THE ROLE OF ALBANIAN MINORITIES TO THE ROMANIAN ECONOMIC MODERNIZATION

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Abstract: Albanians in Romania are an important minority group, apart from the fact that they used our country as a platform to launch the main events that have marked the history of Albania in the last century, and contributed to the history of art, culture and sports in Romania, the country which has adopted them as its own citizens and that they served as their homeland. From bibliographic searches undertaken by us it has resulted that there is no independent research about the topic addressed in the present study.

Keywords: albanian minorities, economic modernization, economic life

JEL classification: Z13, J15

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ALBANIAN PRESENCE IN ROMANIA TODAY

"Ties between us and the Albanians are centuries-old. Both our people and the Albanian one, the former-offspring of the geto-Dacians, the northern branch of the THRACIANS, the later-legitimate offspring of the ancient-Illyrians have seen Christianity of the first centuries,brought to us by St. Andrei, and to them through St. Paul who has traveled several times to Apolonia (Deeds, chapter 17). After the conquest of Dacia, the Emperor Trajan brought workers from the Pirusti Illyrians tribe for gold mining in the Apuseni Mountains "¹.

Then, after a Millennium, it is interesting that the Albanian national hero had a Macedo-Romanian name -George Castriotul (Castriota)-Skanderberg (1405-1468).

The Albanians ' presence on Romanian earth is documented in 1595 when, according to the report of agent Giovanni de Marini Poli to the imperial counselor Pezzen and dated $14\sqrt{24}$ March, are reported coming from Cervenavodă 15,000 Albanians, with their families, who asked for the leniency of the Wallachian Voivode Michael the Brave to settle in Wallachia and about 1,500 of them have been in Michael's army.

Between the 17th century and the 19th century, Albanians are found in Romanian countries as merchants and craftsmen in trades such as silversmiths, armourers, lawyers, bankers, grocers, fur traders, dyers, bakers, publicans, confectioners, builders, pharmacists, engineers, doctors, military officers, teachers, linen-makers, wheelwrights, carpenters, etc. They were serving for the selection of the famous mercenaries first named Arbanasi-who constituted the Royal and noble Guard troops. In the preface of "Mercenaries the Albanians of the Beautiful City" to a reference paper², Dr. Elena Siupur tells us so beautifully: "Picturesque in their clothing red fez,

¹ Gelcu Maksutovici, *Contribuții la cunoașterea raporturilor dintre Biserica Orodoxă Română și Biserica Ortodoxă Albaneză*, în Ciachir Nicolae and Maksutovici, Glecu, *Studii și documente despre istoria albanezilor din România*, București, Editura Ararat, 1998, p. 50

² Adrian Majuru, Bucureștiul albanez, București, Editura Ararat, 2002, p. 8

kilt, red streak, pistols and swords fearfully transported on beautiful horses, these mysterious, proud, conceited and vengeful, easily angered, but brave and faithful to their Lord to sacrifice, spreading reverence, but also fear, the mercenaries remained permanently in the memory of the Romanian world as the single image of the Albanians ... In ages past, thousands of Albanians in crafts practiced only by them or in Balkan by everyone and who came to Bucharest: grocers, merchants and moneylenders, and taverners, coffee-house keepers, bakers of cracknels,sellers of millet beer, khalva sellers, confectioners, bakers, pie sellers, sellers of flour, tobacconists, marchitani, coopers, carpenters, jewellers, shelars, gunsmiths, fur traders, innkeepers, tenants, lihvari and bankers etc. But gradually we find them advanced in military functions-bulucbashi,aga, and in high office functions, and later officials at different institutions, Bucharest - beautiful city –bukur işti, got them all, regardless of profession or rank (...), kept them in mind after their names and lineage, revered their industry and honesty ..."

