

# Introduction: The Roots

*Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov*

The processes of nation-building in the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe constitute some of the main characteristics of the modern era in the three great empires in the region – Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian Empires. These processes, agreeing with Johann Gottfried Herder's concept on modern nationalism, include, as a basic feature, the creation and validation of own national history, language, and literature, which implies a particular increased interest in the nation's origin, historical past, native language, traditional culture, and folklore. On this basis emerged civic organisations and political movements seeking to establish national institutions and, ultimately, own state. The civic emancipation of Roma de facto replicates in its form, albeit more slowly and to a much lesser extent, the general processes of nation-building in the region and outline, albeit fragmentarily, some of the basic directions of their development which are yet to be advanced throughout the region in the coming historical eras (a process that continues to the present day).

The known historical sources about the origin and the very first manifestations of the movement for Roma civic emancipation in the conditions of the three great multinational empires are relatively scarce. For this reason, it is not possible to present the portraits of all the ancestors of this movement, in most cases, even in a very sketchy form. Nevertheless, these first Roma visionaries about whom we have at least some data must be presented here because namely, they were the ones who started the processes of civic emancipation of the Gypsies (as Roma were called at the time) in the region of Central, South-Eastern, and Eastern Europe.

## Austro-Hungarian Empire

The first public manifestation of Roma's aspirations for civic emancipation in the Habsburg Empire dates back to 1850. According to a local press, the Gypsies in Neudörfel (then within Hungary, today in Burgenland, Austria) decided to send a deputation to the Kaiser to deliver *Petition um nationale Gleichberechtigung* (Petition for National Equality), which asks Gypsies to receive rights equal to other nationalities in the empire (Schwicker, 1883, p. 72). The emergence of such aspirations could be understood given the general socio-political context. During the Revolutions of 1848, which marked the beginning of modern nationalism in Europe, a powerful wave of individual nationalities arose in the Habsburg Empire, demanding various changes in their political status, and the Gypsies did not stay away from it. Unfortunately, the names of the initiators of this petition remained unknown.

The next step in this direction is reflected in a short notice in the Hungarian press from 1865, repeated also in the Austrian press. Here, for the first time, the name of the protagonists are mentioned. These are: Janos Kaldaras, located in Bihar (today Bihor county in Romania), in the vicinity of Szunyogd (today Șuiug), a temporary Gypsy 'Vajda', and his companion Sava Mihaly from the same city. They applied to the Hungarian Royal Office for a separate territorial-administrative unit ('Cigány-Vajdasag' in Hungarian, 'Zigeuner-Wojwodina' in German) to be established (*Fővárosi Lapok*, 1865, p. 622; *Klagenfurter Zeitung*, 1865, p. 719). The used term 'Vajda' in *Fővárosi Lapok* is the hungarianised form of the term 'Voivode' (or 'Voievod', 'Vojvoda', 'Wojewoda'), which is a historical Slavic term for a military commander and was often used in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe during the Middle Ages, and became also a designation of a governor of a territorial-administrative unit, designated respectively as 'Voivodina'.

The request for the creation of 'Gypsy Voivodina' expresses the desire to gain public and political recognition of the Gypsy community as equal to all nationalities in the empire. The processes of national revival in the Habsburg Empire reached their pinnacle in 1867 when the Empire was forced to 'ethnicise' and transform itself into a dual Austro-Hungarian Empire while their continued development, and because of the context of World War I, led to its collapse in 1918. This influence of the general social context has been even noted by the unknown author of the publication in newspaper *Fővárosi Lapok*, who explicitly noted that the Gypsies were the last nationality in the Empire that expressed their wish for autonomy. There is a manifestation of irony in this note, in the sense that even Gypsies had already sought autonomy, which allows us to guess what the result of their representatives' public address to the authorities was, although no historical evidence for this could yet be found. It can be argued, with great confidence, that the authorities did not pay any attention to it, which is understandable given the general public disdain of the Gypsies.

There is another important conclusion that could be made by looking at this case. As it has been explicitly noted in *Fővárosi Lapok*, Janos Kaldaras is located around Szunyogd, while Sava Mihaly is from Szunyogd. In other words, the former led a nomadic way of life while the latter lived a sedentary one. That is probably the first historical evidence of an active collaboration between Roma groups leading different ways of life in the name of a common idea for the whole community. Keeping in mind the internal heterogeneity of the Roma community and the complex relationships between the Roma groups, as its main constituent units (Marušiakova, 1988; Marushiakova & Popov, 1997; 2016e), this case may be explained by the desire of the community to reach another dimension and become an integral (and, most of all, equal) part of the society. For this aim to be achieved, a necessary condition was needed: first and foremost, that the community be united and overcome its internal oppositions due to its heterogeneity, and second, that community identity begins to dominate over group identity (at least in the public space). In fact, that is the true beginning of the Roma civil emancipation.

The idea of political representation of the Gypsy community does not appear in a completely empty place. During the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, Nikola Mihailo (born 1810), a nomad Gypsy from Banat, joined the Revolutionary Army and was recognised by the provisional Hungarian authorities the 'Voivode of the Gypsies', while the Gypsies from Banat themselves declared him to be their 'King' and called him Nikola Mihailo Mali. After the defeat of the Hungarian Revolution, he emigrated to Smederevo (Serbia) and from there to Cleveland (USA) where he again declared himself as 'King of the Gypsies' and where he died in 1910 (Pavlović, 1969; Acković, 2012, pp. 144–145).

The existence of the so-called Gypsy Kings (or Barons, Dukes, Counts, Lords, Captains, Voivodes, etc.) is a well-known phenomenon since the very arrival of the Gypsies in Europe and it has been widely spread in many countries and regions across the continent during the Middle Ages. The first historical record about a chief of the Gypsies recognised by the authorities is from the island Corfu (at the time part of the Venetian Republic) during the second half of the 14th century (Soulis, 1961, pp. 157–158). The 1423 Safe-Conduct is well-known, issued by the Sigismund, Holy Roman Emperor at Spiš Castle (today in Slovakia), to Ladislaus, the Voivode of the Gypsies, as well as a number of other similar (fake or not) Safe-Conduct letters in Western Europe during the same period (Fraser, 1992; Kenrick, 2007), with which some sovereign rights of the Gypsy leaders over the respective Gypsy community and their independence from other local authorities have been confirmed. Subsequently, to these rights were added obligations wherein these leaders had to collect taxes and charges for the monarchs. These Gypsy leaders and representatives to the authorities have been referred to in various ways, for example, *Król* (King) in Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania during 17th–18th centuries (Daniłowicz, 1824, pp. 98–100; Каманин, 1916, pp. 109–128; Ficowski, 1985, pp. 32–59; Mróz, 2001, pp. 188–219); *Ataman* in Ukraine (as part of the Russian Empire) in 18th century (Плохинский, 1890, pp. 95–117; Беліков, 2002, pp. 64–72); *Çeribaşı* in the Ottoman Empire from 16th–19th centuries (Marushiakova & Popov, 2001, pp. 39–41); *Knez* or *Kmet* in the 19th century in Serbia (Ђорђевић, 1924, pp. 122–23); *Jude/Juge*, *Vataf*, *Bulibasha* in Wallachia and Moldavia (Achim, 1998, pp. 61–65), etc.

