

MODERN ROMANS COLONIZED IN ROMANIA – THE AROMANIANS

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Abstract: Aromanians were colonized in Quadrilateral and then in Old Dobrudja, in an environment completely different from their own. Their great adaptability, being accustomed for centuries to political changes and multiethnic coexistence, proved that they can adapt to the new conditions better than Bulgarians or Romanians, resulting to be brilliant farmers. About their specific socio-economic or patriarchal society, organized in fâlcări, endogamy and specific pastoral activities, many researches have been done since the time of the Byzantine chroniclers. It is interesting that this mountainous-shepherd people could adapt to the flat land of Dobrudja and to the new global economy of 21st century and knew how to keep their own ethnic identity. Thanks to the affinities with the Romanians, they are well integrated into the socio-economic life Romania and especially of Dobrudja, where most of them live, being on the top of the social pyramide, especially in trade and tourism, unlike the other ethnicities, employed especially in the primary sector. It can be said that today Aromanians have key roles in the economic life of the Dobrudja region, forming in this regard, with the Romanians, the upper stratum of the society.

Key words: adaptability, colonization, quadrilateral, integration

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INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes a short overview of the history of the colonization of the Aromanians in Dobrudja and a current diagnosis of how they have adapted themselves to the new living environment but also to the Romanian cultural environment and the way in which they knew to preserve their cultural identity. Although they had to adjust to a totally different environment, their great mobility and adaptability, learned over the centuries in the Balkans, had ensured their success this time too, becoming from semi-nomadic herders the most successful businessmen and successful farmers in Dobrudja. These psychosocial traits were found by many researchers, scientists, writers and laymen who have known and studied them in their homeland or in the diaspora. German scholar Weigand (1894) appreciated their desire to cultivate themselves and their native intelligence, superior to other Balkan ethnicities.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE COLONIZATION OF THE AROMANIANS IN DOBRUDJA. FIRST STAGE – THE COLONIZATION IN QUADRILATERAL

Following the establishment of independent national states in the Balkans, on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, all tried

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expanding their own national territories and creating „*great national states*” on the account of what was left of Turkey in Europe, namely Macedonia. In this context, began to intensify the interethnic conflicts by organizing armed ethnic groups, namely comitadgii gangs from Bulgaria, andarti from Greece and armatoli to the Aromanians (Cuşa, 2004).

Latter, without a state of their own, Aromanians fought just to keep advocating statu-quo and their millennial rights over the territories which they occupied and their linguistic and religious freedom (Capidan, 2010).

The final blow for the Aromanians was the population exchange between Turkey and Greece in 1923, when, to facilitate Graecization of Macedonia and Thrace, were brought from Turkey, over 1.3 million Greeks to these territories, where they were given land by deposedating the Aromanians of their lands purchased from the Sultan and from local beys or rented from Turks and used for hundreds of years. How the basic occupation of Aromanians was shepherding flocks (Micle, 2013), they saw at once threatened their existence by parceling source and allotment of the old areas of shepherding by these Greeks newcomers from Turkey and Russia. To avoid a miserable life or even to disappear as an ethnic group, Aromanians have turned to a place where they can maintain their identity and to bring forth life. This place seemed to be Romania, and so in March 1923, a group of Aromanians from Veria, Greece, have addressed to the Macedonian Romanian school inspector to find the Romanian Government's position on a possible settlement of the Aromanians in Quadrilateral (Popa-Gorjanu, 2000). An important role in this process of colonization will return to „*Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society*” founded in Bucharest since 1879. It was a responsible inters alia, the right to grant civil status documents necessary following the granting Romanian citizenship (Popa-Gorjanu, 2000).

As many historians and press records, opinions were divided on both sides, both among the Aromanians and Romanians. Some considered them to be rather suitable to be settled in Maramureş or Bessarabia to boost the trade and economic activity there, others thought they were unable to adapt to the agricultural life of the Quadrilateral, due to their traditional occupation, and that were used to mountain environment. This apprehension was shared at the beginning, even by the „*Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society*”, which saw the deployment of Aromanians as an element to weaken their presence in territories submitted to graecization (Papahagi, 2003).

