

The Recent History of the Aromanians in Southeast Europe

by Alexandru Gica

“The aim of this article is to draw an identification “map” of the Aromanians in Southeast Europe. In so doing, we have tried to take an anthropological approach by assuming the analyzed person’s perspective, to understand his or her options and motivations as much as possible. Irina Nicolau (1993) highlighted the difficulty in identifying the Aromanians among their neighbors, due to their chameleon-like characteristics. Thede Kahl (2002) describes the Aromanians as “a minority behaving as a majority.” In a later article, Kahl (2003) gives an answer to the question “can chameleons build their own nationhood?” He observes that “this shifting of identities, this ‘chameleonic’ flexibility, made the Aromanians not only one of the most polyglot groups in Southeast Europe but also a very strong one economically and politically.” Extending this idea, Kahl suggests that “their economic superiority even prevented them from developing their own nationality and accelerated their national absorption.” This article analyzes the cases of the Aromanians from the Republic of Macedonia, Albania, and Greece and should be read together with “The Recent History of the Aromanians in Romania” (Gica A., 2009), which analyzes the Romanian case. We have decided not to include in this article the case of the Aromanians in Bulgaria (a very interesting one) as they are not very numerous (between 3,000 and 5,000). We analyze the period after the First World War and organize the material by the following principles: historical background, demographic information, the state of the Romanian schools and churches founded in the 19th century in order to be used by the Aromanians living in the Ottoman Empire, the Greek-Romanian competition for the loyalty of the Aromanians, the self-identification of the Aromanians in those countries, tensions, further explanations, and conclusions. We also discuss recent events. We may take as a point of departure the observation of J.F. Gossiaux: “the Aromanian movement is a typical ethnicist one, that is one established on valorizing ethnic identity, but this ethnicity is never an ethno-nationalism”

Republic of Macedonia

The most powerful Aromanian activity is recorded in the Republic of Macedonia. They reunited and organized themselves there as in no other country. Lately they have had two political parties, even if not very numerous. Nowhere else are there as many magazines and newspapers in Aromanian as in Macedonia. In Bulgaria, their number decreased while in Greece, membership in the Vlach ethnic group as well as the language have so little prestige that there are no favorable conditions for encouragement from the Romanian side. Most of the Vlach population from Greece would react strongly against contact with a Romanian politician. Such intercessions would be a real challenge for them. In Macedonia, the Aromanians

are very active, and it is obvious that Iliescu wants to deal with the most active people who are receptive to assistance from Romania[1]

This is the way Thede Kahl explained to a reporter from *Deutsche Welle* the interest of the Romanian state in action in favor of the Aromanians in the Republic of Macedonia. The discussion was held during the official visit of the Romanian president Ion Iliescu to Macedonia in November 2002.

Short history. After World War I, the Aromanians suffered many offences from the new authorities. Taxes rose very much and some of them lost their land. We refer to the Aromanians who had bought plots of land from Turks who were leaving the area (some in 1912, others after the World War I). “The Serbian authorities, using various reasons, seized these plots of land, setting forth that the Romanians had no valid property certificates, and they settled Serbian elements in these areas”[2] (excerpt from the report of the Chancellor[3] of the Romanian Delegation to Belgrade addressed to N. N. Filodor, the Plenipotentiary Minister of the delegation, regarding the situation of the Aromanian people living in the Serbian Macedonia, dating from 28.09.1928). Besides economic problems, there was also the problem of the forced Slavicisation of their names. Some of the Aromanians who had lost their land, and some with a precarious economic situation, ended up settling in Romania. But the number of Aromanians who immigrated to Romania was relatively small in number, especially compared to the number from Greece[4]. The Aromanian contribution to the anti-Fascist Partisan movement during World War II was significant[5]. This context helps us understand the initiative of some Aromanians from Bitola, among whom were some ex-Partisans, to found an Aromanian cultural society at the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946; the society was soon suppressed by the authorities[6]. While wealthier Aromanians had suffered as a consequence of the 1948 collectivization of land and herds[7] (and subsequently improved in 1953, when federal agricultural policy was marked by decollectivization[8]), less wealthy Aromanians as well as those connected to party members by family or Partisan ties advanced in communist party structures. Guddemi and Kara (2000/2001, p. 14) noticed during their conversations with the descendents of the latter that “their family memory is of participating in a conscious decision not to emphasize Aromanian or Vlach identity, but to submerge it deliberately in the Macedonian identity which had been, since 1944, in the process of receiving its first institutional or State support.” Guddemi and Kara (see above quote, p. 15) were told by their interlocutors that “Aromanians who wanted to progress in professional careers would deny their Aromanian minority identity and identify as Macedonians so that their careers would not suffer.” After the difficult 1940s, the communist regime of Marshal Tito began to liberalize. The possibility of traveling abroad had major consequences for Aromanians in the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Thus, decades later Aromanians from Yugoslavia showed up in great numbers for the Aromanian Congresses organized in Mannheim (1985) and Freiburg (1988), as well as the Aromanian language courses held in Freiburg (1986) and Bonn (1987), by Vasile Barba through his UALC, “The Union for Aromanian Language and Culture”).

The first Aromanian cultural associations had appeared in Yugoslavia in the 1970s but were largely dormant. Barba had an extremely important influence on the reawakening of Aromanian identity in Yugoslavia. In

February 1988, the “Pitu Guli” Association (established in 1978; president Atanasi Yeoryița) sent a written statement^[9] to the Balkan Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs from Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia claiming legal rights for the Aromanians. The petition repeated demands first made by Vasile Barba in articles he had published in 1978 (pp. 6-7). Besides “Pitu Guli” in Skopje, the “Manakia Brothers Society” was founded in Bitola in 1979. This society organized the celebration of a national Aromanian day at the Aromanian cemetery in Bitola on May 21st 1989. The creation of an Aromanian League followed on the 9th of December 1990. The Republic of Macedonia became an independent state on the 8th of September 1991. The Aromanians were acknowledged by the new constitution in 1992, and in its present version they are acknowledged as part of the Aromanian nation. The Aromanians acquired major rights: radio and TV programs, Aromanian language courses in schools, and support for their publications, the most important being “Grailu Armânescu” (The Aromanian Word) and “Fenix” (Phoenix). The issue of the Aromanian language being used in churches has not been resolved as yet. The first Aromanian political party (“The Party of Aromanians from Macedonia”) was set up on April 7th 2001. A competing party appeared a year later (“The Aromanian Democratic Union”). The two groups are divided by personality differences rather than ideological issues.

The number. There have been several estimates of the number of Aromanians in Yugoslav Macedonia. In 1925, the Romanian plenipotentiary Minister in Belgrade Th. Emandi addressed a report to the Minister for Foreign Affairs I. G. Duca estimating 35-40,000 Aromanians^[10]. In 1929, two other Romanian observers, ^[11] I. Max Popovici and Victor Brabețeanu, found 15,575 Aromanians. In 1942, the Romanian consul in Skopje Emil Opișanu told Mihai Antonescu, the interim Minister for Foreign Affairs,^[12] that their number was 17,003. The official census of the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia found 8,668 Vlachs in 1953, 8,046 in 1961, and 7,190 in 1971. Censuses in the post-Yugoslav era reported 8,574 Vlachs in 1994 and 9,695 in 2002 (see Trifon N., 2005, p. 299 for this information). A recent observer, Thede Kahl,^[13] estimates that 25,000 Aromanians are living in the Republic of Macedonia. Aromanians from the Republic of Macedonia tend to believe that their number is much higher. Consider, for example, the statement of Hristo Colakovski, an Aromanian from the Republic of Macedonia who now resides in the US: “I did some research and the 1991 statistics indicate that there are 8,129 Armânj. This is a ridiculously low number! I mostly blame our own people for hiding their identity during the census. Contemplating this figure creates great bitterness in me. When I think about all the work accomplished, time sacrificed and money spent by our people in the diaspora in terms of promoting our identity – and even foreigners work to help us – it galls me that many native Aromanians in Macedonia hide their identity. I am sure that the true figure for our people in Macedonia is at least 10 times more than the 1991 statistics indicate.”^[14] Another explanation for the low number of Aromanians in the statistics from the Republic of Macedonia was offered by an interlocutor of J. F. Gossiaux in Krushevo in 1993: “We, the Aromanian people, claim that we are Macedonian, as we are natives. We have always lived on this land. This is the reason why we consider ourselves true Macedonians.

