the Bulgarian school in the city of Constanţa from the president of the Bulgarian School Council, who explains that Romanian language instruction at the school had been interrupted during the war.

[325] ANR, MCIP 203/1918, f. 280: Report regarding new projects for the reorganization of private schooling in Dobruja.

forget the Dobrujan refugees," describing Romanian administration as a "terrorist regime" in which locals claiming to support Romanian rule did so by force – for "who [could] believe that they would willingly submit to extermination?"[326] By the end of August 1919, their front pages were denouncing the "imperialistic policies of both big and small states" and affirming Bulgaria's stance that Dobruja was hers by virtue of "history, and geography, and documents that prove[d]" that it had been cut off from Bulgaria by the Congress of Berlin.[327] After the war's end, this revanchist language from abroad, substantiated by the Wilsonian principle of "freedom, independence, and self-determination of peoples," would be joined – as we will see below – by internal calls for the minorities protections intertwined with the same.[328]

Within this context, the link between primary schooling, state-citizenship, and national sovereignty grew even stronger. The Romanian state now had to contend with cobbling out of many disparate regions a fiscal-military state capable of withstanding its doubled mass and the new economic and geopolitical circumstances inaugurated by the postwar era. At the same time, the vitriol fueled by the war and its peace made the state's preference for ethnic Romanians a matter of both policy and practice. Fears of irredentism and resentment at Great Power intervention raised suspicions about the loyalty of the nation's non-ethnically Romanian residents and made a laissez-faire cultural policy, particularly around sensitive borders, seem like an invitation to attacks on the nation's sovereignty by citizens emboldened by the internationally-endorsed concept of national self-determination. As a result, primary schooling came to play an even greater role in the

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[326] "Po nashata programa" ("Our mission"), *Dobrudjanskii glas* (*Dobrujan voice*), 8 Aug. 1919, 1.; "Kongresa na miusiulmante v Konstendja" ("Muslim Congress in Constanta"), *Dobrudjanskii glas*, 8 Aug. 1919, 3.

[327] "Politika na realni interesi," *Dobrudjansky glas*, 22 Aug. 1919, 1.

[328] Ibid.

state's attempts to govern Greater Romania. The need for both literate and loyal citizens became particularly acute and with it the role of primary schooling as a battleground for the elaboration of state-citizenship grew apace.

6.2 From Millets to Minorities

The Balkan and First World Wars prompted the Romanian state to shift from a relatively laissez-faire education policy to one of concerted "Romanianization;" however, the underlying methods with which this overt policy was carried out – as well as received – bore the marks of the imperial strategies of rule that had structured the relationship between the Romanian nation-state and its non-ethnically Romanian subjects in Northern Dobruja. Both state and Dobrujan actors continued to instrumentalize state-citizenship for their own means, elaborating upon the previously un-codified distinction between individual and collective rights, as well as the tension between rights and obligations that had undergirded Romanian state citizenship from the nation's inception. As regional wars, irredentist threats, and exogenous minority protections placed pressure on the relationship between the state and its non-ethnically Romanian citizens, the vocabulary for negotiating these changes grew out of, and built upon, the pre-war interactions between central and local actors in the two Dobrujas.

Within the realm of primary schooling, the coming of war and the geopolitical shifts inaugurated by them compelled the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction to slash away at the autonomy of private primary schools across both Northern and Southern Dobruja, clamping down on Romanian language requirements. By the end of the Balkan Wars, the Ministry's previous laxity towards non-ethnically Romanian private school instructors came to an end. To receive

authorization to teach, private school instructors now had to demonstrate proficiency in the state language through an exam proctored by Ministry-approved personnel; by the end of the First World War, they also had to provide proof of Romanian citizenship.[329] At the same time, the Ministry made the decision that all private schools that had enrolled Romanian citizens must transition to a fully Romanian curriculum, teaching all its subjects in the Romanian language and being allowed to provide only reading and writing instruction in their chosen languages.[330] Private schools with Romanian citizens were also now required to discard all school textbooks imported from abroad or written in foreign languages, even if those had previously been approved by the Ministry; as with instruction, these schools could only introduce foreign language textbooks concerned with grammar.[331] Such a drastic shift in policy not only reduced private schools' decision-making capabilities, but also impaired their relationships to foreign schools and publishers, dealing a blow to one of the principal ways in which these schools nurtured ties to communities outside of Romania's borders.

As significantly, by the end of the First World War, the Romanian state began extracting greater obligations from students and making Romanian citizenship a prerequisite for both school

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[329] ANR, MCIP 1696/1914, f. 16: Ministry response to the petition of the director of an Islamic confessional asylum in Constanţa County who had requested authorization for his asylum to continue functioning. The director of the Islamic confessional asylum in the small town of Caru-Orman had all of his paperwork otherwise in order but his authorization was withheld pending his submission of proof of Romanian language proficiency.; AN 2, p. 49 → MCIP 1696/1914, p. 27 → Ministry directive ordering that measures be taken to close an Islamic confessional asylum in Constanţa County if it failed to comply with Ministry directives.

[330] ANR, MCIP 1689/1914, f. 15v: Ministry decision regarding the Greek boys' school in the city of Constanţa.

[331] Ibid.

attendance and employment, using the global conflict to translate "state of emergency" measures into rule of law.[332] A 1919 amendment to the law for public instruction proclaimed that all "parents and guardians of children of Romanian citizens [be] required to send them to public primary school" between the ages of seven and sixteen, thereby making public primary school attendance the only way for children of Romanian citizens to comply with the law for mandatory primary schooling.[333] As all those residing in annexed territories were granted citizenship, this was a means of ensuring new citizens came under the oversight and direction of the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction. At the same time, the new law expanded the primary curriculum to include two tracks – an "elementary" and a "complementary" one – both of which had to be completed for a student to receive their primary school diploma. The second built upon the first, adding to the basic notions of literacy a more practical education, geared towards the economy of each locality; most importantly, this "complementary" track would give students "a citizenship education," familiarizing them with "the rights and obligations of citizenship."[334] And, since only citizens could be properly acquainted with these rights and obligations, only citizens could, following the "War for National Reunification," gain authorization to teach in either public or private primary

[332] This begs comparison, among other polities, to the British Empire, who presented a similar, and more entrenched, pattern of governance in its colonial holdings over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. See: Christopher Roberts, "From the State of Emergency to the Rule of Law: The Evolution of Repressive Legality in the Nineteenth Century British Empire," *Chicago Journal of International Law* 20, no. 1 (2019): 1–61.

[333] ANR, MCIP 107/1919, ff. 47, 49: Article 1 of the amended Law for primary and pedagogical instruction.