Among the hottest arguments made in favour of colonizing Aromanians in Quadrilateral were the strengthening of the Romanian element in this part of the country, mainly occupied by Turks and Bulgarians, strengthening trade activity and that Aromanians could integrate better in this part of the country because they already knew the language and culture of the Balkan peoples, so they were already used to this multiethnic and multicultural environment (Batzaria, 2005).

They hoped that the Romanian government will help them with terrains, building materials, money, transportation and customs formalities. Since 1922, it will call on all the ways that their will to be taken by the Romanian authorities concerned, by written petition, by making representations to Romanian consul in Thessaloniki (Noe, 1938).

Their demands will receive a favourable solution in 1925 by the government of Iuliu Maniu, which promised to make this a priority. Also in favour of colonization ruled the great scholar and politician Nicolae Iorga (Bujduveanu, 1997).

Quadrilateral colonization was based on the organization of New Law of Dobrudja on 1 April 1914, supplemented by those of 1924 and 1930 (Cuşa, 2004).

Given the limited agricultural area, it was agreed firstly to be colonized 1,500 Aromanian families and 1,500 families from the Old Kingdom, based on tables prepared by delegates' settlers. The colonists were to receive one batch of 10-15 ha; a place for house of 2000 square meters and a place of pasture about 50 areas in the wilderness (Cuşa, 2004).

After hearing the news that the Romanian state support colonization, the Aromanians have liquidated all their wealth of home places and raised money preparing to immigrate to Romania, in the hope that the state will help them to rebuild their houses in Quadrilateral (Cornelia Popa-Gorjanu, 2000). Although the colonists had demanded from the state long term loans

for the construction of households and transport from the Balkans to Romania, they were left to fend for themselves and were made to pay for transport (Cuşa, 2004). It is necessary to mention that the process of colonization took place, roughly between 1925 and 1933, continuing sporadically until 1938. This was done with some interruptions due to the instability of governments in the interwar period and held a little awkward since the arrival in the country, Aromanians were told to go to the villages and to find accommodation before they will build houses, so they had to live with Bulgarians or with Turks, hence appearing numerous conflicts. The wealthiest bought entire villages from the Turks who left the country, others built new villages, but most had to stay in the host even up to four years (Noe, 1938).

Between 1927 - 1935, according to ONAC (Cuşa, 2004) in the Quadrilateral 3635 Aromanian families were allotted, 1945 in Durostor county and 1690 families in the Kaliakra county, but until 1940 the number of Aromanian families settled in Quadrilateral will reach 6553 (figure 1).

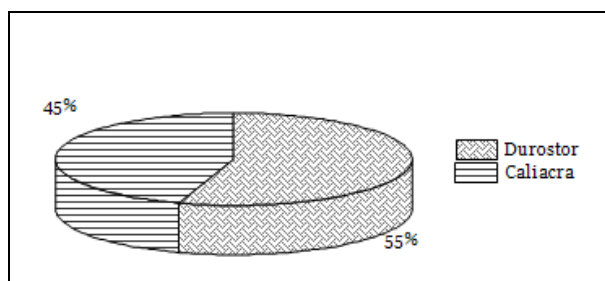


Figure 1. The repartition of Aromanians in the two counties of Quadrilateral (Durostor and Kaliakra counties) in 1940
(Source: Cuşa, 2004)

In 1935, by government decision, Aromanian colonists whose identity documents were recognized by ONAC received Romanian citizenship in a ceremony at Silistra on September 21th (Cuşa, 2004).

