

## Intercultural Communication and Active Cohabitation

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**Abstract:** The hypothesis from which we initiate our approach is that the socio-cultural identity of the Romanian nation is configured by involving all participants to the act of coexistence, the Romany people having in turn a significant participation. In order to highlight this contribution, we propose in this paper operationalizing the concept of *active cohabitation* and the presentation of some Romany personalities, who have added value through their national culture. If, in our view, multiculturalism is none other but simply living together in the same area of two or more ethnic groups, two or more cultures, or two or more religions, between which there are established and produced relations of certain types, at certain times, the interculturalism being beyond the static or contemplative nature thereof, and basing on multiculturalism, it requires knowledge, appreciation, and mutual learning and conscious use of norms, values, customs, processes or technologies, leading to a common patrimony, each usable according to the moments, situations and circumstances, which increases the stock of mutual appreciation.

**Keywords:** co-existence; active cohabitation; interculturalism; socio-cultural dialogue; socio-cultural identity

### 1. Introduction

To exist means to communicate and to communicate means to exist for each other and through the other, for the self. The person does not have a sovereign national territory and it is always and entirely on the border with others. (Markova, 2004, pp. 128-130) When introspecting, it looks always in each other's eyes or the eyes of another. "...the dialogistic builds and rebuilds the social world, the world of varied and polyphonic realities located in the culture". (Markova, 2004, p. 131)

Argumentative fundament from which we plan to start analyzing this theme is assuming the fact that the people, human communities cannot live long without informing, without documenting each other, one on another. To what extent the acquired information and knowledge serve to the good development of the

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common social life, or they are used to disturb, to alter or to destroy the cohabitation, it remains another issue. The option for one or another of the possibilities is undoubtedly historically and socially determined, based on circumstances, degree of development, interests and aspirations, needs and options, political and social systems, ideologies, self-image, beliefs or philosophies of life, which, in turn, varies at special, and in particular, temporal level.

On the Romany people, in the last two decades, there is known and stated increasingly more, but the problem is their contribution to the national socio-cultural patrimony construction, to the national progress and growth of what we daily call the current Romanian society, for which it is kept a relentless, unfair and prudent reserve.

## **2. Romanians, Romany People and Interculturalism**

The term “intercultural communication” designates the belonging of the protagonists to communication process to different cultures. P.A. Bruck says that “*There are intercultural those relations where all the participants do not relate exclusively to their own codes, conventions, viewpoints and forms of behavior, but where there are discovered other codes, conventions, views and forms of behavior as well. In addition, they are experienced and / or defined as being foreign.*” (apud Râmbu, 2010, pp. 2-3)

The core of every culture is represented by values; therefore, understanding each other's values is a significant moment in the intercultural communication process.

In general, the term *intercultural* is preferable to the *multicultural* or *pluricultural*, due to the rich meaning of the prefix “inter” and the meaning of the word *culture*. Thus, when we say *intercultural*, we say all phenomena arising from the encounter between two cultures. Nowadays, the idea of a culture strictly related to ethnicity is exceeded. The boundaries between own and foreign culture have become relative. The Interculturality includes the phenomena related to the linguistic mixture, of forms of syncretism from the domain of architecture, music, clothing, etc. (Râmbu, 2010, p. 10)

At the level of social life, the Romany people and the majority population relationship is not encumbered (despite the stereotypical appearances or the current beliefs) of what we have called a kind of ethnic segregation, even though most Romany people were perceived (justified or not) as being nomad. This is best evidenced in the relationship of the Romany people with the majority population,

the Romanians. Chiva with the old clothes, the gypsy cooker, the gypsy that helps cleaning, to whitewash, to coat the house, the Gypsies who regularly came to besmear the cookware and cutlery, the blacksmith's wife coming after products for the performed work, Gypsies paid by day for various work, the Gypsy or Gypsy's wife who brought now and then fish, etc. were normal presences in the life of the majority (Romanian), regardless of the financial situation or the community status of the household. Also, there was no possibility of ethnic grouping for the Romany people, the ethnic orientation of the Romany people became channeled mainly to the general problems of the city and the society in which they lived, as the majority of which they cohabited. One of the many examples that can be given is that the Phalanstery from Scăieni (Prahova) the only minority who remained along with the socialist Theodor Diamant was part of the Romany people.