Over time, they have distinguished themselves as senior officers in various functions, acting in the Romanian and European culture. In addition to lucrative professions in which they brought meritorious contributions already stated-we can mention accession to leadership positions, which have shown some people of Albanian descent, as were those in the family of Voivode Vasile Lupu, Constantin Draco-Secretary of Voivode Constantin Brancoveanu), Constantin Caraiani counsellor for schools reorganisation during the Wallachian Voivode Grigore Alexandru Ghica, Constantin Sakellarie-Prussian consul in Bucharest, Alexandru Ghica, treasurer, then voivode of Wallachia, etc.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ALBANIANS TO THE ECONOMIC LIFE OF BRĂILA IN THE 16TH CENTURY AND THE 19TH CENTURY

The town of Braila, a Danube port, was under Ottoman occupation between the years 1540-1828 and then between 1829-1834 was governed by Russia, returning to Wallachia and Romania after 1834¹. Now were coming to Brăila ships filled with wheat and barley, salted meat and smoke-dried salt meat, suet, butter, honey, wax, fish, wood for construction, which went to Istanbul. In this respect were built numerous warehouses in Braila for various supplies which were sent mainly to the Ottoman Empire, alongside Romanians settling down here Albanians, Armenians, Greeks, Serbs, while the Ottoman garrison troops were composed mostly of Mohammedan Albanians, which gave a colourful atmosphere to the town where could be practised numerous activities and crafts such as: bakery, confectionery, selling of millet beer, shoemaker's trade, furrier's trade, tailoring, carpentry, pastrycook's shops, shops where cracknels where sold, carpentry and masonry.

In Brăila there was throughout the 19th century, after 1829, an Albanian colony, represented especially by Naum Veqilhargi, the one who conceived, perhaps here, the first Albanian alphabet-Evetar and fought for the emancipation of the Albanian people, for creating an Albanian national State. For a few months, in 1831, the first president of the city of Brăila was the Albanian Kir Constantin Veqilhargi. But, the first figure of the movement for national revival of the Albanian people-Naum Veqilhargi, related to Kir Constantin, was for many years attorney in Brăila and documents attest to his participation to numerous \"ezats\" (public auctions).

Today cannot be specified the number of Albanians in Brăila, because many Albanian merchants were registered as Greeks, including those of Naum Veqilhargi's family. Togheter with the other minorities, settled or arriving in Brăila at the beginning

¹ See Nicolae Ciachir, *Albanezii din Brăila*, în Ciachir Nicolae și Maksutovici, Gelcu, *Studii și documente despre istoria albanezilor din România*, București, Editura Ararat, 1998, pp. 79-142 (selective)

of the 19th century, Albanians have found in this beautiful port city on the Danube all living conditions also to make fortune as merchants or craftsmen. Minorities were received with joy by the Romanian authorities and the Russian ones until 1834, who have allowed them purchase of land at favorable prices, and small-priced houses and land that were abandoned by the Turks .

In this context, the European powers set up viceconsulates in Braila and Galati, so many Albanians will request and receive easily English, Greek, Austrian, Russian, etc., citizenship ,the consular authorities protecting their interests in exchange for a sum of money. They set up the road to the port and to the quarantine (the place where those suspected to be sick were forced to stay for a few days), and a military hospital considered to be modern for those times, are built beautiful public gardens, especially on the Danube Quay, large lockers are built for cargo in the port, everything to attract more people and boost trade.

In 1836, by a decree of the Voivode of Wallachia, Alexandru Ghica - who also originated from an Albanian family -the town and port of Brăila are declared free port (they could import, store and export any goods without having to pay customs duties, except for tobacco and alcoholic drinks. Under the command of fire (Fire Service) many of the Albanians (arnăuți)were serving, as in the City Police and of the 16 security guards of Quarantine, by name, some were sure to be Albanians. Known for their integrity, Albanians were very good guards, fact which led to their hiring in both the Royal guards as mercenaries, groups of soldiers who were guarding the city, county or the Boyar estates. Because the vast majority of Albanians settled in Brăila is declared of Greek origin, their children attended Greek or Romanian schools ,some of them Romanizing their names into Arnăutu, Albanezu, Corceanu, Sotir etc.

The wealthiest citizens of Braila were at that time Constantin Veqil Hargiu (\$ 30,000 annual income), Stavrache Divani (50,000 lei), Marinciu Genevizo (60,000), Petrache Blagopol (65,000) Hristu Ceacâru (\$ 75,000) and Petre Petre Ciorbagiul (97,000 dollars), most of them of Albanian origin.

