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ON THE FORMER AND PRESENT STATUS OF THE AROMANIAN LANGUAGE IN THE BALKAN PENINSULA AND IN EUROPE

Original scientific paper
UDC 811.135.1'282.4(497)

This paper gives a brief historical overview of linguistic surveys (Romance and Romanian linguistics) of the status of Aromanian within Romance language linguistics and Balkan linguistic area. Until quite recently, relevant linguists considered this language to be merely a dialect of Daco-Romanian, while today it is generally seen as an autonomous Balkan Romance language. The fact that this language, apart from having a considerably large number of native speakers, especially in their homelands, is little known to general public in the Balkans and in Europe.

Key words: *Aromanian, pan-Romanianism, Romance languages in the Balkans, endangered languages, Romanian propaganda*

Current linguistic trends in Europe are quite liberal when compared to those from the past. From a historical point of view and considering the overall development of human society, it seems to have been necessary for Europe to openly face numerous and daunting challenges in many fields, and particularly in those concerning ethnic, linguistic and cultural features of a nation, which caused the aforementioned change. The turbulent 1930s and the Second World War gave rise to challenges which put to test Europe's commitment to democracy, principles of freedom, equality and fraternity and to respect all national, human and civil rights. Lessons which came from one of the most turbulent epochs in modern history of this continent radically changed the attitude of European nations toward themselves and other nations. This major change contributed to a total transformation of the perception of the place, role and importance of every European nation, regardless of how big or small it is, in the process of creating a new chapter in history. The Cold War, which at one moment threatened to destroy all achievements of anti-fascism, still had some positive impact on Western Europe – apart from awareness of the necessity for closer partnership, it also became clear that it was necessary to overcome all disputes, to secure reconciliation of nations that had been on different sides for centuries, and to promote linguistic tolerance.

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In terms of democracy of a society and its tolerance, linguistic tolerance meant that deep-rooted attitudes of a particular community toward other languages spoken in the same or some other community had to be changed. In practice, it meant that it was necessary to treat each linguistic variety equally, both nationally and internationally. Having thus become aware of its imminent reality, the united Europe, being a very complex social, political, national and religious conglomeration, made significant decisions and guidelines concerning both linguistic strategies, future language planning languages actively spoken in Europe. Apart from preserving, promoting and learning languages, they are aimed to maintain all those languages whose number of speakers is very small or negligible and prevent their extinction. According to the already established sociolinguistic classification of all languages into two groups according to the number of native speakers, i.e. major and minor languages, which was first introduced by American linguist Ferguson (Ferguson, [1966] 1996:48-51), most languages spoken in modern Europe are the small ones. Considering all reports and descriptions of particular situations in the field published in *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*¹, the group of small languages consists of three subgroups which comprise languages that can be described as very small². The situation is unique among severely endangered languages (e.g. Istro-Romanian, Kashubian, Irish /Gaelic/, Chuvash etc.), whose number of native speakers is considerably small³. On the other hand, there are languages in a somewhat better position, both including those with a relatively considerable number of native speakers, such as Aromanian, Welsh, Scottish, and those that are official languages, such as Romansh, Luxembourgish etc⁴.

¹ See: www.sil.org/ethnologue.

² The first group comprises languages spoken by up to five million people: Albanian, Allemanic German, Catalanian, Croatian, Danish, Finnish, galician, Norwegian (Nynorsk 17%), Sicilian, Slovak, Czech etc. The second group comprises languages spoken by up to three million people: Lithuanian, Latvian, Macedonian, Slovene, Bosnian, etc..

The third group comprises languages spoken by up to one million people: Basque, Breton, Corsican, Estonian, Friulan, Gaelic, Icelandic, Kashubian, Ligurian, Lombard, Luxembourgish, Occitan (Provençal), Upper Sorbian, Lower Sorbian, Montenegrin, Welsh, etc.

³ According to the last Croatian census in 2001, there are only 137 citizens who stated Istro-Romanian to be their mother tongue, but there are also different data: according to UNESCO's *Red Book of Endangered Languages*, the number of speakers of this language is between 550 and 1500.