[334] ANR, MCIP 107/1919, ff. 47-49: Articles 16-17 of the amended Law for primary and pedagogical instruction, including a justification for the provision of complementary courses.

schools.[335] In some cases, even this would not be sufficient, with some school inspectors requiring that non-ethnically Romanian instructors of Romanian citizenship be favorably recommended by a state inspector before gaining permanent authorization.[336] These measures were thus intended to use citizenship as a means of drastically curtailing the ability of Dobrujan private schools to function, drawing both students and personnel away from their halls.

Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian communities had, however, grown adept to negotiating within the confines of the law – both national and international. The "national speak" in which Dobruja's citizen-subjects had engaged prior to the wars continued to be a regular feature of the negotiations between Ministry functionaries and Dobrujan private schools, demonstrating Dobrujan actors' keen awareness of the text via which the Romanian state filtered its relationship to its citizens. Even Southern Dobruja's Bulgarian communities resorted to it when in a position of weakness. When the 1920 school year found them without an authorized school of their own in the small Southern Dobrujan town of Turtucaia, the local Bulgarian community appealed to the Ministry for their educational autonomy by stating that their enjoyment of "all the legitimate liberties and rights" bestowed onto them by the Romanian state made them eager to do everything in their power "for the general progress and success of [their] new fatherland."[337] This they could not do, however, if the "children of the thousands of Romanian citizens in which [they] ought to

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[335] ANR, MCIP 271/1920, f. 7v: Petition of the Islamic Council of Constanța for authorization of the Turkish-language instructors at the city's Islamic school (the Luftis).

[336] ANR, MCIP 271/1920, f. 103: Decision regarding the request for authorization to teach the Romanian language in Constanta's German Evangelical school by an instructor "born of parents of German nationality."

[337] ANR, MCIP 286/1920, f. 14: Petition from Turtucaia's Bulgarian community for the authorization of a private Bulgarian school in their town.

[have seen] the future of the Greater and Re-unified Romania" could not be educated in accordance with "the pedagogical principle" that elementary instruction be conducted in the maternal language.[338] By explicitly emphasizing individual rights while tying them implicitly to collective freedoms, these petitioners were drawing upon the very foundations of Romania's pre-war interactions with its Dobrujan citizen-subjects.

When this national speak failed to have its desired effect – as it did in this and many other cases – Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian communities now had a novel, yet related, vocabulary at their disposal. Expanding on the Romanian state's unofficial policy of employing religious intermediaries and differentiated application of the law for Northern Dobruja's former Ottoman subjects, non-ethnically Romanian citizens in the two Dobrujas began employing the newly-articulated notion of minority rights.[339] As we saw in the last chapter, Southern Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian communities, which had experienced thirty-five years of both citizenship and formalized cultural autonomy under Bulgarian rule, were already employing the language of "nationality" in their calls for collective rights in the aftermath of the Second Balkan War. By highlighting the Romanian state's own tendency to informally measure nationality as distinct from state-citizenship and emphasizing the deficiencies in the state's *de jure* emphasis on individual rights, these communities were but a step away from the postwar invocation of minority rights. And, as such, the transition was a smooth one. Just as they had previously criticized the Romanian

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[338] Ibid., f. 14v.

[339] Scholars have linked the concept of the Ottoman millet to that of minority rights in various post-Ottoman contexts, recognizing the impact the late Ottoman state's merging of ethnicity and confession had on the development and reification of post-Ottoman minorities. See: Heather J. Sharkey, "History Rhymes? Late Ottoman Millets and Post-Ottoman Minorities in the Middle East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 50, no. 4 (2018): 760–64.

state of abuses to its Constitution for its discriminatory treatment towards Southern Dobruja's ethnically Bulgarian communities, so Dobruja's newly-reified minorities invoked the League of Nations' proclamations to guard against the destruction of their schooling institutions.

Bulgarians from Southern Dobruja once more took the lead, constituting a clear, large, and well-organized minority group with diplomatic support from the tsardom of Bulgaria. Illustrative of Dobrujan Bulgarians' invocation of both national and international law in their calls for greater cultural autonomy is a November 1920 petition from the Bulgarian school council in the city of Silistra, which argued for the immediate restitution of Bulgarian private school buildings that had been seized by the Romanian state upon its arrival in the region.[340] The petitioners flagged the previous corporate persona of the region's school councils by denying the Romanian state's claim that these buildings had been the property of the Bulgarian state and criticized the "exceptional character of this law, that [did] not conform either with the Constitution and laws of the country or with the treaty for ethnic minorities agreed upon by the allied powers and Romania."[341] While seemingly novel in its unequivocal language, this petition built upon both the national speak in which Dobrujan actors had engaged since 1878, and the notion of collective privileges utilized by both the Romanian state and its Dobrujan citizen-subjects in the prewar era.

As a result, the post-Versailles minorities treaties that have often been presented as a major breakthrough in international and humanitarian law in many ways served to formalize and accentuate what in the Kingdom of Romania had for decades been the *de facto* relationship –

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[340] ANR, MCIP 286/1920, f. 180: Request from the Bulgarian community of the city of Silistra for the return of their school buildings by the Romanian state, 29 Nov. 1920.

[341] Ibid.

characterized by selective recognition and an emphasis on obligations in exchange for protections – between the state and its multi-ethnic, multi-confessional citizen-subjects.[342] As we have seen, while officially a Christian nation of Eastern Orthodox denomination, the Kingdom of Romania informally adopted, in the aftermath of the Congress of Berlin, the Ottoman practice of employing religious leaders as intermediaries between the state and its non-core communities. And, like the Sublime Porte, the Romanian state progressively blurred the lines between religion and ethnicity, recognizing certain ethno-confessional groups – such as Northern Dobruja's Eastern Orthodox Greeks – not for their religious but for their ethno-cultural distinctions. At the same time, its Dobrujan citizen-subjects invoked their collective rights via a national speak that gradually morphed into a clearer expression of the Romanian state's *de facto* distinction between individual and collective rights. The postwar minorities treaties did not, therefore, constitute so much a tidal shift in, as an articulation of, the Romanian state's relationship with its non-ethnically Romanian citizens – a relationship whose continuities become all the more evident when one looks beyond the text of Romania's postwar education policies at their application.

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[342] For a recent analysis of the 19th-century antecedents of 20th-century minority rights and Romania's role in these developments, see: Raul Cârstocea, "Historicising the Normative Boundaries of Diversity: The Minority Treaties of 1919 in a Longue Durée Perspective," *Studies on National Movements* 5, no. 1 (2020). For more on how the notion of protections for minority populations was informed by notions of external supervision preceding the twentieth century, see: Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge, 2004). For an example of recent scholarship detailing the Great Powers' selective and strategic application of minority rights outside of their own borders, see: Laura Robson, "Minorities Treaties and Mandatory Regimes: The Racialization of Sovereignty after 1919," *Comparative studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 41, no. 3 (2021): 332–339.