As the lack of statistical data, the exact number of Aromanians from Quadrilateral may not be known precisely, at present many records were lost or destroyed, for example Capidan (1932) advance the number of 12,000 souls, Muşi (1936), in his book „*A decade of colonization in New Dobruja*” written in 1935 shows the figure of 32,765 souls, and Constantin Noe, in „*Colonization of Quadrilateral*”, written in 1938 forward figure of 24,730 souls. As place of origin, the first families in the country were Aromanians from Pleasa, Fărsherots of Albania, who founded the first Aromanian settlement of Quadrilateral, the village of Frăşari, like a homonymous village in Albania from which Fărsherots derive their names. After Fărsherots came the Grămuşteni from northern Greece, Bulgaria and Macedonia and the Megleniţi from Thrace (Lozovanu, 2008).

After the colonization of the Aromanian element in Quadrilateral, the economic life began to strengthen and flourish, although Aromanians were considered a shepherd people, they have proven to be excellent farmers and traders, able to adapt quickly to the new life framework.

SECOND STAGE – RELOCATION IN OLD DOBRUDJA

This new exodus of Aromanians occurred in 1940, after losing Quadrilateral by Romania by the Treaty of Craiova, signed with Bulgaria at the pressure of Germany and Italy, on 07 September 1940. Following the bilateral treaty, besides territorial revisions, an exchange of population between Romania and Bulgaria had to be done in the Quadrilateral and Old Dobrudja. Start a new displacement for Aromanians, for some it was even the fifth (Cuşa, 2004).

People evacuated from counties of Durostor and Kaliakra had to be displaced in Constanţa and Tulcea counties, where they would be granted on the former property of the Bulgarians and Germans who left the region. The proper organization of the process was established under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a general Commissioner based in Bucharest but operated by the General Commissariat of Dobrudja, based in Constanţa (Cuşa, 2004).

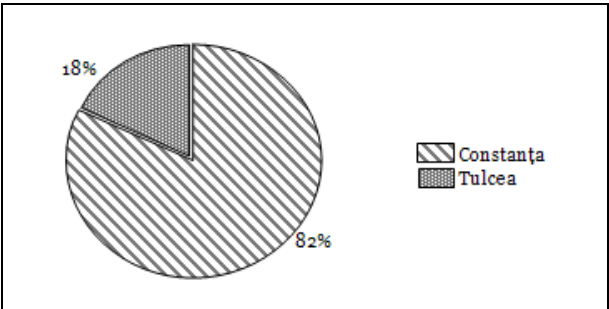


Figure 2. The repartition of Aromanians in Old Dobrudja's Counties (2002)
(Source: National Institut of Statistics - INS)

