

ORIENTALISM IN ROMANI STUDIES: THE CASE OF EASTERN EUROPE

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The article offers a critical analysis of the current state of the academic approaches in the field of Romani studies through prism of Orientalist approach not only toward research subject but also towards Romani scholars from Roma and Non-Roma origin. The article presents different approaches and methodological problems that appear in the study of Roma who live in Eastern Europe, or of Eastern European Origin. Two basic paradigms of Romani studies and in social practice and politics are discussed – their exoticization and their marginalisation, which can take on features of one or both of these two paradigms. On this backdrop the issues of academic ethic in Romani studies is raised. The emergence of NGO-science and native science as specific reflection of the two basic paradigms are discussed as well.

Keywords: Roma, Eastern Europe, Romani studies, orientalism, exoticisation, marginalisation, NGO-science, native science

Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.
Joseph Rudyard Kipling

In recent decades, the concept of Orientalism of Edward Said (1978) has had profound, transformative influence across the spectrum of the social sciences and humanities. According one of the main tenets of this concept, modern western (postcolonial) studies performed prejudiced outsider interpretations of the East; they did not actually examine the research subject itself, but its own ideas about it, reflected in the subject itself. The concept of Orientalism has been received both approvingly and critically. Critique notwithstanding, the book of Edward Said inspired a sequel of works regarding various regions and populations, including examining of attitudes towards minorities or even own country population (Buchowski 2006: 463-482). Linked to this, western anthropology, as pointed out by David Scheffel more than quarter-century ago, performed a kind of collective introspection – which can be figuratively called with the German term ‘Vergangeheitsbewältigung’ – of the discipline’s colonial past and a reassessment the methods of tendentious political analysis of foreign cultures, their interpretations and reasoning (ШеффеЛ 1993: 21-28).

These general trends of ‘Vergangeheitsbewältigung’ has touched also Romani studies, which inevitably led (or should lead) also to criticism of Orientalist approach in this sphere (even more, as such an approach towards “Gypsies” was noted by Said himself – see 1995: 287). The first publications of this kind have already appeared (Montesino 2001; Ashplant 2004; АШПЛАНТ 2007; Lee 2000; Sali 2015; Matache

2016ab; Acton 2016), but they are limited mainly to criticism of individual authors or of the whole vague category called “Gypsylogists” for their racism and colonial perception of Gypsies/Roma. The methodological problems in Romani studies in practice are in the most part limited only to discussion on their ideological bases.

Here we will offer an aside about the category designated as “Gypsylogists” (or “Gypsylogist”). It has been used widely used in recent years (especially by the so-called Anti-Tsiganists’ school), but its contents so far remains unclear (Matras 2005) even for the authors who use it. The category “Gypsylogists” used by different authors vary widely, starting from attaching it to those who write about the Indian origin of Gypsies/Roma (Okely 1983: 13; Willems 1997: 294), and passes through the stigmatization of individual authors, starting from Grellman (18th century) up to the founders and members of the Gypsy Lore Society (19th-20th centuries) (Montesino 2001; Ashplant 2004; 2007; Lee 2000; Matache 2016ab; 2017; Acton 2016), reaching to the definition of Gypsylogist as “Western (non-Romani) writers”, in whose works “the Gypsies are primarily used as objects of depicted and described using their Western imagination, which often was detached from a real contact and close encounter with the group” (Sali 2015: 8-9). In most cases, however, the authors who are operating with the category “Gypsylogists” are using this cliché as a summarising term and are making no efforts to think about its content. Very often they accuse their colleagues of Gypsylogism, even without reading their works. Obviously, such an approach invalidates not only the term itself but debunks the whole discussion.

In our understanding of the place of Orientalism in Romani Studies today there are much more important tasks than to quarrel about the adequacy of usage of the terms Gypsy lore vs Romani studies and classifying some authors as Gypsylogists and others as Romani studies scholars. From our contemporary perspective, much more important and urgent than the analysis of past errors, and searching out old sins of the racist approaches of the 19th and 20th centuries scholars, is the need to make a critical analysis of the current state of the academic approaches in the field of Romani studies. Even the most exhaustive Orientalism Studies, including the “Gypsylogism Studies” (Acton 2016), does not take into account the current realities, and especially the changes which occurred after 1989, when the Eastern European Communist regimes collapsed and the iron curtain fell. These changes, however, are very important in many regards. On the one hand, the regions where the overwhelming majority of Roma live became open for research and scholars received free access to it. And not only scholars from the West, but also from the East, who at some places also suffered from research restrictions and sometimes even bans on studying Roma. On the other hand, the very “Roma issue” from a peripheral sphere of academic and public interest started to attract increasingly attention in the public space of the region. And after the accession of most countries into the European Union and mass Roma migration to the West it became challenge for united Europe too. In the recent past, more and more international donors and NGOs at first and later also national, European and international institutions became pre-occupied with Roma issues. As an end result, two entirely new categories of authors in

the field of Romani studies came on the international stage – the Eastern European scholars and the so-called new Roma elite.

Before the lifting of the iron curtain the works of Eastern European scholars were almost unknown in the West. The development of social sciences and humanities in the so-called socialist camp had previously progressed along its own way, more or less different (and not only ideologically but also methodologically) from the West. This distinction was not only a direct result of the closed character of East European communist countries (and in case of Romani studies with the dismissive approach towards the subject of investigation which was transferred to the investigation itself), but has much older roots. It was connected to the absence of colonial discourse in countries of Eastern Europe and to the circumstance that scholars in East were concentrating in their studies predominantly on their own nations (for more details see below).

Lifting the restrictions from the Eastern European scholars paved the way for their integration into the contemporary global academia. Along with this, perhaps even surprisingly, it appears that Orientalist approach may have its projection also in relation to former Eastern European Communist bloc's scholars. For the first time this problem was approached in the 1990s (Jakubowska 1993), but in recent years it has been widely discussed in the context of imagining possibilities for development of social anthropology in Eastern Europe. (Hann 2005; Buchowski 2004; 2006; 2008; Kürti 2008). This dominance of the “West” was approached and criticized on different context also elsewhere, e.g. in work of Stuart Hall (1992) and lead even to introducing term Crypto-colonialism by Michael Herzfeld (2002), and to a “way of critical revisions ... of existing modes of interpreting of society and culture” in anthropology (Fischer and Marcus 1999: XV). Naturally, these discussions relate directly also to these authors from Eastern Europe who work in the field of Romani Studies.

The problem of Orientalism in the Romani studies has broad dimensions and can be viewed from different perspectives. Certainly, in the forefront are problems of the orientalism in studying of Roma communities themselves, but no less interesting would be an analysis of Orientalist treatment (or deliberate neglecting) of the authors, who originate from the studied communities. Therefore it is not a surprise that the problems which are encountering the Eastern European scholars proved to be more or less similar with those facing by the so-called new Roma elite. This elite, however, is not a creation of the famous billionaire George Soros and of his Open Society foundations network, as he often likes to say, but a result of the overall historical development of the Roma community in the region. This development includes both the movement for civil emancipation of Roma in the period preceding World War II (Marushiakova and Popov 2015a: 258-293), as well as the policy of accelerated and sometimes even forced social integration of Roma after the War, and also and in much greater extent the overall social impact of the conditions in which Roma lived in Eastern Europe during the time of communism (Marushiakova and Popov 2015b: 19-31).

The appeals of this new Roma elite for a discontinuation of the Orientalist approach towards them, ceasing to approach them just as an object, and their desire to

become active participants in Roma research are fully justified. The main problem here is that this desire in fact is usually limited to criticism of the Non-Romani authors, in general and en bloc, and to more or less clearly expressed separation from, and confrontation with, authors within the field of Romani studies (and of their relevant texts), according to their origin (Roma and non-Roma). Even when this position is “playfully” formulated as “Gadžeology” (from *Gadže* ‘non-Roma’ in Romani language) and “Romani-informed point of view” (Tidrick 2010: 121-131) it leads to confrontation and to the implicit conclusion that non-Roma cannot (and should not) be involved in Romani Studies. This approach, however, is not only methodologically highly questionable, but, as it will be discussed below, is far from truth that being Roma is always a guarantee for restraining from Orientalism in Romani studies. Moreover, denial – and often even refusal to be acquainted with older scholar texts because of ideological reasons alone – contributes little to the achievement of new academic knowledge, rather the contrary. It is also futile, especially in the absence of new alternative texts that are better than old ones.

It should be also emphasized however that some of the established names in the sphere of Romani studies, included in European Academic Network on Romani Studies bear co-responsibility for the emerging division and confrontation between Roma and non-Roma authors. Especially damaging was the recent fierce campaign against the creation of the new Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, which effectively deters prospective Roma scholars from the mainstream academia in sphere of Romani Studies (see e-mail discussion in: Friedman and Friedman 2015: 72-301; A Chronology 2017), and pushed them into the orbit of NGO-science and/or native science (these two categories will be discussed below).

At the core of the confrontation between mainstream academia and Roma activism lies the mixing of the two discourses – the academic and the political one (since Roma activism is a political activity). Such mixing of the discourses, as it is in the case of attributing to renowned mainstream scholars from Roma origin (Prof. Ian Hancock and Prof. Hristo Kyuchukov) Roma activism as the main motivation for direction of their academic work (Matras 2015) is a factor which drives and pushes contemporary Roma activists into opposition to mainstream academia and to non-Romani researchers.

