

## Roma Writings



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# Roma Writings

*Romani Literature and Press  
in Central, South-Eastern  
and Eastern Europe  
from the 19th Century until World War II*

*Edited by*

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Cover illustration: Gypsy teacher P.N. Pedanova with a group of kolkhoz workers reads the “Regulations on elections to the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR”. Author of the photo: Makletsov A., date April 1930, Stalingrad oblast. With courtesy of The State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia. Moscow.

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# Foreword

*Elena Marushiakova*

We are bringing to the readers' attention the collective monograph *Roma Writings. Romani Literature and Press in Central, South-Eastern, and Eastern Europe from the 19th Century until World War II*. It is the second book in a triptych published in the frames of the research project *RomaInterbellum: Roma Civic Emancipation between the Two World Wars*. The first book was *Roma Voices in History: A Source Book. Roma Civic Emancipation in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe from the 19th Century until WWII* (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a) and the forthcoming third volume is *Roma Portraits in History: Roma Civic Emancipation Elite in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe from the 19th Century until WWII* (Marushiakova and Popov 2021b).

The realisation of this collective monograph was possible thanks to the joint efforts of the project team, composed of Elena Marushiakova (PI), Vesselin Popov, Raluca Bianca Roman, Sofiya Zahova, and Aleksandar Marinov, from the University of St Andrews. In the authors' team were included also Tamás Hajnóczky, from Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, Viktor Shapoval, from the Moscow City University and Risto Blomster, from The Finnish Literature Society (supported by the Finnish Cultural Foundation). All of them are authors in this collective monograph and the editorial work was done by Raluca Bianca Roman, Sofiya Zahova, and Aleksandar Marinov.

The main purpose of the triptych is in line with the aims of *RomaInterbellum* project: to study the process of Roma civic emancipation from its early beginning in the nineteenth century throughout the interwar period, wherein Roma were not only passive recipients of different and often controversial policy measures of individual states but active architects of their lives. The project delves into the ways in which Roma reacted to the twentieth-century historical circumstances, such as the break-down of empires, state nation-building processes, the formation of minority communities, or the establishment of communist rule. The history of the Roma is considered as an inseparable part of the mainstream European history and, likewise, Roma socio-political visions are treated as an inalienable part of the history of modern political thought in Europe. The studied phenomena are tackled in the framework of an entangled history within the European region, looking at Roma civic emancipation from national and cross-national perspectives.

This collective monograph is looking at Romani literature and press as an inseparable part of the process of Roma civic emancipation. It was also one of the new-born literatures of the nations established on the ruins of the old dissolved empires. In other words, this book approaches in the framework of the entangled history the creation of national literature and press in the region, and it discusses the question of why and in which

way Romani literature and press came into being in individual countries. The presentation of Romani literature and press in several individual countries enables the composition of a comprehensive united picture for the whole region of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

The presented monograph contributes to discovering, collecting, preserving, and analysing Romani literary heritage. The study reveals the broad dimensions of the work of Roma authors, the preferred topics and genres, the ways in which the socio-political circumstances of the time influenced their works, and how these were reflected in and part of the processes of Roma civic emancipation.

In addition to the national languages of the countries under discussion, a significant part of the Romani literature and media was written in the Romani language. The composition of the authors' team of this collective monograph and their language competences allowed the in-depth examination of the birth of Romani literature and media along with the process of transforming oral Romani into a written literary language.

The ultimate goal of publishing this book is to introduce the history of Romani literature and we firmly believe it will contribute to its inclusion to the mainstream of Literary Studies.

# Introduction

*Sofiya Zahova*

Roma/Gypsies have generally been presented and represented, in both public opinion and academia, as being without a literary and writing tradition of their own. This misconception is based on the argument of Roma having an eminently 'oral' tradition and being reluctant to adopt writing practices (Toninato 2014:50–62), with a low level of literacy and education (Cahn et al. 1999; Óhidy and Forray 2019). While these generalisations have some elements of validity in individual cases, they nevertheless disregard and ignore the authorship and literary creativity of Roma dating back to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The current book is based on recent, in-depth historical research conducted throughout Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe (CSEEE) on various publishing and literary activities led by Roma individuals, activists and organisations, offering a significant contribution to shifting this narrative.

The book has a groundbreaking character from several perspectives related to the studies of Romani literature and media tradition in the fields of Romani Studies, Comparative Literature, Sociolinguistics, and Media Studies, as well as from the perspectives of the history of national literature(s). First and foremost, it points to the fact that Romani literature and media does not have a belated history but has developed with similarity and in parallel to the developments of writing and literature practices in the regions in question and on a scale consistent with the circumstances of the Roma community and the formation of the states within which the Roma community has lived. Second, the book contributes to a perspective that goes beyond the interpretation of Romani literature as an 'oral' literature dominated by folklore, storytelling and non-written literacy systems (Blandfort 2015:76–99; Karpati 1989; Toninato 2014:50–62). Third, stepping on earlier historical research describing literary and journalistic endeavours in respective countries (Achim 2004; Acković 2014: 251–332; Marushiakova and Popov 1997: 121–123; Русаков & Калинин 2006) or globally, including CSEEE countries (Djurić 2002; Zahova 2014), and along with recently discussed sources and materials (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a; Shapoval 2020), the book offers a comprehensive and comparative perspective on the activities and content of Roma print media and on Roma written narratives in journalism in CSEEE before the Second World War.

Romani literature histories are often limited to national borders and journalism and literature of Roma have been discussed in studies about Roma history in various countries (Marushiakova and Popov 1997: 121–123; Achim 2004; Acković 2014: 251–332; Crowe 2007) or globally (Djurić 2002; Toninato 2014; Zahova 2014, 2016). Several studies have focused on reviewing literature by Roma authors in a national or regional context(s), e.g. Soviet Union literature (Русаков & Калинин 2006; Shapoval 2020), Hungary (Beck 2004), Kosovo (Courthiade 1985), Czechoslovakia (Hübschmannová 1991, 2006; Sadílková

2009), Macedonia (Kurth 2008), Yugoslavia (Tahirović-Sijerčić 2016) among others, while literature texts' analyses are generally focused on a certain author or on several authors in a comparative perspective (cf. French 2015; Ryvolová 2014). A common discourse in these studies is the presentation of original Romani literature as a phenomenon that developed only after the 1960s. However, our multi-sited research on individual and library collections, archives and other primary sources proves the availability of Roma writings in earlier periods, with an impressive variety of writings in published and unpublished form. By adopting a multi-national and entangled history perspective (Werner and Zimmermann 2006), with case studies from the countries of CSEEE in which Romani literature and print media developed, our aim is to contribute to expanding the academic knowledge, and address mainstream misconceptions, about Romani literature production. We will do this by showing that Roma-led literature and publishing endeavours were developing synchronically to similar processes among all other communities, and that they repeat the pattern through which European vernacular languages became languages with a printing tradition and cultures with a literary heritage.

Definitions of and theoretical approaches to Romani literature have been extensively discussed in comparative literature scholarship (Blandfort 2015:76–100; Eder-Jodran 1993:13–20; Hertrampf and Blandfort 2011; Kovacshazy 2009, 2011). Some of these theoretical debates have been centred on the question of what Romani literature is and what definition should be given to it. According to a rough summary of most of the definitions, Romani literature includes pieces written by Roma who write about Roma. Others would consider as Romani literature pieces written by Roma but with the exclusion of authors who do not explicitly identify themselves as 'Romani' authors – objecting to their inclusion in the category of Romani literature. The works of Roma authors not writing about Roma topics should, according to some, be excluded from the definition of Romani literature, thus leaving in the field only those who centre their work on Roma topics and discuss Roma characters (Hancock 1998:11).

Rarely have translations of world literature into the Romani language been considered part of the field of Romani literature (Zahova 2014:105–9; Шаповал 2020a), nor did books written by non-Roma authors in the Romani language, or for Roma audiences: for instance, for Roma children and young adults. In this way, some theories discussing Romani literature seem to fall into the trap of the orientalist approach in Romani Studies (Marushiakova and Popov 2017c) and apply to Roma writings criteria for definition that would not be applied to most of the other ethno-national community literatures. Thus, although a Polish-language novel such as *Quo Vadis*, discussing a topic that cannot, strictly speaking, be defined as related to Poland, is regarded as Polish literature, and although there are many authors of English literature classics who have written in the English language without necessarily writing about English or British topics, Roma authors not writing about Roma topics are to be left outside of the field of Romani literature, if such approach is followed. At the same time, in the discourse of these theories (considering only Roma-themed works by Roma authors to be part of Romani literature),

Romani literature is considered auto-descriptive, young and of self-referential character (Blandford 2015; Kovacs hazzy 2011). This ‘exclusivity’ of Romani literature is just another projection of the exoticisation of Roma as a community and an example of essentialisation and orientalisation (Marushiakova and Popov 2017c).

Issues arise also from the exclusion from Romani literature of works by authors of non-Roma origin written in Romani language and for Roma audiences, and, indeed, also on a Roma topic. During my participation in an international project mapping important names in Romani literature, I encountered great concerns about my overview of Roma children’s literature because it included the name and works of a Swedish writer. These concerns were related to the non-Roma background of the author as the main criterion with which to include or exclude their works in the field of Romani literature, ignoring the fact that the author has been widely recognised as a writer of Roma books, for which they have been awarded many prizes, and that for every single Roma person in Sweden, this author’s children books are regarded as Romani literature. Had this author’s pure-ethnicity criterion been applied to other ethno-national literatures, then many authors – including national literature canon classic writers of Jewish background – would have been excluded. With this book, we hope to overcome the Orientalism in Romani literature theories by approaching Romani literature and its history with methods applied to other literatures. We propose an approach that does not stress the exclusivity and particularity of Romani literature as a projection of the widely spread stereotype in academia and public discourse that Roma are completely different from other peoples. We approach the history of Romani literature as we would do if we were examining and discussing the literature and written heritage of any other community or nation in CSEEE.

The main methods applied by the authors of this monograph are based on historical approaches and look at the literature artefacts in their historical context. In this respect, the book contributes to the literary histories of CSEEE, and particularly to the interpretative frameworks which look at the interrelation between arts and literature, on the one hand and politics of identity and nationalism, on the other hand (Cornis-Pope and Neubauer 2010; Juvan 2019, Lampe and Mazower 2004; Sugar 1995; Wachtel 1998). Our approach, furthermore, reflects the historical realities and the empirical observations on what is considered Romani literature by Roma themselves and what literature they (would) identify as Romani. In this respect, it is also important to consider the body of Romani literature textbooks (Djurić and Koko 2018a, 2018b; Kjučukov 1997; Sarău 2005; Sarău and Cordovan 2011) and analyse what is considered Romani literature by those who are authors of these materials and who in fact can be considered contributors to the emerging Romani literature historiographies for educating Roma.

We define as Romani literature works authored by Roma and/or in the Romani language that target Roma audiences, among others. According to us, this short yet clear definition is the most accurate description for all historical periods of Romani literature. It embraces different kinds of literary works, both published and unpublished, in a variety of genres, including the genre of journalist/opinion writings in publicistic style,

or *publicistika* in many of the languages of the CSEEE region. According to the literary studies tradition throughout the region of CSEEE, polemical writing, especially as far as early print media is concerned, falls within the literary genre. This is particularly valid for the nineteenth- and twentieth-century media when writings in various genres – especially poetry, but also opinion pieces, carrying the messages for national emancipation, revival and independence, written by poets who later became the founders of national literary canons – were published in the pages of newspapers. Thus, in the CSEEE print media there was space in which emancipatory propaganda and literature intersected, and wherein many national literature canon authors were often first published. The development of Romani literature does not make an exclusion, and forms of journalistic writings were an important part of the early stages of Romani literature's history as well as of Romani nationalism.

We also include in this broad definition of Romani literature other writings that go beyond or border the fiction literary genre, such as religious and folklore publications, as well as translations of religious texts in Romani. Epistolary genres and memoir writings are a significant part of Romani literature. An important form for creation in the corpus of every literature is literary translations, and we look also at the Romani language translation of different genres and types of publications. Many of these have been already described and studied, especially in regard to religious translations (van den Heuvel 2020; Шаповал 2010). While considering them, the book examines more closely the original literary works in Romani (in published form and in manuscript) and Roma print media works, given that these have not been discussed in depth and in a cross-country perspective, nor have their narratives been analysed from the point of view of Roma activism. Our approach is grounded in the view that Romani literature is a multi-dimensional platform for communication, which aims to inspire and encourage confidence and pride in Roma self-identification.

Despite its inclusivity, the embraced definition does not consider any kind of Roma-related publications (books or periodicals) as part of Romani literature. In the historical period we look at, there are numerous publications about Gypsies, including works describing and exemplifying Romani language, history and culture by amateur or professional researchers of various backgrounds. Some authors embracing a historical approach (Acković 2014; Sandu and Grigore n.d.) would include many publications of this 'about Roma' kind into Romani literature, or into a wider definition of Roma publications, as they are mostly written for non-Roma reading audiences. For instance, *Țiganiada* (The Gypsy Epic, translated in English also as Gypsy Camp), set in fifteen century Wallachia and about Gypsies fighting alongside the army of Vlad III (also known as Vlad the Impaler or Vlad Dracula), written by the Romanian scholar and author Ion Budai-Deleanu (1760–1820) is presented in the public statements of some Roma scholars and activists (Sandu and Grigore n.d.:3) and in manuals for Roma children's education as Romani literature, and Budai-Deleanu as a Roma author, which provoked a public reaction on behalf of Romanian literary scholars. As we will see later in the text,

publications about Roma and documenting Romani language and culture have greatly influenced the Roma community in developing an interest in and motivation for Romani literature creation, but they are not part of the Romani literature scene.

The tendencies in Romani literature are closely interrelated with the developments of the historical periods in which they take place, an interrelation that has often been overlooked in studies of Romani literature, except for some studies adopting a historical approach (Djurić 2002; Eder-Jordan 2016; Trevisan 2008; Zahova 2016, 2020a). In some earlier works I have discussed a four-stage historical periodisation of Romani literature (Zahova 2016:82–83) and of Romani-language literature (Zahova 2020a:540–541). The first period, to which this book is devoted, started with the emergence of Romani literature in the nineteenth century and continued until the Second World War. Although the tendencies in Romani literature have been coherent throughout the whole period, the key historical events – like mid-nineteenth-century revolutions, the end of the empires, First World War and nation-state developments – have consequently influenced the main occurrences and features of Romani literature. In the nineteenth century, Romani-language works primarily comprised religious translations and folklore materials, with several instances of original Romani literature or Romani translations in the context of the nineteenth-century romantic nationalism movements in the respective regions, a tendency that continued at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. The CSEEE region is historically the area where the Romani literature started to emerge, a process entangled with the Roma civic emancipation on the background of the process of national emancipation of the people of the region after the fall of the three empires dominating the region (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a). The countries included in the book are those in which noticeable Roma literary activities were taking place in this period. Similar tendencies might have been taking place in other countries of the region and beyond (as, for instance, religious publications in Romani language were published in various countries and letters by Roma requesting rights and equality for their community appeared in some Nordic countries), but so far we have not discovered original literature production in other countries of the region. Thus, chronologically, the book looks at the first period of Romani literature, i.e. since its beginning in the nineteenth century until the Second World War.

The interwar period saw important and dynamic nationwide developments of Romani literature and print media in some countries. While the major phenomenon described in academia is the Soviet state-wide initiative for publications in Romani language (Marushiakova and Popov 2017d; O’Keeffe 2013; Shapoval 2020; Русаков & Калинин 2016), and many facts about the publishing activities in other countries have been acknowledged in scholarship, this volume, for the first time, looks extensively at the periodical and literature publications of the first historical period of Romani literature. The second period refers to the period after the Second World War, with the emergence of works by Roma authors in many European countries. Throughout this period, the developments of Romani literature occurred primarily in the borders of the national states

and were to a great extent dependent on the respective governmental policies towards the Roma. A third period commenced in the 1980s and was characterised by raising the issue of Roma children's education and Roma culture by European institutions; the fall of the Iron Curtain then stimulated considerable production of Romani literature in the decades after 1989. This period has been related to the general rise of Roma issues in the discourse of international organisations, donors' programmes and EU institutions. The Roma movement has also played an important role in the Roma discourse and intensified contacts between Roma activists internationally. In the fourth period, since the end of the 1990s and after 2000 (i.e. continuing today), we may speak about processes of internationalisation, transnationalisation and globalisation of the Romani literature scene and developments that go far beyond the borders of a country or region (Zahova 2014:59–63). In their discussion on Romani literature, some authors thus explore the terms transnational and diaspora literature (cf. Toninato 2014:51–52; Blandfort 2015:26–34).

The historical approach is a leading one in our take on Romani literature as the literature developments cannot be fully contextualised without the historical environment in which they are taking place. We look at the literature pieces and the individuals and stakeholders involved in their production not as independent artefacts and agents, but as entangled in the historical context and in light of their individual agency, visions and strategies. To be able to understand these processes, we need to consider some basic features from the history of national movement and other historical processes in CSEE that have been discussed in Romani Studies scholarship but rarely applied to Romani literature, and particularly not to the early stages of Romani literature history. As Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov have pointed out in several of their foundational works on Roma history, culture and identity, Roma are not isolated and self-sufficient in terms of a social and cultural system, but constitute an intergroup ethnic community that has always existed in at least two main dimensions: as a community and as part of the wider society (Marushiakova and Popov 2005, 2016a). The community dimension refers to Roma as an ethnic formation that is clearly distinguished from its surrounding population, while the society dimension refers to Roma as an ethnically-based integral part of the respective nation states in which they live (a presence most often going back centuries) and in which they are citizens, along with all other co-citizens of different ethnicity. Marushiakova and Popov further consider the two dimensions 'ethnicity' and 'civic nationality,' and in the case of Roma they are intertwined, interrelated and inseparable (2016a:15). This juxtaposition is an important feature of our theoretical approach, as Roma literary activities can be contextualised and interpreted only by having in mind both dimensions in this juxtaposition. It is important to also note that these dimensions are not conflicting but co-existing in an entanglement, and in many cases the core messages of the literary narratives by Roma communicate an expression of both nationhood and Roma community identity, which does not mean assimilation or oppression of their Roma identity for the sake of the national one. It rather means that in the process of writing and publicising their works Roma authors-cum-activists had to negotiate their

own community place within the respective national framework. In this sense, defining certain Romani literature by a national layer, i.e. Finnish Romani literature, Hungarian Romani literature, Bulgarian Romani literature, etc., is not a theoretical limitation dictated by methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Schiller 2003), but is rather a requirement for the full understanding of the multifaceted character of Romani literature. In this respect, we see our interpretations as following the approach of historical studies looking at Romani literature(s) in their historical context and reflecting the developments in the region or in national countries of production (Djuric 2002; Shapoval 2020; Zahova 2014, 2016, 2020a; Závodská 2016), and in critical stance concerning claims that the essence of Romani literature is diasporic and transnational and should not be attributed to national belonging other than the Roma one. The transnational aspect is, however, an important one in contemporary Romani literature (Blandfort 2015:26–34; Toninato 2014:129–59; Zahova 2016:114–22). Transnational tendencies and developments can be seen only after the 1990s, i.e. in the fourth period of Romani literature. Until then Romani literature developments took place and had impact only within a certain nation-state. Even international developments were very rare or lacking before the 1990s. Instances of international developments in the second half of the twentieth century were publishing a Roma author from a certain country in a Roma media in another country (Roma authors were published on the pages of *Romano lil* in Czechoslovakia in 1973) or Roma authors work translated in the official language of another country where Roma lived, such as the translations of the Menyhért Lakatos's novel *Füstös képek* (literary Smoky Pictures, published in English in 2015 under the title *The Color of Smoke*), first published in 1975, from Hungarian into other languages, such as Bulgarian, Serbian, Romanian, etc. But such international developments were rather an exception than a rule. In this respect is interesting to note that in the 1980s both Philomena Franz and Ceija Stojka published their memoirs as Holocaust survivors (Zahova 2014:50–52). But for years they were not aware of the existence of each other's works, despite the fact that both were published in the same language (German) in two neighbouring countries, which shows us that at this time the development of Romani literature still remained within the borders of the nation state in which the authors published. Therefore, without ignoring the common and joint tendencies in the development of Romani literature, we do not find reasons to apply definitions and terms such as 'diasporic' or 'transnational' in an ahistorical manner to Romani literature. For Romani literature(s) had developed only within national borders until recently and no transnationalisation characteristics could be attributed to it until the 1990s. As a recent in-depth study on Roma organisations and activism before the Second World War shows, there are no data to support the claim that there were any Roma transnational or international initiatives in that period (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a:XXXIV).

Another important juxtaposition for the birth and interpretation of all literatures in CSEEE, including Romani literature, is the correlation between romantic nationalism and literary writing. The history of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century CSEEE is

most commonly associated with the so-called national revivals among various communities living at the time within the territories dominated by the three main empires of the regions – the Ottoman, the Austro-Hungarian and the Russian. In his influential work on the social preconditions of national revival in Europe, Miroslav Hroch argued that national revivals take place within a non-dominant ethnic group characterised by a lack of ruling classes, possessing no state and with a literary tradition in its own language (Hroch 1985:22–26). There are several stages in the national revival: 1) phase A, the “scholarly phase,” in which a small elite begins the study of language, culture and history, identifying their own ethnic group as the one that needs to be awakened, revived and made aware about their national consciousness; 2) phase B, or the “national agitation phase”, in which the scholars’ group of educated circles leads the processes but within which patriots outside the elite group are also mobilised; and 3) phase C, which is the “era of mass national movements” in which purposeful activities aimed at achieving all the attributes of a fully formed nation are developed (Hroch 1985:25–28).

The effects on Roma and their involvement in these nineteenth-century processes have been multidimensional also because of the society-community juxtaposition. On the one hand, much as any other ethnic community on the territory of a nation during the national revival period, Roma communities were also the objects of studies concerned with their language, culture and history. Many nineteenth-century studies in CSEEE thus included studies of Gypsy culture, folklore and language, forming the foundation of contemporary Romani Studies. Societies for the study of folklore and literature also devoted publications to Gypsies and their language. These nineteenth-century processes were interrelated to the context of studying people’s history and folklore in unison with the *Volksgeist* tradition established by Johann Gottfried von Herder (Wilson 2006).

On the other hand, in the same context, an interest to study and awaken their own people was raised among the more educated Roma themselves. The latter were thus the individuals to take part in the first phase (i.e. the scholarly phase), which began in the nineteenth century, but had its peak in the twentieth century. These educated Roma individuals contributed to studies of folklore and language in the framework of a particular national revival, but they had identified their own ethnic community as the one that needed to be awakened. These educated Roma, forming the elite phase, were often a part of, or supporters of, the national revival process of the people among which Roma were living at that time, which was not a contradiction, but an expression of the society-community belonging of the Roma community they wanted to awaken. Their background and individual circumstances might have been different, depending on the geographical and historical circumstances of the Roma groups and larger community in those respective areas. As we will see from the book, these individuals could be representatives of the clergy and/or educated within religious circles in the Ottoman Empire, given that the religious field was the one through which education was provided at the time and given the importance of religious identity for the national revivals in the region. In the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires, however, these were often

individuals from Gypsy groups with a higher level of social integration and education (such as musicians interacting with aristocracy). These educated Roma, according to the Herderian model for national emancipation, also started collecting and publishing folklore materials, dictionaries, narratives about customs, and traditional songs representing the national spirit. Language and folklore material collections were considered the core of a people's culture, and thus a main object of interest among the educated and the 'intellectual elite.' Thus, similar to all other elites in the region of CSEEE, these individual Roma intellectuals represented the scholarly phase mentioned above: they were folklore collectors, dictionary compilers, translators into the Roma vernacular and creators of original literature.

Therefore, the transformation of Romani literature from oral into written took place in the context of nineteenth-century romantic nationalism and has followed the pattern through which other European vernacular languages also developed printing traditions in the process of nation building, beginning in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Anderson 2006:70–71). The first Romani-language printed texts featured folklore materials collected and published by folklorists and biblical translations into dialects of Romani language, often preceded by dictionaries and word records. The publications in Romani language or the publications that document Roma narratives in written form in the region of CSEEE also follow this general pattern. Into this area, for instance, fall the works of the Gypsy musician and participant in the Hungarian revolution János Ipolysági Balogh / Jancsi Sági Balogh (1802–1876), who translated prayers into the Romani language, published in a booklet *Legelső cigány imádságok a melly mind a két magyar hazában lévő cigány nemzet számára* (First Gypsy prayers for both nations in their Hungarian homeland) in 1850 (Balogh 1850; Orsós 2015), as well as created a word record which became the foundation of a grammar published in 1888. This is an example of the pattern though which religious and folklore publications laid the foundation of Romani literature and led to the later development of Romani literature. Moreover, right up to the present day, they have had an impact on the Roma communities' activists who produce Romani literature, as well as on the Roma communities, as being sources of pride and identity, given their representation of the Roma as a community equal to all others.

However, it was not only language and folklore records and religious translations that appeared in the nineteenth century. This was also a period in which Romani language fiction – original works by Roma – and Romani language translations of literary works in other languages were created with instances of preserved original literature in the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Szuhay 2000:37). Although, until recently, largely unknown beyond academic circles and several Roma activists, Ferenc Sztojka Nagyidai (1855–1929) should be considered the first writer of original Romani language literature piece. Sztojka is better known for his Hungarian-Romani language dictionary *Ő császári és magyar királyi fensége József főherceg magyar- és cigány-nyelv gyök-szótára – Románé áláva. Iskolai és utazási használatra* (Dictionary of the Word Stems of the Gypsy and Hungarian Languages by His Imperial Highness, the Archduke Joseph), published

originally in 1886 (Sztójka 1886, 2007). The dictionary, however, is more significant for its literary supplement, which included Romani-language translations of religious texts and national Hungarian poets, and original works by Sztójka himself. The publication should be seen as a platform on which all important features of nineteenth-century Romani literary endeavours intersect: language representation in a dictionary; religious texts (Romani language versions of prayers, the Apostles' Creed and the Ten Commandments); Romani-language translations of Hungarian revolutionary poets (Márton Etédi Sós and Sándor Petőfi); original poetic works in Romani language followed by translation ("Royal Greeting," "To Crown Prince Rudolf" among others); a folklore part (with records of songs, blessings, sayings); and two dramas by Sztójka on historical subjects. The drama *Czigány lakodalom* (Gypsy Wedding) takes place in the Middle Ages, in a Gypsy Fortress on Hungarian land during the time of King Charles Robert (or Károly Róbert in Hungarian), who is considered one of the most important figures in Hungarian history. The second drama by Sztójka, *A cigányok vándorlása* (The Wanderings of the Gypsies), is a literary narration about the origin of the Roma people in the time of Attila the Hun. The literary legacy of Sztójka is representative for both the nineteenth-century national revival movement among the Gypsies and for Romani literature in general – its key messages are related to the origin and historical path of the Gypsy people in the background of the historical narratives and figures of the surrounding environment. It is reminiscent of the genre of history narratives, popular among early revival-period writers in CSEEE (Sugar 1995; Todorova 2005) and representative of the scholarly phase of the modern national movement: namely, a poet and literary creator who creates historical narratives and collects folklore to become pillars and emblems of a national consciousness. Despite the fact that these Romani literary activities had never made it to the large mobilisation phase, they took part synchronically within all other modern nations' movements.

Another feature of Romani literature, developed since the early period of its existence, is the interrelation with the literary traditions and social processes of the national society. For instance, József Boldizsár (1825–1878), another Roma participant in the Hungarian revolution, has translated Sándor Petőfi's poems into the Romani language and published them in the recently launched multilingual *Comparative Literary Journal* (Petőfi 1878:29–30; Szabó 2016) on the pages of which were published also Roma folklore and Romani language materials (Szabó 2017). Romani language translations of national poets and leading intellectuals of the abolition movement in Wallachia and Moldavia in the mid-nineteenth century were published in periodicals and leaflets, for instance, by Matei Millo (1814–1894) and Nicolae Istrati (1818–1861). Istrati's poem "The Song of the Gypsies on the Day of their Emancipation" had two editions, in 1844 and 1856 (Achim 2016). Other national and world literature classics, such as Pushkin's *Gypsies*, were also among the early Romani language translations of the interwar period (Пушкин 1937). This tendency has continued steadily throughout the entire period of Romani literature and to this day

has not lost its popularity among Romani activists, with records of recitations of Romani language translations of national literary classics continuing to be put on social media.

Therefore, undoubtedly, we can consider the mid-nineteenth century as the beginning of modern original Romani literature writing, which developed synchronically to all other early modern literatures in CSEEE. Sztojka has been rightfully named the first original writer in the Romani language by some (Courthiade 2017:485–486; Szuhay 2000:37) and the predecessor of Romani literature by others (Marushiakova and Popov 2020; Orsos 2015). Some studies also consider the nineteenth century as the time of Romani literature's birth, naming the first writer of original Romani literature in this era as Gina Ranjičić (Acković 2014:132; Djurić 2002:27). Ranjičić was a figure whom Heinrich von Wlislocki, a nineteenth-century philologist and collector of linguistic and folklore materials among Transylvanian Gypsies, allegedly met in her later years, when she had already authored 250 poems, some of which were published in Romani language and in German by Wlislocki (Wlislocki 1892:181–183). There is a lot of uncertainty and doubt about the authenticity of Gina Ranjičić as a personality and as the actual author of the poems attributed to her by Wlislocki (Marushiakova and Popov 2020; Zahova 2014). Undoubted, however, is the fact that references to her are nowadays forming narratives about the first Romani language literary writings. No matter whether she was a real or invented personality and author of these poems, Gina Ranjičić is today considered by many as the world's first Roma poetess. Her poems in Romani language have been reprinted from the works of Wlislocki and published in Roma poetry collections (Taikon 1964) and anthologies (Acković 2012), and even in mainstream literary periodicals, as 'Gypsy poems' (Birtingur 1966). Roma activists' writings refer to Ranjičić as the first Roma poetess, and, despite the lack of any documentation of her as a historical figure, the Roma Museum in Belgrade has commissioned for its collection a portrait of Ranjičić that is accompanied by the explanation "this is Gina Ranjičić, the first Roma poetess, in the way we imagine her appearance."

According to some Romani literature history interpretations, the first Roma writers emerged even earlier in the nineteenth century. Some Romanian Roma scholars and even some non-Roma academics (Bunea and Lascu 2006) consider that the first writer of Roma origin was Anton Pann. Anton Pann (17908–1854) was the penname of Antonie Pantelimonovici Petrov, acclaimed musicologist, folklorist, Romanian language poet and composer, including of the music of the current Romanian national anthem. Unlike Gina Ranjičić, the existence of Anton Pann is not questionable but his family's ancestry is uncertain, which gives ground for various interpretations depending on the ethno-national standpoint of the historiographer writing about him. Anton was born in the town of Sliven in the Ottoman Empire and later migrated with his widowed mother and siblings to Wallachia. His father was a cauldron maker, *căldărar* in Romanian, a fact that according to Roma researchers and activists means that he belonged to the Roma group with the same name (Sandu and Grigore n.d.) and thus Anton Pann was a Roma writer.

He is presented as the first Romanian Roma writer in literature textbooks (Sarău 2006:56; Sarău and Cordovan 2011:78) and other publications related to Roma personalities and his works were translated in Romani language and published as educational material in Romania (Pann 2005). In the Romanian historiography, on the other hand, Pann is presented as either “bulgarised Romanian” or a “bulgarised Gypsy,” or, according to the famous historian Nicolae Iorga, as Aromanian or Vlach (Munteanu 2016:123). It is interesting to note how, in the process of constructing or ‘curating’ national literature canon, the literature historiographers (Roma or Romanian) use a primordial approach according to which the alleged ethnic origin would make the author count as belonging to one national literature or another. The other interesting phenomenon is the recent ‘discovery’ of the Roma origin of Anton Pann and presenting him as Roma author although debates about his Gypsy origin were present in the early and mid-nineteenth century (Munteanu 2016:123–124).

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the downfall of empires and the establishment of new nation states, bringing nations to the phase of full independence and recognition after the First World War. Many of the nineteenth-century tendencies in Romani literature production, in the light of romantic nationalism, continued and multiplied in the next century (and some continue until today); but the new political, social and cultural realities, along with the general developments of the time, brought new tendencies to Roma activism as well as Roma writing as an extension of this activism. Nation identity-building tendencies, new ideologies, new civil rights regimes, new political parties and legislations became the new environment and, naturally, this has influenced the forms of literary expressions and has been reflected in the content communicated by Roma writers.

Two major phenomena of the interwar period need to be highlighted as an embodiment of the epoch and as something that also affected Romani literary production – Roma civic organisations and Roma print media. During this period, as part of the national states and their legislative regimes for self-organisation, many Roma organisations of a civic, religious or ideological nature were established in some countries of CSEEE, reflecting impressive nationwide Roma movements (in Romania) or vivid local individual movements (in Belgrade and other locations in Yugoslavia). Recent archival and multidisciplinary research has demonstrated only the “tip of the iceberg” by publishing selected historical sources related to the activities of Roma civic organisations of the time (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a:XX). The commonality among all of them, however, was the aim to form an ethnic-specific union of Roma citizens for achieving their emancipation. The personalities initiating and leading these organisations were the spokespersons/representatives of the Roma movement of the time, and in extension of their civic activism, they were often also the first authors of original Romani literature. This marks the beginning of the widespread tendency, observed since the nineteenth century, of an intersection of Roma activism and writing (i.e. overlapping between the figure of Roma activist and writer, see for details Zahova 2017). In this period, in almost all countries of

the CSEEE, groups and circles of individuals came into being that constituted a kind of Roma intelligentsia, which formed visions for the enlightening of all the Roma in their respective countries, by different means. Along with setting up organisations, a common way for them to express, communicate and disseminate their visions for enlightening and their endeavours for self-organisation was through writing. Thus, as we will see in all the texts discussed throughout this book, the Roma activists-writers' works were the embodiment of their visions for the enhancement of their own community and a symbol of their emancipatory efforts.

We see the literary and print media activities of the Roma individuals and organisations as part of a larger emancipatory movement. The term emancipation has different connotations depending on the historical background and theoretic interpretation. It has been used, for instance, in the context of such nineteenth-century events as the serfdom and slavery abolition movements, and political movements among various groups in Europe, as well as for many processes throughout the twentieth century, such as the women rights' movement, voting rights equality, national independence movements in European and in post-colonial contexts throughout the world (Vermeulen 1996). The term emancipation, in our understanding, describes the process of the Roma achieving equal status as a community and as individual citizens with rights in all fields of life within society (political, religious, educational, economic, civil law, etc.) in the context of the entangled histories of the Roma movement and Roma publishing by the Second World War. Emancipation is thus a process that includes various efforts for achieving rights and equality. From the point of view of the history of Romani literature and publishing, we, on the one hand, interpret writing and publishing as an embodiment of the process of emancipation. On the other hand, we are interested in the internal dynamics within the field of writing and publishing – namely, how the issue of emancipation is discussed, what the angles, viewpoints, discussions and perspectives are on the matter of how to achieve equality for the Roma. As with every platform and discourses on the process of emancipation, there are nuances, differences and contrasts as well as commonalities, similarities and resonances. We are interested in comparing those discourses across individuals, organisations, countries and periods.

Periodical press has traditionally played an important role in supporting national movements and, in this regard, Roma publications once again repeat a common European pattern. In some cases, individuals expressing their visions of Roma/Gypsy community development and advancement presented texts they had authored in periodicals published by the national emancipation movement of the surrounding national society (see the publication in the *Macedonia* newspaper in the first chapter) or in periodicals of political circles (in the case of Finland). Usually, however, Roma were striving to set up their own print media and did so as early as the dawn of the twentieth century. In the context of CSEEE, periodicals and journalism played an important role in the early stages of the growth of national literature and as supporters to the national emancipation struggle. A common feature of the interwar period in Europe was the expansion

of print media and newspaper systems (Newman and Houlbrook 2013). The public and social field of modern nation states became gradually mediated by journals and newspapers reaching citizens across the nations. It is not surprising that print media was the most common channel and platform for communicating the messages of Roma activists across the nation-state. A cross-country commonality in Romani language publishing of the time was that newspapers became platforms for sharing visions and programmes of leaders and organisations. Journalistic writing was a common and widespread form of literary expression used to reach the public. It was undoubtedly the most effective publishing form in terms of productions, distribution through the nationwide networks and potential readership. As we will see, Roma print media of the time was not defined by reporting journalism, but by writings in all styles and genre forms, among which were manifestos, opinion pieces, memoirs, poems, etc. Roma print media was thus a micro-model of Romani literature of the time and a propaganda platform for the periodicals' publishers, usually Roma organisations.

The fact that polemical writing was the dominant form of publishing in most of the countries does not mean that there were no other forms of literature. Rather, it was the most feasible and cost-effective way of publishing to reach the public. As our archival research shows, there were also other literary works in different genres, which remained unpublished due to a lack of means or opportunities for publishing. The case of the large-scale USSR publishing initiative in which Romani literature in all genres was created shows that in a favourable and supportive environment literary works did appear and thrive.

Another issue that comes up in relation to literacy and reading habits is the 'oral culture' of Roma. As previously mentioned, Roma written heritage has been viewed as a belated phenomenon and Romani literature as a young one. It has also been defined as dominated by folklore, storytelling and orality in general, until the 1960s, when original authors' works started to be published. This discourse is based on the evolutionary perspective of literary histories that view orality and storytelling as predecessors of written literature, and folklore and orality as belonging to a 'traditional' time, while literature and writing are viewed as belonging to the 'modern' period. Thus, the oxymoronic term 'oral literature' or 'oraliture' (Blandfort 2015:76–99) has been coined (used also for literatures of ethnic communities) for the alleged limited written heritage that can be defined as Roma original/modern/authored literature.

However, the existence and vitality of orality, storytelling and folklore do not oppress and exclude modern literature authorship, and nor does the existence of modern literary genres mean the loss of oral tradition. As the book will showcase, original Romani literature in various modern literature genres was being created as early as the mid-nineteenth century; thus, not belatedly but in parallel to the developments of writing and literature practices in the respective region (and on a scale consistent with the circumstances of the Roma community and state formation in the areas within which the Roma were living). There is no linear evolution in the history of Roma culture – nor,

indeed, in any other culture – when folklore creativity stops completely to give way to modern literature authorship. On the contrary, the relationship between literature and folklore has been multidirectional, multifaceted, diverse and dynamic. Similar to other literature traditions, folklore elements have become inspirational for Romani literature creations, and many authors have applied folklore elements and employed oral narratives in their authored works, with their own interpretations, shift and ornamentation. Simultaneously, motifs, narratives, characters and texts originally created in written form have been further circulated in oral narrative and popular culture to the extent of being perceived as centuries-old folklore treasures existing in the anonymity of the collective. Therefore, our approach is in line with the call for going beyond simplified dichotomies of oral and written literature (Eder-Jorden 2016).

The volume collection discusses the development of Romani literature in countries in which such publications appeared during the first period of the history of Romani literature, that is, from the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century until the Second World War. As we have argued, although divided by the First World War, in regard to tendencies in the development of Romani literature and features of Roma publications, the period should be seen as a whole. This period has also been the least studied with regard to Romani literature and print media. Geographically, these developments took place in the region of CSEEE. As argued in both *Nationalism Studies* (Alapuro 1979) and *Romani Studies* (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a), Finland, which had been annexed by Russia in 1809 and became independent in 1918, belongs to the same region historically and culturally and followed the same patterns of national formation, guided by Herder's philosophy (Stark 2016).

Each chapter is devoted to a country in which Roma literary activities occurred until the Second World War. Beyond the common features, characteristic of the whole region, there are country-related specificities in the political and social development of the national society and the Roma community that have been reflected in the Romani literature and print media features and developments, as demonstrated in the chapters. Furthermore, we illustrate that even within a country, the occurrences were not homogeneous and straightforward, but multidimensional and heterogeneous, reflecting the diversity of voices and visions for the development of the Roma community. The consistent common feature was that Romani literature and periodicals were the medium for communicating in written form the visions and voices of Roma activists of the time.

As the literature phenomena in this historical period were taking place in the borders of the political entities in which the authors and producers resided and were directed to the Roma (and other) communities in the concrete nation-state and in some cases (Hungary) to a certain group, the chapters are organised on a country to country basis and their arrangement follows geographical, political and historical criteria. The first chapter "Ottoman Empire", co-written by Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, looks at the beginnings of Romani literature and media in the Balkans and their interrelations with the general developments in the specific context in the different regions of the

multinational Empire. The chapter looks at the pioneering examples of writings among both Roma Christians and Roma Muslims, demonstrating that while there is particularity of the forms and directions of the literature production process, the essence of the Roma emancipation movement is nevertheless the same and is related to the aim of the Roma individuals to achieve equal status for their community. The second chapter “Bulgaria” written by Aleksandar Marinov looks at the already independent nation-state and how Bulgarian Roma sought ways to establish, define and institutionalise their community through writing and publishing. The Evangelical publications of Roma Baptist churchgoers and of the Roma Muslims from Sofia may be different in their content, visions and interests, but are similar in their expression of the struggles of Roma for social justice and demonstration of active civic consciousness. The third chapter looks at another multi-national state, Yugoslavia, where the shortly existing newspaper *Romano lil* became a platform for conveying the visions about the Roma emancipation in literature form. The author, Sofiya Zahova, argues that it was exactly in this period when narratives of the Roma as a people united by a common culture and historical memory emerged and when all genres of literature writing, including novel, have developed. The fourth chapter, “Romania,” looks at the country with one of the most vivid civic emancipatory movement, mirrored by a not less vibrant literary scene, including Roma periodicals, items written by Roma authors in mainstream media, books on the topic of Roma and the project for the creation of a Roma Folklore collection, within a Roma Library. Raluca Bianca Roman discusses all these developments and brings forth the main outputs of these movements: the literary products themselves, the Roma authors, the main organisations, themes and narratives, in the context of the entanglements between the production of texts and the goals and aims of the Roma emancipation movement in the country. In the fifth chapter, “Hungary,” Tamás Hajnóczky presents four periodicals of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians published before and after the treaty of Trianon. These publications, that in terms of quantity form an impressive body of issues and pages, were platforms for communicating the interests of the wealthiest and most integrated into majority society group of Hungarian Gypsies. Their specialisation determined to a great extent the content of the journals that were focused on the issues of Gypsy musical society, their cultural and social affairs, seeking to strengthen and improve the social standing and economic opportunities. The chapter demonstrates also how journals were aiming to reinforce the Hungarian Gypsy musicians’ particular identity and, furthermore, in the new historical realities of Hungary as a nation-state, expressed their belonging to the Hungarian nation and Hungarian culture. The impressive and, thus far, unmatched in terms of its number of titles and literature varieties, Soviet Romani publishing project is discussed in chapter six, “USSR,” authored by Viktor Shapoval. In the background of the Soviet Gypsy policies of the interwar period, the chapter looks into important quantitative aspects, among which the number of titles per years, genres distribution, number of produced pages, number of original and translated titles, etc., along with previously undiscussed features and agents of the so-called publishing chain – main

authors, translators, editors, publishers, censors and decision takers, and finally readers. In the seventh and last chapter, “Finland,” Risto Blomster and Raluca Bianca Roman present a groundbreaking overview of the literary works of Roma from Finland. In the context of the history and emancipatory movement of Roma in the country, the chapter introduces the pre-cursors to literary pieces authored by Roma, while also highlighting the role of specific organisations, authors and figures in the development of forms of Romani literature. Finally, in the Conclusion of this monograph Raluca Bianca Roman looks at the common threads both in terms of the formal patterns of developments and in terms of the structural process of writing and producing during the first historical period of Romani literature.

All the chapters demonstrate novelty, originality and distinctiveness. The chapter on Hungarian Gypsy musicians’ periodicals presents and discusses in English, for the first time, these recently discovered archival sources – an impressive number of issues of periodicals that have been virtually unknown before recent academic research and publications by Tamás Hajnóczky (2019, 2020a, 2020b). The other country studies, although discussing works, titles and writers mostly already known, reveal hitherto undescribed facts and figures from the history of Romani literature: the first discussion of the *Laço* newspaper, previously unknown Roma authors from Finland, manuscripts by Svetozar Simić in the Yugoslav chapter, original religious works in the Bulgarian chapter. Even when discussing already known literary and media titles, the contributions offer stimulating in-depth analysis of the form and content of Romani literature narratives by providing translations of the literature and media texts, along with discussion and analysis. The USSR chapter offers an exclusive statistical overview of the genres of Romani literature, along with new insights from the important process of editing, production, distribution and preservation. Thus, on the one hand, we build upon the contribution of previously published materials, by detailed discussion and presentation from the point of view of literature, emancipation and nationalism; on the other hand, we reveal facts from the history of Romani literature practically unfamiliar to the research community. Finally, the concluding analysis offers a cross-country discussion on commonalities as well as on the contrasts and differences in the developments against the background of national policies and the Roma movement in each respective country.

Another line of interpretation on the alleged belatedness and particularity of Romani literature has been founded on the claim that late Roma writing has to do with the resistance of Roma to education, literacy and inclusion in the state institutions. In this discourse, the late writing tradition is explained by the “Roma’s diverse approach to writing,” which essentially is exemplified by various non-written forms of communication as “non-alphabetic graphic codes” (Toninato 2014:55–62). Our research demonstrates that, in terms of the particularity of Roma writing, it is not the signs allegedly used by nomadic groups but the diversity in content and writing forms that remain largely under-researched. Demystification and normalisation of Romani literature goes through further interdisciplinary and multisided research on actual writings. The challenges do not

originate in the lack of written heritage but in the fact that these writings are scattered in various localities and very often not in institutional archives or collections. They have also been written in various languages, which poses another difficulty regarding access to all the materials by any individual researcher. Even when written in the Romani language, some texts might be incomprehensible, as not all Romani literature researchers speak the Romani language or all dialects of the Romani language. Another issue is how much of these writings have been preserved at all after more than a century.

The volume, therefore, offers novel perspectives in our understanding of Roma history and Roma writing, wherein Roma themselves become active participants and agents. The overarching goal is to incorporate the works of Roma writers into the broader sphere of literary production while, at the same time, shifting the narrative of marginality and exclusion to one that emphasises Roma authorship, Roma agency and Roma voices within the history of both the Roma community and the respective state/region. By doing so, we hope that the book will further the principal goal of including the history of Romani literature and media in the overarching historiography and literary landscape of Europe, thereby going away with the continuous marginalisation of Roma history within European history more generally. Finally, grounded in the analysis of primary sources, our aim is to showcase the active, engaged and important role that Roma authors have played in the shaping of new ideas of Roma emancipation and Roma mobilisation, as well as in contributing to the individual national histories and literatures.

\* \* \*

Several points might be worth discussing regarding the terms used. As already clarified, we refer to Romani literature as a historically emerged phenomenon and in the broader sense of literary works produced by Roma and/or in Romani language and directed towards Roma audiences, among others. In this regard, Romani literature can also be defined as the corpus of Roma writings and our interpretation is in line with the term “Romani writing” used by Paola Toninato (2014) and “Romani letters” by Karolína Ryvolová (2014). Considering the diversity of language traditions and circumstances in the creation of Romani literature, some authors argue for the plurality of the term and thus speak about Romani literatures in order to reflect the diversity of the phenomenon (Blandfort 2015; Kovacshazy 2011). While we agree that the internal diversity of Romani literature is undisputable and we acknowledge that in the historical period in question all developments were taking place within a certain political entity and no cross-border or international developments were observed in the literary field, we still think that all Romani literature pieces, regardless of the period and location of creation, share features that go beyond the borders of one country or region. Regardless of the independent developments and various forms in which literature was produced, the content and message of the literary narratives of all Roma authors of the time were in one direction. These circumstances allow us to speak of Romani literature as

a heterogeneous and multifaceted yet still collective phenomenon. The term Romani literature in this respect can be considered a construct as much as all other ethnic and national communities' literatures are (i.e. English literature, American literature, Hungarian literature, Saami literature, Latin literature, etc.).

The Romani language adjective 'Romani' has widely been used in defining literature by the Roma and Romani literature has already been established as a term which we also use. The transcription of the words and sentences in the Romani language are maintained as in the original. In the English language texts also the self-appeal of the community is used, most often the term 'Roma', which is by now the one most commonly used within the public sphere. As in the other publications of RomaInterbellum project (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a) the same term is also used as an adjective. The only exceptions to this principle are the combination of terms 'Romani literature', 'Romani language' and 'Romani Studies' because they have already made a lasting entry in the academic language.

The terms 'Gypsies' and the adjective 'Gypsy' are used in the cases when we translate sources in the languages of the countries discussed which are usually translated as 'Gypsies' and 'Gypsy', i.e. 'цигани' and 'цигански' (in Bulgarian and Serbian), 'țigani' and 'țigănesc' (in Romanian), 'Cigányok' and 'cigány' (in Hungarian), 'цыгане' and 'цыганский' (in Russian), 'mustalaiset' and 'mustalainen' (in Finnish). Over time, and especially after the First World War, when the old empires collapsed and new ethnic-nation-states emerged in the region, some of these names were official terms and became political denominations of the Roma communities in their respective countries (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a). As it has already been discussed, the term 'Gypsy' in English is used globally to signify a nomadic life-style and does not refer to a concrete ethnic community (Hancock 2010:95–96) and thus it does not adequately translate the terms used from concrete ethnic communities in the languages of CSEEE (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a:XXXII). In present times in UK context the term is used as part of the officially established "Gypsy, Roma, Travellers" community (Clark and Greenfields 2006). Being aware of these nuances and shortcomings, the authors nevertheless use 'Gypsy' as both a noun and an adjective when translating into English the terms listed above in original sources as titles of works, literary text or names of institutions. In most of the cases we have also provided the originals in the texts which would help the reader to see the context of the term's usage.

The quotes and titles of publications are displayed in the language and alphabet of the original, with their specific orthography. In this period, as well as in other periods of Romani literature, the writing system for the Romani language was often based on the existing orthographic and alphabets of the country of publishing, with which the authors were well acquainted. Thus, in the Roma publications in interwar Yugoslavia Cyrillic and Latin are used as both alphabets were introduced as official in the interwar period.

The publication follows the American Sociological Association (ASA) Style Guide and by extension the Chicago Manual of Style. Thus, Italics are preserved also in cases

whenever used in original texts (for example, when we provide titles of publications and organisations in the original languages and their orthographies), but note that Italics also indicate words and phrases that are in the Romani language or in another language when inserted into a text that is in another language.

The list of references is divided into three parts: bibliography of literature which is separated in two parts depending on the orthography of the languages, thus we have Latin and non-Latin script languages; list of popular journals and media; list of archival sources. The last two parts are divided according to countries for the sake of clarity and research purposes.

For maintaining a form of language equality, all archival and media sources, and bibliographic data, including references to the text, are displayed in the language and alphabet of the original. As the chapters draw on main tendencies or focus on certain type of publications that were the most productive literature field (for instance Hungarian Gypsy associations' journals discussed in the respective chapter), in some cases not all Roma publications from the period are presented in the texts. We have however provided a comprehensive list of the publications known to us and collected as results of our research in two Appendices: Appendix I Romani literature works and Appendix II Roma popular journals and newspapers.

The book reflects the state of research on the interwar literature production in CSEEE Europe as of 2020. Since our experience showed that earlier unknown materials are still available, although dispersed or in badly preserved and endangered-of-extinction state, we do hope that the book will inspire and stimulate further research on the topic that would reveal more literature sources from the first period of Romani literature.

# Ottoman Empire

*Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov*

## 1.1 Introduction

The beginnings of Romani literature and media in the Balkans, in the conditions of the Ottoman Empire, can only be properly understood and explained when placed in the general context of the birth and development of the movement for Roma civic emancipation during the modern era. There is an interesting particularity of this movement, which takes different forms and directions, conditioned by the specific context in the different regions of this multinational Empire. In some cases, this movement (and, accordingly, Romani literature and press) are closely linked to the national liberation struggles of the Balkan Orthodox peoples (among Roma Christians) and, in other cases, it is part of the general development of the Ottoman society (among Roma Muslims).

The reasons for this division can be found when looking at the overall situation of the Ottoman Empire and the place of the Roma in its socio-political structure. Here, the so-called ‘Gypsies’, whose official name in Ottoman-Turkish was *Kıptı* (i.e. Copts – the native Egyptians) or *Çingene*, were full-fledged subjects of the Sultan (i.e. citizens of the Empire) and, unlike the Gypsies in Central and Western Europe who achieved this social status much later, had had civil rights since the fifteenth century (Marushiakova and Popov 2001). However, the population in the Ottoman Empire was not in an equal social position, as the main division was into two basic categories, distinguished according to their religion – orthodox (Muslim) and infidels (non-Muslims).

Gypsies, who were separated by ethnicity in Ottoman law (a relatively rare phenomenon for this Empire), fell into both categories according to their religion (Muslims or Christians), which in turn predetermined the development of Roma civic emancipation in two main directions and, along with this, it flew in different forms.

## 1.2 Roma Christians

In 1867, the Bulgarian newspaper *Macedonia*, printed in Istanbul, published a reader’s “Letter to the Editor” (the chief editor was Petko Rachov Slaveykov, a renowned Bulgarian enlightener, fighter for civic and national revival of Bulgarians and for the independent Bulgarian church); the letter was signed with the pseudonym “One Egyptian” (Един Египтянин 1867:3; for full text of the letter see Marushiakova and Popov 1995:39–42; 2021:9–17). At that time in the Balkans the name *Egyptians* (*Егѣпци*, *Егѣпци*, *Гюпци*, etc.

in the various languages) designated Gypsies, which, in the Ottoman Empire, referred to their official name *Kipti* (meaning Egyptians), and which in turn originated from *Αιγύπτιος* (Egyptians), a term used since Byzantine times (Soulis 1961).

This “Letter to the Editor” in the newspaper *Macedonia* represented a direct response to the editor of the newspaper – Petko R. Slaveykov and his article entitled “The Gypsies,” published in *Gayda* newspaper in 1866 (Славейков 1866:256–258) and which actually inspired the author of the letter to write it. In this article, the leading discourse was the origin and history of the Gypsies in the Balkans, to where, according to its author, they migrated from Egypt; moreover, the Gypsies were said to be those who brought to the “wild” Greeks the benefits of civilisation, as evidenced by the borrowings from their language in Greek (Един Егюптиянин 1867:3). The ‘evidence’ of the origin and history of the Gypsies presented in this article is undoubtedly original (or, rather, even extravagant), although far from the achievements of European science at the time. The ‘Egyptian’ hypothesis about the origin of the Gypsies, especially popular in the Middle Ages, was, at the time, long overdue in the history of science; however, in the Balkans, it unexpectedly found its new life. The reasons for this are rather socio-political – this was the height of the struggle for independence of the Bulgarian church against the Greeks, and the humiliation of Greek’s ancient history was part of the arguments in this struggle, of which Petko R. Slaveykov himself was one of the leading figures.

In this context, the author of the “Letter to the Editor” in the newspaper *Macedonia* used the article by Petko R. Slaveykov as a starting point for presenting the contemporary problems that his community faced, namely the need for religious emancipation of the Gypsies, which for him constituted an integral and important part of their overall civic emancipation.

Summing up the “Letter from One Egyptian”: it was directed against the Greeks, because, according to the author, they were to blame for the plight of Egyptians and a major obstacle to their civic development. In particular, the letter opposed the overall management of the Orthodox Church by the Greek church elite, in the conditions of the Ottoman Empire. This elite was called *Phanariotes*, from the name of the neighbourhood Phanar (modern Fener) in Istanbul, where the court of the Patriarch resided, and rich Greek merchants lived, who influenced the Ottoman administration. The Greek church elite under the Ottoman system was recognised as both the spiritual and secular head of all the Orthodox subjects of the Empire (except those Orthodox who were under the spiritual care of the Patriarchs of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria). The *Phanariotes* were accused of not allowing other Orthodox nations in the Ottoman Empire, as in the case of Bulgarians, to have religious independence. In the words of the author: “the Phanariotes govern our faith” and were insisting that “only they have the right to it and only they are followers of the Apostles of Christ” (Един Егюптиянин 1867:3).

In his letter, “One Egyptian” argued that the policy of the Greek Church is detrimental to all nations, but most severely affects the Egyptians, who were not allowed into the Orthodox Church. With many quotations from the Holy Scripture, the author of the

letter argued that the Greeks had no reason for such an attitude towards the Egyptians. Christianity does not divide different peoples into those “chosen by God” and those “unpleasant to God,” because all people are equal before God, including the “Egyptians” who are also entitled to have their own “spiritual education” (Един Егюптиянин 1867:3). Greeks were further blamed because they considered only themselves to be “pleasant to God, and all others consider suspicious and unworthy”, and insisted that only their language was appropriate for worship and forgot that “the Apostles speak all languages through the Holy Ghost and not only the Hellenic” (ibid.).

According to the Letter, the Egyptians, historically, in their motherland of Egypt, had “reached a high degree [of] education [but] they did some disturbances in Egypt. From which some thousand [people] were displeased and moved to Hellas. There, in Hellas, they brought together with them their eternal arts and alphabet.” (ibid.)

The author of the letter used arguments to plead for the right of the Egyptians as an ancient people. Along with this historical reasoning, the author of the letter also relied on the authority of the Holy Scriptures to present and defend the concept of the equality of his community:

... we see that it will all be in benefit to the Greeks regardless of who invented it and ordained it, they take it and do not let go, and all which is not in their benefit, that is which contradicts their lofty ideas and distinguishes all peoples in the Christian faith, though it was made legitimate by Jesus Christ himself and the Apostles who said – “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (3 Galatians; 28) – they do not recognise it and pretend to be deaf as [if] they do not know it ... (ibid.)

In the text, “One Egyptian” did not limit himself to substantiating the right to religious emancipation of his community but also outlined the more distant goals and the next necessary steps for its overall civic emancipation. He wrote:

That same thing we saw in *Gayda* ... where proving about our origin that we are a breed of the old Egyptians, which is proved live not only by our advantage and abilities, but by our very language and the appellation “Egyptians” which we still hear today ... (ibid.)

Because of their glorious past, they have the right to have religious worship in their own language and to “create a society and take care of education” (ibid.). The letter ends with an appeal to the Greeks:

If they want to be proud before Europe that they are enlighteners, let them first bow and prostrate themselves at our feet, to recognise their enlighteners and do their duty with which to show a faithful example for the others, and then they would have the right to ask. (ibid.)

This letter can be properly understood only in the context of the social movement of Bulgarians against the Greek Patriarchate during this period, in an effort to have their

'own' Bulgarian church. The newspaper *Macedonia*, where the previously discussed "Letter to the Editor" was published, was the main speaker for this movement, and its editor-in-chief, Petko R. Slaveykov, was one of its leaders. For the author of the letter, "One Egyptian", and similarly for the Bulgarian national revivalists, these 'church' struggles were religious only as a form, but in fact they were a movement for the protection of the fundamental rights of every nation to religious and civic equality respectively. The author felt the disparaging (in the best case) attitude of the macro-society towards Gypsies and suffered from the restrictions imposed on his people by the Christian (and in general the religious) institutions of that time. In his letter, he shows the injustice of such an attitude both in terms of the essence of the Christian religion and in terms of the historical fate of individual nations. In defence of his thesis about the "historical right" of the Egyptians to "create a society and [take] care of education" he uses the historical knowledge accessible to him (Един Египтянин 1867:3.). Apart from Scripture itself, which the author undoubtedly knew very well and repeatedly cited in his letter, in defence of his thesis, was the article written by Petko R. Slaveykov, discussed above, which was also the main (and, at the same, time, the only) source of information for him about the history of his community.

The content of the "Letter to the Editor" confirms once again what we know from other historical sources. In the Ottoman Empire, the Roma Christians were integrated into the social fabric with their own social and civil status, which was very similar to the status of other Christian nations' subjects of the Empire (Marushiakova and Popov 2001). As a result, the development of the Roma, at least on the level of ideas, was very similar to the development of the other Balkan nations among whom they lived. The letter shows that at least some members of the Roma community in the Balkans in the nineteenth century reached a new stage in the development of their nationality consciousness. This new stage is characterised by exiting the 'internal' traditional frames of their community in order to search for equal place in the new 'external' socio-cultural realities, according to the norms and values that predominate. It was the Balkan context that determined the shape of this new public appearance of Roma – they, like other Balkan nations, were searching actively for proof of a 'glorious' historical past. They were aiming for the creation of a new national historical mythology that would serve as support and argument in the struggles for their civic emancipation, as separate but equal to other Balkan nations' communities. As a whole, the logic of the Roma development, as seen in the "Letter to the Editor", is a repetition of the pattern of development of the other Balkan nations in the nineteenth century in all its segments – the creation of their own system of education, their own church with services in their own language, and eventually, without specifically mentioning it, the implied perspective of their own state.

The answer to the question who the "One Egyptian" was, we were able to find in the materials published by a famous folklorist from the end of the nineteenth century, Marko K. Tsepenkov. Describing the existing guilds in the town of Prilep (now in the Republic of North Macedonia), he noted the existence of separate Gypsy guilds

(of blacksmiths, violinist and porters) with their respective Patron Saints' holidays – St Athanasius and St Antonius (Цепенков 1898:180). The existence of ethnically distinct Gypsy guilds in the Ottoman Empire has been known since the first half of the seventeenth century, and it was preserved (in more or less modified forms) in the new independent states on the Balkans until the first decades of the twentieth century (Marushiakova nad Popov 2016:76–89). In the Balkans, as the Patron Saint of blacksmiths (by Gypsies and by the Christian majority as well), is honoured St Athanasius. As Marko Tsepenkov noted in the city of Prilep, the Patron feast of the local Bulgarian guild of blacksmiths was also on the day of St Athanasius (January 18), while the guild of “Gypsy blacksmiths” and the guilds of [Gypsy] “fiddlers and porters” (a separate ones) venerated St Antonius, which is on January 17, i.e. demarcation of the guilds on ethnic lines was clearly visible also in this case (Цепенков 1898:181).

This development of the social life of the Gypsies in Prilep is explained by Marko Tsepenkov as follows:

The reason behind all this is a Gypsy called Iliya Naumchev, a barber. This Naumchev, to him went more educated people in his barber shop and day by day he advanced and accepted his ethnicity and he was not ashamed to call himself an ‘Egyptian’, because, as he explained, the name came from Egypt. This Iliya hoped very much for a priest of Gypsy ethnicity. Many years have passed, but he still desired to have this rank among them ... 2–3 years ago, he succeeded to become himself a priest in the Holy Exarchate. (Цепенков 1898:180–181)

A sufficient dose of confidence may suggest that this Iliya Naumchev is the “One Egyptian”, who wrote the “Letter to the Editor” in the *Macedonia* newspaper. The dream expressed by Ilya Naumchev in his “Letter to the Editor” of the newspaper *Macedonia*, failed to materialise, and the independent Gypsy Orthodox Church for which he appealed was never created. This dream remained at the stage of a vision for future development, because there were no objective conditions for its realisation, and in the first place there was a lack of sufficient number of educated Roma elite among Roma Christians to prepare the masses and lead the struggle in this direction. The fight of Bulgarians for an independent Bulgarian Orthodox Church was more successful and, as a result, in 1870 the Bulgarian Exarchate was created with a Decree (*Firman*) of Sultan Abdulaziz. It granted the right to establish an autonomous Bulgarian Exarchate for these dioceses, wherein at least two-thirds of the Orthodox Christians were willing to join it. In the plebiscite of 1873 in the town of Prilep, more than two-thirds of the inhabitants of the city, including local Roma, declared their wish to belong to the Bulgarian Exarchate, which had been influenced also by Iliya Naumchev’s enlightenment activities among them.

In the new conditions, in 1885, Iliya Naumchev fulfilled his hope “for a priest of Gypsy ethnicity” (*ibid.*) as he received the post of an Orthodox priest in the Bulgarian Exarchate. This is not a retreat from the idea of creating a Gypsy Orthodox Church, but a new stage in its development, when the first stage (church independence from the Greek Patriarchate) had already passed and Iliya Naumchev gained a legal opportunity to work

as a priest among his brothers. However, this was accompanied by some problems in his confirmation in the post (probably due to the unusualness of the case) by the head of the Bulgarian Church (Exarch Joseph I), who requested the explicit consent of the Bulgarian municipality in Prilep and the parishes of the future priest. Nevertheless, in the end, the issue was resolved positively (Кирил 1969:611). The latest historical evidence about Iliya Naumchev is from 1900, when he continued to be a priest in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in his native town of Prilep (Кънчов 1900:124).

The presented materials, irrespective of how few they are, allow us to speak about Iliya Naumchev not only as one of the founders of the movement for Roma civic emancipation (Marushiakova and Popov 2017:33–38) but also of Romani literature and, more specifically, of the journalistic genre of engaged publicistic. In any case, the “Letter to the Editor” in the *Macedonia* newspaper, authored by Iliya Naumchev, is the first text by a Roma author to appear in the public print media.

### 1.3 Roma Muslims

Among Muslim Roma in the Balkans, another civic emancipation tendency emerged. Unlike Roma Christians, who fitted into the context of the national revival of their neighbouring Balkan Christian people, Roma Muslims remained in the general discourse of the social development of the Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire. This development led to the establishment of Turkey as a nation-state in early twentieth century (officially in 1923), starting with the so-called Young Turk Revolution (1908), and was characterised by a break with the Ottoman heritage and the replacement of Ottoman identity (closely linked to Muslim religious identity) with Turkish national identity. These common processes in the Empire also applied to other Muslim communities (e.g. the Arabs, Kurds, Albanians, etc.). In this context, the Muslim Roma (or, at least, some of their representatives) were also trying to find ways for the civic emancipation of their community under new conditions. The expression of these aspirations was the emergence of the newspaper *Laço*, which can be described as the first newspaper written by the Roma without any support from ‘external’ factors (such as religious or state institutions) and their respective attempts to influence Roma communities.

Extremely little is known about the *Laço* newspaper. There is evidence of a preserved copy of it and our colleague Peter Bakker, to whom we owe our gratitude for turning our attention to the very existence of this newspaper, has been trying hard to locate it for many years, but to no avail. In fact, the only source about this newspaper is one short article written by Henri Bourgeois (1910:326–329), a renowned scholar of Oriental Studies who also worked in the field of Romani linguistics (Bourgeois 1911) with the impressive (and, at the same time, misleading) title *Un journal pseudo-tchingiané* (A pseudo-Gypsy Journal).

According to the description of Henri Bourgeois, the newspaper *Laço* (Good, in Romani language) was published in Edirne (today in Turkey) by Emin Resa (Bourgeois 1910:326). Two issues were printed; or, more precisely, two issues were known to Henri Bourgeois, as there may have been more. Each of them includes “eight pages, large in -8°” (ibid.:327). The issues are dated 6 and 12 Şubat, 1235 (ibid.:326); according to the Islamic calendar *Rumi* used at that time in this part of the Ottoman Empire; this means February 19 and February 25, 1910 (Koloğlu 1995:61–62).

It is not entirely clear in what language the newspaper was written. Judging by the fact that the Ottoman-Turkish version of the Arabic alphabet was used and that under the title “Lexicon of Latcho” there is a small Romani language (Tchinghiané) – Turkish dictionary of thirty-two words (Bourgeois 1910:327), it can be assumed that the language was mixed-Turkish using words and expressions in Romani language. This was not an unusual phenomenon among Muslim Roma in the Ottoman Empire; rather the opposite, it was a natural expression of the ongoing process of language change and the result of it nowadays can be seen in large parts of the Roma population in Turkey and the Balkans (Bulgaria, Greece, Northern Macedonia) who have Turkish as their mother tongue. Especially in Edirne, this process is clearly visible in the example of a poster with an invitation for the celebration of Gypsy holiday *Kakava* in Edirne, published in 1934 (already under the conditions of the new state of Turkey) (Şanlıer 2018; Marushiakova and Popov 2021a). Moreover, the next two, almost analogous, posters, dated 1948 and 1966 respectively, differ from the one from 1934 mainly by the reduction of Romani language words and expressions in the 1948 one and their almost final disappearance in the poster from 1966 (ibid.), i.e. these posters are a clear illustration of the process of language change and development. The final result of this development is that today, out of seven Gypsy neighbourhoods in Edirne, Romani language is only still spoken in two of them.

The title heading of the newspaper *Laço* defined it already in its first issue as a “Humorous newspaper published for the moment once a week, serving the interests of the fatherland and the Ottoman nation.” In addition, the header of the first issue gave the following two lines “Be blessed a thousand times, O day that you rise with light and love! There is no longer any hostility, tyranny, or exit”, which, according to Bourgeois was “obviously allusion to the recent Turkish freedom.” In fact, this was a reference to the Young Turk Revolution which proclaimed new equality of separate nationalities, including Roma, as well as freedom for expression of their identity, language and culture and thus created euphoria in shaping the visions for their future (1910:327).

In the second issue, one can find a special explanation “Half of the net proceeds from the sale of this number will be paid for subscription for the national fleet” (Bourgeois 1910:326–329) and, in this way, the newspaper publicly demonstrated the civic national consciousness among the Roma in the Ottoman Empire. The newspaper also presents a short dictionary of the Romani language (ibid.), which shows that this national (Ottoman) civic identity did not conflict with the ethnic identity of the community. The newspaper

also contains illustrations of a Gypsy blacksmith and of a tent in the background (ibid.), i.e. a national symbol (a characteristic of nascent nations) appears graphically. The transition of images of artifacts from everyday life in the field of national symbolism is a common phenomenon among numerous nationalities in many parts of the world. Especially in Edirne, on all of the above-mentioned poster-invitations for *Kakava*, the same drawing appears, in which, in the foreground, images of smithing tong, anvil, spade and *cezve* (a Turkish coffee pot) (Şanlıer 2018) are clearly demarcated; the same objects (as well as other objects used by blacksmiths or made by them) can be seen depicted on the preserved flags of the Gypsy guilds in the Balkans, the oldest of which dates from 1849, from Prizren, in Kosovo (Marushiakova and Popov 2016c:80–81). The name of the celebration itself – *Kakava* literally means ‘cauldron’ in Romani language – in fact is the “Roma version” of one festivity with old historical roots among all Balkan peoples, which is celebrated by the Christian people in the Day of St George and bears his name, while among the Muslims it is celebrated under the name *Hıdırlez* (the day of the Muslim saints Hıdır and İlyaz); among the Roma the celebration has respectively acquired distinctly ethnic characteristics of their biggest national celebration (for more details, see Marushiakova and Popov 2007:33–50, 2016b:47).