All these "Gypsy Kings" have been officially recognised and/or assigned by the authorities; they have been a product of the Middle Ages and reflect the inclusion of the Gypsies in the already-existing social relations during the era of feudalism. In this historical context, the case of Nikola Mihailo Mali is rather a continuation of this practice in the modern era (within three countries, on two continents), while the case of the two Gypsy leaders, Janos Kaldaras and Sava Mihaly, also representatives of the community's traditional elite, is quite different. They now want not only to represent their community to the authorities but also to give their community as a whole a new social dimension through a new political status equal to that of other nationalities in the empire.

Despite the failure of the first attempt, the old Gypsy elite continues its attempts to fit into the social realities of the new age. In 1888 in the European press (*Le Temps*, *Daily*

*News*) appeared information that “an old Gypsy named Raphael” from Hungary has addressed a request to the Emperor Francis-Joseph, in which he begs to proclaim him King of the Gypsies because he can prove his direct descent from “King Pharaoh”; he promises on his part to put an end to “the vagrant habits of the Gypsies, and so enable them to furnish good soldiers to the Austrian army” (P. B., 1889, pp. 305–306).

In Raphael's request, two main points deserve special attention. Firstly, that is the expressed will to end the Gypsies' travelling way of life. Since about a century before, the situation had been radically opposite – Empress Maria Theresa and Emperor Josef have pursued a consistent policy regarding the Gypsies, one of its main pillars being the forced sedentarisation of the Gypsy nomads, and there are no data about Gypsy supporting their policy. In the end, despite achieving sedentarisation of many, this policy has turned out to be generally unsuccessful, and the travelling way of life of another part of the Gypsies in the Austro-Hungarian Empire continued. In the new societal and economical conditions of the modern era, however, separate representatives of the Roma elite (in this case, Raphael, of whom nothing else is known) reached a new vision for the future of their community and the need of its social integration. According to him, a necessary condition for the success of such integration was the seizing of the travelling lifestyle. That is no historical curiosity, as it would be understood later since similar processes would subsequently take place among Roma elites in the first half of the 20th century also in other countries of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe (Marushiakova & Popov, 2020c, pp. 265–276).

Secondly, the proposal to include Gypsies in the army is also of interest. Engaging Gypsies in the army can reasonably be seen as a manifestation of repressions, especially when it is committed violently (during the Middle Ages, in Western Europe there are many cases when they were forcibly recruited in the military). In this case, however, the inclusion of the Gypsies in the army could be understood as a means of achieving an equal societal position, i.e. turning the military service of the Gypsies into their civil responsibility, similarly to everyone else, is seen as a sign of them becoming rightful citizens. As will be discussed later more than once, in most of the countries in the region, participation in the army is of particular importance for Roma civic emancipation, because it demonstrates that they fulfil their civic duties as part of the societies in which they live.

Also interesting is Raphael's reference to “King Pharaoh”, to which he describes himself as his heir. The explanation for this is in the popularity among the Gypsies at the time of the idea concerning the Egyptian origin of the community. As the author of the published text (Paul Bataillard) writes, the name *Faraonépek* (People of Pharaoh) was popular in Hungary at the time. The very character of ‘King Pharaoh’, as the narrative about ‘The Lost Kingdom’ (most often Egypt) of the Gypsies has been widespread in the folklore legends with biblical motives among the Roma (Christian and Muslim) in the Balkans in the 19th and 20th centuries (Gjorgjević, 1903, pp. 82–83; 1934, pp. 26–32; Ђорђевић, 1933, Vol. 7, pp. 122–133; Petrović, 1940, p. 112; Marushiakova & Popov, 1994, pp. 23–30; 1995, pp. 26–27), and also elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe (see e.g. Добровольский,

1908, pp. 4, 53). So, this reference in Raphael's address to Emperor Franz Joseph I is not at all accidental, and in the general context of the letter reflects the beginnings of the process of creating a new, national, historical narrative (a process characteristic at that time for all emerging nations in the region).

Raphael's request also is a phenomenon of another character comparing with the old "Gypsy Kings" and is a product of the modern epoch and the time of the birth of modern nationalism. There is no historical data on what has been the result of his request. However, it could be easily assumed that it has not been taken seriously or has received no attention. That could be thoroughly explained keeping in mind the common societal positions towards the Gypsies at the time, characterised with disregard of these people perceived as being of lower social status and not comparable with the rest of the "civilised" European nations.

Sometimes it can be read that "most non-intellectual Roma do not seem to care where their ancestors came from" (Stewart, 1997, p. 28). However, which is evidenced in the whole cycle of Egyptian etiologiical legends mentioned above, the "non-intellectual Roma" also were interested in their history. The case of Raphael (who can hardly be considered "intellectual") clearly shows that this interest not only exists but even could be instrumentalized by the old Roma leadership in attempts to find their place as a public representative of the community in the modern era. Along with the attempts of the old, traditional elite to find their place in the new social realities, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and more precisely in then Hungary, a new, completely different Gypsy civic elite, whose representatives already may be considered "intellectual Roma", gradually began to form.

