Foreword

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov

This book is the third in a series published as part of the project *RomaInterbellum*. Along with the previous two books already published, *Roma Voices in History: A Source Book. Roma Civic Emancipation in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe from the 19th Century until World War II* (Marushiakova & Popov, 2021b) and *Romani Literature and Press in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe from the 19th Century until World War II* (Roman et al., 2021c), it forms a complete kind of triptych. The present book, *Roma Portraits in History: Roma Civic Emancipation Elite in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe from the 19th Century until World War II*, is the last of this triptych and represents a type of conclusion to the work on a common research topic. Together with the previous two books, it is the result of an evidence-based study, which is built to a great extent on the same historical sources; therefore, it is inevitable that there will be some repetitions (either as sources or as their interpretations) with the other two. The most important difference between them is the chosen approach in presenting the history of Roma civic emancipation, which is based on the belief that history can be better understood and appreciated when it is presented through the individuals who constructed and realised it through their ideas, and to a large extent are its creators.

In order for this book to be understood and perceived properly, it is necessary to briefly repeat the basic starting points, the leading methodological approaches, and the key concepts employed.

One of the key issues in Romani Studies concerns the two predetermined discourses in which Roma history has been (and continues to be) articulated by researchers: namely, by approaching the Roma as a threat and/or as victims. In the past, beginning with the emergence of Romani Studies as a specific field of study so-called Gypsies have been researched mainly from the point of view of solving the problems they were seen to pose to the modern state (Grellmann, 1787). In the aftermath of the Second World War, the paradigm gradually shifted and has often set the focus primarily on Roma's grim historical experience, as well as on the various repressive state policies that fostered it.

However, both discourses, though radically opposite, are united in their attitude to the Roma themselves, who are viewed as passive objects of these policies rather than as active creators of their own history. In this way, the scholars are not trying to discover sources written by Roma at all and thus the Roma point of view is de facto absent, as well their visions about the future of their communities, are neglected. The main goal of our approach is to propose a new research paradigm through which the Roma in their *longue durée* history became political subject as creators of their own destiny and architects of their own future (an issue that continues to be especially relevant today).

In the whole history of Romani (and formerly of Gypsy) Studies, perhaps the most serious research problem is the specific kind of 'Roma-centrism' (and formerly 'Gypsy-centrism') that puts Roma (and formerly so-called Gypsies) in the centre of the research attention and leads towards neglecting their surrounding realities. By such an approach, Roma are practically transformed into a kind of a centre of the world, around which all human history revolves, which is obviously not true. The interpretation of the world (both historically and in present times) through the 'Roma-centric prism' practically stigmatises the community yet again, transforming the Roma into something different from all other peoples, and discrediting Romani Studies by sending them into a kind of academic ghetto. All the negatives, yet again, are at the expense of both the Roma themselves and of Romani Studies.

In historical studies of Roma, the emphasis has thus far been on the anti-Gypsy politics, and much less attention has been paid to its implementation (or not) and the results obtained from it, even if these results contradict the declared intentions (or even lead to the opposite results). A typical example in this regard is the famous (and still often quoted) book by Zoltan Barany, according to whom in the so-called epoch of socialism in the countries of the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, the state not only defines the marginal group through the lenses of dominant social norms, religion, ethnic identity, and economic and occupational status but also uses this definition to isolate the Roma population to a social, cultural and economic periphery (Barany, 2002, pp. 49–64). If we accept that it is true, then here is controversy. The whole policy of the communist regimes in the region was just in the opposite direction – to take out Roma from the social and cultural periphery, and to include them in the new socialist life, even if this was done for their immediate (or withdrawn in the more distant perspective) assimilation in the composition of the respective ethno-nation (Marushiakova & Popov, 2008b). Here the most important question is what history needs to study – the used political phraseology or real history? To us, equally important are both sides of the historical process – the aims and the results of certain political actions targeting Roma.

