

## THE VLACHS IN MACEDONIA IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES\*

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**ABSTRACT.** The article summarizes the known data about the localization and numerical distribution of various Vlach groups in Macedonia in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Each Vlach group's (Moscopolitan; Grammoustian; Farsherot and Moglenite Vlachs) migrations are analyzed separately, following them from their starting points from which they ventured forth and dispersed all over Ottoman Macedonia at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, all the way to their dwellings in late 20<sup>th</sup> century in North Macedonia. In the second part of the article we review the thorough, yet unofficial statistics of Gustav Weigand and Vasil Kanchov about the number of Vlachs in Ottoman Macedonia, as well as the number and territorial distribution of the Vlachs in Macedonia, as shown in the 1921 census in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the Yugoslav census from 1931, the six censuses conducted in socialist Yugoslavia in 1948, 1953, 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991, and the two censuses in the Republic of Macedonia from 1994 and 2002.

**Keywords:** Vlachs, Macedonia, Moscopolitan, Grammoustian, Farsherot, Moglenite, Census

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### INTRODUCTION\*\*

The Vlachs (also known as Aromanians, Koutsovlachs, Tzintzars and Macedo-Romanians) are an orthodox Christian Eastern Romance ethnic group native to the Balkans, which for the most part of the Ottoman rule lived in the rugged regions of Albania and Epirus, as well as in the lowlands of Thessaly. In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the destruction of the prosperous Vlach nuclei of Moscopole (now Voskopojë) in south-eastern Albania, and Grammousta, on the Gramos Mountains, set on the present-day border between Albania and Greece, the Vlachs dispersed throughout Ottoman Macedonia and western Thrace.<sup>1</sup> The *Moscopolitan* Vlachs populated the

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\*\* In this article we only look at the Vlachs who lived in the central and northern parts of Ottoman Macedonia – on the territory of today's Republic of North Macedonia – without looking at the Vlachs who remained in the parts of the former Ottoman Macedonia which after the Balkan wars were annexed by Greece and Bulgaria.

<sup>1</sup> A. I. Koukoudis, *The Vlachs. Metropolis and Diaspora*, Thessaloniki 2003, p. 340–357, 402–408.

large urban centers and formed villages with an economy largely based on commerce and craft-trades. The other Vlach newcomers formed villages with an economy based on stockbreeding. The Vlachs of Mt. Pindus and a part of the *Grammoustian* Vlachs were transhumant shepherds. Their summer abodes were located in the mountainous regions of Ottoman Macedonia, while their winter abodes were set in the low-lying coastal regions of Ottoman Macedonia and Thessaly. A part of the *Grammoustians* and most of the *Farsherot* Vlachs, who had received their name according to the village of Frashër in Albania, whence their ancestors allegedly originated, were nomadic cattle-breeders, who constantly moved around.<sup>2</sup> The Vlachs of Mt. Paiko in the vicinity of Moglena in central Ottoman Macedonia made up a distinct group which – according to their ethnogenesis, their linguistic affinity, and their identity – differed from the other Vlach (Aromanian) groups. The language spoken by this agricultural population was very close to the Romanian one and, as opposed to the Aromanians, who call themselves *Armânj* or *Rrâmânj*, these call themselves *Vlași* (Vlachs).<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, due to the political goings-on in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Vlachs of Moglena were often included in the larger group of Vlachs.

## LOCALIZATION OF THE VLACHS IN MACEDONIA AND THE DIFFERENT VLACH GROUPS

### 1. THE MOSCOPOLITAN VLACHS

About half of the Vlachs in what is now North Macedonia claim distant origins from the town of Moscopole or its surrounding satellite villages and they have come to be known as *Moscopolitan* Vlachs. Until 1912–1913 and the fixing of the borders between the Balkan states, Moscopole and the surrounding Vlach villages were part of the *vilayet* of Monastir (Bitola) in European Turkey, present day Albania. Moscopole itself lies approximately twenty kilometers to the west of the town of Korçë, hidden on a plateau some 1 200 kilometres above sea level. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Moscopole and the local Vlach settlements attained the peak of their development and prosperity. The foundations of these glory days had been laid in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when Moscopole was growing demographically, economically and culturally. Some studies describe Moscopole as the second largest town in the Ottoman Empire, though it is unlikely.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, it could have been the only town of its size with an exclusively Christian population. Although the sources disagree about the precise numbers of houses and residents, in around 1760 the town reportedly had between 30 000–70 000 inhabit-

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, p. 192–411.