Under the imperative need and social organization, the two cultures and civilizations were formed and developed together, adopting a convergent path until identification. The lack of territory, "the dispersed nature of the life of the Romany people" (Zamfir & Zamfir, 1993, p. 92), according to the academician Catalin Zamfir, it has led to depriving the Romany people of the chance of having own cultural, religious, educational and administrative etc. places, to cultivate specific and autonomous culture, customs, traditions, language and all that is called the formation and development of the identity or, at least, contribute to its establishment. The only institution where the respective roles and functions could have been pursued and initiated was the family and was, at best, the restricted oral community. Therefore, we consider that, compared with other minorities, the Romany people's situation is atypical. If some of other minorities ensured their own structures (and it continues to ensure them) preserving and affirming almost autonomous their cultural identity, the Romany people have developed their culture and civilization in symbiosis with contacting majority populations, influencing and completing each other.

The cultural vein of Romany people did not maintain by the ties with the mother country, as it happens with other minorities, and their culture is not represented by cultural centers or missions of embassies of their home land or by their homes and places of culture. If other minorities, whatever their size, have, at least, cultural institutions (house of culture, cultural center, club etc.) a local, zonal or regional one (some having such buildings also in the capital), the Romany people are completely deprived of it.

In a collective work, coordinated by professors Catalin & Elena Zamfir, it says that “the traditional folk culture is crystallized particularly in rural communities, in terms of enhanced and prolonged isolation. The history of the last 8-900 years of the Romany people was the history of a community that never lived long enough in isolation, in relatively large homogeneous communities.” (Zamfir & Zamfir, 1993, p. 23) It is this fact that explains why the Romany people’s cultural productions appear either adaptations of ancestral heritage of ancient India, transmitted and adapted to the customs, traditions, practices and cultural productions of the places where they live or customs and habits of the contacting majority population *impregnated by the rromanes* (Burtea, 2002, p. 152). Processing and adaptation were produced in the interference and cooperation process imposed by the real-life process where the needs and the social need have a well-defined place in the historical context.

The kind-hearted and demanding Ion Budai Deleanu, alias Leonáchi Dianèu, in a letter to other Roma devoted to the beginnings of Latin culture written in Romanian, Mitru Perea, famous singer (Budai-Deleanu, 1999, p. 61), his real name Peter Maior, had spoken his incentive and faith, confessing “being Gypsy like you (sn), I thought to be a pious think to write for our Gypsies, to perceive what root of ancestors they had. True, I could have written many lies, praising Gypsies and scorn facts they did not do, as the historians of some nations do, writing about the beginning of his people, praising until God, and they gossip all the wonderful things. But “I love the truth (s.n.)” (Deleanu, 1999, p. 64)

Following the usual canons, it is possible for the reader to legitimately wonder: what are exactly the works specific to their culture, which written cultural productions recognized notoriously had brought the Romany people from their culture and had “succumbed” to the Romanian culture or to the culture of the Romanian habitat, to be added to the creation of Romanian culture or civilization, to be able to justify the previous and the following claims? Arguably there is one thing to be one person of Roma origin or other origin, and another thing is for that person to carry ethnic cultures and civilizations. X can be Roma, but that still does not imply that he came with a culture of the Romany people.

Our answer is that, in these times, it is not about that. It is about issues far more complex than the intercultural borrowings or cultural donations. It is a process of self-denial by giving up what normally should be considered yours, in order to create or contribute (so to give yourself) to what you consider it belongs to everyone, which is not foreign to you, but on the contrary. If you are adopted by it,

you have the obligation and willingness to adopt in turn, not only from a mutual moral option (obligation), but also from the intrinsic conviction without which the act of creation and contribution would be artificial.

Because we used to believe falsely that only intellectuals are creators of culture, we can say that Roma intellectuals, trained in schools of dominant population, took over the dominant culture and took it further. Undoubtedly they came with a tradition of Roma culture, but this was not the type of cleavages of my “a” type and you “b” type, but rather it contributes to the common heritage forming what we have already called the common place of active cohabitation as the contribution itself.

The culture in general is coding an experience. Inevitably, the Roma have personal and collective experience of the Romany people. But they have acted and have contributed as Romanian intellectuals, expressing at the same time the Roma culture and experience. And that remains, truly, an influence, because, even if they have not come with a crystallized culture of the Romany people, they have come with the experience of the Romany people.