⁴ However, according to another study on the linguistic map of Europe (Krauss, 1992:4-10), stating the number of native or non-native speakers is not always a relevant factor which indicates whether a language will be maintained and whether to regard it as majority/minority language. According to the criteria proposed by Krauss, there are three major fact which should be taken into consideration:

- general degree of literacy of the speakers of the language in question (within ethnic borders, nationally and internationally),
- direct civilizational, cultural and political power of the people who speak a particulat language,
- functional incidence of a particular language among different nations.

Europe's concern for maintenance of all languages, particularly those that are small and endangered, is justified by the fact that the existing linguistic diversity has developed particular and unique cultural, folklore, ethnic and material aspects which are integral parts of two images:

- a) an all-European civilizational image, which is manifest in various achievements,
- b) the image of Europe as an open-minded, democratic, multicultural, multiethnic and, of course, multilingual environment.

Regarding Aromanian today, its classification among small languages is justified by several relevant sociolinguistic factors, including the number of native speakers⁵:

- a) the overall rate of literacy in Aromanian is relatively low when compared to other languages spoken in the Balkan Peninsula⁶ and to other Romance languages⁷,
- b) in modern Balkan societies Aromanian has no prestige, and is unknown to most people, excluding small linguistic circles,
- c) when compared to other neighboring and Romance languages, its literary expression is in incipient stages, since its literary tradition is not very fruitful, well-developed or abundant; on the other hand, it makes huge steps forward.

Both in the Balkans and in Europe, the language issue has always been painful and complicated for every nation, and particularly for ethnic minorities who protected themselves from being absorbed into majority population by making efforts to maintain their languages. For, if nothing else, it is the mother tongue that remained the main indicator of diversity, distinctiveness and uniqueness, since "people do not speak 'language' as an abstraction, but particular languages" (Cook, 2003:21). Time has shown that this kind of struggle for preserving the core of identity was the most appropriate one, that it responded to all kinds of challenges, pressure and social and political changes.

Historically speaking, at the turn of the 20th century Europe knew virtually nothing about the Aromanian language, apart from few Romance scholars; however, the situation was quite different in the Balkans. The omnipresence of Aromanians in

⁵ There are no precise estimates of the number of native speakers of Aromanian. They range between 300,000 and 800.000 speakers in the Balkans, up to 2-5 million total.

⁶ Languages and dialects with the lowest literacy rate among their native speakers are in worst position. These languages include Romani, the discourses of Pomaks (in Bulgaria), Goranis etc.

⁷ The author also refers to Romance languages which became official quite recently, e.g. Romansh.

the developing Balkan societies caused their language to be heard, although it was generally oppressed, and in some countries, like Greece, it was completely banned (Кирил, 1969:389; Kahl, 2004:209)⁸. The Balkans and Europe of that time had another trait in common – the fact that their societies were national, to some extent clearly nationalist, which means that there was no room for other peoples and minorities. At the turn of the century, there were two major battlefields in the sensitive Balkans:

a) one refers to the efforts of every Balkan nation to finally liberate their historical territories and Christians living there from the Ottomans;

b) the other refers to the issue of international recognition of independence and territorial sovereignty of all newly formed Balkan states. Due to practical and pragmatic reasons and following the tradition of developed European countries, Balkan states therefore presented themselves as ethnically and linguistically compact and homogenous.

That is why every issue which did not concern the majority people was left aside, was not brought up, and it was not apt to discuss such issues. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that European and Balkan societies of the time were very egocentric, intolerant, uncompromising and extremely narrow-minded. In spite of the fact that these societies were perfectly aware that their official languages were not unified or monolithic due to being dispersed and long-lasting contacts with neighboring nations, they were not ready to accept linguistic diversity in their territories. Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Russian and Ottoman Empires were not only the largest states in Europe, but also Tower of Babel, since there was a huge linguistic diversity within their borders. According to the 1910 census, fifteen languages were spoken in Austria-Hungary (Volkszählung, 1911), more than sixty in the Ottoman Empire⁹, and over a hundred in Russia (Первая всеобщая перепись, 1905). However, these empires disappeared from the world map, not only due to the