Nowadays, the meaning of the term Macedonian is Slavic Macedonian. Therefore, statistics cannot provide the exact figure of the Aromanians from the Republic of Macedonia.”[15]

School. The Romanian schools of the Ottoman era have been closed since 1914. Years later, a Romanian official explained the reasoning behind their closing: “The Yugoslavian government... held that the Treaty of Bucharest was denounced when Romania did not enter the war the moment that Serbia was attacked, and therefore did not fulfill the guarantee obligation registered in the separate and secret Protocol, signed with the Treaty of Bucharest.”[16] (In the 1913 Treaty of Bucharest, which ended the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, Romania had agreed to enter any war against Serbia, but it failed to do so when Austria-Hungary attacked Serbia in 1914, setting off World War I.) As an aside, let us mention that Nikola Pašić, the Serbian Prime Minister of the period (when the Treaty of Bucharest was signed in 1913 and when Romanian schools for Aromanians were closed in 1914) was himself Aromanian[17]

The church. Of all the Romanian churches in Serbian Macedonia, only one survived until the late 1940s, “St. Constantin and Elena” in Bitola. The land was purchased in 1902 and construction lasted from 1902 to 1904. It was consecrated on May 10th 1905. Closed during World War I, the church was reopened on November 8th 1919 – the only institution of the Romanian government that continued to exist. During the interwar period, the church in Bitola also played a role in soothing tensions between pro-Greek and pro-Romanian Aromanians, and worked to maintain some kind of unity.[18] In 1926 the elderly priest Tudor Constantin suffered an apoplexy attack. The Romanian government intervened to appoint a new priest, Gheorghe Cosmescu. On November 12th 1939 St. Constantin and Elena was declared a Serbian church; almost simultaneously all other properties of the Romanian government in Yugoslavia were confiscated – the former Romanian high school in Bitola was taken over on October 26th 1939, while the Romanian cemetery, where the nationalist Apostol Mărgărit and the poet Constantin Belimace were buried, was taken on November 4th, 1939. St. Constantin and Elena was reopened after the defeat of Yugoslavia in April 1941 under the priest Tiberiu Şdicu. On the 22nd of October 1947, however, the Belgrade embassy of the Romanian communist government informed Naum Mustricu, the acolyte of the church, that his position was off the budget[19]. The church continued to have an interesting destiny. It was demolished in September 1968 to make room for the Hotel Epinal to be built, an action considered an ethnic offense by Aromanians in Bitola. A group of important Aromanians, including some ex-partisans, demanded the reconstruction of the church on a different spot. The demand was granted, and in 1969 the church was rebuilt in the Aromanian district using the iconostasis and the sacred images of the old church[20]. On June 2nd 2003, Sasho Yeranda (this is the Aromanian name, the official name being Sasho Nakov) was made a deacon, and on June 5th 2003 he was ordained as a priest. It was the first time the mass was performed in Aromanian in the church of Bitola[21].

Directions. The influence of the Romanian government. There are a few Aromanians with Greek identity in the Republic of Macedonia. They can be found in Bitola and Cruşova. The organization “Moschopolis,” mainly composed of Aromanians from Cruşova who withdrew from the Pitu Guli Society[22], has been

operating since 1999. In 2001 we met in Ianina, Greece, some young people who came from The Republic of Macedonia to study the Greek language. There are very few Aromanians who assume a Romanian identity. Yet there is cooperation between the Aromanian organizations and the Romanian government (especially through Mita Papuli – official name Mitko Kostov – the president of PAM, The Party of Aromanians from Macedonia). There were two moments when the influence of the Romanian government was publicly visible. The first was on the September 28th 1995 when the Republic of Macedonia was acknowledged in the Council of Europe. The Romanian members of Parliament Moțiu, Gabrielescu and Rădulescu-Botică proposed an amendment to the admittance of the Republic of Macedonia in the Council of Europe. The amendment claimed the right of Aromanians to recover their old names (which they had been forced to Slavitize after World War I), to perform religious services in the Aromanian language, and to get back the schools and churches that had belonged to Aromanian communities in earlier years. The amendment also sought to reclaim properties owned by Aromanians in Gopeș and Moloviște[23].

Previously, a delegation of five Aromanians, including Vasile Barba from Germany and Stere Samara from Romania, was received by N. Popovski, the Head of the Macedonian delegation. All five representatives claimed the same rights as the Romanian members of Parliament. The local news described the attitude of the five Aromanians as “very radical and even aggressive” and presumed that Aromanians from the Republic of Macedonia had contributed to the initiative of the Romanian members of Parliament. Their conclusion was that, “In this way, Romania may well be promoting itself as the ‘protector’ of the Vlachs.” On June 10th 1995, V. Barba had sent Kiro Gligorov, president of the Republic of Macedonia (who was also of Aromanian origin[24]), a memorandum[25] on behalf of UALC in which he claimed the same rights for the Aromanians as the amendment later proposed by the Romanian members of Parliament. In fact, the texts of the amendment and of the letter sent to Kiro Gligorov are partially identical. On August 28th 1995, the UALC sent an open letter criticizing the Romanian Parliament for not supporting their member Valentin Gabrielescu in investigating the situation of the Aromanians from Europe in his position as a rapporteur for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Barba reminded them that Albania was acknowledged in the Council of Europe on June 29th 1995, with no explanation requested by any member of the Romanian Parliament regarding the lack of rights of the Aromanian minority in Albania. In the same text, Barba expressed “the hope that the Romanian Parliament and its delegation in Strasbourg would insist, at least for the Vlach minority from the Republic of Macedonia, to attain assurance that guarantees – according to a European code – equal cultural rights to all citizens of the new multinational country...”[26] And this did happen, as we mentioned above. However, the amendment proposed by the Romanian members of Parliament was not adopted. The second instance of visible influence by the Romanian government came in April 2002, when a Romanian delegation led by the state secretaries Doru Vasile Ionescu and Cristian Niculescu visited the Republic of Macedonia. After a meeting with the Macedonian Committee for religious communities, the president of this committee, one Naumov, declared that Romania had asked for Aromanian religious services held in the Romanian language[27]. On April 23rd 2002, the Romanian