6.3 Bespoke Romanianization

Despite the indisputable radicalization of Romania's schooling policies in the aftermath of war, the differentiated rule that undergirded Romanian statesmen's rhetorical and legislative push for national uniformity in the prewar era persisted, revealing the importance of looking beyond a binary relationship between composite states and their minority populations in analyses of nation-building. While the Balkan and First World wars cast greater suspicion upon the kingdom's minority populations, the reification of ethno-cultural distinctions solidified by the postwar minorities treaties served only to further obstruct from view the persistently complex and multidimensional nature of the relationship between the Romanian state and its non-ethnically Romanian subjects. Increasingly unequivocal policies geared toward the Romanianization of primary schooling belied a more nuanced pragmatism in their application. Even more so than before the regional wars of the twentieth century, nationalist dogma was filtered, by Ministry officials and local functionaries alike, through the increasingly acute geopolitical challenges plaguing Greater Romania from its inception.

Thus, the restrictive measures discussed in the previous section were neither as absolute nor as sweeping as the legislation made it seem; the Ministry continued to dole out its sanctions on a case-by-case basis, continuing to be lenient toward those individuals, institutions, and communities that did not pose an obvious threat to Romanian sovereignty. These compromises ranged from the specific to the large. In Dec. 1920, for instance, when Constanţa's Islamic council petitioned the Ministry for authorization of its Arabic-language instructors in the city's Islamic school, the recommendation was that Husein Lufti, who had arrived from Istanbul the previous summer and did not possess Romanian citizenship, not be granted authorization. His wife, Sucrie Husein Lufti, however, was recommended for authorization even though she had lost her

Romanian citizenship – this as a sign of respect to her father who had been mufti in Constanţa County and had been killed in the war as a result of the "mistreatments he suffered at the hands of Bulgarian soldiers."[343] This small instance alone is illustrative of the Ministry's continued bespoke pragmatism in its approach to Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian communities, even as its official policy towards private schools hardened considerably.

Practical considerations once again prove more instructive than rhetorical dogma. Although even Northern Dobruja's German communities, which had often been praised by school inspectors for their exemplary compliance to Ministry directives, began to feel the Ministry's suspicion, this increasingly tense relationship with central authorities was mediated by German schools' location and institutional profiles. In September 1915, for instance, the Ministry approved the request by Constanţa's German Evangelical School to hire as one of its German-language instructors Ida Schindler, who had been born in Dusseldorf and had completed pedagogical training in Breslau.[344] The same school also received permanent authorization for its other German-language instructor, August Rönnebeck, who had been born in Rutenberg, received his schooling in Potsdam, and had been instructor in Garlitz until the year prior.[345] However, the instructor at a rural German school in Tulcea County, in which students of "German nationality" learned the German language and Protestant faith in between their hours at the local public school,

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[343] ANR, MCIP 271/1920, f. 7v: Petition of the Islamic Council of Constanţa for authorization of the Turkish-language instructors at the city's Islamic school.

[344] ANR, MCIP 2448/1915, f. 26: Request for provisional authorization for a German-born German-language instructor at Constanţa's German Evangelical School.

[345] ANR, MCIP 2448/1915, ff. 28-29: Request for permanent authorization for a German-born instructor, recently arrived in Romania, to teach the German language at Constanţa's German Evangelical School.

met with less leniency. The visiting inspector considered the courses to be "an obstacle in the way of the Romanianization of the German colony" and expressed the opinion that the school be allowed to give courses only in the Protestant faith.[346] Since this school operated in an area in which the ethnic Romanian population was at a numerical disadvantage, it was more difficult to supervise on a consistent basis, and did not have the established relationship with central authorities that Constanţa's Evangelical School had, this more modest program met with greater sanctions.

That concerns about threats to Romania's national unity and territorial sovereignty were at the forefront of the Ministry's activity in the aftermath of the Balkan and First World Wars is evident from correspondence between central officials and local school inspectors. In January 1915, for instance, a Ministry functionary asked that the inspector assigned to the Greek boys' school in Tulcea County – the upper administrative district of Northern Dobruja, which shared a border with Russian-controlled Bessarabia – report on whether "the functioning of the Greek schools in Sulina cause[d] any harm to the public schools and if these [latter] schools might be able to accommodate the current population of the Greek schools."[347] The following month, the Ministry received an answer, in an envelope conspicuously marked "Confidential." In it, the chief school inspector of Tulcea County gave the following verdict: "Having inquired, discreetly, into

[346] ANR, MCIP 1987/1914, f. 4: Inspection report on the German-language and Protestant faith courses in the village of Cataloi, Tulcea County

[347] ANR, MCIP 2732/1915, f. 2: Note attached to inspection report of Greek boys' school in the city of Sulina, Tulcea County.

the matter, I conclude that the functioning of the Greek schools (boys' and girls') is contrary to our national interests."[348]

According to the chief inspector, the reasons for the danger centered around demographic imbalance and geopolitical considerations. To begin with, out of Sulina's 7,347 residents, 2,235 were Greek while only 1,368 were Romanian, the rest of the population being made up of Turks, Russians, and other "nationalities."[349] Meanwhile, only half of the city's school-aged children had at that point enrolled in public schools, the remainder attending private schools, with one third of all school-aged children being enrolled in the city's Greek schools.[350] The inspector believed it would have been less problematic if this population had been transitory, but since they were permanent residents who "live[d] there, engage[d] in trade, and [made] fortunes" in the city, they ought to at least have learned the Romanian language.[351] He was therefore of the opinion that, instead of Greek children having a Romanian-language instructor at a private Greek school, they ought to have had a Greek-language instructor at a public Romanian school. This, he said, was how the Ministry had proceeded with Bulgarian students in the same county and he believed the same "system" ought to be applied to the county's Greek school-aged children. In this way, "without forcing them," all would send their children to public schools.[352] The inspector concluded by saying that it was in the interest of the Romanian state to disband the Greek schools in the region, because "at the mouth of the Danube, one must hear the Romanian language, not the

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[348] Ibid.

[349] Ibid.

[350] ANR, MCIP 2732/1915, f. 2.

[351] Ibid.

[352] Ibid.

Greek."[353] In his view, "Greeks [could] have their own schools in Bucharest, Brăila, Galatz, anywhere in the country, but not in Sulina."[354]

The concern with threats to national sovereignty, as opposed to a sweeping rejection of displays of ethno-cultural difference, persisted even in the aftermath of the First World War, when Ministry correspondence flagged the same anxieties. In December 1919, for instance, the inspector of Constanţa's Greek girls' school advised the Ministry to replace the school's Romanian language instructor because the task of teaching the official language, "particularly in private schools," required "well-qualified and enthusiastic persons for counterbalancing the Hellenization of these types of schools."[355] The school was, however, not sanctioned for having a non-citizen from Istanbul in charge of its administration or for continuing to employ an Istanbul-based curriculum rather than one sanctioned by the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction.[356] The following spring, when Constanţa's Greek boys' school submitted their textbooks for Ministry approval, the functionary on whose desk the request landed instructed his assistants to inspect the books closely in order to identify whether these contained anything "contrary to the moral and national interests of the nation."[357] When it was determined that the manuals posed no such challenge, they were approved. The Ministry's handling of Constanţa's Greek schools presents a contrast with its earlier approach to Greek schools in neighboring Tulcea County, where the county's demography and

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[353] Ibid.