It is interesting to understand the reasons behind Henri Bourgeois's definition of *Laço* newspaper as “pseudo-tchinghiané” (Bourgeois 1910:326), i.e. pseudo-Gypsy. His reasons for this are purely linguistic, his main argument is that the spelling of the Roma words is erroneous and there are discrepancies with the texts of Alexander Paspatis (1870, 1888). A separate question is whether Paspatis's work, in this case, can be considered relevant at all, since his texts were recorded by his associates in various places and among different Roma communities in the Balkans. From this, according to us, it was undoubtedly under a wrong premise that he concluded that the newspaper was written by a non-Rom “tzigaphile” (Gypsyphile), who conveyed incorrectly heard words from illiterate Roma (Bourgeois 1910:329). This is a typical example not only of a linguo-centrism but also of the orientalist approach of a Western author of that time (something common even nowadays), who cannot believe that literate Gypsies may even exist and that an educated Rom in the East, if there is such one, could even be a ‘genuine Gypsy’. Moreover, this explanation is completely illogical, because it does not make it clear why it was necessary to publish a newspaper in a language that no one can read in the first place – not even the Roma who were entirely illiterate (according to Henri Bourgeois), nor their surrounding population, who naturally did not know the Romani language. From this point of view, it does not matter whether the Romani language which is used is a ‘correct’ one (according to Henri Bourgeois' criteria) or not. It is not logically justified to seek in the language used an answer to the question whether the newspaper is ‘Gypsy’ or ‘pseudo-Gypsy’. Using Occam's razor, we can say that it is obvious that the *Laço* newspaper was a ‘Gypsy’ newspaper, and that is exactly how it was perceived by its contemporaries (Roma and non-Roma). In this context, there is no reason to blame the publisher of the newspaper *Laço* (and probably its chief editor) Emin Resa for being a non-Gypsy “tzigaphile”

(Bourgeois 1910:329). For us, the simplest (and most logical) explanation is that Emin Resa was a Rom by origin and identity, who wrote in the language he spoke, as did the other Roma in Edirne. It is too naive (and without knowledge of historical realities) to assume that there may have been an eccentric ethnic Turk who, out of love for the Gypsies, or to make a financial or any other profit, would decide to publish a newspaper to be distributed in the Gypsy *mahala* (i.e. an ethnic neighbourhood in the Ottoman Empire).

Unfortunately, nothing more is known about Emin Resa; it is only palpable that if he was able to publish a newspaper, he should have received a relatively good education. And, more importantly, this was not an extraordinary exception in his time, because publishing a newspaper implied the existence of a possible audience, i.e. of a certain number of Roma who would be able to read it. The presence of a certain strata of Muslim Roma in the Ottoman Empire, which possessed at least an initial level of literacy, clashes with the mainstream societal stereotypes (as we see with the example of Henri Bourgeois, occurring even in academia), but it should not cause surprise. As discussed above, the Gypsies have been full-fledged civic subjects of the Ottoman Empire since the fifteenth century and Roma Muslims, in particular, were fully entitled (and at least some of them had a real possibility, which is even more important) to use the educational institutions in the empire. As an example in this regard, we can quote the request from 1693 to the court in Sarajevo, from the Gypsy baker Selim, a son of Osman, who explicitly wrote: “[I] send my children to the religious school to learn the Koran along with the rest of the children” (Marushiakova and Popov 2001:39). And, something more, in the nineteenth century, after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, as part of the attempt to modernise the Ottoman state, Sultan Abdul Hamid II pursued a policy of pan-Islamism aimed at uniting all Muslims in the Empire. In the frames of this aim, special measures to ensure that the Gypsies learned their Muslim religion in a proper way were also developed and implemented. Along with this creation of an own network of primary schools (*mekatib-i iptidaïye*) and industrial high schools (*medaris-i sanai*) aimed at the Muslim populace, with Islamic content and curriculum, where Ottoman Turkish was used as a medium of instruction, Sultan Abdul Hamid II countered the foreign (mostly American) mission schools (Ümit 2014:33).

In this way, many religious schools were also opened to provide education to Gypsies in different regions of the Balkans. In order not to lose the Muslim population to their neighbouring countries, recently separated from the empire, the opening of such schools was also carried out in Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and Romania (Ulsoy 2013:94–98). In addition to these, the Gypsies who were enlisted in the army were also provided with basic education. In this sense, the presence of a sufficient number of literate Roma in Edirne, to whom the *Laço* newspaper was directed, is undisputed.

A statement that some of the profits from the *Laço* newspaper would be donated to the Navy was not just a gesture aimed at ensuring the authorities' favourable treatment of the newspaper and its readers. Gypsies had their place in the military structure of the early Ottoman Empire, and even in the sixteenth century there was a special non-territorial

military-administrative unit, the so-called “Gypsy sancak” with its centre Kırklareli in Eastern Thrace (Marushiakova and Popov 2001:26–27). Gradually, over the centuries (and especially after the seventeenth century), Gypsies, for the most part, dropped out of joining the army; however, in the early nineteenth century, as part of the empire’s reform efforts, the old Ottoman army was replaced by a regular army and general military conscription. Only non-Muslims and Gypsies, regardless of their religion, who were required to pay a special army tax (*bedel-i askerî*), were exempted from military service (Ulusoy 2013:50). This was perceived by many Muslim Gypsies as a restriction of their civil rights and placing them at a disadvantageous position. Evidence of this are the numerous petitions from settled Muslim Gypsies, preserved in the Ottoman archives, in which they demand to be allowed to serve in the army. One of the best known such petition was addressed to the *wâli* (governor) of Edirne in 1870. Finally, in 1873 this restriction for serving in the army of Muslim Gypsies was lifted (Ulusoy 2013:55–57).

It is not clear how long the *Laço* newspaper carried on, but we can suppose, from the fact that the newspaper is almost unknown, that its existence was only short-lived. However, we can assume that it had an impact on the Roma in Edirne and left its traces among them. The reason for such an assumption is the description of the language used in the *Laço* and the graphic symbolism of the newspaper, which is also (albeit different, but with some common elements) present later in the State of Turkey in the above-mentioned posters for the celebration of the *Kakava* holiday published in the same city, Edirne, in 1934, 1948 and 1966 (Şanlıer 2018). It turns out that the presence of written communications, which included individual words or sections in the Romani language, and which were publicly presented in different forms, was nothing unusual for Roma living in Edirne at that time. It should be mentioned that these posters ceased to be produced in the last decades of the twentieth century, and nowadays the celebration of *Kakava* holiday in Edirne by local Roma was transformed into a major city holiday and even into a major tourist attraction for the city (Marushiakova and Popov 2007).

As noted by Henri Bourgeois (1910), at least half of the pages of the newspaper are devoted to humorous dialogues of two characters, Latcho (a Rom) and Mitcho (a Non-Rom). Most probably, this is a kind of reproduction through other expressive forms of plots from the then-popular shadow theatre, with the main character Karagöz (And 1975; Sennur 2004). According to many authors, Karagöz has been a real personality, who revamped the traditional theatre of shadows (that is why, often the theatre itself is named after him). According to Evliya Çelebi, Karagöz was born in Kırklareli and his father was a “fukara-i-kıbtıyan” (a poor Gypsy) (Çelebi 1967:20–23). According to others, Karagöz was a Turkish Gypsy who was taken as a soldier (Menzel 1941:56), who described himself as a Gypsy and who, in dialogue with Hacıvat, explicitly said that he would never give up his “Gypsiness” (Prokosch 2002:103–129). Karagöz himself sometimes came on stage with a greeting in “Gypsy language ‘Zombornos keros’” and performed a blacksmith’s trade (Jacob 1925:109). In other words, here also, as well as in the above-mentioned example

concerning the importance of the blacksmith trade for the Gypsies, this is presented as a symbolic sign of their ethnicity.

Today, a monument for Karagöz has been raised in the town of Kırklareli in Eastern Thrace (in the region of Edirne) where *Kakava* is proclaimed as an official city holiday, and where a legend is commonly told nowadays among the local Gypsies, that Karagöz had been born in the nearby small town of Demirköy (Marushiakova and Popov 2007:43). Among other things, the theatre of shadows itself, often called 'Karagöz', is already just a memory of the past in present-day Turkey. Probably the only place where the traditional theatre of shadows has been preserved until present-day, is among the Gypsies of Western Thrace (in Greece), and one of the first books, published in Romani language in contemporary Greece, is dedicated to Karagöz. The book includes texts of a few scenes from the repertory of this theatre (Λιάπης 1996).

#### 1.4 Conclusion

As is clear from all of the above, the emergence of Romani literature and press, as well as the beginning of the movement for comprehensive civic emancipation of the Roma in the Ottoman Empire, is a general historical process. The fact that in the first stages this development took place 'on two tracks' (Christian Roma and Muslim Roma) does not cancel its unity and the commonality of its pursued goals. Moreover, after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, already under the conditions of the new nation-states, after the First World War, this internal distinction disappeared relatively quickly under the new historical context, in which the Roma were placed. In Turkey, only Roma Muslims remained (the Roma Christians in their majority left Turkey in the population exchange after the Lausanne agreement). In the independent Balkan states, the significance of religious difference between Gypsies decreased at the expense of struggles for an ethnic unity.

Of course, the first steps in this direction are rather episodic, the deeds being of individual representatives of the community and without serious consequences for the community as a whole. However, this is also something to be expected, because this is precisely the general pattern of the development of nationalism in the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe during the modern era, which has already been discussed in the preface to this book. According to the general pattern of the development of modern nationalism in the region, an integral part of which was also the movement for Roma civic emancipation, initially, a new, relatively small national elite emerged, spreading its ideas among the masses. For the Roma in the Balkans, under the Ottoman Empire, there is evidence only for the first phase of this pattern, an important component of which was the emergence of Romani literature and the Roma printed media.



# Bulgaria

*Aleksandar G. Marinov*

## 2.1 Introduction

The modern Bulgarian state was born with the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 and its key defining features were its Bulgarian ethnicity, nationality, and Orthodox Christianity as its official religion. That was the general context that Bulgarian Roma found themselves at the time, which contrasted to the previous era of the Ottoman Empire which was far larger and comprised of many ethnicities, peoples and religions. Bulgarian Roma thus were citizens of a nation-state which now sought ways to establish, define and institutionalise itself.

As is the case today, official census data is not entirely reliable when it comes to establishing the true numbers of Roma in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, according to the census data, in 1910, three percent of the Bulgarian population comprised of Gypsies and this figure dipped to two percent in 1920, 1926, 1934 and 1946, respectively (see Table 2.1). In the years between 1910 and 1934, the vast majority of Roma (defined by the census according to mother tongue/spoken language) identified as Muslims i.e., an average of 83 percent; on average, 17 percent identified as Eastern Orthodox in this period and just 0.1 percent in 1926 and 1934 said they were Protestant (Царство България – Главна дирекция на статистиката 1923, 1927, 1931a, 1931b).

Table 2.1 Population by ethnicity according to Bulgaria census data

	1910	1920	1926	1934	1946
<b>Bulgarian</b>	3518756	4036056	4557706	5204217	5903580
<b>Turkish</b>	465641	520339	577552	591193	675500
<b>Gypsies</b>	122296	98451	134844	149385	170011
<b>Other (including those who did not answer)</b>	230820	192125	208639	133144	280258
<b>TOTAL</b>	4337513	4846971	5478741	6077939	7029349

Source: (Национален статистически институт 2011).

Against the previously discussed backdrop of the creation of the new Bulgarian state, the Roma found themselves within the boundaries of a nascent country which witnessed domestic unrest, several coups, wars, and power struggles. The Roma's visions for their future and civic development were to a great extent influenced not only by their unequal place within the society but by the overall development, trends and aspirations observed within the nascent Bulgarian state. The Tarnovo Constitution of 1879 and its legislation would encompass various religious and ethnic groups, including Gypsies, and give them rights and freedoms (Crowe 2007). When the Bulgarian government decided, on May 31, 1901, to suspend the voting rights of Muslim Gypsies (which were in the majority) and nomads, this gave rise to the convocation of a conference in the town of Vidin, which was organised by a group of Gypsies who insisted that they deserve to have the same rights as the rest of the Bulgarian citizens. This initiative is also believed to be one of the earliest signs of the civic emancipation struggles of Roma in Bulgaria, where the campaign was headed by the *tsaribashi* (headman, leader) of the Gypsies in Bulgaria, Ramadan Ali, and was supported by the Bulgarian lawyer, Marko Markov in 1905 (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a:33–69).

Thus, when the Bulgarian Roma felt like their rights have been infringed upon or that they have been left unprotected by the state, they sought ways to pursue them and secure an equal social position through the establishment of their own organisations. One of earliest Roma civic organisations was thus founded in 1910 in the town of Vidin, as we learn from the officially recognised “Statute of the Egyptian Nationality in the Town of Vidin” (Marushiakova and Popov 2015; Устав 1910). Several years later, in the capital Sofia, the Sofia General Muslim Educational-Cultural and Mutual Aid Organisation “Istikbal-Future” was established (CSA, f.1B, op.8, a.e.596, l.69) which, in 1930, absorbed other Roma organisations from around the country and renamed itself to the General Mohamedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria (CSA, f. 264, op. 2, a.e. 8413, l. 15–20; for the full text of these statutes in original and in English see, Marushiakova and Popov 2021a:69–111). That organisation in fact began publishing their newspaper, *Terbie*, (which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter) and which was ultimately used as a tool that advocated for the interests, visions and rights of Bulgarian Roma.

Bulgarian Roma took active part in all wars that the country fought, they gave their lives to these wars, that whole experience has been remembered by the Roma and, furthermore, they have professed their readiness to defend and fight in the interest of their Bulgarian homeland. Their contribution in the wars has been recognised and some Roma even took positions of respectable ranks in the military, the police, and the gendarmerie. As a whole, this has contributed to the emergence of Roma leaders who would be active among their Roma communities (Кръстев and Иванова 2015, 2016, 2018).

The old Gypsy forms of leadership observed during the Ottoman Empire were transferred in the new socio-political realities in Bulgaria after its liberation (Устав 1910; DA Sofia, f. 1 K, op. 4, a.e. 531, l. 5; DA Montana f. 3 K, op. 1, a.e. 56; for the full text in original and in English, Marushiakova and Popov 2021a). Such was the case of the *cheribashiya*/

*tsaribashiya/muhtar* (headman/leader), whose role was to act as a proxy for a given Gypsy community to the state and local authority and third parties. Such has also been the role of Shakir Pashov, who had been representing a Roma neighbourhood in Sofia, *Konyovista* (Кръстев and Иванова 2018), from the late 1920s until mid 1940s and who became one of the first and most influential Roma leaders in Bulgaria (Ковачева 2003; Marushiakova and Popov 2021a:69–140). Pashov's contribution and role will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

It should be highlighted that, in fact, the majority of Bulgarian Roma led a sedentary way of life and had various distinctive professions, such as porters, shoeblacks, basket-makers, florists, blacksmith, musicians, etc. which was a pre-requisite for the emergence of their civic emancipation movement and press and literature.

The level of literacy is a key issue related to the concept of Roma civic emancipation. Roma were included in the Bulgarian educational reforms and legislature, which made attendance of the first four years of school compulsory for all Bulgarian citizens. Official statistics show, however, that most of the Roma in the period until the wake of the Second World War were illiterate. According to the respective census data, Roma literacy was 3.4 percent in 1910 which increased to 6.0 percent in 1920, and to 8.2 percent in 1926 (Държавна дирекция на статистиката 1931).

Against this general framework of the formation of the modern Bulgarian state, Roma's position within it and the lack of genuine interest in dealing with the Roma, hence the lack of national policies toward them, this chapter will try to present the early development of Romani literature and publications. The birth of Roma writing was thus Roma's search for their recognition, organisation, and emancipation. Specifically, the chapter will explore two sections – one which was influenced and inspired mainly by the Protestant missionary work among Roma in northwest Bulgaria and, secondly, the publications that came from Bulgaria's capital, and the works of a couple of Roma civic organisations which were based on the Islamic faith and their newspaper *Terbie*.

## 2.2 Publications through the Work of Early Protestant Missionaries

The overall presence of Protestants within Bulgaria, which has been predominantly Orthodox, has been quite limited. For example, in 1910, out of a total population of 4,337,513, there were 3,374 Protestants; in 1920, out of a total population of 4,846,971, Protestants were 2,842; in 1926, out of 5,478,741, Protestants were 2,895; in 1934, out of a total of population of 6,077,939, Protestants were 4,983 (Царство България – Главна дирекция на статистиката 1923, 1927, 1931a, 1931b).

As indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the number of Roma Protestants was quite nominal while one of the key features of being Bulgarian was to be Eastern Orthodox. As such, Protestantism would have been regarded as a religious sect on the fringe of Bulgarian society. The Protestant missionary work and involvement with this

small number of Bulgarian Roma played an important role in the emergence of some of the earliest Roma publications. Protestant missionaries have recognised the importance of learning about Bulgarian Roma, their culture and mastering their language. Thus, one was able to witness the issuing of translations into Romani as well as original publications which sought to resonate better among the Roma and attract them to religion.

The place where Protestant missionaries have been particularly successful in reaching and influencing Roma has been in the north-west of the country, more specifically, in today's towns of Lom and Montana and, in particular, the small village of Golinsti, which presently is a neighbourhood called "Mladenovo" and is part of the town of Lom. Its Roma residents could be considered some of the first in Bulgaria to have successfully received and benefitted from the outreach of the Evangelical Baptist work of Austrian missionaries. Its history is linked to the general history of the work of American, Austrian, British, and German missionaries from the times of late Ottoman empire. From the outset of their work, missionaries aimed to also attract Bulgarians by doing chiefly charitable work, providing education, and offering medical assistance while the spreading of religious teachings was left for a later stage. As a result, between 1903 and 1910 a Baptist Church in the larger town of Lom was established while a Roma group of Baptist churchgoers was formed in the nearby village of Golinsti. The two churches were not exclusive and often members of one group would frequent the services of the other. The Protestant missionary work among Bulgarian Gypsies first began in the 1920s but there is no information about its founders, or about its leaders. In 1934, it was relaunched (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a). We are aware thus of the Evangelical Baptist Mission Among the Gypsies in Bulgaria, which was based in Lom and the Committee Gypsy Evangelical Mission based in Sofia.

Consequently, in the village of Golinsti, in 1920s, the first Gypsy Baptist Church in Bulgaria was eventually formed. By 1921, the Gypsy Church in Golinsti could boast of a steady following of around 30 persons and that was when it was recognised as a part of the Baptist Church in the town of Lom. Ultimately, on September 28, 1930, because of its success, the Roma Church managed to erect its own building on its purchased land which was a true source of pride of many of its followers (Marinov 2019; Славкова 2007). One of the main figures there, and in the history of the Evangelical religion of Bulgaria, was the Rom Petar Punchev. He could be considered as a Roma leader and one of the pioneers of the Roma Protestant movement, whose journey with the religion is believed to have begun when he was involved as a travelling missionary for the Baptist Church in Lom. He is also believed to have been the first Roma to preach in his mother-tongue, Romani. He was also, for several years, the only representative of the only Gypsy church in Bulgaria. Due to his work and dedication to spreading the Baptist message among the local Roma, Punchev was officially recognised as a pastor, which granted him power and authority, on November 11, 1923, just a year before he passed away (Marinov 2019; Славкова 2007).

In 1919, another Baptist community was established in Lom's neighbouring town, Ferdinand (today, it is called Montana), whose local preacher was Baro Boev. Boev was

even recognised in the protestant journal, *Християнски Приятел* (Christian Friend) in 1939 as a pivotal figure in the spreading of the Evangelical Baptist faith in the town of Ferdinand and for his successful work among the Gypsies in the same town (Славкова 2007). In 1925, the Roma Baptist community of Ferdinand was headed by a Bulgarian pastor, Petar Minkov, whose following is reported to have been 20–30 Gypsies who also benefited from evening educational courses that Minkov had been running (Славкова 2007). Minkov had been working not only in Ferdinand but in other parts of Bulgaria. He was another prominent figure among the Bulgarian Roma Evangelists. He managed to learn Romani language which helped him to successfully reach and invite Roma followers. Minkov also sought to elevate his followers by offering beneficial skills and knowledge through his Sunday school attached to the Church in Golinsti. He also founded *Дружесто “Ромни”* (Association “Roma Woman”), and offered courses such as German language. Notably, as we will see later, Petar Minkov is an especially important figure for the topic of Romani literature as he translated and published religious books and periodicals in the Romani language (Славкова 2007).

Against this background of the setting up and the existence of the first Roma Church in Golinsti, the first piece written by Roma churchgoers was published (for the full text in original and in English, Marushiakova and Popov 2021a:140–156). Its genre is that of opinion journalism and was written to represent the subjective viewpoint of the churchgoers in Golinsti. The whole conception of the idea of writing and publishing it could be described as a direct consequence of the power struggle, interests and the pursuit of civic and social rights, and the position of the Roma churchgoers. The printed booklet bears the title *Циганска Евангелска Баптийска църква. с. Голинци* (Gypsy Evangelical Baptist Church, village Golinsti) (Циганска Евангелска 1926). It contains ten pages, written in Bulgarian, and begins with a title *Делото на циганската Евангелска Баптийска църква в село Голинци* (The Case of the Gypsy Evangelical Baptist Church in the Village Golinsti). It was published in Lom in 1926 by Printing House “Alpha” (for the full text in original and in English, see Marushiakova and Popov 2021a). It was signed by a total of 20 persons, both male and female, among them members of the managing body of the Gypsy Church as well as some of its lay members.

The writing of the booklet is a great demonstration which addresses a major issue for several Roma Baptist churchgoers. It clearly seeks to raise awareness of what the authors have perceived as a great injustice related to who would become the next leader of the Baptist Church in Golintsi following the passing of its previous leader, Petar Punchev. Punchev died in 1924, a year after he was recognised as a pastor. At the time, the Gypsy Baptist Church in the village could boast of acquiring an almost complete shape, having a steady following, its own structure, deacons, and a choir. This conscious civic act of writing and publishing the booklet was a clear attempt by the Evangelists from Golintsi to secure their own place, representation, independence and access of power and privileges. From the booklet we learn that the Roma churchgoers were against their merging with the Baptist Church in Lom and wanted to remain an independent branch while preserving the Roma character of their church.

The booklet describes the Gypsy Church in Golitsi as a great privilege. The Roma believers considered themselves also as receivers of a great blessing and a favour of God, to whom they were extremely grateful, especially as they consciously recognised their lower standing in the Bulgarian society: “[God] revived us too, the Gypsies, as the very last people to accept [in His religion] from our [Gypsy] tribe” (Циганска Евангелска 1926:11) and granting them the favour to form their own church. In other words, the mere emergence of the Church was considered a sign of the raising of the social standing of the Gypsies in Golinsti, a fact that was a source of their true joy and pride. They considered the church to be unique not only because of its ‘Gypsy’ character but also because it was one of its kind in the world.

This church is located on a northern end of Bulgaria, two kilometres from the town of Lom on the historic side of the village of Golinsti. Our church was renowned and gave joy to the whole West: Germany, England and America. (Циганска Евангелска 1926:1)

The booklet then quickly moves forward to the core of the matter and presents to the reader that the Gypsy Church’s existence and future had been challenged by the interference of external figures such as Trifon Dimitrov, the Bulgarian priest of the Baptist Church in Lom. Dimitrov is presented to have influenced some members of the Gypsy Church and meddled in the whole decision process, which determined its future. The actual reasons, we learn, were personal as Dimitrov’s aim was to head the church in Golinsti. This total disregard of the will of the Roma churchgoers thus urged them to write and publish the booklet, hoping to raise awareness of the situation, the injustice and disregard of their interests and will to have their own and independent Roma church. This publication of the booklet in 1926 is a clear indication of Roma protestant churchgoers’ search to publicly express their own interests, vision and place within the protestant community and, by extension, in the Bulgarian society.

Correspondingly, because of the influence of some of the members of the Baptist church in Lom, along with the priest Trifon Dimitrov, the Gypsy Church in Golinsti became a branch of the one in Lom, i.e. it lost its independence. Eventually, this period of contention came to an end with the appointment, in 1926, of the Bulgarian priest Petar Minkov. Minkov is a figure who has made a notable contribution for the spreading of the Evangelical faith among Roma. He was the editor of the Roma newspaper, *Светилник* (Candlestick, in Bulgarian) which came out in 1927 and contained a section in Romani language which translates as Roma Word (the whole newspaper will be discussed later on here). Before we engage with this, however, we will introduce the Journal *Evangelist* which, even though not exclusively dedicated to Roma audience, recognised the importance of reaching out and including the Bulgarian Gypsies and provided a platform for the publishing of Roma writing and literature.

The journal *Евангелист* (*Evangelist*) was a publication of the Bulgarian Evangelical Baptist Union. The first issue of *Evangelist* came out in January 1920 and in 1939 it was

renamed to *Християнски приятел* (*Christian Friend*). It is reported to have published mainly articles that discussed the history of Baptism, poems and stories, biographical essays on prominent foreign and Bulgarian Baptists, apologetic articles, lessons for Sunday schools and other useful materials related to the Bulgarian Protestant youth. Until 1938, *Evangelist* distributed between 900 and 1,200 copies. Initially, it was a quarterly publication, but from 1925 it was published monthly, with the exception of the months of July and August (Ангелова 2015). Over the course of its run, *Evangelist* was published in several Bulgarian towns including Chirpan, Ferdinand, Lom, Ruse, Sofia, and Kazanlak. In 1929 and 1930, with pastor Petar Minkov as its editor, it was also distributed abroad (Ангелова 2015). Its editorial position was held by pastor Trifon Dimitrov in 1927, while the administrative position of the journal was assumed by Petar Minkov (Ангелова 2015; Иванчев 1969).

It must be emphasised that journal *Evangelist* acted as a platform where the general progress of the mission to include Roma was showcased and it simultaneously published Roma's personal voices, experiences, opinions, and reflections. *Evangelist's* issues 5 of 1927 published an article with the title "Christ or Mohamed" and it was authored by a Gypsy who has signed his name simply as F. Adzhov (Аджов 1927). The piece gives a description of the author's life in his native Gypsy mahala in the town of Ferdinand and how, from being illiterate, he became able to read and write. Eventually, Adzhov describes how he left behind his traditional Islamic faith and how he was edified through his acceptance of the new Baptist faith. The pivotal figures described in the text which helped him in this are the pastor, Petar Minchev, and the Gypsy, Baro Boev (ibid.). The article should also be read as one which presents the author's life as a 'before and after' where his 'new' life is marked with his discovery of the Evangelical faith which directed him not only to leave behind his old ways and religion but also enlightened him both in educational and spiritual sense.

Between the Ogosta River and the town of F[erdinand] the little huts are located, in which I, how many years ago - I do not know, saw the world of God. My life did not differ in any way from the life of my fellow tribesmen, the Gypsies. It [my life] was quiet around the big smith's skin and anvil of my father's smithery ...

A winter's day in 1924, in our mahala the news was spread that a teacher has come to gather the illiterate and teach them to read and write. I did not know how to read nor to write and I also decided to go to this teacher ... Together with this teacher, whose name was [P]etar M[inkov], there was also one Gypsy whose name was B[aro] B[ojev]. Very often, almost every time before they taught us how to read and write, the teacher or the Gypsy B[ojev] used to read from a book and talked to us about God and about Jesus Christ.

So that I could learn, I ought to buy the needed books, while I did not have money for this. My father did not give me money for such silly things, while I could not take it from anywhere ... (Аджов 1927:16)

The article seeks to highlight the power and the positive changes that the Baptist religion could bring to other Gypsies. Their old ways of life and faith are presented almost as

outdated, useless, and ignorant. This is opposed to the positive change that the protestant missionaries brought while teaching the Roma to read, write and learn about God. As Adzhov writes, the twist of his life comes with his acceptance of the new religion, leaving behind his old ways and religion to become a better person. Thus, the raising of the social standing of the Roma and consequently the emancipatory character of the Baptist mission were emphasised.

In the summer of 1925, as usual, we went to work and cheat the villagers from the villages. We settled in the village of K. One day, by us came B[aro] B[oev]. My Christian brother welcomed him with great joy. They read again from the book; [...] I felt very heavy and sad. For the first time in my life I felt the power of sin and its weight. And I fell on my knees praying already not to Mohammad but to Jesus Christ to forgive my sins ...

One day during fall, I was baptised by my first teacher, P[etar] M[inkov] and I joined the followers of Jesus Christ. (ibid.)

The importance to learn, recognise and include Gypsies into the general Protestant mission was presented several times in the journal *Evangelist*. For example, in 1931 it stated: "One of our holy songs tells us to walk forward and up. That is exactly how our work among the Gypsies in Bulgaria could be characterised. The history of the mission of this people is a history of progress." (cited in Славкова 2007:76)

Early Evangelical Baptists were aware of the outcast status of the Gypsies and their desperate situation not only in Bulgaria but across the world (Георгиев 1939). The article whose title translates as "Something Principle for the Gypsy Mission" begins with a direct challenge to its readers, and at the same time seeks to inspire them, stating that even though it is a difficult task, it is the will of God to spread His orders and messages to everybody regardless of who they are. For example, because of the described inclination of Gypsies to steal, cheat and lie, the article explains that "[Gypsies] are persecuted by the wild beasts, despised, threatened and chased by all countries of the world." (ibid.)

The protestant missionary work sought to make Gypsies better Christians and, as a consequence, this gave them the chance to assume another, better position in the general society. The central question, that early missionaries have been pondering about, has been to what extent different cultures and local customs should be recognised so that they accept the professed faith and, importantly, be good believers. This was important because the Evangelical missionaries did not advocate for the obliteration of the identities of the Roma believers. Instead, they pondered on the question what would be the best way for Roma to retain their identities and at the same time be good Christians.

Among the pages of the journal, readers could also learn about some of the progress and fruits of that intention. For example, under the rubric *News of the Union*, we can read the article "The First Baptist Deacon House in Bulgaria" (Редакцията 1939). It shares the news that the first Baptist deacon house in Bulgaria has been bought and is located not far from the Evangelical Baptist Church in Lom. Its reported purpose was "to give shelter to the homeless, to host guests, where our deaconesses would live, female Bulgarians, and also for many other stuff of similar character." (Редакцията 1939:12) Even though

the news article does not necessarily centre around Roma and their incorporation into the general purpose of the first Deacon House in Bulgaria, it presents two photographs of how the current manager of the home, deaconess Ema Herman, provides first-hand training to young Gypsies. The page shows how young Gypsy girls receive practical training on sewing and knitting. In the journal we could also find photos of the Gypsy Women Christian Association *Romni* (*Roma Woman*, in Romani language) (Муди 1927:5) as well as the Sunday school of the Gypsy Evangelical Baptist Church in the village of Golinsti. The image shows more than 20 persons, presumably Roma, as beneficiaries of the service that the Gypsy church offers (Марчев 1927:7). Journal *Evangelist* allowed Gypsies to share their positive experiences with the religion but it also showcased the fruits of their labour. What is also noteworthy here is that the ethnic identity of the Roma was presented and preserved, as compared to adopting the more general one i.e. Evangelical/Baptist. Also, the purpose of publicising these activities was to show the positive, emancipatory, effect on the Roma.

Roma were clearly recognised as in need of help, but at the same time, this quest to help them resulted in also recognising their culture and language. The Baptist and Evangelical missionary work thus uplifted the status of the Evangelical Roma, albeit few in their numbers, by teaching them literacy and other valuable skills which ultimately not only introduced them to the Protestant faith but empowered them as better citizens. This recognition of the Roma was also clearly manifested in the journal *Evangelist* when in its issue 7 in 1927, it included an additional supplement which was in the Romani language (Ангелова 2015:9). Unfortunately, the actual supplement could not be recovered at the time that this archival research was conducted. It has been the belief of Bulgarian archivists, however, that it does exist, but it has been misplaced and not adequately filed.

This general aim to evangelise the Roma indirectly resulted in the recognition of their language, culture, gave them credulity and ultimately resulted in uplifting their social status. Here we should also mention the first translations into Romani language of books of the Bible. Not long after the start of protestant missionary work in Bulgaria, in 1912, the British scholar, Bernard Gilliat-Smith, translated the Gospel of Luke into Romani language. Gilliat-Smith has been commissioned by the British and Foreign Bible Society (Gilliat-Smith 1912). According to the author himself, this translation has “[marked] the beginning of Gypsy literature in modern Bulgaria, a fact known only to a few.” (Gilliat-Smith 1934:161) A rather curious question here lies as to why Gilliat-Smith has done this first translation using the Latin letters, rather than Cyrillic, and there is no information to suggest that that translation was used. It is hard to imagine that Latin characters were intelligible and meaningful to the target audience – the Roma readers themselves. Consequently, there came two additional translations in Romani language of Books of the Bible, this time using the Cyrillic alphabet. In 1932 Angel Atanasakiev translated the Gospel of St Mathew (Сомнал евангелие 1932) and in 1937 the Gospel of John (Сомнал евангелие 1937). His works have been commissioned by the American Bible Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society.

In addition, the Scripture Gift Mission in London has issued several publications in Romani language. Translations of the titles include: *Барре придобивке* (Large gains) (n.d.); *Дуваре бианине* (Rebirth) (1933); *О Дел вакярда* (The Lord said) (1933); *О дром ухтавдо* (The high road) (1938); *Саво пересарла Библия* (What the Bible tells) (n.d.); *Спасител ацал безаханен* (The Saviour remains unharmed) (n.d.); *Спаситело светоско* (The Saviour of the world) (n.d.); *Щар безспорне факте* (Four undisputable facts) (n.d.) (Славкова 2007). Unfortunately, at the time of this research, none of these works could be discovered and they seem to no longer be available from the publisher; thus, there is little information regarding their authors, print run, distribution, etc. Judging by their Romani language titles, it is very likely that they have been authored by Roma and, more importantly, the target audience has been the Roma community itself. Thus, these religious publications, being a mere translation or a creative adaptation of religious themes, gave way for the Romani language to be used as medium of expression in print and be used by the Roma religious community.

This discussion of religious publications in Romani language is further continued with three other publications of religious songs. *Романе свято гили* (Roma Holy Song) (1929), was published by the Evangelical Baptist Mission among the Gypsies in Lom (Славкова 2007). While I have not been able to access the original collection, it is described as a collection of Evangelical songs which have been translated into Romani language by the pastor Petar Minkov and are well linked to the formation of the Gypsy Church in Golitsi and the formation of its own choir, which was directed by Todor Erinkin (ibid).

Four years later, a second publication in Romani language was published in Sofia by the Union of the Bulgarian Evangelical Baptist Churches – *Романе святи гили* (Roma Holy Songs) (1933). It appears to be the second issue of a series entitled *Roma Books*. The collection *Roma Holy Songs* could be deemed as different from the collection from 1929 (Романе свято гили 1929); rather than being a Romani language translation of existing Evangelical songs, many of its songs appear to be pieces of original Roma creative writing. The book contains a total of 79 pages with 78 songs in total, all in Romani language and written in Cyrillic. Its author(s) is unknown but it could be assumed that a) if authored by one individual he/she has been well-versed in two dialects of Romani language and at the same time they must have had a substantial knowledge of the religion or b) two or more authors have collaborated in composing the religious collection – one group must have had a substantial knowledge of the Bible and its teachings while the other (group of) author(s) has been involved in interpreting it and producing it in Romani language. Overall, the collection is unique and valuable especially because of the substantial number of songs with poetical value. As such, it is very likely they were composed by (a) Roma author(s) who demonstrates abilities to play with the Romani language, its rhythm, and rhymes while at the same time conveying the religious message. Thus, the whole collection could be regarded as a great example

of Romani creative writing and that is what exactly what distinguishes it and makes it special.

### Андо Исус Гараде

Са мъре гивеса  
Девла сила дема  
Та Туке буки те керав  
Джикай ме ка мерав.

Лачо овчари сан  
Традес кире бакрен  
Пиравес ка шукар чаря  
Тай ка шудре пая.

Кана темно ачел  
Тай о лъво ровел  
Ва ме джанав кай мъро Дел  
Лестар ман ка църдел.

Само годолеске  
Дикав анде лесте  
Ме джанав кай чаче Вов бут  
Ман обичал тай тут.

(Романе святи гилия 1933:27, song No.26)

### Jesus is my Refuge

In our days  
God, give me strength  
So that I can serve You  
Or I will die.

You are a good shepherd  
You lead your sheep  
And take them to the best pastures  
And to cool shades.

When it becomes dark  
And the lion roars  
Yes, I know that my God  
He will protect me.

That is why  
I turn to him  
I know that He truly  
Loves me and you.

As a whole, *Roma holy songs* (Романе святи гиля 1933) covers many themes such as praise and finding peace and protection that have been based on various books of the Bible.

A third collection of religious songs was published in Romani language, in 1936, bearing the title *Романе гиля е Девлеске* (Roma Songs about God) (Романе сомнал гиля 1936). From the booklet we learn its sub-title's is *Романе сомналъ гиля* (Roma Gospel Songs) and the person accredited with ordering its collection is Ioto At. Tatarev. The collection was published in Sofia by the Gypsy Evangelical Mission; it is comprised of around 30 pages and it offers translations in Romani language of standard Evangelical songs. Notably, some of these songs still figure in the repertoire of Protestant churches today such as the Seventh Day Adventists (Духовни песни n.d.) and are sung today in their Bulgarian versions. Such are, for example, songs Song No. 13 *О Слънце на душата ми* (Oh, Sun of my soul) (Романе сомнал гиля 1936:14–15), Song No. 16 *Любете един друго* (Love one another) (Романе сомнал гиля 1936:17–18), and Song No. 28 *Аз съм чул че ме люби Христос* (I have heard that Christ loves me) (Романе сомнал гиля 1936:29–30) (all titles are in Bulgarian).

The translations in Romani language of books of the Bible, of standard evangelical songs as well as the publication of original creative work in Romani as seen in *Roma Holy Songs* (Романе святи гиля 1933) could all be appreciated as ways of adoption of the Protestant religious tenets while internalising and expressing them through their own, Romani, prism. At the most basic level, all these sought to be relatable to the Roma readers while seeking to teach, inspire and enable them to receive and understand the evangelical faith. Ultimately, the publishing of materials in Romani language is a vital form of civic emancipation as it elevates the status of the language and offers a unique representation for the Roma.

There are three known Roma religious newspapers published in the interwar period. One is *Известия на циганската евангелска мисия* (News of the Gypsy Evangelical Mission, in Bulgarian) which is reported to have been published in 1933 by the Protestant Gypsy Evangelical Mission in Sofia, and its publishing house is “Gladstone” (Иванчев 1969:387, 436, 415, 477). It was issued between 1,000 and 2,000 copies (Ангелова 2015). Also, Marushiakova and Popov (1999) and Slavkova (Славкова 2007) have indicated its existence. Reportedly, only issue 3 has been preserved while there is no information about issues 1 and 2. The second was the newspaper *Bulletin of the Gipsies Mission in Bulgaria* and was published in September 1932 and carried the sub-note, “The people which is in need of enlightenment through the Gospel” (Иванчев 1969:6). Its publishing house “Gavazov” (ibid.) issued about 2,000 copies in Sofia. The newspaper was a Bulletin of the American Mission for the Help of Gypsies (ibid.) and it was published in English (Ангелова 2015:89). Therefore, the intended readership has not been Bulgarian Roma, it did not intend to influence or inform them in any way and therefore it did not have any impact on the Roma.

Perhaps the pinnacle of the Sofia-based Evangelical Baptist Mission Among the Gypsies in Bulgaria, was the publishing of the newspaper *Светилник* (Candlestick, in

Bulgarian). The newspaper was published in 1927 in the town of Lom and its editor was pastor Petar Minkov (Иванчев 1969). Its first, and sole, issue came out on January 15, 1927. Originally, it was intended to be issued monthly, however, the reasons for its discontinuation remains unknown. This periodical is unique because it has not only been commissioned by the Evangelical Baptist Mission among the Gypsies in Bulgaria but also because it exclusively sought to include and address the Bulgarian Roma. By its design and vision, it would be right to call it a Roma newspaper and that is why below we will outline the context and give details on the content published in this sole issue. The newspaper consists of four pages. The first three are in Bulgarian, while the last section, *Романо алав* (Roma Word), is in Romani language. We can assume that the target audience were both Bulgarians and Roma, including those Roma who did not necessarily speak the language.

The opening statement by the editor of *Candlestick* is a clear indication of its intention to help Bulgarian Gypsies alike by exposing them to the doctrines of the Evangelical religion, on the one hand, and by stressing the importance of all believers to spread the word of God especially to those who need it the most, the Gypsies, on the other hand. The small opening article is entitled “The Gospel for Everybody” (Редакцията 1927а). It asks its readers and fellow Evangelical Baptists for their moral support and prayers so that they all would be able to enlighten and help their Gypsy sisters and brothers. The inclusive title of this article, and the newspaper altogether, have been clearly an instruction of Christ to His disciples to spread His words to everybody.

Thus, fulfilling this mission, the newspaper is dedicated exclusively to work with and help Bulgaria’s Gypsies, and at the same time alleviate their hardships and misfortunes.

Go to all corners of the world and preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16. 15). [...]

In this grand march of the children of God around the world a humble place has been dedicated for the evangelical work among the Gypsies in Bulgaria. We are glad that with the help of God, we could do something about this forgotten by the people, but dear to God, creatures.

We begin the publishing of the small newspaper “Svetilnik” with a prayer to God so that it would be really a real candlestick for the spreading of light amongst the impenetrable darkness which surrounds the Gypsy tribe in Bulgaria. With that we fulfil also a debt to our human brothers – Gypsies, which makes us doubly happier and strong in welcoming the hardships and misfortunes of a similar task.

We believe that in this difficult task we will be supported by the prayers of all who love God Jesus Christ. (Редакцията 1927а:1)

From the very outset of the newspaper, its editors seem to be well-aware of the low social status of the Roma and the need to work with them and help them. Thus, they could be allies in their social emancipation, even though this is through the work and prism of the Protestant movement.

Immediately after the editor’s note, on pages 1 and 2 we find the article “The stolen Gospel.” The importance of this article in fact is integral for the birth and consolidation of the history of Roma evangelical faith in Bulgaria and particularly in the geographical north-west of the country – precisely where the first evangelical missions in Bulgaria

were first concentrated. The author of the piece is Trifon Dimitrov and he argues here about the unparalleled power of the Gospel. Besides arguing that there is no better way to receive enlightenment and becoming a better person than through reading and receiving the Gospel, Trifon Dimitrov tries to promote and propagate a legend which would in fact become pivotal in the birth, spreading and the success of the protestant religion among Bulgarian Roma.

No other book has not had such an immense influence upon the moral transformation of humankind and the personality as the gospel. All great poets, philosophers and writers, no matter how great they may be in the world, they were not able to write a book which would possess such beneficial power to bring up and to renew the people, in the way that the Gospel has.

It has influenced people in various experiences in their lives. (Димитров 1927:1)

Keeping that opening excerpt in mind, about the unparalleled power of the word of God and its ability to influence and uplift those who come across it, the author Dimitrov swiftly introduces his key point and how a Gypsy brother embraced the evangelical faith. It must be noted that the Gypsy is not named, nor does the article commit in supporting its arguments by giving more specific details. “Recently, a Gypsy brother has, by the way, told that the reason for his conversion was a gospel which he has stolen from one Evangelist.” (Димитров 1927:1) According to this story, “the Gypsy-brother,” then such “a silly man,” goes to the home of the Evangelist, steals one nice, wrapped book and puts it in his back among other things. (ibid.) Then, he took the book to his Gypsy friend and they began reading the stolen Gospel. After reading it for two-three weeks, God managed to gradually influence their hearts – one of the Gypsies felt that his soul has been saved and, after a while, the Gypsy thief also felt that God had forgiven his sins.

But that was not enough. They, under the influence of the Gospel, began to preach to others. They built a small pulpit, carried it from house to house, as the Jews carried the tabernacle, and preached about the deliverance through the blood of Jesus also to their other tribesmen.

Thus, they continued for a long time. Today, because of this stolen holy book, there are more than 60 souls in this village who have abandoned their old inclinations and sins and enjoy the great redeeming Deed of the Saviour. Among these 60 persons, 20 are Bulgarians while the other 40 are of the Gypsy tribe. (Димитров 1927:1–2)

The article tells that, at the time of writing, in that village, “almost everybody” (Димитров 1927:2) knew about the incredible things that the Gospel has done and its power. It is most reasonable to assume that this refers to the discussed above village of Golinsti which has enjoyed a considerable success with its Roma followers. It is curious to note that the author Trifon Dimitrov does not cite any names, dates or provide other specific data in this story of the Stolen Gospel. This is a clear attempt at myth making that played an important role in propagating the (in)credible nascent history of the Baptist Evangelical religion among the Roma. In this regard, Slavkova (Славкова 2007) has showed that

this legend has been already retold and promoted by the same author a couple of more times – first in 1924, in issue 6 of journal *Evangelist* and again in its issue 13–15 (Славкова 2007:77–78). In that earlier version, the Gypsy, Bogdan Markov from the village of Golinsi, steals the Gospel from the house of his Bulgarian employer and because he is illiterate, he gives it to Petar Punchev. The story then follows similarly to the one presented above where both Gypsies become transformed by its power, become believers and take it to themselves to spread the word of God to the other Gypsies in the village. Even today, among the Roma from the neighbourhood Mladenovo (the previous village of Golintsi) in the town of Lom, a version of this legend still exists (Славкова 2007).

Myths may have many social and political implications; they may be simplified or dramatised while important historical details overlooked and usually there is no evidence to support their veracity. In any case, myths and legends are integral in the process of nation-building and group identity while in this case, when they are related to spirituality and religious belief, the creation and existence of myths and legends can lead to the emergence of beliefs among Roma churchgoers of being ‘chosen’ or favoured by God (Marinov 2019). It should also be noted that the writing of the story of the stolen Gospel and its perpetuation today counters the widely held belief that the Roma have predominantly an oral tradition.

On page 2 of *Candlestick*, there is a small rubric, titled *News*. It tells about the existence of the Gypsy Women’s Missionary Association in the village of Golinsti. The Association is described as quite valuable for the Gypsy women in the mahala in Golinsti and thus it informs about the success of their recently organised a charitable night. For the event “the sisters gave away various objects that were sold away with success. The income [was] 708 leva. This association does a very useful work among the Gypsy women in the mahala. Pray about the work of these diligent workers.” Analysing the association between the previously mentioned, Gypsy Women Christian Association “Ромни” (Roma Woman, in Romani language) and the Gypsy Women’s Missionary Association, mentioned in *Candlestick*, it could be reasoned that the latter organisation has evolved and been renamed to the Gypsy Women Christian Association “Ромни” considering the geographical location of the work dedicated to Roma and also the dates which report about the women’s association – in January 15, 1917 in newspaper *Candlestick* we read about the Gypsy Women’s Missionary Association while in the month of December of the same year, in journal *Evangelist*, we read about the Gypsy Women’s Christian Association “Roma Woman” (Муди 1927:5).

On the same page 2 of the newspaper, there is the article which asks the rhetorical question – What is the Dearest Name? (Редакцията 1927b). It gives the explanation that name should be not gold, not the name of your homeland, nor the one of your mothers that should be dearest to anybody. Instead, that name should be Jesus Christ because only He could give salvation and true happiness and therefore Jesus “would stay the dearest name for all times” (Редакцията 1927b:2).

Page 3 of *Candlestick* is dedicated to the experience of a renowned Italian actor and how he embraced the Evangelical faith. The turning point of the story, which has been envisaged to be continued in the following issue of the newspaper is when, as part of his next role to play and ridicule an Evangelical pastor, he decides to pay a visit to an Evangelical pastor who used to live nearby. The intention of the actor's visit has been to study the pastor so that he could get an inspiration for his performance. Instead, upon the actor's arrival in the house of the pastor, he encounters his disabled daughter who is doing so poorly, she has reconciled that soon she will leave the worldly life. Instead of being sad, she says that her dream and happiness "are towards the heavenly home. [...] Her deep gaze, crossed arms and trembling lips – this was not a theatrical gesture." (Редакцията 1927a:3) As a result, the actor becomes so moved that instead of learning the actions of the pastor, he receives a priceless Christian advice. Ultimately, in a couple of years, the actor shares how he left his profession to become a pastor and how he gladly exchanged a well-paid job for a more impoverished life. Since then, his sole purpose has been to preach about Christ.

This article fits well the general narrative of newspaper *Candlestick*. It seeks to convince its readers that true happiness could be only found in the Holy scripture and in Jesus Christ and that the evangelical work is at the same time equally important as it gives a purpose to the believers and also happiness and joy for enabling others to have salvation, peace and prosperity.

The Roma newspaper *Candlestick* thus started with an editorial column which stressed on the importance and the need to evangelise the Bulgarian Roma. In its body, we can read three feature articles, and a news piece which were in Bulgarian while the last section was in Romani language – *Романо алав* (Roma word).

It offers three articles. The first one is a Romani language translation of the article presented on page 2, "Think about the One who Loves You" (Редакцията 1927b). Here, the article entitled "The dearest thing" reiterates that it is not gold, not the house, nor the mother but Jesus who should be the dearest (Редакцията 1927d:4). The editors are seemingly trying to challenge the 'earthly' value system of their target audience, and to encourage them to seek God and salvation through Jesus Christ.

The second article, "Who is my neighbour" gives the Romani language translation of Luke verses 25–37 with a re-telling of the story of the Good Samaritan (Редакцията 1927c). While not an original piece, the selection of this parable (rather than any one of the many other parables available in the Bible) is special for the editor, Petar Minkov, as it seeks to convey something about the link between a person's perceived social status and their position within the religion. It is notable that Samaritans and their culture were despised by the Jewish people and the story teaches that a person's social standing is not an indicator of their actions and those of low social status should not be overlooked. As such the inclusion of the parable of the good Samaritan in this specific section can be analysed as an attempt to make the religion more accessible and identifiable to the Roma.

The third article is a presentation in Romani language of the story of “the Prodigal Son” which is from Luke 15:11–22 (Редакцията 1927e). It is not a direct translation from the original but a somewhat shortened adaptation to the story. Nonetheless, it conveys the same message and, much like the parable of the Good Samaritan, it could be appreciated by the Roma readers.

Newspaper *Candlestick*'s section *Romano alav*, translated as *Roma word*, which is all written in Romani language, contained parables which seem to be consciously selected by the editors. They can be linked to the existing stereotypes of the Roma who live day by day, wastefully and not saving, and thus can be seen as another attempt at making the religion accessible and identifiable to its Roma audience. Newspaper *Светилник* (1927) should undoubtedly be regarded as a unique endeavour of the Evangelical Baptist Mission among the Gypsies in Bulgaria. Even though it came only with one published issue, it was one of the first in Bulgaria to clearly dedicate itself to the Roma and to address them directly.

### 2.3 Newspaper *Terbie* and Its Role in the Pursuit of Roma Civic Interests

This section will present and discuss the newspaper *Terbie* (Upbringing, from Arabic, through Turkish) which was the publication of the Sofia-based General Mohamedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria (CSA, f. 264, op. 2, a.e. 8413) in 1930. Official records have reported that newspaper *Terbie* was a publication of the Sofia-based General Mohamedan National Cultural-Educational Union in Bulgaria; its editor was Shakir Mahmudov Pashev; it was published in Sofia by the publishing house “Bulgaria”; its price was 2 leva, 1,500 copies were issued and it was published in seven issues between 1933 and 1934 (Иванчев 1969:45, 465).

The history of this Gypsy organisation, however, goes back to 1919 and its predecessor organisation, called the Sofia General Muslim Educational-Cultural and Mutual Aid Organisation “Istikbal-Future” (CSA, f. 1 Б, op. 8, a.e. 596, l. 69) (moving forward, we will refer to it as Organisation ‘Istikbal-Future’). Both organisations are linked with the active involvement of the Rom, Shakir Pashov, who in fact, as we will see later, has left a couple of sources which give reference to the newspaper *Terbie*. The Muslim charitable organisation known as Organisation ‘Istikbal-Future’ was founded in 1919 in Sofia. Its Statute does not make any references to ‘Egyptians’ or ‘Tsigani,’ the terms by which they would most commonly be referred to elsewhere, but instead it references Muslims. Nevertheless, it was a Roma organisation which pursued the furthering of its prominence in the Bulgarian society. From its statute, we learn that it sought to organise the Muslims in a general organisation which would help the poor in times of illnesses, accidents, death and others and would fight for their moral, material and educational-cultural upbringing (ibid.). There are a couple of noteworthy points here. One is that Organisation ‘Istikbal-Future’ had a vision for the inclusion of the wider, i.e. Roma, community. The

second relevant point is that the organisation envisaged to have nation-wide reach and one way to achieve this has been by issuing and distributing its own publication (*ibid.*). It therefore becomes clear the organisation knew that one powerful way to realise their goal, to help and include Muslims from across Bulgaria, was by issuing their own print and narrative.

A publication, which was not explicitly mentioned at this stage, was envisaged to be sold and bring income to the organisation. Apart from selling its publication, the organisation sought to get income, among other things, from selling badges. These badges, its newspaper, along with its proclaimed yearly celebration of St George's Day, point to the creation of unifying symbols around which Gypsies in Bulgaria would derive meaning and a sense of pride. Unfortunately, none of these badges have been recovered. Perhaps, the stamp of the Union might provide some idea; it had circular form bearing the inscription around its edge: "General Mohamedan National Cultural Educational Union in Bulgaria" bearing a star in its middle (CSA, f. 264, op. 2, a.e. 8413, l. 15–20). The whole translation of the text and a commentary have been presented elsewhere (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a).

The existence of newspaper *Terbie* is known and noted, however, its issues have been lost from libraries and archives. In spite of that, there is valuable information about the newspaper and here we will present information about its content. One such source we find in the Roma newspaper *Romano Esi* (Roma Voice) which was the publication of the third Roma organisation, the successor of the General Mohamedan-Gypsy Union – the United General Cultural Educational Organisation of the Gypsy Minorities in Bulgaria 'Ekipe' (Unity) (CSA, f. 1 Б, op. 8, a.e. 596, l. 50–52). Its editor was still Shakir Pashov (who was later replaced by Mustafa Aliev, also known as Manush Romanov) and its first issue appeared on February 25, 1946 while its last issue came out in 1948 (Marushiakova and Popov 2015; Стоянова 2017).

The title of the article that appeared in *Romano esi* is "From the Life of the Sofia Muslim Confessional Municipality – Sofia" (Билялов 1946), however, its sub-title reads "Articles by Hyusein Bilyalov, printing house of [newspaper] *Terbie* on 8 November 1933." The clear aim of re-printing the article published by Hyusein Bilyalov was to raise awareness about a perceived injustice against the Roma, particularly those from Sofia, and therefore, it was a call for a change. The reprinting of *Terbie's* article of 1933 more than a decade later, this time in *Romano esi*, sought to raise awareness among the readership of the newspaper, both Roma and especially Bulgarian officials, about the long-standing struggles of the Muslims from Sofia, i.e. Roma/Gypsies, to run for a place and gain access to the Sofia Muslim Confessional Municipality.

Bilyalov tries to emphasise several times in his text that for a number of years, Bulgarian officials rejected the plea of the Muslims of Sofia to hold elections for trustees of mosques in the capital, even though they had their own mosque, a following of reported 4,000 people and waqf properties (Билялов 1946:2).

It is not 40, but more than 200 [people who are settled] and properties in the capital Sofia, Muslim families have for a number of years been fighting, subject to the law, for the ordering of the election for the appointment of electing trustees and of confessional municipality. (ibid.)

Despite their best efforts, including legal action, the Muslims of Sofia were not successful:

We filed a lawsuit No. 337 from 1927 for the denial of the Minister to fulfil the rule of the law [...]. It was not until 1929 when an order of some kind was made for the election of mosque trustees, however, persons in office frustrated its creation by not advertising the list with the Muslims from Sofia [...]. We filed a complaint to the Public Prosecutor of the Court of Sofia Municipality, incoming No. 14983 from 1930, for violating the official obligations of the respective bodies, however, they were not charged. (ibid.)

It is important to note that the offered reprinted article seems to convey the history, relevance, and the frustration of the Muslims from Sofia. Not once in the article the terms ‘Tsigani’, i.e. Gypsies, Roma, Egyptians, have been used, but instead it references “Muslims of Sofia” and Bulgarian Muslims, and their interests (ibid.). This is certainly a relevant and conscious decision, keeping in mind that their main goal has been to gain access or become in charge of the Muslim properties and their mosque – which are all indicative of the clear civic, religious and therefore political purpose of the organisation. Thus, the newspaper *Terbie* was the vehicle used to convey their struggles and ideas and advance their cause. In that regard, the article makes an emphasis on the importance of education. Becoming in charge of their religious institutions and their properties is recognised by Bilyalov as a way of emancipation that would furthermore facilitate education for the youth in their community:

This [the appointment of trustees] would guarantee also the educational work of our confessional municipality so that our children come out from the university of the street and get involved in general and professional education.

We address our sincere appeal for the revival also of our Muslim school which has been existing for a number of years in Sofia and where our children would receive light, science, upbringing, education and public virtues, [all] desperately needed and good for our homeland. (ibid.)

Reading the excerpts above thus supports the idea that newspaper *Terbie* had been actively and purposefully utilised as a tool which sought to pursue the civic and political interests of the Roma at the time making it a source of great pride, “To our great joy, after heroic efforts, today we enjoy our child and Supreme patron, our enlightening source “Terbie.”” (ibid.)

Their struggles and hope continued even with the coming of a new, democratic government. And despite that their efforts remained fruitless, the author Hyusein Bilyalov

finished his article with a positive note conveying that, “The belief in us, after waiting for more than 10 years, is not yet crashed. We are waiting patiently and we are faithful!” (ibid.)

To support the idea of their conscious Muslim identification, Organisation ‘Istikbal-Future’ published in 1930 a document entitled “Moods and Truths” (DA Sofia, f. 1 K, op. 2, a.e. 831, l. 1). In that official statement, it does not reference the term *Tsigani*, i.e. Gypsies. Quite on the contrary, it clarifies the term “Gypsies” are in fact associated with “pariah” and throughout the text it refers to them instead as “old Muslims,” “poor Muslims,” “minority from Sofia” and “Muslims” (ibid.). As such, this choice of a preferred, non-Gypsy but religious or pious Muslim identity, can be seen as a clear dissociation and distancing of the damaging associations and images that Gypsies may bring but also this can be interpreted as a way to defend the Roma/Gypsy community and clear their disruptive images (Marinov 2020). The choice of the Roma from Sofia to express and employ their Muslim religion is a meaningful, civic, and political act which was aimed at access to positive outcomes in their lives. This is certainly not to be understood that they decided to adapt a new, non-Roma/Gypsy identity but rather a conscious and strategic choice which was hoped to result in the uplifting of their social status which was ultimately an effort for their civic emancipation.

About the Roma newspaper *Terbie* we learn from another source, authored by the Bulgarian scholar and writer, Nayden Sheytanov, who published an article in the Bulgarian newspaper *Mir* (one of the most read Bulgarian newspapers for its time) on May 5, 1934 (Шейтанов 1934). Sheytanov was in fact one of the earliest Bulgarian scholars reported to have endeavoured to conduct a serious and comprehensive study of the Roma in Bulgaria. His studies also encompass the period between the two world wars and, as the majority of his contemporaries, his interests were focused on studying their language, history and folklore. Sheytanov collaborated with scientists from abroad and tried to attract Bulgaria’s public’s interest and attention to the issues and problems facing the Roma.

Among other things, Sheytanov’s article is particularly useful in our topic of Romani literature because it has fleshed out some direct quotes from *Terbie’s* issue 6, published on March 4, 1934. Before we present the quotes from *Terbie*, it is integral to keep in mind that they have been brought up in a specific context and especially in support of the author’s own views and objective, which appeared to be aimed at stirring the indifference and inactivity of the Bulgarian nation at large toward the Roma. In his article “Gypsies and the Gypsy question”, Sheytanov (Шейтанов 1934) tries to urge readers to understand that the Gypsies form the largest non-Bulgarian nation and informs them that they issue their own newspaper, called *Terbie*. Yet, to Sheytanov’s disappointment, few people in Bulgaria express any genuine or serious interests in Bulgaria’s Gypsies with the exception of the “police, to whom Gypsies present a lot of work with their criminalities and to a few politicians, who used to grant and take back suffrage rights to the settled Gypsies.” (Шейтанов 1934:3)

From the selective collection of quotes that Sheytanov offers, there is a certain image about *Terbie's* visions. Its editors seem to stress on history, pride, a much-needed change of the (low) status of the Gypsies, especially in Bulgaria. Therefore, the narrative can be viewed as a call for a total Gypsy (inter)national civic organisation and uprising.

The aspect of the existence of a 'proud' history of the Gypsy identity could be inferred from references to its past. This preoccupation with 'glorious past' makes sense in the context of nation-building struggles in the Balkans. Gypsies here are referred as the "[...] offspring of the greatest King Pharaoh" (*ibid.*). They are therefore urged by the editors of newspaper *Terbie* that "[they] ought to proudly call [themselves] a Gypsy!" Their own traditions, too, should be not ignored but preserved as can be inferred from the quote which urges Gypsies "[not to] ignore your people, faith, traditions!" (*ibid.*) The idea of Gypsy pride could be also inferred from *Terbie's* quote of a great number of Gypsies according to which they number "over a quarter of a million in Bulgaria" (*ibid.*).

Apart from offering a certain narrative or an image of an 'ancient' Gypsy people with proud historical past and traditions and a large population, it is also one which is marred with low social status: "... since the liberation of the Bulgarian country till today, not a single Government of ours take any special care for our nation." (*ibid.*) "Why are the Gypsies in Turkey not at such a low social status compared to us in Bulgaria?" (*ibid.*)

Precisely from that recognised premise of inactivity and indifference of the Bulgarian nation and officials, the editors of *Terbie* urge for the social organisation, and uplifting of the Gypsies in Bulgaria. The original premise lies on the portrayal that Bulgaria is not doing enough for their Gypsies compared to other European nations – "In Europe, especially Austria, Hungary, Romania, Poland ... and Soviet Russia, there are law-makers who passed a number of laws for their support, both financially and cultural-educational." (*ibid.*) Hence, it should not be surprising to learn about *Terbie's* appeal "[...] to the Sofia Muslim Gypsies to organise themselves sooner, to give an impetus to whole of Bulgaria so that ... we have representatives who would protect our interests." (*ibid.*) Receiving education is certainly also recognised as integral as we are informed that "... soon, in Sofia [Gypsies] will enjoy a Turkish school." (*ibid.*) As such, phrases are found which indicate for the need of "[...] our [Gypsy] national revival," "[Gypsy] national movement," "Mohamedan nationalists" and "uprising of the Muslims in Sofia" (*ibid.*) – all indicating for the need for change, pride and organisation.

That organisation, furthermore, was not limited only to Gypsies from Sofia but throughout the country. We learn that they had associates and members across Bulgaria – "Our editorial board will send lists of stock to all our associates in Bulgaria." (*ibid.*) Additionally, there are indications that suggest there had been information about the Gypsies, as we saw from the quotes above, internationally such as Turkey, Austria, Poland the Soviet Union and curiously the General Mohamedan-Gypsy Union has been collaborating with "Hungarian and Romanian Gypsies" (*ibid.*). This highlights the wish of the organisation for greater international cooperation and for a transnational identity.

Another valuable source about *Terbie* is the editor himself, Shakir Mahmudov Pashov. He wrote a monograph entitled *History of the Gypsies in Bulgaria and in Europe. "Roma"* (in Bulgarian), which was never published (Пашов 1957) and a memoir, biography (ASR f. Шакир Пашов) which is not dated but it is assumed to have been written in 1967 (Marushiakova and Popov 2015).

In his short autobiography, Pashov presents his political and civic involvement from 1919. This work is associated with some discrepancies (ibid.) but in it Pashov writes that as a Chairman of "the Gypsy Cultural-Educational Organisation in Bulgaria" he has "founded the first Gypsy newspaper in Bulgaria, 'Terbie' (Upbringing), which advocated for the cultural and educational uplifting and for the political consciousness of our tobacco workers in Bulgaria." (ASR f. Шакир Пашов). One of the discrepancies is the vague reference of the organisation which in reality must have been called the Sofia General Muslim Educational-Cultural and Mutual Aid Organisation "Istikbal-Future" (1919) or the General Mohamedan-Gypsy National Cultural-Educational and Mutual Aid Union in Bulgaria (CSA, f. 264, op. 2, a.e. 8413, l. 15–20).

Pashov gives another reference to newspaper *Terbie* in his monograph (Пашов 1957), also unpublished. Here, Pashov paid more attention to the importance of the newspaper and we learn that its role has been regarded as significant in the organisation and uniting of Bulgaria's Roma and especially in promoting political ideas among the youth. He even describes it as the first and only Gypsy newspaper in Bulgaria and in Europe which is "issued in the name of the Gypsy minority." (Пашов 1957:108). One of the major takes from the Shakir Pashov's monograph is that *Terbie* was a source of great pride for both its visionaries, himself, his associates, such as Hyusein A. Bilyalov, and all Roma across Bulgaria.

Considering the three secondary sources presented above, the importance of *Terbie* ought to be appreciated in the context of its position as the first Bulgarian newspaper which was wholly initiated by Roma, managed by Roma and advocated for the interests of the Roma not only in Bulgaria's capital but throughout the country, regardless of their perceived differences. It sought to pursue and promote its interests and agenda, disseminate ideas, and inspire civic and political consciousness. On the whole, the newspaper was a Gypsy/Roma in its core and character and it stressed its vision for the right, equal and peaceful co-existence with the rest of the Bulgarian nation, and its interest in participating in the political and civic life of the country.

## 2.4 Conclusion

From the presented Roma publications in this chapter, we could discern the emergence and existence of translations in Romani language of books of the Bible, religious hymns, publishing a booklet by the Roma churchgoers from Golinsti in 1926, as well the Roma newspapers *Candlestick* in 1927 and *Terbie* in 1933–1934. Overall, these publications acted

as a platform for expression of the experiences of the Roma but also for their recognition, social positions, and needs. Translations of Gospels in Romani language, as well as religious songs, gave way for the recognition of the Romani language and were examples of some of its earliest (re)presentation in print form. It is also unique to see the publishing of the Evangelical song collection *Roma Holy Songs* in 1933 which represented an original creative work of Romani language poetry writing.

The publishing of the Romani literature in Bulgaria was a public expression of the interests and visions of the Roma in the country from the interwar period. For example, we saw how the struggle of the Gypsy Baptist churchgoers in the village of Golinsti to form an independent church and the experienced injustice led them to write and publish a small booklet. In the example of the Muslims from Sofia, Roma have been excluded from the general context of the Muslim community in Sofia. The two cases may have been different in their actual visions and interests; however, they are similar in the way Roma have decided to express publicly their fervent passions, frustration, interests, and what they have perceived as social injustice. In both cases, the actual publishing, printing, and reprinting of these events are a clear demonstration of active civic consciousness.

All these publications offered a unique chance for the Gypsies to express themselves, their visions, interests, and the way they would like to be considered in the Bulgarian society. Thus, reading and interpreting these documents, we could understand that, regardless of their sometimes differing identities, they retained their Roma identities while their visions for emancipation were not in opposition to the general Bulgarian society. In fact, Roma have professed their desire to be a part of Bulgarian society. This points to their functioning as part of both the community and the wider society to which they belong (Marushiakova 2008). In the case of the Protestant Roma, the religion did not try to obliterate their ethnicity but on the contrary, it conveyed that they are 'better Gypsies' because of their knowledge of the religion and by knowing how to live in accordance with the tenets of the Protestantism. *Terbie* and its parent organisations in fact sought to advocate for the interests of all Roma, regardless of their differences, and to unite them under one organisation. As a whole, both the instances presented in the Protestant Roma publications and in *Terbie* (which was originally framed within the Muslim faith) should be interpreted as seized opportunities in which Roma voices were made manifest. These were utilised not in opposition to being 'Bulgarian' but rather as channels through which they could assert their position, elevate their social status, get recognition and ultimately pursue their civic interests.



# Yugoslavia

*Sofiya Zahova*

## 3.1 Introduction

There were dynamic processes in terms of ethno-cultural and political developments in interwar Yugoslavia. At that time, various undertakings, initiated by Roma informal and formal organisations, were taking place. These initiatives varied, in terms of activities, and included church services in Romani language as well as cultural clubs, community customs and commemorations, which were signs of Roma's emancipation and representation. The endeavours' overall goal was essentially the same: to unite, mobilise, and represent the Roma community as people equal to all others in the Yugoslav public space. The pioneering examples of Romani literature and publications during this period should be interpreted precisely in the framework of this general goal. They included publications in Romani language such as *The Gospel of Luke* and *Romane gilja*, a collection of Roma songs' texts, both produced by Rade Uhlik, as well as original literature in various prose genre pieces, authored by Svetozar Simić, the most prominent activist of the time.