The most significant is to reveal the perspective of the Roma themselves and their responses to existing social and political realities. It is the combination of the two views (of the authorities and of the Roma) that reveals the versatility and different dimensions of the actual historical process. The avoidance of above mentioned pitfalls is only possible if a new, different starting point is sought for a comprehensive historical analysis. Such a starting point, for all our analysis of the historical sources, and for the source-based conclusions made, is in our firm belief that Roma exist concomitantly in different dimensions. For us, it is an undoubted fact, that they are not an outcast social phenomenon, a hermetically isolated and self-sufficient social and cultural system; but they have always existed at one and the same time in at least two main dimensions (Marushiakova & Popov, 2016e, p. 15).

This fundamental principle is based on the juxtaposition between 'community' and 'society'; the distinction 'community – society' is used here with altered content cleared

from its evolutionary hierarchy (Tönnies, 1887) and, in our understanding, it concerns the relations between two simultaneously existing typological phenomena intertwined in one inseparable unity. In this case, 'community' refers to the Roma as an ethnic formation that is clearly distinguished from its surrounding population, and 'society' refers to the Roma as ethnically based integral parts of the respective nation-states of which they are citizens. These two main dimensions may, in short, be called 'ethnicity' and 'civic nationality' (Marushiakova & Popov, 2016e, p. 15).

This distinction between the different dimensions in which Roma exist is directly reflected in their multidimensional, structurally hierarchical, and contextually publicly demonstrated identity (Ibid.). It means that in different contexts, in different life situations, one of the dimensions of this identity (and not only of the two main ones) turns out to be the leading one and comes to the fore. This could be the group, family, class, gender, or any other identity. And, most importantly, these dimensions do not oppose each other nor are they mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they are in a constant (albeit historically and situationally variable) balance. This discourse makes it possible not to enter into discussions about the historical and contemporary dimensions of Roma identity (see van Baar, 2011; van Baar & Kóczé, 2020) and to leave them in the background. Whether this identity will be referred to as 'intersectionality' (Kóczé & Popa, 2009; Smith & Greenfields, 2011), 'hybridity' (Silverman, 2012), 'superdiversity' (Tremlett, 2014), 'political identity' (McGarry, 2014), or with some other current term is not that important, because it does not change its essence.

One can often read that Roma are "un peuple sans patrie" (Stewart, 1991, pp. 39–52), or "citizens of the world and nowhere" (Acton & Gheorghe, 2001, pp. 54–70), or, as is especially popular in recent years in the spirit of James Scott (2009), as a people who master "the art of not being governed", i.e. who stand (or at least tries to stand) outside society. In fact, this does not correspond to the existing realities, at least for Roma in the regions of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe. Their homelands, for centuries, have been the countries where they live, and we know that their civic national identity is kept even in conditions of migration, at least among the first generations (Marushiakova & Popov, 2018a, pp. 88–100). However, it is worth emphasising that, whether intentionally or not, it is precisely this dimension, namely the civic national identity of the Roma, that receives the least attention from the vast majority of researchers.

This is particularly visible in what is presently perhaps the most attractive subfield of Romani Studies, research of Roma migrations from Central and South-Eastern Europe to West. The vast majority of researchers there do not cover the real social dimensions of these migrations, thus neglecting that they are part of the mass national flows of cross-border labour mobility within the European Union, and prefer to focus only on the most visible part of the iceberg – Roma migration as a separate community (most often on Roma beggars from Romania) (Ibid).

The reasons for this approach are many and varied, and here is not the place for it to be analysed. Therefore we will only note that in the era of modern nation-states, without

acknowledging the existence of civic national identity, as a separate dimension in the complex multi-dimensional structure of Roma identities, the very processes of the emergence and development of the Roma civic emancipation movement cannot be explained and understood.

