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**ABSTRACT**

**FRÉDÉRIC DAMÉ'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANIAN CULTURE**

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The elaboration of this thesis, entitled *Frédéric Damé's Contribution to the Development of Romanian Culture*, is explained by our philological concerns and by our intention to illustrate some aspects of the French influence on the modernization of Romanian culture, and implicitly, of Romania. More specifically, we propose a twofold approach: a presentation of the French influence, emphasizing the moment of Frédéric Damé's arrival in his adopted country, and a systematic research of the author's various writings, to which we add some biographical snapshots.

France and Romania have maintained privileged relations, supported by the undeniable francophilia of Romanians and the francophone nature of a significant part of the population. The values promoted by francophonie - peace, democracy, human rights, cultural diversity and solidarity for development - and the diversity of countries that share the French language have encouraged Romania to join the institutional francophonie since 1991, first as an observer and then, since 1993, as a full member of the International Organization of la Francophonie.

The Romanians' cultural openness to France took shape especially from the 18th century onwards, during the Phanariote reigns. In the 'academies' set up by the Phanariots, the French language was taught in Greek, using textbooks translated from French. It should also be recalled that, between 1771 and 1772, the publication in Romanian of several works by Voltaire (translated directly from French) was followed in 1772 by the translation into Romanian of Fénélon's *The Adventures of Télémaque*, which played a decisive role in the spread of the language. In 1776, following the reform of education in Walla Wallachia by the ruler Alexandru Ipsilanti, French became a compulsory subject in the curriculum of the Bucharest higher education system.

A language of ideas and culture, French was used by the secretaries of the princes of Moldavia and Wallachia, both local and French, such as Pierre De La Roche (secretary for foreign affairs to the Moldavian prince Ioan Teodor Callmachi in 1758, who became the first Frenchman to act as tutor to the prince's children) or the Count of Hauterive (secretary to the prince Alexander Ipsilanti and author of the *Memorandum on the ancient and current state of Moldavia* in 1787).

The Romanian press archives reveal that reading French newspapers was a custom in cultural circles. In 1795, at the end of the Russo-Turkish War, the first French consulate, headed by Emile Gaudin, was established in Bucharest. The following year, a second French consulate opened in Iași. In addition to its economic and commercial activities, the diplomatic institution also became a genuine focal point for promoting the ideas of the French Revolution, which began to make 'followers' in the principalities.

As any modernization process presupposes the formation of elites, the 19th century saw an increased interest of young people in academic studies in the Western cultural space. Thus, the Romanian intellectual capital formed in France is one of the premises of the cultural, political and organizational evolution of the Romanian space. This dimension is, after the contribution of the Phanariots and the French consulates, a third source of dissemination of French ideas in the Romanian world. Among the personalities who were influenced in this direction, we may mention Paul Iorgovici from Transylvania, Daniel Philipides, professor at the Academy of Iași and tutor to the ruling family of Les Bals (correspondence with the French geographer of Bocage), Constantin Filipescu, a law student in Paris and future finance minister in the revolutionary government of 1848, Ion Ghica, a man of letters and minister, Petrache Poenaru, the founder of national education in Wallachia, Nicolae Kretzulescu, the founder of Romanian medical education, and Nicolae Rosetti-Roznovanu.

It is worth remembering that certain historical events have strengthened the relationship of the Romanian space with French civilization and culture. Thus, in 1829, the Treaty of Adrianopole, drawn up in French, placed the Romanian principalities culturally under Russian influence until 1834. One undeniable gain was that, from 1830, French was taught in schools in Bucharest and Iași. Thanks to the scholar Jean A. Vaillant, who taught in Bucharest from 1829 to 1840, the Romanians' historical and cultural identity began to be known in the West.

From the beginning of the 19th century, the reading rooms in Bucharest and Iași diversified the range of books on offer, providing readers with numerous French titles. The French-Romanian cultural bridges needed to be strengthened by linguistic leverage, so in 1838 the first French-Romanian dictionary appeared, written by J.A. J.A. Vaillant. Two years later, in 1840, a second dictionary by Petrache Poenaru appeared. Since 1862, three French-Romanian dictionaries have been published in succession. French becomes compulsory in schools, and

drama performances by French theatre companies in Bucharest and Iași are the foundation of Romanians' openness to French culture and civilization.