Interest in own language and history is one of the main characteristics of this new civic elite. The first Gypsy-Hungarian glossary was made already around 1790 in the Calvinist College in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), with the involvement of Mihály Vistai Farkas, a student of the theology of Gypsy origin (Orsós, 2015). The main drive in the process for the creation and the publication of the Dictionary and Grammar of Romani language (Joseph, 1888) appears to have been one of the members of the Habsburg Dynasty, Archduke Joseph Carl Ludwig von Habsburg (1833–1905), Palatine of Hungary, who at the same time was one of the founding members of the Gypsy Lore Society (Zaloaga, 2014). In his work on the preparation of the Dictionary and Grammar, Archduke Joseph attracted to his team several educated Roma, among whom should be noted in particular János Ipolysági Balogh (1802–1876), József Boldizsár (1825–1878), and Ferenc Nagyvidai Sztojka (1855–1929), who, besides their work as native speakers and language editors, produced also the translations in Romani language and original author's literature (Orsós, 2015).

Among this small group of pioneers of the development of the Romani language and Romani literature, special attention deserves Ferenc Nagyvidai Sztojka (1855–1929).

Ferenc Sztojka was born in a family of nomadic Gypsies. His father, József Sztojka was proud to be a child of the Big Vajda Pál Sztojka and his mother was Borbála Kozák. His parents abandoned the nomadic life in 1849 and settled in Uszód, then belonging to the

county of Pest-Pilis-Solt (now Bács-Kiskun county). Their son, Ferenc Sztojka, was born on March 12, 1855. He graduated from high school. From 1875 he attended military school and was inaugurated as a non-commissioned officer in the army. During the occupation of Bosnia, he served in the 38th Infantry Regiment as a third-year lieutenant. There he started to write his poems and published them initially in local newspapers in Gradacac (today Gradačac, Tuzla canton), later also in other mainstream newspapers in the capital city. Ferenc Sztojka married on March 22, 1899, at the age of 44 in Uszód. His wife was Mária Lakatos, eleven years younger than him. Mária Lakatos was from a horse dealer and a copper-smith Gypsy family of Mihály Lakatos. The civic occupation of Ferenc Sztojka was a seal maker, however, for the last third of his life, he farmed a small estate and was a horse dealer (Hegedűs, 2017).

Ferenc Sztojka's Gypsy name was Fardi. It is not clear where from and when he received his middle name Nagyidai, with which he signed most of his texts. The name Nagyidai comes from the village Nagy Ida (today Velká Ida in Slovakia). It could be supposed that he took the name from this place which was legendary for Gypsies. About the occupation and abandonment of the castle of Nagy Ida in times of internecine strives in medieval Hungary and the role of these events for Gypsies he repeatedly wrote in his work. The most productive time for his literature work was connected to his collaboration with Archduke Joseph. After the Palatine's death in 1905, he was forgotten and there are no pieces of evidence of him continuing to write. Ferenc Nagyidai Sztojka had died in Uszód in 1929 due to a final weakening of his age (Ibid.).

It is not clear exactly how and when Ferenc Sztojka and Archduke Joseph became acquainted, but numerous letters they exchanged in the 1880s are preserved and published (Rézműves, 2003, pp. 23–43). Ferenc Sztojka's cooperation with the Palatine leads even to releasing him from the army to be able to devote time to prepare the data and for editing the Gypsy-Hungarian dictionary (Sztojka, 2007), and compiling his own literary texts (poems, two historical dramas). Among the literary work of Ferenc Nagyidai Sztojka the epic poem, *The Wanderings of the Gypsies* (Nagyidai Sztojka, 1886), should be specially noted. This poem created a new historical myth for the birth and the early history of the Gypsies. The poem reflects on the arrival of the Gypsies in the Hungarian lands in the time of Attila the Hun (5th century). According to the poem, the Gypsies used to have their fortress which even Attila was not able to take over. However, soon after that, great starvation spread and that is the stated reason why some of them began to travel, to separate into nine tribes, which practised different occupations (pot making, horse-trading, commerce, metalwork, masonry and carpentry), spread around various Hungarian regions, while some others settled permanently (Orsós, 2015). This poem clearly highlights the interest in the origins and early history of the Gypsies, which is fully in tune with the increased interest in these topics at the dawn of early modern nationalism throughout the region. The example of Ferenc Nagyidai Sztojka shows that he is already going further from myths and legends towards the attempt of creation of history,

as he does not look on his own community as an 'exotic other' but attempts to formulate the Gypsies' own narrative.

The emergence of the movement for Roma civic emancipation was indeed initiated by a relatively small circle of Roma new civic elite, as is the case described in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This is similar as a model to the creation of new modern nations in the region, where it was the elite, which despite being relatively small in number, was able to create national concepts that became at the next stage (Phase B), subsequently adopted by the masses (Hroch, 1985; 2005).

An interesting aspect of this process of development of Roma civic emancipation here is the clear connection with the development of the Hungarian national idea at that time. As a military musician, János Ipolysági Balogh was an active participant in 1848 in the Hungarian Revolutionary Army and published, in 1850, translations of prayers in the Romani language in a booklet with the highly revealing name *Legelső cigány imádságok a melyly mind a két magyar hazában levő cigány nemzet számára* (Very First Gypsy Prayers, Which Are for Both Nations in the Hungarian Home) (Orsós, 2015). József Boldizsár was also a military musician and participant in the Hungarian Army in 1848, translated into Romani language poems of the Hungarian national hero, the poet Sándor Petőfi, and was buried with military honours as a hero of the Revolution (Petőfiana, 1878, p. 20). In this context, it became clear why the Association of Hungarian Gypsy Musicians was created (see below) and why the organisation received public support, which can be linked with the special place that Hungarian Gypsy music held as an integral part of the Hungarian national culture (Sárosi, 1971).

There is no collision in the phenomenon described, but there is a typical manifestation of the multidimensional identity of Hungarian Gypsies in the era of the formation of civic nations, which on the one hand have an ethnic identity as Gypsies while, on the other hand, and at the same time, hold a Hungarian civic national identity. Under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the acceptance by the Roma of the national identity of the surrounding population reflects their desire for social integration in some of the emerging nations (in the cases described above, into the Hungarian nation). An expression of this is also evidenced through the participation of Roma in the Czechoslovak Legion during the First World War (Viková, 2018ab), which apparently reflects their desire for integration into the Czech nation.

