

AROMANIANS BETWEEN EMPIRES IN THE 18TH-19TH CENTURIES. THE RELATIONS OF THE AROMANIAN COMMUNITIES OF BANAT-CRIȘANA WITH VIENNA, BUDAPEST AND BUCHAREST - A TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THEIR ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

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Abstract. Aromanians build a complex economic and cultural life in their original area of origin from the Balkans since the Middle Ages, becoming one of the richest and most advanced national communities in the region. Starting from the traditional occupation of raising animals, they develop a varied range of crafts, the surplus production of which is intended for trade. Based on it, they create a transnational network of commercial relations - mainly at the level of the Habsburg provinces, Venice and the current territory of Germany. These prove useful with the beginning of the national liberation movements of the peoples of the area, especially the Greeks. Now the permanent pressures of an extractive nature of the Ottoman power turn into persecutions and armed attacks, forcing a relevant part of the Aromanian economic-political elite to emigrate to the domains of the House of Habsburg. The main initial destinations are Vienna and Buda (respectively Pest), but the diffusion generated by the various economic opportunities brings a number of large Aromanian families to Banat and Crisana. They integrate into the commercial and cultural circuits here, respectively they make full use of their cosmopolitan approach acquired as a result of the transnational economic activities practiced for centuries. It contributes to the social development of the area in all areas and, especially after the middle of the 19th century, fully engages in the Romanian national movement here.

Keywords: Aromanians, Balkans, Romanians, Mocioni, Sina

The Aromanians form a southern branch of Eastern Latinity, spread in multiple areas of the Balkan region, of Orthodox religion and culture, at least until the 19th century, predominantly Greek. With its occupation by the Ottoman Empire, the Aromanians adapt to the new realities and build a limited national-cultural autonomy, based mainly on the very good economic situation of the community. Initially, the

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main occupation is raising animals, in the transhumance regime, respectively processing the products obtained from them. With the diversification and specialization of related crafts, an important production surplus is generated. It is intended for sale, in order to obtain products that are not available in the areas inhabited by Aromanians, respectively the liquidity necessary to pay the taxes in money to the Ottoman authorities.

The commercial relations of the Aromanian merchants are gradually expanding, especially towards the northwest, where the territories of the Habsburg Dynasty, the Holy German Empire and the Venetian Republic offer rich markets, which generate significant profits. One of the most important cultural-economic centers of the Aromanians in the 18th century became Moscopole, located on the current territory of Albania, where they constitute the majority of the population. The big merchants here supply the aforementioned territories with large quantities of wool, animal skins, wax, etc., the income thus obtained ensuring the area a flourishing development. Dozens of churches are built and the activity of a printing press begins - the second in the Ottoman Empire (after Istanbul/Constantinople). The culture is of Greek origin, the books published here (mostly religious) being printed either in Greek or Aromanian, but with Greek script. With the start of Greek national movements and the preparation of anti-Ottoman revolts, the armed forces of the Empire began a series of raids as a result of which, in 1788, Moscopole was completely destroyed.¹

The event acted as a catalyst, accelerating the emigration of Aromanians from here and other areas administered by the Ottomans - a process that, with varying intensity, had been taking place since the end of the 17th century. As for the commercial elite of the community, most of the important families that formed it opted for the Habsburg territories, whose economy operated on a much more modern basis than that of the quasi-medieval origins of the Ottoman Empire. The primary destinations are important cities, well connected by means of communication, which favor trade links and a good return on capital. Among these are, next to Vienna and Pest, the urban centers of Banat and Crișana, which are in full economic momentum. Here, Aromanians are involved in most economic fields. They purchase or lease entire fields, on which they do agriculture, raise animals and operate forestry operations. They frequently invest in the mining industry, to whose development they thus contribute. But their most important activities remain large trade, namely banking and financial operations in general, facilitated by their generations of experience in running transnational economic operations.²