As such, imagining the concrete historical process, the Romany people were not only “accumulators” who have adopted the culture of the contact populations to graft it as their own style and on own elements, they were also “transmitters” of culture. In other words, the powerful acculturation process was not simply produced, just by enculturation, but it had a complex dynamics, benefiting from the reverse process of exculturation; both with different shares and contributions and at the same time depending on the historical period and the existing socio-economic reality. Let us not forget that even if the land owners were not proto-Roma that settled, they come from a traditional cultural space, well established and formed, founded and defined in its individuality. They were the bearers of a solid baggage of initiations (Hindu), knowledge and perceptions from which they had a lot to share, at least as much as they harvested. And it did not require special efforts and it did not encounter any insurmountable obstacles.

### **3. Roma Contributions to the Romanian Culture**

Earlier studies and extensive research regarding the Roma in Romania, were conducted by Barbu Constantinescu, in 1878. Knowing the Romany people’s language, he wrote *“Probe de limba si literatura țiganilor din România/Evidence*

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*of Gypsies' language and literature in Romania*" and thus it first appeared a work combining the Roma folklore samples of the Romanian Country and Moldova, in the parallel bilingual text Romanian-Roma. Although it is a collection of folklore, it is of particular importance also linguistically because, again for the first time, there are presented in the notes correct grammar explanations, under each inserted song (the Catalogue of publications in the Romany people's domain, [www.edu.ro](http://www.edu.ro)).

Also, well-known philologists and scholars such as: Alexandru Graur (1934), Andrei Avram (1960), Ion Calota (1974), Gheorghe Sarau (1986) in their works tell us how and how much it has been influenced the Romanian language by the Romany people. After December 1989, there was a true explosion in Romania of the Roma phenomenon at all levels (socio-political, musical, editorial, educational). In 1990, the Ministry of Education (Sarau, 2003, p. 5) proceeded to the international official common alphabet recognition of the Romany people's language and its introduction formally in schools where studying the rromany language and literature. The rromany language study was supported by: establishing three experimental classes for the study of rromany language, in three normal schools (Bucharest, Bacau and Targu Mures), in 1991, the opening the optional course for the Rromany language by Professor Gheorghe Sarau in October 1992, at the University of Bucharest; rromany language study as mother language, four hours / week for the I-XIII grades; developing for two curricula for the study of rromany language and literature starting in school year 1992/1993.

The establishment at the University of Bucharest - Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature, of an independent section "B. Rromany language and literature", starting from the academic year 1998/1999, which later became Section "A. Rromany language and literature" it meant the moment of entering into the normality of the cohabitation life in Romania, because the Roma were the only ethnic group in this country whose language (and culture, we would say) was not studied at higher level. Further study of the history and traditions of Roma classes VI and VII, starting with 2006/2007; the establishment of three schools in primary education teaching rromany, the first of which was School no. 12 Măguri (Lugoj, Timis county), establishing the first two bilingual kindergartens, rromany-Romanian language in the history of Romanian education in Sărulești, Calarasi county, in 2004 also in Ciurea village, town Zanea, Iasi County, in the year 2007 (on the initiative and expertise of Roma Center "Amare Rromentza") represent necessary continuation of the process that we spoke of. Their preparation was done with utmost care and deontological respect.

The courage to implement previous initiatives was supported by initial experiments in Tecuci (district Nicolae Balcescu), Galati and Caransebes, Caras-Severin county, of the organization Alliance for Roma Unity (AURR.), which consisted in the establishment of three nursery for children from disadvantaged families, where a meal was granted daily, long before being inaugurated the “croissant and milk” program, of the Romanian Government, with similar content and purpose (1998-2000). Roma contribution to the development of Romanian literature appears as pioneering, tackling new genres, some with unique feature. We refer not only to the epic heroic-comic (Țiganiada) of the well-known Ion Budai-Deleanu the great (heroes-comic-satirical poemation, composed of twelve songs Leonachi Dianeu, enriched with many critical, philosophical, historical, philological and theological notes by Mitru Perea), but also the inauguration, in our literature, of the fabulist genre by Grigore Alexandrescu.