Ulysse de Marsillac, the French professor from Montpellier, Ulysse de Marsillac, who arrived in Romania through the French nobleman Iordache Slătineanu, professor at the Faculty of Letters in Bucharest, journalist and founder of three important publications, famous at the time, *La voix de România*, *Monitorul român* and *Jurnalul București*, was also involved in the efforts to modernize the Romanian capital, which he never left.

Continuing the series of French intellectuals who came to the Romanian cultural space, Frédéric Damé, who graduated in Law in Paris, but also with obvious cultural and journalistic interests, arrived in Romania in 1872. Although the reason for his arrival was of a personal nature - his sister's marriage to the Romanian lawyer Polizu - Frédéric Damé's stay in Romania was resized by the intellectual effervescence of his early years. He thus managed to influence the development of culture and the modernization of the Romanian education system both through his writings and through his teaching.

The present work aims, therefore, to naturally reposition Frédéric Damé's publications in the socio-cultural context of the time and to reveal his involvement in different spheres of Romanian society.

In terms of its structure, Frédéric Damé's work is detailed in the seven chapters, which will be briefly summarized in the following lines.

*In Romania, a French-speaking country*, the inaugural chapter, two important themes are addressed, namely: the French influence on Romanian culture and literature and the Romanian academic environment at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.

In the second chapter, *Frédéric Damé - a biographical and cultural brief*, two important stages in the French scholar's development are reviewed: first, Frédéric Damé's entry into the country, followed by a presentation of his past social and political life; then, his debut in the public, literary, cultural and scientific activity in Romania and France. Thus, the chapter begins with a brief presentation of the young Frenchman's family and his educational path up to the completion of his higher education. At the same time, we present aspects of the professional and personal dimension of his existence in Romania. Surprising the relationships cultivated with personalities such as I.L. Caragiale, Take Ionescu and Bonifaciu Florescu reveal his contribution to the development of Romanian culture. The chapter concludes with some considerations and

appreciations of some emblematic figures of Romanian culture regarding the young Frenchman, such as Mihai Eminescu, Frédéric Damé's redoubtable critic.

The next chapter, *Frédéric Damé's concerns in the field of Romanian history*, highlights the French author's perspective on Romanian realities through his studies *La Roumanie considérée sous le rapport physique, administratif et économique*, where he summarizes the territory, population, government and administration of Wallachia, and *Coup d'oeil sur l'histoire roumaine*, also for informational purposes. His work *Histoire de la Roumanie contemporaine depuis l'avènement des princes indigènes jusqu'à nos jours (1822-1900)* is also an important part of this chapter, as it highlights Frédéric Damé's quality as a historian of his adopted country. Frédéric Damé's well-documented views on Romania have become benchmarks for the radiography of his historiographical contribution.

The fourth chapter, *Frédéric Damé - an enthusiastic and fruitful publicist*, begins with a brief history of the evolution of the written press. This perspective has its due importance, since to know the history, the development and the cultural, social and political aims of publicists is to know the history of modern man. It is in this context that I have illustrated the key moments in Frédéric Damé's publicist activity. The newspaper *L'Indépendance roumaine* was the first point of reference for the analysis, from the moment of its foundation to the influence of Frédéric Damé as editor-in-chief. The collaboration with the newspaper *Românul* also remains noteworthy. Here, Frédéric Damé constantly published dramatic chronicles, bringing out another dimension of his cultural personality. *The Cimpoiul* also illustrates Frédéric Damé's literary collaboration. The publication *La Roumanie* took a clear social and ideological direction. It was regarded as a weekly newspaper that defended the interests of Romanians and was an opportunity for university missionaries to report on the tragic situation of the country at the time, and was of particular importance in the completion of the Unification.

*Frédéric Damé, a modern pedagogue*, the fifth chapter of this doctoral research, highlights the dimensions of Frédéric Damé's teaching activity. The starting point of the analysis was the fact that teaching had always occupied a privileged place in his soul, which justified the responsibility, dignity and dedication that confirmed this vocation.