delegation met with the PAM party organization. The latter asked that the religious services to be held in Aromanian, saying that they refused to “become Romanian.” They also asked that the Aromanians in Romania be recognized as an ethnic minority[28]. On May 20th 2002, the Aromanians of the Republic of Macedonia celebrated their National Day at Struga. At this meeting, the Romanian ambassador in Skopje read a message from the Romanian Prime Minister Adrian Năstase. On the 23rd of May 2002, the Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society also organized a meeting to celebrate the Aromanians’ National Day. The Romanian secretary of state Doru Vasile Ionescu read a message from the Romanian Prime Minister Adrian Năstase[29]. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the president of Romania Ion Iliescu visited Skopje in November 2002. A Rompress wire dated November 6th 2002 described the meeting between Iliescu and representatives of the Aromanian community of the Republic of Macedonia. They “asked the Romanian president to intervene to raise the number of scholarships awarded to young people who study in Romania, as well as for the foundation of an Aromanian diocese within the Orthodox Church, solicitations which Ion Iliescu had a positive answer to.” It is important to note that none of the Aromanian participants in this meeting acknowledged making the request to found an Aromanian diocese within the Romanian Orthodox Church. The Rompress wire further mentions a tense moment: “The president seemed less delighted when the Aromanians requested the acknowledgement[30] by our country (Romania) of the Aromanian nation as a distinctive one, this being the reason why the president advised the participants to judge problems lucidly.” Controversy. Some corruption has always been suspected regarding the scholarships awarded to Aromanians from the southern Balkans to study in Romania. Without real proof, the problem was tackled by Sasho Yeranda in an article entitled “Ună mari arushini” (A Big Shame) in Bana Armânească magazine, no. 30/2002, page 29. People who wanted such scholarships were supposed to acquire a certificate from the League of Aromanians in Macedonia that attested to the person’s Aromanian origin[31]. Nevertheless, many Macedonian Slavs came to study in Romania. In order to avoid the possibility of corruption, the UACM (The Union for Aromanian Culture from Macedonia; president Dina Cuvata) started to license these certificates for free and only to Aromanians. While this information must be viewed with caution, especially in light of the rivalry between LAM and UACM, we have to mention that it seems plausible in a different context. LAM is more ambiguous in its relationship with the Romanian government, while UACM is extremely reserved toward the Romanians; books printed by UCAM almost invariably note that “this book is printed without any support provided by Romania for the Aromanians living in Macedonia.” The same suspicions of corruption are present also in Bulgaria and Albania.

Explanations. The special situation of the Aromanians from the Republic of Macedonia is that the pro-Romanian and pro-Greek groups are insignificant. Instead, there are two other categories: Aromanians who consider themselves a distinct people and Aromanians who prefer to appear as Macedonians (Macedonian Slavs). There are many explanations for this state of affairs. The old conflict between pro-Greeks and pro-Romanians died down as a result of migration to Greece or Romania before and after the World War I, as well as the osmosis process between the two parties fueled by common external pressures they had to face.

The lack of Romanian schools and churches (except in the case of Bitola) eliminated a factor that had facilitated Romanian self-identification. What is more, the failure of the Romanian government to maintain its institutions weakened Romanian prestige and, implicitly, Romanian self-identification. The relationship with Greece was deeply influenced by the Greek-Macedonian dispute over the Republic of Macedonia's name. The boycott imposed by Greece on the Republic of Macedonia in 1994-1995, as well as Greek opposition to the use of the name "Macedonia" compromised the willingness of people to self-identify as Greek in this country. It bears repeating that the liberalizing regime in Yugoslavia after 1950 played an important role for Aromanian self-identification because of the freedom of movement and contact with the diaspora it allowed.

Albania

"In Albania, the Aromanian group sets its hopes largely on the economic advantages of being able to go abroad. Romanians and Greeks use the opportunity to win the Aromanians in the poorest country of Europe for their own cause."**[32]**

Brief history. Before the Albanian state was established in 1914, local Aromanians had already experimented with emigration to the USA. After World War I many Aromanians emigrated to Romania. The Albanian communist regime was particularly harsh; collectivization was forced in May 1947 through a special law, and the nomadic Farsherots were immobilized. This had the unintended consequence of bringing new Aromanian settlements into existence, as annual migrations ceased and communities were forced to settle. One of the most interesting settlements is the village of Andon Poçi, 16 kilometers from Gjirokaster. The village was established between 1957 and 1960 on the site of an abandoned village named Tavan. Nowadays it has approximately 130 houses and 800 inhabitants. Andon Poçi was a local Aromanian hero who fought and died in the resistance against Nazi occupation. This prosperous community has a strong vocal tradition**[33]** and had given two brilliant poets of Aromanian contemporary literature, the brothers Spiru and Dimitri Fuchi (born in 1964 and 1967). After the fall of communism, two parallel initiatives (from Selenița and Corcea) led to the foundation of the cultural association "The Aromanians of Albania," officially registered on October 24th 1991, as the communist regime was beginning to crumble. Its first national conference was held on April 5th 1992; the Romanian Embassy was involved in organizing the conference through Ambassador Gheorghe Micu and Councilor Filip Teodorescu. Representatives of Aromanian communities from Romania, Greece, the Republic of Macedonia, and the diaspora were present. Romania also sent a Member of Parliament Adrian Moțiu and a Bishop Calinic. The participants adopted a resolution demanding Aromanian recognition as an ethnic community. The association's magazine, "Brotherhood," was published on November 27th 1992 in Albanian and Aromanian. The first issue featured an article by the president of the association, Iancu Balamaci, entitled "A voice calling us to fraternity" that presented the magazine's message. That initial unity was soon lost. The main opposition was between the group from Selenița-Vlora, which was pro-Greek, and the one from Corcea, which was pro-Romanian. "Brotherhood" magazine ceased publication after five issues, resumed publication monthly in 1996 and since 2002 (when the Romanian government decided to get involved in the Aromanian question again) it has been

supported financially by the Romanian government through the Department for Romanians Everywhere. The conference of 1992 also decided to train a priest who was to hold services in Aromanian. The sculptor Dumitrache Veriga was elected. He attended the Romanian Faculty of Theology in Pitești and was ordained. He is presently the priest of the Aromanian church from Corcea. Its construction began in 1995 on the site of the old Aromanian cemetery in Corcea. There is a second Aromanian church today in Pogradeț. There is also an Aromanian school as well a kindergarten (private, but free) in Diviaca. Both were established by Koci Janko. The school was opened on December 8th 1998. Initially, it was supported by “The Aromanians of Albania” association as well as other donations. Since 2002, it has had the help of the same Department for Romanians Everywhere within the Romanian government. Number. “At least 100,000 Aromanians live nowadays in Albania.”^[34] A more precise estimate of 139,065 Aromanians living in Albania was provided by the Geographical Studies Centre of the Albanian Science Academy, which performed its research^[35] with a German institute between 2000-2002. This makes the Aromanians the second-largest population group in Albania, after the Albanians. Due to the relatively primitive way of life in Albania before World War II, earlier estimates tended to vary widely, from 40,000 in 1931 (Vasile Stoica^[36]) to 150,000^[37] in 1926.

Schools and churches. Unlike Serbia, Albania allowed Romanian schools and churches for the Aromanians to continue after World War I. The number of schools diminished from 18 in 1916 to 5 in 1923. On April 25th 1933 all private schools in Albania were nationalized, including the Romanian ones. A 1934 memorandum^[38] from the Romanian Delegation in Tirana to Minister of Foreign Affairs Nicolae Titulescu sought to explain the lack of reaction by the Aromanians to the nationalization: “I feel that the Romanian minority from Albania will never address the League of Nations, following the Greeks’ example^[39]. The Romanians from Albania feel Romanian, speak Romanian, but they have their own interests in Albania and they won’t do anything that could create difficulties with the Albanian government.” After further hesitation between state schools with a special program and minority schools, Romanian authorities chose the former. Thus, in July 1937, 7 government schools offering classes in the Romanian language began operating in Albania. In 1930^[40] there were 8 Romanian churches in Albania, of which the one in Corcea (consecrated in 1925, destroyed by earthquake in 1931) was most important. In November 1942, only 6 churches^[41] remained. In a report^[42] dated August 10th 1941, Nicolae Țimiraș blamed the failure of Romanian schools and churches on opportunistic behavior by the Aromanian elites: “Trade interests have suppressed national interests.” In Tirana, community leaders, especially state officials “fearful of losing jobs undertake no action to acquire minority rights for their fellow countrymen. On the contrary, in order to please the government, these state officials, led by the Minister of National Economy, allowed circulation, against their convictions, of the famous official thesis which says that the Romanian population wouldn’t even consider it in its interest to claim educational and religious rights.” During the communist regime, the Romanian schools and churches ceased all activity.