Besides capital works, Ion Budai-Deleanu proved to be a notable presence in the publications of the time, substantially contributing to the development of this kind of our culture, through works of history in Latin as: *De unione trium nationum Transilvaniae commentatio*, grammar works in Latin and Romanian as *Fundamenta gramatices linguae romanicae*, *Dascăl pentru temelile nemțești/Teacher for German foundations*, works of ethnography in German as: *Kurtzgefasste Bemerkungen über Bukovina/Concise note about Bukovina* or *Lexiconul român-german/Romanian-German lexicon*.

Anton Pann (1796-1854) - Roma writer and musicologist, his real name Antonie Pantaleon, son of Pantaleon Petrov and Tomida (Roma family of coppersmiths, come on Romanian land from Bulgaria), the one who wrote the music for the Romanian anthem “Deșteaptă-te Române/Wake up Romania!”. He left us a wonderful collection of collected or processed, systematized, theoretical songs, with comments of Romanian “cults”. Ștefan Foarță tells us that “it appears as an inventive author, who finds difficult rhymes, fanciful etymology, the pun person: he knows this area as much as Rablais” (Foarță, 1971, p. IX). At the same time Anton Pann was also a passionate teacher, fell in love with the profession and his students from Șcheiul Brașovului and Râmnicu Valcea.

Mihail Kogalniceanu - the first great scholar and connoisseur of language problems of the Romany people, the man whom the Romany people owe him and assign him the very act of their release from slavery (Burtea, 2002, p. 37), the person against whom there has always been some suspicion, some believes, which become research hypothesis, that he would belong to the Romany people ethnicity (Burtea, 116

2002, p. 245). This assessment comes not only from the fact that he was a good speaker of the romany language, but also from the fact that it has taken a lot of heart in the struggle for liberation from slavery of the Romany people. His work, without compromising the canons of science, is a plea for the life and soul of the Roma pressing problems of the time. In addition to an important historical and political activity and literary work he stands out as a talent with calling.

Those who deny the hypothesis of the Roma origin of Mihail Kogalniceanu bring as argument the fact that the parent of the *Dacia literară/Literary Dacia magazine*, around which there were formed so many writers of primal importance, belonged to an ancient Moldovan noblemen family, but as we said on another occasion “Not all Romany people were slaves and not all Romany people slaves have been in a dying situation as slaves” (Burtea, 2002). Slaves were freed from slavery (ex. The future Moldova’s ruler, Ștefan Răzvan) and the Roma noblemen, there were actually cases of Roma noblemen who were landowners of Romany people whom they treated without indulgence.

C. Nicolaescu Ploșor, Romany writer and journalist from the Rudari nation, editor of the newspaper “O Rom” (Craiova, 1934), has coordinated a collection of books, the library “O rom”, a collection where there have been added two works of Ploșor of Roma folklore” *Ghilea romane/Cântece rrome/Roma Songs*” and “*Paramisea romane/Povești rrome/Roma Stories*” in bilingual edition (Romanian - rromany), collected from Roma locals from Gubaucea commune, Dolj County.

Miron Radu Paraschivescu, Roma writer published the book “Cântice țigănești/Gypsy Songs” in 1941, inspired by poems “Romancero Gitan/ Gypsy Ballads” by Gabriel Garcia Lorca. Unfortunately, the followers of this plethora ante and after the war of Roma intellectuals “engaged” in the work of emancipation and assertion of ethnicity from which they belonged, scared perhaps of what followed after the Second World War, the dissolution of the General Union of Romany People and promoting the Soviet universalism, as state policy in the minorities domain, waves of arrests that took place between 1945-1955 and the slogan of the unique people of socialism builder have found shelter of their preservation in the fast self-romanization process and breaking off with the Roma ethnicity and, in particular, breaking off with the problems of this nation.