⁸ Aromanian had been banned in Greece for fifty years. The main reason for this ban was that the Aromanians who had lived on the Pindus supported the Tripartite Pact, hoping it will give them freedom and an independent state. Italy created two puppet states: the Principality of the Pindus and the Grand Voivodeship of Macedonia, ruled by Prince Alchiviad di Samarina. One of the first decisions made by the government was to ban Greek and its alphabet in the state which was merely an act of retaliation against the Greeks. Soon after the liberation Greece responded – not only did Greek authorities ban Aromanian in both public and private spheres, but also shut down all Aromanian schools and churches. Aromanian was thus limited to the privacy of home.

⁹ This assumption is made by ethnologists and linguists who take into account the current language map, since the Ottoman Empire never had a proper census like Austria-Hungary.

well-known social and political reasons, but also due to linguistic reasons. Along with denying rights to any kind of national, ethnic or cultural identity, their authorities also pursued policies of absolute domination of the official languages and imposed them by using force¹⁰. Although there were options for education in one's mother tongue (both in junior and senior grades), it was just an instance of pretended democracy and of social tolerance. This hard-earned privilege could easily be revoked or limited at any moment, and was subject to strict control and censorship. Furthermore, this modest privilege was not granted to all subjects¹¹, which created division, intolerance and open discrimination of one people, seemingly favoring another.

Concerning Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, Aromanian was in a much more difficult position when compared to Serbian, or any other Slavic or non-Slavic language, because the number of its native speakers was extremely low, in an almost immeasurable percentage. Looking from this perspective, we can say that the situation has not changed for the better even today. However, this does not diminish the fact that Aromanians were the first people in the Balkans who got their *Grammar*¹², thanks to Mihail Boiagi (d. 1827), one year before Vuk Karadžić published his *Pismenica*. Cultural and historical importance of its publication is reflected in the author's attempt to bring Aromanian, mother tongue of an economically independent, well-off and leading civilian elite, which belonged neither to the ruling German or Hungarian strata, closer to non-native communities and young Aromanian generations, who had grown up in societies which did not belong to their original environment and who started to lose touch with their mother tongue.

The first half of the 19th century saw sudden social and political changes in the Ottoman Empire, such as Serbian uprisings and Greek Revolution in 1821, setting off new waves of migration of Aromanians in the Balkans and Europe, which later caused major problems. Due to favorable development of social, economic and

¹⁰ In June 1907 the Hungarian parliament adopted an act known as the *Lex Apponyi*, named after the Minister of Culture who proposed it, Count Albert Apponyi (1846-1933). This law required that all public and private schools in Hungary should provide instruction in Hungarian so as to enable all students to speak it fluently after completing four grades. Since certain schools in which the instruction was provided in Slovak, Rusyn, Romanian and Czech failed to meet this requirement in a satisfactory way, they were shut down in 1910.

¹¹ For example, Greeks and Germans who lived in the Russian Empire had their own schools and were entitled to further education; however, this was not the case with Jews, Romanians, Uzbeks, Tatars, Mongols etc. Apart from Germans, Hungarians and Italians, Austria-Hungary provided mother-tongue instruction for the Czechs, Croats, Serbs, Slovenes and Poles, but not for Slovaks, Romanians, Rusyns, Ukrainians etc.

