

LEVANTINE

21 February International Mother Language Day

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I AM A LEVANTINE, I SPEAK ROMEIKA

My mother is ethnic greek, romeika is my mother tongue, italian is my father tongue. I went to italian schools, that's why I never learned how to write in Greek. I write Frango- Hiotika which is romeika written in latin letters and I think that we can compare it to the Karamanlı language. I believe that this way of writing was born in Hios Island which for a certain period of her history was ruled by the Genoese. But then it was used by everybody who did not know the greek alphabet and especially by people living in the capital of the Empire.

Romeika was for long periods of time the language used by most people who had relations with the harbor of the "City". That is why it has words from Turkish, from Italian, from French and from many other languages. Its pronunciation is different than Greek because we pronounce the sounds of the ç, the ş, the l, the j as in turkish and as in the other languages, and our ways of expression are simpler.

Romeika lived for centuries and I met Turks and Kurds speaking it; but for example, the genitors of my german friends from Istanbul speak it while my generation (1965) do not anymore.

Even if the Greeks make fun of us I'm glad to know romeika which is for me a way to connect to the past and opens many doors in life.

For my two grandmothers.