It is on the very basis of this distinction between the two main dimensions of Roma identity that the key concept that defines the basic notion used in the preparation of this book was derived. This notion is Roma civic emancipation, which can be synthesised as a movement to achieve a harmonious balance between the two main dimensions of the existence of Roma (community and society), which finds its expression in their respective identities, and which is acceptable both for the Roma themselves and for the macro-society. The Roma movement for civic emancipation is a constant struggle to achieve the equal civic status of the Roma as an ethnic community and as individual citizens with their rights in all social fields (political, religious, educational, economic, cultural, etc.).

Roma civic emancipation should not, in any case, be mistaken or replaced with a process of voluntary ethnic assimilation of the Roma community in the composition of the majority in the countries in which they live, nor in the composition of other national minorities. For centuries, such processes have been going on continuously, both on a personal or family basis (e.g. in cases of ethnically mixed marriages), as well as for whole sections of the community in cases of so-called preferred ethnic identity (Marushiakova & Popov, 2015a, pp. 26–54). In the case of Roma civic emancipation, however, these processes move in the opposite direction, and the goal is not the self-liquidation of the community. On the contrary, the goal is preservation and development of Roma precisely as an ethnic community within their respective civic nations, combined with struggles for civic equality with the means and measures of the respective period and state (e.g. setting up organisations, unions, societies, schools, press publications, plans for work among the Roma, etc.).

On this fundamental objective is based a broader understanding of the overall dimensions of Roma civic emancipation. In this line are included not only civic organisations and political parties but also many other diverse forms of public life that do not directly relate to the core topic: such as, for example, professional associations, mutual aid, charity, cultural and sports associations, so-called 'new' (Evangelical) church communities, etc., which are built on an ethnic basis. Moreover, under the common denominator of Roma civic emancipation is included even the participation of some Roma activists in the communist movement. The communist idea is perceived by them as an opportunity for radical change in society and, therefore, also of the place of the Roma community in it.

However, put in a more general historical context, all these forms of the social, political or religious organisation of an ethnic community, to one degree or another, in one form or another, ultimately fit into the general flow of the movement for Roma civic emancipation, and this is precisely the reason for their inclusion in the general content of the book. It should be especially emphasised that, here, Roma civic emancipation is perceived as part of a global social process of re-arrangement of group solidarities,

expressed in the national building process, which is a product of modernity (Todorova, 2005), in the context of the entangled history of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe. This key line also includes other historical evidence that reveals the multidimensionality of the general process of Roma civic emancipation, such as the participation of Roma in the common political, religious and cultural life of their respective civic nations, an integral part of which they are.

This book also uses other key concepts that need further clarification – elite, visionary, and activism/activist. In clarifying these notions, and especially the overall dimensions of the processes of formation and development of Roma civic emancipation, we, similarly to Eric Hobsbawm, are benefiting from the fundamental works of Miroslav Hroch (1985; 2005), "which opened the new era in the analysis of the composition of national liberation movements" (Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 4).

According to Miroslav Hroch, this process comprises three chronological phases:

Phase A: Activists strive to lay the foundation for national identity; they research the cultural, linguistic, social and historical attributes of a non-dominant group in order to raise awareness of the common traits and unity of the community;

Phase B: A new range of activists emerges, who seeks to win over as many of their ethnic group as possible to the project of creating a future nation; an active process of propaganda and the agitation of these national ideas among their ethnic community begins;

Phase C: The majority of the population forms a mass movement; a full social movement with its own program comes into being and the movement differentiates into diverse wings (Hroch, 1985; 2005).

Of course, each of the national movements in the region has its historical specificities, but there are many common traits. At the beginning of the movement for Roma civic emancipation (similarly to other nationalities), it included a relatively limited circle of the Roma community representatives. They are those who formulate the aims and tasks of this movement, and accordingly, at a later stage, they take over its leadership and carry on their shoulders its basic and main activities. This is the new, civic elite of the community, which is already working in new, social dimensions, and differs significantly from the old traditional Roma elite, whose functions were limited mainly within the community (which, however, does not preclude the transformation of some of its representatives into new roles and with new functions, making them part of the new civic elite). Within this new civic elite, Roma visionaries and activists are being elevated, and the distinction between them is based on the criterion 'strategy – tactics'. The first are those who draw the overall, far-reaching perspectives for the development of the community in the new social realities; the latter are the ones that determine the specific, immediate goals and tasks of the civic emancipation movement of the Roma. Of course, this distinction is abstract and speculative and, in practice, in real life, there is no strict boundary between these two categories, and the same people can combine both functions.