About the year 1848, the Albanians in Brăila enlisted massively alongside Romanians in the civic guards whose role was to maintain public order. The economic relations of the city evolving, skilled craftsmen , many of them Albanians, have organized in guilds; The guild status of barbers is a model of organisation of a group of craftsmen who have achieved a special level of self-awareness, dictated by the city's economic relations which were of its own trades.

The Albanian researcher Vehbi Bala is right to state that the first Albanian newspaper "Drita" ("Light"), which originated in Romania, Braila, in 1887, did not accidentally appear here where Albanians recorded important economic success, bringing perhaps the most significant, contribution after Romanians, to the development of this important port on the Danube, "because Brăila had been the cradle of creating a modern Albanian cultural society, the cradle of Albanian literature because Naum Vechilargi had worked and created here".¹

If in the year 1828, when the Turks left the garrison of Brăila, evacuating the city, there were 591 families, in 1859 in Brăila there were 13.459 inhabitants, Romanian citizens, besides 3.686 of subjects of different protections.² Albanians, both those who had Romanian citizenship, and those who opted for a foreign citizenship were duty-bound citizens in the city, periodically visited natal places giving their families money, bringing in Braila other relatives or fellow citizens who, on the free land of Wallachia (Brăila was dependent administratively on Wallachia until 1859) could earn their

¹ See Vehbi Bala, *Shtypi shqiptar ne rumani*, în *Reviste shkencore e Institut Pedagogik dyvjecar te Shkodres*, nr. 1, 1964, p. 32

² N. Mocioiu, Orașul și județul Brăila în primii ani de la Unirea principatelor, 1859-1866, în volumul Monografia județului Brăila, fără an, p. 85

living honestly and thus could help more their motherland, which was still under Turkish domination.

But, as time passed, Brăila city became a powerful workers' centre; in 1868 a powerful strike of port workers broke out, attended by some Albanians, as could be inferred by their name. In Brăila is set up the first club of workers with their own status and in 1902 over 2,000 people participate at one of the strikes. All this has had a certain influence on Albanian workers, of which many were ordinary and poor people who worked hard either in port or in the many businesses that were founded in Braila in the late 19th century and early 20th century.¹

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ALBANIANS TO THE XIX CENTURY

The golden century of the Albanian Community from Romania was, according to many researchers, the XIX century, the epoch in which Bucharest become an important support center for the freedom and national rebirth movement of the people from the Balkans.² The Albanians from Romania participated to the revolutionary movement from 1821, both in the army of Tudor Vladimirescu and in the one of the Greek prince Ipsilante. Naum Veqilharxi, for example, participated at the activities of Eteria and fought in the Romanian Revolution from 1821.³

The Albanian patriot Naum Panajot Veqilharxi from Braila was the author of the first ABC book of Albanian language published in1844 and the Romanian princess, of Albanian parentage, Elena Ghica writing under the pseudonym Dora d'Istria published 8 books – all in French – as well as numerous articles to throw up the national cause of the Albanians. The Italian teacher Angelor de Gubernatis mentioned her in 1889, at only a year after her death: "Although she has been written mere than any other writer, in behalf of the nations' cause, pleading both for the wrights of the Romanians and for the ones of the Serbs, Greeks, Albanians, Hungarians or Italians, she did not want to belong to a particular nation, feeling that she belong to all of them..."⁴ Dora d'Istria also wrote the first monograph of the Albanians living in our country entitled "Gli albanesi in Rumenia", published in Florence in 1873. The Albanians named Dora d'Istria "the Star of Albania" or "the brightest star on the sky of the unhappy Albania".⁵

This is the beginning of a glorious era, known under the name of the National Albanian Renaissance (Rilidja Kombetare Shiptare) when the great cultural and military movements were born and which will have the climax on November 28 1912 (see the next paraghraph).⁶

After the Peace Congress in Berlin (1878) that refused to take into consideration the demands referring the autonomy of the Albanian territories, the Albanian from Romania founded cultural societies with the purpose of backing up the Riljndia Kombetare Shqiptare. To the end of the XIXth century, the number of the Romanian Albanians was over 30.000 living especially in towns like Bucharest, Braila, Constanta, Craiova, Calarasi, Iasi, and Focsani as traders, artisans but also as doctors, lawyers, architects, constructors and *arnauti* (guards for different squires).