<sup>3</sup> T. Kahl, *The Ethnicity of Aromanians after 1990: the identity of a minority that behaves like a majority*, "Ethnologia Balkanica" 2002, no. 6, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> A. Hâciu, *Aromânii. Comerț, industrie, arte, expansiune, civilizație*, Focșani 1936, p. 152.

ants and as many as 12 000 households.<sup>5</sup> Moscopole drew its wealth and strength from commerce and the various craft trades. Thanks to abundant raw materials and labour, the wool industry boomed. The early cottage industry in woolen goods evolved into organized light industrial production and eventually into trade in both the final products and the raw materials. By trading in their own products and amassing capital, the townsfolk gradually developed wider ranging commercial, compradorial and light industrial activities. However, the greatest economic and cultural wealth came from the development of connections with Europe and the shift towards compradorial activities. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the *Moscopolitans* forged close commercial relations with Venice and with other Italian ports on the Adriatic.<sup>6</sup>

The prosperity and the wealth of the town eventually led to its collapse in 1769 and 1788. The reasons which led to collapse and decay, culminating in the mass exodus of the townsfolk in 1769, may be summed up as follows: the widespread turmoil arising out of the clash between the Russian and Ottoman Empires; the total anarchy among the population of the nearby Albanian regions when there was no strong Ottoman government; the communal strife within Moscopole itself; and the predatory tactics and activities of the Albanian usurers. Mainly owing to the stifling pressures and demands of the usurers, a considerable number of wealthy families started gradually to leave Moscopole as early as 1760. Most of the early fugitives were competent merchants who were already active in Central Europe and they have been carried by the mass exoduses beyond the Danube and Sava rivers to Habsburg territory. The others who followed relocated and disseminated all over the Balkans, with the majority settling in Ottoman Macedonia.

It was in Macedonia where these refugees established the “New Moscopole” in Bitola. Bitola, or Monastir as it was called by the ruling Turks, was an administrative and commercial centre which at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century attracted Vlachs from all over Epirus, Albania and southern Macedonia. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bitola had about 50 000 inhabitants of whom 13 000 were Vlachs, 8 000–9 000 Slavs, 4 000 Jews and the rest Muslim Turks, Albanians and Roma. The Vlachs lived mainly in the southern parts of the town, in the Vlach neighbourhoods.<sup>7</sup> The original Vlach nucleus had consisted of *Moscopolitans*, followed by Vlach refugees from the villages near Moscopole and some *Grammoustian* Vlachs. Eventually, the Vlach community in Bitola evolved into the largest concentration of urban Vlachs anywhere in the Balkans. It was these enterprising *Moscopopolitan* Vlachs who became the beating heart of Bitola, forming the wealthiest class of the town.<sup>8</sup>

Another town in North Macedonia which was virtually created by the Vlachs from Moscopole and its satellite Vlach communities is Kruševo. The isolated loca-

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>6</sup> V. Papahagi, *Aromânii Moscopoleni și comerțul Venețian în secolele al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea*, București 1935, passim.

<sup>7</sup> A. I. Koukoudis, *The Vlachs*, p. 353.

<sup>8</sup> Π. Τσάλλη, *Το δοξασμένο Μοναστήρι, Ήτοι ιστορία της πατριωτικής δράσεως της πόλεως Μοναστηρίου και των περιχώρων από του έτους 1830 μέχρι του 1903*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1932, passim.

tion of Kruševo in a highland area, far from major mountain passes and communication routes, offered many of the preconditions for the Vlach refugees to establish a new settlement. Prior to the arrivals of the Vlach fugitives, the site of Kruševo had been occupied by a very small number of Slavic families, but it was the Vlachs who turned Kruševo into a town of enterprising merchants and craftsmen. During the first half of the nineteenth century, Kruševo continued to receive Vlachs from other Vlach villages, who were either natives or descended from refugees from the regions of Moscopole and Grammousta. During the early period of Kruševo's development, smaller groups of Vlachs also settled in some of the surrounding villages, such as Trstenik, Borino and Arilevo.<sup>9</sup>