¹² Original title: *Aromunisch oder Mazedowalachisch Sprachlehre, Γραμματική Ρωμανική ήτοι Μακεδονοβλαχική*, Wien, 1813. This book was republished by Pericle Papahagi in 1915 in Bucharest under the title *Gramatica română sau macedo-română*.

political condition, young Romanian bourgeoisie started to thrive in the 1830s. Their main national, cultural and political principle was pan-Romanianism (Romanian: *pan-românismul*)¹³. At socio-political level pan-Romanianism referred to unification of all Romanians, who would live in a single state, regardless of where they lived; at national and cultural levels it referred to bringing all Romance-speaking peoples in the Balkans (Istro-Romanians, Megleno-Romanians and Aromanians) to Daco-Romanian linguistic identity. We must not forget that the main feature of a nation in the Balkans in the 19th century and in the first decades of the 20th were common religion and common language¹⁴. National political elites of the Balkan states thought that making independent states should be closely identified with the language, which meant that there could be no independent state unless the state-building nation had a unique language, different from languages of other nations. These ideas were practically an extension of the ideas of the French Revolution and German Romanticism, whose supporters thought that simple linguistic unification was the best way to build and preserve a nation (Spolsky, 2005: 2155) and achieve its renaissance (Ivić, 2001:286). Pan-Romanianism shattered all physical and natural boundaries and annulled all ethnicities and cultural differences between Romance peoples in the Balkans. In that crucial moment of history Aromanians at first accepted assistance from the Romanians to promote education and pan-Romanianism as their orientation (Peyfuss, 1974:78-82; Tega, 1983:148-160), thus looking into the future: they could clearly see the unifications of Italy and Germany; pan-Slavicism had been gaining momentum and had brought together all Slavic nations. according to Kahl (2008:133),

...after the 1860s the Romanian state tried to develop and promote a school system with a strong Romanian character in the Aromanian settlements of the Southern Balkans. Around 1900, there were a good 100 Romanian schools in operation in Macedonia and Epirus. However, as Romania did not aim to establish Aromanian as a literary language, instead intending to turn their linguistic relatives into Romanians, the movement did not find many adherents among the Aromanians. The result was a

¹³ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a short revival of pan-Romanianism; proponents of this idea now advocated for the reunification of Romania and Moldova. Both countries constituted the Kingdom of Romania before the Second World War.

¹⁴ We should point out that the same principle is used even today. Formation of new states after the collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (excluding Slovenia and Macedonia) was, among other things, motivated by the idea of the state-building nation which speaks different language from its neighbors. Apart from Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian languages, after the referendum on Montenegrin independence, another language appeared, i.e. Montenegrin.

conflict of principles which actually even furthered the Hellenisation of many Aromanians.

However, what Aromanians certainly noticed was the fact that despite the strong pan-Slavicism, there was no strong national integration of the Slavs, because each Slavic nation had been founded on four pillars – of language, culture, religion and policies. That is why the unification of Slavs around these key principles was much more natural than turning toward a distant Slavic center in St. Petersburg. In the second half of the 19th century Aromanians who lived in numerous enclaves outside the Ottoman Empire, and particularly those in Austria and Hungary, as well as in Wallachia, became even more aware of their own linguistic status among Romance-speaking population in the Balkans, unlike the Aromanians who lived in their homeland and were subject to very strong Romanian propaganda about linguistic fraternity. That is why pan-Romanianism was rejected as an unsuitable and unacceptable idea. Looking from a wider perspective, it was also counterproductive – a tendency to have a common language as a link between two peoples does not necessarily have to be positive or welcome, but can instead make the situation even worse, which is exactly what happened¹⁵. Another reason for rejecting pan-Romanianism was the fact that it could not quell or overwhelm the national awakening of Aromanians. Being conceived in the second half of the 18th century at first Christian university in the Ottoman Empire, the New Academy (Νέα Ακαδημία) in Moscopolis, their identity was gradually becoming mature and started to adopt its distinctive features. As Bardu pointed out, “in the age of the Enlightenment, Aromanian scholars became aware of the fact that the Aromanians were a distinct people in the Balkans, and that they had their own rights to culture in their own language, like the Albanians and the Bulgarians (Macedonian Slavs), with whom they were in permanent contact, and whose cultural interests they defended in their works” (Bardu, 2007:94).