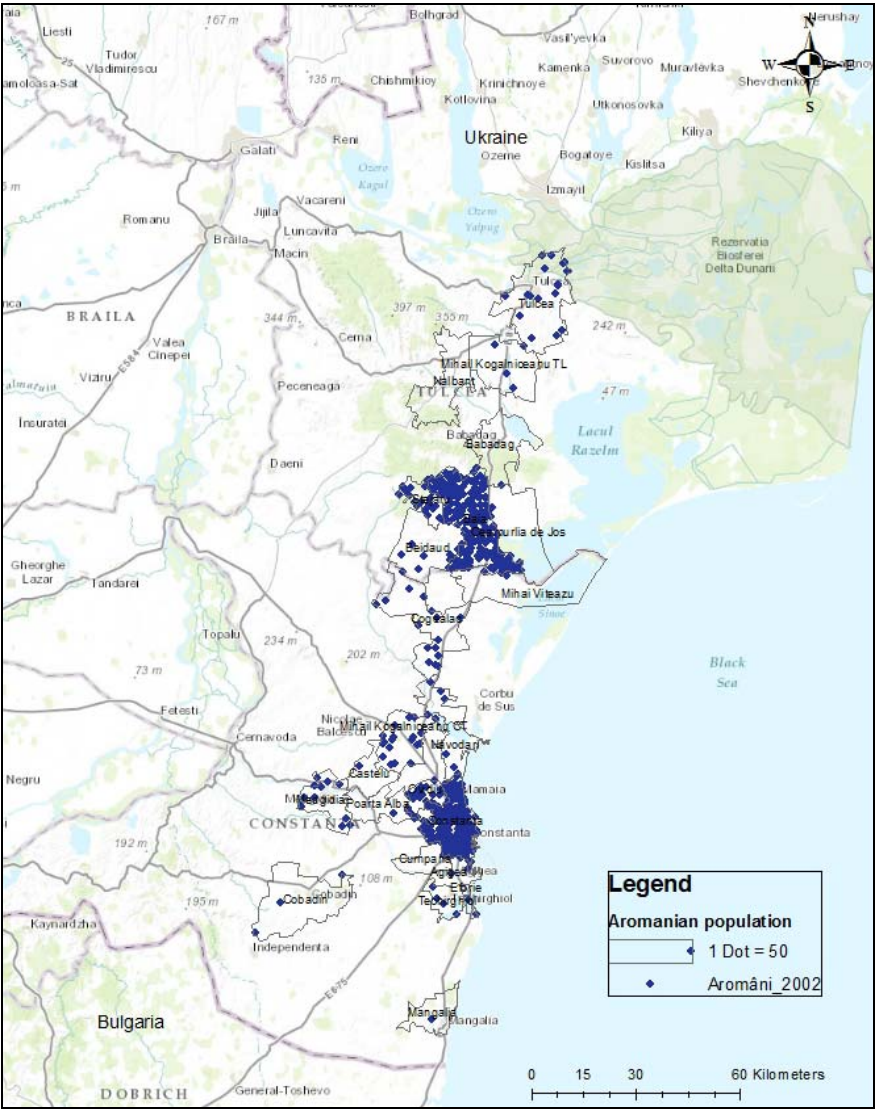


Figure 3. The repartition of Aromanians in Old Dobrudja by dots density method (2002)
(Source: National Institute of Statistics)

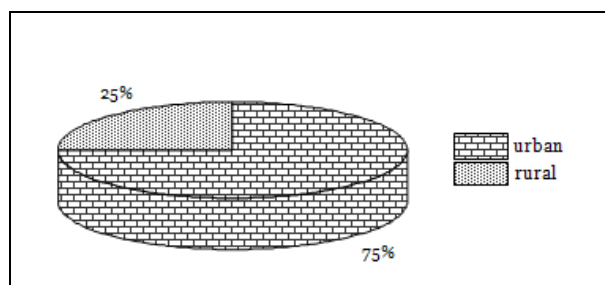


Figure 4. The percentage of Aromanians in Old Dobrudja by urban and rural areas (2002)
(Source: National Institute of Statistics)