After a short overview of the Yugoslav historical context, and a discussion of Roma activism in the first parts of the chapter, the discussion moves to the first publications that targeted Roma audiences. *Romano lil* (Roma paper, in Romani language) / *Ciganske novine* (Gypsy newspaper, in Serbian), initiated and edited by Simić, was the first and only Roma-led journalistic endeavour in interwar Yugoslavia. According to the editor, "our newspaper has been set up in order to write about Gypsies, but understandably for Gypsies." (Симић 1935a:1) The focus of the chapter is a comprehensive analysis of the *Romano lil* newspaper in several sections, dedicated respectively to its production, content overview and narratives. Additionally, Simić's unpublished literature pieces are discussed.

With reference to *Romano lil*'s texts, the chapter focuses on how Simić and his collaborators conveyed their visions about the Roma emancipation in literature form. Roma are presented as a people united by a common culture and historical memory, thus equal to the other people of the Yugoslav Kingdom, who needed to be included in all processes of the social and public sphere. Along with this, in many of the texts the two dimensions of belonging – to the Roma community and to the Yugoslav/Serbian society – were publicly expressed.

### 3.2 The Yugoslav Context: General Developments and Roma Activism

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was created at the end of the First World War as a twelve-million citizen territory, to unite the former lands of the Kingdom of Serbia, the Kingdom of Montenegro, and some territories of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Vojvodina and the shortly existing provisional state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs) under the rule of the Karadjordjević dynasty (Banac 1988:132–140). In 1929, the kingdom was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. For the purposes or simplification, the term Yugoslavia will be used hereafter for the name of the kingdom throughout the interwar period, between 1918–1941.

The overall number of Roma/Gypsies in interwar Yugoslavia is uncertain. According to Tatomir Vukanović the number of Gypsies in the Serbian territories of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1921 was 34,919 (Вукановић 1983:121). The highest estimate in studies reaches 250,000 (Džurić 1987:67) and over 300,000 (Ацковић 2009:61), which was a rather insignificant share of the kingdom's population. As far as the individual rights of the Roma, it can be affirmed that all Roma individuals with citizenship had the same rights as all other citizens of the state, and, as far as sedentary groups on Serbian territories were concerned, they had such rights since the Serbian independence in the nineteenth century (Стојанчевић 1992).

In the general atmosphere of studying all ethnic communities in Yugoslav territories, during the interwar period, scholars were researching the culture and language of the Roma/Gypsies. Tihomir Djordjević [Gjorgjević], a Serbian leading ethnographer, whose PhD thesis about Gypsies was defended in Munich (Gjordjević 1903, 1906), continued to publish the results of his research in both Yugoslavia (Ђорђевић 1909, 1932, 1933a, 1933b) and abroad (Gjorgjević 1907a, 1907b). Some periodicals, such as *Zbornik za narodni život i običaje Južnih Slavena* (Review on Folk Life and Customs of the South Slavs), published in Croatia, developed ethnographic questionnaires for Gypsies, modelled according to the common pattern of the time, and appealed to the readers to implement them and send information, which was consequently published (Vojak 2004:210–211). Some local studies in the field of history and ethnography also included parts related to Gypsy groups in their territories (Hrvatska Enciklopedija 1942; Vojak 2010, 2017; Ђорђевић 1932, 1933a), and there were collectors of Romani words in amateur vocabularies. Among the groups of amateur researchers stands the name of Antun Medven, a Catholic priest from the eparchy of Križ, near Zagreb, who learned the Romani language, and in the 1930s compiled a Romani grammar and Roma folklore collection with song texts and tales that is unpublished thus far and preserved in his archive (Vojak 2009:117–20; 2013:180).

Another scientist during this period was Aleksandar Petrović, a physician interested in Roma communities. He was an employee in the Institute of Hygiene in Belgrade who had done research among Roma, published articles in Yugoslav journals or as separate studies (Петровић 1937b) as well as in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* during the second half of the 1930s. He corresponded with the leadership of the Gypsy Lore Society, sending

materials, written and photographed, on various topics related to the Roma in Yugoslavia, their history, way of life, beliefs and culture (Petrović 1935, 1937).

Similar to other folk communities in the South Slavic territories, interest towards their own history and the need for publishing in their own language, also appeared among the Roma. Although Roma cultural, political and civic initiatives were not an object of measures on behalf of the state, such activities were not lacking. As Dragoljub Acković (2001, 2017a; Ацковић 2000) has argued, grassroots initiatives and self-organising efforts of Roma did exist, both formal and informal. There were several accomplishments led by Roma, e.g. a couple of organisations and the newspaper enterprise discussed here. Among these accomplishments were the First Serbian-Gypsy association (*zadruga*) for mutual support in sickness and death (*Prva Srpsko-Ciganska zadruga za uzajmno pomaganje u bolesti i smrti*), active in the 1920s and 1930s, that most probably was based on an earlier form of a community organisation. The organisation's goal was to provide its members with help and support in various situations. The second known organisation is the so-called Club of the Belgrade Serbian Gypsies (*Klub beogradskih srpskih Cigana*), and information about its activities, which were reported in the media, point to the fact that the Club claimed rights for political representation and participation in the decision-making bodies at the local and national level. More is known about the third organisation, The Association of Belgrade Gypsies Worshippers of "Bibija" (Tetkica) (*Udruženje beogradskih Cigana svečara "Bibije" (Tetkice)*), established in 1935. According to the Association's Statute, its goals included raising the cultural level of all its members by establishing new and supporting already existing cultural and social institutions, accepting gifted kids and young people, with the aim of education and the study of crafts (Acković 2004, 2010; Marushiakova and Popov 2021a:180–217). The fourth organisation, The Educational Club of the Yugoslav Gypsy Youth (*Prosvetni klub jugoslovenske ciganske omladine*), active shortly in the late 1930s, was presided over by Svetozar Simić (Николић 1939:10). There were also Roma local initiatives that were taking place in the cultural, social, religious and political life at the local level. Among the initiatives were the registration of Roma in political parties who stood for elections in the 1920s (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a: 218–235), the initiative for the building of the so-called 'Gypsy Church' after the First World War in Privlaka (today in Eastern Croatia) with donations from the Rom Čedomir Nikolić, where in 1938, in front of a Roma audience from the Vukovar-Srijem region, the newly translated *Gospel of Luke* (Uhlik 1938) was read (Acković 2014:205–208; Vojak 2013:184; Комски 1938). The emergence of the Gypsy church in the region of Eastern Croatia, could be explained by the importance of the religion as a marker of identity for the two major ethnic communities there – Catholic Coats and Orthodox Serbs. Although technically belonging to the Orthodox Serbian Church, the Gypsy church was conceptualised as a separate church to express the differentiation of the Roma community from all others. In Niš, Southern Serbia, in 1928, the Gypsy Singing Society *Sloga* (Accord) was established, and in 1932 the football club *Gajret* (Zeal) (Jašić 2001:25) was founded. According to local community memory, the football club was entirely comprised of Roma, although it was

not officially stated that it had an ethnic character. In some Croatian territories Roma Catholics were also raising voices for inclusion in the state and religious institutions. For example, the Roma in Sveta Klara (now a neighbourhood of Zagreb) and nearby places in the region of Central Croatia, were requesting land from the authorities for agriculture (Vojak 2014:150, 171). The same community was part of the Catholic parish and a big Catholic sermon in the Romani language was organised for them on the day of St Juraj (known as George's Day of Spring) in 1940 (ibid.:180).

Thus, Roma initiatives in the cultural, social, religious and political life at the local level were numerous and were undoubtedly related to the differentiation of the Roma community, on the basis of their common Roma identity. It was thus logical that the goals and activities for equalisation to the other communities, and representation of the Roma people in the public life of Yugoslavia, were also extended to other public fields such as media and publishing.

### 3.3 First Roma Publications

The foundation of Romani literature in Yugoslavia, similar to most of the countries where Romani literature appeared, was related to folklore and religious publications. The first scholar, who encouraged the development of the identity of the Roma community, through Romani language books focusing on the Roma people as an audience, was Rade Uhlik (1899–1991).

Uhlik was born to a Bosnian Croat family, and since the interwar period actively collected oral traditions and studied the Romani Bosnian dialects, creating a Romani language dictionary and numerous collections that were later published, while some remain unpublished (Acković 2019). Uhlik was also the first to give credit to individual Roma for their authorship as narrators or creators of folklore. He purposefully addressed and identified Roma people as the audience of his publications, in his first collection of Roma songs, *Romane gilja. Циганске песме*, published by Vučen Štrbac publisher in Prijedor (Uhlik 1937). The book's Introduction, by Rade Uhlik, is of key importance in the perception of Roma as people who had their own written tradition, in unison with the ideas of contemporary and later Roma activism for emancipation through public representation and circulation of their own folklore, as well as their language and its diversity:

#### BROTHER ROMA!

Here, I created one Roma book and I distribute it all across the country, letting the beautiful Romani word be heard all around. It is high time to do that.

What do I want to do? People do not think about their black brothers! There are two hundred thousand Roma [in Yugoslavia], in the whole world they are ten times more. Thus, it is a shame that they don't read books! This is unfortunate for the Roma.

In these books there are circa a hundred poems and short poems, which I collected from many places. There could be words that you don't know, because the Roma don't speak the same way in different places. But you are going to understand what the meaning is. Roma

have to know more of their words, in order to be able to speak more easily between each other. It was difficult for me to collect the poems.

The Romani language and Roma song must not disappear. That is why each Rom has to collect the Roma songs. Thus, I'm going to come to your place to put the songs on paper and to distribute them among the Roma. Not a single Rom has to pay for these books, I distribute them for free.

Roma! You have to read and to sing these songs and to preserve your language in this way. I know that this booklet comes out for your goodness. Therefore, until we meet I'd like to tell you:

Stay with God!

Whoever knows more songs, let him send them to me at this address:

RADE UHLIK, professor,  
Prijedor, Vrbaska banovina  
(Uhlak 1937:n.p.)

Another unpublished manuscript of Uhlak from the interwar period, consists of Roma tales, collected during the 1930s from different locations in Bosnia (Uhlak 1940). Probably due to the situation in Yugoslavia, which was occupied in 1941 by Fascist forces, the manuscript was not published as the songs' textbook. Its title is *Phirasavne paramiča andar o romano durutnipe* (Funny stories/anecdotes from the Roma past), and the text is entirely in Romani language, addressing Roma, who should laugh, but not be laughed at:

Friends,

I made this book [for you to] laugh a bit. The life of Roma is very hard and poor. That is why sometimes they need their heart to become full of joy. Do not be ashamed and do not think that this is something like a joke with the Roma. These tales are not true ones, they are made up. I publish in this book the tales in the way they were told to me.

All the tales are in the Romani language, and not a single one has a Serbian word. That is why no one who is not Rom can understand the meaning of these tales and cannot make jokes with the Roma.

Hereby I send this book among you so that you can also learn to understand how the language was spoken in the by-gone days of the Roma life.

Rade Uhlak  
Scholar  
(Uhlak 1940:1-2)

Both introductory words given above were exclusively in Romani language as the two books were directed to a Roma audience. The readers had to be engaged and feel proud of their oral heritage finding place on the pages of a book "to travel to the whole land," as Uhlak points out. In an interview with the mainstream *Pravda* newspaper, shortly before publishing the *Roma Songs* collection, Uhlak said: "Among the Gypsies, similarly to other people, songs represent an expression of the peoples' soul." (Курбеговић 1937:8)

Several of Uhlak's manuscripts address the Roma in this manner which is a clear message that Uhlak was promoting the idea of Roma oral heritage becoming written and developing the literature genre to become a representation of the Roma consciousness

and Roma culture. Thus, Uhlik's publication of the interwar period and many other manuscripts of that time, can be considered Romani literature produced in Romani language and for a Roma audience, under the overall aim to preserve the folklore that presents the Roma folk-spirit and to subsequently establish Romani language tradition in writing form. Uhlik is considered the first Romani studies scholar in Yugoslavia, and rightfully called since the time of his early publications the "Gypsy Vuk Karadžić" (Петровић 1937b).

Uhlik translated *O Devlikano lil e Sumnale Lukahtar* (The Gospel of Luke) into Romani language (Bosnian Gurbet dialect), published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in Belgrade (1938). The text was actually circulating in Yugoslavia and was used by both Catholic and Orthodox services. The word about the Gypsy church seemed to spread quickly and in 1938 the priest Lazar Staminirović read in front of a Roma audience, from the Vukovar-Srijem region, in the Gypsy church of Vinkovci (see above), attracting Orthodox Roma who visited from other regions of Yugoslavia, Roma Catholics and also Croat Catholics, who were curious to listen to the unique Romani language service (Рајчевић 1938). Antun Medven, also used the religious translation in his Catholic services and also probably was preaching in the Romani language, himself being a Romani speaker, in 1940 (Vojak 2013:180). The religious texts were an expression of the need of the Roma community of all Christian denominations to be addressed in their own language, which would distinguish them from other communities. Furthermore, to address the needs of the Roma community, and reaffirm their identity, religious services were organised for the Roma in Romani language on their main holidays, such as the day of St George or *Djurdjevdan* (Комски 1938:9). There were also Belgrade Roma's own project for translation of Bible text (Николић 1939:10), which was not realised but was a clear signal of the idea that Roma should be engaged as main actors in these translations.

The activities of Rade Uhlik were a watershed moment in this process, as his religious texts' translations and the two books compiled by him in the interwar period (1937, 1940), were intended as publications for a Romani reading audience and were interrelated with the ideas for Roma emancipation through turning their linguistic and cultural heritage into written forms equal to all other people's traditions. It is thus not surprising to note that the Roma folklore collections of Rade Uhlik formed the foundation of Romani literature in Yugoslavia, becoming a source for publishing of Romani language reading materials as well as a literary model for Roma poetry and prose works for both Roma authors (Tahirović Sijerčić 2009a, 2009b, 2010), Roma researchers (Heinschink et al. 2006), and the general Yugoslav literary scene (Ухлик & Радичевић 1957, 1982).

### 3.4 Svetozar Simić and the Production of *Romano Lil*

As shown above, there were numerous instances of Roma self-organisation, representation and emancipation led by Roma in Belgrade or other localities during the interwar

period, but Svetozar Simić (1913–1979) was the only Roma personality whose activism was interrelated with literary and journalistic activities in the public field.

Born in 1913 to a Roma family, in a village near Arandjelovac in Central Serbia, Simić moved to Belgrade after graduation from high school. He continued his studies in the Yugoslav capital, becoming a law student in 1935. In the 1930s, Simić co-authored with Aleksandar Petrović, three studies related to Roma groups, culture and customs – *About the marriage among our Gypsies* (Петровић & Симић 1934a), *About religion among our Gypsies* (Петровић & Симић 1934b), and *Theft among Gypsies* (Петровић & Симић 1934c). In the spring of 1935 Simić started as editor, publisher and main contributor *Romano lil. Циганске новине*, a monthly newspaper that was issued in three editions, March, April and May.

Later, in 1938–1939, Simić was the founder and president of the Educational Club of Yugoslav Gypsy Youth that existed shortly before the start of the Second World War (see above). Simić was in contact with the network of Roma activists and researchers of Roma culture throughout his life. He corresponded with Rade Uhlik. Simić also worked on Romani grammar and vocabulary, novel(s), as well as a memoir (Acković 2014:263–406). A theatre play script on the topic of the Roma destiny during the Second World War, found in his archive, has been attributed to him, but in fact had been written by Spasoje Mitrović who probably wanted to consult with Simić about the script. Most of the materials are unpublished thus far, and part of them are kept in the Personal Archive of Dragoljub Acković (LADA, f. Svetozar Simić; Acković 2020.). The references below to unpublished literature works are from this archive.

According to the archive and bookkeeping documents of *Romano lil* newspaper, Svetozar Simić was the founder, editor-in-chief and manager of the paper. The headline contained information that the newspaper was edited by a team. The last page of each *Romano lil* issue indicated the managerial and editorial position of Simić: “Owner and editor in chief: Svetozar Simić, Jatagan mala III raw 24. Printed by M. Sibivkić – 9, Kralj Marko street.” The newspaper was published on four pages, by a printing house in Belgrade. The publishing box does not contain information about the print run, but according to a review of the newspaper, published in 1936 in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society (JGLS)* by Jopson, based on information provided by Aleksandar Petrović, the print run was 500 copies for the first two issues and 1000 copies for the third one (Jopson 1936:87).

It is, however, necessary that one particular misunderstanding concerning the newspaper be deconstructed and eliminated. According to the mentioned review of *Romano lil* in the *JGLS*, Aleksandar Petrović is reported as the person who founded and tried to maintain the newspaper, despite all obstacles, financial difficulties and obstructions:

The lone and heroic efforts of Dr. Alexander Petrović to found a Gypsy newspaper have an element of pathos. Difficulties which would have daunted all but a wholehearted enthusiast faced the project from the very start. Money had been undoing of an earlier attempt to form

a Belgrade Gypsy Society (the Administrative Committee had contrived a neat get-away with the funds collected!), and money was destined to exercise a baneful influence on the newspaper plans also ... But, all joking aside, the paper does real credit to the enthusiasm of Dr. Petrović. (Jopson 1936:86–89)

Petrović was indeed one of the main contributors to the newspaper and, despite the fact that he was not explicitly mentioned in the newspaper's administrative records, he was a collaborator in Simić's endeavours and the materials written by him form a substantial part of the small newspaper. Nothing, however, points to the fact that Petrović was the one who started or tried to maintain the endeavour. In fact, all preserved documents from the bookkeeping and archive of *Romano lil* – manuscripts, financial records, as well as the printed copies of the newspaper, attest undoubtedly that Svetozar Simić was the main figure behind its publishing. Furthermore, according to a comprehensive article in the genre of a portrait interview with Simić, published in one of the most influential daily newspapers in Yugoslavia, *Vreme*, the editorial office was set up in Simić's father's house in one of the Gypsy neighbourhoods of Belgrade (Митровић 1936:5). We may speculate why Petrović had misrepresented himself and had been further misrepresented in the *JGLS* publication as the editor and main agent behind *Romano lil's* publishing. In a letter dated May 12, 1935 to Scott Macfie, then *JGLS* Editor, Petrović sent two copies of the newspaper. In the accompanying letter he wrote:

I edit it and publish it together with a Gypsy student. But none of the Gypsies buy it. I had the idea to assemble as many as possible literate Gypsies around it, but it seems it won't be a success. I keep a diary of the history of the paper. All my experience in connection with it, will be a very good contribution to the study of the Gypsy psychology. (Petrović 1935, May 12)

What strikes one here is that the actual editor of the paper, and known to the Belgrade public, Svetozar Simić, is reduced to an anonymous "Gypsy student." Petrović, as author of a series of contributions on Serbian Gypsies in the *JGLS* (Third Series, Volume 14–19), and the main correspondent of the leadership of the Gypsy Lore Society in the interwar period, was an authority whose claims were accepted without doubt or need for verification. Also, it seems that Petrović viewed the whole process as a scientific experiment to contribute to the study of "Gypsy psychology" quite in unison with the racial discourse of the time. I agree with the opinion of Dragoljub Acković that this is a clear case of purposeful falsification (personal communication, December 7, 2018). This pattern is linked to the historically affirmed practice of marginalisation and underestimation of Roma, not as active agents of their history and culture, but always needing to be led by non-Roma. The case of Petrović presenting himself as an editor and heroic entrepreneur in the letter, and the purposeful omission of Simić's name on the review of the newspaper, is not only an example of the diminishment of his own achievements, but also, a clear case of concealment of the facts and misrepresentation of the leading role of a Rom.

Petrović was indeed a main contributor to the newspaper who authored major pieces in it (Петровић 1935a, 1935b, 1935c). Interestingly enough, when writing for *Romano lil* he had adopted a narrative of addressing the Roma community as if he was a member of the community itself, speaking of a collective by using the third person plural (we): “We the Gypsies love more our children than anything in the world” (Петровић 1935a:1), “We do not know if this celebration is related to an event from our peoples’ history as we do not have a written history.” (Петровић 1935c:3) As *Romano lil*’s author, Petrović appropriated a position of a community member and Roma writer. This practice raises an interesting enquiry into the participation and collaboration of people of non-Roma ethnicity in Roma journalism and activism, which has been not a unique but rather a common pattern since the birth of Roma activism and writing. This pattern is something that is observed at present in the Roma movement, as well as in the field of Roma writing and publishing.

Thus, Petrović had a role as a member of the editorial team but, for the sake of historical accuracy, it should be noted that no archival records point to him as a founder, manager or editor of the newspaper. This role belonged to Svetozar Simić. Apart from the archival materials, the Belgrade Roma have preserved the memory of Simić and his publishing endeavours. Roma activists later looked at Svetozar Simić and *Romano lil* as a benchmark of Roma journalism and made an effort to revive the newspaper during the 1960s and the 1970s (Берберски 1969:51). Noteworthy is that one of the first journals in Yugoslavia in the 1990s was named *Romano lil* and was edited by Dragoljub Acković.

The newspaper was written and published mainly in the Serbian language, but there was hardly a piece in which Romani language was not present. To flag Roma identity, the newspaper’s name was in the Romani language and Romani was often used in phrases quoted in articles or when folklore texts were published. It is interesting to note that the Romani language name of the newspaper was written with Latin script, while the Serbian one was written with Cyrillic. It was not unusual to publish in Latin script in interwar Yugoslavia as both Latin and Cyrillic script were officially used to write in the Serbo-Croatian since the establishment of the Kingdom in 1918. We can only guess what could be the reasons for choosing Latin script for the Romani language title of the newspaper as there is no explanation offered for this. Otherwise Simić published all Romani phrases and texts in Cyrillic. We could suppose that the newspaper’s team indeed targeted a wider audience even beyond the borders of Yugoslavia and the Latin script title might have been instrument in this demonstration of internationalism.

The choice of Serbian as the dominating and main language of the newspaper did not in any way diminish the value or the concept of *Romano lil* as a Roma media. On the one hand, the reason was conceptual – although it was directed primarily towards Roma audience, it was also aiming to address non-Roma readers and communicate to the public the strategic ideas of the editorial team. As a matter of fact, until today the dominant pattern of publishing Roma periodicals worldwide is the same: the print media titles are

in the Romani language, while they are published primarily in the official language of the country, and usually having Romani language folklore and original fiction materials (Zahova 2019:354). The same goes for the prose genres written by Roma, as novels, memoirs, etc. From the point of view of Roma authors and editors, the reason for this is not that Roma authors or journalists are not fluent in their mother tongue, but that they generally also address non-Romani audiences with a strategy to (re)present a Roma reality and Roma narrative, very often in contrast to a stereotypical narrative dominating the public space. A more practical and less important reason in the case of the newspaper may have been the high illiteracy rate among Roma in any language in the interwar period, and in the case of those who had reading abilities, they had received their education primarily in the Serbian language.

The price of the newspaper was one Serbian dinar, which, according to the standard of the time, was the price of a daily newspaper. The editorial of the third issue discusses: “the financial side of our newspaper is very low. It has never been great. Our basic capital was only 75 dinars. That was the cost for the paper for the first issue.” (Симић 1935h:1) In the previous newspaper issue (number two) on page three is written that “Our brother, J. P., university student, has contributed to our newspaper with 200 dinars. – Thank him.” The funding for the newspaper production was not sustainable and came from donations covering the printing costs. Petrović, for instance, might have been the Serb friend who took care of printing the newspaper as narrated by Svetozar Simić himself in his editorial:

One of our great friends, otherwise a Serb and a very popular and respected person in Belgrade, took care of the printing. We survive from issue to issue always in a hope that our work will not be in vain and that finally our brothers will see that one dinar per month is nothing for them, especially when this expenditure is compared to the monthly expenses they make for brandy. (Симић 1935h:1)

It was exactly due to the financial unsustainability and lack of resources for printing that the newspaper had only three issues. There is not much information regarding *Romano li!*'s distribution. The edition advertised yearly subscriptions; however, the bookkeeping documents do not contain exact information on the distribution network or on subscriptions. According to the review in *JGLS*, the copies were given for distribution, but this was a great failure on behalf of the distributor, as cash was received for only 200 copies out of 2000 during the three months of publishing (Jopson 1836:86–87). Dragoljub Acković suggests that the newspaper has been well-known in Yugoslavia as there is a post request which ordered “five copies of the newspaper to be delivered to the bookstore Jaša Dajč from Bačka Palanka, a town located 150 km from Belgrade.” (Acković 2009:58) The editorials also point out that the newspaper had several hundred subscribers defined as intellectuals from Yugoslavia, as well as from around the world:

It seems that the whole world has heard about our newspaper. So far, we have received letters from: Sweden, Norway, Germany, Hungary, and Poland. The English Reuters agency has announced its release to its English reading audience. We do not know to what we owe such great popularity of the first Gypsy newspaper in Yugoslavia. Is it because the whole world considers us so wretched and miserable, so the emergence of such a small newspaper, like ours, is already a sensation for them! If we look at the number of those who are buying our newspaper, we will see that the greatest number of our readers and subscribers are from the ranks of *gadže* (non-Gypsies), and, furthermore, intellectuals. People of the highest culture are interested in a newspaper of people at a very low cultural level! This is already a success for our first two issues. (Симић 1935h1)

Apart from enlightening the non-Roma audience of intellectuals, the newspaper has clearly been oriented mainly towards Roma readers, as evidenced by the article narratives and usage of the Romani language throughout all texts. The newspaper itself contains several features, in terms of content, which demonstrate that its targeted audience were Roma. In the first place, there were several advertising publications on the pages of the newspaper pleading for a wider audience and for a specially tailored approach to address the high level of illiteracy. The third issue's last page, for instance, contains the text: "Dear brother, help our newspaper. Read it also to our illiterate brothers, let them also know what our newspaper writes about," while the second page of the first newspaper contained a short advertising announcement on page two saying "Dear readers – non-Gypsies and you *guglalen pra(h)lalen* (sweet brothers) – as many as you are out there, buy and distribute our newspaper!"

At the same time, Simić was well aware of the fact that Roma people had hardly the necessary literacy to access the published materials. While the average illiteracy rate of the Yugoslav population according to the census of 1931 was 51.5 percent (Isić 2001:66), some qualitative studies estimate that it was over 90 percent among the Roma population. Simić came up with a practical suggestion to address the issue, through reading aloud to groups of Roma, which actually had been practiced in Belgrade, as exemplified in an editorial in the third issue:

An interesting attempt was made in that direction by another member of our editorial team, Mr. Milić. He collected in his backyard a group of 15 to 20 men and women of different ages and read to them the newspaper from the beginning to the end. After every article he read, he explained to them in his own words in Romane (in Gypsy language) what he had read to them. Then started the questions that grew up into entire discussions. If we could find more people like Mr. Milić, we could even get a greater interest in our newspaper among our people. (Симић 1935h1)

In his first editorial it was stated that the newspaper was to both Roma and non-Roma audiences. It positioned itself as a counterpoint to the image of the Gypsy exotic beauties which were published in other mainstream media:

A newspaper such as ours could be edited in two ways: it could be written *about* Gypsies and it could be written *for* Gypsies. If we were to write only about Gypsies, we would have to take into account the various tastes of our *gadžo* (non-Gypsy) readership. Without a variety of “stars,” e.g. black and Gypsy, and their respective pictures, our newspaper would hardly survive. No matter how good-looking, attractive and adorable our black beauties are, we still do not mean to write about them. *Our newspaper was launched in order to write about the Gypsies, but of course, for the Gypsies.* (Симић 1935a:1)

The newspaper indeed reached the Roma audience. It apparently had a certain level of distribution among the local Roma community as we learn from the address of Marinko Savić, a respected Belgrade Rom, musical band leader and Gypsy *kmet* (an alderman responsible for communities or administrative territories, in this case on the territory of Belgrade) to the Editorial team published in *Romano lil* (Савић 1935). Savić expressed his joy to learn of the newspaper. The editor also discussed spreading the word among the Roma in the two Belgrade neighbourhoods where many Roma lived:

Straight after printing the first issue of our newspaper, news has spread among the Gypsies across Jatagan Male and Čubura, that Mr Simić has enormously enriched himself. Whenever he showed up among Gypsies, women and children would say: *kava si kaj bićinel novine* [that’s the one who sells newspapers]. In the simple world of ours, to sell newspapers and to write in the newspaper is the same thing. (Симић 1935h:1)

The four-page newspaper format resembles the format of the Serbian newspapers published by Serbian intellectuals at the end of eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century in Vienna: *Serbian newspaper* (*Сербскија новини*), 1791–1792, and the first daily *Serbian newspaper from the imperial city Vienna* (*Новине сербске изъ царствующега града Виенне*), 1813–1822 (Крестић 2003:28–34). These editions were the first ever Serbian language print media, closely interrelated with the ideas of the Serbian national revival and their circulation among the Serbian elite. The first newspaper published in the Principality of Serbia was also named *Serbian newspaper* (*Новине србске*, 1843) and was published weekly in a four-page format to “disseminate education and culture” (Subotić 1998:75). Thus, naming the Roma newspaper following this pattern (Roma newspaper/Gypsy newspaper), and publishing it in the same format, was not coincidental. This demonstrated the intention of the Editorial team to implement the same mission – to evoke a raising of Roma community consciousness as a public phenomenon. It followed the model of the national press, developed by the surrounding (Serbian) nation, but was directed towards the Roma community that had to be engaged, united and represented by the newspaper. This conclusion is not only based on the interpretation of *Romano lil*’s name and format, but also on its content, as demonstrated by the words of the editor: “We should not forget that our newspaper has to fulfil a cultural first-order mission.” (Симић 1935h:1)

Although called a newspaper, this print media was published neither daily nor weekly, and was not focused on reporting news. It was a monthly edition, which in terms of content, merged many print media genres: newspaper, journal, brochure. Most of the pieces were written in the so-called opinion article genre, which also evokes comparison with the early stages of every periodical press created as part of the national revival movement (the mentioned above *Serbian newspaper from the imperial city Vienna* of 1913 or the newspaper *Macedonia* mentioned in the chapter about the Ottoman Empire of the book), in which the main focus is on polemics related to the cultural and political emancipation of the community and the means for their achievement. These opinion articles reflected their authors' ideas and provided guidelines and programme statements. Even the reportage materials in *Romano lil* were intertwined with the polemic style of opinion articles. Finally, a large part of the newspaper was devoted to legends, local memory sharing, and presentation of Roma folklore, which is often typical for ethnographic journals or popular magazines. Being the only print media of its time, thus, *Romano lil* was designed as an all-in-one edition, which combined various styles and genres under the overarching strategic aim to express ideas for Roma emancipation by all possible literary means.

### 3.5 Structure, Content and Genres of *Romano Lil*

The newspaper's content seemed to be strategically thought out, with all three issues following a similar structure. It always started with an editorial article and ended with a feuilleton, written by Simić. The second page was devoted to narratives of importance of the ethno-cultural life or the collective memory of the Roma community, and the third page contained shorter pieces reflecting on contemporary issues, along with Roma folklore. The articles were mostly written by Simić, with several large pieces by Aleksandar Petrović, and M. Milić, an educated Rom and co-founder of the newspaper (Симић 1935h:1), whose pieces (Милић 1935a, 1935b), judging from their content and rhetoric, were edited and influenced by Simić's own style. There was also one piece by each of the following authors: Jovan-Jovanče Milosavljević (Милосављевић 1935); Dragomir Plić (Илић 1935) and Marinko Savić (Савић 1935). Although some of the pieces were not signed (editorials for instance, following the usual practice in this genre) they should be attributed to Simić, as the newspaper archive (LADA) contains their versions in a manuscript format, with the handwriting belonging to him.

Below is the content of each issue with the article's/material's title, as well as authors, when available. The table's aim is to provide a comparative perspective for the three issues and to give an idea about the commonalities of the content throughout all editions:

Table 3.1 Summary of *Romano lil*'s content

No	Editorial (first page)	Folklore and ethno-culture	History and identity related reports	Opinion article on contemporary issue	Feuilleton (last page)
First, March 1935	"Our first word"	"Our Antie-Bibija"; One anecdotic tale; One short tale; One song.	"Our people mourn their King"; Request to Roma readers with ethnographic questionnaire.	"To preserve our and our children's health"	"Ominous note" by Simić
Second, April 1935	"To our readers"	"Djurdjev-dan" by Petrović	"From the history of the Belgrade Gypsies" by Milosavljević; "Our hospitality" by M. Milić	"For our children" by Petrović	"You would have married twice, if you were born before" by Simić
Third, May 1935	"Romano lil" by Simić	"Landlord's wedding at Čubura"; One tale; One song.	"Our uncle Marko" by Simić	"Our intelligentsia and aristocracy" by M. Milić; "We and our children" by D. Ilić; "About begging"; "To our brothers" by M. Savić.	"Lira" by Simić

Because of the cohesion and correspondence between the texts, the analysis focuses on the written corpus on the pages of *Romano lil* as a whole, grouping the pieces from the three issues, depending upon the type of genre and subject covered. The overview below summarises the content and main topics discussed. Selected narratives' analysis follows in the next subchapter.

The **editorials** are constructed in the classical form for this publicistic genre and can be viewed as programmes, not only for the publishing activity of the editorial team, but for the Roma community in general. They appeared at the beginning of each *Romano lil* issue and, following the editorial genre style, express opinions, argue different viewpoints, analyse facts and events, and manifest the newspaper's aims. The opening editorial of the first issue, "Our first word" (Симић 1935a:1), addresses two big matters related to different strata of the Roma community. The first one is related to the poverty of the Roma. The author's explanation is that "our brothers" are poor because they are not

educated, although they have some practical skills in many crafts. Efforts, thus, need to be made among the community to improve the educational level.

The second matter is related to the fact that many educated and well-off Roma are in fact distancing themselves from the community because of the mainstream misconceptions about Gypsies as thieves and criminals, deeply grounded in the public discourse and maintained by the media. Finally, the editorial addresses the issue of perceiving begging as a Roma characteristic and practice. The editorial ends by presenting the goals of the newspaper, to address these issues existing in both the Roma community and the society:

That's why we have launched our newspaper. With it we want to open our brothers' eyes and show them that it is our first and foremost task to send our children to school, in order to become literate, and to let them learn some craft or skill right after graduation. [...]

Our newspaper will do all in order to give our brother a helping hand in his culture, and this means, a mental and material improvement. - On the one hand, we will give ready-made knowledge and statements, and on the other hand, we will show the paths that lead to them. (Симић 1935a:1)

“To our readers” is the second issue’s very short editorial. It provides a self-reflection on practical problems of pricing, distribution and reaching out. It ends with an appeal and question to the newspaper’s readers: “Do all our brothers read our newspaper, if they have read the first issue did they understand it well, and what did they not like about it. We would be glad to hear the opinion about the newspaper of every single reader of ours.” ([Симић] 1935f:1)

The third and final issue’s editorial, “Romano lil”, reflects on the successes and challenges that the newspaper has faced during its short existence. It informs the reader about the newspaper’s international recognition: “English Reuters agency announced publication of the paper to its English reading audience.” (Симић 1935h:1) English media published brief information about the Belgrade Gypsy newspaper and its Roma editor, for example the article “The First Gypsy Newspaper. Printed in 2 Languages” in *The Telegraph* of May 18, 1936. In the text of the *Romano lil*’s editorial, the international success is contrasted to the community reception and some unintended effects, like perceiving the editor as someone who made a fortune. The text further appeals to those who are more educated, to disseminate the newspaper and its contents, and finally asks for more engagement from all community members, especially those who are literate and can influence the public opinion or assist in distributing the contents of the edition.

A substantial part of the newspaper’s materials was devoted to Roma **ethno-culture and folklore**. There were two types of articles. The first text discussed customs and celebrations related to important identity markers of the community, and the second text included records of Roma folklore in the form of songs, short tales or anecdotes in Romani language, followed by Serbian translation. This is not coincidental and is related to the wish of the publisher to provoke identification with “certain poems and stories

printed in a language spoken by them, our people are turning to more serious things, to our life in general.” (Симић 1935h:1) Language has been one of the most important markers of identity in CSEEE context and language policies have been closely interrelated with the nationalism movements (Kamusella 2018). These materials were thus carefully picked to reflect the Roma community identity. Probably the two most important celebrations for the Roma community in Central Serbia, that function as markers of Roma identity (for both Roma and non-Roma) to the present, are the belief in and celebration of Bibija and the celebration of Djurdjerdan, that is the Day of St George on May 6. There are even disputes among the Roma themselves concerning which of the celebrations is ‘more’ Roma (Acković 2013). It is thus not surprising that publications related to these important markers of Roma identity, occupy a central place in *Romano lil*.

In the very first issue of the newspaper, a one-page article, “Our auntie Bibija,” was published ([Симић] 1935b). Among Roma in Belgrade and in Central Serbia Bibija is celebrated as an uncanonised ‘Gypsy’ Saint that protects Roma children from dreadful diseases and secures health for them and their families. An oral folklore narrative, in various versions, explains how Bibija cured and helped Roma children during a plague epidemic. The name Tetkica Bibija is included in both the Serbian (Tetkica, in diminutive) and Romani language (Bibija), a term for the word Auntie, a substitute name for the Plague. In the folklore and calendar customs of many communities in South Eastern Europe, the Day of the Aunt (or the Day of the Plague) is celebrated with different components and prohibitions that have to secure protection from diseases, especially for the children (Попов 1996). It has developed and been perceived as a specific Roma custom, the Aunt thus presented as a black Gypsy woman in narratives and in iconography (Acković 2004, 2010; Petrović 1937). *Romano lil* provided accounts of the legend about the saint and the reason why Gypsies celebrated her. The article describes her with words in Romani language. In the following excerpt from the article the Romani words and phrases are left in the original language to communicate the effect that the author wanted to achieve, while the Serbian text will be translated in English:

She was from our kind. Black as every Gypsy woman, Bari, (high), cući, lean, kokaluni, (scrawny), lungoni ando muj, (long-faced); kale jak(h)a sar angara, (black eyes like coal), that look towards the sky, baro nak, (big nose), baro muj, xurde danda thaj cikne vuš, (big mouth, small teeth and thin lips). ([Симић] 1935b:2)

As seen in the media reports on the Bibija celebration in Belgrade (Политика 1926), as well as in the fact that a civil Roma organisation was named after her, worship celebrations were intertwined with civil activities and commemorating practices of importance for both the ethnic (Roma) and national (Serbian, Yugoslavian) identity of the Roma citizens. It was important to publish this narrative, not because the legend is unknown to the community, but because of its representational purposes: it reaffirms the importance of the custom and celebration of the identity of the community and their differentiation from the Serb community.

In the second issue of *Romano lil*, an article is published by Dr. A. Petrović about Djurdjerdan (Петровић 1935c), the other celebration considered a Roma marker of identity by both the Roma and the non-Roma. The article is a reflection rather than an exact description, since all readers are acquainted with the celebration, but it refers to important elements of it: like going early in the morning to the river, wearing their best and newest clothes, and attending big community gatherings and meetings. The celebration unites all Gypsies, regardless of their way of life and religion, according to the narrative. Thus, nomadic Gypsies would come together in a certain place, being glad that the roaming season starts, while the settled would also be happy because the warm weather brings changes. Similar to the publication about Bibija, the material reaffirms Djurdjerdan's importance for the Roma, as a common and special custom that unites them as one people.

Wedding customs, along with other customs from the life cycle, such as those related to birth and death, play an important part of the community ethno-culture. An article by Simić, in the third issue of *Romano lil*, "Landlord's wedding at Čubura," describes a wedding from the famous Belgrade neighbourhood (Симић 1935j). It is written as a reportage, in an impressionistic style typical of the journalistic discourse of Yugoslavia of that time but contains descriptions and phrases in the Romani language. It portrays a rich wedding in which the whole Belgrade Roma community was gathered:

Along the neighbourhood yard are put ten tables. Perdi sinija ali jak [in Romani language] – All tables as full as an eye. On every table there is baked bread. Pećice: bakrano, buzikano, ćuranosko, bašnesko t(h)aj sosko kod kames – Roasted meat: lamp, goat, turkey, chicken, rooster and whatever you want. Samo čirikljako tud kaj nas – Only chicken's milk was missing.

The bottles were arranged one next to the other as in a bar. Lazy toasts from all around with bottles. Songs, music and joy. There are violins, there is an accordion, bas, tambourine and brace and whatever you want. All kinds of musical instruments. While the elders were sitting, singing and drinking, the youngsters dance in a kolo. (Симић 1935j:2)

The legends, short stories, songs and oral history materials published in the newspaper, should be interpreted in the Volk-spirit discourse – they (re)present Roma folklore as part of the Roma people's culture. The non-Roma audience should get acquainted with the rich Roma folklore, while Roma people should identify with it. The materials selected are short, often of a humorous nature. The rubrics had Romani language names, "Amare gilja" (Our songs) and "Amare paramiča" (Our tales/stories), thus reinforcing a common identity. The first issue contained the following tale:

There was a Rom in a village. He works at one gadžo. One day, at the field, the gadžo brings food for a meal. Then everyone gathers to eat. The gadžo asks: "who is going to take this big slice of bread?"

The Rom would say: "I'm going to take it?"

Then [the gadžo] asks: "Who is going to take this bacon?"

The Rom would say: "I'm going to take it?"

At the end the gadžo asks: “Who is going to take this big hoe?”  
 The Rom would say to this [question]:  
 Brothers, I talked too much, now you speak too. (Romano lil 1935a:3–4)

In the *Romano lil*'s third issue there is a story published by Simić, created in the form of a folk tale narrative, and named “When the Serb was afraid”:

A Rom came into a Serbian man's shop, had a look at all items, and said:  
 How much is this halter, boss?  
 – It's three groats for you, Roma man, for the others it's four.  
 – Common, bro, give to me for two.  
 – I would not sell it for less at all.  
 – Give it to me for two otherwise I'll do what I have in mind!  
 The Owner got scared, took down the halter and sold it to him for two groats, and when he got the money, the seller asked him [the Roma]: Would be good to tell me, what did you have in mind to do to me, Rom, had I not given it to you for two groats?  
 – Let God kill me, if I had not thought to give you three [groats]!  
 Said the Rom and went away happy. (Симић 1935k:3)

The texts of the popular songs, “Who is the one that is coming” and “Stand up, Rom, do some work,” appeared in “Our songs” section in the first issue and the last issue of *Romano lil* (1935b). All folklore materials were published bilingually: in their Romani language with parallel translations by Simić in the Serbian language (the English translations above are done by me, following the Romani language originals as published in the newspaper). The main reason for having exactly these materials published was not strictly speaking because of their content, but the fact that they were considered representative as folklore, due to their popularity among the Belgrade Roma community. Additionally, the Romani language has always been also a symbol of Roma identity, for both Roma and non-Roma readers.

**The publicistic texts related to records of narratives** about community life discuss the history and identity of the Roma as an inseparable part of the larger Serbian and Yugoslav society. The very first issue included an article entitled, “Our people mourn their King” ([Симић] 1935c) about the assassination of King Alexander First, the Unifier in 1934. It describes the reaction of the Roma people to the news, varying from questioning its truth, to rage and anger against the assassin, and deep sorrow at the end:

When newspapers [reporting the assassination] were published, one person would read while the rest of the people would gather in big groups around him, intently listening to him read the article. A drizzle would start raining, but we, instead of going home, have taken off our hats, talking: “I o Del rovel, i Vov (h)ačarel o dji” (And the God cries, He feels compassionate as well). ([Симић] 1935c:3).

The other articles are connected with records of the historical events as narrated by the Belgrade Roma community. The material, "From the history of the Belgrade Gypsies," had probably been narrated to Simić as an oral history, later recorded, published and signed by the narrator, Jovan-Jovanče Milosavljević (Милосављевић 1935:2–3). It contains a vivid and informative account of the dynamic community development – including numbers of families, groups, settlements and leaders – from the Serbian principality under Prince Mihailo Obrenović (1839) until the First Balkan War (1912). While the article focuses on the development of the community against the background of the overall historical periods in Serbian history, the article "Our uncle Marko" by Svetozar Simić in the third issue elaborates on the contribution and the role of Roma individuals, as part of the Serbian army during the First World War (Симић 1935i:2). Marko Vasiljević was a respected Rom from the neighbourhood of Čubura who had proven himself as a great and heroic soldier when serving in the army, for which he was awarded the highest decoration of the time, the Order of Karadjordje Star. The narrative of Vasiljević, recorded and printed in the newspaper starts with:

– Ala mudardem len, ali džuklen. – But I have, brother, killed them as dogs. I have fought at: Ada Ciganlija, Banovo Brdo, Čurkarica, Zaklopača, Varonice where I have been awarded with the "Karadjorđe star." (Симић 1935i:2)

The articles about the grand national narratives are complemented by minor stories about the community's everyday life as "Our hospitality" by M. Milić (Милић 1935a:3–4), in which the message is communicated that hospitality is one of the main characteristics of the Roma people which distinguishes them from the others, the Serb, i.e. functions as a marker of identity, and is maintained unconditionally regardless of the material situation:

Even though we are poor, and often do not have a decent bed in the room, we are always ready to give the best place to our guest, even if this means that we will sleep with our small children on the bare ground ... The guest will get the best piece of the meal. Nothing should happen to the guest as his security is guaranteed by the host ... Are our youth going to save this old custom? De Devla! (Let it be God!) (Милић 1935a:3–4)

Although the newspaper does not pay attention to daily news reporting, its **opinion pieces** cover current issues of significance for the Roma. Similar to the first editorial, awareness is raised among Roma adults regarding Roma children, their wellbeing and education. The article "To preserve ours and our children's health" ([Петровић] 1935a:1935) informs the readers that they have to take care of their health. It also provides practical information, such as that the state has opened, free of charge, health centres for servicing those who are not able to pay. "To our Children" is the central article of the second *Romano*

*lil* issue (Петровић 1935b:1–2) and is written by Petrović. The main point of the article is that the best way to preserve children's health is by not getting sick yourself and not transmitting diseases to your children. According to the piece, the most dangerous diseases are those that come "from sin" and are transmitted by blood, concluding that: "The question of health and advancement of our children is a question of the fidelity of our men to their wives and the fidelity of our wives to their husbands." (Петровић 1935b:2) Another aspect of parental responsibilities is discussed in the piece by Dragomir Ilić, "We and our children" (Илић 1935:3), namely the effect of exposing children to the environment of *kafana* (tavern in which people gather to socialise, drink and discuss all kinds of issues from local gossip to international news). According to the author, drinking habits, indecent speaking and gambling models would be observed uncritically by children if they are brought to kafanas by parents, concluding: "Brother, have you ever asked yourself: what do you do with your children when bringing them to the kafana? Strike the iron while hot, train children in good habits while small." (Илић 1935:3) Finally, in "Our intelligentsia and aristocracy" another reflection on the contemporary situation among the community is discussed. In the piece, M. Milić criticises the successful strata among the Roma that do not support the community (Миличић 1935b:2).

The **original fiction literature** on the pages of *Romano lil* newspaper comprised three feuilletons authored by Simić: "Ominous note" (Симић 1935e), "You would have married twice, if you were born before" (Симић 1935g), "Zira" (Симић 1935l). They are characterised by satirical style, documenting and elaborating on stories heard, witnessed or experienced by the author himself. "You would have married twice, if you were born before" resembles a short story with descriptions of the poor life of Roma living in tents, who agree on marrying their young daughter to an older Rom who had already been married. "Ominous note" and "Zira" are written as humorous narratives about urban youth. In "Ominous note", the main hero, the young Gypsy Djokica, tries to arrange a date with the beautiful Rada by sending written notes to her, which infuriate her father. The final surprise comes when Djokica finds out that Rada had already been engaged to be married to another man.

"Zira" tells the story of Simić himself, who was pushed into an engagement against his will. Zira is a Roma woman who divorced after a short marriage. Her father brings the journalist home, introduces him as a world-known star and tries to talk him into marrying the woman. The main hero and victim of this arrangement makes an effort to argue against this, and finally runs away, on the pretext of having writing obligations:

– Zira, Zira, my daughter, my child, my kid, I brought you a groom, a journalist, a guy as a shaker, his hands are gold, making money on all sides. His guests are journalists, judges and the high ranking directors and officers from all over Europe. They are from Pešta, Paris, Berlin and [from many places that] I cannot name. And you, my child, have a lot, so good for you and for him, and also for me by your side. Hopefully you will not forget me.

– He wouldn't take me, I'm a stupid one! Otherwise I'm ready with my soul and body, as the Gypsies from Leskovac say.

And I told her then, Zira, Zira, don't run away from your happiness, but wait for the priest to add some more years to my age. I don't want to be married around the willow [e.g. to not be married in a church because of being underage]. That's why you have to wait. Then I storm out saying: good buy, good buy! I apologise, but I don't have time right now, I'm writing an article for "Romano lil." Svetozar Simić (Симић 1935l:4)

The motif about a successful Roma man being an object of engagement against his will reoccurs in several of Simić's texts. For instance, the editorial in the third *Romano lil* issue (Симић 1935h), and the unpublished novel, which remains only partially preserved. This motif has probably been related to the autobiographical experience of Simić himself, as well as with observations among his peers. In the original Romani literature pieces, published in the newspaper, the heroes are Roma characters in Roma community surroundings. Although the stories are very short, and there are no generalisations suggesting a collective representation, the plots can be considered typical and illustrative of the interpersonal and intergenerational relations within the Roma community.

### 3.6 Narratives of Self-representation

Despite the short four-page format, the newspaper's content comprised a variety of journalistic genres and styles: from the opinion pieces, through identity representation by folklore and history publications, to original literature writings. There is a coherency, not only in terms of genres and topics covered, but also in terms of narratives communicating common messages to the audience of *Romano lil*.

Being a Roma newspaper, the overall narrative of the edition suggests a **(re)presentation of a Roma collective**. Speaking about Roma/Gypsies, the newspaper's authors used the pronouns of first-person plural, e.g. "we," "the Gypsies," "our people," "our brothers," "our children," "our friends," in all newspaper texts. This way of writing suggests an 'imagined' Roma community (in the sense of Benedict Anderson 2006), a collective comprised of all who are Roma/Gypsies. "Naš narod" (our people) is also a common phrase signifying a distinct community, different from the other people, along with "our brother(s)" and "our brothers and sisters" (Симић 1935b, 1935c, 1935h). This, on the one hand, is a rhetorical construct among the Roma when addressing other Roma; 'brother' and 'sister' are terms used between Roma in general, not only in family relations (this practice is used, following the same pattern, among the surrounding population as well). On the other hand, it also presents the idea about the unity of the Gypsies, who are part of the same family or kin. This narrative is a clear example of a birth of a primordial concept for an ethno-national community united by common origin and belonging.

Simić talks on behalf of Gypsies (speaking of "our people," "we the Gypsies," using verbs forms in first person plural), while at the same time addressing the Gypsies. The most common way of addressing the Roma audience is "our brothers," and the Romani

language phrase *гуллален пра(х)лален* (sweet brothers) followed by its Serbian translation (Симић 1935а, 1935б). The use of this Romani language address for daily communication suggests intimacy and warm feelings, which should also stimulate a Roma audience identifying with the author of the text. It also legitimises Romani language salutations in print as well as public communication, thus strengthening the self-esteem of the Roma readers.

Another interesting feature of addressing the Roma is the special emphasis on both genders – Simić often writes “our brothers and sisters”. This points to the equality of female and male personalities in the Roma collective. The texts even talk about the specific problems of “our sisters,” meaning Roma women, when discussing the lack of literacy (Симић 1935б:1). Thus, Roma women were viewed as equal to men and not as subordinated or right-less individuals. At this point we can include another example from the history of Roma activism in Yugoslavia supporting this statement: According to article 11 of the Statute of the Association of Belgrade Gypsies, worshippers of Auntie Bibija that was contemporary to the newspaper (established in 1935) “Any person (of both sexes) who lives in Belgrade can be a regular member of the Association, assisting members, founding members and benefactors of the Association can be any person.” (Marushiakova and Попов 2011а:199–200)

The content of the narratives themselves also communicate ideas about the collective that is different from the others by specific markers of identity. Such a marker is the already mentioned Djurdjevdan celebration, and the article about it contains very important statements for its collective representation of Gypsy people as one people united by a common culture and history:

All the people have their own celebrations. These are days related to memory about some event from the life of this people or days of birth or death of people who served to this people. And we the Gypsies also have our great people's celebration. We do not know if this celebration is related to an event from our history as we do not have a written history. Even our legends about it do not say anything about that. But still the celebration of Djurdjevdan is closely related to our people's life. The rest of the Christians also celebrate Djurdjevdan. It is honoured by the Muhamedans as well. But no one expects it with the same joy and merriment as we the Gypsies. (Петровић 1935с:3)

The unity and identity of the community is communicated also through its differentiation from the others. The claim for differentiation is that, unlike Roma, the rest of the communities do not celebrate Djurdjevdan in the same manner.

Although the newspaper articles are based on information about the culture, history and memory of the Roma community in Belgrade or Central Serbia, the narrative refers to a general collective, presenting Roma/Gypsies as one people and thus suggesting a common sense of belonging. The editor is, of course, well aware of the non-homogeneous, still common, nature of the Gypsy community. *Romano lil's* authors demonstrate awareness about the different Gypsy/Roma groups. In the first issue a material was published

entitled, “Where do we live and how many of us are” appealing to “every brother of ours to the hands of whom comes our newspaper to send information and data about their place of living, Gypsies who live in the place, occupation, time of settlement, languages spoken and religion.” ([Симић] 1935d:3) Through the wish to collect information about the internal diversity among the Gypsy/Roma, the newspaper narratives reinforce the sense of unity and create the impression that all Roma should go in one path and belong to a whole.

Along with the idea of Roma as a collective, the **Roma belonging to the macro-society / nation state** (e.g. Serbian, Kingdom of Yugoslavia) is expressed. As Marushiakova and Popov (2016a: 15) have pointed out, Roma have not only a sense of belonging to the Roma community (at the level of their own Roma groups, subgroup or meta-group), but also to the macro-society with which they constantly interact and are part of. Roma do participate in the social system, public and institutional life of their respective nation state, identifying with the symbols, national figures and events that symbolise the unity of the nation. The sense of belonging to the national community (e.g. the Kingdom of Yugoslavia) is clearly expressed in the already mentioned “Our people mourn their King” that discussed how the news about the assassination and death of Alexander I (December 16, 1888 – October 9, 1934) was perceived by Roma. The assassination took place almost half a year before the publication of the issue, but it seems that the event was of such significance for the Belgrade Roma community, so it was important for the editor to express the belonging to this community to the people of the Kingdom, e.g. the body of the nation. The article reports that “All of us were full of deep grief: everyone felt that he has lost his Protector, his Father ...” ([Симић] 1935c:3)

Interestingly enough, this is the Serbian language text published in *Romano lil* with the largest usage of Romani. The editor reports the reaction of the Roma in Romani language with phrases and gestures that are common and characteristic for the community on occasions of deep grief and emotional state, thus providing authenticity of the narrative, followed by Serbian translations:

Ah, phabilam, bi baxt bari – Ah, we are lost – we are burned, a big infortune! Along with this, our women were pulling their hair and cursing the children of the one who did it. They were cursing also the dead assassinator, saying: Dear God, Dear God, with what kind of heart could he do it? Sar savo soro sasle? (How could he dare do it). Our people were beating their breasts with fists. If the children, excited by the behaviour of the adults, started making problems, they were cursed: ‘Majlac(h)e baksuzona te mylana tu, (haj) te kava na ashunav’ (You’d better be dead, Jonah, rather than the news I have heard). Some were talking: ‘We have lost a Lord, who was the dearest to us after God and the Sun’. Others would swear: “Let God kill me, if it was not better for me to have all my children killed and my house burned down.” ([Симић] 1935c:3)

The Romani phrases characteristic of mourning portray the Roma as an integral part in the Kingdom. The narrative suggests equality among the Gypsies and the other

communities constituting the Kingdom, but expresses grief from their own community stance:

If some of us had a *dinar*, he would with this very last money buy *rakija*, spread on the ground the first drops [done for the soul of the diseased according to the custom] saying: Let him rest in peace and be glorified, brothers! He loved us and took care of us as his own children. And he did not make any difference between Gypsies and Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. He protected all of us equally. For every Easter and Christmas he gave us support from his own salary. ([Симић] 1935c:3)

“Our Uncle Marko” also contains a narrative that should be interpreted as an expression of Roma belonging to the nation state. Many Roma took part in every war that the Serbian army undertook ever since the nineteenth century. After the First World War there were many war veterans and also many Roma who lost their lives in the wars in which Serbian citizens were involved (the Balkan Wars and the Second World War). After the wars, Belgrade Roma, from the charity Club of Belgrade Gypsies (probably an informal organisation at that time), organised themselves and built a monument devoted to 54 named Gypsies who died during the Balkan Wars and The First World War, as reported in Serbian media in the 1920s (Acković 2017a; Политика 1926). Along with Marko Vasiljević, such heroes included, Amed Ametović, a.k.a. Ahmed Ademović, trumpeter of the First Serbian Army, who played a key role in the Battle of Kumanovo on 24 October 1912, and later took part in the Second Balkan War and in the First World War; as well as the First World War participant Rustem Sejdić (Симић 1935i:2; P. L. 2018). All were awarded with the highest commendations for their heroic participation (Order of Karadjordje). These Serbian Roma war heroes became a source of pride in the respective Roma communities and among Roma activists who were seeking recognition of the Gypsy citizens’ participation for realisation of Serbia’s national ideas (Acković 2017b). This was in unison with the state post-war identity and memory politics: the war veterans and invalids of the Balkan Wars and the First World War had a very respected position and were considered heroes in the public discourse of the Serbian society in the 1920s (Šarenac 2020).

The most strategic pieces in the newspaper are the editorial articles devoted to **visions about what Roma should do for a better future**. In them Svetozar Simić shared his statements that outline an agenda for his own community’s development. In his first editorial we read:

Nowadays, in order for a person to be able to earn a slice of bread for himself and his children, he has to fulfil at least two conditions: to be literate and to have in his hand a permanent occupation ...

And we think that the only remedy for this evil and embarrassment is that every one of our children attends a school, and after the end of the school is immediately sent into some craft or some skill. A man who starts to work from childhood, gets used to it, and can never be without work ... (Симић 1935a:1)

The last issue of the newspaper also contains an article relating to the visions about the Roma community development and the need to improve the way of life of the Roma. The means for this are:

We should not forget that our newspaper has to fulfil a cultural first-order mission. From the interest in certain poems and stories printed on a language spoken by them, our people are turning to more serious things, turning to our life in general. The question of improving our way of life is largely in our own hands ... The future will show, if we would be able to convince our brothers and sisters how important it is for each of our children to complete elementary school and learn some crafts. ([Симић] 1935h:1)

Reading these pieces as programmes which shed light on both problems and their solutions for a desirable future of the Roma, we can see essentially three main points, or priority areas, in which Roma have to concentrate. They are all related to the Roma children or the future generations among the Roma community. They are interconnected: In the first place, Roma have to take care of schooling their children (“first and foremost task to send our children to school, in order to become literate”), secondly, this has to be followed by professional training securing an occupation and regular work (“and to let them learn some craft or skill right after graduation”). In addition to this, Roma have to elevate culturally by gaining experience and knowledge about the world and the people and this is to be achieved by the engagement of the experienced, educated and active Roma from the older generations. What is interesting to point out is the fact that these visions, for the desired development of the Roma community, are not related to demands from the state, political or government measures, but to demands from the Roma themselves (“The question of improving our way of life is largely in our own hands”). The author’s aim was to emphasise on and raise the issue of Roma’s own agency, initiative and self-organisation to achieve a better future through using the already existing mechanism in their environment.

In relation to the need for a Roma agency in achieving a better life for the Roma as a collective, some parts of Simić’s articles also engage in a **critique from within** the community and disapproving actions, views and habits among the Roma that prevent them from reaching prosperity and, in the words of the newspaper, “elevate to another cultural level” (Симић 1935h:1). There are two common themes in this respect that appear in more than one issue of the newspaper. The main critique, observed in the editorial articles by Simić, is to the Roma community itself for not paying enough attention to the schooling and professional skills of their children, as well as for the lack of interest to Roma civic activism. The second critique, expressed in articles by Petrović, is the negligence of the importance of health issues, especially children’s health ([Петровић] 1935a; Петровић 1935b). The third editorial criticises Roma for neglecting their own and their children’s opportunities for success:

A little more economy in the house, higher order and cleanliness: a little less visit to the tavern, less card-playing, less drunkenness; and most of all, more literacy, paying more attention to our children and their preparation for the future life, we will live much and much better. (Симић 1935h:1)

But his main critique is directed toward the educated and successful Roma, who, according to the newspaper narratives, are to be blamed for not improving the situation in the whole community. In his first programme article Simić criticised the educated auditory, those who have succeeded in society and enriched themselves with their professions and status, asking rhetorically: “And then why, sweet brothers, our richer brothers are ashamed of their own brothers, their name, their blood?” (Симић 1935a:1) In “Our intelligentsia and aristocracy” signed by Milić, but clearly influenced by Simić’s style, we read:

Among us however, they are lords. But the only problem is that they are ashamed, even though they were also born by a Gypsy woman and breastfed with her milk. But they can do a lot for us. Can't they be more engaged with this, until literacy spreads among our people? Can't they create one association that would assist us in a case of sickness and death. They can help us create reading rooms and courses for our illiterate adults. They could help us a lot so that every child of ours learns a craft and profession and honestly earns his bread.

Unfortunately, they do not do anything of this. Just the opposite, those who call themselves ‘Gypsy intelligentsia’ and ‘Gypsy aristocracy,’ doctors and other state servants are openly against our newspaper. They spread the word among our illiterate brothers, especially among women, that our newspaper only disgraces the Gypsies, that the owner of our newspaper is against Gypsies, and that no Gypsy should read and support the newspaper. (Милић 1935b:2)

A similar critical message is conveyed by Simić when reflecting on the effect of the newspaper publishing among Roma in contrast to *gadže*, or the non-Roma:

And now let's see what success has our newspaper achieved among our Gypsy brothers ... The vast majority of our brothers, and not to mention women, our sisters, – are illiterate. Understandably, our newspaper cannot count on their support. The other, literate minority, with little exception, does not read anything at all. And when reading, they are interested in various sensations, such as murder, theft, quarrels, trials, etc. ... Many do not even want to have writings about the Gypsies. They say: “That Gypsy newspaper is just disgracing us.” (Симић 1935i:2)

This is a criticism of Roma’s lack of civic engagement and a lack of commitment to activities that benefit the Roma community focusing on its prosperity. The main critique addresses those who are literate and educated, as they are the ones who are supposed to have an active role to lead their own community. The texts portray them, however, as either passive and uninterested towards topics discussed in *Romano lil*, or as people with a negative opinion towards the Gypsy newspaper because it engages with problems existing among Roma.

In the interwar period, across many countries, the issue of public health was raised and this often went hand-in-hand with eugenic policies (Tanner 2012). In the spirit of the time, *Romano lil* published two pieces devoted to children's health and promoted free public health services, offered by the state. These texts insist that Roma are negligent towards their health despite the fact that health is one of the most important values for the Roma:

Sastipe si majbari bax, health is the biggest happiness, says our people's wisdom ... health is, dear brothers our biggest happiness, why does not each of us take care about it? ... Well, but many of our brothers who say: I buy bread because I have to, but I do not go to the doctor's as I can bear with my illness a bit. (Петровић 1935b)

What is interesting to note is that the texts are clearly directed towards a Roma audience, since the authors use arguments with examples from Roma cultural practices and concepts. The Romani language phrases would apparently appeal to them and convince them of the relevance of the issues discussed. What comes to mind when reading this critique, are the similarities with the writings of activists in other countries (Romania, Finland, USSR), discussed in the chapters of this volume, as well as with the present situation and writings or statements by some activists from Eastern Europe, directed to a Roma audience; critiques focused on the issue of successful Roma concealing their Roma origin because of the negative public opinion towards the Gypsies.

The fact that the main issues discussed by the newspaper articles are related to a critique towards their own community, does not mean that the image of the non-Roma is completely absent or that **critique towards the majority** community is not present. The most frequently used term, the non-Roma word in the Serbian language articles of *Romano lil*, is the Romani word proper, namely *zaђе*, provided in its Romani language original, followed by a Serbian translation (*нецигани*). In this way the edition positions itself as a Roma/Gypsy newspaper that represents the Roma point of view. It also introduces the Roma concept to the non-Roma audiences. The Serbs, being the non-Roma population with whom the Roma from Belgrade are in contact, are also present as a term for the non-Roma, in tales and oral folklore narratives, published in the newspaper, but also when referring to the non-Roma audience in general: "From our brothers, Gypsies, as well as from their friends, the Serbs, depends the further destiny of our newspaper as well as whether its volume will increase or not." ([Симић] 1935h:1) On the one hand, the Serbian community is the "Other," from which Roma differentiate. The differentiation is expressed not only in naming, but through anecdotal narratives, in which Roma protagonists ridicule, in a thoughtful and clever way, a *zaђo*. On the other hand, they are also the most closed ones and allies of the Roma, called friends, who form the *Romano lil* readership and are addressed by the newspaper writings.

The newspaper editorials ([Симић] 1935a, 1935h) engage in a critique of the macro-society and primarily its misconceptions about the Roma existing in public discourse.

Simić addresses two of the most common and widespread misconceptions throughout all historical periods and geographical areas which concern the Gypsies: ‘Gypsy criminality’ and ‘Gypsy begging.’ From the position of a Roma run newspaper addressing a wide reading audience, the *Romano lil’s* editor discusses and challenges narratives that were characteristic of the mainstream media. Among these were reporting criminals and criminal activities, not by naming the perpetrator, but by pointing out, in the first place, the fact that the perpetrator was a Gypsy, suggesting equating criminality with being a Gypsy in general. Indeed, even a superficial look into the media of the time, shows that most of the materials are related to reporting illegal and criminal activities by Gypsies. Simić, a law student at Belgrade University at that time, also disputes the legal absurdity of attributing collective guilt to individual criminal acts:

All Gypsies are not and cannot be guilty if one of them breaks the law, and the newspaper instead of saying: this and that, by name and surname, did this and that, they report in large bulky letters: Gypsies have stolen ... Gypsies have cheated ... Gypsies have killed ... Gypsies have been mutilated ... have blinded ... Gypsies ... Gypsies ... Gypsies[.] As if there is not a single criminal act in the world in which a Gypsy guy has not been involved. In human history, there has not yet been such a case in which what an individual, belonging to given people, may have done, is attributed to all the people. And all Gypsies could never answer for the deeds and idleness of individual Gypsies. ([Симић] 1935a)

Another misconception of *gadže*, that is discussed and deconstructed, is the equalisation of Gypsies with begging practices.

Many *gadže* (non-Gypsy) think that a Gypsy and a beggar are the same thing. However, this is not the case.

There are two types of begging. The first is: when a man loses his job, he is hungry, his children are hungry. If the state or the municipality does not help him as a citizen of this country, then only two exits are left to such a man if he does not want to die of starvation: either ask for a piece of bread or steal it. Asking for a piece of bread is forbidden neither by religion, nor by law. Only the one who steals is punished. The second one is the kind of begging, when a person, instead of working, goes around and in various ways, lures money from honest and pious people for bread. We, all the Gypsies, whatever number we are, are against such kind of begging. We fight and will fight against it. ([Симић] 1935a)

Simić challenges the wrong notion of begging as a Gypsy cultural practice, by providing an explanation related to the social circumstances in which every person can find himself. Indirectly, he hints to the fact that if the social infrastructure of a state cannot provide for its citizens in a difficult situation, then begging is just a survival strategy. Furthermore, Simić criticises begging as a practice misused as an occupation replacing proper work. He ends up with a clear message that begging as an occupation is unacceptable for ‘all Gypsies’ who are against it and who will fight it. The topic reoccurred in the third issue of the journal where an unsigned piece criticising begging practices was published (*Romano lil* 1935c:3). As a matter of fact, both non-Roma narratives (about

equating Gypsy with criminal and with beggar) challenged by Simić are still present in the public discourse and continue to be addressed by Roma activists in Serbia and across Europe (Zahova 2020b:294–295).

### 3.7 The Fiction Works of Simić: Beginning of Prose Writing

The Roma publications in interwar Yugoslavia represent a typical example of the early stage of the development for any national literature. In the absence of a state and/or in the process of national revival, led by an educated elite, the first literature works are those that appear in print media periodicals. Similar to all periodicals that provided platforms for these processes, *Romano lil* also contained short pieces covering all journalistic genres, folklore, as well as literature pieces in shorter form, i.e. short stories, feuilletons, and poetry. It should be noted that while the published pieces were mainly polemic writing, there were also other literature forms produced that have not been published until today.

Svetozar Simić is the author of at least two novels in manuscript form, which makes him one of the first Roma novelists not only in Yugoslavia, but also globally. His first novel, *Gypsy* (*Циганин* in the Serbian original), was autobiographical and written in the early 1930s. The manuscript was sent to the mainstream Belgrade publishing house Privreda. Simić got the manuscript back with a standard rejection letter from the publisher dated February 5, 1935. Only the cover of the manuscript has remained of this unpublished novel and is preserved in the Personal Archive of Dragoljub Acković, along with the rejection letter (LADA, f. Svetozar Simić; Acković 2020). The rejection should neither be interpreted as a prejudice towards the author, nor as indicator of the novel's qualities. Publishing a novel requires considerable financial investments, which publishers are often not inclined to take if there is no guarantee for market success. Even literature works by big names like Borisav Bora Stanković, one of the most famous authors in Serbia at the turn of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century (whose works were often about Gypsy characters, most prominent among them being the drama *Koštana* based on the life of Roma from Vranje), needed financial support from the Ministry of Education in the 1920s (AJ-66-638-1059) to fund book purchases of his novel *Impure Blood* (Petković 1990; Kopah 1982).