Since Romanians considered language to be the primary criterion of ethnic affiliation, Aromanians were, on the other hand, of the opinion that they could not identify themselves with Romanians due to sharp linguistic and ethnic differences. Until quite recently, Romanian authorities considered Aromanian to be merely a

¹⁵ There were similar conflicts between Belgrade and Zagreb linguists; in 2007 there was the same kind of conflict between linguists in Podgorica and Belgrade.

southern dialect of Daco-Romanian¹⁶. Whether Aromanian is really a dialect of Daco-Romanian or a distinct Romance language is a question that has not been solved in a satisfactory way. Aromanian is nowadays considered to be a distinct Romance language due to its autonomous development and structural differences (Kahl 2008: 134). Modern linguistics does not yet have a universal criterion for making clear boundaries between a language and a dialect. There are many non-linguistic factors which affect how a variety will be defined, regardless of whether it is a language or a dialect. Apart from political, social, cultural, civilizational and geographic factors, national, historical and religious ones have a special role. The answer to the question whether Aromanian should today be considered as a language or a southern dialect of Daco-Romanian could be sought in Bloomfield's sociolinguistic considerations (Bloomfield 1933:51) about dialect continuum and area, that is, about the position of dialect isoglosses. In terms of Bloomfield's ideas, we can conclude that once common linguistic features decrease in number as isoglosses spread. In other words, the closer two dialects are, the more mutually intelligible they are. As they grew geographically farther, the degree of mutual intelligibility started to decrease, which eventually lead to emergence of new languages or to major dialectal differences which prevented speakers of the same language from understanding each other. In case of Aromanian, another problem was the fact that it had been virtually isolated from Daco-Romanian and its dialects for more than a millennium. It means that there is no dialectal continuum, but instead a rupture in Romance isoglosses due to Slavic and Bulgar settling. In the 20th century attitudes of European experts in Romance languages changed to a great extent. Although Gustav Weigand (1860-1930), a German expert in Romance languages and Aromanian, proved that Aromanian is a distinct Romance language by using actual linguistic material, Romance scholars were originally unwilling to accept this fact, mostly because the question of autonomous languages in the western Romance area, like Romansh, Catalanian, Aragonese, Occitan etc. had not been solved in a satisfactory way before the second half of the 20th century. According to all linguists of the time, those were dialects of official languages, which fits into the image of Aromanian, Istro-Romanian, Megleno-Romanian as different dialects of Daco-Romanian.

From the point of view of modern linguistics, the Aromanians were far more realistic when it comes to defining the relation between Romanian and Aromanian: native speakers of both languages cannot easily speak to each other even about

¹⁶ However, most Romanian linguists and experts in Romance languages are still of the same opinion even today.

basic things, because they either have difficulties in understanding each other, or more frequently, they do not understand each other at all. Linguistic research in this field during the 1980s and 1990s and subsequent studies of the materials collected by Gustav Weigand showed that Aromanians were right and that the hypothesis that there is one and unique (Daco-) Romanian language is not and cannot be linguistically or scientifically provable. In his opinion, it is better to assume that both Romanian and Aromanian have a common source in the Balkans (Weigand, 1908:8-10). Regardless of their common origin and very similar Balkan-Romance morphological structures, these are two separate branches of a single language tree (*ibidem*,16-17). Eminent Romanian linguists like Sextil Pușcariu (Pușcariu, 1940:182-184), Theodor Capidan, Alexandru Rosetti (Rosetti, 1966:72-89), Ovid Desunsianu (Densusianu, 1901:288-348) and others stated the opinion that Aromanians (and those who support the opinion that these are two languages) misinterpret Weigand's ideas. Pointing to their common origin, which was attested in morphosyntax and phonology, simply strengthens the belief that Aromanian is a southern dialect of Daco-Romanian. In his comprehensive study entitled *Aromânii, dialectul aromân* ('The Aromanians and their Dialect') Capidan points out that Albanian and Daco-Romanian share more coinciding lexical elements than one can see when Albanian and Aromanian are compared. The fact that there are much more similarities in the Latin lexical basis of Albanian and Romanian when compared to the basis of Aromanian adds further strength to this argument: both Albanian and Romanian have preserved Latin words which do not appear in Aromanian. This convinced him that Aromanians had come from the north and later settled in southern regions of the Balkans (Capidan, 1932:27-30). Analogies between Romanian and Aromanian made in Romance and Romanian linguistic literature comparing them with German spoken in Germany, Austria or Switzerland were not valid (Pușcariu, 1910:45-61; Iorga, 1919: 56-62; Randi, 1930:71-82) simply because lexical structures and compositions of Romanian and Aromanian are quite different when compared to the relatively stable and unique lexical structure of the entire area where German is spoken. However, even after realizing the situation in Aromanian linguistic field, the Romanians (and we have to mention that they had full insight into it, since they had the commitment to open schools in Aromanian communities in Greece and to give them financial support) are still determined that there are absolutely not two different languages, but that there is a common language of two ethnically different groups of the same people which also share the