They bring significant services to the level of economic development, thanks to which they benefit from the protection and support of the monarchs of the House of Habsburg. They are initially included in the provisions of the patent of tolerance from 1781, issued by Joseph II, as elements that really bring benefits to the great trade of the state. Later, in 1783, the Emperor returned with a special ordinance by which he drew the attention of the authorities in the Buda region to the fact that "... the non-united Greeks and Greeks, who deal with trade in that region, especially in Buda, Pesta, Segra, Sânt -Andrei, they must be specially guarded against any dangers, because in truth they exchange goods for the great benefit of the state". Under these

conditions, the Aromanians settled in the Kingdom of Hungary began to be naturalized, a process during which they had to take an oath of allegiance before the authorities, with a legalized deed attesting to this being concluded. Due to their predominantly Greek-speaking culture, most of the small Macedonian colonies are considered Greek colonies, and their members are called - even by the Romanians from Banat, Crişana or Transylvania - Greek.³

The main reasons for this declarative assumption of the Greek identity by the Aromanians is the interest in the alliance with the Greek merchants for the defense of common commercial interests, respectively their Orthodox religious identity. In general, Macedonian-Romanians are bilingual, considering the Aromanian dialect as their mother tongue, while the Greek language serves as the language of culture, religious service, and communication in business or official affairs. Gradually, their role in the development of a bourgeois Hungary, by consolidating trade and the banking sector here, is becoming more and more relevant. Material advancement is the basis of their social integration in the upper circles of the Kingdom, including through marriages contracted with members of the high Hungarian aristocracy. Many Macedonian exponents are in turn ennobled by the Emperor. Nevertheless, the Aromanian families arriving from the Balkans maintain close relations with each other and consider themselves a community, even after integration into the Hungarian elite, and in this capacity assume an increasingly important role in economic and political life. The institutions created by Macedonians and Romanians in the early decades of the 19th century illustrate the existence at their level of the same clear tendencies to build the nation's identity - by accessing the values of culture, the development of language and literature, etc., as those manifested at the level of the population contemporary Hungarians.⁴

Among the most relevant Aromanian families, whose representatives repeatedly play important roles even in politics at the national level, there are some that have their residence, main fields and/or major economic interests in Banat and Crişana. Among them should be mentioned those of the Nákó / Nako counts from Sânicolaul Mare, the Sina barons - at one time among the biggest bankers of the Empire, who owned large properties in Arad county, the two noble branches of the Mocsonyi / Mocioni family - with domains in Timiş, Arad and Torontal counties, Gozsdú / Gojdu from Bihor county, Grabovsky.

The Nako family, which ended up holding the highest title in the aristocracy of the Kingdom of Hungary, immigrated around the year 1780 from the current territory of Macedonia - a fact also recorded in the Almanach de Gotha (Gothaischer Hofkalender), yearbook of the royal houses and the high European nobility. Here he had established his fortune on the transnational business with cattle and, having significant liquidity as a result of these activities, after moving he bought a series of domains, the most important of which is the one from Sânicolaul Mare (Timiş county). She was ennobled (title of nemes / noble) by the Monarch in 1789, thus confirming the privileged status she had in her community of origin. The next generation is raised to the rank of count / count on 26.02. 1813. The very good material condition of the family, as well as its initial source, can be intuited by the received coat of arms. Both its variants (noble and comital) have between the main

elements a cornucopia, respectively a rampant bull. The same blazons also show their origin – the heraldic element in the first field is an eagle / eagle with a crown, which may refer to the eagle of the Byzantine Empire. Of course, a family with such prestige also owns properties in the capital of the Empire. Count Alexandru Nako buys the Eskeles Palace, later renamed the Nako Palace, located in the 1st District of Vienna (Dorothee street no. 11) from the Arnstein & Eskeles bank. The building, which is in a deplorable state, is renovated / rebuilt with great financial efforts from the count, who, after finishing the works in 1830, establishes his Vienna residence here. The continuing family will continue to hold high public positions in the administration - multiple members are elected to the Hungarian parliament, and another Count Nako Alexandru will function in the first decade of the 20th century as governor of the important Fiume port.⁵