This division and confrontation cannot be compensated and overcome through publishing in mainstream academic journals works where the analysis and evidences are subjugating to the aim to point supremacy of authors’ qualities because of the author “Roma origin” (in this case the origin of the film director Tony Gatlif is another issue) and accusing Aleksandar Petrović, the director of the movie *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* in “manifestation of colonial gaze” because of their Non-Roma and communist country origin (Mladenova 2016: 1-30). Against this background, it is worth recalling that the participants in the First World Romani Congress, held in London in 1971, setting the foundations for the International Romani Union, have proposed to adopt as a hymn of Roma nation the song from the later, stigmatized in the article movie. This is not a paradox, because nowadays more and more non-Roma authors are inclined to

demonstrate in their work their "pro-Roma" position (in way they understand it) to a much higher degree than the Roma themselves.

The problem of Orientalism in the field of Romani Studies is not (and cannot be) a purely academic problem. A common phenomenon is the ultimate dependence and interconnection of the scientific approach (and respectively of the research results) with factors 'external' to the science – in our case of major leading socio-ideological paradigms. Academic science is not and cannot be an island of "pure objective knowledge"; it always develops according to the general socio-ideological context, and always to some extent depends on it.

We are making an attempt here to present some major problems (with no claims of completeness) arising from the leading socio-ideological paradigms within which the Roma have been placed in the last quarter century of transition in Eastern Europe, crosscutting these problems with the issues of Orientalism. Certainly, all countries in this region and their Romani communities are unique and have specific characteristics, but there are enough common features and models (both from the point of view of academic knowledge and government and NGO policies, programs and projects), to enable us to examine the problem in a general and generalizing way.

The analysis of Orientalism in Romani studies should start from something that everyone knows, but which is rarely taken into account in specific studies – that Roma in Eastern Europe exist at least in 'two dimensions', both as a separate ethnic community, and as a ethnically-based integral part of the society within the respective nation-state where they are living from generation and which full-fledged citizens they are (Marushiakova and Popov 2011: 54). The failure to comprehend the essence of the 'community/society' distinction and the interconnections can result in viewing Roma communities within the frames of two basic, and flawed, paradigms, either the 'marginalization' frame in which the Roma constitute a social layer of the society, or the 'exoticization' frame, in which they are understood as a separate community. In both cases, we can speak about two interconnected research paradigms, which stream from the prism of Orientalism. When the Roma are seen primarily as part of the respective social structure, then the problems of their marginalization come to the forefront, with the result that the Roma are usually seen in terms of social and economic peculiarity. When the Roma are primarily seen as a community, and when the general cultural context and their social dimensions are ignored, they appear as an exoticised community. Paradoxical as it may sound, it is not uncommon, that the latter two approaches that at first glance look totally opposing to each other, can in fact be combined, and can actually complement each other, in particular when discussing specific policies and projects of governmental and public structures, and/or civil society organisations on various levels. And what is more important in our case, these two major paradigms are present in the academic research as well, where they actually predetermine researchers' approach towards the Romani communities, and accordingly also predestine the investigations' outcomes and their scientific interpretation (Marushiakova and Popov 2011: 51-68).

The Roma as a Marginal Community

The Roma are undoubtedly an important segment of the population of Eastern Europe. Hardly anyone could doubt that the social problems of the Roma have deepened and intensified during the so-called time of transition, i.e. the time of social and economic transformation since the early 1990s. All over the region, familiar factors from the past have been intensified by major new factors of various nature, many of which are ‘external,’ that is, emanating from outside the region, including international institutions, NGO’s, donor organizations, and recently also the EU bureaucratic machine from Brussels. The ‘Roma issue’ has become very fashionable for implementation of various projects at the level of government policies, NGO’s or academic research. These three domains of activity toward Roma are mutually interrelated and overlap, understandable considering the influence of identical social and ideological paradigms. This interplay of paradigms leads to the primary perception of the Roma as a marginalised community.

In the difficult period of transition, the ‘Roma issue’ and Roma problems have quickly been translated into the general concept of social inequality of the Roma community as such. A great number of NGO-managed projects have been implemented to overcome this inequality, later followed by national programs and then also by European Union projects. As Valeriu Nicolae recently wrote: “For three decades, European institutions have equated all Roma with the uneducated, unskilled, unemployed, poor and often criminal inhabitants hailing mainly from the ghettos and traditional Romani communities – the part of the Roma I call ‘Frankenstein Roma’, since they fit the negative stereotypes of the majority populations” (Nicolae 2013: 89). Romani scholars who opposed this approach (see e.g. Hancock 2010) and the activists from Eastern Europe united in political parties and/or NGO’s were not able in the end to control effectively or at least to steer the basic tendencies in the development of key concepts and the ensuing projects and programs. This is the reason for the growing dissatisfaction with results, or rather the disappointment with the lack of results. More and more, Roma activists speak about a “Gypsy industry” that is sustained by Roma problems and does not try to solve them, because it would lose its source of income.

The leading concept of this approach is that Roma should not be treated as a “normal community” with its own identity, ethnic culture, but as strongly marginalised and to a great extent anomic community, that needs constant special care and social patronage. This approach is not the original creation of the “Gypsy industry”; it has been the basis of almost all existing state policies for “integration” of the Roma communities worldwide. These policies can be associated with an almost complete lack of positive results, in their own terms. Usually the “New Time” is opposed to the previous era, or in other words “the Time of Democracy” is opposed to the so called “Time of Communism.” But in terms of governmental policies towards the Roma there has been mostly continuity. During the second half of the 20th century, in the so-called “communist countries” in the region of Eastern Europe, there was one principal and identical political line in spite of the various differences between the individual countries – effort to integrate the Roma into the society. Such social integration was

more or less openly acknowledged by the individual countries as the first step on the way to ethnic assimilation of the Roma (Marushiakova and Popov 2008a; 2015b: 19-31). This is still the almost exclusive agenda.

When analyzing the national programs and strategies targeting the Roma in the individual communist countries, one cannot help noticing that they have been essentially identical (Gronemeyer 1983; Szabo 1991; Jurová 1993; 1996; Crowe 1996; Marushiakova and Popov 1997; 2007a; Achim 1998; Lysá 1999; Деметер et al. 2000; Guy 2001; Donert 2008; 2010; 2011ab; Hajnáczy 2015). The national Roma programs or strategies created in the period of transition are also similar. And they show similarity not only between themselves, which is more or less intelligible, but more striking is the fact they are very similar also to the programs approved and implemented in the previous period. Of course, there is a major difference in terms of ideological reasoning and phraseology, but apart from that, we see to a large extent identical or at least remarkably similar activities planned to resolve what are perceived to be the same specific problems, in the fields of employment, housing, schooling and education, health, including the problems of Roma women (which are also one of the recent “hits”). Thus, the activities planned and accomplished nowadays as well as the projects directed to overcoming of Roma problems (including the new European programs and projects), are well known from the recent past, so their poor outcomes should not be a surprise (Marushiakova and Popov 2015b).

In the new situation, after the break down of the “Eastern bloc”, the academic research in the majority of cases continues to serve the same general social and ideological paradigms. In the past circa three decades, dozens or even hundreds of mostly (but not only) sociological studies have been published (if we take the region as a whole) that focus on the social and economic problems of the Roma, or to say it more correctly on the marginalised parts of them (Tomova 1995; Jakšić and Bašić 2005; Ringold 2000; Ringold et al. 2005; Lysá 1999; UNDP 2003; UNDP 2005; Vašečka 2002; Zamfir and Zamfir 1993; Zoon 2001a; Zoon 2001b). We believe that it is not necessary to go into detail and interpret the interests of institutions commissioning these studies (World Bank, UNDP, the Open Society Foundations network, Fundamental Rights Agency, etc.), that aim to justify the need for future projects and activities and that bring results that are expected, i.e. results that are called for.

To express this more directly, we will employ a Balkan (and Roma) proverb, which could be translated almost literally with an old English proverb – “He who pays the piper calls the tune”. It cannot be expected that big donors like the World Bank, UNDP or the Network of foundations “Open society”, whose primary mission and reason for their existence is to overcome the problems, will support research and publications whose findings are contrary to this fundamental mission. So, today there are dozens of sponsored publications on huge housing problems of the Roma, two books are on the so-called “Roma palaces” (Calzi et al. 2007; Andresoiu and Ciocazanu 2008), and no studies at all devoted to the housing conditions of those Roma who live at houses or flats that do not differ from those of their surrounding population. The issue here is not limited to the concrete housing context, but applies to the overall approach of selecting a segment of

the community (the marginalized and often socially degraded strata), and it is presented as representative of the whole community.

A series of very similar in terms of approach and results sociological studies appeared over the past 25 years, some of them devoted to Roma in various countries in Eastern Europe and others which summarise developments throughout this entire region. Indeed, these studies and surveys are used as scholarly background, needed for further development of this project niche (the Roma and their problems), and de-facto they serve to confirm and legalise the patronising role of the “Gypsy industry”, which has evolved over the years – started as a creation of the NGO sector, it is gradually being integrated into current national and European programs and projects.