In the following chapter, *Frédéric Damé - linguist and terminologist*, we have initially made a brief history of Romanian lexicography up to Damé; the sub-chapter is particularly relevant given the author's place in the lexicography of the time. Thus, Frédéric Damé's bilingual

dictionary, published in Romania, is the *Nouveau dictionnaire roumain-français*, published in five volumes between 1893 and 1900. The dictionary opens the series of works able to provide a broad picture of the Romanian language at the end of the 19th century and its stylistic variety, highlighting the author's intention to record as many Romanian words as possible, especially from technical and popular terminology. The dictionary contains words existing in older lexicographical works as well as terms from the sciences, crafts and everyday life. This dictionary is a novelty from a lexicographical point of view, since before Frédéric Damé's work, Romanian dictionaries had been published, but their authors had confined themselves to translating them from French, without emphasizing idiomatic expressions or making use of old texts.

Our interest is to highlight both Frédéric Damé's contribution to the description of the vocabulary of the Romanian language and his impressive ambition to know all aspects of our language, an endeavor that exceeded even the expectations of some Romanian specialists. As he mentions in the preface to the dictionary, the linguist's aim was to provide all those interested in the Romanian language with a vast nomenclature of Romanian words and their translation into French. Although the dictionary was not complete, a significant lexicographical progress was achieved in comparison with previous dictionaries.

*Essay on Romanian People's Terminology*, the author's last writing in the field, is a unique work in Romanian linguistics, which we thought it appropriate to analyze. It covers the terminology of rural life, from the tools of agricultural labor to the various occupations of peasants. The study was written with scientific rigor and is a source of knowledge of our past. It has also been a source of inspiration for specialists, and several works of this kind have been published since. Frédéric Damé was careful to order words according to their semantic areas and to clearly define concepts illustrated with popular and regional terms.

In the last chapter, *Frédéric Damé - memorialist*, we briefly introduced Ulysse de Marsillac, a precursor of the latter, and commented on the well-known monograph of our capital, written by the talented man of culture in 1906.

*The Monograph of Bucharest in 1906* is a description of the capital called "little Paris" which has always aroused the curiosity of foreigners. Thus, it can be considered an important monographic work for getting to know the life of the city, which delighted many visitors from



abroad. The author has presented the stages of progress, stagnation or regression of the city, from the attestation of the Dâmbovița Citadel until the 18th century.

In order to elaborate the present research, we have gone through all the articles, studies and works by Frédéric Damé published in Romania, found in libraries in the country, especially in Bucharest, and which are recorded in the body of the thesis.

*The conclusions* summarize the results of the entire study. The method of contrastive analysis from a cognitive perspective proves to be effective. The opinions, ideas, judgments and arguments put forward by us can be points of reference for any future endeavor in the study of the complex personality of Frédéric Damé, whose substantial contribution to the development of Romanian culture, insufficiently researched to date, we set out to highlight.

*The bibliography* comprises a *main corpus* in which all the writings of Frédéric Damé are marked, a *secondary corpus* in which all the publications for which he was director or collaborator are listed, and *Studies, articles, treatises, dictionaries and chronicles* where all the materials consulted for the elaboration of this thesis are found.

There is also a section with links to the websites consulted, entitled *Web Resources*.

In our doctoral research, we set out to bring to the attention of interested specialists the complex personality of the French author dedicated to his adopted country and to impartially highlight his merits in the fields in which he worked with passion and passion: history, publicity, pedagogy, linguistics, lexicography, translation, memoirs and teaching. To date, the existing data and information on the author's life and work are few, incomplete and disparate. A substantial biography, an (almost) complete monograph and in-depth studies devoted to Frédéric Damé in Romanian culture are lacking. Therefore, I considered it necessary/opportune to revisit his work, capitalizing on the sources available today.

We have made an effort to systematize with rigor the scientific, cultural-artistic, journalistic and memorialistic preoccupations of this little-known personality who contributed to the diffusion of French culture and civilization in the Romanian space as well as to the westernization of Romanians' life, civilization and culture. Professor, journalist, dramatic chronicler, writer, memoirist, historian, linguist, lexicographer and translator Frédéric Damé is, without doubt, a remarkable personality of Romanian culture. We have endeavored to show that his achievements in Romanian culture, without being spectacular, resounding, must be known, summed up and valorized with probity.