The town of Ohrid also attracted quite a sizable group of *Moscopolitan* refugees, consisting mainly of enterprising merchants, craftsmen and caravan drivers. The Vlachs of Ohrid established two districts or neighbourhoods of their own, St. George or the Lower Neighbourhood and St. Nicholas or the Upper Neighbourhood. In 1771 the Serbian patriarch Vasil Brkić reported that in the *Pashalak* and in the town of Ohrid the Vlachs were as numerous as the Bulgarians, but these large numbers must have been a temporary phenomenon, because many of these refugees moved on to other parts of Macedonia and to the northerly parts of the Balkans.<sup>10</sup>

Being Vlach villages already, Gopeš and Malovište, both near Bitola, drew a large number of Moscopolitan refugees and from the Vlach villages around it. Vlach immigrants continued to settle there throughout the nineteenth century and while in 1800 Gopeš had only 120 houses, 800 houses and 4 800 inhabitants were counted in 1870.<sup>11</sup>

The Vlach villages of Magarevo, Trnovo and Nižepole on mount Pelister, in the immediate vicinity of Bitola, were essentially born of the exoduses in 1769 and after. Until the Vlachs arrived there in late eighteenth century, all three villages were owned by Turks and had a small number of Slavic inhabitants. The first Vlachs to arrive in the area of these three villages were probably from Grammousta. From 1769 onwards, those first Vlach families were joined by fugitives from Moscopole and its surroundings.<sup>12</sup>

In smaller numbers, the *Moscopolitan* Vlachs settled in other towns and villages in North Macedonia, such as Gorna Belica, Dolna Belica, Resen, Jankovec, Veles, Prilep, Skopje, Kumanovo and Tetovo.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> A. Hâciu, *Aromânii*, p. 179–189.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 100–108.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 113–118.

<sup>12</sup> A. I. Koukoudis, *The Vlachs*, p. 352.

<sup>13</sup> N. Minov, *The War of numbers and its first victim: the Aromanians in Macedonia (end of 19<sup>th</sup>–beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century)*, "Macedonian Historical Review" 2012, no. 3, p. 165–169, 174.

## 2. THE GRAMMOUSTIAN VLACHS

The origins of most of the modern *Grammoustian* Vlachs lie in the area around Mount Grammos in Greece and more particularly the settlement of Grammousta, which was once the centre of quite a considerable group of Vlach settlements. It was there where we can locate the starting point from which a large and mainly pastoral and nomadic population ventured forth and dispersed over almost the entire central Balkan peninsula. Although the village of Grammousta continues to exist to this day, the term *Grammoustian* Vlachs came to be applied to the exclusively transhumant or nomadic pastoral population groups – irrelevant of their place of origin – which in the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries dispersed throughout Macedonia, mainly east of the river Vardar, as far as the slopes of the Rodopi in Bulgaria and as far as the mountains of southern Serbia.<sup>14</sup>

Until mid-twentieth century, the *Grammoustian* Vlachs were organized in large *tajfi*, groups of tens of families under the leadership of a head-chief (*čelnik*). They spent the summers in the highland areas of eastern North Macedonia and western Bulgaria, while every winter they inundated the plains along the river Strymon, the Drama plain and the low coastal areas between Ierissos and Porto Lagos in search of grazing grounds. After the Balkan wars and World War I, the *Grammoustian* Vlachs in North Macedonia spent the summers in the highland pastures of mount Osogovo, mount Plačkovica and mount German, while their winter homes were set in the villages near the towns of Kočani, Štip, Sveti Nikole, Kriva Palanka and Kumanovo.<sup>15</sup>

In the eighteenth century, isolated *Grammoustian* groups appeared in Kruševo, Magarevo, Trnovo and Nižepole in the southwestern parts of North Macedonia.<sup>16</sup> However, the highest concentration of *Grammoustian* Vlachs in North Macedonia was in its easternmost parts, near today's border with Bulgaria. There were a considerable number of summer hut settlements in the highland pastures on mount Osogovo, at Kalin Kamen, Kitka, Ponikva, Lopen, Jamište, Košarica, Oždenica, Stanci and Duračka Reka, and slightly further north on German mountain, were Bara, Vakuf and Osiče. On Mount Plačkovica there were summer hut settlements at Čatal, Lisec, Kartal, Čupino, Kolarnica, Kukla, Kara Tepe, Asanlija etc.<sup>17</sup> During the twentieth century, especially after World War II, the population of these highland hut settlements gradually abandoned pastoral nomadism and eventually settled mainly in lowland villages and eastern Macedonian towns, while many settled as workers in Skopje.

<sup>14</sup> A. I. Koukoudis, *The Vlachs*, p. 372–373.