In the conditions of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was born also a new, previously unknown in Central Europe, social phenomenon – a professional association of Gypsy musicians. This turned out to be a lengthy process, started already in the late 19th century, with the final legalisation of *Magyar Cigányzenészek Egyesülete* (Association of Hungarian Gypsy Musicians), led by Béla Radics, that took place only in 1908 (Marushiakova & Popov, 2021b, p. 8). The Association of Hungarian Gypsy Musicians published two journals, the *Hungarian Musicians' Journal. Gypsy Musicians' Bulletin* (Magyar Zenészek Lapja, 1901) and *Gypsy Musicians' Journal. A Social Periodical Encompassing the Interests*

*of Gypsy Musical Society* (Magyar Czigányzenészek Lapja, 1908–1910) (Roman et al., 2021c, pp. 133–144). The Association of Hungarian Gypsy Musicians continued to develop in independent Hungary after the end of the First World War. What is important here are the national dimensions of the association, in which the Gypsy identity is incorporated as an integral, albeit ethnically distinct, part of the Hungarian civic national identity. In this way, a line of development of the Roma civic emancipation movement was formed, and it became the leading one throughout the region during the interwar period. When multinational empires fall apart and new nation-states appeared, this movement was reshaped within the civic nations of which the Roma are a part.

Subsequent and additional reshaping of the Roma civic emancipation movement within individual nation-states happened only in the 1960s and 1970s when its international dimensions began to develop. In the framework of the current internationalisation of this movement, attempts started to rewrite the history of Roma civic emancipation retrospectively in order to underline the worldwide unity of Roma and to characterise Roma as a ‘nation without a state’ (Marushiakova & Popov, 2005). For this, a search for the roots of these international dimensions in earlier historical epochs is needed. A typical example in this direction is the case of the so-called “International Gypsy Congress” of 1879 in Kisfalú (probably the village of Malá vieska located 8 km north of the city of Košice in Slovakia), which today is included in the history of Roma activism (Hancock, 2002, p. 114). As has already been revealed in detail elsewhere, in this case, it is about a clear media mystification that appears in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and was multiplied by the world press (Marushiakova & Popov, 2021b, pp. 3–5). ‘The Gypsy theme’ itself was a very curious one for readers at the time, because of the stereotypical public images of the Gypsies and because the messages for a forthcoming unification of all Gypsies of the world (which was the aim of the represented imaginary events) guarantees the attraction of a great readership. Much more interesting is, however, the fact that all these doubtful notices presented in the press have been accepted without reservations, including by researchers, not only during that period but even nowadays. The doubts about the veracity of the alleged International Gypsy Congress (Klímová-Alexander, 2002, p. 108; 2005a, pp. 158–159) are usually not taken into consideration and it continues to be accepted as a historical fact in many publications even though, in this case, it is a doubtless mystification and a tendentious misinterpretation in many contemporary publications.

Under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, another phenomenon emerged, present in Roma activism throughout the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe in the following historical eras. It concerns the dialogue (in this case, rather, attempts for a dialogue) of representatives of the Gypsies with the states in which they lived. The desire to engage in this dialogue as representatives of their own communities, expressing their own interests (as they see it) reflects the beliefs of the Roma activists that community problems could be resolved by the authorities (who, for example, should give even autonomy to the Gypsies). The Gypsies tried to enter this dialogue from the premise of unequal positions and, therefore, it should be of no surprise that neither the state institutions

nor Emperor Franz Josef I himself cared to answer at all. More specific is the case of Archduke Joseph, who, with his activity and the support he gave to the Gypsy activists, actually helped to initiate the processes of civic emancipation of the Gypsies in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This support (combined with de facto financial dependence), however, was limited in scope and did not go beyond its own aims and interests – a problem that continues to have its contemporary dimensions in present-day Roma activism.

### Ottoman Empire

The beginnings and the first steps of the movement for Roma civic emancipation during the modern era in the Ottoman Empire are characterised by an interesting specificity. This movement takes different forms and directions, conditioned by the specific situation in different regions of this multinational empire. In some cases, the processes of Roma civic emancipation 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 Ottoman society (among Roma Muslims).

The reasons for this division can be found in the overall situation in the Ottoman Empire and the place of the Roma in its socio-political structure. So, 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 have had civil rights since the 15th century, unlike the Gypsies in Central and Western Europe, who achieved this social status much later (Marushiakova and Popov, 2001). However, the population in the Ottoman Empire was not in equal social positions, as the main division was into two basic categories, distinguished according to the religion – orthodox (Muslim) and infidels (non-Muslims). Gypsies, who were separated by ethnicity in Ottoman law (a relatively rare phenomenon for this Empire), according to their religion (Muslims or Christians) fall into both categories, which in turn predetermines the development of Roma civic emancipation in two main directions and along with this it flows in different forms.

Chronologically, the first line of development is directly related to the name of Iliya Naumchev. To understand the significance of his personality for the Roma civic emancipation, a few words must be said in advance about the general historical context in which, through his activities, he set the beginning of the Roma civic emancipation in the Ottoman Empire.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire entered a long and severe period of crisis, which ended with its disappearance from the historical scene (formally in 1923). During this period, national ideologies were born among the conquered peoples of the Balkans and, accordingly, the struggles for liberation and the creation of their own nation-states began (Serbia, Greece). At the same time, the Bulgarian National Revival began, which developed according to the well-known models – the creation of its own,

national history, the formation of a national language, which started to be taught in the mass-created Bulgarian schools, etc. At the same time, the struggles for church independence and the creation of their own national church began (a phenomenon characteristic of all Eastern Orthodox peoples in the region). These struggles were directed against the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (Istanbul), which under the Ottoman system was recognised as both the spiritual and secular head of all the Orthodox subjects of the Empire (except those Orthodox under the spiritual care of the Patriarchs of Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria). Its Greek church elite, which were called 'Phanariotes', from the name of the neighbourhood Phanar (modern Fener) in Istanbul, where the court of the Patriarchate of Constantinople resided and rich Greek merchants lived who influenced the Ottoman administration was accused of not allowing other Orthodox nations in the Ottoman empire, as in the case of Bulgarians, to have religious independence. The centre of these church struggles was the capital of the empire, Istanbul, where many Bulgarians lived at that time.