As it was natural, at the beginning of our paper, we highlighted the French influence on the modernization of Romania and we focused on the arrival of Frederic Damé. In this context, we started from the idea that, in the history of any natural language, seen as a process, there are periods in which borrowings are made preferentially from a particular language or from a particular group of languages, depending on the social, political, historical, geographical, cultural context of a given epoch. Romanian terminology was mainly established in the 19th century, developing considerably in the first half of the 20th century.

As in other cultural domains, Romanian terminology is based on borrowings from the French language, which can be explained by the particularities of the century in question, by the openness of young intellectuals to knowledge, French culture and civilization. The Latinist current and French influence played a decisive role in the formation of the modern Romanian language.

France, as we know, was for a long time, and especially at the beginning of the 19th century, a country which enjoyed great political and cultural prestige, promoting ideological, philosophical, scientific, and literary, etc. values. Romanian cultural personalities experienced the development of these values either through direct contact with the realities of this country, through their academic training in France, or indirectly, through publications written in French to which they had access.

The Romanian socio-political context was favorable to tendencies of change. Modernity favored a national revival, considerably influenced by the French Revolution. Thus, in 1872, when Frédéric Damé arrived in Wallachia and settled here permanently, the modernization process was in full swing. The enthusiastic French intellectual quickly became a Romanianophile and a Romanianophone and became involved in many activities to promote and bring his adopted country into the orbit of the Western world.

As emphasized by the Cluj researcher, Petru Kovacs, we can join Frédéric Damé to the French intellectuals J.A. Vaillant, Raoul de Pontbriant or Ulyse de Marsillac, who enthusiastically campaigned for the social and cultural progress of our country.

We also noted Frédéric Damé's interest in Romanian history. Although he was not a historian by training, this tireless French intellectual researched with enthusiasm and assiduously, wrote and published several books to provide the French with important new historical data about Romania. The article *La Roumanie considérée sous le rapport physique, administratif et*

*économique* was, at that time, an important (re)source of information for foreigners who did not know Romania, and today it is an exciting document that deserves to be analyzed by specialists.

Severely criticized at the time, especially by the historian Nicolae Iorga, the questionable *Histoire de la Roumanie contemporaine depuis l'avènement des princes indigènes jusqu'à nos jours* (1822-1900), despite the vulnerabilities highlighted by us in the second chapter, remains a daring attempt by Frédéric Damé to bring to the attention of the French public the history of Romanians in the 19th century. The historian is to be commended for his erudition and for his courage to express himself in the sensitive and risky field of the contemporary history of a country such as Romania, situated at the confluence of East and West.

The historiographic approach in the article *Coup d'oeil sur l'histoire roumaine* reveals Frédéric Damé's interest in the origins and evolution of the Romanian people and proves the sustained concern to know, understand and make known the history of the adopted country. We emphasized that this article, in addition to its undeniable documentary value, also has a sentimental, patriotic value, because it reveals the affection for our people, justifiable also through the awareness of the common origin of the French and Romanian people.

Furthermore, we presented the prodigious publishing activity of Frédéric Damé, prior to didactic and lexicographic concerns. After an X-ray of the Romanian press, we brought to the fore some publications that seemed to us the most relevant in the context of the era. Our approach also included defining the political stakes that inevitably double this type of journalism.

We selected a publicist segment that included the European debate of some Romanian problems and contradictions. In this sense, the publications *La Voix roumaine* (1861-1866); *Le Journal de Bucarest* (1870–1877), both under the leadership of Ulysse de Marsillac, *Independenta României* (1877–1944) and *Revista Română* (1912–1916) provide excellent x-rays of local history and mentalities. The declared purpose of these publications, also distributed in France, was to present the Romanian problem in such a way as to dispel certain prejudices of Western readers. Thus, *La Voix roumaine* published historical, geographical, literary articles and historical or parliamentary documents.

Half a century later, *La revue roumaine* was, from its first issue, a cultural bridge between the Romanian Countries and France. French historians and journalists have become our "ambassadors" in France.

*La Roumanie*, the weekly organ of Romanian claims and interests, proposed from the beginning to advocate the cause of Transylvania in view of the National Union achieved at the end of the Great War. The paper ceased operations at the end of 1918, its purpose having been achieved.

Among the most important Franco-Romanian publications in Bucharest was *La Roumanie contemporaine et les peuples de l'Europe Orientale* (1874), a monthly published by Frédéric Damé, whose editorship brought together several French intellectuals attached to the Romanian cause. The journalist gave special importance to the national issue due to the role of the Romanian Principalities in that geopolitical context.