The main goal of this book is to present the processes described above through portraits of leading representatives of the new Roma civic elite, i.e. of the people whose visions and activities initiated the movement for Roma civic emancipation. This approach is not so new for historians but is lacking in respect of Roma in the above-mentioned historical period. Thus, the leading idea here is to present the history of the Roma civic emancipation movement in the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe from the 19th Century until World War II through the biographies of prominent Roma activists and visionaries in this region, revealing their activities during the respective historical period. From the point of view of Miroslav Hroch's concept, these are the people who bring out the first two phases of the process of nation-building in the modern era; they are the emerging new national elite that formulates new national ideas and outlines own visions for future development. It is the emerging new Roma leaders who formulate these new ideas about the problems of the present and the future of their community and who present them publicly, while at the same time promoting them among the Roma community itself (and in the case of the USSR, even by participating in their implementation through state policy instruments). Thus, by presenting the portraits of these leading Roma activists, a complete gallery of Roma civic emancipation will be formed, which will reveal the whole variety of processes taking place in this field. In the Conclusion, on the basis of the presented portraits, an entangled picture of the movement for Roma civic emancipation is offered, and the general dimensions and leading directions of this movement are presented, taking into account the diversity of individuals' approaches and its specific directions, which do not harm its integrity.

To achieve the goal set in this book, a new methodological approach is used, namely the critical rethinking of the historical sources used so far, cross-checking – with the original sources – quotations that have been passing from one book to another in order to correct errors in the reading and interpretation, as well as attracting of new, unknown (or little known) sources. A significant part of the historical sources on which this volume is based has already been published and commented in the previous book prepared in the framework of *RomaInterbellum* project too and their full original text can be read there (Marushiakova & Popov, 2021b). These sources, as well as the newly discovered and added here, for the most part, have not yet entered into scientific circulation or in some cases, they have been used only in publications in local languages, which de facto make them inaccessible to the global academic world.

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In order for this book to be properly perceived and understood, it is necessary to begin by making once again some clarifications on the used terminology, as well as on its spatial and chronological parameters. At the same time, it is also necessary to explain its format – the principles we have used for presenting the text, on which basis the entire composition is established.

The two key terms used in the authors' texts are 'Roma' and 'Gypsies'. There is no need to pay attention here to the public debate surrounding the use of these terms, in which two discourses (political and academic) are wrongly mixed; this debate is closely correlated with the development of contemporary Roma activism and is under the decisive influence of current political structures at international (mainly European) and national levels (Marushiakova & Popov, 2018b, pp. 385–418). In this case, we take a pragmatic approach and consider it sufficient to briefly explain the principles underlying the use of the two key terms in this book.

The guiding principle that defines the use of the term 'Gypsies' is historical. Since the Middle Ages, Roma communities have lived in the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, and were denoted by the surrounding population with different names. Such denominations are 'Αθίγγανοι' (Byzantine Empire, Greece), 'Kıbti' and 'Çingene' (Ottoman Empire, Turkey), 'Цигани' (Serbia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia), 'Ţigani' (Romania), 'Zigeuner' (Austro-Hungarian Empire, Austria), 'Cigányok' (Hungary), 'Cikáni' and 'Cigáni' (Czechoslovakia), 'Cyganie' (Poland), 'Цыгане' (Russian Empire, USSR, Russian Federation), 'Čigonai' (Lithuania), 'Čigāni' (Latvia), 'Mustlased' (Estonia), 'Mustalaiset' (Finland), etc. Over time, and especially after the First World War, when the old empires collapsed and new ethnic-nation-states emerged in the region, some of these names turned into official terms and became political denominations of the Roma communities in their respective countries. All these denominations are usually translated into English (today's language of the global academia) with the ethnonym 'Gypsies'.