An important role in the publishing of history and literature manuals was played by the company "Drita" (Light) founded in 1884 and then by "Dituria" (the Science) founded in 1887. The Board of the "Drita" company was Romanian: the president of the

¹ N. Mocioiu, O grevă în portul Brăila în anul 1868, în Revista arhivelor, nr. 1, 1960, p. 116

² www. albanezi.html, 18 october 2009

³ Histoiria e letersise shqipe (Istoria literaturii albaneze), vol. II, Tirana, 1959, p. 13, and Gelcu Maksutovici, Albanezii din România în contextul istoriei Albaniei și României, în Ciachir Nicolae and Maksutovici, Gelcu, Studii și documente despre istoria albanezilor din România, București, Editura Ararat, 1998, p. 13

⁴ Maria Oprea, *Dora D'Istria, un ceățean al lumii și al elitelor*, in "Prietenul albanezului" ("Miku i shqiptarit"), nr. 123-124, februarie 2012, p. 14

⁵ Gelcu Maksutovici, Op. cit., p. 15

⁶ Idem, p. 12

company was the well-known historian V.A. Urechia, the vice-president - D. Butuculescu and the censors were Dr. Leonte and M. Desliu.¹

In general, due to the trades they practiced, the Albanians settled in towns. The Albanian Community from Romania sustained the National Albanian Renaissance movement financially and emotionally at the end of the XIXth century. This Community had then several thousand members who mostly lived in Bucharest, Constanta, Pitesti, Ploiesti, etc. The top members of this Community were Nikolla Nacio, Mihail Grameno and Asdreni (Aleks Stavre Drenova) – who composed the national anthem of Albania, the music belonging to Ciprian Porumbescu – the song "On our flag is written union".

At the end of the XIXth and the beginning of the XXth century were also printed the first newspapers, bilingual magazines – Albanian – Romanian and even in three languages – Albanian, Romanian and French. There were 30 such newspapers and magazines under the aegis of different intellectual circles of the Albanian Community from Bucharest.

During the XIXth century, Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu and V.A.Urechia were Honorary Members of the Albanian Community from Bucharest and during the XXth century – Tache Ionescu and Dimitrie Butculescu played the same role. The Albanian Community from Romania came to its climax at the end of the XIXth and the beginning of the XXth century. The biography of numerous Albanian families is similar. They came to Romania due to the poverty and political oppression from Albania. The great majority came from Korcea or Korcea district. And almost any exception these families build up fortunes in Romania and created an exceptional economic and social status.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ALBANIANS TO THE XXTH CENTURY

The Albanian language (shqipe) is an Indo-European language with particularities of Illirian origin and two dialects – tosk and gheg – unified in unique literary language during the last decades. The Albanian language is considered as one of the 12 ancient languages of the planet. The Albanians from Romania who came here from the South of Albania speak the tosc dialect and the ones from the North of Albania – the Yugoslavian Macedonia region and Kosovo the gheg one.

The demographic evolution was the following: in 1595 - 15.000 persons; in 1893 - 30.000 persons; in 1920 were almost 20.000 Albanians only in Bucharest; in 1930 were registered 4.670 of which 4.247 spoke Albanian; in South Dobrogea and Basarabia, in 1940, were 40.000 Albanians of which in 1995 remained 15.000. Of these 50 % were Orthodox and 50 % - Muslims; only 30 % have higher education.²

The Albanian companies "Dituria", "Drita" and "Shpresa" ("Hope") united, in 1906 with other Albanian companies and formed the "Bashkimi" company ("Union"). In 1905, at Constanta, an Albanian school was founded under the leadership of the doctor Ibraim Temo. Among the teachers of this school was also the poet Asdreni. As secretary of the Albanian Community from Romania at the beginning of November 1912, he wrote the protocol of the Albanian Reunion from Bucharest, which, under the leadership of Ismail Qemali, decided to proclaim the independence of Albania at November 28, 1912.