In fact, Frédéric Damé took over on his own account a fragment of the identity discourse of the time that highlighted the Romanian singularity compared to the other countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe. Long before 1848, political and diplomatic reasons had led the Romanians to reaffirm the Latinity of their language.

More or less ephemeral, Frédéric Damé's publications had an important role in diversifying and modernizing Romanian journalism.

We then insisted in the paper on the professorial vocation and pedagogical activism of the French author who served Romanian education with responsibility and dedication. We considered his efforts to streamline and modernize education since then to be welcome. We noted that the brochure, *French language in secondary schools* (1896), in which Frédéric Damé proposed changing the French language program in the secondary school cycle, constituted a modern curriculum project for the effective learning of the French language, a revolutionary didactic breviary in those times through the truthfulness of the reformation structure of the specialized curriculum and of the Romanian language curriculum. We argued in the thesis that the small didactic treatise, followed by the three auxiliaries, reflects the visionary, activism, enthusiasm, responsibility and generosity of the French teacher who set out to bring Romanian education closer to the level of prestigious Western education. Our belief is that Frédéric Damé could still be a model reformer of the Romanian school, which is often tributary to a harmful conservatism.

As for *Grammaire roumaine* (1898) intended for French people who want to learn the Romanian language, especially spoken Romanian, we considered that the work proves the excellent knowledge of the Romanian language and the didactic qualities of the author.

The activity carried out by the French author in the field of philology was crowned by the publication of the monumental bilingual dictionary *Nouveau dictionnaire roumain-français* (Bucharest, Imprimerie de l'État), which brought him unanimous recognition. With a gestation of two decades, this reference work in the history of Romanian lexicography reflects both the excellent, admirable knowledge of the Romanian language and literature, as well as the talent, passion and effort shown by the author.

The value and modernity of the dictionary were emphasized, especially, by the researchers Petru Kovacs and Eugenia Arjoca Ieremia. Our belief is that Frédéric Damé, being also a French teacher, understood the instrumental value of a good dictionary in the process of learning a modern language. He assumed the difficulty of the lexicographic approach, he believed in the novelty and usefulness of the work for foreigners interested in a deep knowledge of the Romanian language. Moreover, we believe that Frédéric Damé thought/ sensed that the *Nouveau dictionnaire roumain-français* can represent a landmark and a model for the authors of such a far-reaching scientific work.

We did not ignore Frédéric Damé's fictional creations in our research, even if they did not remain in the history of Romanian literature. Timid attempts, lacking originality, artistic and aesthetic value, his lyrical, epic and dramatic poems are patriotic, inspired by Romanian history and mythology. I assumed that they were written to practice writing in Romanian and to show the Romanians how quickly and how well he knew their life, spirituality and history.

In the end, I made an extensive presentation of the monograph *Bucarest en 1906*, published by Frédéric Damé in French, in 1907, and translated into Romanian Bucharest in 1906 only a century later, in 2007. We argued the documentary value, the cultural and the sentimental one of this substantial book, regrettably forgotten, which concludes and crowns the life's work of the gifted memoirist. We considered it a complete monograph of the capital for those times and recommended it to informed readers and those interested in its charm, uniqueness and authenticity, for the beauty of vintage photographs. Moreover, we noticed the narrative and descriptive talent, the documentary rigour, the spirit of observation of the changes that happened in Bucharest and the patriotism of the author.

Like any outstanding personality, Frédéric Damé had admirers and detractors, more or less vocal/noisy friends and opponents, all of whom recognized his many cultural merits.

Unequal in scope and value, his rich and varied work, left to us as a legacy, can bring surprises or even revelations to those who dare to research it with great care today.

The humanist vocation, the encyclopedic spirit, the unostentatious erudition, harmonized with his romantic nature, reflected in the pathos of knowledge, in the enthusiasm of the search for truth, the prodigious memory, the vivid intelligence, the gift for the perfect learning of foreign languages, in the present case of the Romanian language, all these qualities make Frédéric Damé a fascinating personality of the era of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Surely he would have written other studies or important articles for Romanian culture, if fate had not made him leave this world too early, at only 58 years old.