Self-identifications. Tensions. We will follow the excellent work of Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers (1999) to identify the policies of the Aromanians in Albania. The pro-Romanian militants are politically close to the

Democratic Party of Sali Berisha (mutual visits by the Romanian and Albanian presidents reinforced the link). Supporters of this group claim that the Aromanians of Albania are Romanized Illyrians and, consequently, are close to the Albanians. The “Aromanians of Albania” association manages the assignment of scholarships for Romania to young Aromanians (about 1,000 Aromanian youngsters would be scholars of the Romanian government at the moment). The association issues a certificate attesting to the Aromanian identity of the scholarship applicant. Pro-Greek militants are politically close to the Human Rights Party, a successor to the Omonia Party, which was banned under suspicion of being connected to Greek ultra-nationalists). Supporters of this group claim that the Aromanians of Albania are Romanized Hellenes. These Aromanians advertise and reprint the writings of Achilleas Lazarou. One of them (Lazarou A., 1994)^[43] is a history written in Albanian of the Aromanians of Albania. The Association of Helleno-Vlachs of Albania manages the visa and work permits issued for Greece. The Association issues certificates attesting to the Aromanian (Vlach) identity of the applicant. Schwandner-Sievers mentions that the key position held by these two associations “entails enormous social power.” The fact that “leading figures of both Aromanian Association factions accuse each other of abusing their position by taking money from the candidates” can be seen as a result of the “latent struggle for prestige going on among different groups in current Albania.” Schwandner-Sievers appreciates that the boundaries between the two groups are not necessarily ideological. Examining the lists of members of both associations, she points out “the transfer of loyalty” of some members. “By moving from one association to another, these Aromanians chose to switch from a pro-Romanian to a pro-Greek faction and vice versa. When some of them were interviewed, former power struggles over positions in the associations were exposed.” Schwandner-Sievers also mentions cases in which “one family is split into two identity orientations: a son and his family might be migrant workers in Greece and the daughter might have a scholarship at a Romanian university.” Schwandner-Sievers also reviews the position of the elites in Albania: “Apparently, Albanian Aromanians of high social status in modern Albanian society, and this includes many well-known scholars, politicians and artists, tend not to engage in Aromanian ethnic politics. Under no circumstances at all would some admit to their Aromanian family background. As some interviewees explained, to emphasize a distinct identity might harm their image and status, even though they do not necessarily believe in the available dominant discourses.” Schwandner-Sievers concludes that, these days, the Aromanians “utilize identity politics for social position, reputation, psychological compensation of an inferiority complex, economic advantage, and, most importantly, to secure future opportunities for their children.” Further, she writes that, “In conclusion, the evidence strongly suggests that Albanian Aromanians’ globalizing identity confers an advantage to them over non-Aromanian Albanians. [...] Besides creating a sense of exclusivity, they are able to shift identities: they can choose between different modes of identification, or they can attribute distinct significance to different identities in various situations, referring to their pre-communist situation if opportune. This flexibility is an efficient and profitable strategy of adjustment to different circumstances.”

Recent developments. Explanations. The tensions between the two Aromanian groups in Albania sharpened at the end of 2009 by means of dueling conferences. The “Aromanians of Albania” association organized a congress for “Aromanians from the European Union” on November 17th-18th 2009. On November 18th the congress voted a resolution signed by the presidents of some Aromanian associations: Vangjel Shundi (Aromanians of Albania), Ion Caramitru (Macedo-Romanian Cultural Society, Romania), Stoica Lascu (Picurarlu de la Pind Society, Romania), Zvetlana Nikolin (representative of the organization “In Medias Res” from Serbia), Aureliu Ciufecu (president of the “Macedo-Romanian Cultural Congress” from USA), Aurel Papari (“Andrei Şaguna,” Romania), Gheorghe Zamani (“Veria”, Romania), Elena Wisoşenschi (“Muşata Armână”, Romania). The main points of the resolution[44] were to reaffirm the bond between Aromanian and Romanian identity, to request that the Romanian government assume responsibility for the Romanians of the Balkans, to criticize the claims of some Aromanian associations[45] from Albania and Romania to represent Aromanians, to reject the thesis that the Aromanians are not Romanians, to support non-recognition[46] of the Aromanians in Romania as a minority, and to found an “International Aromanian Forum” made up of Aromanian legal and representative organizations all over the world. The Romanian government was asked for support as a kindred state, including taking the necessary steps to implement Recommendation 1333/1997 for the Aromanians. The Council of Aromanians (an Aromanian international organization founded in 2005) organized a conference in Corcea on December 12th 2009. There were various opinions[47]. The front page of “Fărshărotu” magazine, no. 31 from February 2010, notes the opinion[48] that ancient Macedonia is “the Aromanians’ home country”. In this home country – nowadays covering Greece, The Republic of Macedonia and Albania – the Aromanians are not a minority (on the contrary, the other faction requests recognition of the Aromanians in Albania as a minority). They can be a minority outside these countries (on the contrary, the other faction believes that the Aromanians cannot be a minority in Romania). Another difference between the two groups has to do with the origins of the Aromanians. Just as the Congress of Tirana stressed the Roman roots of the Aromanians, the Conference of Corcea focused on their autochthonism in ancient Macedonia. The President and Vice-President of the Pan-Hellenic Federation of Vlach Cultural Associations of Greece (Kostas Adam and Yoanis Kokonis) attended this conference. The Council also had planned to organize a Congress in Albania in the spring of 2010. The aim of the conference was to gather the opinions of member associations on some of the issues and to find a message of unity. The Congress never took place; instead, the Council of Aromanians organized a large meeting in the well-known Vlach town of Moschopolis on August 15th, 2010, that was attended by several thousand Aromanians from around the world. A resolution was read in which the Council asked for recognition of the Aromanians as a regional people. That resolution was published on August 20th 2010; on August 22nd, the Vlach Association of Veria, which had attended the meeting in Moschopolis, released a brief note signed by its President Giorgios Prapas and its Secretary Antonis Toussikos expressing disagreement with the resolution announced in Moschopolis. The situation of the Aromanians in Albania is special because it is the only place where a competition between pro-Romanian

and pro-Greek factions is taking place, resuming in a certain way the controversies of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Romanian influence can be explained through the memory of past support (schools and churches operating until the start of the communist regime in Albania), through current support given to the “Aromanians of Albania” association, and through many families’ hope to send their children to study in Romania. The Greek influence can be explained through the opportunities connected to visas, work permits, and even pensions[49]. Schwandner-Sievers believes[50] that “it is exactly the revitalization of the conflict between followers of a pro-Greek and a pro-Romanian identification that serves to broaden the scope of options for potential exploitation.” If we follow this suggestion, which seems paradoxical at first, we soon notice that the more fragmentation there is in terms of identity options for Aromanians, the more positions of power are created for members of Aromanian communities. It remains questionable whether the descriptions “pro-Romanian” and “pro-Greek” are appropriate for the two orientations. Both factions cultivate Aromanian identity – each of them in its own way.