Moreover, there is also a succession within scientific studies of similar type, characteristic for previous historical era, in which also the socio-economic problems of Roma are highlighted and ways to overcome them are investigated. Especially significant in this regard is the case with the famous sociologist Istvan Kemenyi, one of the fathers of modern sociology in Hungary and long term president of the Hungarian Sociological Association, whose works in the field of Romani studies, done in time of socialism, were considered a classic reference, and together with his studies done after the breakdown of the regime are still considered as a classic reference today (Kemeny 1992).

Additionally, in the last quarter century, in the study of Roma from Eastern Europe, a new scientific discipline has been appearing. It can hardly be defined in terms of name and methodology, since it is a particular type of research, that we call “NGO-science”, and which, to a very high degree, is equivalent to that what is called “expert science” by Mihai Surdu, about what he recently wrote a comprehensive and well-grounded critique (Surdu 2016). It stands at the boundary between academic and expert research (although in practice doesn’t belong to any of them). Typical its authors have different academic backgrounds, but often they lack any academic background (including cases where the only qualification of the authors is their Roma origin and their mastery of English language). The methodology, used by these “expert researchers” (quotes are not random), formally speaking, is an interdisciplinary (including law, sociology, political science, etc.), but it is often incorrectly applied in the data collection and therefore the results are not verifiable, and usually lead to tendentious conclusions. It is actually the NGO-science (or expert science) that produces data used for determining the financing priorities within the donor organisations. They are used also for elaborating also the national and European strategies and programs for the social integration of the Roma. It seems obvious that a report that begins by stating that in a given country live according to different data (formal and informal) “between 12 and 200 thousand Roma” (Cârstocea and Cârstocea 2017: 3), and then follows with figures and percentages reflecting the situation of Roma in different spheres (education, health, employment, housing, etc.), cannot and should not be taken seriously. This is obvious for everybody except for the “Gypsy industry” in its different dimensions (non-governmental, national, European, international organizations, etc.). For the latter the most important is to have some

“expert” justification for the programs and projects (following the principle, “the more problems, the more money”).

Furthermore, the inclusion of individual Roma as co-authors of publications by the NGO-science (with claims to be “experts research”) is de-facto public recognition of the right of the Roma to be researchers (or “experts” according to the accepted terminology), only by virtue of their origin and not according to their qualification. We recall how in the early 1990s we received a desperate call from a student working in a Roma neighborhood NGO in Bulgaria who was short-term fellow at the European Roma Rights Center, and had received a task of produce a report on the urban problems of the Roma across whole Eastern Europe -- though she had never before left her own country and had not the slightest idea about the life of Roma in other. This is not a single curiosity, but a common practice that continues even today, and not only in the NGO sector, but also in national and European institutions and respected international organizations. The circumstance that, at least formally, the educational and professional level of Roma “experts” has increased significantly over the years does not change the matter.

As an end result, there are currently available hundreds, even thousands, of quasi-expert surveys, monitoring reports, guidelines, manuals, etc., which are devoted to the problems of Roma in Eastern Europe (and now of Roma migrants in West as well), which serve only to accounting the projects for sake of tasks for which they were prepared, and no one outside the “Gypsy industry” reads or uses them. This huge production mainly serves to perpetuate an active policy for the social integration of the Roma, and does not solve their numerous problems and also does not enrich the academic knowledge on Roma. Moreover, this approach has the opposite effect, as it created and consolidated in the public consciousness (especially in Eastern Europe) the stereotype of “the privileged Roma”, for whom huge amounts of money are poured through numerous programs and projects. In this way, mass public anti-Gypsy attitudes are being fed, expanded and deepened. And they can no longer be declared as specific only to the underdeveloped Eastern Europe because they are turned now to a common European problem (Marushiakova and Popov 2013a: 183-194).

In order to avoid misunderstandings, we would like to stress that we are in no way trying to state that the majority of Roma do not face many social and economic problems. The above, mentioned studies, reports, surveys, etc. often reflect to a certain degree the real and existing problems among Roma, even if they are dubious from a methodological point of view (especially regarding selection of respondents, use of official statistics, etc.). In order to solve existing problems, however, they must be defined, focused and localized, and not presented as problems of the Roma population as a whole.

There are only a few authors who, in good faith, underline that their research is not representative of all Roma, but only of a certain segment of them, e.g. for the Roma population living in compact neighborhoods or areas of settlements with over 20 households (Tomova 1995: 13). Such explanations, however, are missing from the pervasive part of this type of research, published by well-known international institutions and organizations (World Bank, UNDP, Fundamental Rights Agency, etc.) Exceptionally, in some report such clarification is made and critical reading clearly reveal

that the work is based on the so-called ‘representative sample’, that cannot in any way be regarded as really representative for all Roma in a given country and even less for Eastern Europe as a whole. Nowhere in this type of research could be find at least a hint about numerous Roma in Eastern Europe, who live scattered among the surrounding population and do not live in the detached local settlements where the survey data were collected. The exclusion of this segment of Roma population from the so-called representative sampling, done consciously or not, actually leads to the exclusion of significant parts of the community, and to presentation of data and conclusions valid for one, albeit a significant part of Roma, which is represented as the entire community. It is not necessary to underline that such an approach is unacceptable in terms of academic or moral validity, or that it inadequately represents the real state of affairs. It will be appropriate to quote here well-known Roma activist from Czech Republic Ivan Veselý, who said in this respect: “It’s like someone did a research on the bums on Wenceslas Square and based his perception of all Czechs on these people”.

This approach, on the one hand, enables to include Roma as a “vulnerable community” into a range of programs for various kind of vulnerable people (homeless, drug addicts, disabled and with AIDS, etc.) and, on the other hand, reflects on the overall public image of the Roma by expanding, deepening and strengthening the existing mass negative anti-Gypsy attitudes and stereotypes in the eyes of the surrounding society. The key problem here is in the real and present danger that the whole will be confused with its part, i.e. the entire ethnic community will be viewed and identified only with its problematic section and as a result, Roma will no longer be considered and accepted as a distinct ethnic community with its own ethnic culture. There are many examples of this. One well-known international research focusing on poverty and ethnicity in Eastern Europe conducted under the leadership of representatives of the Hungarian sociological school contains the recurring ideas and conclusions of the school that we have come to know in the 1970s. The Roma are described as a special “underclass” and bearers not of their specific ethnic culture but of the “culture of poverty” (Szelényi 2001; Emigh and Szelényi 2001), and the leading postulates of this concept, with more or less different interpretations, have been accepted by many other authors (see Stewart 2002). Similar research has been conducted in other countries of the region of Eastern Europe. The conclusions are directly related to a newly formed sociological school in Serbia, which defines Roma as a specific, marginalised “ethno-class”, and some authors (political scientists and even ethnologists) from Western Europe also jointed this formulation (Mitrović 1990; Mihok 1999; Mitrović and Zajić 1998; Boscoboinik and Giordano 2005).

It is worth noting that in such cases, the research results more or less follow the controversial and often criticized theory of Western anthropology first proposed by the English anthropologist Judith Okely and developed by her followers. According to this theory, Gypsies/Roma are not an ethnic community the ancestors of which migrated from India, but their origin is based on an agglomerate of various marginal sections of the European population (agglomerate of people who were cast out of society during the industrial revolution), and who are constructed as a separate community by respective state administrative apparatus and scholars (Okely 1983; Willems 1998;

Lucassen et al. 1998); and in regard of their language, a Romani vernacular is declared to be borrowed from traveling Indian merchants in the Middle Ages (Okely 1983).

For many years, this concept was perplexing Eastern Europeans and was not taken seriously by anyone (both scholars and Roma), but in recent years surprisingly even there appeared its followers (Surdu and Kovats 2015; Surdu 2016) who try to find proofs for non-ethnic origin of Gypsies. We consider that the reason for this is primarily from methodological character. In recent years, in some studies became dominant a model of scholarship which relies on predetermined theoretical concepts and the research itself serves to find the necessary evidence for these concepts. The conclusions are drawn on the base of single or purposefully selected examples that are presented as common to the whole studied community in different countries and in different historical periods. In the case discussed, the authors try to find supporting arguments for their constructivists' concepts in the particular case of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, where according their view in times of slavery the "Gypsies" were not an ethnic, but a fiscal and social category. The case with ethnicity and slavery in principalities of Wallachia and Moldova for us remains quite controversial, and needs more convincing evidences.

Throughout the whole region of Southeastern, Eastern and Central Europe Roma are clearly identifiable ethnic category and the case with Wallachia and Moldova is rather an exception from the rule (as well as the whole system of slavery), however even this exception does not override the rule (Marushiakova and Popov 2009). Although we agree in principle that Gypsy ethnicity as any other ethnicity is a social category and is variable, we consider that no thesis can be proven by indicating only selected and silencing other examples. Passed over in silence historical sources, especially from the history of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, but even also from the history of Austro-Hungary, speak unequivocally.