The Sina family, which would become one of the richest families in Hungary and in Europe in the 19th century, occupied a leading position in the Aromanian colony in Austria and Hungary between 1788 and 1876. She is originally from Moscopole, where in the middle of the 18th century she became strongly involved in the economic activity of the city that became the turning point of trade between the West and the East, between the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation led by the Habsburgs and the Ottoman Empire. With the start of the Turkish attacks on the city in 1769, the family activates its system of relationships built on the background of transnational economic activity and relocates in several stages to the Habsburg territories. The first Sina attested in Vienna is Georg Sinna Popovich in 1780, but the one who really lays the foundations of the family's prosperity here is Simeon Sina (1753–1822). He has been carrying out commercial activities in the Empire since his youth, under the reign of Maria Theresa, mainly as a great merchant of cotton and Turkish tobacco, making a considerable fortune. After the complete destruction of the city of Moscopole in 1788, Simeon Sina, as well as the other Aromanians, brought his entire wealth accumulated over several generations to his new homeland. Most of the time, the transport takes place through smuggling, in the form of gold coins camouflaged in pots of honey or mushrooms with cheese. Under the favorable conditions offered by the repeated imperial regulations for the protection of social elements favorable to the development of the economy, he makes full use of his entrepreneurial qualities. He quickly developed a society for the cultivation and sale of tobacco, cotton and foodstuffs, greatly increasing the wealth of the family. He founds in Vienna the Sina wholesale and banking house, which soon becomes the second most important in Austria, after the Rothschild bank (both banking institutions take advantage of the continental blockade imposed by Napoleon, making fabulous profits on the background of its evasion. In order to- and his social prestige increases, he acquires the domains of Hodoş and Chisdia in Banat, which creates the conditions for him and his sons to be elevated, for special merits in the economic support of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Austrian provinces, to the rank of nobles of the Kingdom, with the title “of Hodoş and Kisdia “ (04/03/1818).⁶

With his death in 1822, Gheorghe Simeon Sina – the first born, took over the management of the family business, in which Ioan Simeon Sina (brother from their father's second marriage) remains a shareholder. Considered to have been “a real

commercial genius”, Gheorghe Simeon Sina develops the industrialization of cotton, which he imports from the East based on the family's transnational relationships and experience of generations. He ends up dominating this industrial branch, then other related ones, so that in time a large part of the financial system in the Austrian Empire comes under his control. The company's activity is flourishing, due to which the two brothers were granted the title of barons in the Kingdom of Hungary (26.07.1832) and then, successively, in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia (1836), respectively in Austria (08.03.1838). The name of the bank is changed to “Bankhaus Baron von Sina”. The baron becomes one of the most famous Austrian entrepreneurs and bankers and the richest man in Austria after the Rothschild family. His prestige is accentuated by his qualities as a member of the Chamber of Magnates of the Kingdom of Hungary, respectively the Greek consul general in Vienna. He is a supporter of Viennese arts and architecture.⁷

The extent of the family leader's wealth is underlined by the fact that Ioan Simeon Sina (1804–1869), although he has an annuity of 60,000 florins from the Sina bank, in addition to relevant personal properties, is known in Viennese society as “Poor Sina”. It is so only by comparison with one of the greatest fortunes of the Empire. Ioan holds high official positions - he is director of the National Bank, the state railway and president of the well-known company “Donaudampfschiffahrtsgesellschaft”, which operates steamboats on the Danube. He also owns an estate in Szent-Miklós, on which he founded one of the largest sugar beet factories in the territory of the Monarchy.⁸

