# ELEMENTS OF RELIGIOUS VOCABULARY IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE AROMANIANS OF ROMANIA

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**Abstract**

Most of the terms forming the basic vocabulary of the Aromanian language are of Latin origin, and there are also later Greek, Slavic, Turkish and Albanian loanwords. Besides words of Latin origin, the Aromanian vocabulary also contains a large number of non-Latin elements. The paper deals with common names in the religious vocabulary and proper names denoting religious holidays. The analysis outlines the etymology, meaning and comparison with similar forms in other languages.

**Key words**: *Aromanians, religious vocabulary, Latin, Greek, Balkan influences*

**Résumé**

Le vocabulaire de base du macédo-roumain est majoritairement formé de termes d'origine latine. C'est sur ce stratum que viennent s'asseoir ultérieurement les termes d'origine grecque, turque, slave, albanaise. Les éléments non-latins sont, donc, présents en très grand nombre dans le lexique macédo-roumain, aux cotes des éléments de provenance latine. Le présent article discute des noms communs existants dans le vocabulaire religieux, ainsi que des noms (propres) de fêtes religieuses. Nous en analysons les sens, l'étymologie et nous les comparons aux formes assez semblables qui existent dans d'autres langues.

**Mots-clés**: *macedo-roumains, lexique religieux, Latin, Grec, influences Balkaniques*

## Introduction

Matilda Caragiu Marioțeanu rightly noted about the language of the Aromanians that "it is not unitary, which is not surprising: living on such a vast territory (from the Balkans to the South of Pindus and from the Adriatic Sea to the Aegean Sea), often in isolated groups, continuously moving, in contact with populations speaking different languages, the Aromanians diversified their language. The linguistic variety of Aromanian is mainly geographic and territorial [...]"[1]. I. Coteanu, in his turn, stated that "according to O. Densusianu, Aromanian had last been in contact with Daco-Romanian in the 6th century, according to Weigand, in the 9th century, and, in other opinions, in the 7th or 8th century. [...] it is obvious that an idiom which, for at least one thousand years, has developed independently, can no more be considered a dialect of another idiom it is no longer related to, since the dialect-language relationship is determined by the subordination relation of an idiom to another. In similar cases, the specialists in Romance languages have decided, although

[1] Caragiu Marioțeanu, 1975, p. 222.

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hesitantly, that Provencal, for instance, is not a dialect of French, that the Catalan idiom is not a dialect of the Provencal language, nor is it of the Spanish language, and each of them is a language as such"[2].

The elements of religious vocabulary in the language of the Aromanians of Romania are suggestive for the understanding of the vocabulary used by Aromanians[3]. Most of the terms forming the basic vocabulary of their language are of Latin origin[4], and there are also later Greek, Slavic, Turkish and Albanian loanwords.

Aromanian contains Latin terms out of use in Daco-Romanian. (Some of them preserved the Latin meaning, some others had a different semantic evolution)[5]. Besides words of Latin origin, the Aromanian vocabulary also contains a large number of non-Latin elements. This is due to the long living with populations speaking languages as sources of borrowings: Byzantine Greek, Old Bulgarian or Old Albanian. Many Albanian elements were preserved in the Aromanian spoken in Albany, Greek elements from Neo-Greek, in the Aromanian spoken in Greece, Serbian elements in the language spoken by the Aromanians in the former Yugoslavian republics. An exact quantification of borrowings from each language within this area is almost impossible, due to the mutual influences and close living of the Balkan peoples, mainly in the context provided by the Ottoman Empire, of ethnic and religious freedom, after the Middle Ages, therefore these words became "Balkan", without any possibility of precisely establishing their origin[6].

Latin terms entered the language via modern Greek[7]. Most of them are overtaken from Neo-Greek; the percentage of Greek elements in Aromanian is the same as the Slavic one in Daco-Romanian[8].

Aromanian borrowed many words from Albanian[9] (one can identify two strata: an old, common one and a new one, specific to Aromanian, containing the highest number of Albanian elements, as compared with Daco-Romanian, Megleno-Romanian and Istro-Romanian[10]).