In 1867 in the Bulgarian newspaper *Macedonia*, printed in Istanbul, was published a reader's *Letter to the Editor*, which was signed with the pseudonym 'One Egyptian' (Македония, 1867, p. 3; full text see in Marushiakova & Попов, 1995, pp. 39–42; 2021b, pp. 9–15). At that time in the Balkans, the name *Egyptians* (Γυφτοι, Египци, Гюнци, Гюнми, etc. in the various Balkan languages) designated 'Gypsies', which referred to their official name *Kipti* (meaning Copts, in sense of Egyptians) in the Ottoman Empire (Marushiakova & Попов, 2001), which in turn originates from *Αιγύπτιος* (Egyptians), used since Byzantine times (Soulis, 1961). This *Letter to the Editor* of the *Macedonia* newspaper Petko R. Slaveykov constituted a direct reaction to his article entitled *The Gypsies*, published in *Gayda* newspaper in 1866 (Гайда, 1866, pp. 256–258), which actually inspired the author of the Letter to write it. In this article, the leading discourse is the origin and history of the Gypsies in the Balkans, where, according to its author, they migrated from Egypt; moreover, the Gypsies were said to be those who bring to the "wild" Greeks the benefits of civilization, as evidenced by the borrowings from their language in Greek (Ibid.). The "evidence" of the origin and history of the Gypsies presented in this article is undoubtedly extravagant, and very 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 long overdue in the history of science at that time, but 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, in which Petko R. Slaveykov himself was one of the leading figures. In this context, the author of the *Letter to the Editor* uses Slaveykov's article as a starting point for presenting the contemporary problems faced by his community, namely the need for religious emancipation of the Gypsies, which for him was an integral (and important) part of their overall civic emancipation.

The *Letter to the Editor* from 'One Egyptian' is directed against the Greeks because, according to the author, they are to blame for the plight of Egyptians and are a major obstacle to their civic development. In particular, the letter opposes the overall management of the Orthodox Church in the conditions of the Ottoman Empire by the Greek church elite, because of whom the Gypsies suffer like other Balkan nations. The author of the letter argues that this policy is detrimental to all nations, but most severely affects the 'Egyptians' (i.e. Gypsies), who are not allowed into the Orthodox Church. With many quotations from Holy Scripture, the author of the letter argues that the Greeks have no reason for such an attitude towards the 'Egyptians' because Christianity does not divide different peoples into the "chosen by God" and the "unpleasant to God", and all people are equal before God, including the 'Egyptians' who are also entitled to have their own "spiritual education", because "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (3 Galatians; 28)". Referring to Slaveykov's article, he writes that 'the Egyptians' historically, in their motherland Egypt, had "reached a high degree of education", and when they settled in Greece, they brought to the local population their "eternal arts and alphabet", and because of their glorious past they, as an ancient people, have right to have religious worship in their own language (Македония, 1867, p. 3).

This letter can be properly understood only in the context of the social and political movement of Bulgarians during this period in an effort to have their 'own' Bulgarian church. The newspaper *Macedonia*, where the *Letter to the Editor* was published, was the main speaker on 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 right of every nation to civil equality. The author feels the disparaging (in the best case) attitude of the macro-society towards Gypsies and suffers from 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. That is why in its text, he does not limit himself to substantiating the right to religious equality of his community but also outlines the more distant goals and the next necessary steps for its overall civil emancipation, and namely, to "make a society and take care of education" (Ibid).

The content of the *Letter to the Editor* confirms what we know from other historical sources, that in the Ottoman Empire the Roma Christians were integrated into the social structure with their own social and civil status, which was very similar to the status of other Christian nations' subjects of the Empire (Marushiakova & 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 19th 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 an equal place in the new 'external' socio-cultural realities, according to the norms and values that predominate. It is the Balkan context that determines the shape of this new public appearance of Roma – they, like other Balkan nations, are searching actively for proof of a 'glorious' historical past, and are aiming for the creation of a new national historical mythology that will serve as support and argument in the struggles for their civic emancipation as a separate community, equal to other Balkan nations. As a whole, the logic of 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 19th 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 especially mentioning it, the implied perspective of their own state ("create a society"). Whether these ideas were altogether realistic and to what extent they resonated with the Gypsies themselves in view of their situation in the Balkans at the time is another question. However, the emergence of such ideas, shaped as a clearly defined vision for the future development of the community and presented in the public space, is a fact that cannot be ignored.

In our quest to find biographical information about 'One Egyptian' we were able to discover some hints in the materials published by a famous folklorist from the end of the 19th century, Marko K. Tsepenkov. In his description of the development and changes of the social life of the Gypsies in the town of Prilep (now in the Republic of North Macedonia), he wrote:

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, pp. 180–181).

A sufficient dose of confidence may suggest that this Iliya Naumchev is the 'One Egyptian', who wrote the letter to the editor of the *Macedonia* newspaper. The exact dates of his birth and death are unknown. It could be estimated that he was born around the middle of the 19th century in Prilep. For many years, he worked as a barber while at the same time being actively working among his community for the uplifting of their civil consciousness.

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 to 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 a 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 Decree (*Firman*) of Sultan Abdulaziz. It granted the right to establish an autonomous Bulgarian Exarchate for these dioceses, wherein at least two-thirds of Orthodox Christians were willing to join it. During the plebiscite conducted in 1873, when the Orthodox population in certain areas of Macedonia had to choose to which church they should belong to (i.e. Greek or Bulgarian), in the town of Prilep more than two-thirds of the inhabitants of the city, including local Gypsies, declared their wish to belong to the Bulgarian Exarchate (Кънчов, 1901, p. 124), which is the impact of Iliya Naumchev's enlightenment activities among them. This has been a great surprise to the contemporaries (in large part, Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire were Muslim at the time).

In the new conditions, in 1885, Iliya Naumchev saw his hope "for a priest of Gypsy ethnicity" (Цепенков, 1898, pp. 180–181) fulfilled, as he received the post of an Orthodox priest in the Bulgarian Exarchate. This is not a retreat from the idea of 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 got a legal opportunity to work as a priest among his brothers. However, this was accompanied by some problems in his confirmation to the post (probably due to the unusualness of the case because of Naumchev's ethnicity) 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, but in the end, the issue was resolved positively (Кирил, 1969, p. 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, p. 124). Unfortunately, his further fate after the adoption of the priesthood is not yet known.

The presented materials, no matter how few they are, allow us to speak about Iliya Naumchev as one of the first visionaries of Roma civic emancipation on a global scale (Marushiakova and Popov, 2017a, pp. 33–38). Along with this, his *Letter to the Editor* in the *Macedonia* newspaper Naumchev is also connected to another line of development of these processes, that goes through the ethnically based professional organisations (guilds) of the Gypsies.