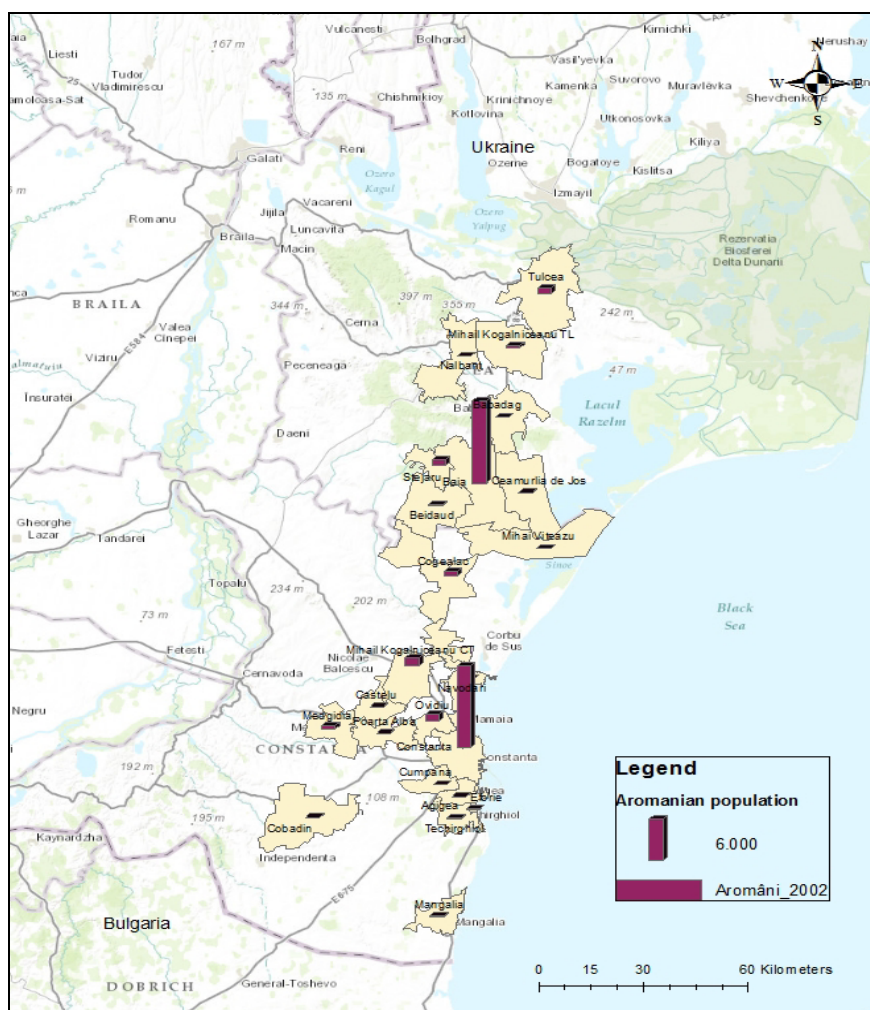


Figure 5. The present number of Aromanians in Dobrudja by localities (2002)
(Source: National Institute of Statistics)

The evacuation took place quickly; the Bulgarians were somewhat slower, so at 18th September 1940 the entire Romanian population was evacuated from Quadrilateral. But due to delays of Bulgarian population, colonists were not immediately moved in Old Dobrudja, so most were brought in

Ialomița County, others in Călărași County or along the Danube banks, where they remained until the spring of 1941, when it was decided to bring them in the Old Dobrudja (Cușa, 2004).

It should be noted that if some of the Romanian ethnics of Quadrilateral preferred to remain there, the Aromanians move was complete. Moreover, because of their unity they settled in Dobrudja, if possible, in a compact manner. This was not fully realized because of the reason that most of them were supporters or had joined the Legionary Movement, the Antonescu government broke them apart, so many of their relatives were colonized in Constanța, some in Tulcea.

In total there were colonized in the two counties of Dobrudja 5230 Aromanian families in 47 centers, of which 2562 families in 26 centers in Constanța and 2668 families in 21 centers in the County of Tulcea (Cușa, 2004). The difference of 734 Aromanian families from the 5964 Aromanians in Quadrilateral, represent the families settled in Ialomița County (figure 2).

Currently most of the Aromanians are living in cities of Dobrudja like Tulcea and Constanța and some in rural localities, but grouped in compact territorial areas (figure 3).

One can see their share in urban predominance (figure 4), with a percentage much higher than for ethnic Romanians for example and their stabilization in the sense that after 1990 migration towards Bucharest ceased and both drain from rural areas towards urban areas. However Aromanians in Dobrudja although have the consciousness of their own identity, different from that of the Romanians, they are far from being an unitary mass, because they come from different countries, being screened in the past a certain collective mentality and on the other hand due to lineages of their political and personal or group interests that have evolved within their community since 1990.

THE AROMANIANS FROM ROMANIA TODAY

Today, the Aromanians called by the Romanians as Makidoni and Armani by themselves, are the third most numerous ethnic group in Dobrudja province, after the Turks and the Tartars, counting 19.850 people at the 2002 Population Census. Appart from the Aromanians from Dobrudja province, which are representing 75% of the whole Aromanians from Romania, important Aromanian communities are located in Bucharest (aprox. 5000 people) and four other counties, namely Timiș, Ialomița, Călărași and Dolj.

The geografic repartition of the Aromanians in Dobrudja has two cores, namely one urban concentration represented by the city of Constanța and one rural municipality represented by the Baia common, in Tulcea (figure 5).