It seems that despite the first manuscript's rejection, Simić had continued working on the novel, probably transforming the autobiography into a more fictional story, as an article in the mainstream daily newspaper *Vreme* from January 1936 states that: "The young Simić has already written a novel full of relief pictures of the Gypsy life, named "Gypsy" because of the fate of its characters. He promises that a novel under this title will appear in bookshops when he leaves the army." (Митровић 1936)

Unfortunately, none of the versions of the manuscript, entitled *Gypsy*, has been preserved. Simić has also produced a novel or a novelette entitled *Gypsy Blood* (*Циганска*

кpв in Serbian), of which handwritten and typewritten pages have been preserved in Simić's archive (LADA, f. Svetozar Simić). My hypothesis is that this manuscript was also written in the interwar period, probably in the late 1930s. Had it been written after the Second World War, it would have contained narratives about the war events as the anti-fascist movement remembrance was shaping the Yugoslav public memory and was present in many literature works. Also, judging from the preserved pages, the description of the characters, their occupations and way of life refer to the interwar years. However, the possibility that the novel was produced after 1946, but narrated as a story from the interwar years, cannot be completely ruled out.

The main hero in *Gypsy Blood* is a talented and very young Gypsy musician, Marko, who lives with his family of three generations in a room in Jatagan mahala in Belgrade. Marko, often mocked at and humiliated because of his poverty and drinking, receives a compassionate gesture from Cana (reads as Tsana), a young Roma woman. Marko is haunted by the memory of this gesture and Cana's encouraging attitude towards him. Soon, the young musician becomes part of a famous Gypsy orchestra and is better off. This consequently changes the opinion of the Roma community towards him and mocking transforms into respect. Dragi, also a musician and father of Cana, invites Marko to their home and gets him drunk, after which an engagement is announced despite the reluctance of the young Marko. The preserved pages are only few and we don't know how the story develops, but we can see a motif similar to one of Simić's feuilletons discussed above, "Zira", in which the young journalist is offered a marriage. The life in the poor neighbourhood is picturesquely described in *Gypsy Blood*:

For Marko it was difficult to drink the first drink, but afterwards many others were offered. Soon a litre was drunk and another one was coming.

Dragi grabbed his contrabass and let his baritone voice sing at will. Full of happiness and joy because Marko is present, Dragi is jubilant because they treat each other well and talk. He is joyful, sings, drinks but the main thing is that Marko is going to be his son-in-law. Whenever he asked Marko if he would become his son-in-law, Marko would say, "I would, I would, but I just need time to mature".

This type of questioning occurred often. He [Dragi] was muttering and asking for a song. Živana started singing like a nightingale in a green meadow. Her song was more intoxicating than the drink. The tense neck vessels were clearly delineated. Dragi belched from the Sevdah song, and with one hand he leaned towards Cana's shoulder, and with the other one – to Marko's shoulder. (ibid.)

The case of Simić's novelistic writings, which have never been published, could be a point of departure for a wider discussion on the novel genre in Romani literature. It has been generally considered and emphasised in analyses and overviews of Romani literature (Eder-Jordan 1993; Romani-Project Graz/Michael Wogg n.d.) that the genre of novel is the least developed, and several explanations were given. The most common reason is the fact that generally this genre is the most elaborated and the last to appear in every literature canon. Since Romani literature was young and recent, thus underdeveloped in terms

of presentation of all genres, it lacks the most complex genre. This statement somehow hints to the interpretation criticised in the Introduction, that the ‘underdevelopment’ of Roma community corresponds to the lack of novelists’ tradition, usually related to grant narratives of national literature. The case of Simić, however, as well as the case of other novel manuscripts written by Roma that have never been published, to mention only a few, Rudolf Daniel (Zavodska 2016) and Alija Krasnići, point to the need of a more nuanced interpretation that takes into account various publishing infrastructure factors related to the mainstream publishing in general or to the Roma publishing in particular. The most important, regarding the mainstream publishing environment, is that novels are usually the literature pieces that get published very hard due to the largest investment needed. Thus, investing in an unknown and unpublished author is a risky undertaking. In Eastern Europe many novelists are already published writers of other prose genres, before publishing a novel. Additionally, it might also be the lack of experience of Roma writers, who are not always present in professional writers’ circles, or are not ready to revise their manuscript following editorial requirements, etc. The examples of published fiction or biographical novels are usually by Roma authors acquainted with the literature circles (Папышев 2006) or focused only on novel writing (Didi 2004, 2008, 2011). The Roma editions are typically supported by either limited donations or by the authors’ own funds. Under these circumstances, the authors, who oftentimes fund and self-publish their own works, may prefer to invest in a book product that requires less funding for a greater print run. Presently, the only published fiction novel in (post)Yugoslav territories is, *The Sin of a Roma Woman* (*Greh jedne romkinje* in the Serbian original) by Zlatomir Jovanović (2016), issued by a publishing house owner based in Obrenovac, Serbia.

Coming back to Simić, it is clear that he was a very productive prose and polemic texts’ writer. Along with his works written during the interwar year (opinion articles, reporting materials, folklore, feuilletons in *Romano lil* as well as unpublished novels’ texts), we should add his unpublished memoir produced probably when he was retired (late 1970s or early 1980s). In the manuscript are intertwined narratives about his own life, stories of Roma who Simić has met, folklore motifs, along with opinions and reflections similar to the ones published on the pages of *Romano lil*. The manuscript is untitled and about 50 typewritten pages of it are preserved. It is comparable to the messages of the other pieces authored by Simić in the interwar period and can be viewed as quintessence of the author’s visions and standpoints:

[T]o be Gypsy, to be mocked and laughed, and whatever happens to scream at you “Gypsy, Gypsy ...” But what have the Gypsies done wrong and why is it like that. Gypsies are not the ones they are thought to be. They are also people as all others. They also have their customs and own life and their ideas about life. They are indeed a particular world, and may be this all looks like that, because they are spread all over the world. However, these are people who one has to feel sorry for, not to chase away, and laugh at as their origins are unknown. Neither where did they come from nor why did they come here and why did they spread all over the world. These are people with their own legends, however without history.

Our history has been concealed. Our Gypsy life has been disabled. We don't even know why we have been created in this world. Despised and laughed at from the whole world. They despise all Gypsies, me included, although I'm not that typical Gypsy. Let them despise, but I know that Rom-Gypsy is nothing like that. Our old people said that they had heard from their grandfathers that Devla [God in Romani language] – God first created the Gypsy man. Wow, how wonderful was back then on the Earth, how beautiful was the life of Gypsies back then. (LADA, f. Svetozar Simić, Unpublished memoir:69)

The analysis of Simić's unpublished manuscripts shows that all elements and motifs in his novels and essays bear the essence of the narratives for self-representation and a generalisation about the Roma as a collective (suggested by the first person plural pronoun) analysed in the previous subchapter. Namely, they speak about Gypsies/Roma as a whole, and they engage with misunderstanding about the Gypsies and the injustice towards the community throughout history and on an everyday basis. Furthermore, these narratives are self-referential with motifs of the author's own biography, professional and personal experience. They are also embedded with reflections on traditional community narratives about the origins, history and culture of the Roma. The unpublished prose works of Simić should thus be also considered as 'activism' in literary form. Essentially, these works are another means for communicating the goals of the movement for Roma emancipation and achieving equal status with others by creating Romani literature and Roma publications.

Unlike many Roma activists, Simić was a typical prose writer and has not created in the genre of poetry. Interestingly enough, even though *Romano lil* was created in the tradition of early nationalism – related to poetic writings by intellectuals leading nationalism movement who propagated and communicated the ideas of national emancipation – such poetry was not published on the pages of the newspaper. In the other cases of the national Roma emancipation movement and literature development, there are such examples (see, for instance, Romania and USSR). Thus, we should acknowledge that, despite the general pattern of development, we should also take into account the importance of the individual agency and the fact that neither Simić nor the other authors published in *Romano lil* were inclined to write poetry. The published Roma poetry works in this period were not modern authors' texts but texts of traditional songs that were written down, as were the ones published in the book by Rade Uhlik (1937) and those in "Our songs" rubric of the newspaper.

This rich spectrum of literary and journalistic activities in the main genres of publishing, allows us to identify Svetozar Simić as the founding writer of Romani literature in Yugoslavia and one of the first Roma authors in the novel/novelette genre globally (along for instance with Aleksey Svetlov who authored the novelette *Ром Хвасю* published in USSR in 1938, see the chapter by Viktor Shapoval in this volume and the original in Светлово 1938). As discussed in the Introduction, according to some studies, the first writer of original Romani literature of Roma origin in this area is Gina Ranjčić. Since the

identification of Ranjičić as a Roma poetess is a later phenomenon taking place after the 1990s in Yugoslavia, and neither her personality nor her works were in circulation during the interwar period (or even in the socialist period), this phenomenon should not be considered in relation to the Romani literature of interwar Yugoslavia.

Svetozar Simić's writing accomplishments extend also to academic texts and studies, co-authored by Aleksandar Petrović (Петровић & Симић 1934a, 1934b, 1934c). Simić has also compiled Romani language grammar and Romani vocabulary, the work on which started in the interwar years (Митровић 1936; Николић 1939) and continued during the Second World War when he was a war prisoner in Germany (Acković 2014:263–406). Thus, he is rightfully called the first Roma scholar of Roma background in Yugoslavia (Acković 2014:359; 2020).

### 3.8 Conclusion

The interwar period saw the birth of Roma civic activism and the emergence of the first Roma-initiated publications in the public space in most of the countries of Eastern and South Eastern Europe. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (Kingdom of Yugoslavia) was not an exception. The processes of civic emancipation of the Roma community in Yugoslavia manifested itself in different public spheres. Organisations and informal initiatives were set up declaring ambitions for civic and political participation. They were interrelated with activities aiming at differentiation of the Roma on the basis of cultural characteristics considered markers of identity – religion, language, folklore, customs. The Yugoslavian capital was the place where most of these activities took place – the few Roma organisations from that time established and developed activities there, the only Roma-led newspaper *Romano lil* published there, and the first Yugoslav-wide organisation (Educational Club of the Yugoslav Gypsy Youth) was active for only a couple of months before World War Two.

The youngest and most prominent Yugoslav Roma activist of the time, Svetozar Simić, started publishing the newspaper *Romano lil* in which various opinion articles about what Roma should do for the prosperity of their own community were published. The topics discussed were important for the Roma community internally and as part of the society as a whole. According to these texts, Roma had to provide schooling for their children, followed by professional training and cultural development. They also had to organise themselves and be engaged with their own community, especially when being more educated. These pleas were directed towards the Roma themselves, who had to awaken and self-organise for the sake of their own community. With this, the newspaper clearly positioned itself as a publishing platform for Roma that communicated the up-to-date visions of the Roma activism of the period. *Romano lil* was thus publicly sharing the messages of the Roma activists, present in the public space in the interwar period, known also

through the activities of the several Roma-led organisations and grass-root initiatives, occasionally reported in mainstream media (Marushiakova and Popov 2021a:180–235).

At the same time, *Romano lil* addressed the broader audience and exemplified the society-community juxtaposition in various ways. On the one hand, it communicated the inseparability of the Roma as part of all Yugoslav communities and as part of the Serbian nation. On the other hand, although created and published primarily for Roma and giving platform to their visions, the content of the periodical clearly addressed a broader non-Roma readership, present with the collective expressions 'our Serbian brothers' or *gadže*. The newspaper was also published primarily in Serbian and always provided translations in Serbian when Romani texts appeared. The representation of the Roma community as a people united by a common identity and the vision for their further advancement were shared and promoted among their co-nationals (Roma and non-Roma alike). *Romano lil* thus served as means for negotiating Roma positionality and gaining collective recognition.

Simić has also written other works that have not been published but embedded in literature form similar narratives about *the* Roma that represented them as a collective, while strengthening their identity and achieving a status equal to all other communities (through identification and differentiation). They have the same motifs and keynote messages like the published texts produced by Simić during the interwar period and, later, in socialist Yugoslavia, communicating the same ideas in a longer and more complex literature form, one which united folklore presentation, different contemporary character stories, memoirs and essay-style opinion paragraphs.

In this respect, both the newspaper publications and all other literature texts authored by Simić, preserved in manuscript form, seem to be strategically thought out in terms of content and way of narrating, with the aim of creating a narrative about the Gypsies as a people united by a common culture and history, thus equal to the other people of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. An important component of the newspaper's content was the emphasis on Roma belonging to the nation and sharing its history. Examining the essence of the messages that the newspaper conveys to both Roma and a non-Roma audience – that Roma are one community with their own rich culture and history, the need for Roma to be more engaged and self-organise as a community, the need for education and professional training as a key for a better future, the fight against majority misconceptions about the Gypsies – we see the main point for Roma emancipation that continued to shape the narratives of Roma activism in texts and activities in later periods up to the present. Although limited, in terms of production and authors, the writing activities of the Roma elite in interwar Yugoslavia have been firmly tied with the visions of the Yugoslav Roma civil activism. Writing and publishing was a means for projection and extension in the public field of this activism. This means it was a common channel for public expression and, not only the content of the publications, but the writing and publishing activities per se were a signal that Roma activists-writers were aiming to present the community as a collective.

# Romania

*Raluca Bianca Roman*

## 4.1 Introduction

Alongside the USSR, Romania is, arguably, the country that brought forth some of the largest amounts of written sources concerning the processes of Roma emancipation during the interwar period. In fact, some of the most active Roma organisations were forged during the 1930s and the Roma movement itself was among the most productive, not only in terms of its activities, but of its published materials. In that sense, alongside with the development of the Roma movement itself, and the shaping of key Roma organisations, the interwar period in Romania saw a large production of Romani literature. As one can see from this chapter, the latter took myriad shapes, including Roma periodicals, items written by Roma authors in mainstream media, books on the topic of Roma and the intention to develop and set up a Roma Folklore collection, within a Roma Library. All of these showcase the vast activity that had undergone in the country concerning the production of Romani literature.

This chapter thus focuses on all these developments, aiming to bring forth the main outputs of these movements: namely, the literary products themselves, the Roma authors that contributed to the shaping of a Romani literature in the country and the main organisations that the authors and/or the literary works were connected with. At the same time, quite crucially, through looking more in-depth at some of the key themes characterising the production of literature during this time (and, especially, the articles written within Roma periodicals), this chapter will highlight the entanglements between the production of texts and the goals and aims of the Roma emancipation movement in the country, with all its complexities and contradictions. Before we do that, however, a brief contextualisation of the shaping of these developments is needed, specifically in connection to the historical, geographic and economic context of Romania after the First World War, the position of Roma during interwar Romania and the beginnings of the Roma movement in the country. These are all crucial in understanding not only the ways in which the production of Romani literature in the country took shape during this period of time but the ways in which key themes present within the Roma interwar newspapers (such as the issue of citizenship, belonging and the emphasis placed by Roma authors on not aspiring for the status of ‘minority’) were embedded within the historical context of the time and can only be understood within it.

To start off, Romania during the interwar period, or Greater Romania (*România Mare*, in Romanian), as is often described in the literature, was characterised by attempts to

create a common Romanian identity in the aftermath of the First World War and the unification of several Romanian territories. The idea behind most of the projects concerning the very term Greater Romania were thus to re-create a nation-state which would incorporate under its borders all the new territories acquired after the First World War. In brief, after the First World War, the Kingdom of Romania would incorporate several important regions, including Transylvania, Bukovina, Bessarabia and parts of Banat, Crişana, and Maramureş. Moreover, during this time, the Romanian state reached its most multi-ethnic population. This led to the shaping of the Romanian nation under the ideals of a unified language, religion and identity. At the same time, the nationalist desire for a homogeneous Romanian state often came in conflict with the existing realities of the time: namely, the unified territories comprised of several multi-ethnic and multicultural communities (for more on these dynamics during interwar Romania, see Bejan 2019; Bucur 2002; Clark 2015; Korkut 2006; Livezeanu 1995; Radu and Schmitt 2017).

In other words, the Kingdom of Romania thus saw the incorporation not only of a vast territory but of a vastly multi-ethnic population. For instance, according to the 1930 census, Romanians comprised 71.9 percent of the population, Hungarians 7.9 percent, Germans 4.1 percent, Jews 4.0 percent, and so on. Roma (or Gypsies, as they appeared in the census), represented approximately 1.5 percent of the total population (or 262,501). While census data of the time (or present-day) may not exactly represent the lived reality, the information available does showcase the vastly multi-ethnic composition of Romania's population during the interwar period (Livezeanu 1995:129, 135).

In this regard, Transylvania is a particularly interesting case in point, and directly connected to how both the Roma movement and some of the key demands laid out by Roma leaders in the region would be represented in the writings of the time, and especially so in connection to the process of Romanianising Hungarian-speaking Roma (i.e. sending them to Romanian schools, teaching them to read and write in Romanian, etc.) which would become particularly important in the claims and writings of interwar Roma activists. For instance, in this province 75,342 Gypsies were registered in the same 1930s census, which represented 2.3 percent of the population, a significantly larger proportion compared to the rest of Romania (Achim 1998:145). While there is no space to go in-depth here, the status of Gypsies in Transylvania thus played an important part within the machinations of the overall demands of the central governments and their attempts or desires to create a unified Romanian identity. Romanianising Hungarianised Roma (or Hungarian-speaking Roma) thus also became an incentive of Roma organisations in collaboration with state institutions and the Orthodox Patriarchy. This, as we will see later in this chapter, also played a part in the ways in which the Roma newspapers reflected and represented the Roma not as a minority but as loyal servants of the Fatherland, and as equal citizens of the country.

The process of constructing a homogeneous Romanian identity within Greater Romania would thus become a battlefield on both ethnic and religious levels (Korkut

2006; Livezeanu 1995; Radu and Schmitt 2017): the status of the Orthodox Church continued to be upheld as central while the languages of education were promoted as Romanian (for more on the relationship Roma have had with the Orthodox church, see Matei 2010a). At the same time, the Gypsies' overall lower number (especially compared to that of the Jewish population of the time, as well as with the Hungarian one), in addition to the forms that the Roma movement would take (emphasising allegiance to the King and downplaying their role as a minority) would mean that they did not necessarily pose a threat to the overall aim of creating a unified Romanian identity (Matei 2010b:20–21). This also created the pathway for Roma organisations and newspapers (and the Roma movement itself) to develop quite freely and thrive during the interwar period (see also Matei 2020).

It is in this context that the interwar period in Romania was also the time when the seeds of Roma political and civic mobilisation were most clearly made manifest, and when several issues which would influence the shape of Roma emancipation in the country arose (cf. Achim 1998; Klímová-Alexander 2005; Marushiakova and Popov 2017a, 2017b; Matei 2010b). In fact, and as a clear signpost of these developments, several key Roma organisations were formed during this time, and they constituted the seeds of a movement that took upheaval during the whole of the interwar years. For this chapter, the importance of these organisations lies in the fact that they were also active and productive in shaping the field of Romani literature during the same period in Romania, primarily through the publications of Roma newspapers, many of which were directly or indirectly connected to one organisation or another. A brief mention of these key organisations is therefore needed before proceeding to discuss the newspapers themselves.

Among these, *Asociația Generală a Țiganilor din România* (The General Association of Gypsies in Romania, or AGȚR), *Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România* (General Union of Roma in Romania, or UGRR) and *Asociația Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România* (The Association General Union of Roma in Romania, or AUGRR) are perhaps the most influential and most widely known. As we shall see, these organisations also contributed to the development of several Roma publications, more or less influential in the process of mobilising individuals under the aegis of an ethnic banner: *Țimpul* (The Time), *O Rom* (The Roma), both published in Craiova; *Foaia Poporului Romesc* (The Paper of the Roma People), published in Rupea; *Neamul Țigănesc* (The Gypsy People) – published in Făgăraș;  *Glasul Romilor* (The Voice of the Roma) – published in Bucharest; *Țara Noastră* (Our Country), published in Bucharest. I will go back to these specific publications in a subsequent section but the influence of these organisations in the shaping of Roma journalism needs to be emphasised from the start.

The first organisation to be set up, though it would never gain official recognition (i.e. be officially registered as an organisation), was the Neo-Rustic Brotherhood (in Romanian, *Înfrățirea Neo-Rustică*), in 1926 in Făgăraș. Its influence, however, appears to have remained somewhat limited to the area of Transylvania (*Ardeal*, in Romanian), and

reached little outside these regional influences (Matei 2012). Its leader, Nafatanailă Lazăr, however, would go on to publish one of the six Roma newspapers, *Neamul Țigănesc*, in three issues (see below).

AGȚR, perhaps the most influential of these organisations (at least at its inception), was formed in April 1933 at the efforts of then archimandrite Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu (1873–1941), together with Gheorghe A. Lăzăreanu-Lăzurică (or George Lăzurică, also known as Lăzărescu-Lăzurică or Lăzărică, 1892 – ?), as general secretary (Matei 2010a:161). The purpose and scope of the organisation were printed in the organisation's manifesto, first distributed in 1933. These were said to be, at once, 'cultural', moral and social, tackling distinct elements of Roma social life. These ideas would be re-published in several articles within the newspaper *Glusul Romilor* and also repeated, almost in their entirety, in the manifesto of the Association General Union of Roma in Romania (see below).

Yet, soon after this organisation was set up, a new one emerged, led by Lăzureanu Lăzurică (the former head secretary of AGȚR) who, in September 1933, split from Șerboianu. This new union was to be called the General Union of Roma in Romania (UGRR), but Lăzurică was soon overthrown from its leadership, in 1934, by flower salesman Gheorghe Niculescu. The latter would become the new leader of the organisation, renamed as the Association of the General Union of Roma in Romania (AUGRR). Unlike AGȚR or UGRR, AUGRR would obtain juridical statute (hence official recognition) and would gradually attract to it many other organisations set up outside of the capital city.

In the same year, Lăzurică and Șerboianu would re-join forces in a renewed AGȚR, renamed as the General Association of Roma in Romania (*Asociația Generală a Romilor din România*). They would also begin publishing extensively in two newspapers, *Timpul* and *Țara Noastră*, which would act as a counterpoint to the AUGRR's own newspaper, *Glusul Romilor*.

Similar to the dynamics occurring within the capital city, smaller organisations began to appear in other regions of the country. As such, an Oltenia circle of AGȚR was formed in 1934. A reference to this organisation is made, for instance, in the article "From AGAȚ in Craiova", in the newspaper *Timpul*, issue no 11–12, September 25, 1933 (*Timpul* 1933a:1). While initially affiliated with AGȚR, the organisation would nevertheless develop its own regional focus and incentives, including the desire to form a Roma Library and the emphasis placed on the leadership of its self-appointed *voievod* of Roma (i.e. leader of the Roma), Marin Simion (who was also the leader of Oltenia's AGȚR).

As one can see even from this necessarily brief outline, the picture of the mobilisation, emancipatory movement and the shaping of Roma organisations during the interwar period was far from straight forward and has been potentially complicated by several distinctive factors. Among these, worth mentioning are the issue of legitimacy among its leaders and the struggle for leadership of the organisations, the distinction between the centre and the periphery (primarily Bucharest, Transylvania and Oltenia), the best means of mobilising Roma individuals and attract them to join different organisations and the desire and need to collaborate with state institutions and church authorities.

Most importantly, all these organisations were active and productive in shaping up the field of Roma journalism in Romania. This was done primarily through the setting up of their own Roma periodicals, in which key issues concerning the aims of the Roma emancipation movement in the country (including, for instance, the conflicts between some of the Roma leaders) were being printed and distributed. In that which follows, the focus will therefore be on this form of Romani literature in Romania during the interwar period. The aim will be to explore not only the main authors of these publications but the main themes, political incentives, regional distinctions and key personalities that shone through within this period.

#### 4.2 Roma Periodicals: Regional Distinctions, Personalities and Political Affiliation

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the above context, Romania has had a record number of Roma-led and Roma-focused periodicals before the Second World War. For example, during the period 1934–1941, six Roma newspapers are known to have been published in Romania: *Glasul Romilor* (The Voice of the Roma); *Neamul Țigănesc* (The Gypsy People); *O Rom* (The Rom); *Timpul* (The Time); *Foaia Poporului Romesc* (Paper of the Roma People); *Țara Noastră* (Our Country). Mentions about a seventh newspaper exist: namely, *Gazeta Romilor* (The Roma Gazette), dated 1936, and presumably founded by Apostol Matei – the founder of the association *Deșteptarea Romilor și Romițelor din România* (The Reawakening of Roma and Romni in Romania) on the August 5, 1936. However, in our searches through archives in Romania, no such newspaper was found. Moreover, mentions of its content, including an article proving the attachment of Roma to the Romanian Patriarch, Miron Cristea, and to the Romanian Orthodox church can, in fact, be found in *Glasul Romilor* (Neacșu 1939:2). The mention of Apostol Matei is interesting and original and, indeed, not connected to *Glasul Romilor*. Nevertheless, the last newspaper has either gone missing, its traces lost or a confusion concerning the names of these media may have been created.

##### *Glasul Romilor (Voice of the Roma, in Romanian) (1933–1940)*

Subtitle: *Organ al Uniunii Generale a Romilor din Romania* (Organ of the General Union in Romania). In the first issue of the newspaper, it was stated that *Glasul Romilor* would appear weekly. However, in subsequent issues, this statement would be changed to “appears periodically, under the leadership of a Committee” (issue 2) or “appears on the 1st and the 15th of each month, under the leadership of a Committee” (issue 3) or, simply “appears twice a month”. In reality, given that between 1933 and 1940 only 15 issues were published, the newspaper’s release was less regular than intended. Its founder was Gheorghe Niculescu and general administrator was N. Niculescu. On the front-page of

the first issue, its editor was stated to be N. Lenghescu, but his name no longer appeared on the title page in subsequent ones (the only ones mentioned were those of its director and administrator). He nevertheless continued to feature as a contributor throughout the newspaper.

*Glusul Romilor* was also the major and, arguably, most influential newspaper, established in Bucharest, having published, in total, 15 issues, since 1933 (with an additional one in 1940). As mentioned in the subtitle, it was the official 'organ' of the Association General Union of Roma in Romania (or AUGRR), and was published in Bucharest, in a four-pages format. Most of the authors were those affiliated or connected to the Union. Some of the key themes in the newspaper were, in fact, those of establishing Gheorghe Niculescu as the indisputable leader of all Roma in Romania, and a lot of other articles focused on the quarrel between AUGRR and AGȚR. This, as we shall see, was not unscrutinised, as similar bids for the role would come from leaders of the Union's competing organisation, as well as from regional leaders of smaller organisations.

As for the main rubrics of the newspapers, these varied from issue to issue, and the newspaper itself did not have a standard format, apart from featuring a general information section and the editorial post (or short requests from readers). Nevertheless, the issues often comprised, on the first page, a general letter from the editor (signed as N. Lenghescu Clei, whose last name is sometimes spelled also as N. Lenghescu Cley, in the first issue) or from Gheorghe or N. Niculescu, usually in the form of a manifesto or key information that they wanted to put out. These were often calling for Roma to unite with the Union. In addition to this, the aims of the organisation were published and republished several times throughout the newspaper's existence, alongside the activities that the Union was preparing or planning (such as the Roma Congress, in 1933, or different meetings of the Union). Segments of information about the history of Roma in Romania were also sporadically included in the newspaper, but without a particularly recurrent position in its overall structure. In addition to this, information on the composition of the central committee (in Bucharest), on regional branches of the Union and their membership were distributed within the newspaper's content as well as rebuttals of the statements made by the leaders of their rival organisation, namely Gh. Lăzurică and Popp Șerboianu. While these did not have a specific place in the newspaper (i.e. a particular page), they were recurrently present. Finally, poems and songs calling for the unification of Roma in Romania under the aegis of the AUGRR were also featured within *Glusul Romilor*. These poems were written in Romanian. The newspaper was also published entirely in the Romanian language.

### *Timpul (The Time, in Romanian) (1932–1934)*

Subtitle: *Ziarul țiganilor din România / Oficiosul romilor din România* (Newspaper of Gypsies/ Official publication of Roma in Romania), Owner: Aurel Th. Manolescu-Dolj. The newspaper was between two and four pages long. *Timpul* (Craiova, 1932–1934) was published in 70 issues, in Romanian language.

While, in effect, the owner and director of the newspaper was Aurel Th Manolescu-Dolj, Lăzurică (and, later, Șerboianu) would also have numerous articles published in it. Having a more regional focus, however, the newspaper declared Marian I Simion, from Craiova as “Voievod of Roma in Romania” (Timpul 1934:1). Furthermore, it had the role of promoting the pleas and focus of Roma in Oltenia.

What is particularly interesting about the newspaper *Timpul*, unlike the other Roma newspapers during the interwar period, is that it did not always have a ‘Roma’/ ‘Gypsy’ theme. In fact, up until issue 11–12, it was subtitled an “independent newspaper” and featured only regional news, often connected to cultural or political events in Oltenia. It was only in issue 11–12 that the ‘Gypsy’ theme emerged, in an article titled “From AGAȚ in Craiova” (Timpul 1933a:1–2), which sets up and introduces the aims of the AGȚR under the leadership of p Șerboianu, as well as introducing Marin I. Simion as the president of the Oltenia ‘circle’ of AGȚR.

From that moment on, the newspaper would feature more articles dedicated to the Gypsy theme and finally change its subtitle to “The newspaper of the Gypsies in Romania,” with issue 24–25, on January 24, 1934. Interesting also is that the subtitle of the newspaper would change several times, in connection with the joining of Lăzurică and the resurgence of the cooperation between the latter and Șerboianu, after their initial conflict. As such, with issue 41, on July 29, 1934, the subtitle of the newspaper would change again, to the “Newspaper of the Roma in Romania.” Lăzurică, as will be clear from some of the articles published later in his career, was one of the most fervent proponents of the terminological shift (from *țigan*, to *Roma*) in public and official discourse. As such, the shift in the subtitle of the newspaper may be due also to his affiliation.

In terms of its content and main rubrics/themes, this most clearly shifted from its move from a general newspaper, featuring regional information to a ‘Roma/Gypsy’ newspaper, where most articles were dedicated to the Roma theme. Other than this, unlike *Țara Noastră*, there did not seem to be a standard format for the newspaper itself. On its two pages, it recurrently featured diverse pieces of information concerning events of interest or focusing on Roma, the political climate in Romania, or regional news concerning Roma. Furthermore, unlike *Glasul Romilor* or *Țara Noastră*, the newspaper *Timpul* did not include information on Roma folklore or poems.

### *O Rom (The Rom, in Romani language) (1934)*

Subtitle: *Organ de îndrumare culturală și revendicări sociale ale romilor din România* (Newspaper of the cultural guiding and social claims of Roma in Romania), Directors: N. St. Ionescu and Marin I. Simion, Craiova, Nr.01–02 (1934).

*O Rom* was another regional newspaper, also published in Craiova, but in only two issues. The first issue was two pages long, while the second issue was four pages long. Much like *Timpul*, it was affiliated with the Oltenia circle of the AGȚR. However, its leaders were N. St Ionescu and Marin Simion and in its second issue (October 22, 1934), it directly criticises the Union of Lăzurică, organised after the latter’s split from Șerboianu.

Furthermore, the title of the newspaper is connected to the initiative to establish a Roma library in Craiova, also titled *O Rom*, which will be discussed below.

In terms of its key rubrics, the newspaper featured, in its first issue, a title-page article on the purpose and intent of the newspaper, as well as information concerning the intent to organise the *O Rom* library. The first page of the second issue was also devoted to the work done by the cultural movement of the Roma in Romania. In addition to this, both issues featured articles concerning the organisation of the Roma movement in Romania, events of the movement in the region (such as the Congress in Sibiu), articles about the 'Voievod' Marin I. Simion, which praised the latter and the work he had been doing for the Roma in Oltenia. Finally, the newspaper also featured calls for the mobilisation of Roma, information about the Oltenia branch and, in the second issue, a Romani language translation of the Lord's Prayer, translated by C. S. Nicolăescu Plopșor, who was also the leader of the *O Rom* library.

*Neamul Țigănesc (in Romanian)/The Gypsy People (1934–1935)*

Subtitle: *Foaie de ridicare a Țiganilor (Romilor) și de informații* (Newspaper for the rising of the Gypsies (Roma) and for information), Director/Editor: Naftanailă Lazăr, Calbor/Făgăraș County, Nr. 01–03 (1934–1935).

*Neamul Țigănesc* was another regional newspaper, published in Romanian language, in 3 issues, under the leadership of Naftanailă Lazăr, and based in Făgăraș County. The newspaper had between two pages (first issue) and four pages (second and third issues). The first issue was published in February 1934, the second issue in September 1934 and the third issue in April 1935.

The main rubrics and themes in the newspaper were somewhat cohesive across its 3 issues, and more regionally focused than those of *Glusul Romilor*, *Țara Noastră* or *Timpul*. The front page was invariably a call/editorial letter written by Naftanailă Lazăr (sometimes simply signed as The Neo-Rustic Brotherhood), which were an address to the Roma readership and an elegy towards the editor of the newspaper (i.e. Naftanailă Lazăr himself). He was invariably presented as the 'apostle' of the Gypsies in Romania. The second pages featured information about the Roma organisations or the Roma events in the county (such as the one led by Marian I. Simion, in Oltenia). In addition to this, it would focus on different themes (such as the issue of naming) that the editor found necessary to address within the Roma movement they were leading. Finally, the third pages (apart from issue 1) featured general information and trivia about Roma in the country, alongside poems (written in Romanian) about the Roma movement, about Naftanailă Lazăr or about the Roma struggle. An interesting article, about the creation of an 'independent state' among tent-Gypsies was published in the second issue of the newspaper (Marinescu 1934:4). The fourth page of the final issue ends with another call to Roma 'brothers' to unite together for a common cause.

Overall, the newspaper's focus and approach, while similar to the central newspapers (in its calls for mobilisation, for instance), were also somewhat distinct to the

other newspapers as it emphasised the need to maintain and be proud of the term *țigan* (Gypsy), which also featured in the newspaper's title (Neamul Țigănesc 1934a, 1934b, 1934c). Furthermore, it focused primarily on the issues and needs characterising Gypsies in Transylvania, at times even criticising central organisations and their leaders for neglecting the particular situations as well as the social and political struggles of Roma from Transylvania.

*Foaia Poporului Romesc (Newspaper of the Roma People, in Romanian) (1935)*

Subtitle: *Organ cultural, social și economic al romilor* (Cultural, social and economic newspaper of the Roma people), Director: Gheorghe Frunzea, Rupea/Târnava-Mare County, Nr. 01 (1935). The newspaper was published in Romanian, in one issue. The first issue was 4 pages long. The newspaper was run by Gheorghe Frunzea and based in the locality of Rupea.

In terms of its content, on its front page, the newspaper features an editorial letter, from Gheorghe Frunzea, asking Roma to rise up and mobilise. Alongside this, the front page also features an article concerning the general Roma movement in Romania, which started in Bucharest, as well as an article about the cultural life in Rupea. The second page features an article advising and encouraging Roma to read and write, authored by Gheorghe Peșteanu, another article about the movement in Rupea (led by Gheorghe Frunzea, Nicolae Duca and Gheorghe Peșteanu) and the desire that the newspaper will continue the work of mobilising Roma in Romania. The second page also introduces the intention to publish a Romani language vocabulary, with translations into Romanian, German and Hungarian. This is a particularly interesting aspect of the newspaper, as it highlights once again the multi-ethnic character of the region in which it was published. From the first vocabulary entry (which only features words starting with the letter 'a'), it is clear that the intention was to develop the vocabulary in future issues. These, however, were never published. The next pages feature different articles, including one concerning the naming of the community and, on the last page, a lengthy article about M. Kogălniceanu and the abolition of Roma slavery in Romania.

While it was only published in one issue there were clear signs in the articles featured that the intention was to continue its publication with subsequent ones (such as the intended vocabulary, mentioned above). Much like the other newspapers of the time, its aim was to promote the notion of a Roma movement in Romania, while nevertheless having a clearly regional focus. There are no mentions of the other Roma newspapers within its pages, nor of the struggles for legitimacy characterising the Roma organisations mentioned above. Alongside the intended dictionary, and its clearly multi-ethnic content, one of its most interesting article discusses the issue of naming Roma/Gypsy communities in Romania, arguing that the term Gypsy should not be used as referring to a 'nationality' as it is seen to be a derogatory term pointing towards a particular lifestyle (see section below, on naming).

*Țara Noastră (Our Country, in Romanian) (1938)*

Subtitle: *Ediție săptămânală pentru Romii din România* (Special Weekly edition for Roma in Romania). This newspaper was also published in Bucharest, in 1938, in six issues. The newspaper was published in Romanian and each issue was between four and six pages long.

*Țara Noastră* was, de facto, a newspaper of the General Association of Roma in Romania, led by G. A. Lăzurică and Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu. Yet, the newspaper title is the same as that of *Țara Noastră*, the main newspaper of the National Christian Party (NCP), whose editor was the National Christian Party's leader, Octavian Goga, one of the leading parties in the country during that period. As we shall see, the connection between the Association and the NCP was strong, not only in the latter's support of the Roma movement led by Lăzurică and Șerboianu but most clearly evidenced in the articles signed by Lăzurică and Șerboianu praising the NCP and its leaders, while also inviting Roma to vote for them in the Romanian elections. It is interesting to note, however, that in issue 4, from August 1, 1937, both Lăzurică and Șerboianu make a small note at the bottom of page two, stating that their newspaper *Țara Noastră* had nothing to do with the official paper of the NCP, and that they were completely "free and fully responsible" of their actions. While this may have been the case, the Roma-focused *Țara Noastră* had several articles dedicated to praising the NCP and encouraging Roma to vote for the latter.

Unlike the other newspapers, *Țara Noastră* also had a more standard format in terms of its rubrics. The first page was often dedicated to a call from either Lăzurică or Șerboianu, clarifications of issues concerning the organisation of Roma in Romania or appraisals of Octavian Goga and his party. The second page was titled *Pagina Literară* (Literary Page) and included themes such as Roma folklore (poems, sayings, proverbs, from Romania and abroad), stories, health advice to Roma, information on Gypsy films, information on Roma from other countries, Roma "thoughts" (*cugetări rome*), etc. Some of the Roma folklore was published in Romani language, rather than Romanian. The third page was titled *Pagina Religioasă* (Religious Page) and featured information on the missionary work being conducted by G. A. Lăzurică and Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu, as well as others, among Roma. It also featured religious texts on different themes and short prayers (these short prayers were also written in Romani language). The fourth page, titled *Fapte, gânduri, oameni* (Deeds, Thoughts, People), often comprised a mixture of themes, including discussions on the Jewish population in the country (and the detachment of Roma from the Jews), information about the AUGRR and its leaders (Gh. Niculescu and N. Niculescu), often in the form of a critique, the success of particular Roma individuals (i.e. musicians, etc.) and information about events and news from abroad (about Roma, but not only). The newspaper also had two general sections: one titled *Poșta redacției* (The Editorial House Post), which featured letters from readers, and one about general information. While the structuring of the newspaper according to these themes was not strictly followed throughout the six issues (i.e. the pages where they featured may have differed), the themes nevertheless followed a similar line.

In short, all these newspapers contributed vastly to shaping the Roma movement in the country while also showcasing the different trajectories and aims of each organisation. As such, both the content and the geographical location of the newspapers is important, as these reflect differences in terms of the visions for a Roma future among different key activists of the time. Furthermore, the geographical location of these newspapers emphasises the potentially distinctive role of the major Roma organisations when it comes to content of the literature produced. In other words, potential discrepancies can be observed in the distinction between the capital and regional locations, between ideas promoted by the key leaders of the Roma organisations and the affiliation of different newspapers to specific political parties.

For example, as will be evident from their content presentation below, the newspapers *Timpul* and *Țara Noastră* would be affiliated with the National Christian Party, a highly nationalistic and anti-Semitic party. This can be seen in the elegies written by G. A. Lăzureanu Lăzurică and others to Octavian Goga (the leader of the National Christian Party) and in the encouragement Roma leaders give to readers in voting for the National Christian Party. As such, the interlinking of political allegiances and the support of particular members of the Roma elite cannot be understated.

Likewise, the connection between the newspaper *Glăsuț Romilor* and the Romanian Orthodox Church is worth highlighting. This can be seen in the myriad articles focusing on the role of Roma elite as “missionaries of the Orthodox Church” (see, for instance, Niculescu 1937:3), in the attempts made to Romanianise Hungarian Gypsies in the region of Transylvania (and, hence, attempts to convert them from the Greek Catholic Church, which was dominant among Hungarian-speaking Roma in Transylvania at the time, to the Orthodox Church, which was seen as the state church in the country) and the numerous elegies to the Romanian Patriarch within the pages of *Glăsuț Romilor* (1934). Quite similarly, these approaches can be seen in other regional newspapers affiliated or connected somehow to the AUGRR: *Neamul Țigănesc* and *Foaia Poporului Romesc*, while *O Rom* and *Timpul* would more clearly be connected with the premises and goals of the AGȚR. That said, as already highlighted above, affiliations did also change, highlighting the fluctuating nature of affinities and allegiances.

In terms of the outreach, readership and distribution of the newspaper, little specific information can be found, other than the content of the newspapers themselves. It is indeed known that the regional newspapers were primarily directed towards a regional audience, as most of the articles focused on local events and political structures but they also addressed issues of concern connected to the general Roma movement in the country. Furthermore, the articles published in these regional newspapers (*Foaia Poporului Romesc*, *Neamul Țigănesc*, *O Rom*, *Timpul*) were often directly addressed to such a readership. However, that is not to say that the newspapers did not reach beyond those regions, nor is it to say that the readership was exclusively Roma/Gypsies. This is primarily the case with the newspaper *Țara Noastră* and *Timpul*.

In fact, *Timpul* had originally started as a general newspaper (titled *Independent Newspaper*) and, at its inception, had no articles on Roma/Gypsies at all. Therefore, it is feasible to argue that its intended audience was always also a Romanian one and continued to be so even after it changed focus. *Țara Noastră* featured several articles (especially in its sections, The Religious Page and The Literary Page) which focused on giving a broad overview of the Roma in Romania, including history, folklore, labelling and cultural characteristics. Though this was never explicitly stated, these articles seemed to be intended not only for Roma/Gypsies but also for a general audience. Such articles on Roma history, customs and folklore were present in all the Roma newspapers of the time (see, for instance, G.A.L. 1937; Lăzurică 1937; Marinescu 1934; Potra 1937; Tache 1940). Thus, alongside specific calls for Roma or directly addressed to a Roma readership (cf. Dănicel 1937; Dutan 1938; Lăzurică 1938; Lenghescu-Cley 1934), these more general articles seem to point to the intention that the newspapers be addressed to a Romanian (or, better said, non-Roma) audience as well.

Finally, as for the distribution of the newspapers, no information is available concerning the print run or the means by which the newspapers were distributed. Nevertheless, some of the newspapers (especially *Glusul Romilor*) reached quite far in terms of its geographical distribution. Several issues of *Glusul Romilor* and one issue of *Neamul Țigănesc* were found also in the Archive of the Gypsy Lore Society, in Liverpool (UK) with a letter attached to them showcasing that the newspapers had been in the possession of the Gypsy studies scholar, Robert Andrew Scott Macfie (1868–1935). Thus, the newspaper's subscriptions were not limited only to the Romanian space but found its way in the collection of international scholars interested in Gypsies more generally.

Having thus broadly discussed the newspapers above, the next sub-section introduces some of the central themes and topics found within these individual Roma newspapers during the interwar period. While these themes are far from being exhaustive, and many more issues did appear within the pages of Roma newspapers during the interwar period, their importance cannot be overstated. They reveal the complex entanglements of political affiliations, regional focus and struggle(s) for legitimate representation among its writers.

### 4.3 Themes in Roma Newspapers

#### *The Struggle for Legitimacy and the Relationship between the Centre and the Periphery*

While common issues can be seen in all Roma newspapers in Romania, distinctive experiences and manifestations of emancipatory actions among and by Roma leaders and organisations were reflected in the regional differences of some of them and, in particular, in the distinction between the centre (or the capital) and the provinces. Broadly put, many Roma gradually appeared to be unhappy about how the interests and needs of

Roma outside of the capital city area were being approached by central organisations. In particular, the situation of Roma in Transylvania often came to the centre as both a social and political issue and leaders in the capital sometimes collaborated with local authorities to register Roma in their organisations. Though there is no space to go in-depth into it here, the situation of Hungarianised Roma (namely, Hungarian-speaking Roma, often Greek-Catholics and with Hungarian self-consciousness) was particularly of interest both to Roma leaders and Roma organisations, and a means by which the latter two proved their loyalty to the Romanian nation: namely, in stating their engagement in a process of Romaniasation of Hungarianised Roma and, thus, the important help that Roma associations might offer to national authorities in their attempt at Romanianising Roma communities. Such a depiction can be found, for instance, in the article *Romii Ardeleni* (Transylvanian Roma), from *Glasul Romilor*, in which the author directly engages with the intervention of members of the Union in the process of Romanianising Hungarianised Roma (Stan 1938:4).

These distinctions were made especially visible in the articles of the two main Roma newspapers, *Glasul Romilor* and *Neamul Țigănesc*, but were also reflected in the pages of *Timpul, O Rom* (both based in Craiova) and *Țara Noastră*. For instance, the Association General Union of Roma in Romania mentioned above, led by Gheorghe Niculescu, began publishing the journal *Glasul Romilor* in Bucharest, on the November 15, 1934. This newspaper became perhaps the most well-known Roma newspaper of the interwar period. As mentioned above, it had 15 issues, published from 1934 to 1940 (another issue would be published in 1941) and, similarly to AGȚR's initial manifesto, stated the Union's main aims as being the emancipation and re-awakening of all Roma in Romania, on a social, cultural, moral, economic and spiritual ground.

Among other things, both organisations' manifestos presented the intention to lay "the foundations for tomorrow", by arguing that Roma too deserved to be heard by the leaders of the country, as Roma too are faithful citizens of Greater Romania. Some of the prospects of the Union, as reflected in the newspaper, were to set up kindergartens for Roma children, encourage education, engage in a programme of settlement of "vagabonds and beggars," namely the so-called colonisation of nomadic Gypsies – referring, in fact, to the sedentarisation of nomadic groups (Tache 1940:2), create Roma consumption cooperatives, food canteens, set up funds for Roma in need, focus on the establishment of Roma libraries, etc. In other words, the organisation was stated to focus on all aspects of social life (economic, social, educational, etc.) in order to improve the fate of Roma people, and so that Roma too could stand as equal citizens of the country. All these aspects can be most clearly seen in a published version of the 'programme' as it appeared within the first issue of *Glasul Romilor* (Niculescu 1934:1):

[...] The goal pursued by us is solely that of coming to the aid of all poor Roma. We will set up kindergartens in all towns and municipalities, where the Roma will be able to send their children for free education[...] We will intervene with energy to eradicate vagabonds and

beggars, placing everyone in businesses and factories and any kind of service, thereby eliminating the ugly habit they have had so far – and instead working in a clean and honest manner [...] We will create libraries from where all Roma willing to improve their knowledge will be able to have access to higher knowledge. In one word, we will embrace everything so that the fate of our Roma people improves, so that we can sit beside our countrymen without being ashamed, because we are all sons of this God-blessed country and we have all done and continue to do our duty to the Throne, the Land, and the Orthodox Christian Church.

The Ed. (ibid.)

As can be seen from above, these foci point to the overall goals of the organisation itself, which aimed to target key social issues of the Roma community. At the same time, all other Roma newspapers (and, as such, Roma organisations more broadly) would mirror similar goals and adopt and adapt them to their own agendas.

Yet, much of the newspapers' content, alongside the elements pushing for the emancipation and mobilisation of Roma in the country, also features snippets of the struggle for legitimacy between Roma leaders at the time: Gh. Niculescu and Popp Șerboianu/Lăzureanu-Lăzurică. Beyond the focus on the social agenda of the newspaper's umbrella organisations, numerous articles within Roma newspapers (primarily noticeable in *Timpul*, *Tara Noastră* and *Glusul Romilor*) were thus devoted to a mutual attack on their respective leaders and proving the rightful and legitimate place of the Union as the only viable one to unite all Roma in Romania. A similar trend could also be seen in the regional newspapers, where *Neamul Țigănesc* is used as a platform to highlight the qualities of its director, Naftanailă Lazăr, while *O Rom* and *Timpul* emphasise those of Marian I Simion and N. Ionescu, etc. As can be seen from below, the relationship the Craiova circle has had with a key promoter of setting up a Roma library (titled *O Rom*, from Romani language, and translated as *The Roma*), namely historian and archaeologist C. S. Nicolăescu Ploșor, was more ambiguous when looking at the content of the newspaper *Timpul*. This moves away from praising the historian and archaeologist for his efforts in supporting the Roma cause and publicising his works (for instance, in issues 28–29 of the journal, and again in issue 39 and 40) to calling Ploșor a crook and a Gypsy (from issue 48 onwards). This again shows the somewhat complicated nature of collaboration between main figures at the time and the fact that the picture is anything but uniform, and allegiances may be fluctuating.

Interestingly, a key motive within *Glusul Romilor* has also been the loyalty and devotion expressed towards the Orthodox church. In fact, as will be developed more in a separate section of this chapter, the role of the Orthodox church was key in supporting one leader or another (or one organisation or another). In this way, it also contributed to the potential success or failure of these associations (Matei 2010a). For instance, in many of its activities, the Association of the General Union of Roma in Romania was aided in its efforts by key figures of the Orthodox church, including the Patriarch Miron Cristea, and was often still in close cooperation with capital city authorities (see, for instance, Niculescu 1937:3). Before this, the Patriarch Miron Cristea had also come to the aid of

Lăzureanu-Lăzurică, especially in the rupture that had been made between the latter and Șerboianu. As Șerboianu had been seen to be moving away from the traditions and teachings of the Orthodox Church, efforts were made to support those that rallied against him. In fact, there are several references dispersed throughout the issues of *Glasul Romilor* which present “ex-priest” Șerboianu as a traitor of the Orthodox faith and as aiming to profit from the cause of the Roma. See, for example, the article with the provocative title of “G.A. Lăzărescu, known as Lăzurică and ex-priest I Șerboianu, as they are. Two crooks who look to profit from Roma” (*Glasul Romilor* 1937:2–4).

Looking at *Neamul Țigănesc*, this was a self-titled ‘Gypsy’ newspaper, published in Făgăras, and led by Naftanailă Lazăr, the president of the Neo-Rustic Brotherhood. The Neo-Rustic Brotherhood, while smaller than the Association of the General Union of Roma in Romania (or AUGRR, led by Niculescu), was, according to Lazăr himself, the first organisation to be set up in Romania, in 1926 in Făgăraș. While its influence appears to have remained somewhat limited to the area of Transylvania, and reached little outside these regional influences, the newspaper published by its founding leader reveals both contrasts and similarities with the approach of the centre, as well as a need for gaining legitimacy by organisations outside of the capital city.

*Neamul Țigănesc* was published in only three issues (February 1934, September 1934 and April 1935). As will be discussed in more depth below and compared to some of the other Roma newsletters at the time, it maintained the label of *țigan* in its very title and dedicated two articles to clarify the use of this label. In fact, this is perhaps one of the most striking distinctions and one upon which Lazăr remarks on several occasions.

*Neamul Țigănesc* also seems to have had a fluctuating and ambiguous relationship with both organisations in Bucharest, the Association of the General Union of Roma in Romania (led by Niculescu) and the General Association of Gypsies/Roma in Romania (led by C. I. Popp Șerboianu and, later, joined once more by G. Lăzureanu Lăzurică). In fact, in the second issue, on a front-page article, the newspaper takes issue with this struggle for leadership among the Bucharest Roma elite. It also emphasises the fact that Lăzurică, though having the merit of promoting and making known Romani literature, was nevertheless “found not to be a Rom,” therefore he could not make demands on such a leadership (*Neamul Țigănesc* 1934c:1). As a side note, a questioning of the ‘Roma status’ of various leaders was not, in fact, uncommon among other newspaper publications either. There seems to have been a back and forth motion of legitimacy claiming that was also founded, among other things, on the validity of the ‘Roma origin’ of its leaders.

Furthermore, this article highlights that the fight between the two leaders (Niculescu and Lăzurică) is not one of principles but of petty interests, namely who is to be the leader of the Roma (see, for instance, *Neamul Țigănesc* 1934c:1), which highlights the need to recognise the authority and leadership of those outside the capital city of Bucharest. Finally, using time in the field of activism as an honorific element, Naftanailă Lazăr emphasises, yet again, that the Neo-Rustic Brotherhood was the first recognised Roma organisation,

as early as 1926 and, therefore, one which “bows to nobody” (ibid.). The article ends with the statement: “Long-live our Voievod, Naftanailă Lazăr!” (ibid.), therefore reinforcing the same quest for legitimacy as that one depicted among the capital’s Roma ‘leaders’.

In the same issue of the newspaper, however, on page three, *Neamul Țigănesc* presents the minutes of a meeting of the General Union of Roma in Romania (from March 1934), in which the Neo-Rustic Brotherhood is recognised as being affiliated to the former and Naftanailă Lazăr granted the recognised title of *voievod* of Roma in Transylvania. Again, these interplays between affiliations to the centre and the relationship of Roma organisations from outside the capital city to the central organisations in Bucharest reiterates the complex and complicated nature of cooperation between centre and periphery and between different individuals aiming to gain momentum and legitimacy as leaders of Roma in Romania (regionally or centrally). Furthermore, at that time, Lăzurică (spelt G.A. Lăzărescu Lăzuricea) was still the president of the General Union of Roma in Romania, while the vice-presidents were Apostol Matei and Gh. Niculescu (spelt Niculicea), and general secretary and treasurer was Nicolae Niculescu (spelt Niculicea). As already discussed above, this would soon change, with Lăzurică being kicked out and Gh. Niculescu taking the title as president. There thus seemed to have been a continuous tension not only between the organisations in the capital city, but also between the latter and those outside it, and this was quite often reflected in the newspapers connected to various organisations (a similar argument can be made for the Oltenia ‘circle’, led by Marian Simion). One can also see in this case an interplay of desires to collaborate with the centre and the desire for autonomy in terms of leadership of Roma in Transylvania (visible primarily in the case of Naftanailă Lazăr). In fact, most regional newspapers in the interwar period affiliated themselves, at one point or another, with one of the two leaders, though it seems that, in the end, Niculescu may have gained the greater overall support. As such, a struggle for legitimacy could be seen both in terms of the relationship between individual Roma leaders at the time (i.e. the conflict between Niculescu brothers and the Lăzurică/Șerboianu union or the initial conflict between Lăzurică and Șerboianu) and in the ways in which regional Roma organisations (and their leaders) also attempted to shape their positions as guardians of the Roma movement in connection to the relationship with the capital city.

### *On Naming*

Much like the process of mobilisation itself, the debates on the usage of the terms Roma vs. *țigan*/Gypsy, are not post-socialist manifestations. In reality, many of the present-day arguments (for one side or the other) can be found as early as the interwar period. As such, it was in the 1930s that the first glimpses of how labels carry with them derogatory or uplifting connotations can be seen. In other words, the use of *țigan* or ‘Roma’ became a topic of debate among Roma leaders during the interwar period, and the debate itself became one of diverging interests. These dynamics are most clearly reflected in the

publications of the time. Taking *Neamul Țigănesc* and *Glusul Romilor* as a comparative framework of engaging with the issue of labelling, one can see, from their very titles, contrasting viewpoints on the nature of and extent to which label categories may foster or impinge upon mobilisation processes.

Firstly, *Neamul Țigănesc*, tentatively translated as *The Gypsy People*, evidently points to the adoption of the name *țigan* as a potentially mobilising and emancipatory term (or, better said, does not see the use of *țigan* as negatively impacting upon the process of emancipation). Yet, though it would be easily seen as pleading for the use of *țigan* over *Roma* (by looking at the title alone), *Neamul Țigănesc* used both terms, *Roma* and *țigan*, often interchangeably within its pages. For instance, at times articles would refer to communities as ‘*Roma*’, and at other times as *țigani*, without a clear distinction made between them in terms of the positive or negative connotation. This is unlike in other publications in which the term *țigan* is seen equivalent with negative stereotypes, and not solely as referring to a particular ethnic group, evident most clearly in the article “Is the word Gypsy a word of mockery or a name for a nation?” in *Foaia Poporului Romesc* (Duca 1935:3).

Nevertheless, in one of its issues, *Neamul Țigănesc* also states that, unlike other *Roma* leaders, Naftanailă Lazăr is not ashamed of the word *țigan*, and does not see in it a potential threat to the social mobilisation of *țigani* in Romania. Below is a reproduction of one of the articles written along this line, which reflects upon both terms and suggests a potential benefit of using them interchangeably. Furthermore, it sees a threat of no longer being “recognised by outsiders” in the complete abandonment of the word *țigan* for that of *Roma* (*Neamul Țigănesc* 1934b:3; R. Lazăr 1935:2):

We are proud of the word **Gypsy**, which we place at the head of our newspaper.

The other leaders are now ashamed of being Gypsies and are looking to call themselves *Roma*.

Under this name, that of Gypsies, we are known all over Europe and that is how we want to be known.

We accept the word *Rom*, as we are called in the Gypsy language “*tu sam rom*”, but we do not deny the word Gypsy either.

“*Tu sam rom?*” means “are you a Gypsy?” And “*Sar te nam rom*”, it is true that I am a Gypsy! (*Neamul Țigănesc* 1934b:3)

The argument is again re-stated in the last issue of the newspaper. Not only does this article emphasise the tension between leaders but also, as such, emphasises the potential, argued by Naftanailă Lazăr, to maintain both the use of *țigan* and the use of *Roma*, unproblematically.

*Glusul Romilor* clearly adopts *Roma* as the preferred term and uses it throughout its publications. The term *țigan* is only used when reproducing literary extract; such as segments from George Potra’s *Țiganii* (*The Gypsies*), in the article “*Artisticul si Pitorescul Țiganilor*” (*The artistic and picturesque of the Gypsies*), published in 1937, in *Glusul*

*Romilor* (Potra 1937:2), in connection to nomadic Gypsies or when referring to what are seen as ‘negative’ traits of leaders of other Roma organisations. This attitude is reflected in the newsletter’s very first issue, in November 1934 (with an article called “Roma brothers!”) which is, de facto, the first manifesto of the Association General Union of the Roma in Romania. According to the article, the stated goal of the programme is to build the “foundations for tomorrow” and its main aim stated to be the “emancipation and re-awakening of all Roma in Romania, on a social, moral, economic and spiritual level” (Lenghescu-Cley 1934:1).

Furthermore, in an article published in June 1938, titled “What we ask for” the issue of terminology is made quite explicit in the demands laid out to public officials (Radu 1938). I quote only one segment of the article below where, among the other demands presented, the issue of labelling is clearly demarcated:

[...] c) in all official documents and teaching books, it should no longer be written ‘*țigan*’, a name which does not belong to us and has a denigrating and mocking meaning, but ‘Roma’ – the true name –, coming from the Sanskrit language which we also speak. (Radu 1938:3)

A gradual shift in the use of Roma instead of *țigan* throughout the 1930s is also noticeable in most of the other Roma publications of the interwar period. For example, in the newspaper *Timpul*, published in Craiova by Manolescu-Dolj, the subtitle of the newspaper gradually changes from, originally, “Independent weekly newspaper” to “The newspaper of Gypsies in Romania” (starting from Issue no 24–25, January 21, 1934), to “The official paper of Roma in Romania” (starting from issue no 41, July 29, 1934). The shift may have also been part of the shift in leadership of AGȚR, with the joining of Lăzurică leading to the change of the use of *țigan* with that of Roma (see Matei 2012, for a lengthy discussion on the issue of labelling in interwar Romania).

The most overarching argument for this transition can be seen in an article titled “Why we call ourselves Roma and not Gypsies” authored by Lăzurică in the newspaper *Timpul* (Lăzurică 1937:1). According to the Roma leader, the word *țigan* does not belong to Roma and is a pejorative name given to them by “Europeans,” meaning “unclean” or “dirty” (ibid.). Roma is said to mean ‘superior man’. The article continues with a statement that Roma know how to choose their own name and compares this situation to Romanians’ preference of being called “Romanians” instead of “Vlachs,” “Munteni,” “Moldavians” or “Bessarabians,” thus emphasising their descent from the Dacians and the Romans. Lăzurică thus grounds the use of the term Roma in both linguistic and historical terms and clearly pleads for a rejection of the use *țigan*.

Finally, an interesting discussion of this debate can be found in the only issue of the newspaper *Foaia Poporului Romesc*, which raises the question of hygiene, attributes of laziness and how the meaning of *țigan* is not necessarily connected to any ethnicity, but to a way of life:

It is known to all of us, who live in the countryside, that the name of Gypsy is given to all those who, whether out of laziness they do not keep their body clean, or because of lack of means they are walking in raggedly dress. This, regardless of the nation in which the person belongs.

In addition to these two cases where someone is given the name Gypsy, there is also a third case: when someone is deprived of a good upbringing and a good common sense, is dealing in lies and all sorts of things that bring them the scorn of all others; these people are still being called Gypsies.

So, we can see from these three examples, what is the meaning of the word 'gypsy', which is given to any man behaving under the above conditions, be it Romanian, Saxon, Hungarian, Rom, etc.[...]

The crisis in which the Roma were placed, and the lack of light and culture, led to a situation in which from within our own nation there were more of those who were dirty and ragged, and engaged in all sorts of lies and actions unworthy of man, and thus the word 'gypsy' was generalized to our entire nation, indeed, without any right. [...]

From the above, it is clear and precise that the word 'gypsy' is only a mockery, for the Gypsy nation does not exist! [...] (Duca 1935:3)

In the above article the author argues for the rejection of the name *țigan* based on the fact that it need not be associated with any particular 'nationality'. It also highlights and discusses issues of bodily cleanliness and hygiene, encouraging readers to adopt the rules and recommendations set out by the author. Thus, while similar in overall theme (namely, the issue of naming), the article is original in its approach and constitutes a somewhat unique example of its kind. As such, given that the newspaper in question was only published in one issue (though, from its content, there was a clear intention to publish subsequent numbers), it offers a particular and distinctive approach to much of the themes adopted by other Roma newspapers in interwar Romania and by other Roma writers of the time.

Through all of these examples, one can see that the issue of labelling of Roma/Gypsy communities during interwar Romania was also a matter of debate among Roma intellectuals of the time. These debates were taking shape and elaborated within the spaces of interwar Roma journalism, which paved the way for not only common threads of argumentation but for clear disagreements as well.

***“We Are Not Ashamed of Being Gypsies; More So Than This,  
We Are Proud”***

Irrespective of the name they chose to use when referring to their communities, Roma writers during the interwar period emphasised the need and importance for Roma/Gypsies to be proud of their belonging to their community. This was reflected both in lengthy manifestos of the various organisations and in several poems and songs that underlined, at the same time, the full belonging of Roma to the Romanian nation, their devotion to King and country (see the section below, on this topic), and the sacrifices Roma have historically made to be full members of the Romanian nation.

One of the clearest examples of this is the “March of the Roma,” published in *Glasul Romilor*, in 1940, and authored by N Lenghescu Cley (Lenghescu-Cley 1940). Below is a transcription of the march, in its English translation:

The time for our emancipation has come  
 And today, Roma are united  
 Under the holy flag of salvation (bis)  
 To which they will forever be bound! (bis)  
 [...]

Under its shield all of our Roma,  
 Bound by a sacred oath,  
 Even before death they will not give up (bis)  
 They will not give up until the grave (bis)

(Lenghescu-Cley 1940:3)

The above poem is both a call to unite under a common banner and a means to emphasise Roma people's devotion to their country of birth and toil. Such manifestations of pride in their Roma belonging, combined with an underlining of belonging to the Romanian nation was to be found in all Roma periodicals during the interwar period.

It was not, however, only poems that reflected such attitudes. Parts of the ‘calls’ or ‘manifestos’ of the organisations were published in these periodicals and, oftentimes, they included an emphasis placed both on the enhancement of one's Roma belonging and in proving the sacrifices Roma people have made for their country of birth. Below is another such example, as reflected in *Glasul Romilor*, in an article titled “What should a Roma do.” Among others, these things are:

1. Not conceal his origin of Roma and not be ashamed of his people.  
 [...]
5. Be a dignified, loyal and good citizen of the country, respecting H.M. the King, the Royal Family, the Laws and the Authorities of this country' (*Glasul Romilor* 1938a:3).

As a synthesis of the requirements laid out for Roma within the article mentioned above, the following are also mentioned: to be proud of one's origin and not hide it; to join the Association and pay its fees; to take part in meetings; to be a “dignified, loyal and behaved” citizen of the country, respecting the King, the Royal Family, the laws and authorities of the country; to give their children to schools; respect their elders, brothers and sisters; go regularly to church; seize living in unmarried partnerships; respect the representatives of the Church and the School, etc. (*ibid.*).

Likewise, the theme of pride (though referred as ‘Gypsy’ pride) is also manifested in the newspaper *Neamul Țigănesc*, alongside a call for uniting Roma/Gypsies under one banner. For example, in the newspaper's first article, titled “To all Gypsies in Transylvania” (Lazăr 1934), Naftanailă Lazăr, lays out the need for Gypsies to rise and speak up concerning

their own fate and needs. According to him: “the first step we have to do in society is not to be ashamed of being *țigani*. Each and every one of us should speak up clearly the proud word *țigan* and emphasise that “we are not ashamed of being Gypsies; more so than this, we are proud” (Lazăr 1934:1; see also section above, on naming).

Taken merely as an illustrative example, and though there is a clear difference between the two newspaper’s approaches (particularly to the issue of labelling), these converge in terms of other key issues they address: namely, the promotion of education of Roma/Gypsy children, the emphasis placed on being ‘honest workers’ of the country and obeying the laws of the state, the settlement of nomadic groups, and the mutual support between wealthier and poorer Roma/Gypsies. As such, both *Glusul Romilor* and *Neamul Țigănesc* (as, in fact, all Roma newspapers during the interwar period), highlighted the need to develop the sense of pride among Roma/Gypsy communities, as a first step towards the process of unification and emancipation.

### *Proving Citizenship and National Belonging*

Alongside emphasising the sacrifices Roma have made for their country, all Roma periodicals during the interwar period seem to point to the importance afforded to King and Country. Furthermore, as discussed in the introduction, their approach was to support the official national policies of the time, primarily those connected to the shaping of a unified Romanian identity and belonging within Greater Romania (cf. Bejan 2019; Korkut 2006; Livezeanu 1995). Below is a short segment of an article from *Glusul Romilor*’s first issue (November 1934), which constitutes one of many such examples. The article is titled “Roma brothers!” (see also Dutan 1938:3).

Roma brothers!

We have always done our duty - to the Land and the King. We have been and will remain royalists and faithful to the Throne, until death.

Of our brethren, no traitor of country has ever been found. We have always been good citizens.

So we deserve a better fate. We also deserve to be heard by those who lead the destinies of our dear country, and to lend their ears also to our rightful wishes. We deserve to be heard and helped. [...] (Lenghescu-Cley 1934:1)

Likewise, this sense of national belonging and the expression of Romanian patriotism, allegiance to the Crown and Country, emphasis placed on respecting national laws, encouragement to become involved in the further education of Roma people can all be seen in a later article, also in *Glusul Romilor* (issue no. 13), authored by V. Dutan and published on June 7, 1939, titled “Our programme and the work of the Association.” Among others, the article stated:

Our programme includes that the Association foster among its members the spirit of order, love for the Dynasty, respect for the laws and the authority of the Christian church, to offer guidance and support to lead a more dignified life, reliant on work; overcome illiteracy,

guiding Roma children to school; organise meetings and educational conferences; create or encourage works of social support, which would come to the aid of poor Roma and new mothers; intervene for the settlement of Roma; help get rid of cohabitation; guide its members by instilling in them a religious spirit, etc. (Dutan 1939:2)

These two excerpts highlight the intention of Roma leaders for Roma to be seen as full and contributing members of the Romanian state, and in full agreement with the policies of the Romanian state to create a unified Romanian identity, foster loyalty to the fatherland and create loyal subjects of the country (cf. Korkut 2006; Livezeanu 1995; Matei 2020). In addition to this, the focus on literacy and the settlement of nomadic groups were often emphasised within the newspaper's articles as, in fact, within all Roma periodicals during the interwar period (see, for instance, Tache 1940), which was also a policy of the Romanian state at the time (Achim 1998:152–53). Yet, the most poignant was the desire to present Roma as supporters of the current political regime, thus once again emphasising the loyalty that Roma were argued to have towards the aims and goals of the central government of shaping a homogeneous Romanian identity.

As such, in addition to emphasising the patriotic zeal of Roma in the country, and their devotion to both King and Country, many of the articles in *Glusul Romilor*, for example, highlight their commitment to present political leaderships and the constitutional changes of 1938. See, for instance, the articles “Roma and the Constitution” and “The new Constitution” in *Glusul Romilor* (1938b, 1938c), issued in June, 1938. Through this, a common feature of the Roma newspapers was also their connection with the broader project of constructing a unified nation in the aftermath of the First World War and proving allegiance to the country's leadership.

### *“Not a Minority”*

As mentioned above, a common theme within the Roma newspapers was also a seeming desire of the leaders of Roma organisations to highlight the status of Roma as fully embedded members and citizens of the Romanian state, often through the argument of being fully assimilated within the Romanian element, as being loyal citizens to the state (see above) and as not posing a threat of sectarianism or minority politics. The desire to not be seen as a minority was manifested across most of the newspapers of the time. This is primarily in the context in which Roma leaders were trying to distance themselves from other minority groups (such as the Jews, the Bulgarians and the Hungarians) which could represent a threat to the overarching aims of creating a unified Romanian state. An illustrative example of this is an article from the second issue of *Neamul Țigănesc*, from September 8, 1934, titled “Who are we and what do we want” (*Neamul Țigănesc* 1934a:2).