In the Ottoman Empire on the Balkans for nearly seven centuries, Roma ('Kıptı' or 'Çingene' in the sources) are clearly defined as an ethnic category, regardless of whether they lead nomadic or sedentary way of life, and regardless of their social status and wealth. The best illustration of that is the *Comprehensive roll of the income and taxation of the Gypsies of the province of Rumeli* of 1522-23. This register shows clearly that at that in this time Roma were not only nomads but also rural residents (engaged in agriculture), urban residents (making their living with unskilled labour or exercising various crafts, as some of them were quite rich), including even individual cases of Roma belonging to the social elite (Marushiakova and Popov 2001: 41-44).

In the Russian Empire authorities in the 18th and 19th centuries issued a series of legislative and administrative acts with a main purpose to get Roma to register in any of the existing estates. As a final result on the eve of the abolition of serfdom in 1861 majority of Roma ('Цыгане' in the sources) are included in the estates 'state peasants' and 'meshchane' (kind of small bourgeoisie), and a small part of Roma through intermarriage became even 'gentry', but ethnicity of all of them remain what it was - Gypsy (Marushiakova and Popov 2008b).

In the Austro-Hungarian Empire Roma ('Zigeuner' or 'Ciganyok') were also clearly defined ethnic category, for what there is vast amount of historical evidences (Horváthová 1964; Crowe 1996). Only policies of the emperors Maria Theresa and Joseph II aimed at abolishing their ethnicity and forced Roma to assimilate as a social category of 'New Hungarians' or 'New Peasants', i.e. here is clearly visible the desire to replace the existed ethnic category by another ethnic or social one.

It turns out that the ethnicity of Roma in Eastern Europe during this historical period is undoubted which is "omitted". Even more unconvincing are attempts to deny the existence of Romani ethnic identity today, based on one example from sociological research, in which the Roma who were asked about their ethnicity responded "you may circle what you think is good to be noted down" (Surdu 2016:33). Palpable this could not be taken seriously as a proof of the lack of ethnicity among Roma.

Maybe it seems strange, but it is actually legitimate from the point of view of the principles of Orientalism that none of the supporters of this line has so far been interested in the opinions of the Roma people living in Eastern Europe in regard of this concepts. Roma in Eastern Europe are not a marginal population, as a whole; they have had an intellectual elite for more than one generation which should not be confused with the above-mentioned "new Roma elite". Indeed, as already said, this new elite was ushered in after the Second World War, during the so-called time of the socialism. And it is quite obvious that today's Roma undergraduate and graduate students supported by various programs of the Open Society Network and its affiliated organizations are mostly children and grandchildren of the Roma elite, which had already emerged. Even with those representatives of this elite who are constantly trained under various forms (summer universities, seminars, trainings, etc.) in Budapest, following their acquaintance with the concept of Roma as a "social construct" a number of questions arise. We have been repeatedly asked by Roma activists: Why Roma alone are not seen in an ethnic discourse as all other peoples living in Eastern Europe? Where does the question 'who are Roma' come from? And why does no one ask 'who are the Hungarians, Romanians, Czechs, Slovaks? Why are Roma placed in a stigmatized category, sharply distinguished from other European peoples, especially from those with a similar historical destiny, as the Hungarians, after both peoples come from elsewhere and settled "late" in Europe?

Presentation of Roma as a "social construct" in academic writings is perceived by most Roma as an attempt to deprive them of the right to have own ethnic history and, in effect, to deny that history. Sometimes it can be read that the history is irrelevant to "ordinary Roma" (Mroz and Mirga 1994; Okely 1983) and that "obsession with origins and history concerns only small group of self-proclaimed Roma leaders" (Lesinska 2005), and that "for them, identity is constructed and constantly remade in the present in relations with significant others, not something inherited from the past" (Stewart 1997: 28).

What exactly is meant by the "ordinary Roma" and who the "extraordinary" or "nonordinary" are is not clear. In any case, the direct analogy with the well-known division of "genuine/true" and "fake/untrue" representatives of a community is beyond

doubt – “true” according the canons of Orientalism are only those, who correspond to the ideas and concepts of the authors, and the rest may not be taken into account at all. Some authors accept as genuine only the marginalized and socially degraded layers of the Roma communities; for others the true ones are only those who have preserved some traditional traits in their lives and in their ethnic culture. In both cases however is clear who are the “fake” Roma, to whom on should not pay any attention – those who are well educated and have a decent social status. Thus, in the end, once again, the two main paradigms of the Roma studies, perceiving Roma as marginalized and as an exotic community, lend themselves to the general framework of Orientalism.

In its most complete form, the notion of the Roma as a community without ethnic identity and without any interest in their history is synthesized in the statement: “First, talk of Indian origin unnecessarily exoticizes the Gypsies, and second, it ignores their own view of themselves. For the fact is that most nonintellectual Rom do not seem to care where their ancestors come from.” (Stewart 1997: 28). In real life, however, beyond the two main paradigms united by Orientalism, which declare the Roma to be a community without identity or historical consciousness, things are radically different. Firstly, the talk about Roma's Indian origin may exoticize them only in the eyes of Anglo-Saxon anthropologists. In Eastern Europe (for non-Roma, and for the Roma too), this origin does not seem so exotic. The Asian (Indo-European or Indo-Arian) origin here is not a sign of exoticism. On the contrary, many of the peoples living in Eastern Europe consciously bring their Indo-European origins to leading positions in their history, based on historical data or when creating their national mythology. Secondly, we don't accept as legitimate the drawing of conclusions about the lack of historical consciousness of all Roma living in Eastern Europe based on an eighteen months field-research in an anonymized city in Hungary (identified by local Roma as Miskolc – about nonsense of such anonymization see below).

In any case, we can definitely say that for about 40 decades of field work in the whole region of Eastern Europe we have not met many Roma who have no interest in where their ancestors come from. Interest in history is characteristic not only for “self-proclaimed Roma leaders” (whatever this means) but also for “nonintellectual Rom”, i.e. for the Roma community as a whole. The opposing of “ordinary” and “extraordinary/non-ordinary” Roma is in fact dividing the community as a whole from its elite, which is actually brainchild of the community and an integral part of it. Such dividing the community is an essential part of the Orientalist approach to Roma.

The interest of the Roma in their history, or more generally, in the self-knowledge of the community, does not emerge in an empty place. It assumes the place and fills up with new content the prior niche of folklore texts, widespread and active among the Roma in Eastern Europe in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, and in some cases to the present day. These folklore texts are from different types, mostly etiological legends, explaining the origin of the Roma and responding to the key issues of their history and traditional culture, such as: from where originated the Roma (e.g. from Ancient Egypt and Roma King Pharaoh); why Roma do not have their own country; why Roma do not have their own alphabet; why they celebrate the Days of St. Vasil (St

Basil) or St. Georgi (St George), and so on. (Marushiakova and Popov 1994; 1995). These texts are based usually on the Holy Scripture (or the Holy Qur'an by the Muslim Roma). Roma often know them from second-hand and third-hand sources (through transmission of their content by non-Roma, e.g. religious servants); and in fact for centuries the etiological legends were the main source of information about Roma history for the Roma in Eastern Europe. In the modern age, when the information sources are greatly expanded and diversified (school, media, etc., including even the popular in Eastern Europe since the 1950s Indian movies and TV series), folklore genres and traditional oral narratives are replaced by written texts, including in various quasi-scientific forms (Marushiakova and Popov 2000).

Over the last two to three decades there have been ushered in numerous publication by Roma authors. Analysing this literary production in all its variety of narratives -- including academic and journalistic studies, Internet blogs, postings in social networks, fictions, new adaptation on folklore bases, etc. (excluding publications prepared in frames of specific projects of the NGO sector on particularly current topics) -- it might appear that the key issues of interest to the Roma community (represented by its intellectual elite) are mainly related to the ancient Indian origin and the roots of Romani language and culture.

Some of these texts may be more or less controversial in terms of modern scientific knowledge, and sometimes may even sound quite benign, e.g. looking for sources of the *Hederlezi / Džurdževdan* celebration in the Balkans, or worshiping Saint Sarah in *Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer* in celebrations of the goddess Kali in Ancient India. The existence of these texts shows, however, the prominent interest in the Indian origin and Indian language and cultural heritage (and, more generally, to the overall history of their community) for contemporary Roma. At the same time, there are many naive, quasi-scientific attempts to reject the thesis of the Indian origin of Roma as a non-Roma invention and to trace the Roma origin to Ancient Egypt, or to the 12th lost knee of Israel or even to the lost continent of Atlantis. Even these attempts are reflections of Roma interest in history. This interest in the history as demonstrated by “ordinary” Roma (and not only by the “Roma elite”) can be explained and interpreted in various ways, or even repudiated as primordialistic, or stigmatized from certain ideological positions, but cannot be denied. What we are observing is a process of creation of historical master narratives among Roma (which is the opposite to a lack of interest in history). What we are observing in this process among Roma today is not different from what already happened (and in some places happens even nowadays) among many other nations, who search for their own national historical master narratives. We cannot see a reason to assume that these processes among Roma should flow in a different way.