Although the Aromanian population is statistically declining, following our research field data, we noticed an average of 2-3 children per family, so we can say that the demographic trends are favorable. Regarding the main strains of Aromanians stands the predominance the Grămușteni, followed by the Fărșherots (sometimes called plisoți) (figure 6).

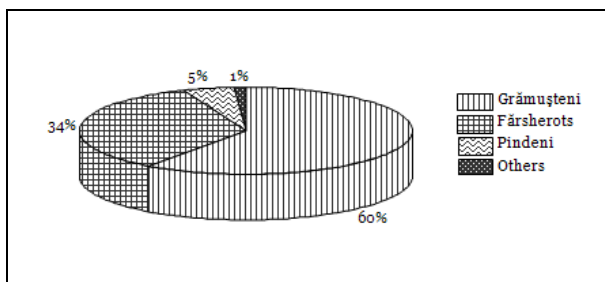


Figure 6. The main Aromanian strains from Dobrudja as percentage
(Source: Cușa, 2004)

The Grămușteni strain (also called cipani) coming from Bulgaria and Greece represents today most of the Aromanians of Dobrudja, are concentrated mainly in Tulcea county and

dominating in terms of economic, cultural and political life in relation to the Fărsherots, the second most important Aromanian strain, concentrated in Constanța county (figure 7).