From our point of view, however, this is not an adequate translation; the word 'Gypsies', in the English-speaking world, including in the scholarly jargon, is used to signify diverse nomadic communities regardless of their ethnic origins and identity (Hancock, 2010, pp. 95–96). However, we also use the term 'Gypsies' to refer to all these communities throughout the period of history in question (from the mid-19th century to the Second World War), for several reasons. Despite the inappropriateness of the term, it (and all its equivalents in local languages) was used at that time; modifying them in historical sources would mean de facto rewriting and falsifying history from a contemporary perspective (see e.g. Dunajeva, 2021a, pp. 65–78). The Roma activists themselves, at that time, except in the rare cases when writing in the Romani language, also used these terms, and in the struggles for the civic emancipation of their community they proceeded from precisely this official discourse set out in their respective countries. Without adequately reflecting this discourse, one could not understand the first attempts to change it through the insistence (especially in Romania) on replacing the designation 'Gypsies' with 'Roma', which began during this period.

As very accurately noticed by Angéla Kóczé (2020), "'Roma' is a politically constructed identity used as a category to capture various ethnic groups". The use of the term as a summarising notion began in the 1970s after the International Romani Union came into being (Marushiakova & Popov, 2018b). Its "officialization" started in the late 1990s and in the 21st century, it was imposed as a politically correct term (except for some individual

countries). From the political sphere, it gradually transits into academia (though not all over the line). Fortunately, there is no major discrepancy between the political discourse, in which 'Roma' in many cases (mostly within the framework of European institutions) is used as the umbrella label for a particular political category (Ibid., pp. 385–418), and the academic discourse, in which this designation is used as an ethnic category (Marushiakova & Popov, 2016e, pp. 7–34). This is because the historical area in which Roma have lived since the Middle Ages is precisely Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, and from which, during the modern era (from the 19th century to the present-day), they have re-settled around the world.

The spatial scope of the study presented in this book is fixed as the region of Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, but this definition is not based on purely geographical but on historical and geopolitical criteria. Until the early 20th century, these were the lands of the three great Empires (the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian), where after the disintegration of the Empires numerous new nation-states emerged. This is actually the region where, at that time, the processes of Roma civic emancipation emerged and developed. From this perspective, it becomes clear why the book includes Turkey (although most of its territory, geographically speaking, is located in Asia) and Finland (which, until 1917, was part of the Russian Empire). Some other countries in the region (such as Austria, Albania, Lithuania, Estonia) are absent, for a simple reason, because there is no written evidence (or, at least, evidence have not yet been found) for the process of Roma civic emancipation.

The book also includes two portraits that break the established spatial frames, which has its own explanation. In the case of Steve Kaslov (probably his native name was Stefan Kozlovskiy), it is about an emigrant from the Russian Empire who transferred his accumulated social experience to the United States. This gives sufficient grounds for his activities in the field of Roma civic emancipation to be considered as part of the general processes taking place at that time, although realised in another national context. The case of Helios Gomez is a little different. Although he was not a representative of community with self-appellation Roma but of Spanish Gitanos, who call themselves Calé, he, along with his civic activities in Spain, also expressed visions for the unity of his community with Roma in the USSR and gives the policy of the Soviet state as an example to follow. Gomez used the generic name 'Gypsies' (in original 'Gitanos') and his case represents the emergence of global, transnational dimensions of the processes of Roma civic emancipation.