Describing existing guilds in the town of Prilep, Marko K. Tsepenkov noted the existence of separate Gypsy guilds (of blacksmiths, violinists and porters) with their respective Patron Saints' holidays St. Athanasius and St. Anthony. He explicitly notes that their creation was under the influence of Iliya Naumchev (Цепенков, 1898, p. 180). In the Balkans, as the Patron Saint of blacksmiths by Gypsies and by the Christian majority as well is honoured St. Athanasius, that is why in Prilep the Patron feast of the local Bulgarian guild of blacksmiths was also on the day of St. Athanasius (18th January), while

the guild of “Gypsy blacksmiths” and the guilds of “fiddlers and porters” (a separate one) venerated St. Antonius, which is on the 17th January (Ibid., p. 181), i.e. a demarcation of the guilds on ethnic lines was clearly visible also in this case.

During the Middle Ages in Western and Central Europe, the Gypsies were not allowed to participate in the existing guilds system and were also forbidden to create their own ones. The situation in South-Eastern Europe is quite different, in the context of the Ottoman Empire, where the local Gypsies fitted seamlessly into the Ottoman *esnaf* (guild) system. The existence of ethnically distinct Gypsy guilds in the Ottoman Empire has been known since the first half of the 17th century (Marushiakova & Popov, 2016b). The ethnicisation of the guilds in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century was already different and was directly related to general processes of ethnicisation in the Empire and were part of the national movements of the Balkan peoples during this period, which also encompassed the Gypsies. The Gypsy *esnaf*'s organisations do not disappear with the end of the Ottoman Empire and were preserved (in more or less modified forms) in the new independent states on the Balkans (Ibid.). In the new condition, the *esnafs* transformed and modernised but continued to occupy an important place in the life of the community and its position in the society, and acquired new and broader social dimensions and functions, becoming part of the processes of development of Roma civic emancipation (Marushiakova & Popov, 2021b, p. 134).

Among Muslim Roma in the Balkans, another line of development of the processes of Roma civic emancipation emerged. The first signals in this direction, showing a desire to get out of ‘Gypsy stigma’ and the existence of civic identity, at least among some Roma Muslims, were in the early 20th century. In 1906, residents of the Pınarlık *mahala* (an ethnic neighbourhood in the Ottoman empire) in Xanthi (now Greece) and their muhtar (representative of the mayor for the Gypsy neighbourhood, appointed by the municipal authorities) sent a petition in 1906 to the Office of Edirne vilayet (province). In this petition, they ask that the population be registered as *Muslims* and not as *Kıbtî* (i.e. Copts, meaning Egyptians, which was the old name of the Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire, restored into census terminology in 1905) because they adore “the dignity of Islam” (Marushiakova & Popov, 2021b, pp. 19–20). A petition with the same request was sent in 1909 by the inhabitants of Şabaniye mahala in Eleftheroupoli (today in Greece) to the newly elected parliament of the Ottoman Empire (Yıldır, 2018, pp. 291–292). It is interesting to note that, at that time, 1,250 Turks, 1,100 Greeks and 1,200 Gypsies lived in the whole city (Кънчов, 1900, p. 200), i.e. the proportion of Roma there was unusually high throughout the history of the Ottoman Empire. No less interesting is the fact that the very discussion of this petition in parliament was presented in *The Jewish Morning Journal*, published in New York as an “appeal by Gypsies to the Turkish Parliament for equal rights.” (Black, 1914, p. 3; see also Der Morgen Zshurnal / The Jewish Morning Journal, 1909, p. 4).

Unlike Roma Christians, who fitted into the context of the national revival of their neighbouring Balkan Christian people, Muslim Roma 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 the early 20th 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 referred to other Muslim communities (e.g. the Arabs, Albanians, etc.) as well. In this context, the Muslim Gypsies (or at least some of their representatives) too were trying to find ways for civic emancipation of their community in the new conditions.

The development of the processes of civic emancipation among Muslim Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire is closely connected with the name of Emin Resa, who published the newspaper *Laço* ('Good' in Romani language) in Edirne (today in Turkey) in 1910 (Bourgeois, 1910, pp. 326–329; Marushiakova & Popov, 2021a, pp. 28–33). The title heading of the newspaper *Laço* defined it already in its first number 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 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 (1910, p. 327) were “obviously allusion to the recent Turkish freedom”, and in fact was a reference to the Young Turk Revolution which proclaimed new equality of separate nationalities, including Gypsies, freedom for expression of their identity, language and culture and created euphoria in visions for their future.

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 the subscription for the national fleet” (Ibid.), and in this way, the newspaper demonstrated publicly the civic national consciousness among the Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire. The newspaper gives also a short dictionary of the Romani language (Ibid., pp. 328–329), which shows that this national (Ottoman) civic identity does 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 artefacts 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 three poster-invitation for the *Kakava* holiday, published in the same city, in 1934, 1966 and 1948, the same drawing appears, in which in the foreground are clearly demarcated images of smithing tong, anvil, spade and ‘cezve’ (a Turkish coffee pot) (Şanlıer, 2018); 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 is from 1849, from Prizren, in Kosovo (Marushiakova and Popov, 2016b, pp. 80–81). The holiday *Kakava* itself (*Kakava* means literally ‘cauldron’ in Romanes) is actually the “Roma version” of a holiday with old historical roots among all Balkan peoples, which is celebrated among Christian peoples on the day of St George and is named after him (*Gergyovden*, *Gjurgjevdan*, etc.), and from

the Muslims, it is celebrated under the name *Hıdırlez* (the day of Muslim saints Hıdır and İlyaz); among the Roma, it acquired distinctly ethnic characteristics of their greatest national holiday (Marushiakova & Popov, 2007, pp. 33–50; 2016c, p. 47).

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 Evliya Çelebi, Karagöz had been a real personality, he had been born in Kırklareli, while his father had been ‘a poor Gypsy’ (*fukara-i-kıbtîyan*) (Çelebi, 1967, pp. 20–23); according to others authors, Karagöz is a Turkish Gypsy who was taken as a soldier (Menzel, 1941, p. 56), who described himself as a Gypsy and in dialogue with Haği Ejvad explicitly said that he will never give up his “Gypsiness” (Prokosch, 2002, pp. 103–129). Karagöz himself sometimes came on stage with a greeting “Zombornos keros” in “Gypsy language” and performed a blacksmith’s trade (Jacob, 1925, p. 109), i.e. also here, as well as in the mentioned example above of the importance of the blacksmith’s trade for the Gypsies, it is mentioned as a symbolic sign of their ethnicity. Today a monument of 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 among the local Roma today that Karagöz had been born in the nearby small town of Demirköy (Marushiakova and Popov, 2007, p. 43).