The article broadly states the aims of the organisation. It also argues that its goal has been to organise together, much like the Jewish nation, the approximately “1 million Roma people living on Romanian lands” (*ibid.*). It should be emphasised that this number (one million) is not founded on demographic data (the official numbers being

approximately 262,000) but, rather, it is used rhetorically by the author to strengthen his argumentation. What is important here is that the article highlights that the organisation is not and will not be a political party, neither a minority group, emphasising in particular that there will be no political manoeuvre coming from their midst, nor will they act as electoral puppets.

This interplay and comparison made with the Jewish population in Romania, as well as with other minority groups (such as Hungarians or Bulgarians) was both poignant and recurrent, not only in *Neamul Țigănesc*, but in the other Roma newspapers as well. The desire to organise themselves in groups and associations was stated to be on the grounds of a constant struggle throughout history and was made discursively distinctive to that of Jewish organisations on several accounts: 1) they presented themselves as fully assimilated within what they called the Romanian 'element'; 2) they emphasised the Christian faith to which they adhered; 3) they highlighted the loyalty they offered to King and Country and 4) they promoted a discourse of equal citizenship for Roma as for majority Romanians on the grounds of common sacrifices made for their common land.

Thus, the avoidance and rejection of the term 'minority' was a form of affiliation to state policies and politics, rather than detachment from it, and a means to avoid the potential threat of being seen as problematic communities, as creating dissent or as posing any sort of challenge to the national order of the day. Below are, for example, some segments from an article signed by Gh. Niculescu, in *Glusul Romilor* (published in April 1941, in the newspaper's final issue), and titled "Racism and the Roma."

[...] they [Roma] do not present, we believe, any danger for the security and sovereignty of the Romanian people.

In duty towards the laws of the country they have always been side by side with their Romanian brothers, and there have also been cases when they have not been taken aback from protecting their land, proving their bravery and courage in the wars that the Romanian people have had with those that tried to take over our country's land. Roma have not been deserters, traitors, nor spies and wherever they have been placed they have done their job, and they have worked without complaint. (Niculescu 1941:3)

The excerpt above is both striking and illuminating, as it points to the clear desire of Roma leaders not to be perceived as potential separatist organisers and, in that sense, a threat to the political order, in times of a clearly volatile political climate. In this context, it is also interesting that, though all organisations presented themselves as being apolitical (in other words, politics were not said to be on their agenda and they would not be involved in electoral processes), most newspapers reflect a particular party-orientation of their organisations, or support for specific parties in the run up to national and local elections.

This, however, need not have always been the same party and allegiances appear to have changed over time. For example, the newspaper *Timpul* initially published several articles in support of the National Liberal Party (*Partidul Național Liberal*, or PNL, which

dominated the political life of the country until the Second World War and contributed to the shaping of the ideological and institutional development of Greater Romania), and against the National Peasant Party (*Partidul Național Țărănist*, or PNT) (Timpul 1933b:1; Nesti 1934:1). Later, it developed a more welcoming attitude and closer connection to the National Christian Party, particularly given its leader's (i.e. Octavian Goga's) support of the Association led by then by Șerboianu and Lăzurică. The front page of *Timpul*, issue number 67–68, from October 20, 1937, shows the photographs of the leaders of the National Christian Party and vows that Roma would only vote with the latter. Likewise, Lăzurică and Șerboianu were allying themselves with Octavian Goga and the National Christian Party. One can see this manifestation in the article titled “Romania for Romanians,” from *Țara Noastră* (Issue 3, July 25, 1937) in which the author C. Mirmilo both downplays the status of ‘minority’ of Roma and emphasises the ‘Romanian-ness’ of Roma in Romania (Mirmilo 1937). It also presents a statement of solidarity in which Roma are urged to vote with the National Christian Party.

Remember what I say to you as a prophet: He who is not with Octavian Goga and the Christian National Party, that Roma is the enemy of the Romanian country and nation; he is the black Jew and he will have no other fate than the fate of the Jew, eternally wandering and persecuted by the latter man! (Mirmilo 1937:1)

It is also worth mentioning that a clear anti-Jewish position is made throughout the articles of *Țara Noastră*. C. I. Popp Șerboianu and G.A. Lăzurică seem to focus on a detachment and distinction between Roma and the Jewish minority (see also Matei 2010b, 2020). One must, however, be careful to underline the fact that these manifestations of an apparent Romanian nationalism (i.e.: see the slogan “Romania for Romanians”), surprising as they may seem from a present-day perspective, need to be contextualised within the climate of the time, wherein being seen as a minority could pose a potential (and physical) threat in terms of support from the state and the church. As such, the ‘non-minority’ approach evident within Roma newspapers during the interwar period, as well as the desire to create a distinction between Roma and other ‘problematic’ minority groups, can only be understood in relation to the claims for equal citizenship laid out by Roma leaders. In other words, Roma leaders, in their writings, wanted most of all to emphasise that Roma were loyal and equal citizens of Romania, also by demonstrating that they supported the political and public discourse of the country which, in this case, had a strong anti-Jewish undertone. The struggle to build up the Roma movement thus could only take place under the circumstances of the general climate of the day.

### *Faith, Roma and the Orthodox Church*

The Orthodox Church in Romania, especially during the interwar period, was obviously a firm supporter of the idea of shaping Greater Romania. After the unification of Romanian territories, in 1919, the Orthodox Church was seen by the political regime of the time as

a crucial symbol not only of Romanian unity but of Romanian identity and belonging (Leustean 2009:39) and thus became part of the process of strengthening and constructing this identity. For instance, the Patriarch Miron Cristea (in effect, the leader of the Orthodox Church at the time) oftentimes combined in his public discourse ideas of patriotic duty with the traditional moral values of the Orthodox Church and equated the practice of faith with the obedience of state authorities. In other words, as its public 'face', Miron Cristea emphasised the political role of the Orthodox Church in shaping and unifying the newly enlarged Romanian state (Leustean 2009:41). In this context, it is not surprising the Roma movement modelled itself and became closely connected to the important role played by the Orthodox Church in the shaping of Romanian identity.

An interesting aspect, particularly salient within the content of *Glăsuț Romilor*, is thus the close relationship Niculescu's AUGRR seems to have established with leaders of the Orthodox church. Many articles point to the 'missionary' purposes of the organisation, alongside the active involvement of Roma leaders in officialising marriages among live-in Roma couples, baptising children and encouraging them to go to (the Orthodox) Church. This relationship may have also contoured Lăzurică's initial connection to the Union and the initial split from Șerboianu (formerly an Orthodox priest who seemed to have moved away from the Orthodox church). In fact, so much so that Lăzurică's split from Șerboianu was even put down to the accusation laid towards Șerboianu of trying to convert Roma to the Greek-Catholic church (see Matei, 2010a).

That said, the Orthodox Church seems to have played its greatest role in the success of the Union led by Niculescu, and contributed to several events organised by the Union, alongside practices of marrying couples and baptising children. Thus, while the broad theme of 'Christianity' was predominant in all newspapers during the interwar period, encouraging its readers to follow through within the spirit of the Church, it seems that it was the Orthodox Church that aided Niculescu's union most and, potentially, also contributed to its larger success in most regions of the country.

This may have been a more complex issue within the region of Transylvania, where the authority of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church (or the Romanian Church United with Rome, Greek-Catholic, *Biserica Română Unită cu Roma, Greco-Catolică*) may have been greater and where many Hungarian Roma still belonged to the latter. Here, the push for conversion to the Orthodox Church could potentially have contributed to the somewhat tentional relationship of the Transylvanian organisation, the Neo-Rustic Brotherhood, with the Association General Union of Roma in Romania (AUGRR, led by Niculescu), as well as to Naftanailă Lazăr's seemingly closer affiliation to the General Association of Roma in Romania (led by Lăzureanu Lăzurică and Popp Șerboianu). The following quote, for example, comes from an article published in *Neamul Țigănesc* (Issue no 3, April 1935), titled "Priests and our movement" (*Preoții și mișcarea noastră*) (N. Lazăr 1935:3), which thus emphasises the close connection of Roma with both the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic Church but also, more importantly, to Christianity as a broader concept.

The movement for emancipation among Roma has started within the old Church and law, because Roma are, before anything else, Christians and it is within the bosom of the Church that they have always found the comfort for their soul, which has been mocked by all. (N. Lazăr 1935:3)

Yet, while the emphasis placed on Roma's devotion to Christianity was promoted in all Roma newspapers, thus distinguishing them from other minorities (such as the Jews), and while both *Neamul Țigănesc* and other Roma newspapers (such as *Țara Noastră*) seemed to welcome the connection of Roma to both major church institutions of the time, *Glasul Romilor* seemed to promote a stronger view of the role of the Orthodox church and Roma people's duty to abide by it. At the same time, and despite the seeming differences in nuances within these different newspapers, the authority of the Orthodox church was, overall, unchallenged. In other words, Roma leaders seemed to acknowledge the Orthodox Church's somewhat undisputed role in shaping the very meaning of Romanian identity and belonging. Emphasising Roma as loyal servants of the King and the fatherland thus also implied a loyal duty and obedience of the Church.

#### *Female Roma Writers in the Roma Periodicals*

An interesting aspect within the articles of Roma periodicals is the existence of some Roma women's voices. This comes closely connected with the fact that, for instance, the Union's General statute itself, under article 3, seemed to have a dedicated section for the Roma women.

Article 3. The Union can set up a section for women for the education and support of Roma women, which will be led separately. (Nastasă and Varga 2001:118)

Likewise, the entries and articles written by Roma women, often members of these organisations or the wives of the Roma male leaders, constitute important examples of Roma women's writings from the era. Below are, for instance, segments from the article written by Elena Dănicel in the newspaper *Țara Noastră*, in 1937:

My dearest sisters,

A woman from your own people writes to you, one of the few Roma women, who was able to learn school and become a teacher. In the struggle that our apostles Archimandrite Șerboianu and the literate G. Lăzurică started for the uplifting of the Roma people, I also join. For this reason, I write to you the following lines: Encourage your spouses to take part in the new, unique and beautiful movement that aims to advance Roma in the social life of the Romanian state. This is a historical moment. You, who share the tribulations and joys with your husbands, working alongside them in coping with the difficulties of life, are best able to encourage them to do good. Your children will rejoice for this in the future.

[...]

With good wishes,

ELENA DĂNICEL (Dănicel 1937:1)

The above article is an interesting example of how women's role in the Roma organisations of the time were being reflected in Roma periodicals. Here, what we can see is a call to solidarity among Roma but, most of all, a call to being faithful to the General Association of Roma in Romania, led by Şerboianu and Lăzurică. In other words, it is not just an emphasis placed on coming together as Roma women in support of the Roma movement but, rather, in support of this particular facet of the movement. As such, the author clearly states that "only Archimandrite Şerboianu and Lăzurică are able to show us the right way." (ibid.) Furthermore, it is interesting to note in the same article the reference made here to the Indian ancestry of Roma in Romania, closely connected to Lăzurică's other articles on the topic. And yet, the most important aspect in this article is the emphasis placed on women's role in support of the movement: as wives and as mothers, having the duty to encourage their husbands and sons to show solidarity to the two leaders of the Roma movement.

Another similar article, almost in the same genre, is the one published a year later in the newspaper *Timpul*, and authored by Marta Lăzurică, G. Lăzurică's wife. Below are selected segments from the translation of the aforementioned entry, which highlight some of the key themes dominating this discourse:

My dearest sisters,

It is the wife of Lăzurică writing to you, his life companion, in struggles and troubles, who has followed him with diligence and dedication in all his activity as fighter for the uplifting of our Roma.

[...]

I make an appeal to you, my Roma sisters, to urge your husbands, your sons and your daughters to support my husband, to prove that the Roma are not a people who lack solidarity, discipline and devotion. I will always come within your midst, whenever and wherever you are, to meet you, to listen to you and to embrace you. In my role as secretary of the female sections, next to the Central Committee in Bucharest, I will be the one who will resolve your letters, your complaints, responding without delay.

With sisterly love and joyful wishes!

Marta G. Lăzurică (Lăzurică 1938:2)

As one can clearly see, this article, similarly to the one authored by Dănicel, is written in the form of a letter to Roma women, whom the author pleads that they encourage their husbands, sons and daughters to support G.A. Lăzurică and to "show that Roma are not people that lacks solidarity, discipline and devotion" (ibid.).

It is worth noting that, among other things, Marta Lăzurică was not only G.A. Lăzurică's wife but also the secretary of the female section within the Central Committee (in Bucharest) of the General Association of Roma in Romania (UGRR, more specifically) and, thus, unsurprisingly, the focus is on highlighting the sacrifices that her husband, G.A. Lăzurică, had made for the cause of the Roma, while also encouraging women to play their part in their encouragements of others to join the movement.

At the same time, the article is interesting from a different point of view: it highlights the sacrifices that were expected of women in respect to both their families and the greater cause for Roma mobilisation: namely, to not only work within the movement itself, but continue to be good, hard-working and self-sacrificing women within their respective households. On top of this, the religious, Christian dimension is clearly emphasised in the longer article. While these are only two examples of the presence (and involvement) of Roma women within the Roma emancipation movement in interwar Romania, their publication within two Roma periodicals of the time highlight their role not only as passive recipients of the movement itself but as active contributors (in both writing and action) to the shaping of the latter.

#### 4.4 The O Rom Library

Having thus far analysed the key forms of Roma publications in interwar Romania, namely Roma periodicals, this section will focus specifically on the collection and publication of Roma folklore, collected and presented by Roma in Romania during the interwar period. A key aspect within this project has been the incentive of collecting and institutionalising the literary heritage of the Roma, on the base of a common Roma identity. This ties in both with the attempts to foster literacy among the Roma in Romanian and with attempts to showcase the cultural richness of the community, including Roma organisations' goals of establishing a Roma university, a Roma cultural centre, a Roma athenaeum etc., oftentimes mentioned within their manifestos and programmes. Furthermore, these attempts to institutionalise Roma folklore and promote the cultural heritage of the Roma in the country were embedded within the broader process of the national emancipation of the community, as part of the Romanian nation, as well as the broader processes of literalisation. Through this, the various pieces of Roma folklore produced and shared during this period, which were published both in Roma newspapers and in special books and individual publications, became an intrinsic part of interwar Romani literature more broadly.

Within this context, a key focus will be placed on the development and shaping of the O Rom library at the initiative of C. S. Nicolăescu Ploșor. The latter is most clearly connected to the Association of Gypsies in Oltenia, led by Marin Simion, but the library itself was put into actual practice by Ploșor. The importance of the Craiova circle of the Roma movement in Romania should not be understated. The latter not only published the newspaper *Timpul* and *O Rom*, mentioned above but also envisioned setting up several cultural projects, including the development of the O Rom library for whom the administrator would be Marian Simion (a Roma and the president of the General Association of Gypsies in Oltenia) and the editor of the library would be C. S. Nicolăescu Ploșor. As such, it developed both synchronically with the central Roma organisations, while also shaping its own regional focus.

The initiative to establish a Roma library was connected to further other incentives of the key Roma organisations during the interwar period in Romania. While the idea was to publish a series of books connected to the topic, only two have been located so far: *Gypsy Songs (Ghilea romane/Cântece țigănești)* and *Gypsy Stories (Paramisea romane/Povești țigănești)*, both edited by Plopșor (Nicolăescu-Plopșor 1934a, 1934b). They were both published in Craiova, in 1934, under the subtitle “Book for the Gypsy Language and Teaching, Issued by the ‘Association of Gypsies in Oltenia’” (*Carte pentru limba și învățătura țigănească scoasă de Asociația Tiganilor din Oltenia*). Both the songs and the stories had been collected from Ursari Gypsies in Gaubauceza-Dolj (a county in southern Romania, Oltenia), and written down by Plopșor himself (Nicolăescu-Plopșor 1934b:30, 1934a:32).

In addition to this, it is worth mentioning that several of the songs and stories in the two books also featured in other regional folklore publications. Again, C. S. Nicolăescu Plopșor is a key figure here. He published several poems/songs/folklore pieces in regional ethnology/history journals (such as *Suflet oltenesc*, Romanian soul and *Oltenia*, Oltenia). These publications contain both poems and songs that Plopșor would later include in the two books from the O Rom library, and more broad pieces from Romanian folklore, often from the region of Oltenia (Nicolăescu-Plopșor 1923, 1927). These materials are useful and necessary as they point to the broader impact and influence of scholars engaged in the Roma movement in Romania during the interwar period.

While the O Rom library never fully materialised, there had been calls spread in the newspaper *O Rom*, asking readers to send in both tangible and intangible materials related to the culture of the Roma. It is uncertain if or how many of such materials had in fact been sent to the O Rom library. However, friends and relatives of Plopșor recounted to me of the many boxes of letters and papers that the latter had collected in his private residence in Plenița. After the start of the Second World War, however, Plopșor’s attention had moved in other directions, being appointed as the Director of the Museum of Oltenia. While his interest in Roma may have been maintained throughout this period, there remain few other materials in the Plopșor fund at the National Archive concerning the O Rom library. That said, one additional poem on/about Roma was discovered in the Craiova section of the National Archives, which reveals once again the broad ranging focus of the Roma emancipation movement itself. The poem will be discussed in a separate section below.

#### 4.5 Literature by Roma Authors in Non-Roma Periodicals and Journals

Connected with the argument made above, concerning the broader reach of scholars from within the Roma movement in Romania, one final important aspect of the newspaper publications written by Roma intellectuals is that they have reached beyond the Roma periodicals themselves. While this was by no means the norm, authors such as

G.A. Lăzureanu Lăzurică published pieces connected to Roma history/literature in some key mainstream Romanian publications, such as *Adevărul Literar și Artistic* (The Literary Truth, 1933, București), *Ziarul Universul* (The Universe Newspaper, 1933, 1937, București) and *Dimineața* (Morning, 1933, București). Incorporating these within the discussion on Romani literature is crucial in highlighting the reach of Roma authors beyond the Roma circle itself. It should also be noted that the types of articles published by Roma authors within mainstream publications appeared to generally focus on the history of the Roma community in the country or on the literary works that had to deal with Roma/Gypsies at the time. Their messages aimed to convey the contribution of Roma/Gypsies to the country while also introducing the general readership to key cultural characteristics of the Romanian Roma community. In that sense, as compared to the topics showcased within Roma newspapers, the articles written by Roma authors within mainstream Romanian newspapers were often general and, at times, exaggerating certain aspects to support their arguments (for instance, the number of Roma in Romania).

An interesting example, in more ways than one, is, Lăzurică's review of Șerboianu's book, *Les Tziganes* [The Gypsies] (Popp Șerboianu 1930). Briefly put, Șerboianu had written a book on the history of Roma, their language and grammar, which was published in French by a Parisian publishing house. The book had made its way among the Romanian readership, but received little to no attention from scholarly reviewers, which Lăzurică also notes in his own review. Because of its importance, below are segments from Lăzurică's full-length article, published in *Adevărul Literar și Artistic*, in 1933.

As a Gypsy, I read this work about which the foreign press unanimously spoke apologetically. Apart from the newspaper "Dimineața", which in the issue of December 11, 1929 expressed interest in the work of Archimandrite Calinic Șerboianu, the Romanian press did not pay any attention to it.

[...]

His Holiness, Archimandrite Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu, a sympathiser of Gypsies, with a perfect knowledge of the Gypsy language, history and customs, believed that by approaching me he would get new sources of Gypsy riddles, poems and songs. I confess that I could not help him too much, because our Gypsy minority assimilated so much into the native population that it is about to lose its language and customs.

[...]

As a Gypsy, I am grateful to his holiness Archimandrite Calinic Șerboianu for his interest in the Gypsies of Europe and for the occasion he gave me to discuss with him for two hours in High Gypsy language.

It is a pity that the [Romanian] publishing houses to which he addressed did not agree to publish the "Les Tziganes" in Romanian, for I am sure the volume would sell and enrich the Romanian literature with a very interesting work.

G. A. Lăzurică (Lăzurică 1933b:8)

In fact, the above article is the second one published by G.A. Lăzurică in *Adevărul Literar și Artistic*. He had also published an article titled "From the life of the Gypsies." (Lăzurică 1933a), in which he introduces himself as a Gypsy. Interesting is that, here (and at this

point), he introduced himself as *țigan*, rather than Roma, which highlights that his views on labelling only changed subsequently, or that he was presenting himself as Gypsy within mainstream newspapers but Roma within Roma newspapers (Lăzurică 1933a:3).

Nevertheless, the article above constitutes an important piece of writing not only because it showcases the broader reach of Roma authors during the interwar period (as *Adevărul Literar și Artistic* was a popular mainstream cultural newspaper of the time) but it highlights how the two initiators of the Roma movement met. The piece also contains initial hints at the later conflict that would arise between Șerboianu and Lăzurică, primarily regarding the number of Gypsies stated to live in Romania at the time. As mentioned above, interesting is also the fact that, here, Lăzurică had not yet adopted the clear and unequivocal stance concerning the terminological shift in the naming of his community. In fact, he uses exclusively the term Gypsies. This showcases the timeline of shifts not only in terms of the relationship between Roma leaders during the interwar period but also of their own position concerning issues that would become pivotal in the public debate (and, sometimes, conflict) between them. Finally, the article highlights the fact that Șerboianu's book did not seem to have been received positively within the academic community in Romania (having only been published in French) and was not published or translated by any Romanian publishing house.

The article is thus important and illustrative in several ways: 1) the wider reach of Roma authors (beyond the Roma periodicals themselves) within the mainstream media; 2) the hints towards the beginnings of the relationship between two key leaders of the Roma movement in Romania; 3) the ways in which the publication of Șerboianu's book on Gypsies had received less interest in the country than it had done abroad. In fact, there was also a rather negative review published by the famous Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga, in *Revista Istorică* (The Historical Journal), which criticises Șerboianu's book for its focus on folklore and its neglect of historical sources (Iorga 1934:68–69).

#### 4.6 Roma Poems as Manifestos

As mentioned above, when discussing the issue of Roma/Gypsies taking pride in their own belonging, Roma periodicals during the interwar period often featured poems/songs/marches written by Roma authors and highlighting a sense of Roma solidarity/unity. These are nevertheless a useful analytical and historical source since they present the visions of unity within a lyrical form, which aims to encourage Roma readers to join forces within the movement developed during the interwar period.

A clear example of this is the “March of the Roma”, presented above and published in *Glasul Romilor*, which can be seen as an interwar hymn of/for the Roma (Lenghescu-Cley 1940). However, in addition to this, calls to Roma unity were a theme among most of the other poems/songs presented within Roma periodicals. As an example of this, the poem below, written by V. Dutan and titled “To the Roma” is written as a call for action and a

manifestation of Roma love and sacrifice for their country. Through this, it illustrates the two main issues that Roma leaders during the interwar period often emphasised in their public discourse: 1) the loyalty Roma have to their nation-state; 2) the need for Roma to unite under a common brotherly banner

To the Roma

1. Roma brothers from our beloved Romania,  
We have lived on this land for thousands of years,  
And we have done our sublime duty  
Defending our home from its enemies  
[...]

4. In Great Romania, the beautiful one  
Today we have all the rights  
Being assimilated in masses  
Among a people with whom we are brothers

5. Although we have all the same rights  
We were not paid attention to  
Being laughed at in the past  
Mocked and disdained

6. And to make this state right  
Our union has been established  
Having a programme of growth  
Emancipation and reputation  
[...] (Dutan 1938:3)

Furthermore, the above poem, beyond focusing on Roma themes of unity and solidarity, emphasised the loyalty that Roma should have to Greater Romania, highlighting the fact that Roma have the same rights as other citizens of the country, wherein the concept of “assimilation”, as presented within the texts, was linked to positive connotations of embeddedness and full belonging to the nation, and metaphors of “brotherhood” went beyond the focus on Roma belonging (namely, Roma are brothers and sisters with fellow Romanians). At the same time, the poem is illustrative in another sense: in the ways in which it plays with the idea of equality under law in its contrast with actual realities. Thus, the author highlights the disdain that Roma continued to suffer within their country and the ways in which the message of emancipation could be a pathway to rid of the struggles facing members of this community. Through this, the poem is at once a plea for solidarity, an advertisement of the AUGRR and a means to showcase the embeddedness (i.e. assimilation) of Roma within Greater Romania. It thus acts not only as a form of literary production but as a political act in and of itself.

In addition to examples such as the one above, many of which were published in *Glusul Romilor*, some additional unpublished poems are worth mentioning. One of them was found in the C. S. Nicolăescu Ploșor fund of the National Archive in Craiova.

Its authorship is unknown, but its collector was most probably Plopşor himself, who had made annotations on the side of the document. Below is a full translation (from Romani language, translation courtesy of Viktor Shapoval) of the poem “Ghilabos ă Rom G<h>ilabos!” (Let’s sing Roma, let’s sing!):

Let’s sing Roma! Let’s sing!  
 Let us sing  
 The good word  
 The word shown wise  
 The word where the sun rises from  
 Where the good comes from  
 From the uprising of all  
 From the living of people  
 The uprising  
 The living  
 Of the poor  
 The poorest of the poor  
 The Roma of work

[...]

Let’s sing Roma! Let’s sing!  
 Let us sing  
 The great word  
 The white word  
 The word of Stalin  
 As Stalin lifted the burden  
 From our shoulders  
 Took sobbing far  
 From us  
 And wiped off  
 The tears from our eyes

[...]

Sing Roma! Do sing!  
 About our suffering sing  
 About our deprived  
 Musicians  
  
 About our stolen days  
 About all stolen days  
 From all people  
 Of work at latitude  
 At longitude  
 Of the Earth  
 Let’s sing Roma! Let’s sing!  
 Let us sing.

(AN Dolj, F. C. S. Nicolăescu-Plopşor, dos. 146/48)

The above poem, though undated, is illustrative of the call for Roma to come together in song and unity. Written in Romani language, with unknown authorship (potentially even Ploşor himself), and making references to Stalin as the person to lift the burden of the Roma, the poem is also an important example of the ways in which the Roma issues and the Roma struggles were being connected to broader geopolitics of the time, wherein political leaders were seen as the ones who could address the sorrow and struggles of the Roma community. This is an important aspect of the Roma movement in Romania during the interwar period (and, as we can see, the Roma movement in other countries as well), wherein Roma leaders themselves needed and asked for the support of state institutions and state officials. In other words, none of them were working in a social-political vacuum and the social and political context of the day vastly influenced their work and directions. While not unique, the two poems presented above are illustrative of this embeddedness and contextualisation.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

Romania's Roma movement during the interwar period was one of the most active in the countries of Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe. It led to the formation and development of several Roma organisations, the establishment of clear manifestos and demands on behalf of the Roma leaders of the time and the shaping of a Roma intellectual elite. At the same time, it led to the creation and development of Romani literature, in its myriad forms. Firstly, one can attest to the shaping of interwar Roma journalism in the country. While certainly not unique, as the case of Yugoslavia shows, this form of Roma journalism during the interwar period in Romania was perhaps the most active in the region. As such, six known Roma periodicals were published between 1934 and 1941, some of which had a substantial number of issues (for example, *Timpul*, with 70 issues, and *Glasul Romilor*, with 12).

Furthermore, while all distinctive in their own right, and while often showcasing the particular demands of the organisation they were affiliated with (and, connectively, emphasising the legitimacy of their leader), all these publications share in common a clear programme of social emancipation for the Roma in the country, including cultural projects (such as the establishment of a Roma "library," a Roma "university," a Roma "cultural house," etc.) and social projects (such as the organisation of Roma "cooperatives," Roma "canteens," mutual aid programmes, etc.). Moreover, despite declaring themselves 'apolitical' they all undoubtedly had political goals and agendas, wherein often the newspaper content would advocate one political party of another (such as the example of *Timpul* and *Țara Noastră* have clearly shown). Thus, the aim of introducing the Roma newspapers and the aim of analysing the broad themes present within the Roma periodicals of the interwar era was to emphasise all these dynamics and struggles occurring within the Roma movement of the time, as presented and detailed in specific

publications of this sort. Finally, the regional and central aims of Roma organisations become clearer when comparatively analysing the content of Roma periodicals.

In short, Roma periodicals from interwar Romania represent a specific and important type of Romani literature of the time. They showcase not only the views and demands of the Roma intellectual elite, the shape and complexities of the Roma emancipation movement, the specific regional struggles of the Roma communities, but emphasise the development of Roma journalism itself which, after the beginning of the Second World War, seems to have disappeared. As such, the Roma newspapers from the interwar period remain crucial historical, social and political sources, oftentimes highlighting the historical rooting of key debates within the sphere of Roma activism today (such as the issue of community labelling, 'pride' and the focus on education).

Secondly, this chapter has also sought to highlight the ways in which Roma authors (and authors affiliated with the Roma movement) have contributed to the development of other literary and disciplinary fields, beyond the exclusive 'Roma-theme'. For example, G.A. Lăzurică (who published in mainstream newspapers), C.I. Popp Șerboianu (who also published vastly on the theme of cremation) and Nicolăescu Ploșor (who would go on to become a leading historian in the country), all pinpoint to the reach, influence and contribution of these individuals to other fields and other readership, therefore highlighting also the entanglement of Romani literature as part of Romanian literature in the country. In this context, and especially given the focus Roma authors have placed on Roma as equal citizens of the country, loyal to the Crown and the state, the development of Romani literature highlights also their full alliance with the shaping of national identity within Greater Romania, and the rejection of the label of 'minority'. In other words, rather than opposing the national ideal, Roma authors (and, by extension, Romani literature) during this period underlined the contribution of Roma to Romanian literature.

Thirdly, this chapter has explored the attempts of one section of the Roma movement (more specifically, the Oltenia circle of AGȚR) to develop a Roma library, by collecting and publishing Roma folklore. While its outcome did not develop as planned, there remain several substantial sources pointing to this incentive, including two monographs on Roma songs and stories, as well as works published within regional folklore collections (*Suflet oltenesc*, *Oltenia*, etc.). These pieces of Roma folklore thus show the ways in which the Roma interwar period movement was not only politically but also culturally driven, aiming to create (or, better said, collect) a repertoire which would become representative of Roma folklore in the country. In other words, this was also a project for the institutionalisation of the oral and written heritage of the Roma, an additional symbol for reaching the status of a modernised community, with a rich cultural heritage and, thus, equal to all others. At the same time, the shaping of this project did not go against the emphasis placed on Romanian national belonging but with it. In other words, Roma intellectuals of the time underlined, through their writings, the entanglement of these two layers of belonging and identity among Roma: an ethnic and a civic one: namely, Roma as an integral part of the nation-state (i.e. citizens of Romania) and an ethnic

community (cf. Marushiakova and Popov 2017b:11–12, 2017a:50). Looked at in-depth, the messages conveyed within the forms of Romani literature discussed above clearly highlight an expression of both identities.

Finally, the discussion of particular themes present within the pieces of writing that we have from this period of time, such as Roma poems and hymns, which emphasise both a call for solidarity among Roma and the national belonging of this community, or the activity of Roma women within the Roma movement, further illuminate the multifaceted ways in which the demands, ideals and goals (as well as the vision for the future of the community) were put into writing by Roma authors. Therefore, all of the aforementioned materials, in different forms, constitute crucial, valuable and important source materials and examples of the ways in which the Roma interwar movement in Romania created the space and opportunities for different forms of Romani literature(s) to emerge and develop. Interwar Romania was the period when some of the most important works of this sort were put into existence: including the development of Roma journalism, in the shape of Roma-led and Roma-focused newspapers, of a Roma folklore collection and of Roma-themed poems and poetry. These activities were silenced with the start of the Second World War. While new fields of literary production and journalism have emerged in the decades after 1990, interwar Roma mobilisation seems to have been, and continues to remain, the most productive platform for the development of Romani literature in the country.

# Hungary

*Tamás Hajnáczy*

## 5.1 Introduction

This study aims to present the role of Gypsy musician journals as part of the Gypsy civic emancipation efforts. After introducing the general situation of the Gypsies in Hungary and the presentation of the literature on the Gypsies, I turn to the journals of the Gypsy musicians. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was established in 1867 through the so-called “Austro-Hungarian Compromise,” and was composed of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Austrian Empire. During almost all of its existence, the throne was occupied by Franz Joseph I of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine. From 1867 until his death in 1916, the monarch held both the Austrian imperial and the Hungarian royal titles. The two countries were related not only by the person of the ruler but by the ministers of war, foreign affairs and finance and their respective ministries. These areas had the designated “imperial and royal” ministers, of whom Hungarians were always appointed either foreign or finance ministers (Romsics 2005:17–18).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the house of Habsburg-Lorraine played an important role in Gypsy studies. Archduke Joseph Carl, of the palatine branch of the imperial family, the premier branch residing in Hungary, was a key figure in furthering research on Gypsies. The imperial and royal archduke, who had served as commander-in-chief of the Royal Hungarian Army for many decades, worked extensively in organising and patronising the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, as a board member and later as an honorary member. One of the most prominent areas of his interest was studying and exploring the linguistic and cultural relations of the Gypsy population of the monarchy (Soós 2000:6–8).

The journal *Ethnologische Mitteilungen aus Ungarn* (Ethnologic Notice from Hungary) was published between 1887 and 1907, under his patronage, and included the separate issues entitled *Mitteilungen zur Zigeunerkunde* (Notices about the lore of Gypsies). He tried to resettle wandering Gypsies on his estate in Alcsút and set up a school for their children, but his initiative eventually failed. He corresponded regularly with the leaders of the Gypsy Lore Society, supporting their journal not only financially but also by authoring articles (Landauer 2004:22–23; Soós 2000:6–12). The financial support of the Archduke made the publication of the following Hungarian-Gypsy dictionaries possible: in 1885, Endre Győrffy’s *Magyar és cigány szótár – Czigányúl mondva vakeriben* (Dictionary of Hungarian – Gypsy Dictionary. To say in Gypsy [language] vakeriben) and in 1886, Ferenc Sztojka Nagyidai of Gypsy descent himself, published *Ő császári és magyar királyi*

*fensége József főherceg magyar- és cigány-nyelv gyök-szótára – Románé áláva. Iskolai és utazási használatra* (Dictionary of the word stems of the Gypsy and Hungarian languages by His Imperial Highness, the Archduke Joseph). Furthermore, in 1888, Joseph Carl published his book *Czigán nyelvtan* (Gypsy grammar, in Hungarian) – *Románo csibákero sziklaribe* (Romani language textbook, in Romani), in which he tried to analyse the Gypsy dialects of Hungary (Gyórfy 2011; Landauer 2004:6–12). The imperial and royal archduke maintained close professional relations with Gypsy researchers of the given period; especially with Antal Herrmann and Henrik Wislocki, both from Transylvania, and both members of the Gypsy Lore Society and very prolific authors.

The most emblematic work of Antal Herrmann can be considered the analysis and editing of data from the 1893 nation-wide survey of the Gypsies by the National Royal Hungarian Statistics Office. The ethnographer summed up the figures in about one hundred and fifty pages, which he published under the title *A Magyarországon 1893. január 31-én végrehajtott Czigányösszeírás eredményei* (The results of the census of Gypsies carried out in Hungary on January 31, 1893) in 1895, and the volume of the *Magyar Statisztikai Közlemények* (Hungarian Statistical Bulletin) (Herrmann 1895), published as a bilingual edition, in Hungarian and German languages. The census provided extremely detailed data on the Gypsy population of Hungary at the turn of the century. The study was mainly inspired by the “issue of settlement for wandering Gypsies,” however, the entire Gypsy population was censused (Herrmann 1895:1). At the time of the survey, there were 274,940 Gypsies in the country, ninety percent of whom were classified as “permanently settled,” seven percent “long-term residents” and three percent as “nomadic Gypsies” (Herrmann 1895:1). The study also included data on the linguistic affiliation of the Gypsies, which revealed that almost forty percent of the Gypsies were native Hungarian speakers. Almost thirty percent of them were Vlach Gypsy and about twenty-five percent of them spoke the archaic Rumanian dialect Boyash. The remaining few percent were recorded as native speakers of, among others languages, Slovak Serbian, Croatian, Ruthenian, and German (Herrmann 1895:34). See Table 5.1 for details.

Table 5.1 Gypsies in Hungarian lands by language and settlement, late nineteenth century

Native language	Permanently settled Gypsies	Gypsies residing in one location for a longer period	Wandering Gypsies	Total
Gypsy	28.72	29.84	62.12	29.97
Hungarian	38.69	38.71	22.53	38.10
Boyash	28.84	24.90	12.15	24.39
Other	7.75	6.55	3.20	7.54

(Cserti Csapó 2011:39–40).

The three language groups were very distinct from each other, living in separate Gypsy settlements and did not marry each other (Erdős 1989:42–56). Within the so-called Romungro Gypsy group, with Hungarian as their mother tongue, a separate group was formed by Gypsy musicians, about whom the research report noted the following: “Amongst the domestic Gypsies the musicians are very prestigious and in all respects the elite, the most intelligent and from a national point of view form the most significant class. However, from both a social and artistic perspective they are in need of many kinds of correction.” (Herrmann 1895:59)

In terms of settlement, Gypsy musicians showed similar proportions to the total Gypsy population (Herrmann 1895:76). However, the sporadically available sources show that Gypsy musicians with permanent residency lived dispersed within the urban areas of towns, and it was not even uncommon for them to accumulate significant wealth. Furthermore, they sometimes had extensive social network capital among the influential non-Gypsy population (Hajnáczy 2019, 2020a; Nyerges 2015). In part, the favourable social standing of the prominent personalities among Gypsy musicians made it possible for them to form associations and found journals in the first half of the twentieth century (Hajnáczy 2020b; Marushiakova and Popov 2021a:467–548).

In 1901, in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, on the initiative of non-Gypsy journalists, but with the cooperation of Gypsy musicians, the *Hungarian Musicians' Journal (Gypsy Musicians' Bulletin)* was founded. However, it only survived for a few issues. In 1908, the Gypsy musicians themselves initiated the establishment of their own association and the launch of a newspaper entitled the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal*. This paper was published continuously until its folding in 1910 (Hajnáczy 2020a). The Great War was a stalemate for the Gypsy musicians' self-organisation as many of them were enlisted as soldiers. The monarchy lost the war, which meant the disintegration of the empire and the mutilation of Hungary. As part of the peace treaties around Paris that ended the First World War, Hungary, as a losing party, had to sign the so-called Trianon Peace Treaty on June 4, 1920, at the Grand Trianon castle in Versailles. Among other things, the peace treaty dictated the borders of Hungary, according to which the area of the country decreased from 282 thousand to 93 thousand square kilometres, while its population decreased from 18.2 million to 7.6 million. More than 100,000 square kilometres and 5.2 million inhabitants went to Rumania, while Czechoslovakia received 61,000 square kilometres and 3.5 million people. More than 20,000 square kilometres and 1.5 million inhabitants were annexed to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and 4,000 square kilometres and nearly 300,000 people were annexed to Austria. Poland received 589 square kilometres with 23.6 thousand inhabitants and Italy 21 square kilometres with nearly 50 thousand people (Romsics 2005:145–147). The Treaty of Trianon naturally also affected Gypsies in Hungary; due to the new country borders, their number decreased to a fraction, and from a linguistic point of view, a proportional shift could be experienced in favour of native Hungarian speakers (Cserti Csapó 2011:39–40). Hungarian Gypsy music, perceived as an integral part of bourgeois Hungarian life and identity

Table 5-2 Gypsy musicians' associations and newspapers in the first half of the twentieth century

State(s)	Association			Journal					
	Name	Period	Territorial extent	Name	Period	Frequency of publication	Number published	Editors	Ethnic belonging of the editor
Austro-Hungarian Monarchy	Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Federation ( <i>planned</i> )	1901	National	Hungarian Musicians' Journal (Gypsy Musicians Bulletin)	1901	Published every two weeks	3	Henrik Miskolczi, Elemér Márkus	non-Gypsy
	Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Association	1908–1910	Budapest	Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal	1908–1910	Published every two weeks	Missing issues, 45 issues can be found	dr. Miksa Breyer, Lajos Hegedűs, Ferkó Vörös, László Szepessy	non-Gypsy
Hungary	Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Association	1918–1933	National	Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal	1924–1931	irregular, Every 1–6 months	Missing issues, 27 issues can be found	dr. Jenő Járosi, Jenő, Béla Mázor	non-Gypsy
	Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Federation	1935–1940	National	Hungarian Gypsy Music	1938	monthly	2	Mázor Béla	non-Gypsy

(Hajnáczky 2019; Hajnáczky 2020a)

before the war became part of Hungarian irredentist ideology and revisionist efforts, and partly because of this, their initiatives enjoyed significant support from the authorities (Hajnáczy 2020c, 2020d). After the end of the First World War, Gypsy musicians formed associations, and in 1924 re-launched the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal*, and in 1938 *Hungarian Gypsy Music* (Hajnáczy 2019).

The period previous to the end of the First World War was, of course, the age of the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary, whereas the period following was that of the territorially much reduced Kingdom of Hungary. The overview of the publications proceeds chronologically.

## 5.2 Hungarian Musicians' Journal (*Gypsy Musicians' Bulletin*), 1901

The *Hungarian Musicians' Journal* (*Gypsy Musicians' Bulletin*) – *The professional journal representing the Gypsy musicians in Hungary and abroad* (Hungarian original: *Magyar Zenészek Lapja. (Cigányzenészek Közlönye) A magyarországi és külföldi cigányzenészek érdekeit felkaroló szaklap*) was published in 1901, in Budapest by the Hungarian Musicians' Journal Publishing Office. The bulletin was published every two weeks and only three issues were published. The journal was edited by Henrik Miskolczi and Elemér Márkus, themselves both non-Gypsies.

The well-known Gypsy first violinists Vilmos Radics and Pali Rácz began, towards the end of the 1880's, to work to create a mutual-aid organisation for Gypsy musicians. The idea ultimately failed in the absence of support and due to the personal conflicts it caused (Parádi 1908). Nearly a decade later, a group of active journalists founded the first magazine representing the interests of Hungarian musicians, the *Hungarian Musicians' Journal*. The journal wanted to deal with both non-Gypsy and Gypsy musicians, and the editorial board also envisaged the establishment of a patient aid association and employment agency (*Magyar Zenészek Lapja* 1897a, 1897b, 1897c). The enthusiastic initiative soon failed, as the publisher did not live up to expectations and simply condemned the newspaper to cessation.

However, despite the initial failure, the newspaper reporters did not lose their determination, and in 1900 they re-launched the journal which, by its second year, intended only to represent the interests of Gypsy musicians. This change in emphasis appeared in the name of the periodical; becoming the *Hungarian Musicians' Journal* (*Gypsy Musicians Bulletin*), and the following line was added as a subtitle: "A professional journal advocating the interests of Hungarian and foreign Gypsy musicians." (*Magyar Zenészek Lapja* 1901a)

As a first step, the editors set up a newspaper committee inviting popular Gypsy first violinists and laid out the mandate of the paper thus:

We would like to give our dear readers a paper that will always be useful: it will have a portfolio, artistic discourse, songs awaiting their setting to music, news from the country and

abroad, news, etc. In each issue we shall also publish a song, the music and lyrics of which were written by our most famous musicians and poets. We will publish the accompanying notes and make it available to our esteemed readers. (Magyar Zenészek Lapja 1901a:2)

Gypsy violinist members of the editorial board: Béla Radics, Pali Rácz, Károly Balogh, Marci Banda, Lajos Munczy, Antal Kóczé, Gyula Rácz, Laci Rácz, Bertus Bogdán, Józsi Csóka, Jóska Babári, Pali Farkas, Péter Márkus, Gyula Hegedüs, Sándor Oláh, Géza Balogh, Dezső Babári, Miklós Berkes, Náczi Dani and Lajos (Magyar Zenészek Lapja 1901d). The articles in the first issue provided insight into the recent events of the founding of the journal, as well as arguing that Gypsy musicians need not only a voice but also an association (Miskolczi 1901; Serly 1901). Non-Gypsy journalists would have gladly taken on the role of flag bearer for the latter objective, which they openly emphasised in the editorial:

You, who number about fifteen thousand; You, who partake in well-deserved successes, not only in Hungary but also abroad; You who, with your art, evoke deep emotions in everyone's heart: Would you stand aside when it comes to your own interests?! On the one hand, it is very beautiful and noble, because they show that they do not rely on anyone else; but on the other hand it is very wrong, because by doing so they are turning their backs on the common good. After all, this is not selfish-interest, which is disgusting! But about how to end the war between yourselves and form an alliance that would clearly advance your interests; and which would give you, such a significant generation, social position. And it is up to you. Is it not a sad fact that every branch now has an association or organisations, only Gypsy musicians do not?! And it would be easy to form, you just have to want it. You, we know, truly want this to come about, it simply needs someone to take the initiative to move towards this noble institution. Well, we are more than happy to sacrifice our time and for this lofty purpose, we are just waiting - and we know that we are not waiting in vain - for you to work hand in hand with us to achieve success. We will not regret the time or effort to establish a national association for Hungarian Gypsy musicians, and similarly you will not regret devoting your time, sometimes, to this noble cause. Please read carefully our plan as laid out in this issue - and listen to your heart speak, for it is the best counselor in such cases. (Márkus 1901:1)

The initial steps were taken by the aforementioned non-Gypsy newspaper reporters together with the Gypsy musicians in order to found the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Federation. First of all, the statutes of existing national associations were studied in order to create customised association rules for Gypsy musicians. Some of the emblematic points of the draft were published in the journal, according to which the association would have provided, among other things, illness benefits and funeral aid (Magyar Zenészek Lapja 1901b). Gypsy musicians could have joined the group as lifelong, founding, regular, and supporting members, depending on how much they supported the organisation (Vas 1901). Following the announcement of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Association, the editors of the paper came up with another innovation, namely that they wanted to establish an agency for the placement of Gypsy musicians abroad (Magyar Zenészek Lapja 1901c, 1901e). However, the efforts of the journalists were not a complete success among the Gypsy musicians, only three hundred people assured them

of their support, expressing their frustration in the columns of the paper they wrote (*Magyar Zenészek Lapja* 1901g):

If there were to be a couple of renowned Gypsy first violinists, sparing neither time nor financial sacrifice, willing to join with us, we who founded our paper for and have dedicated months to saving and improving the well-being of the Hungarian Gypsy musicians; in addition to founding a foreign agency and then a national federation. If this were so the Gypsies would not be lying in the mud so, and could even be pulled from it. But the Gypsy first violinists and orchestra members in Budapest – they sleep soundly. Rural first violinists and members of their orchestras seem to be awakening. (*Magyar Zenészek Lapja* 1901f1)

Eventually, due to the general lack of interest, the editorial board gave up its wide-ranging dreams for Gypsy musicians, restored the journal's original name, and dedicated the columns of the journal to the founding of the Hungarian Musicians' Association.

### 5.3 Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal (1908–1910)

The *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal - The Official Journal of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Association - The social journal representing the interests of the Hungarian Gypsy Musician* (original Hungarian title: *Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja. A Magyar Czigányzenészek Egyesületének hivatalos lapja. A magyar czigányzenészek érdekeit felölelő társadalmi folyóirat*) was published between 1908–1910, by the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Association. The journal was published every two weeks, the existing issues are incomplete in number, only forty-five issues can be found. It was edited by Miksa Breyer, Lajos Hegedüs, Ferkó Vörös and László Szepessy, all non-Gypsies.

A few years after the futile attempt of Vilmos Radics, Pali Rácz, and some journalists, the foundation of a Gypsy musicians' association was again on the agenda as an initiative of an ageing Pál Rácz and Vilmos Radics' son, Béla Radics. The founding of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Association in 1908, was not without controversy, sometimes they came under the disapproving gaze of the daily press, but those who stood on the Gypsies' side arose victorious (Parádi 1908; Sárosi 2012:13). The Hungarian Musicians' Home, led by Pali Rácz, hosted their meetings in the so-called Gypsy Home, later presumably the café called the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Club (*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1908u; Nyerges 2015:72–73; Sárosi 2012:48–59). At the inaugural meeting in March, the leading figures of the Budapest association of Gypsy musicians set a goal of launching a newspaper entitled the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal*.

The editorial staff of the Gypsy musicians' journal dreamed specifically of a colourful periodical, covering a wide range of topics, in accordance with the interests of Gypsy musicians. Over time, more and more columns were launched, and readers also received a sheet of music supplement. Firstly, they reported on the activities and plans of the association, and also informed the Gypsy bands about domestic and foreign job

opportunities. Calls for competitions and song contests for Gypsy musicians, as well as reports on their progress and results were also published. Poems, literary portfolios, and sections of a novel being written were also published in the columns of the paper, though mostly by non-Gypsies, though for the most part they were writings about Gypsy musicians and voiced their interest and concerns. The editorial office, for example, devoted a separate section to horse racing as well as a presentation of the lives of once-famous first violinists. The last pages of the issues featured brief news reports on Gypsy music society, as well as ads from tailors, shoemakers, dentists and instrument makers.

A few months after its establishment, the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Association organised a concert entitled *The Five Hundred Gypsy Concert* at the People's Theater, the proceeds of which were intended to increase the association's reserve capital (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1908b; Sárosi 2012:50). The concert featured the most famous Gypsy first violinists of the era and nearly forty Gypsy bands, that is to say about five hundred performers in total. The Gypsy musicians performing at the concert were able to enjoy significant success and recognition both in the ranks of the audience and in the columns of the mainstream press. The *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* June issue even published a selection of articles praising the concert, choosing articles published in national or other prestigious dailies (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1908d). At the same time, this well-intentioned initiative also resulted in strife and insults within Gypsy music society. Some distanced themselves from the event, sometimes just because their names were not mentioned on posters promoting the event. There was a Gypsy first violinist who would have been willing to perform at a concert for the benefit of the association but only for a considerable sum of money. While others refused to participate because they would not have been allowed to play a solo or were not entrusted with conducting the host of five hundred musicians (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1908c). In addition to all this, the organisers were also attacked, by the non-participating Gypsy musicians, for the fact that the concert did not meet its high financial hopes, which was attributed to a lack of proper advertising and careless organisation (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1908e).

The *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* continually worked towards effectively representing the interests of Gypsy musicians. They regularly provided fresh articles and data on the steps taken by the cafés that adversely affected Gypsy musicians, and they also published revealing articles on the members of Gypsy music society who had violated its written or unwritten rules (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1908j, 1908k, 1908m, 1908z). In September 1908, for example, the Gypsy musicians' publication wrote of its outrage that café owners were hiding the penalty costs within the contracts (grief money), according to which if a Gypsy orchestra withdrew from the contract, it would have to pay a relatively high sum to the café owner (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1908r). And in May of the following year, it could be read in the columns of the paper that café owners began to abolish or significantly reduce the advance paid to Gypsy bands (Magyar Czigányzenészek

Lapja 1909p). The newspaper also monitored the operation of the Hungarian Gypsy Orchestras' Agency, founded in 1908, to see if it fulfilled the role of job placement touted by the impresario in the journal:

We visited the impresario, Sándor Kovács, to find out about the purpose of the agency. He outlined the purpose of the agency to us as the following: He found that the café owners in Budapest keep the honorarium of the bands to a minimum and he wants the established agency to prevent this. He places bands for the highest possible price and does not collect his commission from the orchestra, but from the café owner. The company also made it a goal to find placements abroad. The impresario also made a promise that he would support our association with an adequate amount each year. Our paper will check the operation of this new company and the moment we see that it deviates from its intended purpose, we will immediately seek a remedy against its operation. We, therefore, urge our readers to contact our paper immediately in the event that they have a complaint against the new company so that we can initiate proceedings. However, if we see the company embracing the interests of Gypsy musicians, we will be the first to support him. For the time being, we shall monitor its activities. (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1908f:2–3)

The first articles in the Gypsy musicians' journal were extremely positive about the work of the agency. The paper published the agency's practical professional announcements (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1908v, 1908x), and highlighted that it had obtained placements for several orchestras in the capital, as well as beginning to explore opportunities abroad (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1908h, 1908s, 1908t). Early in 1909, the owner and impresario of the agency were cordially invited to join the editorial board of the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1909a). However, in less than half a year the gap widened between the Hungarian Gypsy Orchestra's Agency and the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Association, as the impresario continued his business with no regard for the interests of Gypsy musicians. The agent, a non-Gypsy, was now a member of the Gypsy Musicians' Journal editorial board, and subordinated the paper to his own business interests, which eventually led to his expulsion from the editorial board (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1909u). He was also accused of charging too high a commission and driving certain Gypsy orchestras out of cafés using underhanded means in order to replace them with orchestras whose placement he mediated. The Gypsy first violinists in Budapest launched a movement against the agency and decided to visit the Minister of the Interior in order to have it banned (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1909w). The association, in turn, decided to write an appeal to the Minister of Commerce asking him to take steps for the immediate revocation of the impresario's tradesmen license. Furthermore, the organisation also stated that it would issue a circular to the cafés and restaurants in the hopes that the now rejected agent come upon closed doors when turning to them (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1909v). The *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* did not hide its position on the matter either, it published its views in a strict tone in its editorial:

In our opinion, it is completely unnecessary for an agent to mediate for Gypsy orchestras in Budapest. Needless to say, before there was no such institution, Gypsy musicians had a grand time. However, as soon as the agent pitched his tent, complaints and friction immediately ensued. [...] Mediation in Budapest is not only unnecessary but quite simply harmful. The agent cannot get a higher salary, so the commission is taken from the first violinist's cut. [...] The agent should do respectable foreign business or stay with his old potato agent craft and not long for the title of impresario. (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1909x:1)

The newer goals of the association were published in the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* in August 1908. The president of the organisation, Béla Radics, wanted to create a national pension association for Gypsy musicians, which would have allowed not only Gypsy musicians from Budapest to join but all Gypsy musicians in Hungary (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1908n). The president's plans were for no assistance or pension to be claimed from the membership fees and donations received by the national pension association in the first years; he considered it conceivable only later after a sufficient pension fund had been accumulated (*ibid.*). The president's initiative sought to answer a burning question (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1908v), the financial difficulties of 'aged' Gypsy musicians. He wrote of this in a later editorial:

Today, only young first violinists are sought across the country. The foreign proprietor, before negotiating, asks for a portrait and if the first violinist is not a young man, he does not even enter into negotiations. Nowadays, age comes first and only then does art follow. The young first violinist can bow better, the contractors say, and thus when choosing performers put the old ones to the back. [...] So if they do not take care of themselves, they have to form an association that will take care of the elderly and those incapable of work, using small contributions. The contributions will be perhaps the smallest part of the pension fund. Each orchestra conductor will need to ensure that the pension fund grows through charitable donations and is strong enough to ensure each member's hope for the future that as he grows old he shall rest and spend the last days of his life without worries. The ministry, which supports all similar associations, would not refrain from supporting the pension association of Gypsy musicians. Some of the Budapest orchestra conductors have connections and if they were to describe the situation we are in would certainly be useful and win the support of the highest and most distinguished circles. (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1908o:1)

The association, through the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal*, raised its voice not only on behalf of the ageing Gypsy musicians who were drawing towards the end of their careers but for Gypsy musical society as a whole. During its existence, the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* regularly published writings about the unsustainable situation of Gypsy musicians and their financial difficulties. It reported on the declining opportunities of rural Gypsy orchestras, who wanted to find stages in cafés and restaurants in Budapest. However, the capital city did not promise more favourable opportunities either; some of the Gypsy musicians there only had work from one day to the next (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1908g, 1908q, 1909c, 1909f). At times, foreign opportunities shrank, for example, in an Austrian spa town, Hungarian songs were banned, Hungarian Gypsy musicians were expelled from a Croatian coastal town, and cafés in

Paris closed their doors to Gypsy musicians (*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1908l, 1909j, 1909f). The association newspaper tried to reassure Gypsy musicians, at the same time encouraging them to trust in a better future and not give in to the sense of hopelessness (*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1908i, 1908y, 1909s).

From its beginning to its end, the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* continually announced songwriting competitions for Gypsy musicians, promising the winners great sums and fame in reward. In May 1908, the paper proclaimed its first song contest, promising a significant sum, one hundred crowns to the first place, and the publication of the winning song (*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1908a). In the months following the call, nearly two hundred and twenty folk song entries were received, which the organisers of the competition were happy to register. At the same time, the editors reported of their outrage, as many applicants engaged in fraud, with many submitting songs written by others or ones that had been previously released. In the nineteenth century, it was common for songs with known or unknown composers to be performed as folk or popular tunes. In addition to this, the popular thinking concerning composer, arranger, and performer were different than in later decades. For these reasons, there was a debate at the time as to who was responsible for a given song (Sárosi 1971:136–170). The following lines serve to illustrate the differences in thought concerning authorship:

[...] it pains us to speak of such things happening these days! Not long ago a truly beautiful composition was printed as the work of Patikárius, I was happy to play it and praise Patikárius – and then I learnt that the composer was Pecsényánszky ... It happens that a famous Gypsy will visit the countryside and learn a csárdás from a whistling composer and then return to Pest to have it set to piano and publish it as his own composition. The Gypsy does not do this from malice, he believes that what he learnt is called composition. (Sárosi 1971:161)

The first-place winner was awarded the grand prize of one hundred crowns by the jury, and those entries submitted that were considered outstanding were awarded a certificate. The editorial board immediately announced a new song contest, citing its great popularity, again granting a hundred crowns to the composer of the song judged to be the best (*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1908p). For the second call, the number of entries was many times more than the previous one, almost seven hundred applications were submitted, many of which were disqualified because of plagiarism. The jury also noted that most of the songs received were inappreciable, even with the utmost goodwill, and thus ended up in the trash (*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1908w). Nevertheless, the top prize of one hundred crowns was awarded again, but the winner was later found to have submitted the work of a renowned Gypsy first violinist, and as soon as the dishonesty came to light he was immediately stripped of his prize (*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1908z, 1909b). The editorial staff was not discouraged by the series of discrepancies and scandals accompanying the song contest, and it was announced again and again in the years that followed. The popularity of the song contest among the applicants also proved to be unbroken. About six hundred entries flooded the editorial office with the next call

(*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1909k), while the following one received more than one thousand one hundred applications. During the latter, two gold medals, one hundred crowns per winner, one silver medal and certificates were awarded. The majority of the submitted songs continued to be judged as subpar quality by the jury, and many again choose to apply with the work of others (*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1909t).

In addition to the song contest, the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* editorial board announced a public competition for Gypsy first violinists in January 1909, citing letters from readers as the reason. A cut-out ballot was published in the paper, with which readers could vote for the most popular Hungarian and Budapest first violinists. The Gypsy first violinist who received the most votes was to be awarded a gold medal, while the second was to be awarded a silver medal. The call soon enjoyed great popularity among Gypsy musicians and their fans and patrons alike. The circulation of the paper increased significantly within days, as it was only possible to vote on the ballot paper cut from the journal itself. The first violinists in the capital and in the countryside did everything they could for votes, the journal wrote: "Recently, for example, one of the rural orchestras ordered 200 copies of our paper and, so to speak, had the whole city vote. Our distributor in Budapest is using a small cart to take out the 'Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal', so many people are purchasing or being made to purchase it by orchestra heads." (*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1909d:5) The voting continued with unbroken enthusiasm even after a few weeks, orchestra leaders continued to do their best to win: "One of Budapest's orchestra leaders has recently distributed 300 newspapers among his audience for the purpose of voting. A coffee house proprietor bought 100 newspapers to support another." (*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1909e:5)

Due to the great interest and the influx of ballot papers, the editorial staff had to employ two people simply to count the ballot papers on a day-to-day basis and to calculate the competition's standings. Because the audience competition of Gypsy first violinists was extremely popular not only among the Gypsy musicians of the capital but also among the rural Gypsy musicians, the remuneration was slightly modified. The most popular first violinist in Budapest and in the countryside could now both win a gold medal, likewise, the second-place winners could win a silver medal in the capital and the countryside (*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1909g). The number of votes skyrocketed in the following weeks, with more people voting than in all the previous months combined.

The results of the audience competition for the Gypsy first violinists were announced in the April issue of the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal*, in which it was also explained that large and small gold medals are awarded in the capital in addition to the silver medal (*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1909l). In Budapest, the grand gold medal was won by Laci Rácz, while the small gold medal was won by Józsi Csóka, and the silver medal was taken home by Elemér Sáray. Two grand gold medals were also awarded in the countryside because Gyuri Dick and Dávid Kozák won in a tie, and György Csikay won the silver medal. The awards were bestowed in the capital by the editorial board amid much pomp and in the cafés that served as the base for the winning Gypsy first violinists'

while rural winners received their medals by courier, the editorial board citing long distances (*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1909n).

From the number of votes cast for the Gypsy first violinists' audience competition, we can gather some indirect information on the circulation of the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* during the examined period. It can be stated that at least 469 copies of the paper were purchased on January 15, 1909, but the actual number may have been slightly higher than this. The Gypsy first violinists who received a small number of votes were not included in the lists, and presumably, not all readers took the opportunity to vote. The paper increased its sale each week until April 1, 1909, when it reached 52,474 copies sold in total. The audience competition significantly boosted the paper's circulation, but that did not necessarily mean the number of readers multiplied. In any case, the audience competition of the Gypsy first violinists meant significant publicity and revenue for the edition. The *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* data of January 15, 1909, provided some basis for determining the real number of readers, because at that time the orders for hundreds of copies had not yet arrived en masse to the editorial office.

Table 5.3 Data on voting and winners in Budapest for the Gypsy first violinists' audience competition

Ranking	Gypsy first violinists in Budapest	Number of votes					
		1909					
		January 15	February 1.	February 15	March 1.	March 15	April 1.
Grand gold medal	Laci Rácz	146	291	506	614	1043	6843
Small gold medal	Józsi Csóka	–	–	139	451	509	3986
Silver medal	Elemér Sáray	94	194	331	346	818	3864
IV.	Jancsi V. Kiss	62	262	265	291	620	3002
IV.	Józsi Babári	–	84	326	394	804	3002
V.	Nándor Sovánka	39	86	189	340	493	2890
VI.	Elek Vörös	128	270	280	281	294	2864
VII.	Pali Farkas	–	81	141	332	380	2820
Total number of votes		469	1268	2177	3049	4961	29 271

(*Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja* 1909e, 1909g, 1909h, 1909i, 1909ac, 1909d).

Table 5.4 Data on of the voting and winners in the countryside for the Gypsy first violinists' audience competition

Ranking	Rural Gypsy first violinists		Number of votes					
			1909					
	Name	City	January 15	February 1.	February 15.	March 1.	March 15.	April 1.
<b>Grand Gold Medal</b>	György Dick	Brassó	–	30	123	481	843	4684
<b>Grand Gold Medal</b>	Dávid Kozák	Brassó	–	–	–	100	100	4684
<b>Silver Medal</b>	György Csikay	Kolozsvár	–	–	–	486	938	2380
III.	Gyúszai Hamza	Nagyvárad	–	42	99	104	244	2200
IV.	Géza Káló	Nagyenyed	–	39	46	152	253	2100
V.	Lajos Pongracz	Kolozsvár	–	–	–	568	866	2086
VI.	József Barcza	Kaposvár	–	–	219	494	586	2083
VII.	Károly Bebe	Nagyvárad	–	–	31	181	394	1496
VIII.	Imre Magyarai	Debrecen	–	–	224	589	960	1490
<b>Total number of votes</b>			–	111	742	3155	5184	23 203

(Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1909e, 1909g, 1909i, 1909ac, 1909d).

After the Gypsy first violinists' competition, the editorial board of the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* came up with another initiative; citing a highly successful foreign example and the opinion of the high society audience, a national Gypsy musician competition was proposed, for the following reason:

Every year, the world's most famous opera singers come together in Bayreuth to perform a concert. Music lovers and music connoisseurs from all over the world flock to listen to the concert. High social circles proposed the idea of whether it would not be nice and good for our Gypsy musicians, from all over the country, to compete for one, or possibly more, great honors. [...] The great and important goal of the annual national Gypsy music competition would be for the people of the capital to get to know the good hitherto unknown, obscure rural orchestras. And for the well-known good orchestras to show every year that they are getting even better and not in decline. These would be the advantages for the bands. First violinists should perform solo songs and show that they are not only masters of their craft when an entire orchestra is behind them, but also when they have to stand with a single

violin before the thousand-headed monster that is the critical opinion of the general public. Orchestra members should also showcase their knowledge. Let the best bass player stand upon the stage and showcase his talent, the best cimbalom etc. Let us hear the best tárogató, large winds and small winds. Honour those who know what they are doing and boo those who are only good at boasting. It does not take skill to tell a hundred people that I am the best bassist in the country, it does however take a lot more art for a hundred people to say about someone that he “is the best bassist.” (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1909m:1–2)

The national competition for Gypsy musicians was to be held in Budapest from the ides of August to the end of September 1909, and two orchestras would have been given the opportunity to perform every day, amounting to about seventy ensembles during the thirty-five days of the event. In addition to all this, they also wanted to make room for the solo performances of the first violinists and orchestra members. Great emphasis would also have been placed on the promotion of rural bands, with only twenty-five of the seventy Gypsy bands being allowed to be nominated from the capital, and the remaining forty-five places going to rural bands. The travel and accommodation expenses of the latter would also have been borne by the organisers. Prizes worth thousands of crowns were promised, which would be awarded by a carefully selected jury of experts (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1909o, 1909q, 1909r). Finally, the national Gypsy musician competition, despite several confident announcements, was only held in November, at the Orpheum managed by the Royal Hotel in Budapest, and with a number of modifications. The event completely lost the character of a competition, and took on the profile of a charity event, with gold medals promised for all performing Gypsy orchestras. The proceeds of the concert would be used for the erection of a statue to Archduke Joseph Carl of Habsburg-Lorraine, the “Gypsy musicians’ apostle” (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1909y, 1909aa, 1909ab). Archduke Joseph, the well-respected son of the deceased, was also invited to the event (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1909z), and visited the popular many week-long charity event on several occasions (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja 1909ac). A permanent author and the later editor-in-chief of the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians’ Journal* wrote an ode entitled “The Chief Voivode” glorifying the memory of the late Archduke Joseph:

The Chief Voivode  
(*excerpt*)

Archduke Joseph – His name a hundred times blessed,  
His eagle eyes look down into this vale of tears  
And at his gaze all burst into bloom,  
Where before fallow stumps had waved;  
That they may not become blackguards in their nomadic ways  
Creates a Gypsy settlement in Alcsút;  
Saves our language treasures in a Gypsy dictionary,  
The work of his hands bestows blessing upon blessing.

But where is the hand to gather into a string of pearls,  
 The ocean of merit of the archduke ...!  
 Naive love shines from him,  
 Gypsy lips name him the “Chief voivode”;  
 And their kiss pays for the dust,  
 That touches the feet of the chief voivode,  
 Adoringly resurrecting him from the dead  
 May his statue stand forever.

A more poetic glorious statue than his  
 The poet’s imagination would never imagine,  
 If weeds were to be proud palms,  
 Oh what would Gypsy tribute create!  
 Musical notes will turn to stone  
 And every stone shall sound  
 You, princely Gypsy advocate,  
 Whose memory so many faithful hearts guard.

László Szepessy (1909:1)

After the charity concert, the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians’ Association, and with it the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians’ Journal*, ceased to exist, the reasons for which we have no knowledge of due to a lack of sources. However, with the dissolution of the organisation, the need for a Gypsy music organisation and newspaper did not disappear within Gypsy music society. A decade later, the previous leaders of the former association founded the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians’ National Association, which within a few years launched a paper they called the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians’ Journal* (Hajnáczy 2019, 2020d).

#### 5.4 Hungarian Gypsy Musicians’ Journal (1924–1931)

The *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians’ Journal* – *The professional bulletin of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians’ National Association* (in Hungarian: *Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja. A Magyar Cigányzenészek Országos Egyesületének szakközlönye*) was published from 1924 to 1931, in Budapest. The journal was published irregularly, every one to six months, the existing issues are incomplete, only twenty-seven issues are known. The journal was edited by Dr. Jenő Járosi and Béla Mázor, both non-Gypsies.

Gypsy musicians did not permanently give up the dream of an association of their own, however, the Great War did not favour their aspirations as many of them were enlisted. On the front, they often served as military musicians or served in military bands. Over time, they became so-called military first violinists, front-line Gypsy musical bands were formed and made the monotony and vicissitudes of the standing war more bearable, but mainly for the officers (Scholtz 2018). After the end of the First World War, the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians’ National Association was formed under the direction of the most prestigious Gypsy first violinists, which, unlike its predecessor, allowed not only Budapest Gypsies to join but also rural Gypsy musicians. It formulated its goals as the following:

4. § The goals of the association:

a) b) To promote the material, moral and intellectual interests of its members, all according to Christian principles, and provide legal protection for them. Through the reciprocal support of the members the attainment of better working conditions and protection of acquired rights, based on Christian principles, with the exclusion of political and religious debates.

c) To restrict, with the support of the Royal Hungarian Ministry of the Interior, the operation of uninvited musicians and those arriving from foreign lands.

d) To promote and develop the art of Hungarian Gypsy musicians.

e) To provide for a retirement fund for its full members, according to the financial capacity of the association and to be defined in future statutes, furthermore in cases of accident and sickness for provision of financial support to be given, again to be decided at a future general meeting. Burial is to be provided for full members and their legal next of kin by the association according to the statutes. (Hajmáczky 2019:167–168)

The association wrote in the very first paragraphs of its statutes that the organisation intends to launch a paper, which took place a few years later, in 1924. It was then that they launched the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal*, which, until it folded in 1931, was intended to inform Gypsy music society. Primarily, the paper gave an insight into the activities and operation of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Association through the published articles, calls and minutes. Like the national organisation, the initiatives of the Budapest group and local groups in the countryside appeared in the edition. Social news of Gypsy music society was also featured in the columns; funerals, weddings, anniversaries, balls, decorations, awards, domestic and foreign performances, and lawsuits. Literary and historical writings were also provided with a forum; poems, short stories, portfolios, and essays were published. The *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* considered the plight of Gypsy musicians, their aid and job placement, the suppression of jazz, and the establishment of the Bihari Music School to be the most important topics.