Greece

The idea of “Hellenism” unites Aromanians in Greece much more than the idea of “Vlachness,” so the following comment by the Mayor of a large Vlach village probably represents the opinion of most Greek Aromanians: “How is it possible that someone call us a minority? We made the Greek state!”[51]

Brief history. The identification of some Aromanians as Romanians started in the second half of the 19th century. Helen Abadzi (2004) explains this phenomenon thus: “[A]nd the forgotten Vlachs finally found someone to pay attention to them and were flattered that some people valued their language. The lack of understanding for the feelings towards a mother tongue had disastrous consequences for many Greeks and Vlachs.” Few of the Vlachs in Greece embraced the Romanian cause. Nicolae Matussi estimated[52] in 1943 that before the war “the so-called ‘Aromanian question’ embraced up to now, for many years, barely 5% of the Romanian population from Greece. The group of the Romanian nationalists was exclusively made of teachers’ families, schoolmasters (salaried officials of the Romanian government) and pensioners, as well as those who were attending the less numerous Romanian schools.” Difficulties (especially economic) after World War I and the Greek-Turkish war (1919-1922) and the subsequent population exchange led a significant number of Aromanians to migrate to Romania after 1925 (for a more detailed analysis of Aromanian colonization in Romania see Gica A., 2009 and Cuşa N., 1996). After the Metaxas regime took power on August 4th 1936, Greek authorities banned the use of the Aromanian language in public. Following is a description of the Greek authorities’ attitude by the Romanian consul in Salonika, E. Popescu, on February 10th 1939: “Acknowledging an apparent goodwill of the General Governor, as well as of some central authorities in Athens, who in various cases as the one last year when they stopped abuses that forbade the use of the Macedo-Romanian dialect, proved benevolent energy, we have to note on the other hand that the lower people’s mentality, of the gendarme, of the schoolmaster and of the Greek priest mainly resembles the one of the andartes of black remembrance from the years of horror and terror around 1905.”[53] There followed a long series of dramatic events, reactions, and counter-reactions. The Italian

army attacked Greece on October 28th 1940. While a few Aromanians welcomed the invaders with enthusiasm, most Aromanians supported Greece and many played a critical role in preventing the invaders from crossing the mountains of Northern Greece and pushing them back into Albania. A short while Greek officials began to imprison those who fraternized with the enemy while also sending many Aromanian leaders of the pro-Romanian movement to a concentration camp in Corinth (the first arrests began on November 10th 1940). A total of 265 Aromanians were interned in the Corinth camp; a few also were kept in Catzika prison in Iania. On March 13th 1941, many of these Aromanians were transferred to Crete and other islands[54]. In April, the Nazis invaded Greece and quickly conquered it, leaving the Italians behind to manage the occupation. The next period is ambiguous. A Greek Vlach named Alcibiade Diamandi (1893-1948) positioned himself as a representative of the Aromanians in the occupied Italian area, vacillating between Italian and Romanian interests (see Divani L., 1996, for an analysis of the effects of Italian and Romanian actions on the Aromanians in Greece). Documents recently published in Bucharest (see documents no. 261 and 293 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006) indicate that Diamandi came to occupied Greece in April 1941 with a mandate from Romanian Prime Minister Ion Antonescu: "The warrant received from you to serve our national interest was a peremptory order. Totally respecting it and confronting the most captious on-site difficulties and adversities, I acted for over a year with an unshakable faith and perseverance, as a common soldier and I did everything humanly possible to completely answer to the expectations and the credit your highness granted me through the approval of our program presented in April 1941." [55] Between 1941-1942 Diamandi attempted to set up an Autonomous Vlach State in the Vlach regions of Greece, eventually styling it "The Principality of the Pindus," but with little effect – his movement succeeded in changing a few local signs from Greek to Vlach. More than anything else, Diamandi's small group of Vlach separatists managed to alienate the local Greek and Vlach population and turn them even more against the Romanians and their Italian protectors. Radu Arion, who was the leader of the Romanian delegation in Athens, and Emanoil Popescu, the Romanian Consul-General in Salonika, sent reports to Bucharest criticizing Diamandi's activity. Even the man soon to become the administrator of Romanian schools and churches in Greece, Gheorghe Papagheorghe, demanded Diamandi's recall or suspension in the wake of these events[56]. Diamandi was summoned to Romania in the summer of 1942; interestingly, he sent a memorandum to Antonescu on July 17th 1942 (document no. 261 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006) that seemed to deny everything written before on this matter: there is no mention of The Principality of the Pindus or any Aromanian state that had been created in Aromanian territories within Greece. Diamandi was not allowed by the Romanians to return to Greece. In a memorandum [57] dated October 1943, Nicola Matussi, Diamandi's closest collaborator, asserted: "We, the Romanians from Greece, have always made our duty to the Greek state. We have never undertaken anything against the country we live in. The sympathy towards Germans and Italians – sympathy which has never embraced any anti-Greek character – is due to the Romanian ties of alliance with Germany and Italy." Matussi continues, "Although an old friendship connects me to Mr. Diamandi, and despite liaisons which have tied our families for many

generations, we initiated the big action in Thessaly and Macedonia only after we had confirmation that Mr. A. Diamandi really had this mission from the Romanian government.” At the beginning of 1944 Matussi also came to Romania. Further research is needed to shed more light on these events. Diamandi’s sometimes reckless actions created an image of the quisling Aromanian during World War II. This happened despite the fact that many Aromanian villages[58] were burned to the ground by the Germans and that many Aromanians fought against the Italian and German invaders. Thus in 1944, the president of the temporary Committee for National Liberation, Alexandros Svolos, the military head of ELAS, Stefanos Sarafis, as well as the political head of EAM, Andreas Tzimas, were all Aromanians. In addition, Evangelos Averoff-Tositsas (1910-1990), an Aromanian from a wealthy family in Metsovo and a well-known Greek politician, played a major role during the war – Averoff spent a year in a concentration camp in Italy, and after his escape he helped coordinate Greek resistance against the occupiers. In addition to a very successful political career in Greece after the war, he also wrote extensively about the positive role played by the vast majority of Aromanians during the war and cleared up the misconception of Aromanian collaborationism by showing that the actions of Diamandi and his followers had been an anomaly. The Romanian alliance with Germany and Italy through most of the war, as well as the stigma caused by the collaboration of some Aromanians during the war, led to the almost complete abandonment of Aromanian self-identification as Romanian in Greece. As Helen Abadzi (2004) describes, the same psychological processes led many also to abandon the Aromanian language: “After all the disasters of two wars, the safest thing for the surviving Vlachs was to hide and forget the language that got them into so much trouble. It is as if they all decided that its use was a problem.” A long absence of Aromanians from public view followed. This only began to change after Greece entered the European Economic Community (now known as the European Union) in 1981. The early 1980s witnessed the appearance of Aromanian societies that aimed to preserve cultural traditions. In 1985 these groups came together to form the Pan-Hellenic Federation of Vlach Cultural Associations. As of 2009, the Federation counted 101 Aromanian member societies. Every year, the Federation organizes a summer gathering (andamuma) where Vlachs from throughout the world gather and enjoy songs and dances performed by Greek Vlachs in traditional Aromanian clothes. There are many possible explanations for the “rebirth” of the Aromanians in Greece that began in the 1980s. Most frequently cited is the maturing of Greek democracy as a member of the European Union. Another view is that Greek authorities took notice of the Aromanian “rebirth” movement that began in the diaspora in 1978, focused on achieving recognition for the Aromanians in the Balkans, and they decided to fight it intelligently by encouraging Aromanians to organize in support of their culture. Neither explanation is supported by documentation.

The Number. The last censuses in Greece that mention the Aromanians were taken in 1940 which found 26,750 Vlachs, and in 1951, when 22,736 people identified themselves as Vlachs. Thede Kahl[59] estimates that at most there are 300,000 Aromanians in Greece who are familiar with the language, perhaps 100,000 of whom are fluent in Aromanian.