Unfortunately, nothing more is known about Emin Resa; it is only palpable that if he was able to publish a newspaper, this means he received a relatively good education. And more importantly, this was not an extraordinary exception in its time, because publishing a newspaper implies the existence of a possible audience, i.e. of a certain number of Gypsies who will be able to read it. The presence of certain strata of Muslim Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire, which possessed at least an initial level of literacy it should not cause surprise. The Muslim Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire were entitled to use the educational Islamic institutions. As an example in this regard, we can quote the request from 1693 to the court in Sarajevo, from 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, p. 39). Something more, after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, as part of the attempt to modernise the Ottoman state, Sultan Abdul Hamid II pursued a policy at uniting all Muslims in the empire. An own network of primary schools (*mekatib-i iptidaiye*) and industrial high schools (*medaris-i sanai*) was created aimed at the Muslim population where Ottoman Turkish was used as a medium of instruction. An additional reason was concern about schools opened by protestant missions and fear of their possible impact on Gypsies. In frames of this aim, special measures were developed and implemented to ensure that the Gypsies learned their Muslim religion in a proper way (Ümit, 2014, p. 33); as a result, several Gypsy schools were established in the Balkans (Dingeç, 2021, pp. 95–108). 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 will 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 16th century, there was a special non-territorial military-administrative unit, the so-called 'Gypsy sancak' with centre Kırklareli in Eastern Thrace (Marushiakova and Popov, 2001, pp. 26–27). Gradually, over the centuries (and especially after the 17th century), Gypsies, for the most part, dropped out of joining the army; however, in the early 19th century, as part of Ottoman Empire 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 askerii*), were exempt from military service (Ulusoy, 2013, p. 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 can be found in 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 most known such petitions is addressed to the *wāli* (governor) of Edirne in 1870. Finally, in 1873 this restriction for serving in the army of Muslim Gypsies was lifted (Ibid., pp. 55–57).

It is not clear how long the *Laço* newspaper continued to be published but we can suppose that its existence was only short-lived (there is information about only two published issues). However, we can assume that it had an impact on the Roma in Edirne and left its traces among them. The reason for such assumption can be found in the language and the graphic symbolism used in the *Laço*, which is also present later in the state of Turkey in the above-mentioned posters for the celebration of the Kakava holiday published in 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 presented publicly in different forms, was nothing unusual for Roma living in Edirne at that time. These posters ceased to be produced in the last decades of the 20th century and nowadays the celebration of the Kakava holiday in Edirne by local Roma has been transformed into a major city holiday and even a major tourist attraction for the city (Marushiakova and Popov 2007: 41–42).

The emergence of the movement for the comprehensive civic emancipation of 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 Gypsies and Muslim Gypsies) does not cancel its unity and the commonality of the pursued goals. Moreover, after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, already in the conditions of the new nation-states, after the First World War, this internal distinction disappeared relatively quickly and in Turkey remained only Roma Muslims (the Roma Christians in their majority left Turkey in population exchange after the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923). In other words,

the development of the process of Roma civic emancipation was preserved and further developed already in the new conditions of the nation-state. Similar processes were also taking place among Roma Christians in the newly independent Balkan national states, where for Roma Muslims the significance of the religious difference gradually decreased and was replaced with aspirations for ethnic unity.

### Russian Empire

Unlike the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, in the Russian Empire, the first steps of the Roma civic emancipation movement were severely limited and virtually absent. In fact, the only known exception so far is Ignatij Antonenko. This case reveals the emergence of a new, hitherto unseen, direction in the development of this movement, which is yet to manifest itself during the interwar period. In particular, before reaching a certain degree of social integration of the Roma community (or at least parts of it) in the Russian Empire, it found its expression in the inclusion of some of its representatives in the social and political struggles.

The beginning of the 20th century in the Russian Empire was a time of sharp aggravation of socio-political struggles, which is reflected in the First Russian Revolution (1905–1907). The main organisers of this revolution were the parties of the far left – the Socialist-Revolutionaries (the so-called Esers), the Social Democrats (the so-called Bolsheviks and Mensheviks) and the anarchists. Part of this revolution was the Sorotchinsk Uprising (December 1905 – January 1906). After the brutal suppression by the authorities of the uprising, with the help of Cossack troops, with many casualties (killed and wounded people), and shocked by the atrocities committed, the famous Russian writer, publicist and public figure, closely linked to the revolutionary movement, Vladimir Korolenko, published a journalistic investigation entitled *The Sorochynsk's Tragedy* (Короленко, 1907, pp. 172–205). The uprising itself was organised by Nikolay Pyzhov, at that time an 18-year-old campaigner of the Social Democratic Party, who later published his memoirs on the event (Пыжов, 1929; 1930), in which he briefly mentions Ignatij Antonenko's participation in it.

The main (in fact the only complete) historical source about Ignatij Antonenko is his memoirs about the Sorochinsk uprising, published in the Gypsy journal *Nevo drom* (New Way) in 1931 (Нэво дром, 1931с, pp. 12–15; Marushiakova and Popov, 2021a, pp. 21–23). These memoirs were written in Romani; however, the original text is not preserved. The text for publication was edited by Mikhail Bezlyudskiy, and published in the dialect of *Ruska Roma*, which was considered to be the standard Romani language at that time (a literary language created in the USSR). Judging by Antonenko's last name and the brief data from his text about his family, he was a representative of the Roma group of *Sery*, living in Ukraine and Southern Russia. At that time (early 20th century) most *Sery* in Ukraine led a sedentary or semi-nomadic (with permanent residence and short

wanderings) way of life. The text is accompanied by a photograph on which he appears to be about 50 years old, i.e. it can be assumed, with approximation, that he was born around the year 1880, and his birthplace is unknown. From the published memoirs of Antonenko, it can be seen that in 1901 in the city of Poltava (today in Ukraine) his father introduced him to the writer Korolenko, who supported their family. In Antonenko words: “here I had a great friendship with the writer; first of all, he taught me literacy (read, write), and then in 1902 he began to give me social-democratic proclamations for distribution” (Нэво дром, 1931с, р. 12). Soon after that, his family moved to the village of Sorochyntsi (today Velyki Sorochyntsi in the Myrhorod district, Poltava region, Ukraine, the birthplace of the famous Russian writer Nikolay Gogol).