The natural interest in its own history, language and ethnic culture by the new Roma elite in Eastern Europe is largely suppressed by the inclusion of representatives of the system of NGO-science. The reasons for this can be easily explained – NGO-science is directly and completely financially dependent on the ideology and strategic priorities of its donors (international, European and National institutions and foundations). So it is obvious that perhaps the most exploited discipline (along with the

Roma Holocaust) developed by Roma NGO-science is that of gender, and the issue of “double-discriminated Roma woman” and the derived topics: domestic violence, women and children trafficking, early marriages, prostitution etc. (and correspondingly extremely current are different programs and applied projects in this direction). Similarly, in recent years, the topic LGBT-community (ERRC 2015; Kurtić 2013) has been actively and persistently pursued in joint meeting, events and actions which are, however, in direct contradiction with some traditional norms and values of many Roma communities in Eastern Europe. Participation in such actions has resulted for some Roma participants in threats of with excommunication from their communities.

Outside of these leading topics for Roma NGO-science (and associated social practice), the issue of Roma history, language and ethnic culture remain relatively behind, and are limited within projects for producing of teaching manuals. This however more or less fall within the other basic Orientalist paradigm (Roma as an exotic community), which will be particularly discussed later on.

The orientation of Romani Studies toward the social and ideological paradigm of Roma as a marginalized community leads also to a less expected, but absolutely natural result – to the overall shift in academic values and their social function. A firmly established trend over the past decade is that most popular and cited scholar texts about Roma from Eastern Europe are actually publications of NGO-science (or expert science), and their mass distribution via the Internet, in English, provides easy access. In our work with university undergraduate and graduate students in recent years we, similarly to the experience of Ian Hancock, “hear from them repeatedly that they cannot tell whether the sources they are consulting for their own research papers are reliable or not” (Hancock 2010: 193-194).

In the recent years, under the slogan “nothing for Roma without the Roma”, more and more alumni of the Roma NGO sector are being redirected to the “Expert” field, which in turn gave birth to growing ambitions to become an integral part of producers of contemporary academia. Indicative in this respect is the title of the seminar “Nothing about us without us? Roma Participation in Policy Making and Knowledge Production”, held in Budapest in 2014, in which, in addition to Roma activists working in the NGO sector (mainly in the network of Open Society Foundations and its Roma NGOs), some representatives of academia (Roma and non-Roma) also took part (Ryder et al. 2015). At first glance there is nothing wrong with this – just the opposite, we can only praise such initiatives. But, despite the importance and timeliness of the issues discussed (in particular from point of view of Romani studies), the seminar papers were not published in an academic publication (and such possibility was even not discussed). They appeared in an edition of one NGO, closely linked to the structures of the Open Society, which largely invalidates the messages sent by the seminar to the academic community (Ryder et al. 2015)

As has already been said, often authors of Roma origin are included as co-authors in NGO-science (or expert science) research publications. However, they are not able to alter the basic paradigm of this type of research, and in practice their participation only serves the leading line, and leading author, regardless of the reasons for their

participation and extent of their input. The trap is set here by linking NGO-science's "expert" work with Roma policies and projects for solving the Roma problems. Bringing the problems of Roma to the fore, and in the same gesture disguising the real overall state of the community, is often considered as the most direct way to solve these problems. In practice, however, despite the huge number of diverse publications in the paradigm of marginalization (and respectively, in spite of numerous policies, programs and projects related to these publications), the problems of Roma persist and deepen (Kovats 2012: 1-4; Marushiakova and Popov 2015b: 19-31; Matras 2015b: 29-47; Themelis 2016: 432-451; Voiculescu 2016). This is not a surprising paradox, but an expected regularity, because the "Gypsy industry" (whether at the NGO, national or European level), like any other business, obviously does not want to destroy itself. If the Roma cease to be a problematic community, the need of this industry will disappear and respectively the whole industry will be destroyed, and the people involved in it will have to look for other subjects to study and write about. From this point of view, the shocking (at least seemingly) invocation of late Nicolae Gheorghe, who himself moved from being an academic scientist to Roma activist, should not be so shocking: "My suggestion is that ... projects for Roma, ... should be stopped for a while. This is in order to have a moratorium and assess what is actually happening with these projects on the ground." (Gheorghe 2013: 47).

Consulting the list of publications in numerous research papers, MA and even PhD Thesis show clear domination of above mentioned type of NGO-sector publications, which are distributed widely, free of charge, and easily accessible. The same is true about "expert studies" commissioned by different institutions and organization. In this way, the circle is closed – the NGO-science is validating itself by quoting NGO-science. To illustrate this trend, it would be enough also to check what titles are cited in various reports by the European Commission and other Euro-structures. That is why we should not be surprised by the ironical fact, that in this type of publications, e.g. an article written by the former Head of European Roma Right Centre (Petrova 2003) is quoted as a basic academic reference, to prove the Indian origin of the Roma (an academic question which solution was given more than two centuries ago). Perhaps the brightest illustration of the deadlock to which leads the NGO-science are the attempts of the European institutions (the Council of Europe and the European Commission) to formulate with help of their "experts" (a vague category involving scientists, government servants and NGO activists, including Roma) the content of the term 'Roma'. For three decades already, the content of this "umbrella term" has been constantly changed, with the hot pursuit to cover with it more and more diverse communities (as the geographic area of their residence is constantly expanding), differentiated according to heterogeneous criteria (origin, identity, designation by the surrounding population, nomadic way of life, social marginalization, similar experience of discrimination). This obviously expands the market for the 'Gypsy industry'. Unification of such diverse communities with different life style, historical and current experience under one "umbrella term" and finding for all of them uniform solution of

all their problems is an impossible task (Marushiakova and Popov 2016a: 7-10; 2016b: 3-6).

And the problem here is far from commensurability only in academic terms (which still is not an inconsequential problem in terms of scientific development), but in the fact, that the fundamental policies for solving the problems of Roma on national and European level are actually elaborated on the basis of NGO-science. And what is even more important, this type of NGO-science appears to be the most important one for those who determine the policies towards Roma. We will give only one example in this regard. Few years ago, we were commissioned to write a summarised report on the best practices in policies and projects targeting Roma communities in the countries of European Union within a project, being managed by one European human rights organization (Improving 2010). The baseline data for the report were collected by researchers in different countries, all of them representatives of the NGO-sector, who selected those policies, projects and practices, which they believed were good and deserved to be transferred across the European Union. When we made the synthesis, and included in it policies and projects, which were absent from the basic data, the representatives of European structures deleted most of them from the final edition and insisted on inclusion of others, which according to them were much more promising and worth transferring to the member countries. Thus a good European practice, recommended to be multiplied in other countries, was a project in Italy for taking care of one large Roma family (keeping children in school, finding work for parents, supplies of medical care, etc.), while the University discipline “Romistika” at Charles University in Prague and the Roma Museum in Brno, which exist already for more than two decades, well-known to the public with a much stronger social effect (including on Roma), could not be recommended according to this assessment.

What will be the final results of this approach when the question comes to designing and implementation of next European policies towards the Roma is already not difficult to predict. The impasse in addressing and solving the “Roma problem” by the European institutions is already evident (including from the Third Roma Summit, organised by the European Commission in April 2014). The latest (to date) confirmation of this impasse is the report by the Fundamental Rights Agency (European Union 2016), which, ultimately remains in the paradigm of marginalization of the Roma (not only in Eastern Europe, but at European level), in spite of clarification made, that the data presented (such clarification in practice is indicating to existence of serious methodological problem) refer to 80% of the community.

From all said above we cannot help but conclude that there is not and can be not hope that the Orientalist paradigm for representing the Roma as a marginalized community will soon disappear from the sphere of Roma research.

The Roma as an Exotic Community

In parallel to the main social paradigm analysed above, there is another one, which at first glance is at the far pole from the previous. It is the paradigm, very popular in

Western (mainly in Anglo-Saxon) anthropology about “Gypsies,” of the Roma as a community characterized by its uniqueness and unrepeatable peculiarity (in the way of life and in their culture). The beginning of this approach refers to the early 19th century, when in condition of United Kingdom “the Gypsies received considerable attention as the supposed keepers of a much missed and much romanticised pre-industrial way of life” (Hancock 2010: 95). Because of the discrepancy in translating in English the designations ‘Cigáni’, ‘Cikáni’, ‘Cyganie’, ‘Ṭigani’, ‘Цигани’, ‘Цыгане’, etc., used in Eastern Europe, on the Roma automatically are transferred all the main stereotypes (including academic) about Gypsies widespread in the West. The acceptance of ideological criteria (in particular, the principles of political correctness), decisive in academic research and in practice over recent decades, has led not only to the imposition in the public domain and in the prevailing part of the academic texts of the term 'Roma' (the extent to which this is justified from an academic point of view is a separate issue that we will not be discussing now), but also to the transfer to the Roma of all the basic social and cultural characteristics of the “Gypsies” as imagined by the West. To what extent these characteristic might be relevant to the communities identified as Roma as a whole is also a separate issue that we will not be discussing here. This has led to the collision of two fundamentally different scientific-methodological traditions about which must say a few words.

In Eastern Europe, in the new ethno-national states, the National Museum -- founded mostly under the influence of Herder’s ideas on ‘Volksgeist’-- is still nowadays one of the most important public buildings in the capital. These museums feature mostly exhibits and collections concerning their ‘own’ people, own history and own ethno-cultural traditions.