Slavic loanwords mainly originate in South Slavic, Macedonian in particular[11]. One can identify three strata of elements which penetrated the language at different historical times: a stratum of old Slavic terms, usually similar to those in Daco-Romanian; a newer stratum specific to Aromanian, due to the constant relationships with the Slavs in the Balkan Peninsula; a more recent stratum in the language of the Aromanians living in Slavic-speaking countries. The local Slavic influence (Serbo-Macedonian influence in the Yugoslavian space, Bulgarian influence in Bulgaria),

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[2] Coteanu, *Elemente de dialectologie a limbii române*, Bucureşti, 1961, p. 114.

[3] This allows us to draw a parallel between this reality and the theory of fractals in exact sciences (Mandelbrot, B. B., *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*, W. H. Freeman and Company, 1982), according to which the whole can be found in each and every part of the whole itself, thus assuming the imperfection of this relation, taking into account the differences between those sciences, but also emphasizing the closeness that this approach involves within a holistic paradigm of knowledge.

[4] Caragiu Marioţeanu, 1975, p. 256 and Coteanu, 1961, p. 144.

[5] Caragiu Marioţeanu, 1975, p. 256.

[6] Idem, *ibidem*, p. 258.

[7] Coteanu, 1961, p. 146.

[8] Caragiu Marioţeanu, 1975, p. 259.

[9] Coteanu, 1961, p. 146.

[10] Caragiu Marioţeanu, 1975, p. 260.

[11] I. Coteanu, 1961, p. 146.

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shows differences from one locality to another, from one social group to another, from one family to another, from one speaker to another[12].

Words of Turkish origin are also numerous in Aromanian[13]. Aromanian preserves terms from non-Balkan languages as well. Of them, the highest influence is exerted by Italian, indirectly, through the Neo-Greek spoken by most Aromanians in Greece, or directly, through the commercial relations between the Aromanians and Venetians[14].

In the last century, one can notice an orientation process of Aromanian towards the languages of the countries inhabited by Aromanians, either due to the socio-political conditions within those states, or due to the easy way of using a single language in the public space and in the personal one, at home. This state of affairs relies on a reality, i.e. the Aromanians are at least bilingual, being fluent in both Aromanian and the language of the population together with which they live.

Specialized literature on the study of this idiom mainly belongs to Aromanian authors who enjoy the advantage of having Aromanian as their mother tongue, which made their research easier. The Aromanians produced high-standing linguists: Capidan, Papahagi, Caragiu-Marioțeanu, Saramandu, to name just a few of the myriad of Romanian linguists of Aromanian origin.

**Elements of religious vocabulary in the language of the Aromanians of Romania**[15]:

- *aféndi*, *afénde* < Greek *αφέντης* "master, employer, boyar, owner", cf. Turkish *efendi* "gentleman, educated man, scholar", "husband, man", fig. "master", Arm. *afende* "priest, parent, father", *fendi* (e.g. *fendi Dima*, a formula used by a wife when addressing an elder brother or cousin of her husband), Aromanian also preserves the term *preftu*;

- *ağiún*, *ağiúnari*, *ağiúnare* < Latin *ajunare*, cf. Spanish *ayunar*, French *ajeuner*, Romanian *ajuna* (attested in *Pravila lui Coresi/ The Coresi Code of Laws*, 1560);

- *aiseáscî*, *aisítu*, *aγiséscu*, *aγisít*, *aγĭuséscu*, *aγĭusít* , *s` aiseascî*, "may it be blessed", "blessed, holy", Greek *άγιος* "holy, saint";

- *aĭu*, *iu*, *i*, *aγĭu* "saint", Greek *άγιος* "saint", Arm. *Iu Iani* "Saint John", Arm. *I Nicola* "Saint Nicholas", Aromanian also preserves the term *sâmtu*, *sum*, *stî*, *stă*;

- *Amintắtoarea di Dumnidză(u)* "Mother of God, Holy Virgin Mary", Arm. *amintát* "gained", "born", Arm. *amintari* "gain", "birth", Arm. *amintă* "(he) gained", *amintă un ficiuricu* "she gave birth to a boy";

- *anghíe*, *anγíe*, *Hristólu anγé* "Christ is risen from the dead", Latin *in-vivere*;

- *ánghil*, *ánçil* (Papahagi) – "angel", Greek *άγγελος* "messenger, bearer of news, herald, angel", cf. Latin *angelus*;

- *aştirnumíntu* (*a preftului*) "attire (of a priest)", "bedspread, cloth", Latin *asternimentum*;

[12] Caragiu Marioțeanu, 1975, p. 262.