About his participation in the Sorochinsk uprising Ignaty Antonenko wrote:

In early 1905, when the revolutionary activity began to arise among the circles of peasants in Sorochyntsi, I began to take part in this activity. When in November 1905 a peasant union arose in our village, I was elected as one of the commissioners of this union and took part in the meetings of its leaders, in the development of the program, which was then sent to newspapers and printed at the end of November. Before the uprising in our village and during the uprising itself, I was in the circle which ruled all the activities of the uprising. (Ibid., pp. 13–14).

After the cruel suppression of the uprising, Antonenko was arrested, spent about a year in prison in Kharkiv, but was acquitted at trial (Ibid., р. 15), and Korolenko bailed five peasants arrested after extinguishing the uprising, one of them being Antonenko, for whom he paid an amount of one thousand rubles (Кривинская, 1961, р. 65). Unfortunately, there is no more information about his life after 1931 (when his memoirs were written), as well as about the year of his death.

The limited manifestations of aspirations for Roma civic emancipation in the Russian Empire are primarily due to the unique place of the Gypsies, who were not at the lowest levels of the social structure at all. Firstly, as Nikolay Stieber pointed out: “According to our legislation, the Gypsies are not singled out as a special tribe, nor as a special class, they are not even included anywhere in the composition of ‘inorodtsy’ [literally ‘foreign-born people’, was a special category-defining many subjugated peoples in the Russian Empire, with more or less limited civil rights – authors note]” (Штибер, 1895, р. 550). Secondly, in the complex structure of the Russian Empire, the majority of Gypsies in the 19th century (including nomads) were assigned to the categories of ‘state peasants’ and ‘meshchane’ (city dweller, small producers). In modern language, this can be expressed approximately as belonging to ‘lower middle class’ and ‘upper-lower class’. A relatively small number of Gypsies (the so-called musician elite) even registered at the lower levels in the ‘merchants’ estate. The main problem for the authorities in the Russian Empire, which determined its overall policy towards the Gypsies, was how to get them to fulfil their tax obligations as members of certain estates (a task at which successes were negligible) (Marushiakova and Popov, 2008a).

It should also be underlined that in addition to the old, traditional Gypsy elite, which is preserved among the itinerant Gypsies (the predominant part of the Gypsies in the empire), a new, different community elite was born and developed in the Russian Empire. It is about the so-called musical elite. The beginning of the processes of settlement of Gypsies in the big cities of the Russian Empire was closely related to the famous 'Gypsy choirs'. The first such mixed (men and women) choir was created by Count Alexei Orlov in 1775, in his estate at Pushkino, near Moscow. The conductor was Ivan Sokolov (succeeded by his nephew Ilya Sokolov), and at the beginning of the 19th century, the choir members were freed from serfdom and moved to live and work in Moscow. Count Orlov's Gypsy choir was very successful amidst the Russian aristocracy. Other similar choirs were created and many generations of famous Gypsy musicians grew up. Gypsy musicians began to move mostly to the two metropolitans (St Petersburg and Moscow), and other big cities and became registered in urban estates. After several generations, Gypsy musicians and actors became a special social stratum and created famous artistic dynasties with high social position and standing. Gypsy musicians regularly met the highest circles in the Russian Empire – the aristocracy, rich merchants, famous poets, writers, musicians, etc. (Щербатова, 1984; Деметер et al., 2000). The public positions and the public image of the Gypsy musical elite in the Russian Empire are also evidenced by the fact that many cases of mixed marriages into high society, e.g. well-known cases are of Gypsy girls marrying Prince Golytsin (GARF, f. 109, op. 3 A. d. 2769), Feodor Tolstoy (a close relative of the famous writer Lev Tolstoy), the brother of the same writer Sergei Tolstoy, Prince F. Masalskiy, Prince G. Wittgenstein, the millionaire from the Ural Nechaev (Байров, 1996, pp. 19–25), and others. Already in 1833 George Borrow noticed this unique social position of the Gypsy music elite:

Those who have been accustomed to consider these people [the Gypsies – authors' note] as wandering barbarians, incapable of civilisation and unable to appreciate the blessings of a quiet and settled life, will be surprised at learning that many of those in Moscow inhabit large and handsome houses, appear abroad in elegant equipages, and if distinguishable from the genteel class of the Russians [are] only so by superior personal advantages and mental accomplishments. (Borrow et al., 1911, p. 61).

Given the unique social position of the Gypsy musical elite in the Russian Empire, it is clear why the ideas of Roma civic emancipation did not find a place in its circles. This elite was closely associated with high society in tsarist Russia; moreover, part of it, after the October Revolution and the Civil War, flowed into the midst of the so-called white emigration to France and China (Marushiakova & Popov, 2004; 2019). Another part of it remained in the USSR and became part of the new, Soviet Gypsy elite.

\* \* \*

In more general terms, we cannot help but notice that the processes of Roma civic emancipation in the three multinational empires (Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian) discussed above were the result of efforts of individual representatives of the Roma community, who received no inspiration as ideas, nor financial and other material and technical support from the other national movements. On the contrary, these national movements (e.g. Hungarian, Bulgarian) to which the Roma became attached, tended to incorporate the Roma and to use them in the pursuit of their own goals, rather than to develop the national ideas of the Roma. This, however, did not create any contradictions among them (which is logical in cases of a common enemy). This situation would change significantly in the coming historical eras in the conditions of the newly created ethnonational states.

Despite the limited number of Roma visionaries in the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, however, they nevertheless succeeded in generating ideas that would continue to develop later and remain relevant to this day. These are, for example, an increased interest in the origin and history of their own community, as well as in its language and ethnocultural traditions and folklore, striving for the development of education in the Romani language, for achieving equal citizenship as an ethnic community, for the creation of national autonomy, and even the possibility of creating its own country. A separate issue is that this development remained mainly in the first chronological phase of nation-building, according to the already mentioned concept of Miroslav Hroch (2005), and the second stage (propaganda and the agitation of these national ideas among their ethnic community) covered only a limited circle of the community. The case of the Russian Empire, although at first glance does seem to be a direction leading away from the development of these processes, is in fact an integral part of them. This direction of development enriches the common palette and gives new dimensions to the processes of Roma's search for their place in modern society.

The palette of cases presented clearly demonstrates that the groundwork for the processes of Roma civic emancipation had already been established before the interwar years.