Schools and churches. In a supplement to the Treaty of Bucharest, which concluded the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos agreed to allow the network of Romanian schools and churches for Aromanians to continue in Greece. The interwar period saw 11 active Romanian churches in Greece[60]. In 1916 there were 44 Romanian schools[61] and in 1935[62] there were 25 primary schools with 917 students and 52 teaching positions as well as 4 secondary schools[63] with 360 students and 46 teaching positions. Aromanian students from Yugoslavia and Albania also attended the secondary schools. The biggest problem of these schools was the fact that their graduation certificates were not recognized by the Greek state, and so their graduates were considered illiterate. This is why the vast majority of the graduates of Romanian schools in Greece chose to continue their studies in Romania, and in many cases to settle there. This “brain drain” caused the pro-Romanian Aromanians of Greece to lose their elite. G. Trifu, the Romanian General Consul in Salonika, observed in September 1934 that “the design of our cultural action in Greece is based on a wrong vision. I consider as duty of the Romanian state to urgently find the best solution for supporting this Romanian element, which must not be separated from the land of Macedonia and instead of bringing it to Romania it is necessary to help it develop in their native places.”[64] On February 21st 1946 the Romanian schools in Greece were closed under the pretext that many professors who taught in these schools had collaborated with the enemy during the Second World War. The professors were asked to leave Greece; some were even imprisoned for up to a year until they were able to leave Greece[65]. On April 24th 1948 the communist authorities from Bucharest officially protested[66] the closing of Romanian schools that had taken place in 1946[67]. The protest memo highlighted a little-known fact: “During the period that the Greek Macedonia was ruled by the patriotic forces of liberation, the number of settlements with functional Romanian schools rose to 91,” compared with the 29 schools that existed before the war. Of course, the Romanian communists were trying cast a favorable light on the Greek communists who fought in the Greek civil war (1946-1949), but there is ample evidence that the Greek communists wanted to improve the situation of minorities in Greece (partly in the hope of getting them on their side, no doubt).

Self-identification. For Thede Kahl (2003, p. 213-214) “in Greece, the national identity of most Aromanians takes place without doubt through modern Hellenism. [...] the two terms ‘Greek’ and ‘Hellene’ cause problems. While almost every Aromanian considers himself a Hellene [...] when speaking Greek, he would not consider himself Greek [...] when speaking Aromanian. [...] To be a Hellene does not automatically mean to be a Greek. Further problems arise if a language is used that does not differentiate between ‘Greek’ and ‘Hellene.’” Asterios Koukoudis (2003) considers that “the Vlachs in Greece enjoy a position of stable equilibrium between their linguistic or any other ‘otherness’ and their inalienable right to be considered members of Romiosyni, the modern Greek nation – sharing their history with that of the rest of the Modern Greeks.” There are for sure some Aromanians who choose a different self-identification, but they are few and keep a low public profile.

The confrontation with the Diaspora: “Armânlu tu xeani easti câni chirut.” (“An Aromanian abroad is a lost dog.”)

The Aromanians who left their native lands regularly created discomfort for the ones left at “home.” Vlachs in the diaspora were the first to make claims for Aromanian rights. Those who remained in their native lands felt (rightfully) that those who left did not have the right to speak for them. In a 2002 interview^[68] with the journalist Mariana Caciandoni-Budeş (an Aromanian from Romania), Achillea Lazarou articulated those ideas: “I told you that Ellada is the home country (of the Aromanians). The Aromanians of Ellada have no need of any Resolution or Recommendation. [...] We see ourselves there (in Greece), where nobody bothers us. Look: the Aromanian from Ellada is the best Greek and the Aromanian from Romania is Romanian because he came as a Romanian to the Romanian state. [...] Don’t mind the 2-3 people that live in Paris or Freiburg. You need to have your own opinion. [...] How can you consider claiming the Aromanians as a minority in Romania? That is incredible.”^[69] Asterios Koukoudis, 2003, makes a similar argument, but based on numbers: beside the fact that the Aromanians of Greece live in their native land, they also constitute the majority of Aromanians. “Those who are genuinely interested in the Vlachs must give serious consideration to the views, feelings and concerns of the Vlachs of Greece. The individuals of Vlach descent living in Greece outnumber all their fellow Vlachs living in the other Balkan countries; even more, they continue to live in what it is indisputably the ancestral land of all the Vlachs. How can we call ourselves democrats while we speak – and even worse, act – on behalf of the Vlachs without seeking the consent of the majority of the Vlach people?”

Recent events. Suspicions. There is still a bit of an obsession with “Romanian propaganda” among Aromanians in Greece. Sometimes it is fed by real facts, sometimes not. The following quotation comes from an author^[70] who is usually well-balanced, A. Koukoudis, 2003: “It is also true that the official Romanian state – usually acting behind the scenes, but sometimes quite openly – once again turned its attention to the Vlachs of other Balkan countries, contriving to inject new life into old and familiar nationalistic views. The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was officially recognized by Romania when it agreed to describe its Vlach population as a minority.” Koukoudis refers here to the friendship and collaboration treaty between Romania and Republic of Macedonia. The treaty was signed in Bucharest by presidents Ion Iliescu and Boris Trajkovski on April 30th 2001 and was ratified by the Romanian Parliament on September 18th 2001. Romania recognized the name “Republic of Macedonia” (instead of the designation “FYROM”) in article 16. Article 12 mentioned protection of the rights of minorities in the Republic of Macedonia, with an explicit quotation of Recommendation 1333/1997 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. However, the Aromanians have been recognized as a minority in the Republic of Macedonia since 1991. As we have mentioned, in a statement made on May 23rd 2002 at the History Faculty in Bucharest, state secretary Doru Vasile Ionescu announced that Romania would get involved again in supporting Aromanians from Albania, Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia. Greece was not mentioned in the plan of the Romanian authorities. The following day, May 24th 2002, Andrei Bădin published an article, “Illegal financing

for Iliescu's party election campaign from 1992," in the journal *România Liberă*. The article used as a source a chapter from the book "The Apocalypse – Revelations about Persons and Events" published in Athens in early 2002 and signed by General Nikos Grilakis. The main disclosure was that in exchange for financial help in the 1992 election campaign of I. Iliescu, the Romanian party agreed to "clearing off the Aromanian problem." Such statements are difficult to check and we will not refer here to their truth or falsehood. After the treaty between Romania and the Republic of Macedonia was signed in 2001, the fear in Greece of renewed intervention by the Romanian state in the Aromanian issue was revived, despite the fact that in 2002 the Romanian officials did not include any mention of support for the Aromanians of Greece.

The language issue. In the conclusion of his 2003 paper, Thede Kahl says that "everybody who uses the term Vlach-speaking Greeks should realize that they became Greek-speaking Vlachs some time ago." Koukoudis considers that the decline of the Aromanian language is the only unsolved problem for the Aromanians in Greece. Besides some objective reasons such as the disappearance of the Aromanian traditional way of life and their own pursuit of modernism, there are political reasons for abandoning the language. Blame is again assigned to Aromanians from the diaspora and their actions: "It is feared that for as long as these tensions continue, for as long as certain parties persist in these uninvited interventions, the rate of decline in use of the language will accelerate." Koukoudis's opinion would seem to be confirmed by the fact that in villages where there were no Romanian schools or where they ceased functioning long ago, the Aromanian language was better preserved. As a possible path to revive the Aromanian language in Greece, Koukoudis speculates, "Perhaps when they feel that the cultivation and the dissemination of their language will not be exploited as a lever to overturn their own sense of identity and the equilibrium they have achieved with the society in which they live – perhaps only then will they take action." Helen Abadzi (2004) arrives at a similar conclusion with respect to the Aromanians from Greece who are concerned for their identity: "The challenge for all who love the old language and its songs is to preserve it and cultivate it while avoiding political pitfalls." Some positive signs for the Aromanian language have appeared in recent years as a result of the immigration of Aromanians from Albania to Greece. The need to communicate led to a revival of the Aromanian language. Koufogiorgou A., 2008, analyzes how "the presence of Vlach-speaking Albanians in Metsovo influences the use of Vlach to some degree at least for those inhabitants of Metsovo with whom they have close contact. The case of the Vlachophone Albanians in Metsovo illustrates how the objective need for communication through a common code with the local population creates conditions which favor the use of a language, otherwise being increasingly abandoned." Another good sign is the appearance in recent years of many CDs with Aromanian songs containing leaflets in which the verses are written in Aromanian using both Greek and Latin alphabets. Finally, YouTube now hosts a huge and growing number of homemade videos featuring Aromanian songs, dances, language, and other information.