In the 1920's Hungarian Gypsy musicians struggled with serious financial problems both in Budapest and in the countryside, as their job opportunities narrowed significantly, for which they blamed in part the spread of jazz throughout Hungary (Vámos 2018; Zipernovszky 2017:75). The *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* regularly kept the issue on the agenda, publishing a number of writings and minutes which drew attention to the plight of Gypsy musicians. Dramatic lines here quoted from the association's newspaper report the critical conditions of Gypsy musicians:

We receive a lot of complaints from all over the country about the harshness of economic conditions, and in several places they complain that the now fashionable jazz music wants to increasingly force out Gypsy music. It is undeniable that we are in a very difficult economic situation. It is equally difficult for the people of Budapest and the people of the countryside to make a living. (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1927b:1)

According to some writings, the situation had deteriorated to the point where the daily income of Gypsy musicians is at stake:

The issue is the problem of livelihood, and is already at the threshold of starvation. The newspapers wrote that among the 3,800 Gypsies in Budapest, barely 10% are at work, while the rest are adrift ... Every day, heartbreaking cries for help arrive in writing to the association, desperately begging for six or eight hungry, naked children ... The general economic situation is affecting all sections of society, none of them is in a happy situation, but the fate of the Gypsies is exacerbated by the jazz bands, which forces them more and more into the background and knocks the bow out of their hands and takes the bread out of their mouths. (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1927h:1)

The critical state of the Gypsy musicians was further strained by the conflicts that surfaced again and again in their association, as well as the lack of cooperation and cohesion. Due to the above-mentioned, the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* regularly berated the membership and did not shy away from reproachful outbursts. It was the first to report that rural Gypsy musicians sometimes unjustifiably criticised Gypsy musicians in Budapest because, in their opinion, the musicians of the capital did not care about the association and did not pay the membership fee (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1927a). At the local level, Gypsy musicians also competed with each other for job opportunities; it was not uncommon for one to under-bid the other, something café and restaurant owners often took advantage of (Farkas 1927).

The scaremongering and spreading of malicious rumours neither favoured unified action among Gypsy musicians nor served the representation of their interests; an editorial in the paper described it thus:

Now, now, what's this malicious rumour intended to do? What is this "joking about" supposed to be? Do Gypsies really need all this news snatched from thin air and without any serious basis. Take this into consideration (if such people tend to think at all) those who toll the warning bell. Because such rumours are only suitable to stave off the remedies to the many troubles afflicting the poor Gypsies ... But what are some people doing, instead of working together to help the leaders fix the troubles? Insults! When he speaks to Palko, he blames Paul. If he talks to Paul, he blames Palko. If he talks to the national president, he blames the president of the local group. If he talks to the president of the local group, he blames the national president. (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1927b:1)

In the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Association, the conflicts of interest of the members sometimes worsened to the point where they endangered the successful outcome of the general meetings. The Gypsy musicians' journal repeatedly drew the attention of the membership to appearing at the meetings free from anger, intrigue, and bias. It also went on to say that generalised, intolerant bull-headed demands must end and space must be provided for deliberations in the interests of the association. Because of these previously mentioned factors, the association's leadership proposed that local groups only be represented through a delegation and have a say in national forums only in proportion to their numbers (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1927c, 1927d, 1927g).

The desperate financial situation of the Gypsy musicians increasingly required the leadership of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Association to take decisive steps to ensure the effective implementation of the social welfare promised in the statutes. Notably in the area of accident, sickness and funeral assistance, as well as the establishment of a pension fund and a job placement office (Hajnáczy 2019:167–168). The *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* regularly kept the above-mentioned objectives on the agenda, and several articles and minutes of association general meetings appeared in the columns of the paper, all dealing with the wide-ranging issues just mentioned. In the March 1927 editorial, the paper reported that the organisation wanted to create a sickness fund, and noted how:

The organisation of the sickness fund will be like the organisation of the association. Each local group must set up separate monetary accounts. Detailed instructions for their organisation will be provided later. At this point, it would be a very good idea for the rural groups to start the preparatory work now. In this respect, the local group in Vác is the pioneer, on February 24th they organised a large dance with a concert, the net income of which is used for the benefit of the soon to be established sickness fund. It would be very good if other local groups followed suit. (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1927a:1)

The plans for a sickness fund were not affected by the change of leadership either (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1927f), the organisation constantly kept itself informed and conducted negotiations to this aim, the issue surfaced at the July general meeting. The delegate of the local group in Miskolc suggested that the leadership of the organisation negotiate with the National Workers' Insurance Institute on the admission of Gypsy musicians. At the meeting, the HGMNA (Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Association) legal counsel clearly expressed his concerns about the proposal, while also drawing attention to the futility of setting up a sickness fund:

The leadership has already dealt with this issue a great deal. I have been to the Ministry of Public Welfare several times already. It is also my opinion that we would be admitted to the workers' insurance company but I find it dangerous in several respects. First of all, we put a heavy burden on the shoulders of the members. What we calculated was that an average member would have to pay 6–7 pengős per month and the same amount by the proprietor. This would be very difficult for members to pay in view of the current hard conditions, but secondly, the owners should also be considered. Today, everywhere the situation is that they are trying to lower the wages of the Gypsies, some employers do not even host music because their venues cannot afford it. If now the employers would have to pay a sickness benefit in addition to the wage, they would employ even fewer Gypsies and if they did they would pay less because the sickness benefit would also burden them. And this is not such a small amount. Imagine, gentlemen, for an orchestra of, say, 10 members, a café would have to pay 60–70 pengős a month. In addition, frequent changes in staff would make entry very difficult. Admitting and dismissing members is a lot of work. [...] In addition, there may be two ways to solve the issue. We could first set up a private sickness fund. Firstly, it requires

a large administration, secondly, it is expensive. If we do this for the members, then we also have to give the members hospital care, and it costs a lot and we spend the money on it unnecessarily, because 90% of our members can be admitted to hospitals on the basis of a poverty certificate anyway, so it does not make sense. It makes all the more sense for them to pay for something they have received for free so far, because hospital care is the same, whether it is on the basis of the poverty law or on the basis of association membership. (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1927f:2)

The legal counsel, Dr. Jenő Járosi, a non-Gypsy, considered the only viable option in this area was for the association to refrain from setting up a private sickness fund and to provide medical and pharmaceutical care to members at affordable prices. According to his plan, they should contract with a pharmacy to offer a discount if medicines are bought exclusively from them. Relying on his preliminary negotiations, he also explained that a doctor could be contracted with only one pengő of the members' monthly payment. As an initiative, he saw it justifiable to introduce the above only in the capital, and, if the feedback were to be favourable, to extend it to rural local groups (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1927f). The following year, the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* published news about the introduction of a sickness fund and the establishment of a pension fund, but the association was still unable to make any significant progress in this area (Bura 1929a; Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1929a, 1929f, 1929g, 1929i).

The prospects of the Gypsy musicians were only further decreased by the fact that in May of the following year, an article complaining about the misuse of the funeral allowance appeared in the journal written by the organisation's leadership. First of all, the article stated that although the statutes of the association provided for the provision of funeral assistance to members and their relatives who regularly pay the membership fee, the problem was that most of the members did not fulfil their obligation to pay the fee. Nevertheless, in the event of death, funeral assistance was immediately demanded from the association, which then directly threatened the association with financial collapse:

So here is the main cause of the problem, the member is months behind in paying his membership fee, but when someone in the family dies he comes pleading and begging that he was unable to pay, his father, mother, or wife even goes to the group leaders to cry, to ask for forgiveness etc. and to only pay for the funeral aid, they just do not think of the fact that hundreds and hundreds do exactly this, so money does not come into the association's treasury, and so from what are we to pay aid. (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1928a: 2)

Not only the lack of membership fee payments hindered the association, but there were also cases where the Gypsy musicians unlawfully took aid for deceased relatives:

There have been cases where a member reports his mother or father's death and asks for an allocation of aid. However, not only did he not support his parents, but perhaps he even lived in another city and did not care for them all his life. But when they die, he thinks to himself, 'Excellent! I may get some aid and if I will try to see if they grant it'. However, under the rules, funeral allowance is granted for parents only if the child, who is a member of the

association, lives in the same household as the parents and the parent is dependent solely on him, the member. (ibid.)

The honorary president of the HGMNA, Gypsy first violinist, Béla Radics, argued the following year that membership of the association only be composed of first violinists, because only then could funeral assistance be provided to members (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1929a).

In the field of job placement, some progress could be observed in the implementation of the Ministry of Commerce decree number 85.271/IX. 1928, which regulated the operation of the association's placement agencies. The decree was especially well-received within the ranks of the National Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Association, as the organisation of job placement was an old debt of the leadership. According to the decree, the association set up a job placement office, headed by a responsible agent, who also directed the work of the other agents. The *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* reported on the benefits of the newly created body with extremely favourable words: "The great advantage for Gypsies is that the agent cannot charge a so-called arbitrary agent's fee, as he has done previously, but only the 5 percent set by the board of directors. We have already told our members that if an agent charges more than this under any pretext, they should immediately report this to the leadership of the association, which will take immediate action and retaliate against the abuse." (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1928c:3)

The paper also gave news that the HGMNA had set up an arbitral tribunal in order to smooth out the frictions between Gypsy musicians and agents and that everyone gets their fair share. The measure was motivated by the need to avoid years of litigation before state courts. The contracts were also standardised, henceforth only a document approved by the association could be used. Contrary to the previous practice, the contract was now concluded not only between the employer and the first violinist but also between the orchestra leader and the Gypsy musicians. The mentioned stipulations were beneficial to both parties, the Gypsy musicians could not quit their work and leave their conductor overnight, and at the same time, the hands of the Gypsy first violinists were tied in terms of how much he had to pay the orchestra members (ibid.). The association made the following confident remarks in the journal about the background of the newly conceived measures: "In general, the great advantage of these innovations is that in the future, the association will guard the rights and obligations of both orchestra conductors and members. So neither can be circumvented, as they have been in the past." (ibid.)

Within the framework of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Association, new departments and bodies were established to deal with the issue of placement. In 1928, the bassists and cimbalom players of Budapest formed a department, which also aimed to settle the contracts concluded between the members and the Gypsy first violinists (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1928b). The agreement would have provided benefits and obligations for both parties:

First and foremost, the member cannot leave the orchestra without giving a resignation, which has happened many times previously and which was largely the reason the orchestras were unable to perform as an ensemble at an appropriate level. The second aim is that the orchestra conductor cannot dismiss a member as he wishes without notice, but yes, if the member is suitable, he cannot be sent away during the term of the contract, and if the contract is for a fixed period, he can only be sent after notice has been given. (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1927b:3)

The contract template prepared by the department determined the notice period for both Gypsy first violinists and orchestra members to be fifteen days. The association department composed of the bassists and cimbalom players in Budapest composed a list of the advantages of the contract:

1. The notice period is determined to be 15 days.
2. The contract must be signed by the member, which ensures both the member and the first violinist.
3. The member must receive the salary written in the contract.
4. The first violinist is ensured that the member fulfils his responsibilities and cannot simply leave when he so thinks.
5. There is an arbiter tribunal, which is also very important as if there is any problem with the proprietor the arbiter tribunal can settle it in a few weeks without any costs. (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1930f)

The following year, the Gypsy first violinists of Budapest established the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Orchestra Conductors' Syndicate. Its goal was, among other things, for Gypsy first violinists to act in unity on wage issues and to push the impresarios out of the market (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1929b). The first attempts at job placement was far from resolving the issue definitively. During the 1930s, new ideas were born in this field; they envisaged the introduction of a so-called 'minimisation', which would mean the association would determine the minimum amount of wages that could be given to Gypsy musicians per café and restaurant (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1930d). The *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* summed up the benefits of the initiative as follows: "If it is established at a café that the salary there is, say, 4 P. per day, the member must receive these four pengős, no matter how much the impresario and the first violinist get. This means that prices cannot be taken lower and lower every day because the impresario cannot give members cheaper than is set." (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1930d:6–7)

At the same time as the association was working towards its social initiatives, which sad to say were doomed to fail, it was also trying to make progress on behalf of Gypsy musicians at another level, namely its declared and determined battle against jazz music. The new musical trend was blamed in most part for the destitution and impoverishment of Gypsy musicians, something the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* regularly emphasised in its columns. It made an effort to combat jazz at both local (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1927f, 1927e, 1927i, 1930a) and national levels. In the autumn of 1927, the HGMNA decided to look for allies to curb the spread of jazz, so it convened a meeting to which it invited a number of social organisations: the Hungarian Lyricists, Composers and Music Publishers Cooperative, National Federation of Hungarian Women, National Federation

of Catholic Housewives, National Housewives Federation, National Hungarian Song Federation, the Turul Federation, Werbőczy Comradery Association, Csaba Comradery Association, Bethlen Gábor Circle (*Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja* 1927j). In his opening speech, the executive vice-president of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Association spoke sharply against jazz, explaining the motive of the gathering:

The goal of our meeting is to protect Hungarian music and Hungarian song against the rising deluge of foreign music. [...] Now when danger threatens one of the national treasures, Hungarian song, we feel it is our duty to champion this cause. We are at the stage when family life is infected by moral corrupting and debasing jazz music, at this moment our children are dancing the Charleston. It is the responsibility of every Hungarian to do battle against this, to kill the infection and to again water Hungarian hearts with Hungarian emotion. (*Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja* 1927j:2)

The president of the Budapest local group did not hide his opinion on this either. He explained that Gypsy musicians would rather go hungry and cold with the onset of winter than play "Negro style." In his speech, the secretary of the association, declared jazz music to be a "foreign worm." And only after did he turn to the presentation of the HGMNA manifesto, in which the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Religion and Public Education were asked at length to repress jazz, and the following suggestions were made:

1. In all public places where jazz bands operate, coffee houses, restaurants, patisseries, dance halls etc. the employment of Gypsy musicians be compulsory. Jazz bands are to take equal turns playing. In the evening after 10 o'clock jazz bands are not to play at all, in consideration of their disruption of the peace and the quiet of the night.
2. In all public places where varied performances are given, such as music halls, cabarets, vaudeville shows, 50% of the performances are to be Hungarian numbers. This does not only mean the works of Hungarian composers, but also Hungarian in their style and content.
3. In all places where the public may dance: dance halls, public tea afternoons, dance reveries, balls etc. 50% of the dances are to be Hungarian. If these dances employ jazz music the employment of a Gypsy orchestra is compulsory.

In the case of point 2 and 3, the program and the dance order are to be given to the competent authorities before the issuance of the permit, which can only be issued if they are acceptable. The delegate of the competent police authority is responsible for checking that what was recorded in the program and dance order is observed. (*Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja* 1927j:3-4)

The delegates of the invited social associations unanimously welcomed the proposal and assured the Gypsy musicians of their full support (*Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja* 1927j). Based on the success of the meeting of the HGMNA addressed a brief interpolation to the Minister of the Interior, who, however, rejected their proposal, which only increased the members' bitterness and dissatisfaction with the association's leaders.

In the spring of 1929, first violinist Károly Bura became the president of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Association and published his ambitious, innovative program in a lead article of the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal*. Among other things, the newly elected president explained that he sees one of his main tasks as being the establishment of a music school:

We wish to care for the conditions for cultural progress too. To this aim we will soon establish a music school to serve the training of the new generation. We have received a promise that the outstanding talents finishing here will find the path to higher training and the podiums of world success abroad. Only trained Gypsy musicians can regain all that fashionable musical trends have taken from us and only Gypsy music will be able to conjure up again a renaissance of Hungarian song and Hungarian tunes. (Bura 1929a:1)

After that, the association's journal kept providing information about the establishment and operation of the music school, as well as publishing its calls and announcements. The idea of the music school was first formulated in 1928, and the initial steps were taken by János Ilovsky, a member of the legal committee of Budapest, and the honorary chairman of the association. At the outset, the HGMNA negotiated with the Music Academy to begin education for Gypsy musicians within its framework, but its request was rejected, citing a lack of rooms and the rejection of the idea by teachers. There was also the idea of enrolling Gypsy children deemed talented enough in existing music schools, but this idea was rejected for several reasons. On the one hand, they also wanted to provide further training for adults, which would have been impossible in music schools specialising in children (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1929c). On the other hand, it was thought that a music school not specifically serving Gypsy musicians was not suitable for teaching Gypsy youth, as only a curriculum designed along the following basic principles was considered acceptable: "This curriculum will be different from other music schools because it takes into account Gypsy traditions, which bind them to Hungarian song. The primary goal of this curriculum is to improve the interpretation of the Hungarian song, and only secondly, but in parallel, to develop general musical knowledge." (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1929c:2) János Ilovsky was able to win numerous supporters for the music school, who helped the foundation of the institution professionally or financially.

Finally, a Gypsy music school, named after János Bihari Gypsy first violinist opened its doors in September 1929, in Budapest (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1929e). The HGMNA published the following words on the front page of the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* encouraging enrolment in the Bihari School of Music:

At school, both children and adults receive education. Children receive both theoretical and instrumental instruction. Adults only receive theoretical training. Theoretical training is provided over five-month courses. Theoretical instruction in this first course covers: note writing, signs, prescriptions, timing, etc. Children and adults are taught separately in separate lessons.

Children receive education two hours a week and adults one hour a week.

Next year, in February, 1930, the second five-month course of theoretical education begins, those students who have passed the first course with at least satisfactory results can be enrolled and can present their certificate. The second course covers further theoretical training and the most basic music theory studies.

Instrumental instruction takes place over a ten-month course, two hours a week.

We invite our highly esteemed Members to apply for their own or their children's education and come to enrol in our associations office, VIII. Német Street from August 2 to August 15 between 3 pm and 5 pm.

To apply, you must have a pupil's birth certificate and a school certificate from your last year attesting to your education.

The association admits students with a low tuition fee (two or three pengős a month) and partly without tuition fees.

Claims for a tuition waiver must be duly applied for at the time of enrolment. The granting of the tuition waiver will be made after hearings by the association's board of directors, the first violinist syndicate and the professional departments. (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1929d:1)

About one hundred and sixty students, all Gypsies, were admitted to the first grade and were taught theory and instruments by a faculty of sixteen, of whom only one was of Gypsy musician ancestry. The list of both students and teachers was published in the *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1929h). The HGMNA soon organised a charity concert to support the music school and for the benefit of a fitting grave marker for the former president, Gypsy first violinist, Béla Radics. Nearly a thousand Gypsy musicians performed at the event, winning wide recognition from an audience of an estimated twenty-two thousand and the popular press (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1930b). Word of the Bihari Music School not only spread throughout the Hungarian press but also appeared in the columns of foreign papers; English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Danish, Swedish and Finnish newspapers praised the initiative as much as the Hungarians (Bura 1929b; Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1930c). Encouraged by the example in Budapest, the local group in Pápa founded the second Bihari Music School from the proceeds of a charity concert and it began the education of thirty students (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1930e).

However, the initial inroads soon found themselves hindered. After only a few months Budapest's Bihari Music School struggled with serious financial problems, which was only exacerbated by the fact that some of the enrolled students did not pay the tuition. The Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Association was forced to take serious steps to maintain the institution, students owing tuition and several teachers were dismissed and the coming general assembly was postponed to 1930, so that the sum allocated for it could be given to the Bihari Music School (Magyar Cigányzenészek Lapja 1930g). The austerity measures seemed to provide a solid footing for the financial situation of the school, and the head of the education department noted in the association's journal about the more favourable prospects:

Having learnt from the mistakes of the past, these omissions have been avoided, in part. There is no longer cause for mistrust. The curriculum and intellectual direction of the Bihari music school is a guarantee that the Bihari school today is on the level of any other working music school asking high tuition. And all this is achieved through the tuition is as inexpensive as it is, and all the links in the schools' operational chain accommodate Gypsy life conditions and needs. (Magyar Cigányzenészek. Lapja 1931:2)

However, storm clouds inevitably loomed over the Bihari Music School again. The scandals that erupted because of the charity concert split the association into two camps, by and large, the Gypsy musicians did not pay their membership fees, local groups, in turn, ceased to exist, and in many cases, the leadership did not even come close to achieving the goals they had previously set themselves. The *Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Journal* was discontinued in 1931, and then, two years later, the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Association was dissolved, which also meant the closing of the gates of the Bihari Music School (Hajnóczky 2019:39–44).

## 5.5 Hungarian Gypsy Music (1938)

The *Hungarian Gypsy Music – The Official Journal of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Federation* (in Hungarian: *Magyar Cigányzene. A Magyar Cigányzenészek Országos Szövetségének hivatalos lapja*) was published in 1938, in Budapest by the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Association. The journal was published monthly and only two issues were published. It was edited by Béla Mázor, a non-Gypsy.

Despite the dissolution of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Federation, Gypsy musicians were still able to take collective action in 1934; they announced a strike against the Hungarian Radio. On the one hand, because the radio management wanted to have a say in what songs the Gypsy musicians play during the broadcasts, and on the other hand, they found the payment for radio broadcasts to be insufficient (Hajnóczky 2019:45–48). The Gypsy musicians' planned mass action eventually failed due to internal tensions, but this did not deter the leading Gypsy first violinists from founding the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Federation in 1935. The statutes of the newly established federation declared the following about the mission of the organisation:

The goals of the Federation: to congregate the Gypsy musicians living in Hungary, protect their intellectual, artistic and financial interests, improve their working conditions, to more effectively support the touristic interests related to the fame of Gypsy music, the nurturing of Hungarian song, the unified direction of their members in a patriotic and Christian spirit – the exclusion of political and religious questions. (Hajnóczky 2019:189)

In order to advance the goals set out in the statutes, the association envisaged the establishment of an office, library, placement agency, a Gypsy musicians' home and a music

school. The federation considered itself responsible for the task of constantly consulting with the competent ministries and agencies in order to further the interests of Gypsy musicians. Furthermore, in order to inform Gypsy musicians and to promote their cause, it planned to launch a journal (Hajnáczky 2019:189–190), which was finally published in 1938, and entitled *Hungarian Gypsy Music*. It was only published a few times. The first edition began with a militant editorial defining the mission of the newly founded paper as follows:

Our new armour is ‘Hungarian Gypsy Music’ and our spiritual warriors are the lead letters. We do not want to wage war against anyone, but we want to fight among our own ranks: against old-fashionedness, errors, ills, and bad qualities. We want to fight for the cultural development of Hungarian Gypsy music so that we can achieve a worthy place in the society in which we live a modest bourgeois life as workers. (Magyar Cigányzene 1938a:1)

In the following piece, the honorary president of the association espoused the indispensability of the newspaper: “Without a doubt Hungarian Gypsy music’s lead soldiers signify a great growth in strength for the Federation, without a trade journal effective association work would be unimaginable, it serves its membership with enlightening efforts and is propaganda for the audience at large and the respective authorities.” (Sándor 1938:1) The edition which was only published in a few issues reported on the domestic and foreign news of Hungarian Gypsy music society, concerts, performances, and it published historical articles on well-known Gypsy first violinists. It also gave news about the general meetings, plans and measures taken by the federation. The editorial board of *Hungarian Gypsy Music* placed great emphasis on informing foreign audiences. The best example was its launch of a “Portrait gallery of Gypsy orchestras” column, which was published in English, German, Italian, and French, the aim being to promote famous Hungarian Gypsy bands among foreign restaurants and venues. The publisher planned to send the paper to the following countries: Germany, Sweden, Norway, Latvia, Finland, Lithuania, Estonia, England, Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, Poland, France, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Italy, Greece, Egypt, The United States of America, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, India, Iran, Turkey, the South African Union, Australia (Magyar Cigányzene 1938b).

The columns of *Hungarian Gypsy Music* were mainly composed of writings concerning the unsustainable social conditions of Gypsy musicians. The federation’s legal adviser saw the creation of the association as a milestone as it made possible the coordinated action of Gypsy musicians in order to defend their interests:

It took ages, however it was not too late, Gypsy musicians finally realised and began to cooperate. They founded the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians’ National Federation, which should be considered by all Gypsy musicians, as a serious force of those who want to work and fight for a better more secure existence, and a calmer bourgeois life. It is therefore in the very most interest of Gypsy musicians to congregate there and forge their own destiny with one will. (Nagy 1938:6)

The Gypsy musicians' journal repeatedly announced that the organisation had put debating the social situation of Gypsy musicians on the agenda of its next general meeting (Magyar Cigányzene 1938c, 1938d, 1938f), as well as the federation's proposals aimed at ensuring the livelihood of Gypsy musicians. The organisation developed a draft proposal aimed at introducing 'minimum subsistence' for orchestra members. They envisioned classifying venues into three categories and paying the orchestra members accordingly. In the case of hotels, restaurants and cafés classified in the first class, the orchestra members would have received ten pengős per head, in the case of those classified as second-class, seven pengős, and in the places classified as third-class, five pengős. The draft proposal did not want to regulate the salary of Gypsy first violinists, it would have entrusted this to an agreement between the bandleader and the owner of the venue (Magyar Cigányzene 1938e). Another considerable achievement of the federation was the so-called 'collective agreement' which wanted to regulate the agreements between the Gypsy musicians and the agents. The twelve-point collective agreement was signed by the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Federation and the Artistic Agents' Association in September 1938, the purpose of which was defined as follows: "Mutual protection of the interests of Gypsy music and job placement, respect for signed contracts and the elimination of the anomalies experienced." (Magyar Cigányzene 1938g:4) The document listed at length the rights and obligations of Gypsy musicians and agents vis-à-vis each other, as well as the amount of commission, the procedure for concluding contracts and disputes (*ibid.*).

The steps taken by the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Federation to improve the financial situation of Gypsy musicians eventually came to a halt because there was a division within the organisation. Namely, the orchestra members, claiming that the federation led by the Gypsy first violinists could not produce a breakthrough in their social existence, turned to rebellion and took over control. Due to unceasing internal tensions and the incompetence of the new leadership, the federation first came under the supervision of an official governmental commissioner and then was finally disbanded (Hajnáczky 2019:54–58).

## 5.6 Conclusion

Four journals concerning Gypsies in Hungary appeared in the first half of the twentieth century. The wealthiest Hungarian Gypsies and the most integrated into majority society were mostly Gypsy musicians. Gypsy musicians primarily lived dispersed within the borders of towns and cities, and it was not uncommon for them to accumulate considerable wealth or maintain close contacts with influential non-Gypsies. In part, the favourable social situation of the predominant personalities in Gypsy musical society made it possible for them to form associations and publish journals during this time. The Gypsy musicians' associations bore the characteristics of a trade union formed by an occupational group composed by, and integrally related to, a specific ethnicity. Gypsy

musicians formed the most prestigious caste of the Romungro group with Hungarian as their mother tongue. They strictly distinguished themselves from Boyash and Vlach Gypsies, whose native language was not Hungarian. Their publications do not contain any hint at them having any pretence of wanting to represent the interests of all Gypsies, not even the non-musical Romungro. As a result, their publications focused exclusively on the issues of Gypsy musical society, their cultural and social affairs. Gypsy musicians had well integrated into the majority population; their journals, therefore, did not focus on the issue of social integration or social equality of the entire Gypsy community. Instead, they sought to strengthen their social standing and to improve their financial circumstances and opportunities. The journals concerned themselves with reinforcing the Hungarian Gypsy musicians' particular identity and the continuation of their traditions. Furthermore, they sought to develop and assist the progress of Gypsy musical solidarity and, therefore, the unified representation of their interests. Following the treaty of Trianon, the journals, in addition to the previously mentioned content, expressed their common fate and solidarity with the Hungarian nation. This was not due to any intent at assimilation, but it was an expression of their feelings of belonging to the Hungarian nation, while, at the same time, preserving their Hungarian Gypsy musicians' ethnic identity. We can sum up that, in the end, all these efforts led to civic emancipation for at least of part of Gypsy community and Hungarian Gypsy music becoming an integral part of Hungarian culture.



# USSR

*Viktor Shapoval*

## 6.1 Introduction

In the aftermath of the First World War, the 1917 revolutions and the Civil War, Russia was a collapsed, devastated country, where hunger and disasters ruled. Under these conditions, the construction of a new state began. The New Economic Policy (1921–1928) started with the cautious allowance of old market relations that helped achieve a short stabilisation. Later, from 1928, five-year plans were introduced with the aim to mobilise the economy by regulatory measures in order to strengthen the country for defence, declaring the motto “the best defence is a good offence.” Against this background, the intellectual and artistic life was experiencing a decade of post-revolutionary freedom (hungry, but intoxicated with hope), discovering new trends in the field of poetry, theatre, plastic arts, architecture, limited only by the task of serving the working people of the whole world. Remarkable experiments in the field of social construction, reconstruction and (often bloody) deconstruction pushed the very different forces of society in the struggle for the right to make decisions, but gradually unanimity and total control replaced freedom and diversity. In this whirlpool of events and opinions, an affirmative action (Martin 2001) in relation to nationalities was perceived as a natural and integral part of the proletarian internationalism, limited only by fears of the bourgeois nationalism. Among the many manifestations of the concept of the brotherhood of all nationalities, a Gypsy nationality project was implemented and led to the creation of a completely new literature, which will be discussed in this chapter.

The main principles of the USSR policies towards the Gypsies as part of the general nationalities policy were declared many times: the Gypsies, as a nationality oppressed by Tsarism, had full civil rights in the USSR and enthusiastically participated in the construction of socialism. They thus also looked forward to the moment when their foreign brothers will be free from the capitalist oppression. The Gypsy project became one of the ethnically oriented projects of the Soviet cultural revolution, but a very remarkable one. It had reached a unique and worldwide unprecedented success. Books, schools, clubs, and other cultural achievements demonstrated new opportunities for the development of the small nationality:

*Ласа адасавэ рэндэ машкир ромэндэ, сыр романэ школы, клубы, лолэ вэнглы, романы печать. Ласа адасавэ рэндэ сыр одова, со романэчявэ (чявэ и чяя) джяна тэ сыклён*

и прэ буты. Адава сыкавэла, со культура машкир ромэндэ залыяпэ [...] Бутяритко государство заботисола ваш ромэндэ, дрэван камэл тэ газдэл машкир ромэндэ культура. Государство подкирла пэскирэ стредствэнца и отмэкэла бут ловэ прэ амарэ культурна рэндэ. Пирдал адая помошь амэндэ сы пэскирэ школы, клубы, журнало, книги. (Панково 1930:3)

Let's take such things among Roma such as Roma schools, clubs, red corners [propaganda spots], the Roma media. Let's take such things like the fact that Roma (boys and girls) go to study and work. This shows that the culture among the Roma started to develop [...] The workers' state takes care of the Roma, really wants to raise the culture of Roma. The state supports with its resources and releases a lot of money for our cultural deeds. Thanks to this help, we have our own schools, clubs, one journal, books.

It is symptomatic that the author's attention focused on new organisational forms and spaces as symbols of the 'correct' culture. This is tightly and naturally connected with their state support and advantages for an ethnic nationality. Such a relationship model describes Roma mostly as passive consumers of this massive cultural care. This impression is supported by examples such as the insufficient involvement of Moscow Roma in the cultural events organised by Roma activists and the government. And it is a very important nuance for understanding the Gypsy educators' attitude toward their own people.

The cultural achievements of the Gypsy project looked great. However, according to some authors, this project was nothing but a Potemkin village and one of the many imitations forged for propaganda purposes (cf. Деметер, Бессонов & Кутенков 2000:206–207). At the same time, a balanced assessment of this policy should include undoubted acceptance of the wide range of new opportunities for cultural growth, that were possible only as part of the Soviet ideology and only available for the narrow layer of mostly urban Roma in Moscow and few other places. This did not underestimate the significance of the fact that, among other successes, over a decade period about 260 books were published in the firstly standardised Romani language, and this was a result of the exhausting efforts of a very small group of mostly nonprofessional writers. The period from 1926 to 1938 was very fruitful for Roma culture and especially for the new Romani literature, but at the same time it was a very hard time for everyday life conditions. The Roma 'Renaissance' paradoxically started in the period when relative economic freedom was ended and when food shortage began to increase.

The long-lasting result was a new ideal image of an educated Roma, which was deeply rooted in the memory of the nationality:

Папу миро сыкльыа ды Романэ школа интернато (ды штэто "Нижняя Дубровенка" ада надур ки Смоленск на окраине города)... ада ки война исыс. И да интэрнатостыр потом бут ромэн битчхадэ ки Москва ды варисаво Педогогическо техникумо ваш ромэнги исыс скидка при поступлении.

My grandfather studied at the Roma boarding school (in the town of Nizhniaya Dubrovenka, this place was near the city of Smolensk on its outskirts [now the city street near the village Serebrianka])... this place, where the war was. And later from this boarding school many [graduate] Roma were sent in Moscow to some kind of Pedagogical College, for Roma there was a discount on admission. (Dmitriy Gasperovich, email correspondence with the author, April 27, 2003)

The project had a huge positive impact. Education was, and still is in a way, aimed to make someone's life better (Деметер 2014:3). Everyday life conditions of Gypsies did not differ from the rest of the population and thus was full of troubles. The 1917 Russian revolutions profoundly changed the lives of millions of people, Gypsy choirs and horse trading lost most of their incomes, because the population was getting poorer. The New Economic Policy (1921–1928) allowed a private initiative to normalise living conditions in order to only accumulate strength for the Great Break. The new goals of the state were industrialisation and collectivisation, and they left almost no time for leisure, which reduced Gypsy choirs' income. The actress Olga Demeter-Charskaya (1915–2016) was reminded of a hit song of that time, titled *Трактористка* (a woman driving tractor); the song was considered as an ideal combination of two politically correct themes: industrialisation and collectivisation, and was a dream for any Gypsy woman in a choir. The famine of 1932–1934 (Eaton 2004:16, 42) was a heavy period for Roma, which finally destroyed the basis of former Gypsy autarky. Official employment and trade union membership become important. The younger generation started to look for new opportunities. Nikolay Pankov, one of the most active personalities leading the Roma project emphasised that new phenomena and institutions were presumably involving young Roma. For many of the Gypsy men, there was a common path towards new careers, through the Red Army enlistment, for example: Mikhail Bezlyudskiy, Andrey Taranov. This experience explains their inclination to simple solutions and no ideological hesitations. They stood far from delicacy in resolving issues of social constructing and reconstructing.

The Soviet authorities did not immediately pay attention to the Gypsy nationality. To claim the opposite should be interpreted more as a rhetorical statement, as this one shows:

С первых дней Октябрьской революции советская власть, освободившая отсталые народы СССР, поставила перед собою заботу о приобщении цыган к трудовому организованному населению и о вовлечении их в производство и строительство социалистического общества. (Таранов 1929:21)

From the first days of the October Revolution, the Soviet government, which liberated the backward peoples of the USSR, set itself the task of introducing Roma to the organised working people and of involving them in the production and construction of the socialist society.

In general, the chronological boundaries of the Soviet cultural revolution are rather vague. Even its central period, when the so-called *культсбор* (an additional tax from many groups of the population for the development of culture) was introduced, is outlined indefinitely from the early 1930s to 1942 or 1943. On the contrary, the chronology of the Roma cultural project is very clear, starting in 1925 and ending in 1938. In 1925, a group of Roma activists started to organise the All-Russian Union, which existed formally until February 1928 (Marushiakova and Popov 2008:2). Again in 1925, in December, the first Gypsy school was opened in Moscow (Дударова 1927:16). The end date can be considered August 1938, because in September the Gypsy schools were reorganised into Russian ones. In 1926, the project of Cyrillic Romani alphabet was officially approved (Черенков 2013:8). At the same time, Roma emancipation has become more active: organised activists started working on shifting Roma to the sedentary way of life (Деметер & Черных 2018:210). The first leaflet of the All-Russian Union of Gypsies emphasises that its leaders are Gypsies (Таранов et al. 1927:1). They reasonably believed that this focus was important for their readers. The energy of nationality-oriented people yielded impressive results. That very short period gave at least 260 books, 13 years of school education and organisation of Gypsy working communities in many trades. It also led to the establishment of the Roma theatre, which still exists and continues to be popular.

Geographically, those events were possible mainly in Moscow, and seldom in few other areas. There were no Roma schools in Leningrad, for instance. In short, the stage was very narrow and Roma enthusiasm was thoroughly controlled, as any nationally oriented activity of the time.

Some aspects and results of the Soviet Roma project have been discussed before (Kenrick 2007; Lemon 2000; O'Keefe 2013), but comprehensive description and analysis of the Romani language printed publications is still lacking and the topic remains underresearched. Such analysis is lacking, especially regarding the literature production process. Original documentation concerning the editorial and publishing processes of 1927–1938 can add important details. For this reason, the publishing chain processes, from authorship, through production, editing and censorship, and finally to readership, will be comprehensively discussed in the chapter.

Romani language books published before 1938, in pre-war USSR, could, by and large, be previously accessed: until 1938 they were considered a prominent success of Soviet national policy; later they were considered one of the successes of the respective period; after 1991 they were described as a simple and ineffective tool of communist propaganda (Деметер, Бессонов & Кутенков 2000:206–207). The multidimensional analysis by Valdemar Kalinin and Aleksandr Rusakov was the first to show the Soviet Romani literature as a successful example of a new national literature in its thematic and genre diversity, as well as a field of linguistic and poetic experiments (Русаков & Калинин 2016). This opens up a number of still unstudied aspects in this new literature phenomenon

that developed over only a decade. Rusakov also focused on the Soviet version of the standardised Romani language of the 1920s and 1930s in a socio-cultural context (2013). This is also a starting point for a deeper exploration of the language which had to be used not only for everyday communication, but on a higher level, in the field of politics, grammar, agriculture, geography, astronomy, etc. Despite the fact that the result was not always perfect, the attempt of those enthusiastic forerunners developed fast and powerfully and looks inspiring even a century later.

The struggle between the old and the new was very important for understanding the conflict within the Roma community. The Roma activists understood this and emphasised it. At the very beginning, the Soviet Gypsy cultural project was not a purely immanent ethnic initiative. It was also not at all an artificial construction. The project was an enthusiastic breakthrough undertaken by the Roma and non-Roma activists and sympathisers in order to reach many cultural aims at once. These aims were partly idealistic and controversial, but sincere. The balance between the original and translated books shows that external and especially socialist ideological and aesthetic values were dominating, but the language itself had its own internal peculiar values.

When the processes started in 1925, Roma were considered as ethnically united, nomads and natural internationalists. The activists thus believed that the differences between the Roma groups were very little and irrelevant (Шаповал 2020b). Perhaps this was one of the reasons for the project's failure. This narrow circle of activists effectively created a numerous and diverse literature and many other cultural projects. Though this tremendously interesting experiment was very fruitful, not very expensive and very fast, unfortunately it was stopped unripe, similarly to many other nationally oriented projects of that period.

The project did not continue after 1938 and many plans were left unfulfilled. The national Theatre *Romen*, however, continued to exist and became a new centre for cultural development. Nevertheless, a dozen years of predominantly elementary schooling had created a very thin but strong layer of relatively educated people in/for this small nation. Seemingly a Potemkin village for propaganda purposes, the project successfully united very talented Roma and their sympathisers.

The Gypsies, who made only 0.04 percent of the total Soviet population, had received a considerable cultural assistance, and many non-Roma persons were actively involved in the project. Two Roma bibliographies (Герман 1930; Саткевич 1966) unanimously show the special media attention toward Roma issues in the period 1927–1938 (Shapoval 2020:348) as illustrated in Figure 6.1. This was also the time of great popularity of the Gypsy choirs and, since 1930, of the *Romen* Theatre. Note that the top result of any other year of the twentieth century is less than 50 (1911), and in the ninetieth century is less than 20.

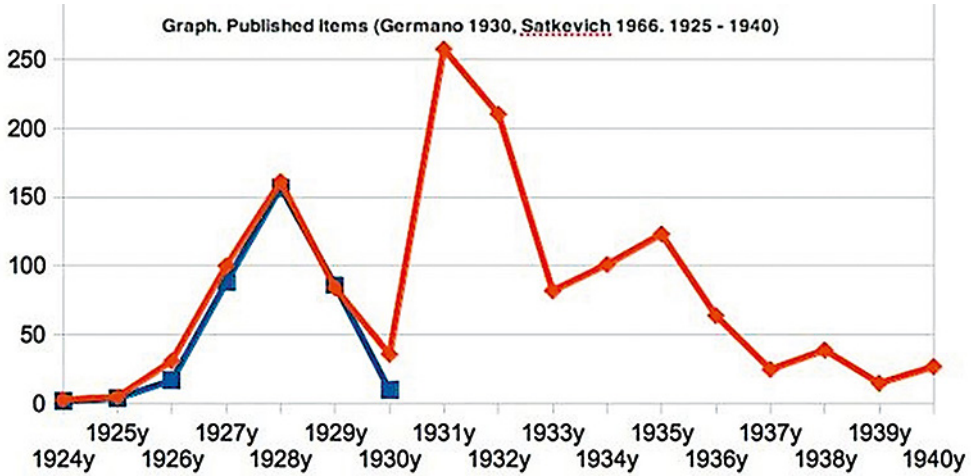


Figure 6.1 Number of published sources concerning Gypsies in Russia / USSR (1927–1938)

The public sympathy for Gypsy art, especially for singers, was doubtless. State support for minorities was also regular and visible in the success of their literature production (cf. Горький 1953:324). The linguistic aspect of this cultural work was called “language building” (Алпатов 2000:222). Gypsies were seen as an ideal object for such a social experiment. They were almost all illiterate. There was no alphabet for the Romani language, neither was there formal schooling in it. They were considered by the authorities to be nomadic and severely oppressed by Tsarism victims of former inequality.

Under these conditions, Romani literature, which was going to appear as a new great achievement of a previously illiterate small nationality, had to have support in advance. Comparing Ingush and Romani literature, two approximately equal in terms of the size nationalities, one can find an example of a very strong affirmative action (Martin 2001) toward Roma in this aspect: there were at least 110 books (more than 5800 pages) published in Romani language in 1927–1933, and only 97 items (including articles and poems, not exclusively books and brochures) published in Ingush for a twice longer period (Shapoval 2020:349).

## 6.2 The Production Process

The enthusiasm of the nationality’s activists and writers, as well as the support of the state and society are very important, but this intention alone is not enough for the books’ publication. One needs special equipment, paper, specialists and readers as final consumers.

There are at least two different aspects in the production process. On the one hand, is the aspect related to the history of the Romani literature as an intellectual phenomenon. This includes discussion on the personalities who created the new literature, what

samples and aims did they have in their new project, among others. On the other hand, are the aspects related to economic and social history, addressing questions such as how the technical process was organised, where and how Roma books were printed, how they were delivered and where they were used. The last aspect and questions have still not been studied closely.

In order to create his poems, the poet needs a bit of inspiration, a sheet of paper, and a piece of bread, too. The typographer needs machines, qualified workers and many other things to create a book. The following example demonstrates how technical resources are important; in 1938, the reorganisation of the national book publishing system temporary left the Roma authors without a printing house. The efforts to change the situation were unsuccessful, because previously “all Gypsy literature was published in the 17th Printing House of the city of Moscow” (RGALI, Ф. 631, Оп. 6, Д. 617, Л. 34), and the state plans did not provide other possibilities for printing for few years. The limited technical resources in this case were aggravated by the lack of specialists who perished during the wave of repression ending in 1937–1938. In general, it is well known that Gypsy books were created in the USSR until the 1938, but the details of this process were partly unseen behind the general enthusiastic formula: Gypsies were one of the many people, repressed by Tsarism, who escaped to the light of freedom and knowledge.

We should start with the simplest question, though rarely touched upon. Producing books requires a printing house and specialists. In 1928–1931 Gypsy books were published in two printing houses of the Central Publishing House of the Peoples of the USSR (*Tsentrizdat*):

1. Almost every Romani language book was printed and bound at one address: Moscow, Shlyuzovaya embankment, house number 162. Before 1917 (at least since 1897) this was a dyeing factory and paper mill of the 2nd guild merchant Alexander Grigoryevich Kirillov (Вся Москва 1915:333). Now it is a ruin, though listed in the Red Book (i.e. book with list of threatened artefacts) of Architecture (Электронный п. д.). The contemporary address is Moscow, Shlyuzovaya embankment, 10.

Since 1927, this was the Printing house “Book Factory” of *Tsentrizdat*, which gathered specialists for book production in 52 languages. Head of the Editorial Sector of the publishing house was Semen Markovich Dimanstein, 1886–1938 (Вся Москва 1927:351). The same complex of buildings, placed on the street corner, had another address: Shliuzovoy passage, no. 6, as it is indicated in the first Soviet Roma book which was an ABC-book for adults (Дударова & Панков 1928:96).

When, in 1931, *Tsentrizdat* was reorganised, its “Book Factory” (at Shliuzovaya embankment, 10) was managed by Viktor Samuilovich Wainstock and Head of production was Genrich Franzevich Matz/Motz, 1889–1938 (Вся Москва 1931:457). Later it was named the Printing house of the *Polygraphkniga* Trust (OGIZ) No. 17 (known as “Factory of National Books”) and was headed by Aleksey Petrovich Shchukin, 1894–1938 and technical/product head continued to be G. F. Motz, alias Matz (Вся Москва 1936:197). Since 1932 until 1938 Printing house No. 17 printed all Romani language books prepared during this period

by various state-owned publishing institutions. However, many technical specialists (not of Roma origin) involved in the printing of books in many languages were dead after the Great Purge. It was the lack of skilled hands that made the recovery of the Romani language books' production process after 1939 a difficult task. This, however, is only an assumption and one interpretation. Soon, the Second World War started, which changed all possible plans for book printing.

2. In 1930–1931, the *Tsentrizdat* possessed the second printing house in the second capital city Leningrad, where a small number of Romani language books was also printed. Before the 1917 Revolution, it was a printing house of the Governing Senate that was the legislative, judicial, and executive body of the Russian Emperors; and nowadays it is the building of the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation. The factory had two addresses. The printing house of the *Tsentrizdat* named *Comintern* was located in the Senate's printing house building: house 1, Krasnaya (former Galernaya) and headed by Ivan Andreevich Vishnyakov, 1898–? (Весь Ленинград 1930:181; Весь Ленинград 1931:192), who wasn't involved in Romani language book production after 1939, as he was drafted in the army during the Second World War where he worked as a naval typographer and was awarded military awards afterwards. This address is indicated on the Romani language translation of the famous book by Klim Voroshilov (1881–1969) *Авэла-ли марибэ?* (Will There Be a War?) (Ворошьолово 1931:2), which was a brief and trivial explanation of the inevitability of the future world war, printed in Russian several times by millions of copies. The second building of the printing house *Comintern* was in the former printing house “Kügelgen, Glitsch & C” (established 1906), and was located at Yekaterinhofskiy (now Rimskiy-Korsakov) Avenue, 87 (Весь Ленинград 1926:161; Весь Ленинград 1935:411). We have not yet discovered a Romani language book indicating that it had been printed at this address.

Producing books in the Romani language was not at all an easy task. Surprisingly, the Romani literature production was rapidly growing during the years of paper shortage in the country. Many of the preserved manuscripts of Roma authors were not written on standard sheets (they were not on sale), but on hand-slanted sheets cut off from a large printing roll. This was gray rough paper with spread ink and not always good pens. The quality of the paper and writing materials, however, contrasts with the careful and clear handwriting on these papers. The censors, who left traces of a red pencil marking undesirable and doubtful places, and typesetters, who left black fingerprints on the margins, worked directly with these copies.

The shortage of writing paper in any form as well as paper for book printing was shocking and offensive, as Korney Chukovskiy, one of the most published Soviet authors, witnessed in his diary (Чуковский 1991:42, 59, 77, 76). Nevertheless, in the meantime, there was paper especially provided for ethnic minorities' books. For instance, in 1933, in Crimea, “There are also a lot of books printed in Tatar [language]. But the Tatars hardly read them – and the saleswoman at the kiosk told me that in the end she was tearing these books into pieces – and in the form of package she was selling them to customers

who come for grapes.” (ibid:79) It is highly possible to suppose that some Romani language publications blindly sent somewhere for sale had the same fate.

Every year the writers of the Gypsy group of the Moscow Association of Proletarian Writers (MAPP) fought for a small place in the state plans for their books. It wasn't a certain thing. In one of his preserved letters, Alexander Germano officially asked the *Tsentrizdat* about Gypsy books planned for 1932 (Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4777, Л. 66). The answer to this request remains unknown, but the year 1932 was in the end the most successful one for Romani language books' production.

In addition, other state publishers were also obliged to publish books in the languages of the USSR peoples, including Romani. It was a difficult task because of the lack of skilled people, e.g. in the Nationalities Sector of ONTI (abbreviation of *Объединенное Научно-Техническое Издательство* in Russian or Joint Scientific and Technical Publishers) “the main staff by the day of the report is only 30 percent full.” (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4720, Л. 1) This led to the urgent involvement of partly unskilled personnel for the translation of technical texts: “12-е) Contact Moscow organisations ... and take into account the members of nationalities there.” (ibid.:2) In the resolution on the Report of this sector on December 19, 1931 is written that “the GIKhL [State Publishing House for Fiction Literature] had not complied with the decisions of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks dated August 15, 1931, as the work on the production of fiction in languages of a significant part of nationalities has not yet been organised.” (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4720, Л. 3) In such alarming situation many publishing houses were forced to participate in this work by publishing books of different nationalities: “Use the stuff of all publishers included in ONTI for parallel publication of literature in Russian and nationalities' languages.” (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4720, Л. 1 об.) This measure also explains the apparent peak in the number of Romani language publications that was reached in 1932.

Appropriate measures were taken very soon: “3 – ... shock-working month started from February 15 to March 20 [1932] ... the issue of nationalities' literature should be transferred to the socialist conveyor.” (ibid.:4) The last term (in Russian *соцконвейер, социалистический конвейер*) meant activation of workers' proposals and inventions aimed at improving the efficiency of their work. Today this process would be called ‘constant brainstorming’.

Russian books were pushed back in line and priority was given to the preparation of books in the languages of nationalities: “7 – As a last resort for the elimination of downtime ... allow the loading of linotypes of the 17th Printing House with Russian typing, if there is no typing in nationalities' languages.” (ibid.:4)

Perhaps the Romani language publications were even in a better position in the 17th Printing House when compared to the other nationalities' languages. At that time, an essential part of the activities related to small languages was devoted to Latinisation. This process did not touch the Romani language which continued to be published in Cyrillic. The meeting of the editorial board “Creativity of the Peoples of the USSR” at the

GIKhL (State Publishing House for Fiction Literature) on December 22, 1936 concluded that the plan for book production of Gypsy literature was 100 percent complete (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4720, Л. 37). Strangely enough, this monumental book of 1937 (Горький & Мехлис 1937) did not include any translation from Romani (Shapoval 2021:7).

The standard print-run of Romani language books was from 1000 to 500. There are two reasons why Romani books of the interwar period have been preserved so poorly. The first reason is understandable and obvious, as at that time books and other paper things disappeared. Under the conditions of lack of paper, any piece of paper could be used for the needs of the everyday life. Roll-up cigarettes and fruit and herring packaging are quite obvious ways of use. The second reason is not so simple. The editor and publisher Leonid Domgerr informs: “The copies of the first half volume [of A. Pushkin’s works] published at the end of 1938 reached the print-run of ‘27,000’, although in reality only 5,000 copies were printed.” (Домгерь 1987:328, note 17) If Pushkin’s ceremonial jubilee edition suffered so much from the paper deficiency, it is hard to imagine what a gap could be expected between the declared and the real print-run of nationalities’ publications of that time. A print-run of 500–1000 copies does not differ technically from a print-run of 100 copies, as the paper used for adjustment and test sheets just consumes up such insufficient savings. Thus, the very modest print-run of 500–1000 for Romani language books should be considered accurate and not far from the exact number of printed copies.

On the one hand, the Gypsy writer was fairly well protected from suspicions of having a wrong social background; he (or she) could not be accused of an exploitative social background. On the other hand, the taxation system of artists was very disappointing and sometimes the material profit from creative work was hardly existing.

It would be interesting to look at the information about authors’ fees. When interpreting retail prices for the period of the first two five-year plans (1928–1937), we should take into account the plausible assumption that the real purchasing power of the rouble (*червонец*) decreased very fast. This process was uneven and almost catastrophic in the period 1931–1933. Roma activists and writers, however, somehow survived this period. The fees of creative workers were constantly growing in nominal terms, although this hardly compensated the real devaluation.

Writers and translators worked intensively. For example, in 1932 Nikolay Pankov had translated a minimum of 461 pages and edited more than 360 pages of translations by other persons. In addition, he worked as a Gypsy teachers’ instructor and a political activist. It is worth pointing out that, in 1932, having a lot of work meant a bitter luck, as work could cover only the necessary basic living expenses, which still for many people was just an unreachable dream.

On the base of book publishing statistics, I have previously emphasised the crucial bond between the first and the second five-year plans for the development of the national economy of the Soviet Union, and how it had affected the Romani language books’ planning (Shapoval 2020:352). We know very little about the first five-year period. There is an undated list of the average fees signed by A. Ryabinina, then head of the National Sector

of the Leningrad branch of the State Publishing House for Fiction Literature (GIKhL). Apparently, soon after 1933, the author of prose in a language of a nationality of the USSR received 150–250 roubles for one printed sheet with a print-run of 2000 copies (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4777, Л. 14).

Later, Ivan Rom-Lebedev and Mikhail Alekseevich Ilyinskiy, “acting jointly in relation to rights and obligations,” as authors of the book “Stories from the life of Gypsies before the revolution and under the Soviets (in Gypsy),” under the agreement No 1873 of July 31, 1936 received 350 roubles for one printed sheet with a print-run of 1000 copies (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4777, Л. 6). As an additional difficulty and lack of many things on sale, the so called ‘commodity famine’ was imposed on this money devaluation. It was impossible to buy the most ordinary things without coupons which were set up for regulating distribution. They are mentioned in the literary works of the Roma author as a sign of the everyday life. Bezlyudskiy for instance proudly wrote that he was able to obtain coupons for clothes for Roma schoolchildren:

Нагара сарэ тыкнэ чяворэ савэ ськлёна дрэ романы школа гынэ манца дро Мосторго и пиро ордеры льям ваш кажнонэскэ тривики калошэнца. (Безлюдско 1931:26)

Recently all the little children who study in the Roma school have come to the store Mostorg with me and we, on coupons, bought everyone boots with galoshes.

The state organised nationalities’ projects were rarely profitable. According to Contract number 1568 (of April 13, 1936), Nikolay Pankov had to get for the Romani translation of the story *The Stationmaster* by A. Pushkin (about 110–120 pages) 875 roubles (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4777, Л. 28). In this case the profit could be only 50 roubles (500 copies, 0.10 roubles each). It is obvious that book production costs were significantly higher. Unfortunately, we have no information about other books. Often in contracts was indicated a (twice) higher number of copies than in the issued book itself. How this affected the translator’s and author’s fee is unknown. On the one hand, in the standard contract form we find no mentions of compensation to the author in case the publishers did not fulfil their obligations: “6. The publishing house undertakes to publish the work indicated in clause 1 in the amount of 1000 copies” (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4777, Л. 23 об.), the option “If not ...” is omitted. On the other hand, in 1932, the high-ranking Soviet writer Boris Pilnyak received 5,000 roubles as a compensation, since the publisher did not have paper to print his book (Чуковский 1991:59).

One of the last books published in USSR, in 1938, was a collection of prosaic works by Aleksey Aleksandrovich Svetlov (1897–1961), a member (since 1936) of the Union of Writers of the USSR. There is a note about him in an official document, the author of which is not indicated in the copy: “a modest (almost wordless) in life, but a significant writer in Gypsy literature, Leksa Svetlov – Aleksey Aleksandrovich.” (RGALI Ф. 631, Оп. 6, Д. 617, Л. 44) The main and initial part of his book was the novelette *Ром Хвасю* (Светлово 1938:3–117). Svetlov had a contract with the State Publishing House for Fiction

Literature signed on June 28, 1937 and the manuscript was submitted to the publisher on December 1, 1937 (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4777, Л. 7). This confirms our hypothesis that in 1938 only Romani language books planned for the previous five-year period (1933–1937) were published. Further publication of Romani books became impossible due to organisational and institutional problems: “However, in 1938, when some Moscow publishing houses closed their national sectors and transferred the publishing of national literature to the respective republics, Gypsy writers lost all opportunity to be printed in their native language.” (RGALI Ф. 631, Оп. 6, Д. 617, Л. 33)

The last Romani language books were ordered for printing in June 1938. One of them was the Gypsy-Russian dictionary compiled by Aleksey Barannikov and Maksim Sergievskiy (Баранников & Сергиевский 1938). This dictionary was in preparation for several years and its concept changed few times. In 1931 the journal *Нэво дром* (New Way) informed its subscriber A. Putiata that “[t]he Gypsy-Russian dictionary will be printed this autumn” (Нэво дром 1931:24). Later, the edition was promoted in different format to be published by different publisher that, in fact, was never issued:

Дрэ издательство “Советско Энциклопедия” авэла вымэкно лынаскиро баро “Романо-русско-английско словарё”, саво стховэна профессоро А. П. Баранниково и профессоро М. В. Сергиевско. (Романо- 1932:23)

This summer, a large *Romani-Russian-English Dictionary* will be published at the *Soviet Encyclopaedia* Publishing House, it is composing by Professor A. P. Barannikov and Professor M. V. Sergievskiy.

This is the only mention of this publishing house in connection with Gypsy book publishing. The dictionary was published in a hurry and not in a final and fully prepared version, which led to some criticism (Черенков 2013:9; Шаповал 2013).

The 1920s and 1930s were an interesting era in the USSR: the visual arts went through the evolution from revolutionary intoxication with freedom and extreme formal experiments to severe dogmatic and militaristic laconism. At the same time, the printing technique improved markedly. Unfortunately, very little is known about the designers of the Romani language books as only few names were indicated in the 1930s. For example, in 1932, Arkadiy Ivanovich Shcherbakov (1901–1971) made five drawings in black ink for the novel by Bezlyudskiy *Грай* (Horse) (1933: front page, 9, 33, 7, 27). All five sheets with illustrations were later used in the book (Безлюдско 1932), which had been printed and available in libraries now. The name Shcherbakov is provided in the book (Безлюдско 1933:2). In many other cases, the names of the designers remain unknown. It is noteworthy that on the reverse side of the sheets there are pencil notes signed by I. V. Shishkov which read “pay two times” (note one) and “60 rubles” (note five). The reasons for such method for payment are unclear to us, but at least these documents help us understand how the book design and pictures were paid.

The state support for Romani language publishing also determined the relatively low retail prices of books. The total price of the whole Romani collection (counting one copy of each printed book) in 1938 has reached a bit more than a monthly salary of a mid-qualified worker. In another scale it costs no more than five–six pounds of green coffee beans in 1938 Moscow, that is a rare food item which had never been under rationing limitation in the USSR.

However, these books' prices did not include the price of distribution. Distribution was generally very poorly organised: "Much attention was paid to the very weak work of the National Sector of the *Knigotsentr* (a united state bookseller) for the Gypsy books distribution." (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4720, Л. 33) The problem is obvious as sellers had a lot of troubles and almost no income from these books. Readers might have been looking for them in vain.

When publishers were correcting thematic plans for the first trimester of 1934, discussions arose, for example, on the atheist books (*What Do Gypsies Believe in?* and *What Is Superstition*), between publishers who were interested in politically correct topics (obviously in the scale of that time) and booksellers who were more worried about book distribution and sales: "The representative of the Book Selling Centre KNIGOTSENTR Rybak objects to the publication of an anti-religious textbook in the Tat and Gypsy languages, [although] in the annual plan these names were approved and agreed upon with the National Sector of the KNIGOTSENTR." (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4720, Л. 23) Comrade Rybak knew those books are very hard for sale, although their prices were low.

In a letter of June 1941, Mikhail Bezlyudskiy asked the employee of the Gypsy section of the Writers' Union Elizaveta Muraviova to buy for him a "little book of my songs" in Moscow. He was informed about it by the composer Semen Mikhailovich Bugachevskiy (1903–1968) but had not seen it yet himself (RGALI Ф. 631, Оп. 6, Д. 617, Л. 115). If this was a book published in 1934, Bezlyudskiy could have gotten it, for example, when visiting Moscow in 1935–1936. The exact details of this songbook are not mentioned in the letter. But this example is very illustrative for the fact that for some reason an author living far from Moscow was unable to buy a copy of his own book. Romani books distribution was a very serious problem in a big country.

One can conclude that the figures of print-run were quite satisfying (one copy of any Romani language book for 60–120 persons was a very good index of supplying for that time), while the Romani books' distribution was poorly organised. A document from 1935 shows that Romani books were sold very slowly, e.g., 767 out of 1000 copies were still unsold of Stalin's *About Technique* (Сталино 1932) and 854 out of 1000 copies from Amosov's *The Struggle against Religion and [for] Socialism* (Амосово 1932) remained unsold as well (RGALI, Ф. 1810, Оп. 1, Д. 514, Л. 79–81 об.).

On the one hand, there were schools for Gypsy children, for instance, in the village of Serebrianka near the city of Smolensk, and they have probably received Romani textbooks from Moscow for free. That is why there was no data about school textbooks in

the document mentioned above. A document from 1936 shows similar problems and explains the slow selling of Romani language handbooks because of the small number of students, estimating the need for Romani textbooks in four regions from 15 to 100 copies per year (GARF, Ф. Р 1235, Оп. 123, Д. 27, Ч. 4, Л. 95–96).

At the same time, there were places where Roma were waiting for handbooks in vain. An unnamed Gypsy girl with the penname *Kolkhozaritsa* (a Kolkhoz woman) wrote, envisioning Moscow as a book paradise:

Дрэ Москва лылваритко бандза зачиды романэ лылварьенца, а адай дро романо гавытко совэто нанэ ни екх лылвари прэ романы чиб... Бут молы РОНО и товаришшѐ Безлюдско чиндя дрэ Москва папири соб тэ выбичавэн романэ лылваря савэ исы, нэ уса жэ лылваритко бандза на камэл тэ выбичавэл. (Колхозарица 1934:1).

In Moscow, the bookstore is littered with Romani books, but here in the Roma rural district there is not a single book in Romani ... And the district education department and comrade Bezlyudskiy wrote letters to Moscow many times asking to send Romani books, which are for sale, but still the bookstore does not want to send.

This unequal distribution of textbooks was indirectly caused by a fixed price for nationalities' textbooks, which included the cost of delivery, including distant transportation of small lots of relatively inexpensive books unprofitable for merchants. The other reason was the weak advertising system. In the Russian State Library were discovered only four reference and informational publications (of very modest format) that helped bookstores and libraries to order books for nationalities in 1935–1936. In 1935, two catalogues included two pages of Gypsy books (План 1935:19–20; Новые 1935-1:19–20) and one page referred to them in a similar publication in 1936 (Новые 1936-II:7). In 1935, a 23-page catalogue of textbooks and other books for students in Romani language was published (Стабильные 1935). This was not a lot at all. And, thus, it was especially important that Romani language journals in 1927–1932 regularly published reviews and announcement for newly published books in Romani. In addition, the subscribers of *Нэво дром* journal received 12 items of books as a bonus to the edition in the period from January until October 1931. One of them was written by an unknown Smolensk Roma activist de visu: “Мурачковский [Василий], Ваш со ракирла нэво гавитко хулаибнытко артельно уставо.” which translates as “Vasiliy Murachkovskiy, What does the new [Standard] charter of agricultural cooperative farms say?” (Нэво дром 1930:21)

### 6.3 Roma Press in the USSR

Roma periodicals in the USSR between the two World Wars were formally divided into journals and newspapers. The Romani journals were more numerous than the newspapers, although they were more expensive to produce. This imbalance is quite unusual as typically newspapers are more numerous than journals. Copies of the Romani language

journals are much better preserved and available in libraries, while copies of the newspapers are less preserved. For this reason, as well as in order to follow a chronological order, it is natural to start from the journals.

Viktor Shklovskiy noted in 1924 that “[p]olitical journals block the perception of a journal as a literary form. But they also have their own history.” (Шкловский 1990:386) The Romani language journals appeared only ten years after the formation of Soviet Russia, in a time when the balance between literature and politics on the journals’ pages was clearly inclined towards the predominance of political topics.

Two Soviet Romani language journals are known. They were published sequentially by approximately the same circle of persons and the communist Andrey S. Taranov was executive editor: *Романы зоря* (Roma Dawn, 1927–1930) and *Нэво дром* (New Way, 1930–1932). The editorial staff was not personally announced, but it is known that Alexander Germano, the most productive Romani language author of the time, played an important and main role in the preparation of the journals’ issues.

The first journal was distributed free of charge, as it is shown on the back side of the wrapper. The second journal was sold at a fairly modest price of 15–25 copecks per issue. For comparison purposes, one can consider that in this period a visit to the bath house, a movie, a tram ride, and a pay-phone booth tariff were a *dime*, or 10 kopecks (Жолковский 2010). According to the posters of the Gypsy performances of the Leningrad Ethnographic Theatre under the direction of Vsevolod N. Vsevolodskiy-Gerngross, which were extremely popular for decades, at the end of 1930 had “the price of places from 25 kopecks up to 1 rouble 50 kopecks” (RGALI: Ф. 2640, Оп. 1, Д. 130). In 1931, the prices of tickets for the First Moscow State Circus varied from 1.40 to 4.90 roubles (Вся Москва 1931:247). See Figure 6.2.

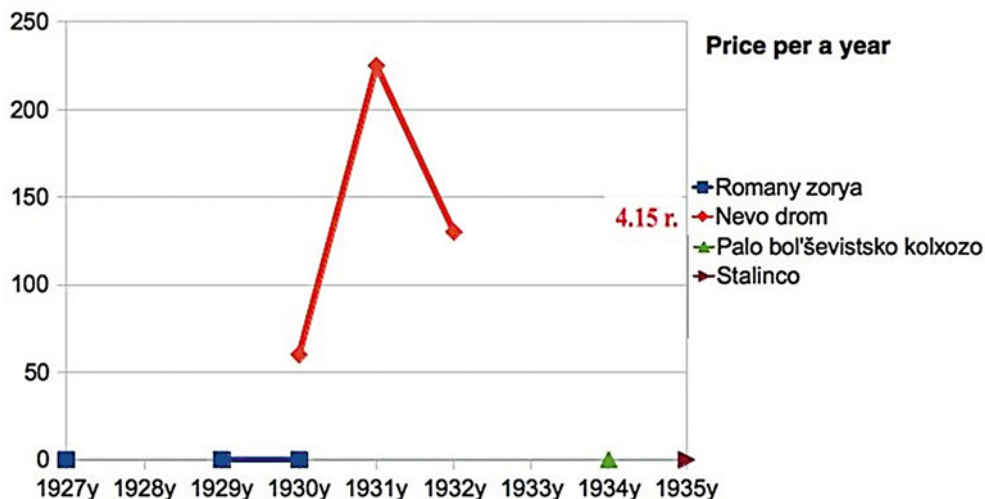


Figure 6.2 Romani language periodicals in the USSR: price per year

In addition, another difference between the two journals was that *Романы зоря* journal was actually an annual periodical (three issues were published during its four-year existence, the last one being a double one, see Table 6.1), while *Нэво дром* journal was a monthly one (during 24 months there were 19 issues, five of them were double, see Table 6.2).

Table 6.1 *Романы зоря* (Roma Dawn) journal: issues and number of pages

Year	1927	1928	1929	1930 (August)
<b>Романы зоря</b>	Issue 1, 35 pp.		Issue 2, 50 pp.	Issue 3–4, 64 pp.

According to preliminary announcements and advertisements (Германю 1930:32; Лебедево 1930:31), the second journal was named *Буляритко ром* (A Working Rom).

Table 6.2 *Нэво дром* (New Way) journal: number of issue, number of pages and price in kopecks

Year	1930	1931	1932
January		Issue 1, 36 pp., 25 kop.	Issue 1, 24 pp., 20 kop.
February		Issue 2, 36 pp., 25 kop.	Issue 2–3, 32 pp., 30 kop.
March		Issue 3, 32 pp., 25 kop.	
April		Issue 4–5, 32 pp., 25 kop.	Issue 4, 24 pp., 20 kop.
May			Issue 5, 24 pp., 20 kop.
June		Issue 6, 32 pp., 25 kop.	Issue 6, 24 pp., 20 kop.
July		Issue 7, 24 pp., 25 kop.	Issue 7, 24 pp., 20 kop.
August	Issue 1, 16 pp., 15 kop.	Issue 8, 24 pp., 25 kop.	
September	Issue 2, 20 pp., 15 kop.	Issue 9–10, 32 pp., 25 kop.	
October	Issue 3, 24 pp., 15 kop.		
November	Issue 4–5, 25 pp., 15 kop.	Issue 11–12, 24 pp., 25 kop.	
December			

A subscription was announced to the *Нэво дром* journal. However, the visible decrease in the volume of issues, as well as the publication of double issues at the end of the year, indicate constant difficulties in the journal's publishing. At the end of 1931, the Central Publishing House of the Peoples of the USSR (*Tsentrizdat*) was reorganised and included

into the GIZ (the United State Publishers). For this reason, the last double issue of the *Нэво дром* journal in 1931 and its first issue of 1932 were already published by the National Sector of the Educational Publishing House *Uchpedgiz*, the institution under the People's Commissariat for Education (*Narkompros*), although formally it was published at the old address of the previous publishing house *Tsentrizdat* (10, Nikolskaya St.). The next five issues of the journal, until July 1932, were prepared at the new editorial office: GIZ, 16, Kuznetskiy bridge, 16, *Uchpedgiz*, National Sector.

After the seventh issue of 1932, the publication of the *Нэво дром* journal suddenly stopped. Unexpected closure and no official comments from the authorities was a pattern repeated regularly in the Roma cultural projects. This time also, no explanation was given about the closure of the journal. It must have been a surprise for the editorial board too, since in the very last (seventh) issue for 1932, on the second page of the cover, as usual, was published an announcement about subscribing to the journal for 1.80 per year for 12 issues (which was a very solid discount as the retail price of an individual issue was 20 kopecks,  $12 \times 0.20 = 2.40$ ).