[354] Ibid.

[355] ANR, MCIP 271/1920, f. 48v: Inspection report regarding Romanian language instruction in Constanta's Greek private school.

[356] Ibid., f. 48.

[357] Ibid., f. 53 Inspection report regarding the textbooks proposed by Constanta's Greek boys' school.

proximity to a (then) precarious border made the insularity of local Greek communities a cause for greater concern.

Greater Romania's schooling policies in Northern and Southern Dobruja thus complicate the typical duality of state-minority tensions in literature on nation-building in interwar East Central Europe.[358] While Romania's schooling legislation was, on its face, highly restrictive towards private schooling institutions, the application of postwar policies followed the same core logic as had that of their laxer prewar antecedents. Scholarship on East Central European state-building following the First World War has already complicated the notion that the relationship between composite states and their minority populations was a binary one, showing how a nation's diplomatic ties (or lack thereof) with neighboring states impacted its treatment of the minority

[358] Recent literature continues to foreground interactions between nation-states and specific ethnic or ethno-confessional communities (such as between the Bulgarian state and Bulgarian Muslims – Pomaks, or between the Hungarian state and Hungarian Jews or ethnic Germans) in the aftermath of the First World War, rather than the variations among states' treatments of individuals/communities *within* specific minority groups. See: Sabrina P. Ramet, ed., *Interwar East Central Europe, 1918-1941: The Failure of Democracy-Building, the Fate of Minorities* (New York: Routledge, 2020). See also: Kenneth B. Moss, *An Unchosen People: Jewish Political Reckoning in Interwar Poland* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2021). While some recent scholarship has singled out minority subgroups within nation-states (such as German Swabians in the Romanian Banat), there is still further avenues for exploring the ways in which minority groups within particular regions experience differentiated practices of rule depending on the particular circumstances of their constituent local institutions, demography, and geopolitical circumstances. See: Christopher Wendt, "Formulating Germanness in the Banat: 'Minority Making' Among the Swabians from Dualist Hungary to Interwar Romania," *National Identities* 23, no. 4 (2021): 325–47.

groups patronized by those states.[359] The present analysis of postwar Romanian schooling policies provides further nuance still, highlighting both the crucial role played by geopolitics in cultural politics and the differentiated application of legislation applied between and within minority groups as a result.

6.4 Empire after Empire

That this was a feature of postwar Romanian nation-building more broadly – and that the kingdom's experiences with its first two annexations is key to understanding it – is evident from an evaluation of Greater Romania's approach to schooling in the highly-coveted Bessarabia region. Although Romanian nationalists considered Bessarabia to be historically and culturally Romanian, they could not help but confront the fact that its time under Russian administration (1812-56; 1878-1919) had left an indelible mark on the region's institutions, not least among them its primary schooling system. Bessarabian schooling had been administered by organs of local self-governance, its population included large numbers of Slavs, and its subjects had a developed group consciousness with which they imbued their calls for minority rights. While this particular

[359] Harris Mylonas's *The Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), for instance, argues that how states deal with "non-core groups" depends on their foreign policy goals and relation to the external patrons of those groups, thus establishing a tripartite relationship governing new nation-states' policies towards their so-called minority groups. While Mylonas uses this model to explain states' discrimination *between* minority groups, he does not discuss the differentiated treatment of members *within* a particular minority groups.

combination of factors posed a novel challenge for the Romanian state, the underlying aspects of the region – relative local autonomy, heterogeneous demography, and strong ties to foreign entities – were, at their core, familiar to the incoming Romanian administration. As such, the Romanian state's concerted Romanianization of Bessarabian primary schooling was both a logical continuation of its policies in the two Dobrujas, and a reflection of the new geopolitical circumstances with which it had to contend.[360] In the end, imperial strategies of rule would be presented, in this region as in others, as efforts to adapt to the new postwar international norms.

Just as Romania had annexed Northern Dobruja with a legacy of decentralized millet administration and Southern Dobruja with a relatively laissez-faire Bulgarian education policy, it seized Bessarabia with the zemstvo organs of local self-governance that had tied it to the administrative structure of the (by then newly-defunct) tsarist state. And, just as in Northern Dobruja the Romanian state had continued to informally administer primary schooling through

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[360] When Romania begrudgingly ceded Southern Bessarabia to the tsarist empire in 1878 in exchange for Northern Dobruja, it transferred its Bessarabian institutions and administrators into Northern Dobruja as a symbolic continuation between the two regions. The Romanian administrations of Southern Bessarabia and Northern Dobruja were thus intimately linked in this way as well. For more on the entanglement of these regions in Romanian national politics and imaginary, see: Iordachi, "Diplomacy and the Making of a Geopolitical Question" in Daskalov et al., *Entangled Histories of the Balkans* (2017). At the same time, the histories of Southern Bessarabia and Southern Dobruja were linked by Russian (tsarist) influence, Southern Dobruja's Bulgarian administration (1878-1913) having been organized with guidance from the tsarist empire. See: Ernő-Loránd Szabadi, "Dobruja's Public Administration and Its Role

in the Romanian Nation- and State-Building Process (1878–1926)," *Acta Univ. Sapientiae, European and Regional Studies*, 20 (2021), 101. See also: Miroslav Svirčević, "Local Self-Government in the Municipalities of Serbia and Bulgaria after the 1878 Congress of Berlin," *Serbian Political Thought* 8, no. 2 (2013), 69-71.

religious intermediaries, so in Bessarabia it retained the zemstvos following annexation, lacking the resources and personnel necessary for undertaking the structural integration of Bessarabian schooling into the Romanian education system. The Ministry therefore expected Bessarabian zemstvos to continue upkeeping school grounds, undertaking necessary repairs of school buildings, providing fuel to warm the schools, and paying the salaries of school caretakers.[361] This pragmatic adoption of imperial institutions into the overarching structure of the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction was seen by some – like Ștefan Cioleanu, the Secretary General of Education in Bessarabia – as a necessary step towards "the complete unification of life and institutions in Bessarabia."[362]

This unification was, in Bessarabia, all the more desirable due to concerns about the prior Russification of the region's population and Russian presence on the other side of the newly-redrawn borders. Romanian administrators in Bessarabia worried at length about Russian efforts to "denationalize" Bessarabia's ethnically Romanian population and requested reports from the Ministry of Public Instruction on the progress of the Romanian campaign for the nationalization of Bessarabian primary schooling.[363] Demands by regional administrators that the Ministry undertake "immediately, completely, and without reservations the nationalization of the entire education system in this province" stemmed from this concern and were compounded by the local

[361] ANR, MCIP 423/1921, f. 346: Budget request for primary schools in Bessarabia from the Secretary General of Education in Bessarbia.