<sup>15</sup> N. Minov, *The War of numbers*, p. 174.

<sup>16</sup> A. I. Koukoudis, *The Vlachs*, p. 403.

<sup>17</sup> N. Minov, *The War of numbers*, p. 174.

### 3. THE FARSHEROT VLACHS

The name *Farsherots* is of toponymical origin, for most scholars connect it with the village of Frashër in Dangëlli in southern Albania. This is because the *Farsherot* Vlachs, or some of them, are believed to have come originally from Frashër in Dangëlli area in general. The term which these Vlachs use of themselves in their own dialect is *Rrëmanj*, which is cognate with *Armânj* (Aromanians), which is what most of the rest of the Vlachs call themselves.<sup>18</sup>

By the eighteenth century, the conditions which gave birth to the *Farsherots* had presumably already taken shape. Since most of them had become pastoral nomads, they formed independent clans and *tajfi*, which dispersed all over Epirus and Albania with no specific or constant summer and winter settlements. Around the mid-nineteenth century, Aravandinos estimated that the nomadic *Farsherot* population in Epirus and southern Albania was between 1 500 and 2 000 families.<sup>19</sup> During the 1820s, most of the ancestors of the modern *Farsherot* Vlachs had moved about mainly in Epirus and what is now central and southern Albania. But after 1821, the *Farsherots* spread out and established new settlements, which produced the modern *Farsherot* population groups outside Epirus and Albania.<sup>20</sup> However, in North Macedonia, their number was much smaller compared to the *Moscopolitan* and *Grammoustian* Vlachs. In 1845 a group of ten to fifteen *Farsherot* families settled in Magarevo, near Bitola. A larger group settled among the older Vlach residents in Nižepole, but during World War I, when Nižepole was evacuated and destroyed, most of these *Farsherot* families moved to Greece, where quite a number of them settled for good. Another case was that of the village of Gorna Belica, near the town of Struga, next to the Albanian border. The livestock of the permanent Vlach residents was looked after by *Farsherot* nomads, who moved back and forth between Gorna Belica and central Albania. Gradually, some of these circa 150 families started to buy houses in Gorna Belica and some moved down to Dolna Belica and the nearby non-Vlach villages of Vevčani, Podgorci, Višni and Labuništa. In the twentieth century, many of these *Farsherots* settled in the nearby town of Struga and some went north to Skopje and Kumanovo.<sup>21</sup>

### 4. THE MOGLENITE VLACHS

The Vlachs of Moglena, known as *Meglenites* or Megleno-Romanians, were sedentary agriculturalist Eastern Romance group, which lived in the area called Vlacho-Meglen, on the eastern border of North Macedonia and Greece. Almost all *Moglenite* villages were annexed by Greece after the Balkan wars. Only the villages of Konsko and Sermenin, which by the beginning of the twentieth century were completely

<sup>18</sup> A. I. Koukoudis, *The Vlachs*, p. 270.

<sup>19</sup> Π. Αραβαντινός, *Περιγραφή της Ηπείρου*, μ. Α, Ιωάννινα 1984, p. 196.

<sup>20</sup> A. I. Koukoudis, *The Vlachs*, p. 294.

<sup>21</sup> Т. Трајановски, *Влашките родови во Струшко: Прилог кон историјата на народностите во Македонија*, Скопје 1979, p. 29, 66.

Slavicised, and the village of Huma are now in North Macedonia. By the end of the twentieth century, less than 300 people of *Moglenite* Vlach descent, most of whom were already Slavicised, lived in North Macedonia, mainly in the town of Gevgelija and in the village of Huma.<sup>22</sup>

## STATISTICS

### 1. IN OTTOMAN MACEDONIA

There are plenty of statistics about the number of the Vlachs in Ottoman Macedonia, mainly within the population statistics of European Turkey. As regards most of them, we do not know by what means the author reached the figure presented to us and all we can do is accept it or reject it without being able to address it critically. Various numbers are given depending on the period when the statistics was made, the origin of its author and its definition of “Macedonia”.

Bulgarian Vasil Kančov’s and German Gustav Weigand’s statistics are characterized by a more serious and critical approach. Owing to the scientific value of these statistics and their popularity and acceptance, we will focus on them as to get closer to the number of the Vlach population in North Macedonia in late nineteenth century.