It is logical to think that the editors had several planned and unpublished issues at different stages of readiness. However, no traces of them have been found. Perhaps the decision to close the journal was provoked by the publication of a critical piece about the attitude of the authorities to the first Gypsy school in Moscow, located, since the end of 1925, near Taganka square. It was related to the visit of a delegation of foreign workers, probably proletarian writers, who were fascinated by the singing of the Roma school-children's choir. The delegation then visited the cramped basement in which the children were studying (*Нэво дром* 1932:10). This very serious 'political mistake' could have caused scandal and the closure of the journal. The place was anyway also endangered of being closed as the authorities had a different plan for its use:

Дрэ Москва сы романы школа, нэ джибэн лакиро дрэван и дрэван сы на мишто. Адая школа камнэ тэ пирильджан палю дэшудуй километры э штэтостыр, кай дживэна тыкнэ чяворэ. Камнэ тэ пирильджан одолэстыр, со штуба романы школа, дрэ сави ёй (школа) бутякирдя шов бэрш[,] ачяь треби ваш позбуглякир[и]бэ руссконэ школа. (*Нэво дром* 1932:9)

There is a Roma school in Moscow, but its life is very, very difficult. The authorities want to transfer this school 12 kilometres from the place where Roma children dwell. They want to replace it because the building of the Roma school in which it (the school) has been working for six years has become required for the expansion of the Russian school.

The content analysis of the journals shows the dominant position of political topics, as can be seen from Table 6.3 and Table 6.4. At the same time, the variety of forms and themes condensed in a small issue is striking.

Table 6.3 Contents of *Романы зоря* (Roma Dawn) journal, 1930, issue 3 and issue 4

Author	Title in Romani language and in English	Genre	Theme	Pages
A. S. Taranovo	Ваш колхозно строительство (On the organisation of collective farms)	Instructive article	Politics of sedentarisation	1–3
G. Lebedevo	Ваше политико-воспитательно буты (About the political education)	Analytical article	Need for ideological education	3–5
D. Savvov	Рома и коллективизация (Roma and collectivisation)	Opinion article	Benefits of collectivisation for Roma	6–9
N. Dudarova	Романы школа (Roma school)	Opinion article	Pros and cons in a concrete Roma school	10–13
Prof. M. V. Sergievskiy	Сыр треби тэ чинэс чячепнытко романэс (How to correctly write in Romani)	Educational article	Phonetical principle of spelling in Romani	13–14
Prof. M. V. Sergievskiy	Соскэ треби тэ скэдэс сарэ романэ лава (Why do we need to collect all the Romani words)	Educational article	Linguistic discussion	14–16
No author (G. Lebedevo)	Дрэ СССР (In the USSR)	Poetry	Successes of Soviet Roma	17
Alexander Germano	Ярга Yarga [a Gypsy Chief]	Prose, short story	Criticism of Roma traditional way of life	17–35
G. Lebedevo	Стихи (Poems)	Poetry	Roma youth and the new life in collective farms	35–36
Maria Pol'akova	Линка Linka [a Roma girl]	Prose, short story	The old 'unhappy' vs new happy life	36
G. Lebedevo	Мулы рат (Dead blood)	Poetry	Critique of old nomadic habits	43–44
G. Lebedevo	Сыр дживэна рома (How do Roma live)	Opinion article	Glorification of the new life in collective farms	44
G. Lebedevo (Indo–Rom)	Кличё колхозостыр (Call to the collective farm)	Poetry	Propagating collective farms	46

Table 6.3 Contents of *Романы зоря* (Roma Dawn) journal, 1930, issue 3 and issue 4 (*cont.*)

Author	Title in Romani language and in English	Genre	Theme	Pages
Evdokiya Orlova	Хасиям палэ гилы (We died for our song)	Theatre-play	Young Rom imprison for theft, his fiancée marries another man	46
No author	Пирэ советско э пхув (In the Soviet land)	Reporting article	Discussion of the new way of life	58
M. Polyakova	Сыр ром Пупырка скэдыяпэ кэ рома дрэ Москва (юмор) (How a Rom Pupyрка was going to visit Roma in Moscow, humouristic comics)	Comics	Propagating the new way of life	63

In 1932, the proportion of articles published without the name of their author increases and the proportion of fiction decreased.

Table 6.4 Contents of *Нэво дром* (New Way) journal, 1932, issue 7

Author's name	Title in Romani language and in English	Genre	Theme	Pages
No author	Курсы ваш подготовка (Courses for training [of Roma teachers])	Announcement	Practical information for applicants	1
No author	Національно пучибэ (The national question)	Publicistics	Historical overview and critique of Tsarist and Provisional governments	2
No author	Екх миллионо 51 тысенцо састэ (1 051 000 roubles)	News report	Agriculture, support for Roma farms	3
No author	Кай авэна инке романэ колхозы (Where will the new Roma collective farms be)	News report	Agriculture, informing about three Roma farms	3
No author	Вчивэнапэ дрэ романэ колхозы (Roma come to collective farms)	News report	Agriculture, Roma farms in four regions	3

Table 6.4 Contents of *Нэво дром* (New Way) journal, 1932, issue 7 (cont.)

Author's name	Title in Romani language and in English	Genre	Theme	Pages
E. Popova, M. Bril'о.	Рома дрэ Союза ССР (Roma in the USSR)	Analytical article	National politics toward Roma	4
No author	Тхойбэн Сарэкоопромсоюзос (Decree of the Union of Cooperatives)	Official information	Economics, Roma policies	12
No author	Со бангэ тэ рипирэн штэты (What local authorities need to remember)	Instructive material	Recommendations how to involve Roma into kolkhozes	13
Gusarovo	Дрэ Цыгхимпромо (In a Gypsy chemistry cooperative in Moscow)	Analytical article	Economics, propaganda	14
No author	Ваш выкэрибэ промфинплано (On the implementation of the industrial and financial plan)	Economic report	Reporting on fulfilled plans	14
No author	Промфинплано дро Маё (Industrial and financial plan for May)	Economic report	Economy	14
No author	Промфинплано дро Июнё (Industrial and financial plan for June)	Economic report	Economy	15
No author	Со кэрла арминистрац, пиро ракхибэ састыпэ (What the administration is doing to save [workers] health)	Final report	Health issues of chemistry Roma workers	16
No author	Ловэ ваш романэ колхозы (Money for Roma collective farms)	Economic news and reports	Economy	15
No author	Кролико дэла камло тэ чяло мас, куч цыпа (A rabbit gave tasty and nourishing meat, valuable fur)	Instructive material	Agriculture	16
M. Bezlyudsko	Пашка (Pashka [a male's name])	Prose, short story	A Rom horse dealer in a tough time	17
O. Pankova	Коминтерно (Comintern [an anthem])	Poetry, song verses for choirs	The Comintern anthem's text	21

Table 6.4 Contents of *Нэво дром* (New Way) journal, 1932, issue 7 (*cont.*)

Author's name	Title in Romani language and in English	Genre	Theme	Pages
M. Bezlyudsko	Миро литературно дром (My literary path)	Prose, memoir	Bezlyudskiy's story of becoming a writer while in prison	23
A. Maksimovo	Льлваря ваш ромэнгэ (Books for Roma)	Book review	Romani language books reviews	23
No author	Выгынэ нэвэ льлваря (Newly published books)	Announcement	Advertising five books on agriculture and atheism	25

If we consider the slow and labour-demanding technologies, the unpredictability of censorship requirements and the lack of literate correspondents, the existence of these Romani journals at that time must be considered a miracle.

Romani language periodicals were generally notable for their marked instability: after the release of the first issue of the *Романы зоря* journal in 1927 (see discussion on the accurate release date in Шаповал 2019), a year-long pause in 1928, and three years of relative activity, the Romani language periodical press continued its dotted existence further, but on the periphery and in the more modest format, as newspapers.

After almost three years of complete inactivity of Romani language press publications (1932 and 1933), in 1934, Romani language newspapers emerged, which marked the history of the Roma newspapers in the USSR. They appeared relatively later than the journals which were more expensive and slower to produce. In 1934 and 1935 only four newspaper pages were published in the town of Mineralnye Vody. Such an imbalance and domination of journals' production over newspaper publishing contradicts the approaches and theoretical positions of the leaders of Bolshevism. Stalin's formula "the newspaper as a collective organiser" (Stalin 1923) was not duly implemented in practice in the Roma periodical press. All in all, three issues of Roma newspapers were published and we have reasons to believe that other newspapers existed. Quite a lot of print and archival sources have been preserved from the decade under study (1927–1938). These materials contain a lot of cross-references, reviews, announcements and links, and if other newspapers were published, they would have been mentioned there.

Nevertheless, some obscure mentions of Gypsy newspapers are sometimes found until 1934. An unknown newspaper is mentioned in the first issue of the journal *Романы зоря*: "The Roma newspaper was published and will continue." (Мугуев 1927:3) However, nothing is known about such a newspaper. Perhaps the author of this information meant Vol'frid Viksne's note / article of about 150 words published in 1927, in the seventh issue of the newspaper of the Central Publishing House of the Peoples of the USSR (*Tsentrizdat*). The newspaper was entitled *За верстаткой* (Behind the Layout) and a short text "Our Holiday" was translated into 52 languages, including Romani (Викснэ 1927:3). The newspaper did not indicate the name of the author of the Russian text, neither of its Romani

language translator. The article was listed in the bibliography of books and articles about Gypsies by Alexander Germano: “324. Викснэ В. Р. Амаро свэнко...” (Герман 1930:74). The surname of the author of the solemn note was often written differently: Виксне, Viksne Wolfrid Reyngoldovich (1899–1938). He was Latvian proletarian and revolutionary, and his last employment was as head of the technical section of the national department of *Uchpedgiz*. He was later convicted of terrorist and fascist activities, shot at Butovo training ground, and rehabilitated in June 1959 (Фамилия Виксне 2020).

The name of the Romani language translator of this text is given only in the manuscript of Germano on Gypsy literature of 1927–1937: “translated by N. A. Pankov” (Германо n.d.:3), see also the Romani language text’s analysis and discussion in my article “A translation into the literary language of the period of its formation as a breakthrough” (Шаповал 2020a:275).

The second mention of the Gypsy newspaper is less clear. Paul Vaillant-Couturier (1892–1937), a French writer and well-known figure of the Comintern, in an article about visiting a Gypsy collective farm in 1931, mentions, among other cultural achievements, that he was shown a newspaper in Romani. The Gypsy man proudly addresses the French guest: “Подыкх... амэндэ исы газета прэ романы чиб” – “Look ... we have a newspaper in the Romani language.” (Кутюрье 1931:8; Германо 1933:43) It is not possible to find out which newspaper was shown in this case, but the accented fact is very significant as a cultural achievement. The First International Brigade of Proletarian Writers, including comrade Paul Vaillant-Couturier, had the important task to show to the world the Soviet paradise in all its glory. Perhaps a Gypsy newspaper was published before their visit in order to be presented during the very visit, but there is no newspaper copy from 1931 preserved until today.

Another mention of a Gypsy newspaper can be found in an article criticising chauvinism against Roma workers on the construction of a bridge over the Tvertsa river (now named after its constructor P. Bogomolov) in the city of Tver: “The public prosecutor [in the court process against chauvinism] was a representative of the national Gypsy newspaper, comrade Dorano; he spoke with applause.” (К. 1931) It is quite sure that the name *Dorano* is the Romani adjective *Darano* ‘scared’ used as a ‘Roma name’. The case was briefly described (Таранов 1931:3), but there was no new information about it.

Before moving on to the characterisation of the preserved issue of the third newspaper, it is worth describing the contrast between the two five-year plans in relation to Romani periodicals. What is the most important difference between journals and newspapers? In the Roma project in question, the most important difference is in their official status. The second half of the studied pre-war decade (the second five-year plan period, 1933–1937) was time of digression and there was a slow but steady decline in the Gypsy cultural project. And this is clearly seen in the status of the Romani language periodicals. The total length of the Romani journals (22 issues altogether) is more than 700 pages in the first five-year planning period, while there were only eight pages of newspapers published in the second five-year period. This clearly shows declining of the project. The number of copies was changing following the same pattern, as can be seen in Figure 6.3.

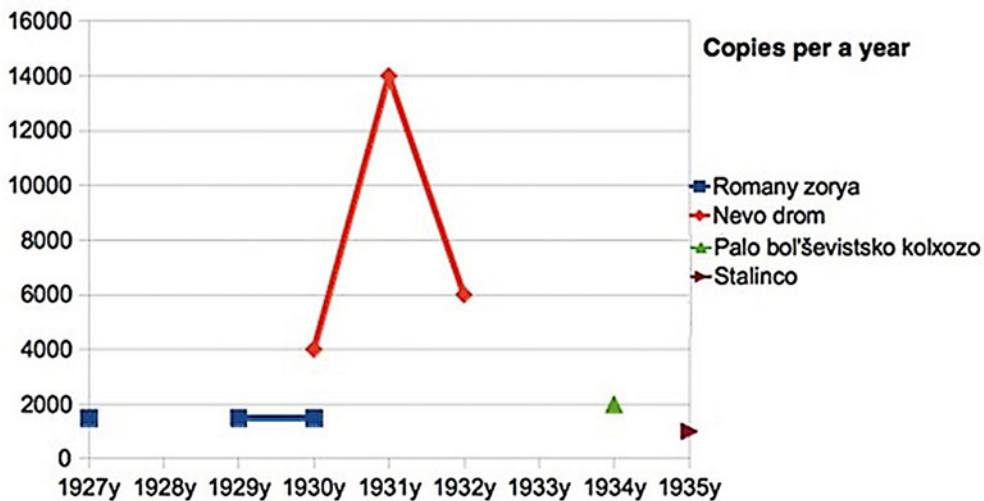


Figure 6.3 Romani language periodicals in the USSR: number of copies per year

The most impressive result has been reached in 1931, when more than 300 pages per journal were published. This was a great achievement considering the growing recession and crisis of the period. The number contrasts to the four newspapers' pages published annually in 1934 and 1935 which is just a symbolical contribution as can be seen from Figure 6.4. Paradoxically, after the proclamation of Joseph Stain's motto "Life has become better" on November 17, 1935, not a single page of a Romani language periodical was published. It is very likely that some newspapers' issues have not been preserved but it could be considered with certainty that no other newspapers were published.

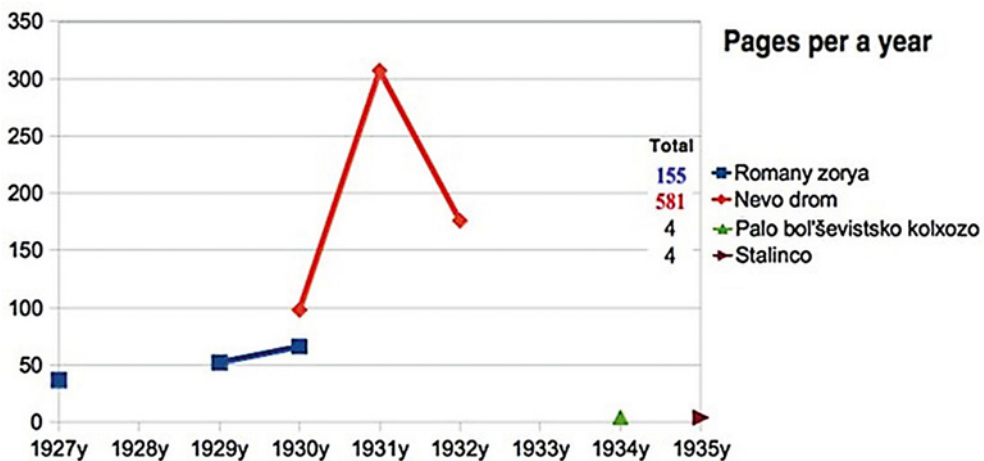


Figure 6.4 Romani language periodicals in the USSR: number of pages per year

The Romani language journals of the first five-year planning period (1928–1932) were published by the Central Publishing House of the Peoples of the USSR *Tsentrizdat* and (since December 1931) in *Uchpedgiz*. Both publishing houses were part of the capital city's structures and therefore the journals passed the censorship control on the highest level of *Glavlit* (General Directorate for Literature and Publishing). All three known Roma newspapers during the second five-year planning period (1933–1937) were printed in the district town of Mineralnye Vody, thus far from the political and cultural centre of the country. These newspapers were:

- 1) *Пало большевистско колхозо* [For the Bolshevik Collective Farm]. Политотделоскиро органо Минводсконэ МТС [Mineralnye Vody MTS political department's organ]. 1934. [No. 1 ?] May 24. 2 pp.
- 2) *Пало большевистско колхозо* [For the Bolshevik Collective Farm]. Политотделоскиро органо Минводсконэ МТС [Mineralnye Vody MTS political department's organ]. 1934. No. 2. August 22. 2 pp.
- 3) *Сталинецо* [Stalinist]. Минводсконэ РК ВКП(б), РИК'оскиро тэ Райсовпрофоскиро Органо [Mineralnye Vody district CPSU(b) [Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)] comity, district executive comity, district trade unions' council organ]. 1935. No. 3 (137). October 5. 4 pp.

Two of the issues that have been preserved are small newspapers of the local machine tractor station (MTS) (1934), the last issue is of a somewhat higher status, that is, the organ of a number of district organisations (1935). The last change was expected, because in 1935 all small MTS newspapers were closed and transformed into newspapers of rural districts (Петренко 2006:149). In the hierarchical system of that time, the Romani language deserved a specific perception and even obscure suspicions as a minority language but had at the same time some official support. It was quite unusual, because the censorship district authority assumed responsibility and risked publishing unique periodicals in an unknown language, in case of a 'political mistake', either real or invented. The sequence of permits' number given by the district authority shown in the newspaper issues helps us reconstruct the chronology of this apparently complex and probably highly risky process. It might be that the time needed to get the content controlled and approved was also one of the reasons why journals were more widespread than newspapers.

The name of the newspaper *For the Bolshevik Collective Farm* is typical and standard for dozens of small newspapers published by the MTS political departments throughout the country. The reason is that the XVII Congress of the CPSU(b) that took place at the beginning of 1934 set the task of turning the collective farms into Bolshevik farms. The number of newspapers with the name *Сталинец* (Stalinist) reached even hundreds. The third newspaper, entitled *Сталинецо* (Stalinist), of October 5, 1935, has a parallel regular numbering: no. 3 (137).

Such a popularity of titles makes it difficult to answer the question whether publications in the Romani language were included in the regular issues' numbering of the certain newspaper commonly printed in Russian. The description of the newspaper *За*

*большевистский колхоз* (For the Bolshevik Collective Farm, in Russian) of the Mineralnye Vody's MTS is present in the Russian State Library catalogue as "За большевистский колхоз: газета многотиражка: орган политотдела Минерало-Водской МТС. с 1933 г. [For the Bolshevik collective farm. 1933. Newspaper with a large circulation: organ of the political department of the Mineralo-Vodskaya MTS. Since 1933]." It is noteworthy that in 1934 the 29th issue was published in German (for the German minority living then there). However, the Romani language issues of 1934 were, for some reason, not included in the regular numbering, and their existence is not indicated in the description of the catalogue of the Russian State Library.

At that time, each published item had a censorship permission number, which had to be indicated on the publication. This sometimes helps to clarify the actual release date. The sequence of permissions for the Roma newspapers is as follows: the May (not numbered) issue of the newspaper *Пало большевистско колхозо* had permission number 724 issued by the Mineralnye Vody district and Ivan Tokmakov was already present in the editorial staff (as well as in the third issue). The August (second) issue had permission number 44, and Nikolay Pankov, not Ivan Tokmakov, was the Moscow guest editor on the editorial board. That means that the manuscript of the second issue passed through the censor control before the manuscript of the first (unnumbered) issue. This should not be very surprising as newspaper materials of this kind were related to reporting of exact events and treated common topics.

Other Moscow activists were also among the authors of the Roma newspapers: Mikhail A. Ilyinskiy was an original writer and actor of the *Romen* Theatre, Alexander German was a writer, poet and playwright, founder of the Romani literature in the USSR.

The design of the first two issues of *Пало большевистско колхозо* was rich and noteworthy. They were printed in two colours with red headers which was rather uncommon for a small and local newspaper. Perhaps the issues were printed on the initiative of Mikhail Bezlyudskiy, then chairman of the Gypsy village council, in order to present in the best light the state of affairs on the territory he led for the audiences and authorities in Moscow. He writes in his autobiography that he was called/invited to Moscow in 1935. In reality, a meeting in the Central Executive Committee of the USSR on the employment of Gypsies took place at the very beginning of January 1936 (Протокол 1936). Bezlyudskiy's dating is accurate, because preparatory meetings at different levels required a lot of time. He probably arrived in the capital with three newspaper issues in the Romani language.

The issue of the Romani language press was also discussed in 1941. In a letter dated June 1941 from Mikhail Bezlyudskiy to the employee of the Union of Writers Elizaveta Alexandrovna Muravyeva it was mentioned that there are some rumours about the opening of a Gypsy newspaper (RGALI Ф. 631, Оп. 6, Д. 617, Л. 114). Apparently, such plans were scheduled, along the publication of a collection of short stories by Roma writers in Russian, gathered by Muravyeva. Unfortunately, these plans were disrupted by the battles on the Eastern Front of the Second World War from the 22 June 1941.

In sum, the Soviet Roma media was politically oriented and ideologically overloaded. As a business project none of those periodicals was possible without the state financial support.

#### 6.4 Books' Genres and Topics

The books published during this decade-long cultural project are the most visible and tangible result. Roma schools and public organisations' activities, even in Moscow, are less preserved in archives. On the contrary, the Romani language books of that time have been saved better. There are two collections of Romani books in the Russian State Library (in Moscow and Khimki) and in the National Library of Russia (in Saint Petersburg). In addition, the second collection is digitalised and accessible at the *Zingarica* collection of the National Library of Finland website. These books are very important as an example of Romani literature development and materials that witness the results of that project. Although the data are not yet absolutely complete and accurate we could draw relatively reliable conclusions. One could still hope for some new findings as the catalogue of the Russian State Library has been updated and now many names have been rewritten more accurately (see Annex I. Romani Literature, pp. 266–275).

The Romani language books published comprised of both original works and translations. The numbers of original and translated books were approximately equal (Shapoval 2020:352). The translations were made from the officially approved list of books recommended for translation into the languages of peoples of the USSR. The border between original and translated books is not fully certain, because translators adapted, shortened or supplemented the original texts, for various reasons (Shapoval 2020:350). In some cases, translation was not possible due to the lack of terms. In others, translation was more like a literature retelling.

There were many difficulties in creating a standard language. For instance, the word for a small prosaic form (a story) in the Soviet Romani literary language was not immediately determined. So, in 1930, Georgiy Pavlovich Lebedev (1900–1969) translated *Stories for Children* by Alexander S. Neverov (1886–1923) as *Ракирибэна ваш тыкнэ чяворэнгэ* (Неверов 1930). This choice does not allow to differentiate 'stories, novellas' and 'talks, conversations'. In 1931 Lebedev defined the contents of his book *Нэвэ глоса* (New Voices) as a collection of *гуля* 'poems' and *ракирибэна* 'short stories' (Лебедев 1931). Nikolay Pankov used *ракирибэна* in another sense 'talks, conversations' in the title of the book by Sergey V. Pokrovsko (1874–1945) *Conversations about the Reproduction of Animals* (Покровско 1932).

In 1931, his wife, Maria Yegorovna Polyakova (1904–1976) titled her book *Романэ ракирибэ* (Roma Stories) (Полякова 1931), where the plural form should be *ракирибэна*. Probably the previous title of one story was not changed properly. At the same time, *ракирибэ* 'conversation' also served for translation of the official 'speech', for example:

Pankov translated *Speech at the First All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers-Udarniks (Shock Workers)* by Lazar' Kaganovich as *ракирибэ* (Кагановичё 1933). However, after some time, this term with its three mutually interrelated and close meanings began to create some inconveniences, which changed the translating and publishing practice. The prose story *Бахт* (Luck) by Ivan Rom-Lebedev (Ром-Лебедев 1930) was defined on its title page as *расказо* (from *расказ*, the Russian term for 'story') (Ром-Лебедев 1930:1), though previously announced as *ракирибэн* 'conversation / story' (Нэво дром 1930:21). Thus, the trend in coining and using terms was not straightforward, though in the end quite clear: the term *рос-пхэн-ыбэ(н)* as a calque of the Russian *рас-сказ* 'story' finally won, and the year 1931 was a crucial point for this process.

The narrow circle of industrious people successfully created diverse and rich literature and many other cultural projects. The starting date of this project in the USSR can be considered 1927. Actually, by 1927 there were two publications: the first one was a leaflet of the All-Russian Union of Gypsies explaining the benefits of sedentarisation and benefits for Gypsies who wish to engage in farming (Таранов et al. 1927), and the second one was a short article on the 10th anniversary of the October Revolution in the November issue of the newspaper of the Central Publishing House of the Peoples of the USSR (Викснэ 1927:3). The third published item was the first issue of the journal *Романы зоря* (Roma Dawn) although its real year of release should be approached with serious hesitation (Шаповал 2019). In the years that followed, there was an unprecedented increase in the number of books published in a language that did not have a literary tradition: one book was published in 1928, four books were published in 1929, nine books were published in 1930, and in 1931 were published 31 books. In the starting period, 1927–1931, the *Tsentrizdat* was the only place where all Romani literature titles were published. This publishing house published Romani language books for five years.

The topics of the first books are very telling: three ABC-books for adults and two books on political literacy and communist ideology. For example: *Нэво дром* (New Way) was a ABC-book for adult people (Дударова & Панков 1928). The difference between these books is almost insignificant. Thus, the texts for teaching literacy consisted of political declarations, and texts on political literacy were composed simply to further progress in reading.

In the next years, school handbooks (two published in 1930 and two in 1931) and political books (one and nine respectively) still prevailed, but fiction books started to appear as well (three in 1930 and four in 1931), along Romani language children's books (two in 1930) which were published for the first time. For example, Maria (Masha) Polyakova warmly wrote about a little Roma girl going to school (Полякова 1930). This topic was brilliantly continued by the Czech Roma woman Tera Fabiánová later (1992).

Clear boundaries between genres and themes were blurred by the dominant motive of class struggle. For example, the Romani language version of the political essay "If the enemy does not surrender, destroy him" by the famous fiction writer Maxim Gorky was created and published too (Горький 1931). The Romani language books of various genres

focused on the 1917 Revolution and the upcoming struggle against world capitalism. For instance, the stories for small children were about the revolution and the war with a strong dose of correct Soviet ideological markers (Неверов 1930). This thematic looks monotonous and dull and is monolithic in its inner intention. In this regard, all Soviet Romani literature is a syncretic discourse on the revolutionary trauma. Lidia Osipova later wrote about this feature of Soviet literature, giving a critical assessment of this simplicity from an aesthetic point of view, in a book symbolically titled *Explicit Slavery and Secret Freedom* (Осипова 1960). She knew this subject as an insider as in the early 1930s, called also 'lean years'. She was the author of a couple of training books on agriculture, one of which was translated into Romani and was entitled *What a Milkmaid Should Know* (Осипова 1931). This book is an example of new topics which appeared in Romani literature in 1930–1931. Agriculture had become extremely popular due to the successes in organising collective farms which lead to a shortage of food. Thus, in 1931, 12 books on the topic of agriculture and farming were published, including the previously mentioned book by Osipova.

Another new topic was aggressive atheism (three books were published), including informative non-fiction publications on biology and historical anthropology, for instance *Did the Man Come from a Monkey* (Гремяцко 1931).

Medicine and hygiene were also popular and two books by well-established authors were translated into Romani language (Российский 1930; Берляндо 1931). There are two details worth mentioning. Firstly, the terminology was created ad hoc in a very short time but, in principle, these new publications successfully transmitted important and new pragmatic information. Secondly, the authors of books that were translated into nationalities' languages, including Romani, were the most significant experts in their fields, for example of medical science: professor Dmitriy Mikhailovich Rossiyskiy (1887–1955), Soviet therapist and medical historian and MD Berland Abram Solomonovich (1897–?) who was the author of books on various aspects of medicine published until 1963.

Thus, it can be said that, until 1931, one publishing house successfully worked in various thematic areas, and since 1932 several publishing houses performed these functions. The 1932 state order to provide nationalities with books was implemented by obedient state publishers. Over three years, their activity in Romani language books production was visible, but gradually weakened. For instance, the publishing house of the People's Commissariat of Industry (*Наркомтяжпром*) (from 1931 on, this was the Joint Scientific and Technical Publishing House – ОНТИ) had published five Romani books in 1932, four books in 1933, and three books in 1934. The Publishing House of the Central Committee of the CPSU(b) (*Политиздат*) was active for three years too: it published two Romani books in 1932, nine books in 1933, and seven books in 1934. The same trend is visible in the publications of the Komsomol Publishing House *Тэжны гвардия* (Young Guard): it published seven Romani books in 1932 and the same number in 1933, and two books in 1934. One of the books was the Romani translation of the memoirs of Lenin's sister about his childhood (Ульянова-Елизарова 1933). And, finally, an essential contribution

was made by the agricultural publishing house, which had many variations of its name in Romani: Гавитколхозгизо, Гавитко-хулаибньткко издательство, Гавиткохулаибнгизо, Сельколхозгизо, Сельхозгиз, etc. It published eleven Romani books in 1932, four in 1933 and the same number in 1934. None of those houses published any Romani books after 1934. Thus, the activities of the publishing houses of the People's Commissariat of Industry, of the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, Partizdat, and Young Guard coincided chronologically, and Romani books were only published in 1932, 1933 and 1934.

Obviously, the publication of a loss-making little print-run and difficult to distribute literature was not a dream order for publishers. Some publishers escaped this obligation more or less successfully. Only in 1933 the publishing house of the trade unions Profizdat gave its very modest contribution to the Romani literature by publishing three books. The Moscow authorities' publishing house (Московский рабочий), being formally a state property, issued a single Romani book: *Can the Dead Come to Life?* (Киселево 1932), which increased its scores both in minority publications and in atheistic literature. Other state publishers were either more industrious or less lucky.

The state atheistic publishing house (ГАИЗ) published ten Romani books which appeared quite evenly in a five-year period, from 1932 to 1936. Among the state propaganda of primitive atheism, there was a bright spot: a very sympathetic book on nature called *The Animal and What Surrounds It in the World* (Шэйнисо 1935).

The law publishing house (Советское законодательство, since 1937 Юридическое издательство) used to publish regularly two Romani books per year from 1932 to 1934, increasing its activity to four in 1935, and later declined to four books per year being published in the later years, after 1934. One of its publications was the Romani translation of the biography of the formal Head of the Soviet State Mikhail Kalinin (Шотмано 1935) which is difficult to consider scientific or codifying work, but at that time the official biographies of the still living revolutionary leaders could adorn the production raw of any publishing house. A problem arose two years later when the biography's author Alexander V. Shotman was accused of participation in the anti-Soviet Trotskyist organisation and shot dead. Unsold copies of a book by a discredited and then unwanted author were usually destroyed.

The publishing house of the People's Commissariat of Education (*Учгиз, Учпедгиз*) was responsible for publishing school textbooks. Twenty-four books in Romani language were published in 1932, eight in 1933, fourteen in 1934, nine in 1935, two in 1936, and four in 1937. Along with textbooks, this publishing house published fiction and non-fiction. For example, stories about the revolution for the children (Олейниково 1932) by the poet and member of OBERIU avant-garde group Nikolay Makarovich Oleynikov (1898–1937), who was later accused and shot as a 'Japanese spy'; a story about the car construction (Крюндель 1932) by a luckier author, Kryundel' August Frantsevich (1897–1967), the future head of the Soviet Parliament of Estonia. Authors of the translated originals were notable and famous figures in their field and they were not Roma.

Compared to this unanimity, the chronology of Romani language publications in the children's publishing house (*Детиздат, Детгиз*) seems anomalous: one book was published in 1933, no books were published in 1934, three books appeared in 1935, eight in 1936, and one in 1937. The peak activity in the Roma publications of this publisher was not in the first half of the 1930s but in the mid-1930s.

Little is known about Roma posters, but they were printed in several colours. The songbooks are somewhat better preserved, but not all of them are known either (Германо et al. 1932; Германо et al. 1934). The reason for the poor preservation is that the clean backside of the poster was often used for drafting, and songbooks were usually published in small format on thin gray paper that was ideal for cigarette rolls.

Both books and periodicals were very important for the Roma activism of that time. Few simple topics were repeatedly appearing throughout various genres: a terrible past of the Gypsies in contrast to their bright future in the USSR, after their inclusion in the brotherhood of workers, the inevitability of the war against capitalism, and, for this reason, the need to survive temporary difficulties. Soviet literature was considered a means for transmitting such beliefs to the reader, and thus was only a tool of propaganda with quite narrow set of tricks and lack of independent significance (Осипова 1960:11). An important difference should be noted, however: while this stage was a degradation for Russian literature, for the emerging literatures, as Romani, everyday achievements of new heights of expressiveness were reached, and new poetic forms and prosaic images were created. This fact should not be underestimated when assessing the significance of Soviet Romani literature.

## 6.5 Authors and Readers of Books

The new literature was created by people of various backgrounds, more or less educated. Some of the very productive Roma authors were not Roma by origin, and some others developed their Romani language ability relatively late, e.g. Alexander Germano (Marushiakova and Popov 2020:153–154). Roma authors came to writing literature in different ways. Mikhail Bezlyudskiy wrote that he started to learn how to write poetry and prose fiction in the amateur literature circle while being imprisoned and under investigation in the famous Moscow Taganka (Безлюдско 1932b:22–23).

### *Making Roma Writers*

Roma writers and poets worked extremely hard, and it is worth noting that there were a lot of creative young Roma who enthusiastically wanted to join artistic ranks in order to take part in the national culture's building and development. That was a very unusual time, very hard and full of new opportunities for young Roma. The training of young writers was very popular. Famous masters such as Viktor Shklovskiy (Шаламов 2004:74), and a modest Roma writer, already very noticeable in his branch, Nikolay Pankov (see

about *rabkors* – workers’ correspondents schooling in Shapoval 2020:350) were involved in this cultural activity. New talents were growing and learning technics of writing prose and poetry in amateur circles, be it a navy club (a Baltic fleet’s literary club has promoted Semen Mikhaylov’s book on Roma issues in Russian: Михайлов 1932), or a prison spot for cultural work.

### *Women’s Contribution*

Women’s participation was very important. The gender balance in the Romani literature and the language building project was somehow unusual. It is worth underlining that women were also active in the Roma cultural project, as well as in the new Romani literature in particular (Shapoval 2020:352–353). Olga Pankova was a Roma woman, who was one of the most productive translators, translating 32 books. The other woman who translated at least six published books was Maria N. Lebedeva. Evdokiya Orlova was a very talented poet and also served as chief of a mobile Romani theatre. Many other Roma women of that time and their contributions to the project deserved further studies too.

Aleksey P. Barannikov wrote that, after 1917, Roma artists joined unanimously the trade union of cultural workers Rabis: “In the revolutionary times, almost all Gypsies who were linked with singing and other forms of artistic activities joined up in the union of artists.” (Баранников 1931:45) For instance, the singer and poet Yevdokoia Orlova became a member of Rabis in 1918 (RGALI Ф. 675, Оп. 2, Д. 464, Л.1).

Collective authorship was a socialist ideal, though hardly achievable. The new Romani literature was developing under the same conditions as other national literatures in the USSR. The slogan of collectivism found its application in artistic work and creativity. Thus, the resolution on the Report of the Nationalities Sector ONTI by comrade Shapiro declared on December 19, 1931: “5. The Sector’s orientation to the compilation of the original book by brigades [of the authors] ... is right.” (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4720, Л. 1) Collective literary works in Romani language translation took place for instance during the work on the book *Состыр амэ ачьям бидэвэльтка* (Why We Became Unbelievers) (Бригада 1934).

In principle, an individual authorship as a concept contradicts, to some extent, the highest degree of collectivism. A change in authorship for political reasons was quite usual. The journal article “Ваш саро романо дрэ Москва” (About everything that is Romani in Moscow) reported: “Профессоро М. В. Сергиевско, Н. А. Дударова, Н. А. Панково кончают буты пэ букварё ваш ромэнгэ” – “Professor M. V. Sergievskiy, N. A. Dudarova, N. A. Pankov are close to finishing their work on the primer for Roma.” (Романы зоря 1927:33)

The first Soviet Romani ABC-book for adults was published as a work of two authors – a Gypsy woman, an educated teacher, on the one hand, and a Gypsy worker, a genuine autodidact and poet, on the other hand (Дударова & Панков 1928). The contribution of professor Sergievskiy’s (a non-Roma) who also worked on this publication cannot be

assessed, as it was not indicated in the book. The political reasons behind this was that the idea to have a genuine Roma book created by genuine Roma authors for working Roma was great, even though it was not the whole truth.

### *Authors of Translated Books and Other Non-Roma*

There were also non-Roma contributing to the Roma 'Cultural Renaissance' without being part of it, such as Petr Serafimovich Patkanov (stage name Istomin, 1869–1930). His Roma handbook was a unique early description of the Moscow choirs' variety of Romani (Патканов 1900). Vladimir N. Dobrovolskiy (1856–1920) gathered his collection of Smolensk Romani language texts (Добровольский 1908) used as a source of dictations in Moscow Roma schools. Prof Yevgeniy Platonovich Ivanov (1884–1967) started Roma folklore studies before the 1917 Revolution (Блюменау 1927:24–25). His Roma collection is not described, though it is believed to be rich.

Russian authors involved in Romani language publications sometimes provided no information about this. The painter Vasiliy Vatagin (1883/84–1969) did not give any information about a Romani language version (Ватагин 1936) of his book for children *Animals Big and Small* (Ватагин 2017:337). Zinaida Kokorina (Смелкова 2016), the first Soviet woman to graduate from a military aircraft school, left no mention about her book about women's military training translated into Romani by M. N. Lebedeva (Кокорина 1932). Olympiada Georgievna Polyakova (pseudonym Lidia Timofeevna Osipova, 1902–1958), Russian journalist, writer, literary critic and public figure of the 'second wave' of Russian emigration to Western Europe, left no word about her book in Romani language either (Осипова 1960), which is preserved until today (Осипова 1931).

Since January 1938, as an employee of the Department of Nationalities' Literature, Boris Lukich Agafonov (1907–1941 / 42?), father of the famous singer of Gypsy romances Valery (1941–1984), renewed the Catalogues of Mongolian, Dungan, Kalmyk, and Gypsy literature (Соколинский 2003:41). It is clear where he had gained knowledge of oriental languages. The place of Boris's birth is the village of Khoronkhai (in his biography mistakenly named 'Kharoshchay'), near the border town of Kiakhta (former Troitskosavsk). But where he became acquainted with Romani has not been reported anywhere.

As for the authors of the translated originals, their names were not always indicated in the Romani language books. An additional source of frustration was the risk of political repressions. As victims of repression, some authors became undesirable and their names were not mentioned. So, the book on scabies (Эфрон 1933) does not have any indicated author, though there is an editor (Andrey S. Taranov) and a translator (Mikhail T. Bezlyudskiy). The author of the Russian original (Эфрон 1931) Professor Nikita Savelyevich Efron, a famous specialist in dermatology, who was arrested on October 20, 1932 and shot dead on August 21, 1933. He was a cousin of Sergei Yakovlevich Efron, husband of the poetess Marina Tsvetaeva. The Romani translation was accepted for printing

on November 23, 1933 (Эфрон 1933:24), obviously, after the author's death by execution. The author's name is omitted in the brochure, probably for this reason.

Another author died before being sent into exile and that was the reason why his books escaped prohibition. It was Nikolai Konstantinovich Lebedev (1879–1934), historian, geographer, very talented writer of scientific books for children, and a member of the Anarchist party, which was the reason for his exile (Материалы 2020). His books for elementary school and for illiterate adults have been translated into many languages of the peoples of the USSR, including Romani (Лебедево 1935a, 1935b, 1937).

Sometimes the names of the Romani books' editors appear only once. The Tatar poet Ahmed Fazylovich Erikeev (1902–1967) was indicated as an editor of the book by Bezlyudskiy (Безлюдско 1932); the Polish writer Domsky (Stein) Genrikh Grigorievich [Germanovich] (1883–1937) was mentioned as editor of a book by Orlova (Орлова 1933). The last case is very interesting. Before 1933, the honest Polish communist had already had a couple of conflicts with the Soviet centre. In 1920, he had protested against the Red Army invasion of Poland in the *Rote Fahne* newspaper (Regula 1995:35; Дойчер 1957). “Henryk Stein, also known by his revolutionary pseudonym L[eon]. Domski or Kaminski, was one of the few leaders [of Communist Party of Poland in 1925] not arrested ... Soon Domski fell from Soviet favour, and the Comintern dismissed him ...” (Busky 2002:3) As for Domski personally, the period of 1930–1935 was relatively quiet and comfortable, between two arrests. As far as it is known, he did not know the Romani language. Who was the real editor, then? Evdokiya Orlova could hardly be an editor of her own poems. She was a singer, dancer and oral poet. Literacy wasn't a special skill of hers. A propos, the edited text is not ideal, e.g.: “Мэк кудренца тэлэ дуга, Прастала амэндър пхурано...” – “Let the old life run away from us with curls [instead of *кудуненца* ‘bells’] under a [harness wooden] arc.” (Орлова 1933:5) The reasons for such oddities are not entirely clear.

Some names are not given in the Romani translations. But in one case it is not even clear that RIM on the cover is a pseudonym (Рим 1932), the abbreviation R.I.M. means Reshud [Ignatievich?] Magidovich (Масанов 1958:31). Perhaps this was the son of Ignatij Petrovich, an employee of the publishing house *Gosmedizdat* (Вся Москва 1930: 442).

### *Censors*

Censorship was a very important factor in Romani language books' publishing. Censors were attentive readers. Printed publications in Romani language had been published in the USSR since 1927. By this time, the system of control for publications in nationalities' languages had already developed sufficiently, although it continued to improve. Due to the numerous renamings and restructuring, it is easier to talk about these institutions using the abbreviations *Glavlit* and *Glavreperтком*, keeping in mind the instability of their official status and names.

Who were the censors of Romani language texts? This might sound unbelievable, but publications for nationalities were controlled by a clerk on duty. He read a brief Russian

summary, a review by a political editor, expert opinions, and then prepared a draft decision approved by his/her superior. It was a responsible function, which was paid much better than the work of a metallurgical engineer. Persons who signed the reviews and expert opinions acted as hostages. If they missed a 'political mistake', they were punished together with the author. For this reason, all official readers, including the political editor, executive editor and, finally, editor *sensu stricto*, were sometimes overly attentive.

Collective responsibility extended to the publishers. The standard contract of the writer with the publishing house in the early 1930s contained a note, that "If the Publishing House has concerns that the submitted work will not be allowed to print under censorship conditions and the Author does not find it necessary to amend the questionable place of the manuscript, the publisher is given the right to delay the payment ..." (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 2, Д. 27, Л. 4) This financial control led to enormous caution and self-censorship.

In the second half of the 1930s, mentioning of censorship disappeared from the text of the contracts: "2. Submission of the manuscript for review to the appropriate authorities shall postpone the moment of acceptance of the manuscript ..." (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Д. 4777, Л. 23)

This is a quote from the contract for the translation of Pushkin's poem *Цыганы* (Gypsies) accepted for printing February 1, 1937 (Пушкин 1937:28). On the translation's manuscript a stamp with *Glavlit's* permission dated January 28, 1938, not 1937 (obviously a mistake) is visible (RGALI, Ф. 613, Оп. 1, Л. 7501:1).

*Glavrepertkom* looked for then forbidden Gypsiness (*цыганищина*, essentially a folk melodramatic style) in the texts and music of Gypsy choirs and theatres. In the meantime, Russian *Tsyganshchina*, as well as Gypsy performances of musical classic, was quite popular abroad (Кузник 2013:41; Бурматов 2018). The main enemies of the censor were human feelings related to eroticism and religion. The first was the suspected sin of the Gypsy songs and dances. "Chastity placed at the service of communism is socialist realism," Lidia T. Osipova summed up ironically (Осипова 1960:43). Religious hints were expelled from the literature of nationalities even more severely than from Russian texts. For instance, Vladimir Bakhmetiev's description of the young hero's joy "he was ready ... to sing this fine morning, [as a prayer of a child in church choir]," never changed in Russian editions, but in the Romani translation was cautiously cut out in order to avoid a religious mention: "ёв могискирдя ... тэ багал дрэ адава гожо злоко" – "he could ... sing this fine morning." (Бахметьев 1935:7)

*Glavrepertkom*, which emerged as a department within *Glavlit*, later followed it in the principles of control, being a separate institution. As part of it, comrade Averchenko wrote on December 15, 1931 ideological claims criticising the play of Alexander Germano *Джиибэн прэ роты* (Life on Wheels) for an excess of songs and dances (RGALI, Ф. 656, Оп. 1, Д. 754, Л. 4) and evaluated the music of the Abkhaz folk choir, allowing recording on plates on June 2, 1930 (RGALI, Ф. 656, Оп. 1, Д. 754, Д. 4034, Л. 14). It was an important and well-paid function. Each year, the choir paid 2–3 roubles to renew the permission of the repertoire.

### *Looking for Roma Readers*

The alphabet was created and officially approved, writers were found and trained, books were printed, but it was also necessary to find readers. The writers were thoroughly looking for readers' feedback. As a typical sample of a message to readers can be seen in a text printed at the end of the fiction book *Грай* (Horse):

Бутяри ром и колхознико  
 Прогин ядая лылвари и приби́чав дрэ  
 редакця́я лыл со исы шукар дрэ лылвари  
 и со на шукар. Усыкавэ́нте, со на ухты́лла  
 дрэ адая лылвари. Дро лыла чинэ́нте  
 пэскири вурма, лав, кицы бэ́рш, бу́тяри  
 или колхознико и пэскиро адресо.  
 Ромалэ, тумарэ лыла бангэ тэ дэн  
 редакця́якэ дром, савэ тре́би тэ чинэс  
 романэ лылвара ваш бутитконэ ромэнгэ.  
 Лыла обмэ́кэ́нте би маркакиро пиро  
 адресо:  
 Москва, центр, Никольская, 10  
 нацотдел сельхозгиз'а  
 Мих. Безлюдскому

Roma Worker and Collective Farmer  
 Read this book and send the letter to the  
 editors what is good in the book and what  
 is bad. Show up what is missing in this  
 book. In the letters write your last name,  
 first name, your age, if you are worker or  
 collective farmer and your address.  
 Roma, your letters should give the editors  
 the way to write Romani books for Roma  
 workers.  
 Drop letters without a stamp at:  
 Moscow, centre, Nikolskaya, 10  
 National department of Agricultural pub-  
 lishing house  
 Mih. Bezlyudskiy

(Безлюдско 1933:39)

There are a number of important details which are worth discussing. For example, addressing only working Roma, both urban and rural. Their opinion was valuable and interesting to publishers. A letter without a stamp was paid by the recipient. This book's illustrations were saved at the children publishing house *Detgiz* (RGALI, Ф. 630, Оп. 1, Д. 2193), then the book was transferred to the *Young Guard* publishing house, and the author was waiting for readers' reactions and reviews at the agricultural publishing house *Selkhozgiz*. Such requests for readers' feedback were common and were made also in publications by the atheist publishing house the GAIZ (Бригада 1934:40), by the agricultural *Selkhozgiz*, or, in the Romani language, *Гавитко хулаибнытко издательство* (Варламово et al. 1933:2), as well as by the political publishing house *Politizdat* (Кагановичё 1933:93). This practice of contacting the reader for an assessment of the topic and language of books is characteristic for Romani publications, but does not seem common for literatures with older tradition.

### *Students as Readers*

Roma school students were obviously the most active and numerous groups of readers. Considering the general context of organising the education system for nationalities it is noteworthy that the system's activities, as any Moscow institution at the time, included a big dose of constant renaming, structural shifting and reorganisation, including moving from one place to another, changing addresses, e.g. street names and Moscow internal division by districts. The *Tsentrsovnatsmen* (the Central Council for education of

national minorities) had a very complicated structure comprising several departments (a separate one for every nationality) and authorised members in 3 main comities (*Glavk*) of the *Narkompros* (The People's Commissariat for Education of RSFSR). This institution was not flexible enough and had rare sessions (Дённыйгхаус 2011:185). It is unbelievable that even under such an irrational and controversial management system of educational projects for small nationalities, it was possible to organise few schools (in particular in Moscow) for Roma children and publish several textbooks and other educational literature. It was a result achieved by Nina Dudarova and other persons. In such instability and constant changes, personal relations and personal agency were crucial for every small success in the schools' life and supplies.

## 6.6 Conclusion

The initial plan of the Soviet Roma project changed throughout the decade 1927–1938 and depended on the changing political and economic conditions. Being a very visible and, for some time, even a sample of the Soviet Cultural Revolution, that aimed especially at the development of so-called 'culturally backward' small nationalities, this cultural project appeared successful and the prospects for its future seemed good. During the first two five-year plan periods (1928–1932, 1933–1937) there were unprecedented achievements reached by a very narrow group of enthusiasts, especially concerning Romani books' publication.

The interrelation between Romani language book publishing and Roma activism during the period 1927–1938 was strong and there was a close interrelation: the list of Roma activists almost coincided with the list of Roma writers. The latter is typical of the process of emancipation in many other cases (Hroch 2005).

The dissolution of the All-Russian Union of Gypsies coincided chronologically with the absence of the issue of the journal *Романы зоря* in 1928. Printed texts in the specially developed Romani language created not only an image of an ideal future, but also corrected the perception of the present by shifting the readers' emotional evaluations of everyday difficulties towards either sincere, or officially prescribed, normative optimism. The boundaries between genres and themes were not clear, because the dominant motive of any book was the class struggle and revolution. Activists were mostly writers and vice versa. They reasonably evaluated the book in their native language as an instrument of ethnic emancipation and as its symbolic result.

The noticeable reduction in the number of Romani language publications and the absence of periodicals coincided (and thus might be related) with the refusal of the authorities, in 1936, to create a Gypsy ethnic territory (a rural district) in the Stavropol krai in order to concentrate Gypsy collective farms there. The latter plan was delayed for an indefinite time. Some activists then went on to pursue administrative careers outside

of the Gypsy project. Writers united around the Gypsy group in the Union of Soviet Writers worked for *Romen Theatre* and dreamed about books for the Soviet Gypsies. The absence of new Roma books diminished their significance as potential influencers on the authorities. Before the Nazi's invasion in 1941, Alexander Germano had finally published in Orel a tiny (78 small pages) book of his Romani verses in Russian translations by famous poets (Германо 1941) which was edited by his friend, the poet Vasilij V. Kazin (1898–1981), but almost all copies of the book were lost in the war calamities. This was a serious blow to the entire group of Roma writers. Each new book served as an evidence of the official recognition and helped to increase social influence.

As one of the projects of the Soviet cultural revolution, the Gypsy project was notable for its unusual success in creating a new literary language and active book publishing. Among its achievements are both original fiction and textbooks, as well as manuals in various fields of knowledge and technics. This meant that elementary school was almost fully provided with necessary books. It is noteworthy that Roma women played an active role in the creation of new literature and proved to be not only translators, but also authors of original works in several genres. As the most hardworking author, Nikolay Pankov, who was distinguished by incredible productivity, should be noted. This project was regularly supported by the state, which, apart from funding the whole creative and publishing processes, facilitated also the distribution of books at reasonable prices.

The project reached its highest successes in the period of the 1932–1934 famine, provoked by forced collectivisation in the agriculture. Its closure chronologically coincided with the Great Purge of 1937–1938. Fortunately, the Roma activists survived, though their cultural and social activities were mostly stopped or at least reduced before the Second World War. The reasons for the termination of the publications in Romani language are not entirely clear. It is important to keep in mind that new Romani language books were not planned in 1939. Further plans of the Soviet government concerning the Roma cultural project are not clear due to the lack of official documents. Nevertheless, the statement “Government bans Romani language and culture” in 1938 (Kenrick 2007:XXVI) looks like some exaggeration. There was no ban on Romani books as the remains of previous editions were available to buyers anywhere in the USSR. A new Roma generation, educated and fully adopting the new Soviet ideology, was declared as its natural product.

Thus, it would be more accurate to speak about a sharp reduction of publications. The outbreak of the war in June 1941 crucially changed all plans, but this does not mean that the continuation of Romani book publishing would not have been possible under better conditions. Otherwise, the fact that the Roma writers section kept looking for young writers even in 1941, despite the third year of lasting pause in Romani language publications, cannot be underestimated. Their contacts with the authorities were positive, and their hopes were reasonably optimistic. No one expected such a long period of coming disasters, which severely affected the entire Roma population.



# Finland

*Risto Blomster and Raluca Bianca Roman*

## 7.1 Introduction

While Finland would not traditionally be considered as being part of the Central, South Eastern or Eastern European region, it directly connects to the developments occurring elsewhere in the region, not only through its historical connection to Russia (i.e. until 1917, Finland was a Grand Duchy of Russia) but, most importantly, through the ways in which Roma civic emancipation occurred in the aftermath of the First World War. Furthermore, while little is known or written about Roma works of literature from Finland, several key authors and pieces by and for Roma appeared during the interwar period, offering important and crucial perspectives in the shaping of Roma emancipation in the country. This chapter explores the context of these developments, with a focus on key works and key protagonists that have contributed to what we can now call Romani literature in Finland. The aim is both to introduce the pre-cursors to literary pieces authored by Roma, while also highlighting the role of specific organisations, authors and figures in the development of Romani literature.

In fact, early twentieth century was the period in which Roma religious mobilisation seems to have been a strong feature in the country, primarily through the role played in this regard by the Finnish Gypsy Mission (*Suomen Mustalaislähetys*), an Evangelical religious organisation which began a large work of Christianisation of Roma in the country (more on this organisation in Section 4). The latter played an active and important part not only in promoting particular policies concerning Kaale/Roma in the country (such as sedentarisation and education), but, most importantly for the purpose of this chapter, in influencing key Roma writers and writers of Romani literature in the country. While the interwar period, and especially the 1930s, has often been presented as being one of the organisation's most 'quiet' periods (Viita 1967:117) and, connectedly, one of the quieter periods in the production of Romani literature more broadly, this situation is undoubtedly grounded in the broader social-historical context of Finland between 1918–1938: a country battling with an economic recession, country-wide starvation and a struggle to create a new sense of unity in the follow up of its civil war. Some words about these processes and the earlier historical events that shaped them are, therefore, needed, in order to contextualise the process of Roma mobilisation and the development of Romani literature in the country.

First of all, after the Russian Revolution in 1917, the role of Finland as being part of Russia became a stronger source of tension and, on December 6, 1917, Finland declared its independence from Russia. This led to different internal, national struggles for consolidating and strengthening a Finnish national identity. What followed was also the ensuing of a Finnish Civil War in 1918 and the beginning of the First World War (Alapuro 1988). The interwar period, therefore, would see the continuation for a struggle for national identity, and a rebuilding of society in the aftermath of several national and international conflicts, which saw fewer activities being promoted by and for the Roma in the country.

In terms of Finland's Roma population (i.e. Kaale, the name of the community under question and the name members of the community often use for themselves), and the specific national policies concerning them, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the debate on the so-called "Gypsy issue" (*mustalaisyksymys*) – namely how to address the lack of permanent settlement, the lower education and employment of so-called Gypsies in the country (*mustalaiset*, in Finnish) – had become a focal point within the Senate of the Grand Duchy of Finland. In support of the debate, the Senate held a broad clergy-led survey in the 1860s (KA, KD 561/51, 1863). As the survey showed, the Western Ostrobothnia district and the South-Eastern Karelian and Ingrian districts near St. Petersburg emerged as the central areas for about 700 Gypsies in Finland (Komiteamietintö 1900:42).

Karelian parishes also emerge as special regions for the story told in this chapter: the Finnish Gypsy Mission, founded in 1905, whose publication, *Kiertolainen* (Vagrant), later became a key element in the early stages of Romani literature in the country (see sub-section 4), had moved its headquarters (between 1911–1917) from Tampere (a city in Western Finland) to the Karelian city of Viipuri (Russian *Выборг*, *Vyborg*, Swedish *Viborg*, German *Wiborg/Wiburg*), only to start again, in 1920, in the capital of Finland, Helsinki.

The process of discussing the 'Gypsy issue' culminated in the 1890s when the Senate set up a committee which conducted an extensive survey of the Gypsies through the Central Statistical Office (TK, K 9, 1895). In addition to that, the renowned Gypsylogist Arthur Thesleff (1871–1920) was hired as secretary of the Committee, and he conducted extensive expeditions compiling information on Gypsies in Finland (and elsewhere). While preparing a comprehensive contribution of the Committee's report (Komiteamietintö 1900), he also wrote a separate article on the colonisation (i.e. settlement) of Gypsies in Finland (Thesleff 1898), which he referenced in the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society when acting as its president (Thesleff 1911a). Thesleff's collection is available on-line in the Finnish National Library's Zingarica-database ([www.kansalliskirjasto.fi](http://www.kansalliskirjasto.fi)).

The report itself contained accurate statistical data. According to the survey, 90 percent of total 1551 Gypsies living in the area of Finland were without a permanent settlement. In terms of education, 50 people were reported as attending schools, 17 were attending ambulatory schools, 21 were in elementary schools, 3 were attending prison schools and 9 other schools. There were 73 people who reported to have both good reading and writing

skills, 513 people with only reading skills and the number of illiterate ones was 396 people. For instance, a survey by the Central Statistical Office estimated that the number of adult Gypsies with both reading and writing skills was 10 percent (the total in Finland at the time being circa 50 percent). It is likely that similar data would be valid for the inter-war period of time (Komiteamietintö 1900:49, 59, 88).

As mentioned above, the post-1918 context was also characterised by a process of uniting and consolidating the Finnish nation as a whole. This was grounded in the long history of Finland which, between 1809 and 1917, was a Grand Duchy of Russia. Interestingly, it was during this time that the country's national epic, the *Kalevala*, was published (in 1835) and when a Finnish nationalistic movement (also known as *Fennomania*) developed, from the 1860s. The important point is to note that the *Fennomans*, in their nation-building process, emphasised Finnishness, especially as a linguistic, cultural and nation-based quality. This led to scholars being primarily interested, for linguistic and cultural reasons, in the study of folklore defined as Finnish or Finno-Ugrian, and to other groups being excluded from their collection work. Even though Roma's nationality at the time was identified as Finnish, their own language (Finnish Romani) and their own folklore and oral history were excluded from the national programs of Finnish folklorists and linguists.

Nevertheless, it sometimes happened that folklore items – told by Roma – were included in the archives and publications as examples of “Finnish folklore” (Blomster and Mikkola 2014:21–24). For example, some of the folklore material told by Karelian Rom August Herman Berg – collections which included magic traditions, fairy tales, proverbs and songs – ended up in the most significant publication of Finnish folklore, “the ancient poems of the Finnish people” – i.e. the Finnish runic *kalevalametric* poems (Blomster and Mikkola 2017). Furthermore, although the official folklore collecting process broadly ignored Roma, there were, alongside Arthur Thesleff, others who were active in the field of Roma folklore in Finland: such as prison school teacher and Lutheran minister Adam Lindh (a non-Roma, born 1843), Karelian Rom Herman Hagert, as well as the founder of Gypsy Mission, Oskari Jalkio (1882–1952, first Anders Oskar Storbacka, later on Oskar Johnsson and, since 1922, Oskari Jalkio).

Not much is known about Herman Hagert's songbook, which compiled songs sung by Roma living in Karelia (again, a region of clear importance for the purpose of this chapter). The manuscript and the cover letter, which contains the oldest known sentences written in Romani language by a Finnish *Kaale*, nevertheless highlights that Roma may also have aspired to participate in the literacy process in the country. For example, Hagert presents a wish that the recipient, allegedly Arthur Thesleff, would edit and deliver to him “the book,” in accordance with his promises. Presumably, Hagert is here offering his collection of songs for Thesleff to publish (Blomster 2012b:326–327). Hagert's cover letter is written both in Finnish Romani and in Finnish, the first sentence is in Romani: “*Ata louvo me panna na liijom te laakavau, me laakavaa varikonge,*” and the text continues in Finnish:

That five marks I didn't get to put yet, but yes I will still put it ...  
 but what have you promised about my destiny, please edit and send me a book  
 Goodbye, take care and stay in the grace of God  
 this hopes your cheap friend Herman Hagert Sortavala.

(Blomster 2012b:326–27)

Another early example of independent activism to develop Romani literature in the country was the work of minister and prison schoolteacher Adam Lindh, a non-Rom (Blomster 2012a:288–289). Lindh, while doing prison-work in the eastern cities of Vyborg and Lappeenranta, had compiled his manuscript *Aapisliin romaned sibbah ranijas A. Lindh sigjibosgero-are-fõras* (ABC-book in Romani), with the help of Roma prisoners. Besides including the translations of religious texts, songs and chapters of the Bible into Finnish Romani, the manuscript consists of Finnish Romani vocabulary, mathematics, geography and also some reading texts possibly written directly from the dictation of Roma narrators. Here is an example:

Gräi (Finnish Romani)

Miero i grasni hin tshikko gräi, douva frastela tshikkas hast, less hin hou a orhos khuuro, kata me buud rikkavaha; hahava leske khas da djou, että veelas vela thuudehe da hou sarjage. Da ka vela baaride, draade me less aro fooras.

Horse (translation from Finnish made by Anette Åkerlund)

My horse is a good horse, it runs very fast, it has a fine stallion foal, which I like a lot; I feed it hays and oats, that it would come to good meat and it would have a fine brush. And when it gets bigger, I drive it into town.

(SE/RA/730781/1; see also in Zingarica-database in [www.kansalliskirjasto.fi](http://www.kansalliskirjasto.fi))

At the official level, the apparent silences in publishing Roma folklore and oral history in Finland continued during the interwar period. Only Estonian academician and linguist Paul Ariste (1905–1990), who also published the book *Romenge paramiši: Mustlaste muinasjutte* (Estonian Gypsy Fairy Tales) (Ariste 1938), published the biography of Ina Roth from the city of Jyväskylä, recorded in 1938, in Romani language (Ariste 2008:208–11, Ariste 1940; for originals see Zingarica, Paul Ariste, Fond 330, M 194:2). Nevertheless, both Arthur Thesleff and Oskari Jalkio, published broadsheet ethnographic reviews of Roma life in English, in Swedish and in German, in separate books, scientific seasonal journals and newspapers (Johnsson 1912c; Thesleff 1904). Texts on Roma/Gypsies written by Thesleff and Jalkio in Finnish are only available in the Gypsy Mission's journal *Kiertolainen* (Johnsson 1912a; Thesleff 1911b).

Interestingly, in the hopes of some Roma activists at the time, the gathering and publishing of Roma songs, personal life stories and language was most obviously seen as a good thing in terms of expressing their identity. It is referred to, for example, by

an anonymous Roma reader's letter published in *Kiertolainen* (1913a:21), where he/she presents his/her wishes that Roma songs be published as sheet music. However, the number of Roma songs published in *Kiertolainen* remained low: only two Roma songs ended up being released. For example, *Gudujensa, kamajensa/Riding bells are ringing* is a song sung by youngsters riding with their horses and tells about the marriage customs of Finnish Roma (Kiertolainen 1912). The other published song is named *Romano/Roma* (Kiertolainen 1914a). The song is about a group of Roma visiting neighbourhoods unknown to them and encountering other Roma people there:

Romano (in Finnish Romani)

Ğas, ğas te dikkas ta ğas, ğas te hörökavas, sar hin aro boldo boliba nii!  
Doori laha ħunnas ta doori laha ğaanas, sar hin are vare stedi ta thaane.

Oi, oi ka ğeejom ta oi, oi ka avjom daari, aro dauva hiistigo thaan ta stedos.  
Fedde sas ka jommas ta fedde sas ka sommas, ar mo kamlo, eigo pingimen stedos.

Ma aahen ħojimen, ma čuuvan bengilboske, me ka jommas are dala stedi!  
Avjom te dikkaa ta avjom te ħunnaa, sar hin daari mare kokare naarti.

Roma: (from Finnish original)

Let us go see, let's go hear what this baptized world is like!  
That's where we get to hear and that's where we get to know how the world is elsewhere.

Oh, when I went and oh, when I came here, here in a terrible, dreary place!  
Better to live and better for me to be in my well-known localities.

Don't you hate me, don't feel sorry for me coming here!  
I just came to see and hear how my miserable tribe lives here.

(Kiertolainen 1914a:3)

It was only in 1939 (i.e. already the interwar period) that some poems and songs published in *Kiertolainen* were collated by Oskari Jalkio in a separate bilingual publication, titled *Romanenge ğiilja: Romaanilauluja* (Roma Songs) (Jalkio 1939). This publication is an important example of the development of Romani literature, in the context of the Gypsy Mission's activities in Finland. The publication contains eleven spiritual song texts, including translations of songs frequently sung within the Finnish Free Church and Roma-themed texts written by Jalkio to familiar melodies: such as a translation of the song *Kajide tuut, mo Raij, kajide tuut* (Nearer, My God, to Thee) – the so-called “Titanic hymn”, allegedly the last song the band on RMS Titanic played before the ship sank, Jalkio's text *Saaro Jesuseske* to a Finnish school song (I give everything to Jesus, the horse tradings and the lies, all my ferocious actions on the market, playing cards and fraud), and *Kaalo* to Elemér Szentirmay's melody *Csak egy kislány van a világon*

(*Oo, som feddem me kaaleske at biêereskiïro staava me!*). In particular, three spiritual texts written by so-called “Gypsy Girl” were included in the collection. The foreword of the book was written by Eeli Jokinen, who served at the time as the executive director of the Gypsy Mission and as an editor in the Finnish Free Church’s Youth Association, the publisher of the book.

Worth mentioning is also that, in the interwar period, there was an interesting one-man project, which had a large role in shaping the Roma and literature in Finland: the collection of “Roma Folklore” (*Romaaniperinne*, in 1957) was formed in the archives of the Finnish Literature Society from the Roma folklore and oral history collected by Matti Simola (1926–2004), a non-Roma self-taught collector of folklore. Simola compiled his extensive collection in the 1930s and 1960s in collaboration with more than 40 named Roma individuals. It should be noted that Simola’s materials contain many autobiographical narratives written down after dictation from his informants. Simola later wrote the script for a folklore manuscript, which he sent straight to Sylvi Kekkonen, ‘the mother of the nation’ and the wife of Finnish president Urho Kekkonen. The manuscript titled *Romaani Tarinoita. Kirjoitettu valkolaisille jotta he voisivat paremmin ymmärtää keskuudessaan eläviä romaaneja* (Roma Stories. Written for the White People in Order to Better Understand Roma Living among Them) also remained unpublished (Blomster and Mikkola 2018).

Thus, while Simola’s contributions of notebooks to Finnish folklore were contested – as they included the narratives of Roma from outside of Finland (i.e. not Finnish Kaale) and as some Roma questioned later on about the materials could not recognise their own folklore within it – this is not necessarily the most important aspect. These were the first materials in Finland to be labelled under the title of “Roma Folklore” within the Finnish archives. In other words, while the materials remain informal, they are nevertheless a note-worthy entry, as they reveal the contribution of Roma informants with songs and materials which shaped the development of Roma folklore in the country.

## 7.2 Precursors to Finnish Roma Literature. Kalle Tähtelä: the Socialist Revolutionary

As can be seen from the above, the specific case of the development and shaping of Romani literature in Finland needs to be understood within its particular social and historical frames. In this sense, the lower number of publications and materials from the interwar period is interesting also given the context in which the ‘Gypsy issue’ had been designated as a focal point within the country and, as we shall see below, within the sphere of religious evangelism, from the start of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, an important aspect to highlight is that Roma writers and intellectuals appeared on the scene much earlier than this period. One example of a prominent Roma writer in this respect was Kalle Tähtelä.

Kalle Tähtelä (also known as Franzen) was born on the 26th May, 1891, in Leppävirta, in the Northern Savonia region of Finland, to Aleksanteri Franzen (formerly Hagert) and Retriikka Jaakontytär Junno. He was a poet, journalist, gardener, herbal healer, socialist, and fighter pilot on the Bolshevik side in the Russian Civil War. Throughout his life, he was an active journalist and writer. Among the things he published were, for example, pamphlets, translations of other works and plays, and original plays. Being a devout socialist, and later part of the “Reds” army (i.e. the socialist army aiming to create a socialist republic in Finland, after its independence from Russia) under the conditions of the Finnish Civil War, he often published many of his works in the publishing house of the Labour Movement (for more details, see Tervonen 2012:130–131).

He came from a mixed family: his father Roma and his mother Finnish. Among other things, Kalle Tähtelä was a fairly unique case. Unlike the majority of Roma in the country, at the time, his family was quite wealthy, and the children were educated. His family-owned, for instance, their own home, grounded in his forefather’s participation within the army. Tähtelä attended primary school in Leppävirta, Kuopio and Porvoo and, after a couple of years in Russia, he moved to Helsinki (ibid.). His upper secondary school education (lyseo) was interrupted when Kalle entered the newspaper industry, working first for the dailies *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat* (Southern Finland News) and then for *Aamulehti* (Morning Paper) (ibid.). Among many of his work activities, he would eventually go on to become a prolific and productive writer.

Initially, he began working in different cities across Finland, as a journalist. Most of his work was a journalistic style (i.e. pieces of local news). Moreover, much of his writing focused on social revolutionary ideals, a theme most prominent towards the end of his life. In 1909, when he was just 18 years old, Tähtelä published the only piece of writing to hint towards his own family and community background, the *Mustalaisen kosto* (Gypsy Revenge), a three-act play in five short parts (written in Finnish), which was later republished several times (Tähtelä 1909). The play is inspired by the story *Liv* written by Norwegian theologian and writer Kristofer Janson (published for the first time in the book *Fraa Bygdom/From the Country*, 1866). That is also why the main character’s name was Aslak, which is a very common name among the Sámi people in the North. *Liv* was translated into Finnish in 1879 (Janson 1879).