At Braila and Constanta were the most powerful Albanian Communities from Romania. In our country lived and worked great personalities of the political, social, and cultural Albanian fields. In the 20s of the last century great personalities of the Albanian society activated in our country: the lyric Lasgush Poradeci, the poet Mihail

¹ *Ibidem*, p. 25

² www. albanezi.html, 8 December 2013

Grameno, the poet Asdreni, the prose writer Mitrush Kuteli, the poet Aii Aslani, the diplomat Nik Perna, the poet and churchman Fan S. Noli, higher pontiff of the Albanian Orthodox Church and the archbishop of the Albanians from America. He kept the first sermon at the Orthodox Church "One Day" from Bucharest that was used during 1912-1947 (after other sources 1911-1945¹) by the Albanian Community from Romania.

Invited by the Albanian community leaders in Bucharest, Nicolae Iorga wrote the first history of the Albanian people, in French.² At the beginning of the twentieth century, in Bucharest a Normal School for boys was founded, which prepared teachers for Albania. The teaching language was Albanian and the school was hosted by the boarding school from "Prinicipatele unite" Street. At that time, the Albanian community in Bucharest was the most powerful organization of the Albanian diaspora. Community would organize various celebrations, meetings, gatherings, and used the money raised to pay for printed magazines, Normal School staff, helping the elderly, etc. On November 5, 1912, Ismail Qemali - Member of the Porte Berat and Luigj Gurakuqi - two of the future founders of modern Albania arrived in Bucharest. At the meeting held at Hotel Continental, in the presence of leaders of the Albanian community in Romania the state independence of Albania was approved and consequently proclaimed on November 28, 1912, in the Albanian city of Vlora, Ismail's hometown in the presence of Albanian delegates community in Romania and of the People's Assembly consisting of delegates from all parts of Albania .

After World War I a new wave of Albanians, mainly from Yugoslav Macedonia, arrive in Romania for economic reasons, this time settling in the cities of Transylvania Oradea, Cluj, Medias, Sibiu, Sighet, Baia Mare, Targu-Mures as workers and craftsmen (bragagii, confectioners). Many came from all Albanian territories to study in Romanian educational institutes.

During the interwar period of the last century, life refreshes the Albanian community in Romania, especially in Bucharest and Constanta, under the aegis of "Bashkimi ", and of others alike, established for geographic or religious purposes. Among the publications in this period stands the newspaper "Shqipëria e Re" ("New Albania") which continues to develop in the years 1919-1935.

During the communist regime, any form of organization is banned between 1953 and 1989, and the Albanian community in Romania falls somewhat apart. Much of its members either passed away during and after the years of World War II, or turned to Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo. Another part emigrated to the USA and Turkey.

The most representative thinkers of Albanian origin and universal Romanian culture are considered: writer Victor Eftimiu - former director of the National Theatre in Bucharest, actor Cyril Economu doctor Ibrahim Themo - one of founders of the "Young Turks " organizatio and leader of the organization concerning health, education, cultural and religious life of Muslim Dobrogea, Stavru Opari architect, architect Nicolau Spiru - builder of public buildings, journalist and diplomat Nik Pemma, translator Focioni Miciacio, Asdreni poet, illustrator Despina Ghinokastra singers Antony and Nicholas Kristaq Rafael musicians Mihailescu - Toscani, slavicist Lucia Djamo - Deaconess doctors, physicians Anastase Opari, Theodor Economu Nikola Nacio tantalum Economu, lawyers, engineers, traders Cunescu famous families, Tabacu, Regep Selimovic, Daut Memish Professor Mircea Nicolae Djamo Dumitriu - European champion in yachting etc .