[13] Coteanu, 1961, p. 146.

[14] Valeriu Papahagi, Neculai Iorga, *Aromânii moscopoleni şi comerțul venețian în secolele al 17-lea şi al 18-lea*, Bucureşti, Societatea de cultură macedo-română, 1935, apud Caragiu Marioțeanu, 1975, p. 263.

[15] The material was collected in the spring of 2013, in the village of Camena, Tulcea county, from Mihai Naum, the psalm singer in the village church whose patron was Saint Demetrius, the Great Myrrh-Streaming Martyr. In order to reproduce the forms, we consulted *Dicționarul dialectului aromân...*, by Tache Papahagi.

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- *bâseáricî, băseárică*, “church”, Latin *basilica*;

- *blâstém, blăstém, blástim* “curse”, cf. Latin *blastemare*;

- *câmbánî, câmbánă* “bell”, cf. Byzantine Greek *καμπάνα*, Italian *campana*;

- *cândílî, căndílă* “icon lamp”, cf. Byzantine Greek *καντήλα*, Albanian *kandile*, Bulgarian *kandilo*, Turkish *qandîl*, Italian *candela*;

- *Cârciun, Cârčĭún, Crăčĭún* – “Christmas”, with its uncertain etymology, we still mention two phrasemes Arm. *trî Cârciun, foclu ardi cî featî ursa* “on Christmas day, the fire is burning because the she-bear is whelping”, *di `anvârliga di Cârciun budzîli nu pot s`ni`adun* “around Christmas (or the burning log), I cannot join my lips together (with cold)”;

- *críştinu, críştin* “Christian” < Latin *christianus*;

- *crúți, crúțe* “cross” < Latin *crux*;

- *cumnicári, cumnicáre, cumâ'nic* “communion, eucharist”, “I am giving the eucharist” < Latin *comminicare*;

- *dumâ'nicî, dumâ'nică* “Sunday” < Latin *dominica*;

- *Dumnidză'*(u) “God” < Latin *Domine Deus*;

- *gâ'rnu* “wheat” with the meaning of “funeral wheat porridge”, Papahagi gives the term *cólivă* < Greek *κόλλυβον*;

- *hagí, hăgí* “pilgrim”, “a devotee who journeyed to the sacred places”, cf. Turkish *haci, hadjy*;

- *Hristólu* “Christ” < Greek *Χρίστός*, Greek *χρίση* “anointing, crowning”, “the anointed of God”;

- *iazmó, ayeazmó* “holy water” < Greek *αγίασμα*, Greek *ἁγιαζμός*;

- *icoánî, icoánă* “icon” < Greek *εἰκόνα*;

- *ĭu dĭmî, ayĭu dĭmă* “altar” < Greek *άγιον βήμα* “holy altar”;

- *înclinári, încl ´inăčĭúne, ncl ´inăčĭúne* “bow, prayer”; in Arm. there is also *anchiliciuni* (“bows” meaning “greetings”);

- *mârtíi, mărtíe, amărtíe* “sin” < Greek *ἁμαρτία*;

- *mimrmíntu, mirmínțî, murmíndz*(î), *murmínțî* “grave”, “graves”, “graveyard”, “graves” < Latin *monumentum*;

- *misáli, misále, misă´l´ĭ* “table cloth” also has the meaning of “a mass for the dead”, “funeral feast” < Latin *mesanlis*, Greek *μεσάλ(λ)ι*, Albanian *mësálë*, Latin *mensalium*, Bulgarian *mesal*;

- *misítă* “praying” (name of Mother of God), *misít* “mediator” < Greek *μεσίτης*;

- *n`iluía* “have mercy”, *Dumnidzale n`iluia* “Lord, have mercy on us”, cf. Bulgarian *мил* “dear, sweet, pleasant”, Bulgarian *милея* “to love, to be fond of somebody”;

- *oárî*, (*preftulu*) *oară* (the priest) “prays”, Latin *oror, -ari*[16];

- *Páşti, Páşte* “Easter” < Latin *Paschae*;

- *pâtidzári, pâtidzát*(u), *pâteádzî, pâteádză pâtigiúni, pătiğĭúne* “to baptize, baptized, baptism”, Latin *baptizio*;

- *písti, píste, pistipséscu* “faith”, “I believe”, cf. Greek *πίστη* “belief, safety, certainty”;

- *plâcârii, plâcârséscu, pălăcăríe, pălăcărséscu, pălăcărsíre, părăcălíe*

[16] Caragiu-Marioțeanu, *Biblia la aromâni*, in “Revista de istorie şi teorie literară”, XXXVIII/1990, p. 3-4.