In Western Europe, and especially in the big colonial Empires (and notably Britain), the interest of historical museums has been primarily directed towards the ‘others’, towards uncivilized peoples of specific culture, who living outside metropolises, and to whom the ‘Gypsies’ are automatically assigned. Even though Roma are European people for at least a millennium, their romantic image in the public consciousness in West, enables them to fit into the paradigm of the Anglo-Saxon anthropology, and this scientific tradition proved to be extremely resistant and still maintains its dominance globally.

Here we need open a bracket and to make a specification about the term ‘Anglo-Saxon Anthropology’, which we are using both in this and in our previous texts (Marushiakova and Popov 2011). It is incomprehensible to us why some authors perceive so sensitively their attribution to this school, which they rebut with arguments of a primordialistic character, pointing origin of their own and their academic mentors origin. (Okely 2016: 65-84). In our view, it is quite clear that the term 'Anglo-Saxon Anthropology' refers to an established academic tradition and to a specific school of thought and not to the ethnic origin or identities of the individual scholars (it is sufficient to recall that one of the founders of the Anglo-Saxon Anthropology is Bronislaw Malinowski, a Pole by ethnic origin).

One of the most impressive examples in above pointed direction is of the famous political scientist and anthropologist James C. Scott (2009), for whom, and for his followers too, one prime “example of people evading state control is the European Gypsies (Roma and Travellers)” (Engebriksen 2017: 48). In this case we see a development of the romantic stereotypes about the “free Gypsies nomads”, which were widespread in the 19th century literature. This stereotype, however, whether presented in a literary or in scholar writings, is refuted by the historical realities and contemporary processes in Eastern Europe. In this region, in the first half of the 20th century, the first organizations were set up to fight for Roma social equality in the countries where they live; and here, on the initiative of the Roma themselves, is the beginning of the modern Roma integration policies which are already being introduced at European level, in other words, the Roma here are not running away from the state but struggle to be an integral part of it.

The imposition of this Anglo-Saxon approach to Roma in Eastern Europe is inextricably woven into the context of changes in this region over the past 20 years. The question of methodology has become a key component in the struggle to conquer the new research market, released from the dominance of Marxist ideology. Existing scientific traditions and achievements in the region have been blacked out, redacted, usually with the labels “Marxist”, “nationalist” or even “racist”, and consequently in their place a “new, more enlightened, approach” was imposed, informed by anthropology. In pursuance of these aims, countless projects, summer schools, and postgraduate fellowships were organized, with the ultimate objective to educate and form a new generation of anthropologists, who would be free from the legacy of communist past. It is not accidental that at the very first meeting within such a project was funded at great cost by the Marie Curie program of the EU, entitled “Promoting Anthropology in Central and Eastern Europe” (FP6-2004-MOBILITY-2, Project ID 20702): the most important tenet for those who wish to become “real” anthropologists, was formulated as follows – to avoid contacts with local scholars in the countries where their research will be done.

Particularly in Romani studies the results of this approach could not sufficiently justify the money and efforts invested. In the region of Eastern Europe, a generation Europe came into being that is less “Marxist”, and that considers it unnecessary to read authors from the recent or distant past. This does, however, not turn them into modern anthropologists; instead it rather limits their abilities and outcomes of their research work. As a matter of fact, in Eastern Europe only very limited number of studies written by scholars living in this region appear that could be considered as “real anthropology”, according to Western standards. Most common are publications, in which the authors declare themselves as anthropologists, but they are rather just imitators of Western authors, and most often are unable to offer any new ideas and concepts, and are even less able to get any impressive results.

Here we have to open another bracket and to note that over the last years, reverse trends have also developed, which invoke optimism. There is already formed a circle of young scholars, most of whom are from Eastern European countries by origin; some of

them have received their education and/or professional realization in the West (mainly in the UK). Their texts, although generally remaining in the general paradigm of Anglo-Saxon anthropology, in practice offer a new approach based on another type of attitudes towards their field of research and also towards academic heritage and colleagues from their home countries (see e.g. Brazzabeni et al. 2015).

To return to the issue of reason for the lack of results from simple imitation of Western anthropology in condition of Eastern Europe. It lies in the fact that, in Eastern Europe, Roma -- in spite of everything still are not perceived by their surrounding population (including local researchers) as 'foreigners'. They could be considered as 'others', and attitudes towards them may contain various aspects of negativity (especially strengthened in the years of transition), but nevertheless they were, are and will remain 'our own', and they cannot be perceived as strange and exotic community. And indeed, what would be exotic in a community whose traditions, social norms and customs are in largely repetitive of (or contaminated by) those of their surrounding population. Moreover, in many cases namely Roma are preserving and developing the traditions, social norms and customs of the surrounding population, for whom they constitute their only historical heritage (Marushiakova and Popov 2016c: 35-64).

We will give only one example to illustrate the exoticizing approach in anthropological studies. A few years ago, one article was published by two American anthropologists, who have been investigating for more than three decades the Roma communities descended from migrants from the Balkans who live in the US. With some degree of self-criticism, one of the authors mentioned that she "was a bit chagrined" to discover that the celebration of the Serbian *slava* (a day of certain saint, considered a patron of given kin) "seemed identical" to the Roma' *slava* (Groppe and Miller 2001: 99). This confession is in fact a direct result of the focusing of the research interest only on Roma, without even a minimal interest in the cultural context in which their ancestors had lived. There is hardly any researcher in Balkan studies, including researchers from the United States, who do not know the significance of this feast for the Balkan peoples (and in particular for the Serbs). In fact, the discussion of *slava* in the Balkan studies was a major social and national issue for several decades at the end of the 19th and first half of the 20th century, when one of the main postulates of the Serb national ideology was "where there is *slava*, there is Serb". And it is clear that in the Balkans there could not appear researchers who, regardless of their training and specialization in anthropology, would address the *slava* as an exotic Roma tradition.

Similarly, having *pomana* (customs to commemorate the dead, visiting cemeteries, leaving food on grave of deceased, distributing food for commemoration, having common meal, etc.) among the so-called *Vlax Rom* in Central and Western Europe and in the USA, which some authors believe to be a core Roma tradition, is in fact is a custom typical of all Orthodox-Christian Slavic peoples (called *pomen*, *pominki*, etc.) and Romanians: the term *pomana* is borrowed from Romanian.

In these cases, we see the expansion of the functions of individual elements of Roma culture as result of their migration. In their previous countries of living all these elements are familiar to everyone, to Roma and to non-Roma. If not as an actual

practice, they are known as cultural heritage. Therefore, they cannot be perceived by anybody as features characteristic only of Roma culture. In their new countries of living, especially in the West, these elements of Roma culture are completely unknown to the majority and seem to be very specific. This perception affects the Roma, for whom the significance of these elements increases, so that they start to preserve and perceive them as extremely important characteristics of their ethnic culture, which differentiates them from ethnic “others.” And in this way, they help to strength and develop their ethnic identity.

The examples of influences on the Roma culture by their surrounding culture are not cases of exceptions, but something which is rather regular. Roma are an integral part of the societies in which they live and with whom they share their common general cultural characteristics, e.g. religion(s), holidays, customs, rituals, traditional cloths, food, music and dances, etc. And this commonality is not only in the frames of the national states and respective national cultures, but in the frames of a more complex cultural and historical regions, e.g. the Balkans, Central Europe, or post-Soviet space, or smaller transitional border regions. An illustrative example of the impact of the cultural and historical regions in Eastern Europe on Roma culture in its contemporary dimension is the case of the celebration of the holiday *Hederlezi / Džurdževdan*. This holiday, referred to by Roma also as *Hâdârlez, Erdelezi*, etc. (the day of Muslim saints Hıdır and İlyaz) in its Islamic version, or *Džurdževdan / Gergyovden* (the day of St George) in the Orthodox-Christian variant, is particularly significant for understanding the place of the Roma in the general cultural context of the Balkans. Roma, whether Christians or Muslims, like non-Roma members of different Balkan nations, consider this holiday as rightfully their own, separating them from the others. The fact that others living nearby also celebrate it does not bother them – they are convinced that the celebration by the others is not the same as theirs. Formally speaking, this celebration is nowadays not the same - among the other Balkan nations, a large part of the ritual elements of the holiday are dropped and the holiday has been modernized to a greater degree than it has among the Roma. Yet several decades ago, there were almost no differences (apart from the language of the ritual songs, which admittedly is different among nations). Notwithstanding all this, there is virtually a Roma ethno-cultural version of the holiday which, along with existing Bulgarian, Turkish, Serbian, etc. variations, is part of the cultural tradition in the Balkans (Колева 1981; Тенишева 1991: 71-80; Terzić et al 2015: 71-88). Moreover, under certain circumstances, this holiday in its Romani variant can take on much wider social dimensions, as for instance the transformation of *Kakava* (the Roma appellation of this holiday used in the region of Eastern Thrace) into a celebration including the whole urban population in the town of Kırklareli (the region of eastern Thrace) in Turkey (Marushiakova and Popov 2007b 33-50).