Explanations. Paradoxically, the involvement of the Romanian state in helping the Aromanians from Greece (until the communists took power in Romania) led to the diminishing or even the disappearance of those Aromanians from Greece who identified themselves as Romanians. The alliance of Romania with Italy

and Germany and the actions of some Aromanian quislings during World War II discredited any pro-Romanian identification among the Aromanian community in Greece after the war. The prevailing theory in Greece today is that the Aromanians are “Vlach-speaking Hellenes.” There is still an obsession in Greece with “Romanian propaganda,” despite the fact that the Romanian state has not interfered in the affairs of Aromanians in Greece for more than half a century. The lack of action by the post-communist Romanian state can be explained by political realism: the desire to not jeopardize their entry into NATO and other European structures on the one hand, and an awareness that there are no pro-Romanian Aromanians in Greece, on the other hand. The actions of the diaspora to protect Aromanian identity are looked upon with suspicion. Sometimes this is justified, since Aromanian militants neglected the reality of the situation in Greece as well as the desires of the Aromanian population there. Sometimes this suspicion is a consequence of a fondness for conspiracy theories, which always offer an outsider to blame for one’s own problems. Aromanian scholars in Greece are very critical of the actions of the diaspora, but they are not as critical in examining the prevailing theory of Aromanian identity, language, and history in Greece.

Conclusions. The “map” of Aromanian self-identification is quite complicated. A pro-Romanian orientation can be found in Romania and Albania. A pro-Greek orientation can be found in Greece and Albania. An autonomous orientation (the Aromanian people are neither Greek nor Romanian but have their own identity) can be found in Romania and Republic of Macedonia. Of course that this is a simplified description, since all three orientations appear in all the analyzed countries in different proportions and sometimes in ways that are difficult to notice. On May 11th 1942, the Romanian Consul to Salonika Emil Oprișanu described the following situation: “Before 1912, a Romanian from the pure Romanian village Crușova (Krushevo, Macedonia) had 4 sons. They attended different schools: Romanian, Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian. After 40 years, a son is settled in Romania and is a fiery Romanian patriot; another one is a trader in Skopje and has sympathies for the Serbs; the third is a trader in Sofia and thinks that he is Bulgarian; the fourth is a Greek monk at Mount Athos. When they meet together they speak the Aromanian dialect, only to praise the merits of their various countries.”^[71] This is a striking statement about the famous adaptability of the Aromanians. As a general rule, Aromanians are loyal to the countries in which they live. The Aromanian elite massively identifies itself with the surrounding majority. The bold initiatives concerning Aromanian rights almost all have come from the diaspora, where the pressures and local threats are not felt anymore.

Opportunism. The moral issue. “The local Aromanian population... shows Romanian feelings only when it thinks that it could take advantage of that.”^[72] These words were written by the Romanian minister at Sofia, G. Caranfil, on September 28th 1942 – but they have been echoed countless times in describing the Aromanians. The debate around Aromanian “opportunism” came back powerfully in Romania in 2005, when the Aromanian Community of Romania requested recognition of the Aromanians as a distinct national minority. Those who made this request were called opportunists by those who opposed it: “Your ancestors came as Romanians to Romania and you deny your Romanian origin by reason of interests.” We should note that this “moral argument” is used selectively. For example, those who oppose recognition of the

Aromanians in Romania fail to ask Romania, “By what right do you interfere in our concerns after you abandoned us 50 years ago? And didn’t Romania get involved with the Vlachs at least partly because of its own interests?” Those same people also forget that many Aromanians became pro-Romanians for reasons of opportunity or personal interests. [73] The debate around “opportunism” (or its euphemism “flexibility”) is fascinating, especially in light of the Aromanians’ consideration of morality as an important value. Gossiaux remarks on the loyalty of the Aromanians towards the people in power, and he notices that “the character which prevails is not that of the hero, of the fighter or of the rebel but that of the nomad, the professional traveler, pacifist and diplomat by necessity.” [74] Schwandner-Sievers concludes her 1999 paper with the following statement: “In contrast to essentialist assumptions, I want to stress that it is the flexibility of identities that makes people strong everywhere.”

The contest. There is something else that can explain why there are so many self-identifications among Aromanians and why there is so much rivalry in the Aromanian world. There is a sort of contest among the Aromanians: “How we will we survive?” The different orientations in the Aromanian world can be seen as different answers to the above question. Let us also note that each “party” is not as homogeneous as it might seem from outside. There are many harsh disputes within the Aromanian world today. We will mention here only three: that of the alphabet in which the Aromanian language should be written, that of the identity of the Aromanians, and that of their origin.

What is there to do? How can people with so many different orientations live together? The answer may not be as difficult as it seems. We quote here the answers of two Aromanians from Greece: “sympathy, understanding but diversity in opinions” [75] and “as much as we can, to meet more often, everyone to keep their options and do not forget that we are brothers.” [76] There are many who think that the “Aromanian Question” will be solved if all of us would only share the same opinion about Aromanian identity – whatever that opinion might be. The coexistence of different beliefs seems a more realistic approach. The freedom to travel has always helped the awareness of a plural model for Aromanians.

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[1] Quotation from *Divers* (information bulletin about ethnic minorities), no. 45(95), November 21, 2002.

[2] See document no. 149 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, p. 446.

[3] There is a mistake, in my opinion, in the book of Drăghicescu and Petre. The name of the Chancellor has to be M. Petrașincu, not M. Petrașiuc as it appears in the book.

[4] See document no. 153 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, p. 465 for the following explanation of Max Popovici and V. Babețeanu (1929): “[...] those from Serbian Macedonia are much more oppressed, without schools and churches, with their lands taken with no compensation but the immigration movement in Yugoslavia is much weaker than here (Greece) because there wasn't such shameless propaganda as here (Greece).”

[5] These Aromanians belonged to the 7th Partisan Battalion. See Guddemi Ph., Kara G., 2000/2001, p. 13.

[6] See Guddemi Ph., Kara G., 2000/2001, p. 15. The members of the association explained (without success) to those who came to suppress the society that Pitu Guli and Jane Sandanski (celebrated as heroes in the anthem of the Republic of Macedonia) were Aromanians. They spoke also about the new Constitution which promised equal rights for minorities living in the new republic (founded on August 2nd 1944).

[7] A further reform allowed people to have a herd with at most 300 animals. See Gossiaux J.F., 2002, p. 142.

[8] See Gossiaux J.F., 2002, p. 151.

[9] See *Zborlu a Nostru*, no. 18 (1988), pp.28-29 for the text of the memorial.

[10] See document no. 126 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, p. 358.

[11] See document no. 153 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, p. 472.

[12] See document no. 256 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, pp. 492-493.

[13] See Kahl T., 2006, p. 62.

[14] See “An Interview with Dr. Hristo N. Colakovski” by Robert Nicholas Talabac, *Newsletters*, vol. VII, 1993, p.6.

[15] See Gossiaux J.F., 2002, p. 173 for this quotation.

[16] See document no. 184 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, p. 377.

[17] See Gossiaux J.F., 2002, p. 166. His Aromanian name was Nikola Pasku.

[18] See document no. 176 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, p. 537. The author of this document from 1937, V. Papazi, says that the two parties united around the church as a consequence of the common threat to be assimilated by the Serbians. In document no. 153 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, p. 457 we found that there were 6,000 Aromanians in Bitola in 1929; 5,400 were pro-Greek (“graecomans”) and 600 were pro-Romanian (“nationalists”).

[19] The information on the church of Bitola until 1947 comes from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004 and 2006.

[20] See Guddemi Ph., Kara G., 2000/2001, p. 17.

[21] In July 2003 we visited the church “St. Constantine and Elena” in Bitola. The priest Sasho Nakov was not there. We heard the liturgy performed by the Romanian priest C. Marcu. He performed first in the Macedonian Slavic language and after that in a mixture of Romanian and Aromanian.