The Sina dynasty in the Empire ends in the third generation, with Gheorghe's only son, Simeon Gheorghe Sina (1810 – 1876). He inherits a formidable fortune and continues the family business, being actively involved in any work of economic or financial reorganization of the state. It obtains public recognition in the field of organizing economic and financial life, respectively following the creation of charitable institutions. He engages in, respectively contributes generously to, the foundation of the Hungarian Agricultural Credit, the foundation of the Hungarian Insurance Company, the promotion of railways and steam navigation, the systematization of rivers, the modernization of agriculture. On the cultural-charitable level, it supports the education of the population and provides very important sums for the National Museum, the Children's Hospital and other hospitals, cradles, orphanages, the Institute for the Blind, the Commercial Academy, the National Theatre, the Conservatory, the Fire Brigade, the National Casina, the basilica in the Leopold district, the House of Fine Arts, especially the Palace of the Hungarian Academy.⁹

The Grabovsky family, originally from Grabova, creates a very good situation for itself in the Kingdom of Hungary. Athanasius and Konstantin – great wine merchants, are ennobled by the Monarch on 06.09.1823. The diploma is published initially in the county of Pesta and later in the county of Caraş, where they receive half of the domain of Apadia, from which they derive their noble predicate. At the time, Atanasie is a member of the Pest city senate and director of the “Wallachian” (Aromanian) school. Next, Atanasie is heavily involved, alongside business, in the cultural life of Aromanians and Romanians from Pest and Banat, respectively

maintaining ties with boyars and people of culture from Wallachia. Many intellectuals of these communities hang out in his literary salon, such as Petru Maior, Samuil Micu Clain, Damaschin Bojinca, Dimitrie Ūchindeal, Moise Nicoara, Ioan Teodorovici, Ștefan P. Neagoie, Teodor Aaron, Emanuil Gojdu, Eftimie Murgu, Petru Moaler Câmpeanu, Andrei Mocioni, Constantin Lecca, Paul Vasici, Partenie Cosma, Zaharie Carcalechi, etc., respectively the Romanian students of the University of Pest. In addition to cultural-literary topics, they also get involved in debates on the complicated issue of the Orthodox Church in Banat and Hungary, in which the Romanians were completely dominated by the Serbian ecclesiastical hierarchy. These ideas are acquired here by Andrei Șaguna - future Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan, who lives for a while in his maternal uncle's house. Also, Atanasie Grabovsky has very good relations not only with the Hungarian magnates, but also with the Romanian Goleșcu boyars, who visit him frequently. At his initiative, a series of books in Romanian and Aromanian are published at the printing house in Buda. It has a rich library, from which a number of Aromanian manuscripts can be found today in the Library of the Romanian Academy.¹⁰

The Mocioni / Mocsonyi family (originally also spelled Motsonyi) is one of the most studied Banat families by modern and contemporary Romanian historiography. Its exponents - Aromanians, descendants of immigrants from the Moscopole area, stand out on all levels of social life and go down in history as leaders of the Romanian national movement from the Habsburg Monarchy and, later, Austria-Hungary. The members of this family, raised to noble rank by the Emperor for his merits, are mainly active as merchants and large owners, also very involved in the service of the national and the Orthodox cause. They are originally from the Astropotam region (the current territory of Greece) and later moved to Moscopole (the current territory of Albania), according to the oral traditions kept in the family and recorded by Vincentiu Babeș in 1883. The first Mocioni immigrated to the Habsburg domains at the end of the 17th century, in within the great movement of the Orthodox population (mainly Serbs, but also many Aromanians) led by Patriarch Arsenie de Pec (1690). Genealogical data regarding the family members begin to be consistently recorded with the priest Constantin Mocioni - settled in the Kingdom of Hungary in 1747 (until he only had accounts transmitted orally in the family). Two of his sons continue to accumulate important fortunes and are at the origin of the two noble branches that will play such an important role in the activity of promoting the rights of the Romanians on the Haburg domains. Andrei's descendants obtain the domain of Foeni in Torontal county (currently Timiș county) and the noble predicate "of Foen", while those of Mihai form the armalist branch. All the relevant members of the extended Mocioni family, although perfectly integrated in the high multi-ethnic and multilingual society of the Monarchy and related to the largest families of the Hungarian and German aristocracy, remain in history great as patrons of the Romanian community. For this they found or restore Orthodox churches, support schools in Romanian with their own funds, offer scholarships for young Romanians, finance publications in Romanian or buy hundreds of issues of Romanian newspapers to be distributed free of charge to compatriots without financial means. Although