These examples illustrate the alleged “exclusive specificity” of Roma culture. Together with this, they clearly show that Roma and their culture cannot and should not be studied without having extensive comparative basis. In other words, in studying Roma it is absolute necessarily to have very good knowledge of ethnic cultures in the

countries and regions in which they live (or had lived before their migrations). Only by doing so the misunderstandings can be avoided and an adequate presentation of Roma culture can be achieved, and their exoticisation to be avoided. The reasons for the many cases in which the Roma are attributed with “specific” social and cultural characteristics that are common or at least similar to those of their surrounding population in Eastern Europe are above all methodological. In many cases, the authors lack basic knowledge of the history and culture of majority population surrounding Roma. Reasons for this might be different - in some cases it is an exclusive interest only in the “specific” Roma community that is being studied outside the context; in other cases this lack of basic historical knowledge. For us particularly absurd is the approach, which we can see in the work of our colleagues, social and cultural anthropologists, sociologists and others, and in work of their students, who come from good Western Universities, where they master all possible methodologies, know all current theoretical works, but are in some cases explicitly discouraged to read the texts written by local authors before going in the field to Roma in Eastern Europe. This is done often in bona-fide believe that the researcher should enter the field as “blank slate”, i.e. with an open mind in order “being true to the issues present in the community itself, not popular discourse or even the academic literature” (Puddephatt et al 2009: 19).

For those who have not been indoctrinated to believe the postulates of social anthropology, and are judging only by the results obtained, this academic discipline seems to be in a serious crisis, seeking its identity and affirmation in academia through endless methodological and theoretical exercises. The results obtained from applying this approach to Romani Studies in Eastern Europe are the best proof of its complete methodological and practical insolvency. Without knowing the context and ignoring previous works of Romani studies scholars in given field, it is not possible to perceive and to understand contemporary processes and phenomena. Thus it is not surprising that in some cases in current writings one cannot find even a hint about which Roma (from the point of view of the internal structure of the community) are being studied. Knowing the context in case of Roma is probably more difficult task than in researching other population, because their context is not only country where they are living but very often also their previous countries of living in different historical periods. Lack of such kind of knowledge leads to numerous confusing situation. We will point only few examples in this regard: The concept of Gypsy “brotherhood” deployed by Michael Stewart (1997), through which the author explains the whole social life and culture of Roma in Eastern Europe, actually describes social phenomena (including the category of “brotherhood”) which has long been known in academia and is repeatedly described, analyzed and discussed among other peoples, living in the Balkans (Todorova 2006; Kaser 2008; Hristov 2014: 218-234). Similarly, for Balkan readers it was very interesting to read in an article of Elisabeth Tauber (2008: 268-269) how in Sinti kinship terminology, “reciprocity” in addressing is used not only from bottom to top, but also from top to bottom (not only granddaughter call her grandmother “mami” (but also vice versa). On the basis of this discovery, the author makes theoretical conclusions about the concept of “respect” among Sinti:

“... this unidirectional reciprocal address term between generation +2 and generation 0 allows the establishment of a relation of respect between grandchildren and grandparents. Respect among Sinti is expressed between equals: male respect among Sinti men (young and old) expresses their equality; female respect expresses the equality among women. This is true even though age is considered to be particularly respected.”

This kind of reciprocal addressing was however, practiced not only by Sinti, but also by Bulgarians (Roma as well), who still use it today (including our family). However, unlike the author's interpretation, in Bulgaria this is a common form of the speech etiquette, that came into being from shortening the flattering expression “на баба детето” [the grandmother's child] (could be also *мамо*>на *мама* детето [mother>mother's child], “тате>на тате детето” [fathers>fathers's child], etc), and nobody ascribes to this linguistic pattern the kinds of real or symbolic meanings described by this author.

The starting point, or rather a counterpoint, to such analysis is in the presumption about existence of “genuine, true” and “fake, non-authentic” Roma. From this presumption appear also some most extravagant concepts about Roma culture, which is defined as a “contrast culture” or even a “culture of dissidence” (Streck 2003: 159-179; 2011: 106-123), or that “Roma “culture” can best be seen as “oppositional” to that of non-Gypsies” (Stewart 1997: 238), i.e. those Roma who do not have a contrast or oppositional culture presumably are considered not to be ‘true’ Roma. The theoretical concepts about contrast and oppositional culture are derived from general considerations taken for granted, such as: The Gypsies (i.e. travelling people as a whole, including Roma) are considered to be service nomads and to belong to the ‘overrolled’ communities who have “traditional skill of mastering para-orders” (Streck 2003: 159-179; 2011: 106-123); have ability to live according to “optio tsigana” on “social pasture” (Günther 2016); the major, structure-model of Roma identity and culture is the principle of “brotherhood” and their constant opposition to the ‘Gadže’ in all spheres of life (Stewart 1997). Eventually, these dubious concepts are used to explain all the field research observations. Such an approach, however, can open widely the doors for a selective approach and/or incorrect interpretations of the historical facts and of the field research materials and may put under the question all authors’ thesis and conclusions. In some cases, even the field research materials brought as evidence for such concepts should cause doubt – e.g. despite our active quest, we were unable to find (neither in the field nor in the literature) a single case of *Vlax Rom* in Central Europe (and of Roma in general all over Eastern Europe) who have custom to break their furniture and burn their money in honor of the upcoming Roma New Year (Stewart 1997: 244-245).

This perception of the Romani culture as “oppositional” or “contrastive” is not accidental. Most of the works about Roma start with explanation of the cognitive opposition ‘Roma – Gadže (non-Roma)’. Such opposition really exists, but should not be understood in a way that the Roma ethnic culture is “oppositional” to the ethnic cultures of non-Roma. In fact, the opposition ‘Roma – Gadže’ is a concrete expression of the fundamental opposition ‘We – They’, which demarcates the borders in the sense

of Frederick Barth (1969), through which each ethnic entity (including the Roma community) is differentiated from others and formed. The opposition 'Roma – Gadže' is not unique, on the contrary; it is the Roma's form of a universalist, all mankind principle. In fact, such oppositions exist in all other European nations, but with most of them who have their own ethno-national states on their base already lie forms such as 'We – Foreigners'. Historically older form that is preserved by Roma, is also not unique. It has been known since ancient times (e.g. 'Greeks – Barbarians'), in the Middle Ages it had a religious dimension, e.g. 'Christians – Pagans' or 'Muslims – Unbelievers', and nowadays such best known opposition based on ethnic characteristics is 'Jews – Goyim'.

The approach based on the opposition Roma vs. Non-Roma in the analysis of specific socio-cultural realities is obviously unproductive, as it turned out also in the attempts to analyze Orientalism in Roma studies by dividing authors to Roma and non-Roma (see above).

In the same way it does not work in attempts to explain the concept, perceived often especially in NGO-science as a key-concept of Roma culture, *Romanipe* (which become especially popular over the past few decades), especially when it is made to represent diverse contents. In contemporary interpretations of *Romanipe* are included some of the basic norms and values of the community life of the Roma, such as respect for the elders or attachment to the family (Raykova 2003), which are actually more all-mankind universals. In other cases, in the notion *Romanipe* are included separate formal and content characteristics of Roma culture (Grigore 2001) which occur (or did not occur) within various Roma groups. The misinterpretation of the concept of *Romanipe* shows that the inclusion of authors who are from Roma origin in the field of Roma research (mostly in the framework of NGO-science) as a whole (regardless of the exceptions) does not change the exoticist approach, which in this case is directed at its own community

The concept of *Romanipe*, indeed, only makes sense if it is not perceived according to its different contemporary interpretations, but in the original form, extracted from the reality of life (Mirga 1987: 243-255). The concept of *Romanipe* (called also *Romanipen*, *Romipen*, *Romania*, *Romanimos*, even *Câgânia* in various Roma groups) is not meaningless by itself; on the contrary, it can be very important in Romani studies (see e.g. Marinov 2016: 211-236). The phenomenon *Romanipe* exists even among communities who have no particular word for its labeling. Often one can hear from Roma activists that they actually learned about *Romanipe* only at seminars and trainings conducted within the Roma (and non-Roma) NGO-sector. The lack of a name however does not repeal the existence of the phenomenon. It still exists, even though it cannot be clearly articulated. In fact, the best instrumental approach is not to regard *Romanipe* as a set of certain specific social and cultural characteristics and/or components, but as a social and cultural behavioral pattern, i.e. specific moral and behavioral code, which can be more or less different in the different Roma communities, but still exists among them. Or in other words, *Romanipe* must be perceived as a complex notion of ideological order, which synthesizes everything that characterizes

the Roma according to themselves, as a sort of quintessence, an emanation of the Roma identity. *Romanipe* is not subject to formalization and essentialization because it in fact covers the entire life of the Roma, and may be more or less different in any particular expression.

Naturally, *Romanipe* as one complex (and not as separate features and/or elements) is by presumption unique for Roma, as well as covering relevant phenomena encountered in any other nation. Therefore, it is meaningless in this line to seek explanations for the uniqueness of the Roma culture, because it is clear in advance that every nation and its culture are unique, bounded and self-generating. And, contrary to the opinion of some authors, this is in no way “the burden of nationalist fantasies of ‘unique’, ‘self-generating’ cultural schemes” (Stewart 2010: 5), but rather just the opposite. The creation of “‘unique’, ‘self-generating’ cultural schemes” is inherent to any human community that creates ‘own’ culture, in our case the Romani culture.