[362] Ibid., f. 346v.

[363] ANR, MCIP 430/1920, f. 2: Letter from an administrator in Hotin County, Bessarabia requesting a report from the Ministry regarding the progress of nationalization of primary schools in the region.

population's resistance to Romanian education.[364] Even by April 1921, the director of the pedagogical college in Khisinev was writing to the Ministry about the limitations of Romanian instruction in the region, lamenting that the tsarist state had tried to "denationalize" the region by "debasing its native population."[365] According to him, this made it so that once the "Romanianization" of Bessarabian schools started in 1918 with a campaign to attract "Moldavian elements," schools found themselves unable to attract sufficient qualified instructors.[366] He reported that "the first measures to nationalize primary education" were "met with fear" and "distrust" by the region's didactic corpus, "and at times even with hostility," some instructors undertaking a propaganda campaign against education in the Romanian language.[367] Facing a situation analogous to that of Southern Dobruja, albeit compounded by the proportionally more entrenched Russian influence in the region, Romanian administrators in Bessarabia viewed the Romanianization of primary schooling as a matter of urgency.

And, as in Southern Dobruja, fears regarding local hostility to Romanian education in Bessarabia were augmented by the region's geographic location and the collective strength of its non-ethnically Romanian groups. A 1920 report from Hotin County, the northernmost administrative district in Romanian-administered Bessarabia, spelled this out clearly. After listing

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[364] Ibid.

[365] ANR, MCIP 423/1921, f. 212: Letter to the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction from the director of the pedagogical college in the city of Chişinau (Khisinev).

[366] "Moldavian" is the term Romanian administrators used to refer to the peoples of Bessarabia, a region Romanian nationalists have considered to belong to the former Romanian Principality of Moldavia.

[367] ANR, MCIP 423/1921, f. 212: Letter to the Romanian Ministry of Public Instruction from the director of the pedagogical college in the city of Chişinau.

all the efforts that county had undertaken to promote the Romanianization of primary schooling – leading field trips to Bucharest, holding regional conferences, organizing book drives, founding cultural societies and magazines intended to "serve the idea of spiritual unity" in that region – the report emphasized that "in no other part of the country [was] the need for Romanian national culture felt more" than in that area as a result of "the geographical situation of the county and the ethnographic [one] of neighboring countries."[368] Furthermore, the report went on to say that the primary didactic corpus in Hotin County, although for the most part proficient in the Romanian language, was led by a chief inspector with whose help instructors were "imbued more with Wilson's principles regarding minority rights than at least with the same rights for [the Romanian] state and nation [*neam*]."[369] This, according to the report, resulted in an autonomous didactic corpus in Bessarabia whose activities in cultural circles and through diverse modes of propaganda served to imbue the region's population with a similarly autonomous spirit.

Just as the Romanian state had worried about Bulgarian irredentism in Southern Dobruja and the Hellenization of Tulcea County on the shores of the Danube, so Romanian administrators were now anxious about calls for collective rights among minorities along Bessarabia's border with the rival Soviet Russia. As in the two Dobrujas, the Romanian state pragmatically maintained Bessarabia's prior schooling system and sought to incorporate it into the bureaucratic apparatus of the Ministry of Public Instruction. Yet, analogously to its cultural policies in Southern Dobruja, it doubled down on both the rhetoric and the policies of concerted Romanianization with which it

[368] ANR, MCIP 430/1920, ff. 3v-4: Report over the cultural and educational activities undertaken by the administration of Hotin County for the unification and Romanianization of Bessarabia.

[369] ANR, MCIP 430/1920, f. 4.

had chosen to confront the real and perceived threats toward the nation's sovereignty from non-ethnically Romanian populations along Dobruja's contested borders. Having seen its national sovereignty made once again contingent on the fate of its non-ethnically Romanian residents, of which it now had in staggeringly greater numbers, the Romanian state committed to a defensive and increasingly discriminatory cultural policy in its newly-acquired territories. Its recently-adopted approach was, however, intimately linked to the imperial legacies it had adapted in its more laissez-faire handling of Dobrujan schooling.

That the Great Powers' imposition of the postwar minority treaty was a cause of grave concern and irritation for many a Romanian statesman and administrator is evident from the ubiquity of complaints on this score; at the same time, Bessarabia offered a possible solution to this vexing problem – a solution whose novel language obscured the imperial principles on which it was based.[370] Typical of the time, an inspection report from July 1921 from a Ukrainian middle

[370] As discussed earlier in this chapter, many Romanian statesmen – and particularly those belonging to the Liberal Party that had pursued and orchestrated Romania's territorial aggrandizement in the First World War and its aftermath – saw the imposition of minority rights as a violation of the nation's sovereignty and an outrageous intrusion by the Great Powers into Romania's internal affairs. Prime Minister Ion C. Brătianu, who resigned rather than accept the terms of the minority provisions, led the charge in viewing the minority treaty as an extension of the Congress of Berlin's decision to make international recognition of Romania's independence contingent on its accepting non-Christians to citizenship. After 1919 as after 1878, this complaint was intimately intertwined with Romanian antisemitism, which grew to unprecedented heights after the First World War. Throughout this period, Romanian politicians and intellectuals vilified the nation's Jews for their preeminence in the nation's urban economies. For more on how antisemitism shaped Romanian constitutional policies, see chs. 7-9 in Iordachi, *Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism, and Minorities* (Leiden: Brill, 2019). For more on Romanian interwar fascism and antisemitism, see: Roland Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

school in Bessarabia complained that the minority rights doctrine had begun to be exploited by "interested" parties who requested the creation of schools for minorities even when those schools did not count among its students children belonging to that minority group.[371] "From this follow[ed]," the report went on, "that children of other nationalities [were] obligated to attend schools whose language of instruction [was] neither that of [their] parents nor that of [the Romanian] state."[372] In other cases there existed "an even stranger anomaly," whereby the school of a particular nationality did not have instructors who knew that group's language and instead offered instruction in the Russian language.[373] This, it turned out, was the case for the Ukrainian middle school in Şaba parish, which had been designated a Ukrainian school but taught its students in the Russian language. A Franco-German colony, this locality was made up of diverse ethnicities – French, German, Russian, and Ukrainian – and its school populations reflected that diversity; its language of instruction, however, did not.

For the reporting inspector, this concerning state of affairs fortuitously presented a pretext for flipping the rhetoric of minority rights on its head. Given the circumstances of the school's demography and language of instruction, he suggested that "at such schools with a mixed population, the sole language of instruction must be that of the Romanian state."[374] Doing otherwise would have been, according to the inspector, "facilitat[ing] the nationalization of some at the expense of others" and to the detriment of the Romanian nation, "serving, without realizing

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[371] ANR, MCIP 455/1921, f. 78: Report on a Ukrainian middle school in the commune of Şaba, in Bessarabia.