German linguist Gustav Weigand’s statistics encompassed exclusively the Vlachs population and was made based on his personal research in Macedonia, Epirus, Albania and Greece in the period between 30th April 1889 and 24th May 1890. The results of his field research were published in 1895 and according to Weigand, the numbers of the Vlach population in what is now North Macedonia were as follows:<sup>23</sup>

| Towns and villages          | Number of Vlachs |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Bitola and nearby villages  | 20 700           |
| Kruševo and nearby villages | 7 000            |
| Struga and nearby villages  | 1 300            |
| Resen and nearby villages   | 1 000            |
| Ohrid                       | 700              |
| Prilep and nearby villages  | 500              |
| Veles                       | 250              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                | <b>31 450</b>    |

*Gustav Weigand's statistics (1895)*

<sup>22</sup> Попис на населението, домаќинствата и становите во Република Македонија, 2002 година – дефинитивни податоци, vol. 10, Скопје 2002, p. 86–87.

<sup>23</sup> G. Weigand, *Die Aromunen. Ethnographisch-Philologisch-Historische Untersuchungen über das Volk der sogenannten Makedo-Romanen oder Zinzaren*, Erster band, Leipzig 1895, p. 286–290.



It is obvious that Weigand completely disregarded the *Moglenite* Vlachs in Gevgelija and the nearby villages, the *Grammoustian* hut settlements in the eastern parts of North Macedonia and the Vlachs who lived in the largest centers of the Kosovo *vilayet*, such as Skopje and Kumanovo.

In the 1890s, as inspector general of the Bulgarian schools in European Turkey, Vasil Kanchov regularly travelled in Ottoman Macedonia and collected valuable historical, geographical, statistical and ethnographic materials. “*Macedonia, Ethnography and Statistics*” published in 1900 was the synthesis of his research of many years. According to him, 80 767 Vlachs lived in Ottoman Macedonia in 1900, of which 77 267 were Christians and 3 500 were Muslims. If we extract only the numbers related to the Vlachs in North Macedonia, Kanchov counted 31 102 Vlachs.<sup>24</sup>

| Towns and villages                | Number of Vlachs |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Bitola and nearby villages        | 18 150           |
| Kruševo and nearby villages       | 4 095            |
| Kočani and nearby villages        | 2 020            |
| Gevgelija and nearby villages     | 1 650            |
| Struga and nearby villages        | 1 500            |
| Resen and nearby villages         | 750              |
| Prilep and nearby villages        | 745              |
| Veles                             | 500              |
| Ohrid                             | 460              |
| Skopje                            | 450              |
| Kratovo and nearby villages       | 340              |
| Kriva Palanka and nearby villages | 220              |
| Negotino                          | 90               |
| Kumanovo                          | 50               |
| Gostivar and nearby villages      | 50               |
| Kavadarci                         | 32               |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                      | <b>31 102</b>    |

*Vasil Kanchov's statistics (1900)*

## 2. IN THE INTERWAR PERIOD

The Balkan wars and the subsequent treaties regarding the drawing of the borders between the Balkan states divided the villages and settlements of the Vlachs in Ottoman Macedonia between Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. The Vlach settlements were particularly hit during World War I, when the Macedonian Front went through the Vlach

<sup>24</sup> В. КАНЧОВЪ, *Македония. Етнография и статистика*, София 1900, passim.



villages on Pelister, in Bitola and through the Moglenite Vlach villages. In 1916 and 1917, the Bulgarian military authorities evacuated the inhabitants of Gorna and Dolna Belica, Gopeš, Malovište, Magarevo, Trnovo and most of the Vlach residents of Bitola and Kruševo. All these displaced persons were relocated to the interior of Bulgaria and many of them did not return to their communities in North Macedonia.<sup>25</sup> From 1912 onwards there was a steady influx of Vlachs from Bitola and the surrounding settlements into Greece. The élite of the Vlach communities in these places, the community leaders, the scholars, the teachers, the wealthy merchants, the capitalists, the bankers and many lesser professionals, transferred their activities to Florina and Thessaloniki in Greece, where they could be close to their relations and compatriots who had been living there since long before the Balkan wars and World War I. The departing community leaders and their families were followed by many of the less privileged members of the community.<sup>26</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, an undefined number of poor *Grammoustian* Vlach stockbreeding families, as well as Vlach farmers from Moglena, left North Macedonia for good and settled in Southern Dobruja, which was at the time ruled by Romania.<sup>27</sup> These circumstances were reflected in the following interwar censuses, where the number of Vlach population in North Macedonia drastically defers from the numbers presented by Weigand and Kanchov.