The Roma Archimandrite Calinic I. Popp Șerboianu, graduate of the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, the highest declared figure of the Romany people in the church hierarchy and one of the founders of the Roma interwar movement, besides



its contribution to the enrichment of the Romanian Orthodox practice and theory, he releases, in the year 1929, in Paris, its monographic work “*Les Tiganes - Histoire - Ethnographie - Linguistique - Grammaire – Dictionnaire/ Gypsies - History - Ethnography - Linguistics - Grammar - Dictionary*” in a volume of 397 pages, at the prestigious Payot publishing house. Following the publication of this book, he was elected the corresponding member of “The Gypsy Lore Society”, representing Romania in the prestigious London society (and the only European society) to study the life and history of the Romany people. The acquired status inspires him the idea of trying for the first time in history, the organization of Romany people in Romania at the country level, at national level (having as Roma local predecessors Năftănăilă Lazar from Fagaras and Iancu Panaitescu from Bucharest). His work was continued at national level by Gheorghe Niculescu, the florist, G.A. Lazărescu-Lăzurică, economist and journalist, Gh. Apostol and others, thereby contributing to the development of the Romanian culture and organizational practice (Năstasă & Varga, f., pp. 30- 32).

The Great Nicolae Iorga, born of a Roma father and Macedo-Rumanian mother, both parents coming from Pindos Mountains and settled in Botosani, where they opened a grocery store, a descendant of the famous Roma adventurer, Iorga Cupețul, also called Galeongiul (Galeolitul) because he had been condemned to the galley.

After years in which the great historian, literary, politician and scientist has denied any origin other than Romanian, when the Legionary attacks on his ethnic origin have intensified and become more argued, in his last lecture at the Summer University in Vălenii de Munte, he announced his audience that he, the great historian, who knew the family history of Moldavian boyars better than they knew themselves, he *has recently (seriously?) discovered his own “Southern origin”* (Iorga, 1938, pp. 72-73) seeming wiling to nurture the conviction that the great Roma scholar, in a way, belongs to them, although he had not moved a straw for them. Besides the invaluable contribution to the development and affirmation of the Romanian historical research and theoretical and practical political activity (chairman of the National Democratic Party and prime minister during 1931-1932), as M. Kogalniceanu, he stands out as a talented writer and literary critic. But we wonder how can his personality know in detail the history of others (countries, places and private individuals) and he knows nothing of his own history, which he reveals as late as he so casually claimed, only when the virulence of the attacks and accusations of the opponents focused just on his ethnic origin, considered being

halogen, even if the strikes had an entirely different motivation and target (their inefficiency leading to the physical elimination of the great scientist, as a last extremist resort)?

#### **4. Conclusions**

We appreciate that what is contained in this material, and what it is not covered, currently exceeding our knowledge, is not only a segment of the links that unite all lives on the area called National Romanian State, but - more importantly – it is a potential challenge to deep research, nonpartisan, whose outcome will not bother anyone, even if many of the above statements will prove to be only innocent fantasies or inductive-deductive method shortcomings of research, used almost solitary because, in most of cases, the lack of objectives of the possibility to be correlated, in a genuine scientific approach, with other research methods, ensuring convincing validation.

However, the work is meant to be the start of a prolific intercultural dialogue, aimed at producing the necessary mutation claimed by the world we live in and the imperatives of peace and social stability, from the static multiculturalism (which, whatever we say, it is more the objective result of history - is God given gift - than the constructive human intake) towards the interculturalism, considered by us as being an authentic and humanly conscious construction. Interculturalism is the leap from the coexistence in itself (Hegel, 1995, p. 105) (which it could be parallel and indifferent) as it is provided by multiculturalism, to the coexistence for the self (Hegel, 1995, p. 137), where people interact consciously, sustained by knowledge, learning and valuing the norms, values, and why not, the voice of others, for their good and social community.

If *multiculturalism is the result of history*, of the population movements due to political decisions and military conflagrations, border movement or due to natural disasters (earthquakes, floods, fires, draughts) or social (epidemics, expulsions, exclusions, invasions, refuge, persecutions, etc.) interculturalism can only be regarded as an option, where the conscious element is clearly predominant, even if it emanates, most of the times, out of interest and necessity, in a world of interdependence, where in order for each to develop, it needs, first of all, peace and stability.

In supporting the process there are successfully working: the globalization; the educational practices; the military training and international cooperation; the zonal

and regional social division of labor; the cooperation at national, international and global level; business people in their relentless pursuit for profit; the existence of international, regional and world structures; internationalization trends of the structures in which we live; emergence of structured multinational entities (Eurostat, the European Community, European Council, European Union, UN, etc.); the International Migration; music; fashion; Internet; penetration of expanding national cultures of transnational cultures; yoga practices, etc., that bring together people, languages and ideas, processes, technologies and products on opposite meridian and from totally different cultural spaces.

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