[372] Ibid.

[373] Ibid.

[374] ANR, MCIP 455/1921, f. 78.

it, the subversive intentions" of Romania's enemies.[375] While seemingly a straightforward logic rooted in national and geopolitical considerations, the inspector's suggestion that Romanian language instruction for all non-Romanians – or "un-Romanians" [*neromâni*], as he called them – would safeguard these groups from Russification seemed to resolve the contradiction between Romanianization and minority protections.[376] Whereas in the two Dobrujas the Romanian state could not have been in a position to argue that a more entrenched "denationalizing" force was threatening Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian groups, in Bessarabia the more widespread and overwhelming presence of the Russian language and tsarist institutions provided a pretext for intervention on behalf of the region's minority populations.

The Romanian state could act, in other words, like an imperial power, mediating the balance between the diverse ethnic groups within its borders. As an appeal from Romanian schools in Salonica, Greece from 1921 pointed out, under Ottoman administration, the Romanian national question in that region had been "simpler and somewhat easier, because the battle unfolded on the field of competition between nationalities, conglomerated into a heterogeneous state in whose interest it [had been] to support the weak against those stronger in seniority [*vechime*], number, and organization."[377] The same logic could now be applied to Greater Romania within its patched and demographically heterogeneous borders.

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[375] Ibid.

[376] ANR, MCIP 423/1921, f. 257: Establishment of summer courses for Romanian instructors in Transylvania to deepen their knowledge of Romanian culture, and for "non-Romanians" to learn the Romanian language.

[377] ANR, MCIP 469/1921, f. 6: Appeal from the Romanian community in Coriţa addressed to the administration of Romanian schools in Salonica, Greece.

Imperial legacies persisted, therefore, long after Romania gained its national independence and their internal logic was apparent in even the most nationalizing of efforts in the aftermath of the First World War's dissolution of the great Eurasian land empires. Part of myriad conscious decisions in which pragmatism played a greater role than it has often been ascribed, the imperial norms and patterns of governance inherited by east central European states such as Romania complicate the picture of nation-building in this region and encourage the retracing of seemingly novel post-1919 concepts like minority protections back to their prewar antecedents.[378] While the language of minority rights inaugurated by the Versailles peace settlements was novel both in its explicit articulation of the notion of minority protections and in the establishment of the League of Nations as their guarantor, the principles upon which the minorities treaties were built were endogenous both to prewar notions of sovereign responsibility and to the imperial institutions and practices adopted and adapted by the states and peoples of the former land empires.[379]

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[378] For an example of scholarship championing the novelty of the 1919 minorities treaties, see: Mark Mazower, "Minorities and the League of Nations in Interwar Europe," *Daedalus* 126, no. 2 (1997): 47–63. Part of the reason for the overwhelming amount of scholarship highlighting the changes inaugurated by the 1919 minorities treaties is the enthusiasm with which these international conventions were perceived by contemporaries as heralds of a new era in state-minority interactions. For more on how these treaties were perceived on the "peripheries" of Europe, see: Marcus M. Payk and Roberta Pergher. *Beyond Versailles: Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and the Formation of New Polities after the Great War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019).

[379] See: Luke Glanville, "The Antecedents of 'Sovereignty as Responsibility,'" *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 2 (2011): 233–55.

6.5 Conclusion

In the aftermath of the First World War, "Greater Romania's" massive territorial gains, the disintegration of the great land empires around it, and the Great Powers' selective invocation of minority rights simultaneously reduced the incentives for laissez-faire cultural policies and bolstered the Romanian state's ability to position itself as protector-arbiter among its non-ethnically Romanian populations. Greater Romania's unabashed rhetoric of unification and "Romanianization" therefore obscured both the imperial legacies that undergirded it and the persistent tendency of differentiated rule that defined its outwardly homogenizing interwar cultural policies. Like the political and cultural amphibians within its recently acquired borders, the actors who made up the ever-changing political and administrative structure of the nascent Romanian state continued to employ and adapt imperial institutions, norms, and strategies of rule.[380] At the same time, the language of "minority rights," whose novelty as a term belied its longer lifespan as

[380] While scholarship on those states with colonial holdings prior to the First World War has extensively demonstrated the postwar continuities between old empires and new forms of imperialism – among them, the activities of the League of Nations – less attention has been paid to the ways in which those states that rose out of the defunct Eurasian land empires perpetuated imperial institutions and practices both before and after 1919. For examples of scholarship on the continuity between old empires and postwar imperialism, see: Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).; Sean Andrew Wempe, *Revenants of the German Empire: Colonial Germans, Imperialism, and the League of Nations* (New York: Oxford Academic, 2019). For literature that posits a sharp break between the First World War and its nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century antecedents in East Central Europe, see: Erik Goldstein, *The First World War Peace Settlements, 1919-1925* (London: Routledge, 2002).; Larry Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2020).

a (limited and selectively employed) concept, galvanized the relationship between the Romanian state and its non-ethnically Romanian citizens, while simultaneously articulating and elaborating upon the distinction between individual and collective rights, and the accompanying interplay of rights and obligations, that had long been a *de facto* feature of state-citizenship in this "shatterzone of empires." In this case as in others, muffled eulogies for empire were heard in quotidian relationships and state-citizen interactions long after east central Europe's new composite nation-states ostentatiously struck the final nails into their precursors' coffins.

7.0 Conclusion: National in Difference

In 2018, Romania celebrated the centenary of its "Great Union." Cities across the nation were draped in the tricolor flag and in monumental displays of the nation's heroes – among them, King Carol I. The official website of the Ministry of Culture, whose purview it was to oversee the festivities, introduced 2018 as a year "unique" for Romania, in which the nation was to "pay homage to those who, one hundred years ago, were able to realize an apparently impossible dream: the union of all Romanians."[381] Where others had failed, the "intellectuals, politicians, soldiers, and citizens" of 1918 had succeeded "because they acted together." This despite the many differences that separated them. The Ministry of Culture thus cautioned that "to be united does not mean to be the same, but rather to define and safekeep a common spiritual sanctuary," "an area that is untainted by negotiation or conflict: Romania."

While this was a far cry from the reality of both Greater Romania and the less great national variations to follow, the idea that "regardless of all that separate[d]" Romania's citizens in 2018 they were, nevertheless, "all Romanians," harkens back to newly-independent Romania's attempts to "create unity ex nihilo" so as to extract duties – without complementary rights – from its citizen-subjects.[382] As this dissertation has shown, the Kingdom of Romania freely rifled through the

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[381] All quotations in this paragraph are drawn from: Guvernul Roman, Ministerul Culturii, "Centenarul marii uniri": http://www.cultura.ro/centenarul-marii-uniri.