many exponents of the family deserve to be mentioned, perhaps the most relevant remains Alexandru de Mocioni (04.11.1841 – d. 01.04.1909).¹¹

Emanoil Gojdu, future lawyer and philanthropist of Aromanian origin, was born on 09.02.1802 in the city of Oradea. His family also comes from Moscow and has good material possibilities, even if not at the level of previous large families. Emanoil Gojdu begins his studies at the University of Pest, where he attends law and philosophy courses. He develops good relations with Hungarian writers and intellectuals, but at the same time he attends the (-national) literary salon in the house of Atanasie Grabovsky, where he develops a (a) Romanian national consciousness. He becomes a lawyer, rising through his own qualities to the heights of the profession. It is among the first to replace Latin with Hungarian as the procedural language. His pleadings are published as models in specialized magazines, being considered one of the best experts in legal sciences of the time. He is in high demand and his fees are increasing, allowing him to accumulate a relevant fortune. He is the owner of two steam mills and the president of the association of mill owners in the capital of Hungary. He generally invests in real estate and land, whose values increase exponentially in the context of the accelerated development of the city in the 19th century. The flourishing financial situation allows him to fully support the magazines and other Romanian publications that appear in Buda and Pesta, in which he frequently publishes materials campaigning for the Romanian national revival. In 1848, with the revolutionary movements, he initiated political actions in favor of Romanian nationality, having a moderate program. This positioning, along with his personal and professional qualities, later facilitates his access to a series of high positions, after the fall of the revolution. He is appointed supreme committee of Caraș County (1861), which makes him a member of the Chamber of Magnates in the Parliament of the Kingdom of Hungary. Later, he was elected a deputy in the Tinca district of Bihor county (1865), respectively appointed as an advisor to the Supreme Court (of Cassation) of Hungary (1869). Throughout his career, he cultivated the (a)Romanian national consciousness in himself and his compatriots, fighting through the political and legal means available to him to improve the situation of the rights of the Romanian community. He also made great financial sacrifices for its good, donating important sums to Romanian schools and cultural institutions. For the same purpose, he tests his entire fortune of several hundreds of thousands of florins to a foundation whose main purpose is to grant scholarships for Romanian students, support Romanian educational institutions, promote the Romanian language and Romanian culture, as well as help orphans and the poor. The entity contributes to the development and maintenance of Romanian cultural identity, in a socio-political context in which ethnic minorities encounter difficulties in accessing education and culture.¹²

In conclusion, the exponents of Aromanian families who, forced to leave their ancestral territories due to persecution and attacks, settle or obtain domains in Banat and Crisana, capitalize on their transnational experience accumulated before emigration in order to integrate and prosper in the new environment. The skills, habits and system of relationships accumulated over the generations allowed these families,

once established in the Kingdom of Hungary, to accumulate enormous capital and obtain noble titles, bringing additional prestige.

Later, they use these resources and capital (financial, social, etc.) in the service of the Romanian national cause. They build and endow Orthodox churches and schools with teaching in the Romanian language, which function as foci of community culture. For the same purpose, it contributes to the establishment and consecration of a national church hierarchy, supports publications in Romanian and offers scholarships for students and pupils. It thus ensures the perpetuation of an intellectual branch attached to the community interest, which acts consistently for the defense and promotion of Romanian national-identity rights. The effects of their actions lasted over time, contributing a century later to the realization of the wishes of the Romanians in the Kingdom of Hungary regarding the union with Romania.

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