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"prayers", "I pray", "prayer", cf. Greek *παρακαλία παρακαλῶ*;

- *preásini, pareásin΄ĭ* "Lent", "fasting", cf. Latin *quadragesimae*;
- *préftu* "priest", cf. Latin *pre(s)b(y)ter*;
- *psáltul* "psalm singer, singer" Greek *ψάλτης, ψάλτος*;
- *Stî Măríe, Stî Mârie, Stă Mărie, sâmtu, sum, stî, stă* "Saint Mary, Holy Mother of God" < Latin *sancta Maria*;
- *ţéarî, ţéară* "wax" < Latin *cera*;
- *vasileácu, vasilác, vasilcó, vasileác* "sweet basil" < Greek *βασιλικός*.

**Main annual holidays and their names in Aromanian**

We will just enumerate the names of the most important holidays of the Aromanians, the religious holidays, mentioning that, for proper correspondence in Daco-Romanian, we used the Orthodox calendar titles, considering that most Aromanians belong to this Eastern rite.

*Aiu Vasili* "Saint Basil the Great" (January 1);

*Toli* "the Apostles" (probably the Synaxis of the Seventy Apostles, January 4);

*Pâtigiuni, Fotili, Ta Fota* "Epiphany, Baptism of the Lord", cf. Greek *τα Φοτα* (January 6);

*Aiu Iani* "Synaxis of John the Baptist" (January 7);

*Ai* (*Aiu, I*) *Andoni* "Saint Anthony the Great" (January 17);

*I Tanasi* "Saint Athanasius" (January 18 – Saint Athanasius and Saint Cyril);

*Triflu* "Saint Tryphon, the Martyr" (February 1);

*I Ftimiilu, Iftimliu* "Venerable Euthymius the Great" (January 20);

*I Tudorlu, Iftodor* "Saint Theodore Stratelates, the Great Martyr" (February 8) or better "the Saturday of Saint Theodore" (first Saturday of Great Lent);

*Vanghelizmo* "Annunciation" < Greek *ΕΥαγγελισμος* (March 25);

*Aiu Iorii* "Saint George, the Great Martyr" (April 23);

*Vailu, Văiu* "Palm Sunday", cf. Greek *Των Βαίων* (the Sunday before Easter);

*Paşti* "Resurrection of our Lord" or "Holy Easter" (a moveable feast, the first Sunday after the full moon, after the March equinox);

*Analipsea* "the Ascension of our Lord" < Greek *Αναληψις* (on Thursday, forty days after the Resurrection);

*Arâsai* "Whit Sunday", "Descent of the Holy Spirit" (on Sunday, fifty days after the Resurrection);

*Iu Triada* "Holy Trinity" (on Monday, after the Descent of the Holy Spirit);

*Sum Chetru* "Saint Peter" (June 29 – Saint Peter and Saint Paul, the Apostles);

*Helea* "Holy and Glorious Prophet Elijah" (July 20);

*Stî Mâria Mari, Stî Mârii Mari* "Our Most Holy Lady Mary", "The Dormition of Mother of God" (August 15);

*Stî Mâria nicî* "The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady, Mother of God" (September 8);

*Stavrolu* < Greek *σταυρός* "cross", Ascension of the Holy Cross (September 14);

*I Dimitri, Su(m) Medru*[17] "Saint Demetrius, the Great Myrrh-Streaming Martyr" (October 26);

[17] The form *Su(m) Medru* for the Aromanians of today can be found in Caragiu-Marioţeanu only, 1990, p. 3-4.