The *Gypsy Revenge* play is, in essence, a romantic revenge story about a Gypsy young man named Aslak, whose father was killed by a man called Gunnar Haugen many years before. Encouraged by his mother, Guro, Aslak seeks to revenge his father’s death. Making his plans for revenge, Aslak ends up working in Gunnar’s secluded cottage, where he plans to seduce Gunnar’s only daughter, Liw. He also begins spreading rumours about Gunnar’s violent past. Nevertheless, Aslak eventually falls in love with Liw, and, despite his mother’s demands, he cannot take his final and planned revenge. Instead, he reconciles with Gunnar and ends up living permanently in their house, with Liw (Tähtelä 1909).

As one can see, the story partly tackled issues of blood-feuding and family revenge. Nevertheless, the feuding ends with reconciliation, as love is seen to conquer hate

(Tähtelä 1909). This play is also the only one in which the theme of ‘Gypsiness’ even features in Kalle Tähtelä’s work. It is nevertheless interesting to point out this particular theme of the play, and the struggle of its protagonist to make good the revenge of his father’s death and his love for his enemy’s daughter.

In effect, one can see traces of his biography within it, even if not specifically mentioned. As Miika Tervonen has previously argued (2012:130–31), if one looks at his own family’s history, Kalle Tähtelä had long-lived somewhat both within the world of the macro society (i.e. Finnish society) and that of his Roma family, which is also reflected in the narrative of the *Gypsy Revenge*. Being born into a Roma family, but a settled and relatively wealthy one (and, at that, a type of life somewhat detached from other Roma families in the country), Kalle Tähtelä’s biography was undoubtedly shaped by this position. Educated, and thriving for a literary career throughout his life (be it journalism, plays or translations), he also constitutes a unique and distinctive point in the history of Romani literature in the country. His written contributions are undoubtedly contributions to both the broader genre of Finnish literature of the time and to Romani literature more specifically, a potential sign of his belonging to both the Roma community and the Finnish nation.

His career as a writer continued after the publication of this play, but also moved away from Finland itself. In 1910, for instance, Tähtelä went on to study in Germany and, later, in 1911, he moved to the United States, where he worked in different capacities: as a servant, gardener, natural healer etc. (ibid.). While in the United States he also turned his attention back to journalism, having worked and published in several American magazines.

Tähtelä also interestingly adopted a socialist worldview during his travelling years abroad. Thus, he applied for jobs specifically in Finnish-language labour socialist magazines, which were widely published in the United States at that time. In addition to his work as a journalist, he wrote two other plays and published poems and short stories. Kalle Tähtelä also studied in New York at the Rand School of Social Science and at Columbia University in the Department of Journalism, also taking lectures on dramaturgy (J. J. 1921:3).

Not much else is known about his time in the United States or Germany, except for the fact that one of his short story books reflects the experience of immigrants in the country (*Siirtolaiset/Immigrants*). Additionally, among his most notable works, Tähtelä published the following plays and short stories: *Ihmisiä: seitsemän novellia/People: Seven Short Stories* (Tähtelä 1913a); *Ihmisiä: siirtolaisnovelleja/People: Short Stories of Immigrants* (Tähtelä 1913b); *Lowellin lakko, kolminäytöksinen näytelmä/Lowell’s Strike: a Three-Act Play* (Tähtelä 1913c), all in 1913, in Finnish. In addition to this, he had translated the following pieces: *Ihmisteurastamo: kuvauksia yleiseuroopalaisesta sodasta/ A Human Slaughterhouse: Descriptions of a Pan-European War* (Tähtelä 1915) and *Natsaretin kirvesmies/Nazarenian Carpenter* (Tähtelä 1916).

When Tähtelä returned to Finland, in 1917, he had already become a convinced socialist. His socialist ideals seem to have been sparked (or, perhaps, developed) while living

in the United States. In fact, shortly after return to Finland, and just before the start of the Finnish Civil War, Tähtelä became the editor of a socialist newspaper in Turku (*Länsisuomen Työmies*/Western Finland Working Man, later *Sosialisti*/Socialist) and active among the socialist revolutionaries of the time (Tervonen 2012:130–31).

He was also part of the ‘Reds’, within the Finnish Civil War and, after the failed revolt of the ‘Reds’, Tähtelä escaped to Russia. While in Russia, he joined the Red Naval Forces of the Baltic Sea, as a fighter pilot. General Nikolai Judenitš’ (a commander of the Russian Imperial Army during First World War and the leader of the anti-communist White movement in Northwestern Russia during the Civil War) troops shot down Tähtelä’s plane near Petrograd on the October 22, 1919. While he survived the crash and managed to escape overnight, seeking shelter with his fellow pilot, he was captured and was executed two days later, on October 24, 1919 (Geus 2004:189), at the age of 28. His body was found after the retreat of the Whites. Tähtelä was buried on the November 11, 1919, in the Common Tomb of the Revolutionary Heroes of Oranienbaum, present-day Lomonosov, part of St Petersburg (Tervonen 2012:131).

Through his life story and his work, Kalle Tähtelä is undoubtedly an interesting example of a prolific writer, producing literature that may, in some respects, be considered some of the earliest written works authored by Roma writers. At the same time, his contribution as a writer of mainstream literature is equally crucial and important in showcasing the active role of authors of Roma/Gypsy background in shaping the literature of their respective nations as well as Roma writers intrinsically two-fold position: as members of their own ethnic community and a part and parcel of the larger society they inhabit.

### 7.3 The Finnish Gypsy Mission and the Rise of Roma-authored Publications

Officially founded in 1906 (though having been established a year before this, in 1905, at a Tampere meeting), by Oskari Johnsson (since 1922, Oskari Jalkio), the Gypsy Mission began its work as an Evangelical organisation aiming to ‘bring God’ to the Roma people in the country. In fact, the Gypsy Mission has left its mark in the lives of several future Roma activists, including, as we shall see, Aleksander Åkerlund and Ferdinand Nikkinen. The former’s work will be explored in more detail in a section of this chapter.

Most importantly for the purpose of our discussion on Romani literature in the country, and in conjunction with its social and religious work, the Gypsy Mission also began publishing its own journal, from 1906. The first was a Christmas special issue *Mailman kiertäjä* (World Traveller), published in 1906, which continued, from 1907, as the journal *Kiertolainen* (Vagrant). Much like the organisation itself, the publishing of its own journal continued, under changing titles, until the present-day. *Kiertolainen*, whose editor was Oskari Jalkio, was published in Tampere (before the organisation’s move to Helsinki), from 1907–1929. It was later re-named *Vaeltajakansa* (The Travelling People) in the aftermath of the Second World War. Presently, Romano Missio (the current name of

the former Gypsy Mission), publishes the journal under the title *Romano Boodos* (Roma news).

Broadly put, the journal's most active period was at its inception. In 1907, 13 issues were published, in 1908: 9 issues; 1909: 9 issues; 1910: 9 issues; 1911: 9 issues; 1912: 5 issues; 1913: 4 issues; 1914: 5 issues; 1915: 1 issue. Interestingly, the interwar period was its least active one: between 1920 and 1929, only five issues in total (1920, 1923, 1925, 1927, 1929). Once again, the silence of this publication activity during the interwar period needs to be understood in the contexts of the country's history (the aftermath of the Finnish Civil War) as well as in the context of the organisation's leadership history. For instance, in 1931, Oskari Jalkio had moved to Haiti to conduct missionary work and only returned in 1938. Given that Jalkio, the founder of the organisation, had also been one of the most active writers in *Kiertolainen*, it is thus not surprising that the number of publications had diminished.

In conjunction with this, during this time, the other activities of the Gypsy Mission also declined and the person leading the mission became Eeli Jokinen. While some Roma celebration Days (i.e. *Romanipäivät*, or tent events which featured both evangelism and other activities for Roma) continued to be held, the most well-known being the Keuruu festival at Midsummer, the number of publications of the Mission and the number of activities vastly decreased until after the Second World War.

In terms of its content and authorship, the majority of the journal's articles were written by Oskari Jalkio (sometimes under the Romani language pseudonym, Andreo Phaal, meaning "Inner Brother"), his wife Helmi, and the main affiliates of the Gypsy Mission. Their inputs aimed to highlight the Mission's work for the salvation of the Roma people, at times also presenting information on Evangelical work conducted among Roma in other countries (such as the work of the English Evangelist, Gypsy Smith). It also presented the events of the organisation, stories and published testimonies of Roma experiencing the process of salvation and some collections of personal stories and travels of Roma themselves (such as the experiences of schoolteacher Sofia Schwartz and long-time collaborator of the Mission, Karl Fr. Lindström).

In addition to this, the journal often seemed to feature poems, songs and stories written in Romani language as well as songs written in Finnish which focused on the experiences of Roma living in Finland. Some of these were written by Roma or written based on the experiences of Roma and published in *Kiertolainen* as well as in separate books: such as the example of *Vakavaa ja leikkiä mustalaiselämästä: kertomuksia* (Seriously and Playfully on Gypsy life) (Johnsson and Johnsson 1912). It is important to note, however, that the perspective in the stories written by Oskari and Helmi Jalkio were somehow top-down, sentimental and compassionate. The Roma were sometimes seen in these stories as morally weak, emotional, childish, ignorant of society and superstitious (Jalkio 1922; Johnsson 1913b).

It is also interesting to note that *Kiertolainen* was, on the one hand, a primarily Evangelical newspaper (initially led by non-Roma), having a missionary outlook and

aimed at bridging the divide between the majority population and the ‘Gypsy’ population in the country. On the other hand, it also comprised news items and articles concerning the state of other Roma communities elsewhere in Europe, therefore making a connecting point between Roma across different national contexts. These aspects reveal the impact of specific Evangelical missions in shaping particular understandings of the ‘Roma/Gypsy vision’ and the future of Roma communities across Europe, most notably in their emphasis on sedentarisation and their focus on children’s education.

Moreover, issues of ‘nationality’ (i.e. Roma as a separate community versus Roma as part and parcel of the Finnish nation) also came to light in *Kiertolainen*, especially noticeable in some articles written by Jalkio (Jalkio 1923b; Johnsson 1908, 1909). For instance, in one rhetorical question posed in *Kiertolainen*, in 1908, “Will the Roma in our country merge with the people of Finland?”, the answer that came was that this would inevitably be the case: “as civilized Christians, it is impossible for Roma to maintain their own national identity in Finland” (Johnsson 1908:2).

Jalkio’s conception here, as presented on the pages of the journal, was based on the idea that Roma in Finland did not have “the conditions necessary to preserve their own nationality” (ibid.). They, according to this article, had “no traditions of their own, no history of their own, no fatherland, no literature, no religion” and, ultimately, “did not even have their own native language in the same sense as other peoples do” (ibid.). The former’s statement led directly to the conclusion stressed later in *Kiertolainen* that Roma should be raised as Finnish citizens in need and not as Roma (Jalkio 1923b:4). The most impressive concrete objectives would be Christianisation, settlement, education and the employment of Roma following the models of the rest of Finnish society (Johnsson 1908:1–2).

Interesting discussions on the pages of *Kiertolainen* also occurred in the debate between Oskari Jalkio and the German missionary worker and publisher Reinhold Urban, primarily concerning the culture, the nationality, and the future of the Roma (Johnsson 1912b; Urban 1912). Urban had a strong opposition to some of the ideas of Jalkio: for example, about the future of Romani language and culture. Most important, however, especially in connection to the issue of emancipation, was Jalkio’s reply to Urban, which, among other things, posits the idea that even if the merger of Roma with the Finns is inexorable, the international unification of the Roma would also be expected in the future:

They are going to rise more as individuals than as a folk. They remain, in a way, foreign to each other, remain broken up without ever becoming together as a nation. But I guess the Roma will once come together in a much more noble way into one big entity. It occurs through great universal ideals. I do not believe that any other bond should ever unite or assemble this disbanded people, nor do I consider it necessary, because the fulfilment of such a place in human history is, in my opinion, as lofty and high as any other nations. (Johnsson 1912b:22)

Nevertheless, in anticipation of the future, *Kiertolainen* continued on the path set by Jalkio by bringing out glimpses of Finnish national rhetoric. This can be considered, for example, in the use of prints by prominent painters of Finnish National Romanticism as illustrations (von Wright: *Taistelevat metsot* (Fighting Capercaillies) (von Wright 1914); *Raatajat rahanalaiset* (Drudges) (Järnefelt 1909), Romani translations of the story *Kurko rattesko kente* (Children of the Holy Night) written by famous Finnish author Zachris Topelius, most likely translated into Finnish Romani by Oskari Jalkio (Topelius 1909) and publishing an extensive kalevalametric poem *Heimolleni* (For My Tribe) written by Lieska (a.k.a. Oskari Jalkio) (Lieska 1907). For example, in the poem “For My Tribe”, the narrator looks at Roma from the outside and calls them employing old Finnish kalevalametric of poems (alliteration, parallelism, the lavish use of parables) into Christian life:

For my Tribe (from Finnish original)

Traveler, poor one,  
 wanderer, vagrant,  
 like a chip on the waves,  
 rampaged by an angry stream,  
 you travel around the world,  
 my dear tribe.  
 Retailled, persecuted,  
 trampled, mocked,  
 discarded, sallied,  
 overviewed,  
 my unhappy family,  
 my slandered tribe,  
 walker in the village alley,  
 always taking steps,  
 passing without home,  
 wandering with paltry  
 dependent on the mercy of other people,  
 always begging for alms.

(---)

Rise out of the swamp, my family,  
 step up from your subordinate position,  
 lift up your head, you youngster,  
 raise up your gaze, you maiden,  
 towards the highest light,  
 the most ageist sun,  
 the beloved Father  
 in the house of heaven,  
 from where the directing threads reach out,  
 the reins of justice!

(Lieska 1907:9)

In other words, the themes of Roma ethnic identity and Finnish national identity are fascinatingly intertwined in *Kiertolainen*. This is evident also in the emphasis placed on

connecting the Finnish national instrument, the kantele, with Roma. The connection between Roma and kantele (which, according to Roma oral history and folklore, was not known, at least not by Roma themselves), manifests itself in many different forms in the journal: in a song *Kulkuri* (Vagabond) written by Helmi Jalkio (Johnsson 1913a) and *Yksin maailmassa* (Alone in the World) written by Mustalaistytö (Mustalaistytö 1910) and in the drawings (for example, Kiertolainen 1914b and 1914c; Kiertolainen 1913b) and stories like *Kanteleensoittaja* (Kantele Player) (Johnsson-Jalkio 1934).

One may also try to understand the connection between kantele and Roma from another point of view: namely, the issue of Christianisation and the association of kantele with the spiritual realm. Kantele's status, alongside that of a national symbol, as a celestial musical instrument, was cemented in Finland in the first translations of the sections of the Bible from the mid-1500s, whereby the harp was localised in Finland as kantele (Häkkinen 2010:328). Therefore, having Roma play the kantele in *Kiertolainen* had a twofold rhetorical message for the readers: Roma were at the same time a part of Finnish people *and* a Christian community. In other words, helping them would be an important task for everyone, both in terms of national/civic and spiritual duty. Through all of this, the intertwining of 'national' and 'ethnic' identity, and combined with the religious undertones of the Gypsy Mission, as presented and represented within the pages of *Kiertolainen* are interesting and important sources which, somehow, point to the entangled status of Roma the country: as members of the Finnish (Christian) nation and as members of their own ethnic community. As the next section will show, all these aspects are also clearly present in articles written by Roma authors themselves.

#### 7.4 Examples of *Kiertolainen's* Roma-authored Pieces

While the previous section has sought to emphasise the social, political and ideological background within which the most popular journal in the country has functioned (and the key figures behind it), the authorship and Roma writers on the pages *Kiertolainen* are worth emphasising, alongside examples of the texts they have written. Most articles appear to have been written by either Oskari Jalkio, his wife Helmi, or non-Roma preachers and collaborators of the Gypsy Mission, but Roma were also present as authors within the pages of *Kiertolainen*. In fact, though not in a leadership position, one can find a myriad of life stories, poems, opinion pieces/essays, memoirs and contributions of Roma writers across the pages of the Gypsy Mission's journal.

As an example of this, a notable figure within the history of Roma involvement within the Mission is Sofia Schwartz (1887–1932). While she is not often attributed as a writer or contributor to the overarching theme of Romani Literature in Finland, she nevertheless had several interesting inputs to the organisation, through the letters and materials published under her name in the journal *Kiertolainen*.

Schwartz was a prominent female figure within the Gypsy Mission, a teacher in the first Gypsy school in Vyborg/Viipuri (where many Roma lived at the time), between 1906–1907 (Rekola 2010). She then attended Sortavala Seminary (i.e. a pedagogical institution in Sortavala, Karelia), from where she graduated in 1911. Most importantly, for the purpose of this chapter, is that she also wrote several letters and small entries in the 1907 issues of *Kiertolainen* (Schwartz 1907).

When the Viipuri Gypsy school closed on February 28, 1907 and Sofia Schwartz was relieved from her teaching duties, she travelled to Ingria (a historical region in the south of Karelia, and the North West of contemporary Russia), where she became familiar with the Ingrian Roma. She then wrote an interesting article for one of the first issues of *Kiertolainen*, titled “Story about Ingrian Roma”, in which she compares Finnish Roma with Ingrian Roma (Schwartz 1907:6–7). This article is especially important because it highlights two things: 1) the ways in which Sofia Schwartz’ perceptions of the Ingrian Roma (*Inkerin romanit*) encounters were shaped by comparison to her knowledge of the Finnish Roma community; 2) the emphasis placed on the importance of schooling and education as a means towards the social inclusion of the Roma in the societies they lived; 3) the ways in which Sofia Schwartz’ opinions connect with the actions and emphasis placed by the Gypsy Mission on the sedentarisation of Roma and the upbringing of children.

As the article reflects, according to Schwartz, the Ingrian Roma were much more ‘advanced’ than the Roma in Finland: they said they believed in God, went to church regularly, and were also happy to go to school. Unlike the Roma in Finland, Schwartz mentions that Ingrian Roma also had no suspicion of those doing missionary work. This was especially relevant in the context of the Gypsy Mission’s early activities, and their need for Roma mediators in order to reach Roma families and gain their trust. Schwartz thought the receptiveness of Ingrian Roma in comparison to Finnish Roma was due to the fact that in Russia the Roma did not disdain the non-Roma as was the case in Finland. She also highlighted that the state may have been more favourable to them. Furthermore, according to Sofia Schwartz, in Finland, it was more common that if one Roma stole, the whole Roma community would be accused of stealing. In Ingria, however, she argued that things were different. At the same time, Schwartz pointed out that this was understandable, because the Finnish people themselves were hard-working, so it was harder for them to tolerate those who did not abide by this moral ideal (Schwartz 1907:6–7).

Sofia Schwartz’s own life story is interesting also because of the support Schwartz seems to have had for the Gypsy Mission’s aim to sedentarise Roma in Finland. It is also clear that, when comparing the situation of the two Roma communities, Schwartz did not want to offend Finnish readers of the article. Instead, she pointed out to possible ‘reasons’ why the situation may have been worse off for Roma in Finland and, in some ways, justifying it.

Sofia Schwartz died in 1932, at 45 years of age (Rekola 2010). Throughout her short life, she had worked as a teacher and collaborated with the Gypsy Mission in her

various capacities. While she did not become what one would call a recurrent writer for *Kiertolainen* she nevertheless remained an important figure for the Gypsy Mission over the years. The article mentioned above, however, highlights the contribution and involvement of Roma themselves with the activities of the Mission which may or may not have been influenced by the position of Roma within it. Furthermore, the article constitutes an important piece of Roma writing within the newsletter *Kiertolainen*.

In addition to Sofia Schwartz, other Roma authors on the pages of *Kiertolainen*, would go on to become active in their later life, even if in different directions, to the Gypsy Mission's focus. At the same time, these articles are interesting in highlighting the gradual appropriation of the journal also by Roma writers, which would use it as a platform to share and proclaim their views, opinions and visions for their own community's future, sometimes in line with the Gypsy Mission's goals, at other times quite distinctive. This is important to highlight as it shows the ways in which Roma agency was manifested even in these early days of the Mission and the ways in which their views were being reflected in writing.

In this respect, Ferdinand Nikkinen's article from 1913, and his later life trajectory, are worth mentioning. Below are selected segments of this important article, which highlight both his vision at the time and the ways in which the latter connected with the role and activities of the Gypsy Mission:

#### **To Roma young people 1913**

Forgive me, that I dare to tell my opinion of how we could rise to the level of the civilised people.

I do not know why our forefathers had to wander along the village roads. Roma of our time have inherited wandering from their parents. In general, Roma are persistent to keep their traditions. Good followers of traditions! It sounds lovely, but we should not admire these traditions, because our fathers have left many bad traditions to us. There are, naturally, also many good things – for instance, our own language and nationality. If we retain our parents' modes of life, our children will suffer from a similar misery and be despised by other people. Because of our bad habits, other nations despise us. This curse is a big burden on our shoulders.

To remove this curse, we must leave aside our forefathers' inheritance – give up wandering, deceiving people in the selling of horses and in future-telling also. Let us ask for God's power that we could leave our bad habits and learn good habits instead. We ought to leave wandering and live in one place. We ought to leave begging and start to work, to leave deceiving and to be honest. We ought to leave superstition and believe in God. As we believe in God, we'll win everything good. (Nikkinen 1913:15)

This article interestingly starts off with a direct criticism of some cultural 'traits' among the Finnish Roma and puts particular focus on the issue of travelling or nomadism, which is seen as hindering the social inclusion of the community in the country. Nikkinen thus addresses his 'letter' to Roma youth, whom he encourages to give up their forefathers' traditions for the benefit and future of their children and their future generations.

It nevertheless continues with a focus placed on the ways towards the “betterment” of Finnish Roma in the country. Among these, much like Sofia Schwartz, Nikkinen seems to place an emphasis on two things: again, sedentarisation (that is, the cessation of wandering) and, crucially, education (that is, the focus that they see needed to be placed on schooling and upbringing of children).

We, who are a part of Roma youth, let us look at life with greater hopes. Let us not be content with misery. Let us strive for a better life. Let us throw away that which bind us to misery. Homelessness is the greatest curse in the world. A home – even a small one, can protect us from the storms of the world. For what lives a person, who does not know, where to sleep the following night? A wanderer does not know how lovely it is to work for a good life.

The Roma do not care for livelihood. They do not educate their children to be chaste\*\* in the modern way. They do not know their duty to educate their children. In my opinion, people who do not work to earn their existence could go away from the world. As young straight Roma boys and girls let us not be satisfied with our past. Let us seek that we all would have the same national rights and our own home. The fight is life. Life is dead without goals. Let us fight that also our opponents witness it. Let us ask God to be our leader. Through Him we'll get a good goal.

Tribesman Ferdinand Nikkinen (1913:15)

It is worth noting that the editors of *Kiertolainen* saw fit to make two editorial notes to Nikkinen's article, marked with \* and \*\*, respectively. The latter can be seen above, wherein the editorial note says:

\*\*The morality nowadays is worse than that of Roma people. We do not advise Roma youth to admire it. Let us follow Christ's morality. (Nikkinen 1913:15)

While this editorial note may seem a small matter of disagreement, it is nevertheless interesting and gains more importance in the longer history of Nikkinen's activism and his departure from the Gypsy Mission. In fact, it is crucial to highlight that Ferdinand Nikkinen, in the aftermath of the Second World War, would become of the Mission's most fervent critics.

It is unclear when Ferdinand Nikkinen's affiliation with the Gypsy Mission stopped. Nor were the reasons ever clearly stated. Nevertheless, what we do know is that, in 1946, Nikkinen collected the signatures of 364 Roma men from across the country and sent a letter to the Ministry of the Interior, criticising the Mission's lack of Roma leadership and asking for a more direct involvement from the state to support the Roma in the country (Friman-Korpela 2014; Pulma 2006:166; Stenroos n.d.). Nikkinen also became a fervent atheist and had a direct influence to the founding, in 1953, of *Romanengo Staggos* (title in Finnish Romani, meaning the Roma Union), one of the first civic Roma organisation in the country. Furthermore, his son, Reima Nikkinen, would also be connected and involved with *Suomen Mustalaisyhdistys* (Finnish Gypsy Association), founded in 1967, which would become (under the renewed name of *Suomen Romaniyhdistys*, Finnish Roma Association), the most active civic Roma organisation in the country, whose

work continues until present-day. It is thus not only important to trace the relations and legacy of the Gypsy Mission with the writings and work of key Roma activists, but relevant in highlighting the ways in which the Mission paved the way for the foundations and development of Roma writings in the country (for more on the subject, see Roman 2020). Through this, Nikkinen's trajectory, much as the trajectory of Aleksander Åkerlund (discussed below), are crucial in showcasing these complex entanglements and developments.

Finally, there were other writers in *Kiertolainen*, whose Roma background was self-declared either through the stories told or through the name they choose to sign with (such as "a Roma," "Roma Girl," "A Roma Girl's Story," etc.). These often took the shape of personalised stories, memories from childhood or discussions of their own path to 'salvation' through the intercession of the Gypsy Mission (Hagert 1929; Lindström 1913; Romani 1927; Schwartz 1907). Nevertheless, even when anonymised, these are important examples in highlighting Roma authorship and presence within the organisation.

Below are, for instance, segments of an article titled "For the Roma Tribe," written in 1929, by Maria Hagert, a Roma woman (Hagert 1929:8):

#### **For the Roma tribe**

Gypsy Mission is one of the most difficult tasks than you can imagine. Among Roma, who call themselves Christian, you can see "dead faith" every day. They feel that there is nothing good in religion. However, the loving Saviour has redeemed also Roma, though they have not really got much love.

Gypsy Mission's work has been done for only 23 years. We have not seen as great results as we had wished for. You cannot expect great results during such a short time, taking into account the difficulties of the work and the small resources available. Gypsy mission has become loved only by a few people. I hope I could open this work in the right way.

[...]

I hope that Roma mission work would become livelier. You ought not to be depressed if you see little fruit. It also took a long time for Noah to build the ark. If you could take Roma children to take care of them, you could see better results. Let's do this work together. If you cannot do anything else, pray for this work. God will hear it. (Hagert 1929:8)

It is interesting to note here both the interchangeable nature of the terms Roma/Gypsy used above and the way in which the author pleads for the active involvement of the Mission and, again, specifically in terms of the education of children. More radically, this author argues for the taking away of Roma children for the purpose of education (see quote above, "if you could take Roma children to take care of them, you could see better results"). This drastic proposal would materialise later in the history of the Gypsy Mission; more specifically, the taking away of Roma children from their families, especially in the 1950s, would be connected with the state incentives of transforming Roma into 'better' citizens of the nation-state (hence, educating them away from their families). It would also, unsurprisingly, be one of the more controversial and contested moments in the organisation's history (Friman-Korpela 2014; Pulma 2006; Tervonen 2012).

Another similar article was written by an anonymised Roma author (signed simply as “A Roma”/*Romani*), which pleads for the spiritual revival of the Roma, as a means for social inclusion. A commonality between all these authors is a clear focus placed on the children’s upbringing and the role of the Gypsy Mission within this.

### Suggestions

[...]

As far as I know, the change of the fate of the Roma tribe in Finland, for which the state has granted some funds, has so far been mainly to revive the spiritual life of a few mostly devotees. Alongside this, there has been work done in society, but due to the lack of funds and resources, results have not been as great as desirable and necessary.

[...]

As far as the Roma are concerned, we must recognize that, as important as reviving the spiritual life of individuals, just as important for temporal life is the improvement of their social condition and their position within society. The most important of these, in my opinion, is upbringing children to work and the reviving the spiritual life [of people] in the direction of starting a life of dignity.

Romani (1927:22)

Thus, through a look at only some of the content of *Kiertolainen*, and a closer analysis of some key articles and letters written by Roma authors on the pages of this journal, one can see that Roma voices were always present within the Gypsy Mission. In fact, in many ways, Roma played an active part also in shaping and promoting some of the goals and aims that are often associated with the Gypsy Mission (such as sedentarisation, spiritual revivalism and education of children). Furthermore, the Gypsy Mission, through its main written material, the journal *Kiertolainen*, has opened space for Roma authors to become just that – writers and authors of their own life stories. In effect, this also led to the shaping of future Roma activists in the country, such as Ferdinand Nikkinen. Nikkinen, however, was not a sole example of this. In that which follows, the discussion moves on to a particularly interesting figure within the Mission, whose work, both writing and activism, constitutes a crucial example of the myriad forms that *Romani* literature has taken in Finland, at the beginning of the twentieth century: Aleksander Åkerlund.

## 7.5 Aleksander Åkerlund and the “Features of the Gypsy Life”

Lecturer, violinist, actor and book editor Aleksander Åkerlund (1893–1944), born in a Roma family, simultaneously lived, much like Kalle Tähtelä and Ferdinand Nikkinen, in two intrinsically connected realms: the ethnic Roma community and the mainstream national society. While the same argument undoubtedly applies to all Roma, who are at once members of their community and members of the macro-society they inhabit, in the case of these three authors, this particular position led to their formation not only as visionaries but, in a sense, as actors to the shaping of Roma emancipation, in myriad

forms. As such, Åkerlund could, as a musician, skillfully capitalise on the popularity of 'Gypsy music' – a Roma-related music played in a characteristic 'Gypsy style' and composed by non-Roma composers. At the same time, during the interwar period in Finland, he contributed to shaping a new type of 'Gypsy image', by combining, in his art, an active position concerning Roma issues, which he would target specifically at a non-Roma audience.

Most clearly related to the purpose of this chapter was a book titled *Piirteitä mustalaisten elämästä* (The Features of Gypsy Life), edited by Aleksander Åkerlund, under the artist name Alex Aulo (Aulo 1934). Although the text itself was not written by Åkerlund, the edited book brings together the contents of his work as an activist as well as some aspects of his personal history. When the content of the book is compared to the hundreds of newspaper advertisements and writings about his presentations and concerts, the book appears not only as promotional material for his work but as a kind of personal and intellectual vision.

Aleksander Åkerlund's career as an activist-artist began within the Gypsy Mission in the 1910s after the focus of the Mission's activities had shifted to Viipuri, in 1911. Interestingly, in his obituary, published on December 6th, 1944 in *Helsingin Sanomat* (Helsinki Newspaper), Åkerlund is also said to have been "raised in the home of a Gypsy Mission's leader" (*Helsingin Sanomat* 1944:11). Something about Åkerlund's relationship with Jalkio is also found in the fact that Åkerlund's later artist name, Alex Aulo, brings to mind the name of Jalkio's son, Aulo Angar Johnsson (1912–1951).

When the Gypsy Mission began organising evenings with a program to support the actions of the Mission, Åkerlund signed up. Several other Roma were also involved: Mandi Isberg, Ferdinand Nikkinen and Antti Palm, to mention only a few (Johnsson 1913; Viita 1967:51–61). Much like Ferdinand Nikkinen, the reasons for Aleksander Åkerlund's withdrawal from the Gypsy Mission remain unclear and were never referred to directly in the printed sources of the organisation.

However, Åkerlund's independent career was, especially in its early stages from 1917, connected to leftist intellectual and Roma emancipatory circles of the short-lived Finnish Roma Cultural Society (*Suomen Romanien Sivistysseura*, spring 1917), The Finnish Gypsy Theatre (*Suomen Mustalaisteatteri*, 1917–1919) and artistic circles in Helsinki Music Institute (*Helsingin musiikkiopisto*, year 1919). It is obvious, that these more or less political reasons, alongside the previously mentioned negative attitude within the Gypsy Mission to the rising of Roma ethnic activism, contributed to Åkerlund's departure from the Mission. Another possible explanation, more connected to his personal religious life, is found in the true-to-life stories presented in *Piirteitä mustalaisten elämästä*.

Broadly, the topics of the book *Piirteitä mustalaisten elämästä* fall into three categories: informative, religious, and true-to-life contents. The book begins with two articles, which together draw a picture of the history and missionary work of the Roma in Europe and Finland. The first article, written by Swedish Free Church pastor Otto Sundberg – *Mustalaiset. Unohdettu lähetysala* (Gypsies. The Neglected Missionary Field) (Sundberg

1934) – was published in Swedish in the Ansgarius Calendar of the Swedish Pietist Mission and in *Kiertolainen* (Sundberg 1923). With the second article, written by Oskari Jalkio, *Mietteitä mustalaistemme aseman parantamisesta* (Thoughts on Improving the Status of Our Gypsies) (Jalkio 1923b, 1934b), the focus moves to the proposals for a solution to the ‘Gypsy issue’ in Finland (see the previous discussion on Jalkio’s writings).

The religious section consists of an extract from the Holy Bible *Tek ternicaija* (Ten Young Women) (orig. from the Gospel of Matthew 25: 1–13) and of one poem, *Kaalesko mangiba* (Kaale’s prayer), written by Oskari Jalkio both in Romani and Finnish languages (Jalkio 1923a, 1934a). The book also contains another poem, *Kaalo* (Kaale, another term used for Finnish Roma, literally translated as ‘Black’ from Finnish Romani), which is written by Andreo Phaal (i.e. Oskari Jalkio). The two poems are a good example of how Jalkio put himself in different positions in relation to Roma when writing under his own name or under the pseudonym Andreo Phaal, “Inner Brother” (translation from Finnish Romani). While ‘Oskari Jalkio’ writes as a missionary, ‘Andreo Phaal’ strives to some extent to understand aspects of Roma life, though strongly coloured by specific stereotypes and themes of Gypsy Romanticism. However, read in parallel, the poems open up as well Jalkio’s as Åkerlund’s ambivalent mindset. The following are a sample translated stanzas from the poems *Kaale’s prayer* and *Kaale*. *Kaale’s prayer* was written in Finnish Romani and Finnish while *Kaale* was written in Finnish:

**Kaalesko mangiba** (in Finnish Romani)

Hun maan, hun maan, baro Deevel! Cuoro kentos mangina:  
me vaa duural grehhibosta, bolibosko drommesta.  
Saaro manna doori geelo, nango daari sterdo som.  
Sasto sommas, ka me geejom, kaan som cingro, geero rom.

Roodidom buut bolibosta, Saaro, saari frestadom.  
Kaan me ciinjinte som gesta, sar jeek vildo cau me som.  
Le maan neer to bringos, Deevel! Kammaa doi te hyylävaa.  
De maan doori aahaa, giivaa, ar ti angal garuvaa!

Pherdo som me grehhibosta, oo, mo gij hin gungalo.  
Thou maan aro navasiina, ar’ ti rat do purano!  
Oo, me som bidaadeskiiro, aah mo iego daad ta phaal,  
aah mo koni fedde guosos ta mo kamlo gesko maal!

**Kaale’s prayer** (translation from the Finnish original)

Hear, hear, great Creator,  
A request from a poor child!  
I come from far away to the world,  
I have walked along the roads of crimes.  
I’ve lost everything,

I get to stand in front of you bare.  
 Healthy I was when I started my journey,  
 Now I'm a miserable wreck.

Much I found in the world,  
 I've all been through.  
 Now I am already tired from the heart,  
 I will be exhausted like an orphan.  
 Pull alongside you, Lord,  
 to get a moment's rest!  
 Let me be there and live,  
 in your arms only.

I am full of the filth of sin,  
 my heart is filled with evil.  
 Wash me clean  
 With your holy blood!  
 I'm an orphan, an alien,  
 Please, be my father,  
 My brother, my best treasure,  
 Orphan's soulmate.

(Jalkio 1923a:1; 1934a:22–23)

**Kaalo/Kaale** (translation from the Finnish original)

I'm a mystery for others  
 as well as for myself.  
 I'm wandering like a haunt,  
 and I'm happy to do so.  
 To stay in one place,  
 it would be a death for me.  
 I hurry forward,  
 I give you a home.

I don't know why –  
 I pass as long as I pass –  
 and that's not what I ask,  
 when I hide into my heart  
 the one who tells me to pass,  
 the strange need for wandering,  
 all the glowers of the South,  
 the sum of longings.

I cry out when I want,  
 all my tears,  
 until the grief fades  
 as well as the leftovers of sorrow.

But when the joy rises,  
I let the jubilation out,  
so that the whole land will hear,  
where Kaale passed.

O, how lovely is life,  
when there is a mind to live,  
and when you hear your heart-song  
singing brightly.  
It is a wide world  
always in front of me.  
Everything is ready there  
and nothing forced to brace.

(Phaal 1925:10; 1934:32)

The edited book also included three true-to-life stories, all presumably written by Helmi or Oskari Jalkio. In two of them, *Särjetty viulu* (Smashed Violin) (*Särjetty viulu* 1934) and *Tumma soittaja* (Dark Caller) (Sävel 1915, 1934) a “dark violinist” travels along with the Gypsy Mission’s performance group. A third one, *Kanteleensoittaja* (The Kantele player), by Helmi Johnsson-Jalkio, is about Janne, a Roma playing the Finnish national instrument, kantele, at the Gypsy Mission’s events (Johnsson-Jalkio 1934).

In *Särjetty viulu* (Smashed Violin), Santeri, a violinist from the Gypsy Mission, wonders between a spiritual and worldly life. The story starts when the violinist has painfully but deliberately broken his violin. According to the confession of the violinist, the violin itself is the reason for his struggle. In Santeri’s own words:

Well, that is what the uncle said, idly, that is exactly what it (the violin) is for me. It was bewitched and always got me into crazy rapture. Sitting in solitude this evening felt so vividly that that wicked thing is what separates me from God. We have been praying together, you remember uncle, but God seems so far away and the voice said, “Break it” and I did, but it sucks, I don’t feel any better and I can’t live without a violin. It is, at the same time, my happiness and curse. The violin has a very peculiar spirit and it takes me up a high mountain and shows me all the ideals and charms of the world and, poor me, I kneel and serve but not God. Two powers are waging war on us. Who will win in the end? Do you understand, dear Uncle? (*Särjetty viulu* 1934:28)

The prayers of the “dear uncle” and the explanation of God’s purposes would eventually calm down Violinist Santeri. Yet, “dear uncle” concludes his story as follows: “The youngster calmed down for a period, but soon a “thousand-year habit of blood” took victory over him and Santeri again launched a new violin under his arm for the fairs of the world.” (ibid.)

In the story of *Tumma soittaja*, the protagonist, now an unnamed Roma violinist, is presented with respect and stereotypes as “the delicate child of a stray wandering Tribe” (Sävel 1915:17). The narrator tells his/her own interpretation on the future of the “dark tribe”, as follows:

The poor ones are wandering in the dark. Who would bring the torch to the night? Who would brighten the tone of the heart of a dark tribe? The echo of the dark caller's tunes in my soul whispers: "He was the Torch-bearer in the night." Long and desolate is probably his path, but there is a wonderful gift of tunes in his soul, comforting, illuminating and lighting when angry winds threaten to extinguish their torches. Listening to the sounds of his own soul, the dark caller continues his heavy pursuit and many bless the power of his tunes. Wherever he leaves the echo of his playing, from there a tearful look at his steps follows. Far away, the lonely heart remembers his tunes and prays for the light and peace of the day on the path of the dark caller. (Sävel 1915:17)

These stories are important in order to understand Aleksander Åkerlund's and Oskari Jalkio's personal interpretations of the relationship between the two. If we place Oskari Jalkio – the alleged writer behind the pseudonym "Sävel" – as "Uncle," "Troupe Leader" and the first-person narrator, and Aleksander Åkerlund as "Santeri," "Torch-bearer," "Dark Caller," "Youngster," some details of the life story of Aleksander Åkerlund are possibly explained through a perceived spiritual crisis. The denominations suggest that Jalkio either was an "uncle" adopted by Roma, or that he himself sought to be accepted among the Roma as an "uncle". The interpretation is directly dependent on the one who ultimately gave the aforementioned designations in the first place. It is, though, obvious that in re-publishing the stories, Aleksander Åkerlund wanted to show he had received the hidden but written apologies from Oskari Jalkio, and had accepted them. Åkerlund had also, at least to some extent, renewed his connection to the Gypsy Mission after Jalkio returned to Finland in 1938. As such, Åkerlund's name can even be found in the list of members of the Mission's board from 1939 (Viita 1967:121–22).

Interestingly, the story of activist-artist Aleksander Åkerlund, who worked mostly outside institutions, did not end in the canon of Finnish Roma activism and literature, which had long been maintained by the Gypsy Mission. However, according to Åkerlund's own assessment, he was "the only Gypsy enlightenment speaker in the Nordic countries from a Gypsy background" during the interwar period (Helsingin Sanomat 1941:9). The Tombstone in Malmi Cemetery is engraved with golden letters "Roma-Tribe Enlightenment-Lecturer Aleksander Åkerlund" (Malmi Cemetery in Helsinki: block 81, row 4, place 78).

## 7.6 Conclusion

As this chapter has highlighted, Finland represents an interesting and important case study when it comes to the shape and content of Roma writings before and during the interwar period and, especially, how these link to processes of Roma civic emancipation in the country during the same period. While the number of Roma publications was significantly lower than in its preceding years, these particular manifestations and the shape of the movement itself need to be understood within the historical, social and

political context of Finland at the start of the twentieth century: the upsurge of Finnish nationalism, the country's economic struggles and the desire to shape a clear Finnish identity in the aftermath of Finland's Civil War.

That said, the content and work that would shape the field of Romani literature in the country also (directly or indirectly) reflect these changes. One can see in the various texts presented above the ways in which Roma writers' understanding of the future of the Roma community in Finland was grounded in the overall aims and goals of the larger society: namely, a focus placed on education and sedentarisation and a focus on being part of the Finnish nation. While these issues were undoubtedly part of the aims and goals of the Finnish Gypsy Mission, a Christian Evangelical organisation aiming to 'bring God' to Finland's Roma population, they cannot be underestimated in the ways in which Roma activists and writers themselves promoted them. Examples of this are the texts written by Sofia Schwartz, Ferdinand Nikkinen, as well as the anonymous Roma authors present within the pages of *Kiertolainen*, The Gypsy Mission's flagship journal.

At the same time, the stories and pieces of writing shared by these Roma authors (including Schwartz, Nikkinen and Åkerlund) reflect another dimension of their social experience: namely, that of Roma visionaries, who are at once part of their respective community (i.e. the Kaale) and members of the macro-society, of which they were an intrinsic part of. In other words, what these texts also illuminate is the entangled position of Roma authors during (and before) the interwar period in Finland: as members of their own community, proud of their identity and heritage and as striving for national/civic identity, as members of the Finnish nation. Through this, these materials emphasise the myriad forms that ideas of the future of the Roma community may take, as well as the ways in which Roma civic emancipation was manifested and represented within literary works of the time.

Moreover, the role of the Finnish Gypsy Mission (and, especially, its journal, *Kiertolainen*) cannot be underestimated in contributing to the promotion and the shaping of Roma authors and activists during the interwar period. The journal featured numerous Roma writers within its content, who found within *Kiertolainen* a platform to share their own visions, ideas and perspectives. Some of these writers were, or would become, prolific Roma activists in the country, at times moving away from the Mission (and, at times even moving against it) or, at other times (such as the case of Sofia Schwartz has shown), continuing to be active members of the organisation. Regardless of which path they took, their input within the pages of *Kiertolainen* should not be disregarded. In other words, the apparent 'silence' or 'inactivity' of Roma writers in Finland during the period under focus is just that: an appearance. As this chapter has highlighted, writings by Roma and writings concerning Roma were not far in between.

Finally, the examples of seemingly 'outlier' authors, such as Kalle Tähtelä, who wrote just before the interwar period, and whose work connected to his socialist ideals, emphasise the ways in which issues of Roma civic emancipation need not necessarily mean a

focus on one's own community. It reflects an openness to the 'outside' world, in a quest for equality and interest of the problems of society as a whole (rather than just the issues concerning the Roma/Gypsy community). In fact, Kalle Tähtelä's life story (much as Aleksander Åkerlund's and Ferdinand Nikkinen's, later on) showcases the myriad shapes that the very process of 'emancipation' may take: among others, a preoccupation with the broader issues of the macro-society in which they lived, and not just the ones characterising their specific Roma/Gypsy community (in this case, the Kaale). This is crucially important as civic emancipation need not only be understood as an 'internal' focus; rather, it becomes an open-ended engagement with the world, involving both the Roma community and the majority society in which they lived. Through this, the examples presented in this chapter offer important perspectives and nuances to the very meaning of Roma civic emancipation during the interwar period, as well as the ways in which these perspectives were reflected and promoted in the development of Romani literature at the time.



# Conclusion

*Raluca Bianca Roman*

As the chapters in this book have all highlighted, the production of Romani literature during the interwar period in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe was intrinsically connected to the Roma civic emancipation movement during the same period of time. While the specificities of each country context are embedded within the historical unfolding of the nation-states in which Roma have lived, some common threads and themes can be identified throughout. These common threads are identifiable both in terms of the patterns of developments in terms of producing Romani literature during the interwar period in the region and in terms of the narratives and messages that these writings convey. In that which follows, we will look at the general context of the development of Romani literature in the region during the interwar period, which created the 'scene' upon which it emerged and flourished, followed by a more concrete comparative analysis of the content and themes present throughout the chapters discussed in this book.

To begin with, the emergence, production and development of Romani literature in the countries of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe reveal crucial aspects of the entanglement of Roma emancipation with the shaping of mainstream national consciousness in the region (as well as, in some cases, of mainstream nationalism). Furthermore, rather than detached from the overarching history within which they were embedded, Roma elite, writers, activists and 'representatives' of the time emphasised a direct connection with the history of their respective countries, thus also highlighting in their written works the synchronous belonging of Roma/Gypsies to both their respective communities and their respective nation-states, which connectedly underlined the double belonging of Roma/Gypsies to two key dimensions: their 'ethnic' community and the macro-society in which they live and within which they are active agents (see Marushiakova and Popov 2017a:49).

It is also important to stress the ways in which the development of the Romani literature and the Roma movement more broadly was connected to the historical unfolding of the twentieth century. Broadly put, the twentieth century, the timeframe when Romani literature developed (though, as shown, in some places its emergence could be traced even earlier) and when the Roma emancipation movement began, was also the time of the emergence of new nation-states, building a national identity and belonging. This was the case across all the countries in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe and certainly the case of the countries discussed in this book. Furthermore, despite discussions of their marginality and their distinctive social positioning compared to the majority population within their respective countries, Roma/Gypsies were not (nor have they ever been), outside of the mainstream processes of state formation. This is a crucial

aspect which needs to be underlined when trying to understand some of the key themes present within the development of Romani literature during the period under analysis. More specifically, as we can see from the texts presented in this book, a clear emphasis was placed by authors during this time on highlighting the necessity to see and promote Roma as equal citizens of their respective countries, as embedded within the national struggles and as connected to their nations. While they often did so by pinpointing to the historical struggles of their communities, they also did so by showcasing the embeddedness of Roma/Gypsies within their respective states. The themes and focus of Roma written works produced during this period in all the countries of the region point precisely to this.

In this line of thought, Miroslav Hroch's typology is a useful one in understanding these processes. As discussed in the introduction, Hroch pointed out three key stages or phases in the processes of national revival: 1) phase A, a phase within which a small group of elite or intellectuals begin to focus on the study of language, folklore, history, and thus identifying common threads in order to shape a national consciousness among their ethnic group.; 2) phase B, in which these ideas are put into action in order to also mobilise those outside the small circle of elite; and the final stage 3), phase C, of mass mobilisation, wherein all the elements necessary to the formation of a nation state are already achieved (Hroch 1985:25–27).

It is easy to see that the first two stages are clearly present in all chapters presented in this book and these are the stages of the Roma civic emancipation movement during the interwar period. The first phase is that which can be most evidently seen in the emergence of a group of Roma elite in all countries, whose members aim to embark on the study of their own language, history and folklore. Yet, most of the work of Roma activists, including that of the production of Romani literature, could be seen as fitting within the second phase of Hroch's scheme, where the attempts are made to activate the sense of consciousness among the community. It is in this stage that the production of Romani literature in the region flourished, wherein Roma writers begin to create works which aim to, at once, engage with their own community, building on the study of their literature, history, culture, folklore, etc., and seeking to mobilise Roma through emphasis placed on the concepts of 'awakening', 'emancipation' and 'unity'. In fact, the issues of 'awakening' and ethnic consciousness are the ones that permeate almost all texts presented in this book and, as we discuss below, are a common theme in Romani literature during this period.

At the same time, one can only fully understand these developments if one looks at the specific historical and national unfolding within which they are manifested in the early twentieth century: the fall of empires, the formation of new nation-states, the quest for national identity and the shaping of national consciousness (Alapuro 1988; Gellner 2006; Hobsbawm 1992; Korkut 2006; Livezeanu 1995). In fact, all these aspects are notable in all the cases and nationally specific examples of Romani literature discussed in this book. For instance, in the Ottoman Empire, the emergence of Romani literature and

Roma media, as well as the emergence of the Roma civic movement, was closely connected to two trends: the general transformation of the Ottoman society, in the case of the Muslim Roma, and the liberation struggles of the Orthodox Balkan people, in the case of Orthodox Gypsies. At the same time, in the USSR, we could see the interlinking of the production of Romani literature with state support was also central to the positions taken by Roma activists at the time in respect to issues of education and sedentarisation. In Yugoslavia, as well as in other countries in the region, we could witness that the forms of literature produced seem to have been strategically shaped with the aim highlighting that Gypsies are a people united by common culture and history, while also being equal to the other people of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In Hungary, the Gypsy Musicians' journals and the connection between emancipation and professional organisations showcase not only an expression of a Gypsy identity but also an expression of belonging to the Hungarian nation. Likewise, in Romania, Roma activists of the time actively pursued the aims of 'awakening' their community while nevertheless highlighting the loyalty that Roma have to King and Country and while also distinguishing themselves from other minorities in the country. In Bulgaria, the shaping of Romani literature revealed the complexities and entanglements of religious identity and community identity. In the specific case of North Western Bulgaria, this was with the influence of the Evangelical Mission. However, it also revealed the struggle to find new place in society, through the aims of Muslim religious organisations and their goals of uniting all Gypsies. And finally, in Finland, the works produced by Roma writers of the time were connected both to the post-Civil War context characterising the country – in the frames of Finnish nation-building, on the one hand, and of class struggles, on the other (the latter also being an important marker of the time and evident among Roma/Gypsy writers in other countries as well) – and to the role of the Finnish Gypsy Mission in providing a platform for Roma voices to express themselves.

There is also a different type of unity in this seeming diversity, and the development of Romani literature during the interwar period reveals some very important common aims and goals of its writers and producers. All of these emphasise the need to understand at once the particularity of Romani literature(s) in the region during the interwar period and, most importantly, the connecting lines that point towards the more general development of the Roma emancipation movement at the time. These common lines can, once again, most clearly be articulated in the framework of Miroslav Hroch's discussion of the formation of nations and national revivalism (Hobsbawm 1992:11–12; Hroch 1985:25–30). In that which follows, we will try to highlight some of these common pathways, identifiable (in one form or another) in almost all the cases discussed in this book. These can be most simply understood in two dimensions: 'form' and 'content'.

Firstly, if we look at the 'forms' (or structures) of the development of Romani literature in the region, an element which is figuring central within all the countries discussed throughout this book, is the importance of the press; more precisely, the medium of newspapers and journals. As all chapters have pointed out, Roma writers of the interwar

period saw newspapers and journals as key media through which their messages would be shared. This was clearly the case in terms of Roma-led journals, most evident in the case of Romania (with as many as six different Roma newspapers being published) or in the case of Hungary's Gypsy musicians' journals (but present also in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia). However, this was also the case in terms of articles and pieces written by Roma authors in Roma-centred newspapers during this time (Bulgaria, Finland) or publications by Roma writers in mainstream journals/newspapers (in all the countries).

The use of newspapers and journals as a medium to convey political demands or highlight allegiance to the national leadership of the time was not, however, a Roma-exclusive practice. In fact, newspapers and journals constituted a key pathway through which intellectuals of the time (Roma and non-Roma alike) presented their views on different matters. Such forms of media were also important markers of the time, specifically connected to the process of modernisation, both in the West and in the East, for minorities and majorities alike (Leone 2004:3, 5). Furthermore, newspapers had long been used as means to reach a broad audience and were the sources most widely read, not only within the region but also outside of it, oftentimes promoting, in diverse ways, ideas concerning national belonging and connected to the shaping of nationalism in their respective regions (for some general works, see Bingham and Conboy 2015; Hampton 2004; Harmsworth 1901; Leone 2004).

Thus, it is not surprising that Roma elite also chose these media as a means to promote their ideas, programs, plans and incentives as well as use them as a political or mobilising tool among. This is a common theme throughout all the chapters in this book, even when the shape it has taken may have been distinctive. In other words, the use of press is also connected to the ways in which the press was a key instrument in the macro society in which Roma lived and the ways in which the press was a means of shaping and emphasising national belonging, particularly in cases of the construction of new-nation states.

The general character of the newspapers in this era, which included publications of pieces from different literary genres, also contributed to the expression and development of national Romani literature(s) in all their diversity. In fact, it was also during this period that the main genres of Romani literature were formed and developed. These included, among other things, Roma poetry, publicistics, short stories, novellas, memoirs, artistic translations, etc. Thus, different texts belonging to these different genres (i.e. poems, songs, translation work, etc.) would often appear on the pages of Roma newspapers and constituted the key pieces of Romani literature.

Moreover, the development of Romani literature coincides with the development of literature in their respective countries. – see, for instance, the establishment of folklore collections; the interest in national grand narratives; the focus placed on national identity, etc., all manifested across the countries in the region. It is in this context that the Roma movement during this time built itself in the context of national institutions, organisations and unions. Romani literature also directly connects to this, specifically in cases in which the production of literature was interrelated with the development of a

Roma emancipation movement in that country. A clear example of this is, again, the case of Romania, where Roma organisations (and Roma leaders) promoted their visions of the future of Roma communities within the spaces of their newspapers but similar processes could be seen in all the countries discussed in this book. Roma writers and activists used the forms and means that connected to the development of mainstream literature: be it newspapers; books; translations of key texts; the collection of one's own folklore; the focus on the development of educational institutions, libraries, etc.

Also in terms of the common 'forms', the pathways to the production of literature in the country took, at times, specific (but connected) appearances, such as the case of Bulgaria and Finland, where Evangelical missions played an active role in the shaping of Romani literature in the country. Furthermore, in these two contexts the involvement of non-Roma within the process of Evangelisation of Roma revealed the ways in which the voices being promoted were shaped, which also lead to their expressing their own ethnic voice. Roma writers spoke within the pages of religious journals and manifested their particular ideas of their visions for the future of their communities. This undoubtedly shows an active engagement, where their visions for the future were being manifested in a particular narrative.

Likewise, cultural organisations constituted additional forms or pathways in which Romani literature developed. Such was the case in Hungary, for instance, whereby the Gypsy Musicians' work offered platform for Roma elite and literature, primarily through the publication of their journals. And, as the country with perhaps the largest production of Romani literary works, the USSR emphasises the intrinsic connection between the development of Romani literature, state support (and connections to state funds and policies), and the development of national literature more broadly. The unique case of the USSR clearly demonstrates that, given the appropriate or favourable general conditions, the literary creativity widely flourished within a very short period of time.

An interesting aspect within these discussions was also the role of Romani language or, better put, the ways in which the development of Romani literature was not always necessarily synonymous to its production exclusively in Romani language. In fact, while Romani language poems, books, monographs (published and unpublished), were present in some form in all countries discussed, most materials available from this period were published in the language of the authors' respective countries (with the exception of USSR). Yet, the fact that these pieces of writing were not in Romani language does not equate with the authors' (or, more generally, 'Roma/Gypsies') lack of interest in speaking their language or keeping their language in oral form. Rather, it is a reflection of the community/society juxtaposition discussed above, wherein Roma are both members of their own communities and members of the broader societies they inhabit. Moreover, since most activities embarked upon by the Roma organisations that set up the Roma movement in different countries included not only Roma but also members of the majority, the language of that particular country was adopted as a primary means to share and convey the messages of Roma elite. At the same time, the existence (in some countries,

such as the USSR) of policies concerning the standardisation of Romani language into a written one led to a situation in which the number of titles in Romani language during the interwar period of time was practically unmatched in any other historical era. This also makes the production and importance of studying the development of Romani literature crucial to the understanding of the broader development of the Roma movement.

Looking now at themes of the writings themselves (i.e. moving into the sphere of 'content'), a key preoccupation among Roma writers, intellectuals and elite of the time appears to have been that of the (re)presentation of their community's history, language and culture. In fact, as the first phase in Hroch's typology emphasises, the rising concern and interest in their community's history, language and culture, is a key moment in the coming together of elite for the purpose of shaping a national revival. In other words, Roma writers' interests in all these matters, across the diversity of national contexts presented in this book, reflect a clear manifestation of such incentives for national revival. At the same time, the interest in folklore and the culture of one's people, as can be most clearly evident in Romania's case of attempting to establish a Roma library collection titled *O Rom*, is not an exclusive Roma practice. The emergence of new nation-states (and thus of new forms of nationalism(s) in the area) were connected with the interest of collecting national folklore as a means of proving the unity of a people (Stark 2016). Roma/Gypsies, in the move towards their civic emancipation, were not on an exception to this. It is thus not surprising that one of the key means by which Roma writers and activists sought to establish and promote a sense of group consciousness during the interwar period was through the collection of Roma folklore or the promotion of the study of their own community history and culture.

Yet, and just as importantly, none of this meant a denial of the national belonging of Roma in any of the countries discussed in this book. Quite to the contrary, across the various examples introduced in this book, an overall expression of a connection and solidarity of Roma writers with the nation-state in which they lived was manifested in their writings. This could be seen in all countries: for example, in Romania, where loyalty to King and country was emphasised, in Hungary where solidarity with the Hungarian nation was argued, in Yugoslavia, where the claims laid out by activists was the recognition of Roma as equal citizens of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, in Finland, where Roma writers focused on education as pathway of further inclusion within Finnish society etc. In fact, what one can see from all the chapters in the book, and what is highlighted in numerous Roma publications of the time, is the emphasis placed, at the same time, on one's belonging to one's own community and solidarity with the majority society within which Roma were embedded and to which the authors of these texts showed a connection with. This was, in effect, a key aim of the emancipatory movement among Roma across the region.

Connecting the lines of both 'form' and 'content', it is interesting to note that in spite of the striking clarities in some of the messages conveyed within the texts discussed and the different forms of Roma literary production in all the countries presented here, there seem to have been no cross-border or international dimensions to Romani literature in

this period. While some materials (such as brief articles in Roma newspapers) did present information on Roma in other countries or the ways in which the Roma movement in the authors' own country was being presented in the international press, the focus of the texts themselves were almost always directed towards a national readership. That is to say, the focus of the Roma movements, and the ways in which they were reflected in the texts produced as part of it, were very much 'nation-centred' and were concerned primarily with the issues facing the Roma communities within the borders of the countries in which the authors lived. Given that nation-states in the region at the start of the twentieth century were, as mentioned above, in a process of building their own national identity, this is not at all surprising. As members of their respective nations, it was crucial for Roma authors to stress in the production of their mobilising works (and in the messages they conveyed in their writings) that these were directed towards a national audience, within the borders of their own nation. In this context also, it is not surprising that some of these messages could well convey narratives of mainstream state nationalism. This, however, went alongside their desire to emphasise the unity of the history, culture and language of Roma/Gypsies in their respective countries.

Under this broad background, it is important to highlight that the common discourse on Roma 'presentism', or Roma as people 'living for the moment' (Day, Evthymios and Stewart 1999:3), which has become a predominant narrative in discussions on Roma historicity – often through the argument that Roma lack an interest in their own history/future – is contrasted by the actual ways in which the sources and works presented in this book highlight that Roma have always been actively engaging with and interested in their past, in the shaping of their future, in their connection to a sense of community consciousness (i.e. an ethnic consciousness) and in the further development of means to do so, through the medium of literature (for a contemporary perspective in Roma's interest in both their community's past and future, see Roman 2019). Of course, most of the activists, writers and individuals presented on the pages of this book would be classified as part of the elite, which may not, in effect, represent the views of their community overall. However, the important thing to note is that, even in such cases, and as early as the beginning of the twentieth century, a clear preoccupation with the shaping of Roma national belonging, unity and mobilisation had already developed, wherein a preoccupation with the connection between their history and their future (or their visions for the future) was clearly manifested. This casts doubt on the tendency to see Roma/Gypsies as living outside of broader historical, national and social processes, as an 'atemporal' community (uninterested in their own history) or as people completely 'marginal' to the political and social contexts in which they live.

At the same time, this type of mobilisation for the development of a community consciousness during the interwar period occurred alongside a desire for Roma/Gypsies to be seen as integral and contributing parts of the societies they inhabited. In fact, as can be seen from all of the above, the goals and 'visions of the future' presented within the texts discussed throughout these chapters, emphasise the need that Roma become and be seen as equal citizens of their nation-states and as individuals directly contributing

to the development of the countries within which they lived. In other words, rather than completely detached (or 'outside') the majority population of the nation-states in which they lived, Roma writers sought to highlight the entanglement of Roma/Gypsies and the macro-society they inhabited, which grounded their arguments for civic emancipation within the developments of their respective nation-states. Through this, both the forms and the content of Romani literature development have been intrinsically linked with the development of the Roma civic emancipation movement of the time, as well as to the incentive of presenting Roma/Gypsies as contributing members of their societies.

Finally, within this context, the development of Romani literature during this period cannot be seen as a 'late' occurrence in comparison to the development of mainstream works of literature in the region (in fact, in some cases, national literatures of new national states emerged at the same time and in the same way as Romani literature) but as concomitant with the development of national literature throughout the whole region. Roma works of literature thus emerged and developed alongside other forms of literary production. Undoubtedly, the former's progress has been hindered by many elements and factors and a legitimate question might arise, concerning the more widespread development of other national kinds of literature. However, the answer to this is quite straightforward and has been hinted at several times throughout this conclusion: the emergence of Romani literature at the start of the twentieth century occurred concomitantly with the creation of new nation-states. The creation of new nation-states also meant an impetus to develop institutions (such as educational systems), as well as a particular orientation to the collection of national folklore, which would highlight the unity of the nation as a whole. While state support for the shaping and development of Romani literature may have existed in the USSR, even if for a short period, this was overall absent in most other cases. For this reason, also, the development of Romani literature was hindered by the lack of an infrastructure to support it. However, its existence is an important historical occurrence, which should and cannot be overlooked.

To conclude, Romani literature itself is undoubtedly the product of a more general process concerning the birth and development of modern nationalism throughout the region under discussion. As the introduction to this book has already pointed out, the development of Roma nationalism and Roma civic emancipation movements, as well as the shaping of Romani literature as part of it, follows precisely this pattern in the development of nationalism (and national consciousness) in the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe of the time. Within it, an initially small group of Roma/Gypsy elite (writers, artists, activists, different forms of 'representatives') emerged, seeking the 'awakening' of their own communities and spreading ideas of national consciousness among the Roma/Gypsies in the region. The emergence, production and development of Romani literature in the region during the interwar period, constituted a key means by which this elite sought to achieve this 'awakening'. And, through this, it constitutes a clear and important example of how the Roma emancipation movement cannot be detached from the broader historical context of the region in which it emerged.

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- Journal *Magyar Zenészek Lapja*. (*Cigányzenészek Közlönye*) *A magyarországi és külföldi cigányzenészek érdekeit felkaroló szaklap* [Hungarian Musicians' Journal. Gypsy Musicians' Bulletin. The professional journal representing the Gypsy musicians in Hungary and abroad]. Edition of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Association. Edited by Henrik Miskolczi and Elemér Márkus. Budapest. No. 1, July 15, 1901; No. 2, August 1, 1901; No. 3, August 15, 1901. In Hungarian.
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Journal. The Official Journal of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Association. A social periodical encompassing the interests of Gypsy Musical Society]. Edition of Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' Association. Edited by Miksa Breyer, Lajos Hegedüs, Ferkó Vörös and László Szepessy. Budapest. 1908–1910. Published biweekly (1st and 15th). An. 1: No.No. 1–19 in 1908; An. 2: No.No. 1–22, 1909; An. 3: no data for 1910. In Hungarian.

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Newspaper *Bulletin of the Gypsies Mission in Bulgaria: Народът, който се нуждае от просвета чрез Евангелието* [Bulletin of the Gypsies Mission in Bulgaria: The people that needs Enlightenment through the Gospel]. Sofia. No. 1, September, 1932. In Bulgarian.

Newspaper *Известия на Циганската евангелска мисия* [Bulletin of the Gypsy Evangelical Mission]. Sofia. No data for No.No. 1, 2; No. 3, June 3, 1933. In Bulgarian.

Newspaper *Тербие* [Upbringing]. Newspaper of the Mohammedan National Cultural-Educational Organisation. Edited by Sh. M. Pashev. From No. 6: Newspaper of the Common Mohammedan National Cultural-Educational Union in Bulgaria. Editorial Board: Shakir Makhmudov Pashev, Asen Gogov and Demir Yasharov. Sofia. No data for No.No. 1, 3, 4, 5; No. 2, February 27, 1933; No. 7, May 6, 1934. In Bulgarian.

### *Finland*

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### *Hungary*

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Journal *Magyar Cigányzene. A Magyar Cigányzenészek Országos Szövetségének hivatalos lapja* [Hungarian Gypsy Music. The official journal of the Hungarian Gypsy Musicians' National Federation]. Edited by Béla Mázor. Budapest. 1938: No. 1, August; No. 2, September. In Hungarian.

### *Ottoman Empire*

Newspaper *Laço* [Good]. Humorous newspaper published for the moment once a week, serving the interests of the fatherland and the Ottoman nation. Edited by Emin Resa. Edirne. 1910: No. 1, February 19; No. 2, February 25. In Ottoman Turkish and Romani.

### *Romania*

Newspaper *Timpul* [The Time]. Newspaper of Gypsies in Romania / Newspaper of the Roma from Romania. From No. 1: Independent Weekly Newspaper. From No.No. 24–25: The Newspaper of Gypsies in Romania. From No. 41: The Official Paper of Roma in Romania. Director/Owner: Aurel Th. Manolescu-Dolj. Craiova. No.No. 1–71, 1932–1940. In Romanian.

Newspaper  *Glasul Romilor* [The Voice of the Roma]. Newspaper of the General Roma Union of Romania. Director: Gheorghe Niculescu. Bucharest. No.No. 1–15, 1934–1941. In Romanian.

Newspaper  *Neamul Țigănesc* [The Gypsy People]. Newspaper for the uplifting of Gypsies (Roma) and for information. Director/Editor: Naftanailă Lazăr. Calbor, Făgăraș County. No.No. 1–3, 1934–1935. In Romanian.

Newspaper *O Rom* [The Rom]. Newspaper for the Cultural Guiding and Social Claims of Roma in Romania. Directors: N. St. Ionescu and Marin I. Simion, Craiova. No.No. 1–2, 1934. In Romanian.

Newspaper *Foaia poporului romesc* [The Paper of the Roma People]. Cultural, Social and Economic Newspaper of Roma. Director: Gheorghe Frunzea. Rupea, Târnava-Mare County. No. 1, 1935. In Romanian.

Newspaper *Țara Noastră* [Our Country]. Special Weekly Newspaper for Roma in Romania. Editors: Archimandrite Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu and George A. Lăzurică. Bucharest, No.No. 1–6, 1937. In Romanian.

### *USSR*

Journal *Романы зоря* [Gypsy Dawn]. Moscow. Editorial Board (no names) at the People's Commissariat for Education of the RSFSR. No. 1, November, 1927; No. 2, 1929; No. 3–4, August, 1930. In Romani language.

Journal *Нэво дром* [New Way]. Moscow: Tsentrizdat (Central Publishing House of the Peoples of the USSR) [An. 1, No. 1 – An. 1, No. 10]; Uchpedgizo (State Pedagogical Publishing House of the People's Commissariat of Education of the RSFSR) [An. 1, No. 11 – An. 3, No. 7]. Editorial Board: Executive Editor Andrey S. Taranov (from An. 3, No. 1 – Andreyo S. Taranovo) et al. An. 1: No. 1, August, 1930; No. 2, September, 1930; No. 3, October, 1930; No. 4–5, November – December, 1930. An. 2: No. 1, January, 1931; No. 2, February, 1931; No. 3, March, 1931; No. 4–5, April – May, 1931; No. 6, June, 1931; No. 7, July, 1931; No. 8, August, 1931; No. 9–10, September – October, 1931; No. 11–12, November – December, 1931. An. 3: No. 1, January, 1932; No. 2–3, February – March, 1932; No. 4, April, 1932; No. 5, May, 1932; No. 6, June, 1932; No. 7, July, 1932. In Romani language.

Newspaper *Пало большевистско колхозо* [For the Bolshevik's Kolkhoz]. Mineralnye Vody. No. 1, May 24, 1934 (Editorial Board: [I.] Tokmakovo, [?] Yustoso, [M.] Bezlyudsko); No. 2, August 22, 1934 (Editorial Board: Yustoso, [N.] Pankovo, [M.] Bezlyudsko). In Romani language.

Newspaper *Сталиниџо* [Stalinist]. Mineralnye Vody. No. 3 (137), October 5, 1935. Editorial Board: [I.] Tokmakovo, [?] Yustoso, [M.] Bezlyudsko. In Romani language.

### *Yugoslavia*

Newspaper *Romano lil. Циганске новине* [Roma Newspaper (in Romani language). Gypsy Newspaper (in Serbian)]. Editor in cheif Svetozar Simić. Jatagan mala, Beograd. 1935: No. 1, March; No. 2, 30 April; No. 3, 31 May. In Serbian with texts in Romani language.