same kind of Roman script¹⁷. Considering all that was stated above, we can say that Romanians adhere to Greek attitude, who consider every spoken or written variety of Greek spoken by Greeks who do not live in their homeland and use it in their everyday lives and work to be the Greek language.

That is why Aromanians think that the early decades of 20th century were a turning point in their efforts for recognition of their linguistic identity. The still present concept of Pan-Romanianism was used to promote the official Romanian attitude that what both Romanians and Aromanians have in common is not Romance, but Romanian origin. Romanian nationalist circles thus denied the existence of Aromanians, of their culture, ethnic identity and language. These attitudes, supported only by the idea of creating a Greater Romania, contradicted those that Weigand expressed in *Aromunische Grammatik* (1907), in some earlier essays on the language of the Vlach living on the Pindus and Mt. Olympus and in *Ethnographie Makedoniens* (1923). In all these texts Weigand unambiguously stated and highlighted the differences between Aromanians and Romanians, starting with their customs, beliefs, way of life, mentality, ending with the language and its vocabulary. While Romanian word stock of the time was undergoing the process of re-Romanization¹⁸, which meant replacing Slavic words with Romance ones, the original Aromanian lexical stratum was enriched primarily by adding Greek elements, followed by Slavic and Albanian ones. Further contacts with Romanian, French and Italian brought new words into Aromanian, particularly learned words and technical terms. Apart from lexical discrepancies, which concern both whole words and grammatical/derivational morphemes, it is also obvious that these languages sometimes use different lexemes. Examples given in further text illustrate how certain lexemes do not coincide:

Aromanian	Romanian	Aromanian	Romanian
yuvusire	a citi (to read)	haristo	mulțumesc (to thank)
ngucinedz	a înțepeni (to freeze)	păradz	banii (money, pl.)
zbor	cuvint (word)	zurlu	nebul (naughty)
neauă	zăpadă (snow)	taze	proaspăt (fresh)
agăpisescu	a iubi (to love)		

¹⁷ To be more precise, Aromanians used an adapted version of the Romanian alphabet until 1997, and then adopted a version of the Latin alphabet modified to represent certain sounds of Aromanian. Modern orthography is mostly based on the principles proposed by Boiagi in 1813.

¹⁸ Re-romanization of Romanian is still underway.

The following examples illustrate phonological differences which are most obvious in words of common Romance stock, such as:

Aromanian	Romanian	Aromanian	Romanian
scriat	scris (written)	lunjină	lumină (light)
talj	a tăia (to cut)	deadun	deodată (suddenly)
dzeadzit	deget (digit, finger)		

However, the crucial factor was the fact that contacts between speakers of Romanian and Aromanian in the 19th and 20th centuries caused borrowing from Romanian, particularly in the domains of abstract and learned words, which Aromanian had not had. Young Aromanians were educated in Romania, which played a crucial role in that process, but it only slightly reduced linguistic distance between the two languages. Thus Aromanian experienced re-Romanization and is still undergoing this process, because it adopts new words from all other Romance languages.