[22] See Kahl T., 2006, p. 64.

[23] See Guddemi Ph., Kara G., 1997, p. 7. The authors quote a MILS news report from September 29th 1995. There is a mistake in the MILS report. The names Rădulescu and Botică were written separately, implying that they were two different persons. In fact, the names should have been written together since they belong to a single person: Florin Rădulescu-Botică.

[24] See Gossiaux J.F., 2002, p. 173.

- [25] See the French version of the memorial in Zborlu a Nostru no. 46/1995, pp.31-32. For the Romanian version see Zborlu a Nostru no. 47/1995, pp.33-35.
- [26] See Zborlu a Nostru no. 47/1995, pp.31-35; the quotation is from page 35.
- [27] According to Santa Djika (Skopje, member PAM). See the paper “Tsi (nu) spusi secretarlu di statu”, Bana Armânească, no. 29/2002, p.22. We do not have any other confirmation of this information.
- [28] Idem.
- [29] The main idea of the message was the desire of the Romanian authorities to be involved again in the “Aromanian Question”. One of the participants, I. Cardula, asked D. V. Ionescu why the Romanian state did not consider helping the Aromanians of Greece. Ionescu did not answer the question, saying instead that the Romanian state could obtain rights for the Aromanians in Albania, Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia, since these countries were under European pressure to respect the rights of minorities. Ionescu added that he knew that many Aromanians in the Balkans did not consider themselves Romanians; he believed that the reason for this was that the Romanian state stopped helping Aromanian some 50-60 years ago. I was witness to this meeting.
- [30] One of those who made this request was the poet Dina Cuvata (official name: Dimo Dimcev).
- [31] In order to get this certificate, the applicant had to deposit into the Association’s account 250 Euro (after the transition to a single currency – previously the fee had been 500 Deutschmarks).
- [32] See Kahl T., 2002, p. 156.
- [33] See the outstanding CD “The Aromanians of Andon Poçi/Albania. Songs and stories,” edited by the Romanian Peasant Museum (Speranța Rădulescu and Thede Kahl).
- [34] See Kahl T., 2006, p. 60. The author is cautious, adding that this is the figure of the Aromanians “if we suppose that the number for the orthodox minority in Albania is correct.”
- [35] See Trifon N., 2005, p. 300.
- [36] See document no. 159 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, p. 491.
- [37] See document no. 36 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, p. 176.
- [38] See document no. 140 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, pp. 313-314.
- [39] The Greeks of Albania protested to the League of Nations and the International Court in the Hague against the nationalization of Greek schools. They won and recovered control of their schools in 1935. See document no. 156 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, p. 335.
- [40] See document no. 157 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, pp. 488-490. The eight churches were in Corcea, Șipsca, Grabova, Nicea, Lunca, Pleasa, Moscopole and Elbasan.
- [41] See document no. 201 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, pp. 588.
- [42] See Tanașoca N. Ș., 2002, for the reports of Țimiraș. The present quotation is from page 219.
- [43] There is an “answer” to this book, one written by Kopi Kyçyku “The Aromanians from Albania” (in Albanian), Bucharest, 1999 (two editions). Kyçyku K., 2004, is a short revised edition.
- [44] For the text of the resolution see Frăția no. 11-12, 2009.
- [45] Aromanian Community of Romania, Mandra from Albania, The Association and The Union of Vlachs of Albania.
- [46] This demand is accompanied by a request to help the Aromanians from Romania in order to prevent further frustrations.
- [47] Many of the Conference speeches can be found in the review Fărshărotu no. 31, 2010.
- [48] There is no mention of whom this opinion belongs to.
- [49] In the review Formula no. 842 (2008) (paper “Pr. Dumitrache Veriga, parohul bisericii ortodoxe “Sotir” din Korcea, Albania” written by Claudiu Târziu), the priest Dumitrache Veriga says that the retired Aromanians who declare themselves Greeks receive a pension of 320 Euro – an ordinary pension in Albania is 150 Euro. (In November 2010 a brief statement on the “Armanamea” Yahoo forum indicated that the pensions from Greece had been cut off.) These statements must be viewed with caution. In the same Formula article, Dumitrache Veriga states that there are 400,000 Aromanians in Albania and 4,000,000 in the Balkans.
- [50] Schwandner-Sievers mentions that this opinion should be added to the historical analysis of the “Aromanian Question” made by Peyfuss M.D., 1994.
- [51] See Kahl T., 2003, p. 214.
- [52] See document no. 293 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, p. 568.
- [53] See document no. 178 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, p. 366. We mention here the

case of the three Aromanians from Papadia: Sterie Papatanas (teacher), Hristu Cotabiți (priest) and Ahile Cotabiți. On February 5th 1937 there were convicted and fined 702.30 drachmas for using the Aromanian language in public. Despite the Romanian official's efforts, they didn't escape the fine. See document no. 192 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, p. 570.

[54] See document no. 195 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, p. 575.

[55] See document no. 261 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, pp. 510-511.

[56] See document no. 264 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, pp. 526-527.

[57] See document no. 293 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006.

[58] See document no. 214 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, pp. 612-614 where we have a list of 15 Aromanian settlements burned down in October-December 1943. This record was made on February 29th 1944. Villages were burned down after this date, too; for example, Vlaho-Clisura was burned down by the Germans on April 5th 1944.

[59] See Kahl T., 2006, p. 57.

[60] See Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, p. 33.

[61] See document no. 4 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, p. 125.

[62] See document no. 144 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, p. 320.

[63] Among which were the Superior School for Trade from Salonika (opened in 1899) and the high school from Grebena.

[64] See document no. 164 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2004, p. 501.

[65] See documents no. 315, 322, 323, 325, 327, 328, 329 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006 for more details.

[66] The protest was published in the Universul journal. The text can be found in document no. 337 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, pp. 647-649.

[67] There is a mistake in this protest letter: it appears that the Romanian schools from Greece were closed in February 1945 by Prime Minister Plastiras. In fact, the Romanian schools from Greece were closed one year later, on February 21st 1946.

[68] The interview can be found in the review Bana Armânească no. 30 (2002), p.6.

[69] When asked if the Aromanians from Romania would be recognized as a minority, Lazarou answered: "This will never happen". The reporter continued, asking "What if they are recognized?" Lazarou: "If this happens please give me a call and I will tell you 'well done.' But this will never happen." Sometimes, the same person can state different opinions on the same subject. Let us look to two different opinions of GM (Aromanian from Greece) about the Aromanians from Romania: "Your ancestors were Aromanians but you, today, you are not", "Your ancestors made a mistake when they abandoned Greek citizenship, a bad consequence of the Romanian propaganda. Now you are far from your homeland and I don't know what are you doing. What a pity. I look to you with love and maybe, one day, you will understand the truth about the Aromanian world. Until that, be good Romanians since you are their guests." We will quote here the request of another Aromanian from Greece, MH, towards the Aromanians from Romania: "Be Aromanians in Romania to help us be Aromanians in Greece."

[70] Sometimes Koukoudis makes statements that are hard to sustain. For example, Koukoudis thinks that "the irredentist revival culminated in the celebrated Proposal 1333 of the Council of Europe" (in the same talk he gave in the USA, Koukoudis designated as "irredentist" the Aromanian organizations from the diaspora who fought for specific rights for the Aromanians).

[71] See document no. 257 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, p. 504.

[72] See document no. 267 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, p. 532.

[73] See document no. 124 from Drăghicescu A., Petre M., 2006, p. 292.

[74] See Gossiaux J.F., 2002, p. 167.

[75] The title of the talk delivered by Aleko Kakrimani, the Ianina prefect, to the Conference held in Corcea, December 12th 2009. Kakrimani was previously mayor of the Aromanian village Metsovo.

[76] A. Lazarou in an interview taken by Mariana Caceandoni-Budeș: Bana Armânească no. 30 (2002), p.6.