In the 1921 census in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, as well as the Yugoslav census from 1931, the Macedonian Vlachs represent a statistical whole with the Romanians in Banat and the Vlachs in eastern Serbia. In 1921, the Vlachs were registered as Romanians/Tzintzars, while in the census of 1931 they were registered as Romanians. In 1921 there were 9 087 Vlachs in Macedonia and according to the 1931 census their number rose to 10 981.<sup>28</sup>

One of the demographic characteristics of the Vlach population in North Macedonia according to the 1921 census was the high percentage share in urban population. More than 50% of Macedonian Vlachs lived in the cities, which represents the second highest percentage of city population, right behind the Jews. It was in the interwar period when a large number of *Grammoustian* Vlachs of eastern Macedonia abandoned their former way of life and settled in the lowland villages near Štip, Sveti Nikole (in Ovče Pole) and Kočani.

<sup>25</sup> N. Minov, *Titsi shi cum eara internats Armânjli di Crushova tu chirolu a Protlui polim mundial?*, in: *100 di anj di proclamarea a printsipatului armânescu Pindus hi 100 di anj di deportarea a Armânjlor*, eds. J. Mihailova, M. Nikolova, Scopia 2017, passim.

<sup>26</sup> A. I. Koukoudis, *The Vlachs*, p. 466–467.

<sup>27</sup> C. Noe, *Colonizarea Cadrilaterului*, “Sociologie Românească” 1938, vol. 3, no. 4–6, p. 144–147.

<sup>28</sup> Дефинитивни резултати пописа становништва од 31 јануара 1921 год., Сарајево 1932, p. 88–123; *Die Gliederung der Bevölkerung des ehemaligen Jugoslawien nach Muttersprache und Konfession nach den unveröffentlichten Angaben der Zählung von 1931*, Wien 1943, p. 308–351.

## THE YUGOSLAV CENSUSES

A total of six censuses were conducted in socialist Yugoslavia – in 1948, 1953, 1961, 1971, 1981 and in 1991. Despite speaking a different language from the Vlachs of eastern Serbia, and despite the different ethnic background, both the Macedonian Vlachs and the Vlachs of Serbia were regularly counted together under the same ethnonym.

The Yugoslav censuses in 1948 and 1953 show the same tendencies for the Vlachs which were typical for all the other Yugoslav nations and minorities. Most of the Vlach population in North Macedonia became rural. In 1948 only 38% of the Vlachs lived in the cities, while in 1953 the urban population grew to 42%. In Ottoman Macedonia and in the interwar period, the Vlachs were mostly merchants, craftsmen and stock-breeders, and only the *Moglenite* Vlachs were engaged in agriculture. However, in the 1948 census 57% of the Vlachs were registered as farmers and only 5,7% were merchants or craftsmen. Bitola was no longer the “metropolis of the Vlachs”. In 1948 and 1953, Kruševo was the town with the highest number of Vlach population, while in 1953 the *Grammoustian* Vlachs in Štip and the surrounding villages were more numerous than the Vlachs in Bitola and the nearby Vlach settlements.<sup>29</sup>

| Towns and villages                         | Number of Vlachs            |                             |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
|  | <i>1948 Yugoslav census</i> | <i>1953 Yugoslav census</i> |
| Bitola and nearby villages                 | <b>1 709</b>                | 1 454                       |
| Struga and nearby villages                 | 1 288                       | 1 244                       |
| Štip and nearby villages                   | 1 229                       | <b>1 624</b>                |
| Kruševo and nearby villages                | 1 202                       | 1 001                       |
| Kočani and nearby villages                 | 794                         | 746                         |
| Skopje                                     | 667                         | 460                         |
| Sveti Nikole and the villages in Ovče Pole | 605                         | 508                         |
| Gevgelija and nearby villages              | 593                         | 440                         |
| Veles and nearby villages                  | 374                         | 272                         |
| Ohrid and nearby villages                  | 271                         | 236                         |
| Resen and nearby villages                  | 240                         | 110                         |
| Kumanovo and nearby villages               | 144                         | 163                         |
| Other regions                              | 395                         | 410                         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                               | <b>9 511</b>                | <b>8 668</b>                |

<sup>29</sup> *Konačni rezultati popisa stanovništva od 15 marta 1948 godine*, vol. 9, Beograd 1954, p. 280–289, 437–450; <http://publikacije.stat.gov.rs/G1953/Pdf/G19534001.pdf> [access: 01.05.2021].