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*Mihailu* “Synaxis of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel and other Bodiless Powers” (November 8);

*Andreilu* “Holy and Glorious Apostle Andrew, the First-Called” (November 30);

*I Nicola* “Saint Nicholas the Archbishop of Myra in Lycia” (December 6);

*Cârciun*, *Pap Cârciun* “Christmas”, “Santa Claus”, “the Birth of our Lord” (December 25);

The terms *ai*, *aiu* [*agʹĭu*], *i*, *iu* < Greek *άγιος* “holy, saint” differ from one region to another, from one saint to another, according to the phonetic laws affecting the lexical structure. It is also interesting to note the form *stî* (for Holy Virgin Mary) < Latin *sanctus*, via religious books in Slavonic, from the Serbian *свети* (*sveti*) or Bulgarian *sfet*.

There is also emphasis on the use of certain Greek terms, without the possibility of identifying too many phonetic substantial processes, but just a desinence, specific to Aromanian: *-li* in *Fotili* < Greek *τα Φοτα* “Epiphany” (the Greek term is translated as “light”), *-lu* in *Stavrolu* < Greek *σταυρός* “cross” (the more so as there is Arm. *cruți*, *crúțe* “cross”, Latin *crux*, *crucis*, without any desinence in *Vanghelizmo* < Greek *ΕΥαγγελισμος* “Annunciation” or *-ea* in *Analipsea* < Greek *Αναληψις* “The Ascension of Christ”.

Certainly, there are such elements, close to Daco-Romanian, as *Cârciun*, *Sum Chetru*, *Andreilu*, *Mihailu*, although in the last two names, the forms used nowadays by the Aromanians living in Romania seem to confirm some later borrowings from Daco-Romanian, since they differ from it only by the specific ending *-lu*.

**Conclusions**

For a better understanding of the topic in this paper, we would like to specify that, although there are translations of the Holy Scripture and even of the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, the Golden Mouth[18], there is no religious service in Aromanian in churches, except occasionally or extraordinarily[19]. Thus, the Aromanians preserve in the religious vocabulary certain elements belonging to various periods of history, with influences specific to each people they lived with, which explains the difficulty of exactly establishing the etymology of each term.

As we may notice, most of the elements belonging to the religious vocabulary derive from Latin or Byzantine Greek. Just as in Daco-Romanian, there are terms preserved only in Aromanian (*misali*) or forms which were not subject to the same rules of phonetic, lexical and semantic evolution as those affecting Daco-Romanian. These aspects prove the age of Christianity in the lives of Aromanians.

The above-mentioned elements of religious vocabulary entitle us to investigate the hypothesis according to which the links between Aromanian and Daco-Romanian

[18] Enumerated as such under the Bibliography, without any criticism regarding the vocabulary which was used. We will outline them as follows: *Di la Dumnidzau Liturgia a tilui ditu sinti parintilui a nostru IONA GUA-di-AMALAMA Arhiepiscopu ali Constantinopole*, Editata di Societatea Culturală Balcania, Paris, 1967, *Noulu Testamentu*, by A. N. Caciuperi, published by Avdella Publishing House (without mentioning the publication year and place), and Dina Cuvata publishes *Bilia* (The Old Testament and the New Testament), in Skopje, 2003, edited by the Union for the Culture of Aromanians in Macedonia.

[19] Since 2003, in Bitolia, in Macedonia, Father Saso Nakov, who graduated from the Faculty of Theology in Romania, has also been serving in Macedo-Romanian, http:// jurnalul.ro/stiri/externe/ aromanii-pot-citi-biblia-in-limba-lor-59367.html.

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must be looked for in late vernacular Latin[20].

From the mere enumeration of holiday names, one can infer that, according to the calendar, they occur in wintertime when the Aromanians, mainly shepherds, merchandise carriers or traders stayed home.

We also want to emphasize the fact that we confined our short presentation to basic terms that we found by performing field work and we made references to the forms presented by Tache Papahagi in *Dicţionarul dialectului aromân/ Dictionary of the Aromanian Dialect*, 2nd edition, 1974, an aspect which allowed us to identify the changes occurring in the Aromanian vocabulary throughout four decades since the publication of the dictionary, which confirms our belief that Aromanian is still alive and dynamic.

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[20] The hypothesis was formulated by a well-known dialectologist, Professor Marin Petrişor, PhD, *Originea dialectelor româneşti în concepţia lingviştilor români*, in Ovidius University Annals of Philology, vol. XIII, 2002, p. 207-216.


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