Along with the development of scientific thought and expansion of general linguistics and sociolinguistics, Romance scholars changed their views on the entire picture of Romance languages in Europe. They reassessed all previous views on autonomous dialects, and it eventually led to an increase in the number of Romance languages. Aromanian is one of them, and linguistic literature defines it as an autonomous Balkan and Romance language of the Romanian branch. Inclusion of Aromanian in the Romanian branch means that this language, along with Daco-Romanian, Megleno-Romanian and Istro-Romanian, shares phonetic, morphological and syntactic features, which are unique for the Southeast European Romance linguistic area. Aromanian is now an official language only in the Republic of Macedonia, but solely in areas populated predominantly by the speakers of this language (Kruševo, Bitola, Štip, Ohrid, Kočani).

It would be wrong to think that intellectual disputes about the present status of Aromanian in the Balkans have ceased. Greek authorities, which strongly deny the existence of Aromanians as a distinct ethnic group, but instead consider them to be Hellenized Vlachs, support the opinion that Aromanian is a Daco-Romanian dialect. Solely on these premises, Greek authorities had allowed the Romanians to educate Vlachs until mid 20th century. To make things worse, a great number of Aromanians

in Greece identify themselves as Greeks¹⁹. In numerous Greek readings on ethnology and history one can find that Aromanians are in fact ancient Greeks, who were completely Romanized when Rome invaded Greece in 146 BC and consequently "forgot" their mother tongue (Κεραμόπουλος, 1930:42-57; Lazarou, 1986:23-31; Κολτσιδας, 1993:9-29; Σιώκης, 2002^α:67, Σιώκης, 2002^β:112). Therefore, the Greeks were given the "patriotic task" of bringing back their "lost brothers in language" to their original linguistic roots. This idea is not a new one, because it had existed for centuries, and we must state that even Aromanians were not immune to it. According to what the author of the famous *Λεξικόν τετράγλωσσον*, (Quadrilingual Lexicon) Bishop Daniel Moscopolites had written in its 1794 *Preface*, we can conclude that the purpose of this book was (so to say) "to linguistically convert" all speakers of Vlach (i.e. Aromanian), Bulgarian and Albanian, and to make them accept Greek (*ρωμαϊκή*), the language of the Church and education (Papahagi, 1909:112-113). One of the pioneers of Greek education, Neophytos Doukas (Νεόφυτος Δούκας, 1760-1845), who was of Aromanian origin, did not like Aromanian. In his works he described it as a "filthy" and "stinking language" (Peyfuss, 1994:24).

According to the Internet version of the biggest world encyclopedia of languages, the *Ethnologue*,²⁰ almost 700,000 Aromanians in Greece are still linguistically deprived and are subject to rapid assimilation. The report states that all Aromanians older than fifty are bilingual, whereas, young generations (18-20 years of age) are monolingual, which means that the only language they speak is Greek. Most Aromanians between 25 and 50 have a passive knowledge of their mother tongue and know solely the basics of grammar and vocabulary. According to Greek statistic estimates made by VPRC in 2001, a totally different picture could be seen: out of 50,000 Aromanians only 20,000 persons passively speak or understand Aromanian²¹. All these facts clearly point to the fact that Aromanian is facing extinction in Greece, which is alarming. The situation is similar in Albania and Bulgaria, but not in Romania, where there is a strong Aromanian community which succeeded in claiming their rights to maintain their culture, ethnic and linguistic identity. The situation in the Republic of Serbia is also alarming: according to the 2002 census, none of 586 Aromanians stated that Aromanian is his/her mother

¹⁹ Since they firmly believe that they are of Greek origin, these Romanians are aptly termed as "Greco-Romans". Instead of the official Latin, they still use Greek alphabet.

²⁰ See: http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=rup.