Similar tendencies were shown in the following Yugoslav censuses. From 1961 to 1981, the number of Vlach population in North Macedonia was steadily declining, with 8 046 Vlachs in 1961, 7 190 in 1971 and only 6 384 in 1981, while the number of urban Vlach population was growing. In the last Yugoslav census of 1991, there were 7 764 Vlachs living in North Macedonia, with Skopje and Štip having the highest concentration of Vlach population.

### CENSUSES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

On September 8, 1991 Macedonia proclaimed its independence. The Vlachs were recognized as an ethnic minority, they were represented in the parliament and they enjoyed ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious rights, as well as the right to education in their language. Many forms of Aromanian-language media have been established since the 1990s (most notably: the Vlach television program *Scănteau* broadcasted three times per week on the second channel of the Macedonian national television) and there are Vlach classes provided in primary schools. However, despite the growth of Vlach population confirmed with the 1994 and 2002 censuses in the Republic of Macedonia (there were 8 467 Vlachs in 1994 and 9 695 in 2002) about 30% of the Vlachs claimed Macedonian as their mother tongue which further confirms the loss of the Vlach language.

Hereby we will present the results from the last Macedonian census in 2002. It could be noted that the Vlachs became a dominantly urban population, with 8 487 Vlachs (or 87,5% of the total) living in urban centers. The capital Skopje became the new “metropolis” of the Vlachs, with 2546 Vlachs, or 26% of the total, living there.<sup>30</sup>

| Towns and villages                         | Number of Vlachs                 |
|--|----------------------------------|
|  | <i>Macedonian census in 2002</i> |
| Skopje and nearby villages                 | 2 579                            |
| Štip and nearby villages                   | 2 074                            |
| Bitola and nearby villages                 | 1 271                            |
| Kruševo and nearby villages                | 1 020                            |
| Struga and nearby villages                 | 656                              |
| Sveti Nikole and the villages in Ovče Pole | 360                              |
| Veles and nearby villages                  | 344                              |
| Ohrid and nearby villages                  | 324                              |

<sup>30</sup> Попис на населението, домаќинствата и становите во Република Македонија, 2002 година, passim.

| Towns and villages            | Number of Vlachs                 |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                               | <i>Macedonian census in 2002</i> |
| Kočani and nearby villages    | 291                              |
| Gevgelija and nearby villages | 214                              |
| Other regions                 | 562                              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>9 695</b>                     |

### SUMMARY

For the most part of the Ottoman rule in the Balkans, the Vlachs lived in the mountainous regions of Albania and Epirus, and in the lowlands of Thessaly. Only after the destruction of the prosperous Vlach settlements of Moscopole in south-eastern Albania, and Grammousta on the Grammos Mountains in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Vlachs dispersed throughout Macedonia and western Thrace. In Ottoman Macedonia, the majority of the Vlachs populated the large urban centers, or they formed villages with an economy based on commerce, craft-trades, or stockbreeding. Only a small minority of the Vlachs in Ottoman times were an agricultural population. However, the Balkan wars, the First World War and the subsequent treaties regarding the drawing of the borders between the Balkan states, divided the villages and settlement of the Vlachs in Ottoman Macedonia between Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia and contributed to a steady influx of Vlachs from the Serbian part of Macedonia into Greece and Romania. This resulted in a threefold reduction of the number of the Vlach population in the northern part of Macedonia. While some 31 000 Vlachs lived on the territories of what is now North Macedonia in the last decades of Ottoman rule, the number was reduced to 9 087 Vlachs living there in 1921 – a number which remained almost unchanged throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The aftermath of the Second World War resulted in a shift in professions of the Vlach population. One of the demographic characteristics of the Vlachs in Ottoman Macedonia and in the Interwar period was the high percentage share in urban population. More than 50% of Macedonian Vlachs lived in the cities, working as merchants and craftsmen, while only about 5% of the Vlachs worked in agriculture. However, in the 1948 census 57% of the Vlachs were registered as farmers and most of the Vlach population in Yugoslav Macedonia became rural. A new change took place only in the last decades before the break-up of Yugoslavia and in independent Macedonia, when once again the Vlachs became a dominantly urban population, with 87,5% of the Vlachs living in Macedonia's urban centers.

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