[382] The first two quotes in this sentence are drawn from the above-cited Ministry of Culture website; The reference to creating "unity ex nihilo" is drawn from Andrei Cușco, *A Contested Borderland Competing Russian and Romanian*

toolboxes of its imperial predecessors and liberally adopted imperial strategies of rule in its attempts to extend and exercise its sovereignty over a heterogeneous populace. The dogmatic nationalist rhetoric of its statesmen thus obscured, as is often the case, a much more pragmatic reality. A nation-state in name only, the Kingdom of Romania governed its multifarious parts via a dynamic differentiated rule whose legislative ambiguity allowed for flexibility and compromise in its application. Its amended post-1878 constitution did little to define citizenship or "the quality of being a Romanian," while its legislative regime of exception in Northern Dobruja blurred the lines between citizenship and subjecthood, making everyone an "actual or potential" Romanian, from whom duties could be extracted.[383]

The annexation of Northern Dobruja, on which international recognition of Romania's sovereignty was contingent, intimately informed these processes and shaped notions of national citizenship, with primary schooling acting as a field of negotiation between the state and its non-ethnically Romanian citizenry. The ambiguity of the Constitution and national censuses, which obscured difference so as to nullify it, stood in contrast to primary schooling legislation and censuses that flagged and reified ethno-confessional distinctions among the officially Romanian Orthodox body politic, perpetuating the imperial practice of differentiated rule. At the same time,

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Visions of Bessarabia in the Second Half of the 19th and Early 20th Century (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016).

[383] As discussed in Ch. 1, the revised 1879 Romanian constitution ambiguously juxtaposes the category of Romanian citizen to "the quality of being a Romanian."; Ch. 1 compares Romanian state-citizenship with that of the Ottoman Empire, borrowing the notion of "actual or potential" citizens from A. Ebru Akcasu, "Nation and Migration in Late-Ottoman Spheres of (Legal) Belonging: A Comparative Look at Laws on Nationality," *Nationalities papers* (2021) 49 (6): 1113-1131.

these discrepancies allowed Northern Dobruja's residents greater *de facto* control over their state-citizenship designations and thus, over the extent to which they had to conform to the duties invoked by the state. As we have seen, this pattern was replicated and reinforced by the Ministry of Public Instruction's heterogeneous approach to primary schooling, which mirrored that of its Ottoman and tsarist counterparts in its pragmatic decentralization, strategic use of native language instruction, and unofficial recognition of religious leaders as intermediaries between it and Northern Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian communities.[384] As in the land empires surrounding it, the partial and selective autonomy bestowed upon private schools and their religious patrons, which was intended to temporarily make up for the state's shortcomings, laid the groundwork for later demands for collective rights among the nation's non-ethnically Romanian communities.

With the geopolitical changes inaugurated by the Balkan and First World Wars, Romania's approach to national integration and cultural assimilation would shift in significant ways. The kingdom's annexation of Southern Dobruja in the aftermath of the Second Balkan War posed even greater challenges to its sovereignty than did the acquisition of Northern Dobruja. The region's proximity to its former Bulgarian sovereign, its large contingent of disaffected and nationally-conscious Bulgarians, and its residents' three decades of experience with national citizenship and relative cultural autonomy under Bulgarian rule put Romanian administrators on high alert to irredentist threats. This prompted a rhetorical and, to the extent possible, practical turn toward concerted cultural Romanianization, whereby the Ministry of Public Instruction worked to dismantle the previous autonomy of private schools in the region. The First World War exacerbated these changes, its vast geopolitical consequences fueling mistrust of non-ethnically

[384] See Chs. 1-3 of this dissertation.

Romanian citizens and encouraging the legislative destruction of cultural autonomy in private schools across the two Dobrujas. Once again, citizenship served as a means of extracting obligations to the nation and now of also closing primary school doors to non-citizen – i.e. non-ethnically Romanian – instructors.

Ideology, however, cannot be fully blamed for this change, just as scarce material and bureaucratic resources cannot solely account for the inconsistency of implementation. As the trajectory of primary schooling legislation and practice in the two Dobrujas indicates, geopolitical concerns and irredentist threats often preceded the national chauvinism generally thought to have engendered them. While recent scholarship has gone a long way toward proposing nuanced and multiple causes for early-twentieth-century conflicts in east central Europe, a lack of significant attention to the pre-First World War era has perpetuated a tendency to blur the lines between prewar nationalist rhetoric (and legislation) and its practical application.[385]

Fears regarding unstable borders, revanchist claims on newly-acquired territory, and the exogenous concept of minority rights, on which Greater Romania's sovereignty was contingent, prompted the clamp-down on private primary schooling. The campaign to culturally assimilate the nation's non-ethnically Romanian citizens via schooling was thus just as often a defensive as an offensive pursuit for the Romanian state during the latter part of the long nineteenth century. Liberal Romanian statesmen's assimilationist language and policies often obscured both the contested political and ideological nature of cultural assimilation and the uneven and often

[385] For a recent example of such conflation, see the second point of the conclusion to Roland Clark, "Interwar Romania: Enshrining Ethnic Privilege," in Sabina P. Ramet, ed. *Interwar East Central Europe, 1918-1941: The Failure of Democracy-Building, the Fate of Minorities* (Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2020).

contradictory ways in which it was applied in practice by central and local officials alike. This reactionary nationalism is apparent in the Ministry of Public Instruction's perpetuation of differentiated rule. True to its prewar patterns of governance, the Ministry clamped down on those private schools it deemed threatening to the state's interests in geopolitically sensitive areas while allowing less menacing institutions more leeway in conforming to central directives. Significantly, it was specific schools, not specific ethno-confessional communities, that the Ministry targeted with more stringent policing.

Throughout, Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian citizen-subjects manipulated the ambiguous nature of state-citizenship and employed their communal and trans-regional ties to skirt central directives and retain a measure of control over their primary schools. While in an indisputably subordinate position to central authorities, these actors nevertheless adeptly maneuvered around the instability and inefficiency of the Ministry of Public Instruction. Recognizing in the Romanian state's approach the imperial modes of governance with which they had been intimately familiar under Ottoman rule, Northern Dobruja's non-ethnically Romanian communities negotiated their obligations to the state via the institution of primary schooling. These cultural and political amphibians contested civil status categories, engaged in "national speak," appealed to religious intermediaries, and employed trans-regional networks in an effort to safeguard their schools.[386] In so doing, they retained a degree of cultural autonomy and influenced the evolving contours of Romanian state-citizenship. Later, Southern Dobruja's non-ethnically

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[386] As mentioned in footnote 33 of this project's introduction, I borrow the term "amphibian" from Chad Bryant's *Prague in Black* (2009), which was in turn inspired by Peter Sahlins's description of the inhabitants of the border of France and Spain in his seminal *Borders: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

Romanian citizens petitioned for their collective rights alongside their individual ones and, after the First World War, the ethnic Bulgarians of Southern Dobruja led the way in invoking the newly-articulated concept of minority rights to safeguard their cultural autonomy against the campaign for Romanianization.