The chronological scope of the book is not determined by specific dates either, but according to respective historical eras. In our initial intentions, the chronological limit of our work was between the Two World Wars. However, based on existing and newly discovered historical sources, and because of the purpose of the study itself, it appeared necessary to go beyond this range. To better explore and explain the processes of Roma civic emancipation, it was needed to start at the roots, and the first manifestations of

Roma civic emancipation took us further back in time. The earlier time limit of the study can, though to some extent conditional, be set in the mid-19th century. This was the time (especially after the revolutions of 1848) when modern nationalism rapidly developed, and this was also in this context that the processes of Roma civic emancipation began to take root. The end caesura of our focus is the outbreak of the Second World War, which fundamentally changed the worldwide social and political order and respectively, also influenced the processes of Roma emancipation. The end of the Second World War marks the beginning of a new, quite different, historical era. This upper limit is also not precisely chronologically fixed due to a number of circumstances. Different countries became involved in the war at different times, and in some of them, the processes of Roma civic emancipation continued to evolve for some time also under these new conditions. In addition, some of the materials presented (the memories of participants in the events, for example) are of a later date, even when they describe the events of the interwar period.

In the composition of the book, the text is divided into chapters and subchapters. The division by chapters is according to the individual countries in the region because it is precisely the national borders that set the framework for the processes of Roma civic emancipation. As will be seen, the concept of the Roma as a transnational community during the studied period appeared only sporadically and was perceived rather as a desired potential opportunity. The individual chapters are in most cases divided into subchapters devoted to individuals; in other instances, one chapter (or subchapter) combines portraits of two or more personalities.

The individual chapters are of different lengths, which is directly dependent on the scale of activities aimed at Roma emancipation, as well as on the presence of Roma activists in individual countries. Naturally, the size of the chapters also depends on the array of discovered source materials. As expected, and for obvious reasons, the longest chapters appeared to be Bulgaria, Romania, and especially the Soviet Union.

Some of the terms used, which do not have an adequate English translation, are left in the original language and are in italics when used for the first time.

Italics also indicate words and phrases that are in the Romani or other languages. The words and expressions in the Romani and other languages are maintained as in the original followed by translation in round brackets. Italics in some instances are used to designate the names or titles, e.g. of organisations, Roma groups, newspapers, kolkhoses, literary works, etc.

In the authors' texts the self-appellation of the community is used, namely, the term 'Roma' (except in the case of Spain for obvious reason), which is by now the one most commonly used within the public sphere. This term is not, however, used in its original grammatical forms but instead, it is adapted to English grammar. We have done so because we consider it acceptable to introduce foreign words into English, but we do not consider it appropriate to impose foreign grammar into one or another language. The

only few exceptions from this principle are the combination terms, such as 'Romani language', 'Romani literature' and 'Romani Studies', because they have already made a lasting entry in the academic language.

The names of the personalities are given in the usual order – name, father's name (if any), surname, although in the original spelling in some languages (Russian, Hungarian, for example) there is an inversion of this order (i.e. surname, first name, in Russian also father's name).

Quotations in the text are marked in two ways – by detached, clearly separated paragraphs or double quotation marks ("/") when they are part of a sentence. Single quotation marks ('/') stand for the individual terms used in the different texts.

The omitted parts or abbreviations, which are eliminated in the English translation of quotations are indicated with square brackets []. A similar approach is used when further clarification is needed to better understand the meaning of individual words or phrases.

In many places in the texts, and especially those of the USSR, for the names of the institutions their abbreviations and neologisms, originated on this basis, have been used. They convey the spirit of the era as they were part of the new language policy in the early USSR, so we have kept them. Because often these abbreviations and neologisms are incomprehensible even in the modern Russian language, a special Dictionary has been included. This Dictionary also includes other commonly used abbreviations in countries throughout the region.

For maintaining a form of language equality, all archival and media sources, and bibliographic data, including references to the text, are displayed in the language and alphabet of the original.

Separate references are made to the archival and media (newspapers and popular journals) sources, according to their respective rules. In some cases, however, especially in private archives, the bibliographical data are not organised in the standard way and often the individual documents lack a designation, thus only the folder's name or archival subdivision is available. In other cases all bibliographical data is available but the page numbers of individual documents are missing or are invisible for the researcher when documents are offered for review only in digitalised form.

The Scripture quotations in English translation for this edition are taken from English Standard Version (https://biblehub.com/).