²¹ See: <http://www.iospress.gr/ios2001/V-PRC-1.pdf>.

tongue²². However, "although Aromanian is very seldom heard in public, it still lives in Aromanian families and among Aromanians in general. The insufficient occurrence of Aromanian names in official documents... or the fact that they change their names can make an impression that their ethnic identity has changed or become inconsistent, which is not the case." (Plasković 2004: 153)

Attitudes of Romance scholars toward Aromanian changed when Europe experienced major changes which affected its economic and political unity. However, there has not been and will never be cultural or linguistic unification, because all EU members have adopted policies on recognizing cultural, national, ethnic, minority, linguistic and any other kind of diversity. Since the 1950s the language map of Europe has dramatically changed due to the influx of workers from East Europe, the Balkans, from former colonies and other countries. Most of these people have become EU citizens, and Europe can not neglect the fact that their mother tongues are different from official languages of the member states. Lessons learned in the Second World War have shown that any kind of exclusion is harmful, including linguistic ones, because exclusion can result in extinction of languages which have been spoken in Europe for centuries. It is therefore not surprising that the Council of Europe pays particular attention to the question of minority languages, both in EU members and other countries. The main principle and foundation of the overall ethnic, civilizational and cultural image of Europe as a conglomeration of varieties is a tendency to preserve all forms of languages. That is why Aromanian got special attention and in EU documents it is characterized **both** as an autonomous Romance language and a jeopardized minority language²³.

It is a fact that Aromanians were subject to inevitable assimilation in all Balkan and European countries, but it is also true that regardless of all positive European attitudes toward their language, the voice of Aromanians is not sufficiently heard: there are few of those who wish to learn it as their mother tongue or as a second language. In terms of learning Aromanian and promoting it in Europe, one of the most active entities is *Unia tră limba și cultura armănească*, an Aromanian cultural and language association from Freiburg, Germany. Unfortunately, apart from Macedonia, there is no other country in Europe where Aromanian is used as an

²² See: <http://webzrs.stat.gov.rs/axd/popis.htm> (Knjiga 1: Nacionalna ili etnička pripadnost – podaci po naseljima; Knjiga 3: Veropisповest, maternji jezik i nacionalna ili etnička pripadnost prema starosti i polu – podaci po opštinama)

²³ For further details see: *PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE 1997, ORDINARY SESSION RECOMMENDATION 1333 (1997) on the Aromanian culture and language*. Assembly debate on 24 June 1997 (18th Sitting) (see Doc. 7728, report of the Committee on Culture and Education, rapporteur: Mr de Puig). Text adopted by the Assembly on 24 June 1997 (18th Sitting).

official language. In his book *Cincari, narod koji nestaje*, Nikola Trifon mentions what Catalanian MP Luis Maria de Puig Winnifrith's said, as quoted by Winnifrith: "While there were more than 500,000 speakers Aromanian in the early 20th century, their number decreased by half, and they are scattered in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and FYR Macedonia." (Trifon 2010: 399)

In case of Serbia, we are of the opinion that there is still hope for Aromanian, because one of potential development goals is organizing optional courses in this language at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, in collaboration with Serbian-Aromanian Association *Lunjina*. This task is very serious and ambitious. To make this idea come true, apart from good will, Serbian educational authorities should show their understanding and give an official approval; this would prevent the extinction of a language whose speakers gave a great contribution to the overall development and progress of Serbia at the turn of the 20th century. It would pay tribute to all worthy Aromanians, who are nowadays mostly unjustifiably forgotten, and who created civil society in Serbia and in the Balkans due to their work, diligence and devotion, as Dušan Popović put it (Popović 1988: 303-304) .

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Apstrakt

O PREDAJNEM I SADAŠNJEM STATUSU AROMUNSKOG JEZIKA NA BALKANSKOM POLUOSTRVU I U EVROPI

U radu autor daje kratak istorijski osvrt na razmatranja lingvista (romanista i rumunista) o položaju aromunskog jezika u okviru romanske lingvistike kao i balkanskog lingvističkog areala. Do relativno nedavnog perioda o ovom jeziku se u relevantnoj lingvističkoj literaturi razmatralo samo kao o dijalektu dakorumunskog, dok danas prevladuje viđenje da je to zaseban i balkanski i romanski jezik. Veliki problem predstavlja činjenica što je ovaj jezik, i pored relativno znatnog broja njegovih nativnih govornika, poglavito u matici, uglavnom nepoznat široj i balkanskoj i evropskoj javnosti.

Ključne reči: aromunski, panrumunizam, balkanoromanski jezici, ugroženi jezici, rumunska propaganda