The Kingdom of Romania's experiences administering the cultural life of the two Dobrujas thus had a profound impact on Greater Romania's approach to cultural assimilation and sheds light on the perpetuation of imperial norms and patterns of governance in the purportedly post-imperial nation-states of East Central Europe. The Congress of Berlin's wedding of the international recognition of Romania's sovereignty with this nascent nation-state's citizenship legislation encouraged legislative ambiguity and an emphasis on the obligations rather than the rights of citizenship. At the same time, non-ethnically Romanian citizen-subjects in Northern Dobruja recognized this pattern and worked within it to maintain the amphibian nature of their cultural and political alliances that had characterized their time as subjects of the Sublime Porte. By the conclusion of the First World War, these negotiations had primed both the Romanian state and its non-ethnically Romanian citizens for the Great Powers' imposition of minority rights.

And, just as this doctrine's novelty as a term belied its older lineage – entangled with Romanian state-building – as a concept, so the ways in which the Romanian state approached it in its new territories obscured the imperial legacies underpinning it. For, in seeking to justify cultural Romanianization with a defense of weaker minorities against stronger ones, Romanian administrators did nothing more than coopt the script of their imperial predecessors. These findings strengthen claims made in recent scholarship regarding the nineteenth-century antecedents of

twentieth-century minority rights.[387] In particular, they emphasize the role the Congress of Berlin's contingent recognition of Romania's sovereignty played in setting the stage for the Great Powers' imposition of minority rights protections on the nations of East Central Europe more broadly in the aftermath of the First World War.[388] Furthermore, they add to discussions regarding the importance of conceptions of sovereignty in East Central European nations' adverse reactions to the minorities provisions by accentuating the primacy of concerns regarding sovereignty in Romanian statesmen's pushback against both the terms of the Congress of Berlin and of the 1919 minority treaty.[389]

The arc of this dissertation thus complicates the progression from empires to nation-states at the "shatterzone" of the three great Eurasian land empires.[390] As this project has sought to show through the case study of Romania's annexations of the two Dobrujas, those nation-states that were carved out of the receding edges of the Ottoman, Russian, and Habsburg empires displayed, in

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[387] For more on how the notion of protections for minority populations was informed by notions of external supervision preceding the twentieth century, see: Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge, 2004).

[388] For a recent analysis of the 19th-century antecedents of 20th-century minority rights and Romania's role in these developments, see: Raul Cârstocea, "Historicising the Normative Boundaries of Diversity: The Minority Treaties of 1919 in a Longue Durée Perspective," *Studies on National Movements* 5, no. 1 (2020).

[389] For an example of scholarship highlighting the ways in which the Great Powers employed minority protections to restrict the sovereignty of newer and less powerful nation-states, see: Laura Robson, "Minorities Treaties and Mandatory Regimes: The Racialization of Sovereignty after 1919," *Comparative studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 41, no. 3 (2021): 332–339.

[390] See: Omer Bartov, et al., eds. *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

many ways, the "national indifference" that has by now been aptly documented in their citizen-subjects.[391] When looking beyond rhetoric to the practical application of legislation – particularly legislation that, as in the case of primary schooling, intimately affected the lives of the majority of non-state actors – it becomes readily apparent that nation-states pragmatically adopted imperial strategies and norms of governance in much the same way as empires had adopted national ones.[392] This allowed for the unofficial recognition of ethno-confessional difference within a national context, as long as this difference was not deemed threatening to the nation's territorial integrity. It also set the stage for the advent of minority rights, whose selective imposition by the Great Powers turned out to be neither novel nor effective, reifying the previously tacitly recognized differences within composite nation-states and thereby rendering them threatening.[393]

Seen in this way, the picture of state-building in East Central Europe becomes more dimensional and the progression from nation-building to national chauvinism – and fascism – less obscure. The observation that the "brittle, sectional nature of the unified state came as something of a surprise to Romanian nationalists, for little in prewar, irredentist nationalism had prepared

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[391] For pioneering studies on the topic of national indifference, see footnote 31 in this dissertation's introductory chapter.

[392] For literature on empires' adoption of national strategies of rule, as well as on the subject of imperial nations, see footnotes 35 this dissertation's introductory chapter.

[393] For scholarship detailing the ways in which ethnic cleansing rose out of the very premise on which the democratic (and particularly the post-1919) nation-state was built – that of coherent territorial units inhabited by ethno-linguistically homogenous populations – see: Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001).; Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy : Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).; Philipp Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe* (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2014).

them for the multinational and regionalized nature of their country" ought therefore to be re-examined – as, indeed, ought other accounts of interwar state-building in this region.[394] For, as the Romanian case has shown, one could speak of "empire after empire" even in the geopolitically peripheral nations of East Central Europe whose borders, albeit much less extensive that those of the typical imperial nation, housed a "kaleidoscopic" population whose intimate experiences with (land) empire made the adaptation of imperial norms and patterns of rule a desirable strategy of governance.[395]

The case study of Romanian-administered Dobruja thus suggests the need for future research, both within Romanian and East Central European historiography. One starting point would be a more in-depth exploration of the trans-regional ties of minority schools both before and after the First World War. This would help better isolate the role played by geopolitics and diplomacy in national cultural policies, as well as deepen our understanding of the continued influence of religious intermediaries on the articulation of collective rights in the territories of the

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[394] See Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 297.; Some studies have begun just such a comparative analysis of interwar state-building in East Central Europe, yet without a thorough investigation of the impact of pre-war imperial norms and strategies of governance. One such study, which highlights the chaotic nature of governance in this region after the First World War is the volume of collected essay *Interwar East Central Europe, 1918-1941: The Failure of Democracy-Building, the Fate of Minorities* (Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2020), edited by Sabrina P. Ramet.

[395] Here, "empire after empire" is an allusion to Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga's 1935 thesis, *Byzance après Byzance*, in which he argues for the continuation of the Byzantine cultural and institutional legacy in the Balkans.; As mentioned in footnote 6 of this dissertation's Introduction, I borrow the descriptor from Mark Mazower (*Salonica, City of Ghosts*), who referred to Ottoman Salonica as a place of "almost kaleidoscopic interaction.; For literature on the subject of "imperial nations," see footnote 36 in this dissertation's introductory chapter.

former land empires. Future research could also more thoroughly interrogate the nineteenth-century antecedents of twentieth-century minority rights and probe more deeply into the differentiated application of rights (or of discriminatory policies) *within* minority communities. Such research would add more nuance to the state-minority binary that still dominates literature on this topic.[396] Finally, a comparative exploration of the interplay between state-citizenship and mandatory schooling in the new nation-states of East Central Europe would shed more light on the role individual citizenship rights played in diminishing the collective autonomy of minority groups in this region.

[396] For references regarding this trend, see footnote 52 in Ch. 5 of this dissertation.

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