¹ Gelcu Maksutovici, *Contribuții la cunoașterea raporturilor dintre Biserica Orodoxă Română și Biserica Ortodoxă Albaneză*, în Ciachir Nicolae and Maksutovici, Glecu, *Studii și documente despre istoria albanezilor din România*, București, Editura Ararat, 1998, p. 59

² N. Iorga, *Breve histoire de l'Albanie et du peuple albanais*, publication de l'Institut pour l'Etude de l'Europe Sud-Orientale, Bucarest, Imprimeria "Cultura Neamului Românesc", 1919

Today, important representatives of Romanian sport and culture are: Albanians Cornel Stavru – famous Romanian opera tenor; Caesar Ivănescu poet; playwright Vlad Zografi (son of Nicholas Djamo); painter and national sailing champion (in 2004), Vlad Dumitru; the writers Kopi and Ardian Kyçyku.

In our country The Cultural Union of Albanians in Romania and Albanian Ladies Society are both represented in public life. Albanians in Romania have three representatives appointed to the Council for National Minorities, who are considering "giving back the dignity to the Albanian people in Romania and reviving their culture and spirituality under the rich traditions" that have united representatives of the two countries for over 400 years. "Claims to: Hristo Cotadi's Villa, on Ecaterina Teodoroiu Street no. 22 in Bucharest, donated to the Embassy of Albania in 1933 and claimed by means of testamentary forms for the headquarters of the Cultural Union of Albanians in Romania"¹.

CONCLUSIONS

Over time, the Albanians have found warm shelter on Romanian soil and a warm fellowship. Besides the famous Albanian bodyguards, they have distinguished themselves as silversmiths, gunsmiths, lawyers, bankers, grocers, furriers, dyers, bakers, innkeepers, bakers, builders, chemists, engineers, doctors, officers, teachers, drapers, wheelwrights, carpenters etc. In general, due to trades that were practiced Albanians settled in cities. Today we find them scattered in Alba, Arges, Bacau, Brasov, Braila, Calarasi, Cluj, Constanta, Dolj, Galati, Giurgiu, Gorj, Ilfov, Mehedinti, Mures, Olt, Prahova, Suceava, Timis, Valcea, Vaslui, Vrancea and Bucharest.²

At the beginning of last century in a joint Albano - Romanian congress, held in Trieste in March 1913, talking about relations between Albanian and Romanian Dr. Shunda said : "Strengthening Albanian nation, Romania strengthens itself, because it sees clearly that Albania is threatened by the same dangers, because it knows too well that the fate of the Romanian people and the Albanian nation will be the same forever."³

Today, the Albanian community, represented by the Association League of Albanians from Romania (ALAR), has entered on its website the following motto: "POWER, IMAGE, SUPPORT. As partners of the Romanian people we permanently share the same honest vow, so that we can always remain close to each other, for a better piece of bread, a stable job, blessed with sun rays that penetrate our common lives".⁴ ALAR was established in 1998, and it excels in events dedicated to the friendship between the Albanian and Romanian and the current President is Professor Oana Manolescu. Since November 2001, ALAR has been publishing a monthly magazine "The Albanian's friend" ("Miku and Shqiptare"), particularly interesting, having Marius Dobrescu as chief editor "a reference name when it comes to the literature, civilization and Albanian culture, as both author and translator"; he is also the author of a very interesting work, "Moments in the history of Albania. Collection of studies and articles", Bucharest, Privirea Publishing House, 2011, from which I extracted this pearl of wisdom: "Each of us has something to learn by mutual understanding, through the understanding of the course of history of the other so that we could be really close to each other".

Albanians are a significant minority in Romania, who, apart from the fact that they have used our country as a springboard to the main events that marked the history of Albania in the last century they have also contributed greatly and positively to the

¹ www. albanezi.html, 8 December 2013

² www. albanezi meserii.html, 8 December 2013

³ *Poporul român și lupta de eliberare a popoarelor din Balcani*, documents volume edited by Direcția generală a Arhivelor Statului, București, 1986, Documentul nr. 234, p. 602

⁴ www. albanezi meserii.html

development of the Romanian economy in the last centuries, to the history of arts, culture and sport in Romania, the country that has adopted them as her own sons and that they served as their homeland.

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