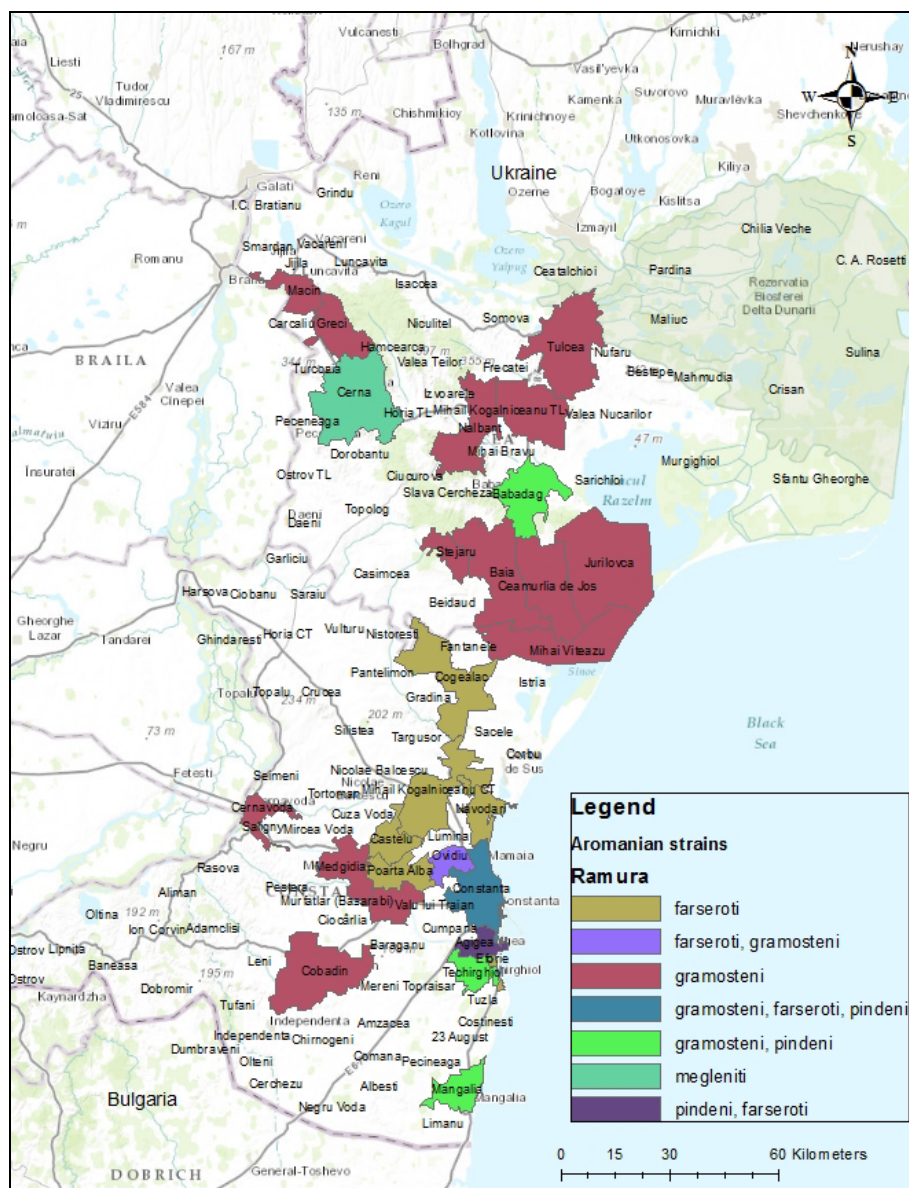


Figure 7. The present arial repartition of Aromanian strains in Dobruja by localities (2013)
(Source: Field research data)

They are also the originators of the most cultural events and those who have made possible the introduction of the native language in schools. Although in the past the most conservative in language were the Fărsherots, whose speech had fewer foreign loans, today in Dobudja, the Aromanian language is better preserved and transmitted at Grămoșteni than in the case of Fărsherot families, who have adopted many words from Romanian. Besides the common Latin origin which binds most of Romania's Orthodox religion practiced by Aromanians to an extent far

greater than the Romanians, the number of those who adopted the new reformed religions is insignificant. Nowadays, the Aromanians currently fall into two groups, one which wants to be considered as part of the Romanian people, that advocate for the preservation of their cultural particularity and its idiom and one that advocates for their recognition as a national minority in Romania. No matter what their position is, based on scientific arguments, either political, Aromanians in Romania today is in a crisis of identity (Tanașoca, 2004), that derives from the little interest that majority have towards them and of their poor self-knowledge.

One finding is required, namely that in the absence of a system of schools and media, Aromanian language is lost in Romania as in the rest of the countries where they live, and the young people are now speaking a mixture of Romanian and Aromanian language (Trifon, 2012).

CONCLUSIONS

Aromanians were seen at the time of their colonization as Romanians, this was the reason for their colonization in Dobrudja, namely strengthening the Romanian character of this province. They were not forced to come here, so, they were brought as Sothern Romanians and they have taken on this role, and now claiming to be a national minority is impossible (Djuvara, 2012).

Their great adaptability, being called the chameleons of the Balkans (Nicolau, 2001), ensured their continuance but their rebellious spirit and nomadic life, retired and always on the move was as a double-edged blade, on the one hand helped them to preserve their own identity but on the other hand they have remained trapped in past and the Aromanian dialect could not develop into a modern literary language and the Aromanians could not constitute a proper state, so that ironically, they came to be a kind of diaspora in all countries where they live, even where they are native. One thing is certain, Aromanians are the legitimate representatives of the Balkan Romanity (Caragiu-Marioțeanu, 1996) and therefore, more than anywhere, in Romania they should be helped to preserve their language and traditions, as part of the oriental Latinity, so even Romanian culture will be richer and more complex. However, Aromanians in Romania represent the strongest and also the most active diaspora with a major influence in the Balkans and in the world and it also had the merit to try the attempt towards standardization of Aromanian idiom towards a literary form and it is has also an active involvement in political and economic life in Romania. Currently the portrait of the young Aromanian is not anymore that of a shepherd or merchant, leaving with its caravans the rough paths through the Western Balkans (Hâciu, 1936).

Modernity is universal and the Aromanians can not escape from the trend with all their conservatism, nor shouldn't, after all they have survived not because they knew how to hide from modernity but because they knew how to adapt to change, to evolve with the new without ceasing, however, to be a true Aromanian (Trifon, 2012).

The Aromanian in this third millennium is predominantly a man living in a city, usually a prosperous businessman or one with a liberal profession respectable. Most are engaged in industry, commerce, tourism and services. In general we can say that the story Aromanians in Romania is one with a happy ending and that their adventure in these lands has been and continues to be a model of success.

Aknowlegments

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