In this line of thought, we cannot, but agree with Judith Okely, that “Gypsy culture is ... a culture created from and through difference” (Okely 2010: 41). This is, however, not specific to the Roma. Such statements about specific ethnic cultures are valid for all people and historical regions of the world, and in our case for Eastern Europe, where Roma have lived for centuries and are its integral part, in regard of their ethnic culture. There is no reason to oppose Roma and their ethnic culture to all other peoples and their respective ethnic cultures. We consider Roma ethnic culture as a phenomenon of the same order with the ethnic cultures of all other European people, together with whom the Roma live. We do not see any reason and no need to separate and to stigmatize Roma and their culture, and even more, to oppose them to the rest of the world (whether as a community or as culture). Such opposition only strengthens existing mass public anti-Gypsy stereotypes and makes meaningless all attempts and opportunities for social and cultural integration of Roma in the context of today’s global world.

What has been argued above should by no means be considered as a statement that an ethnically specific Romani culture does not exist. This actually leads to a general principle well known in ethnography/ethnology – the different cultural elements by themselves are not ethnically loaded but become ethnically specific only when perceived as such by the respective ethnic communities who consider them as markers distinguishing them from ‘Other’ ethnic communities. Combining all the different cultural elements carried by a nation in a common ethno-cultural system (perceived as own), transforms it into an ethno-specific characteristic only for this nation and distinguishes it from the ethnic ‘Others’. In particular, among Roma, the result is the presence of many diverse sub-variants of the invariant of Roma culture due to the internal heterogeneity of the community and because they live scattered among the surrounding population in different countries and in different cultural and historic regions. In all cases, however, this does not undermine the overall conclusion about the Roma culture as part of the composite cultural palette of European peoples, just as unique and special as each of them.

The above-mentioned and other examples (Marushiakova and Popov 2016c: 35-64) clearly show the insolvency of the postulate of the “blank slate” in social sciences, i.e. of the practice to study only a specific Roma community without knowing other Roma communities as well as without knowing the cultural characteristics of their today or past surrounding populations. A separate question is that it is not always about direct influences and borrowings from the surrounding population or about independent historical development under different conditions of the old Indo-European heritage, about which we wrote earlier (ibidem). In any case, the need for good knowledge not only of Roma but also of other European peoples among whom Roma live (or have lived), is invaluable. In practice, it turns out that, ultimately, this ‘blank slate’ approach not only does not produce good results, it directs the interpretations and conclusions in the wrong direction, and leads to the stigmatization and exoticisation of Roma as a community staying outside the social and cultural space and historical time.

The approach of ‘blank slate’ is closely related to the ignoring and thus de facto excluding from academic circulation of the works of Eastern European scholars is met not only in social anthropology, but is also found in other disciplines. So, for example on the web page of *Romani Project* (a cluster of academic research activities based at the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures at the University of Manchester, head by Prof. Yaron Matras) one can read the text *A Brief History of Romani Linguistics* (no author). In this text, it is noted that “the first normative Romani grammar” is published in 1980 (Romani Project). For the first time, however, the Romani language was codified and standardised much earlier, already in 1930s in USSR where was also created Roma alphabet (on base of Cyrillic), were published two Romani grammar (Сергиевский 1931; Сергиевский & Баранников 1938), and even text books on Romani grammar for Roma schools (Вентцель 1933; 1934). We can only guess whether this "omission" is done consciously because of methodological (due to an orientalist approach) or for some other reason, or simply because of a lack of knowledge of matter (which seems very unlikely for such an erudite linguist as the head by project, responsible for the content of the site, even in case of unsigned text). In any case the final result is deleting of important part of history of Romani linguistic.

Here we will make another small insertion. The above discussed approach also has other implications, not only in the area of Romani studies, but also in a more general context. Ignorance and refusal even to get acquainted with the achievements of Eastern European researchers of some Western scholars may be interpreted as a desire to expunge totally everything written before them, and to present themselves as “pioneers” of long-known things. This also explains the widespread aphorism in Eastern Europe: “What it means to become a recognized European and world scientist – to be able to present all things known to the East in an accessible language in the West.” What is more, at least in our view, this approach also means the negation of contemporary academia, because academia means a constantly evolving and constantly changing knowledge,. Approach which consciously deletes all that was done before is doomed only to repetition of old discoveries, and the change and advancement of knowledge cannot happen.

Our sentiment is that this is all about Western Europe's competition with Eastern Europe for symbolic capital and for financial resources, which is concealed under scientific terminology, academic rules and even beyond, for example, through stigmatization of local scholars (including those who are from Roma origin) as Marxists, Herderians, essentialists, primordialists, adherents of the methodological nationalism and even racists, without minimal interest in their works. For scholars from Eastern Europe, or at least those from the older generation, this approach is painfully familiar – in exactly the same way in the days of the former Communist regimes, the “bourgeois science” was denounced and all its achievements were denied, at least on official level. In practice, things were much more complex.

That is why we should not be surprised from the results of the last (so far) attempt to solve the problems between East and West academia, which was the goal of the ambitious academic conference “Does East Go West? Anthropological Pathways through Postsocialism”, which took place in 2010. Some of its participants not only did not accept, but even categorically rejected in their presentations the post-colonial approach, that is developing during recent over two decades and launching the idea of promoting the Western social anthropology in the East. These participants were not invited to contribute to the published *Conference Proceeding*, even though the editors of the book claim the opposite (Giordano et al. 2014: 7).

Returning to the topic of the exoticization of the Roma – it is possible only if they are approached as an isolated community without taking into account the societal and cultural dimensions. The Roma besides as a community have always been part of the societies in Eastern Europe in which they live. In fact, their whole way of life requires social symbiosis, they are making their living, filling certain social and economic niches, and naturally they cannot be isolated from the general social and cultural context. From this perspective, the possibility to place the Roma in the paradigm of exoticism in real life is pre-doomed to failure. Roma communities living for centuries in Eastern Europe have achieved relatively much higher degree of social integration compared with their counterparts from Western Europe and the New World and could not fit in the exotic paradigm of Western scholars, who are expecting to find the idealised “true Romany”, who, as Ian Hancock (2010: 95) noted, did not in fact exist anywhere. Therefore, the most common impression of researchers from the West about most Roma communities in these regions, which we have heard repeatedly is that “these are not true Roma”, they are “assimilated”, etc., and that is why they often impose on the studied community their own theoretical visions, without any attempt to verify them by field research data or even by neglecting of data which contradict their theory. And while for a researcher from the West it is normal to remain in the frames of Orientalism, then the chance that this will be done by local researchers who still live in these realities appears to be negligible.

The fact that the scholars from Eastern Europe live in that reality, which they are studying, stultifies another basic tenet of anthropology – about the methodology of field research. A firmly established fundament in anthropology since Bronislaw Malinowski is the rule that field research must be long term, as the researcher should be settled in

the field (among the studied community). However, this approach is meaningless from point of view of Eastern European scholars, who are living their whole lives in the same field (socium) with the Roma, where the problem for them is not how to be “included” into research field, but rather how to be “excluded”, i.e. how to create a certain distance from the studied subject and from the general social context, to enable an objective and reliable scholar analysis and interpretation. For us, however, research during which the researcher lives for months in one village, and nevertheless writes about Gypsies or about Roma in general, have limited validity, given observations were only performed in a specific Roma community and for the actual Roma settlement. They have no particular value as a summarised research on Roma, even within one country, let alone anything more, given the heterogeneity of the Roma as a community and the various conditions in the societies in which they live. Hundreds and thousands of long term research studies done in singular locales could be made, and some of them will repeat each other in greater or lesser degree, while others will produce almost nothing common, because the internal diversities of the Roma (in community). These studies may lead to some new knowledge, but will not give more aggregated or more detailed conclusions about Roma in a country or as a whole.

No particular value as a summarised research on Roma can be found in the tendency of recent years for self-reflection, and a limited number of informants, even only one in some case, yielding in the end a personal narrative (Gay y Blasco 2011: 7-17, Tauber 2006). We are aware that this is may be legitimate direction in current move of social anthropology towards rapprochement with humanities, but sometimes we are doubting to which genre we should relate such works, should they be regarded as scholar work or more as literary fiction? Situated in the context of an academic discipline, published in academic journals or books, however, these works are presented (or at least perceived by readers) not as personal narratives, but as representative accounts, valid for all Roma, Gitanos or Sinti. It seems to us that this direction of development is not accidental, and appears as an effort to avoid possible allegations of ethical and ideological character. As a confirmation of this we would like to share another observation. In recent years after the publication of the renowned article *Ethnicity without Groups* by Rogers Brubaker (2002: 163-189), we have observed among scholars from the fields of social sciences and humanities a kind of fear to use certain terms, or to summarize, in order to avoid accusation of *groupism*, *essentializing*, *naturalizing* and *commonsense primordialism*, etc. (Brubaker 2004: 11).

This issue is also connected to another tenet of social anthropology – concerning the anonymization of the places of research. Concealing the sources of information on the basis of which the conclusions of an academic study are made is explained by the need to respect academic ethics and protect informants. Of course, such anonymization is important and needed in some specific cases. However, in today’s anthropological works and often also in the works of other social science scholars the anonymization has become the absolute rule. For us it is difficult to understand why when the information doesn’t contain any sensitive information, anonymization is needed. For the vast majority of the scholars living in the region of Eastern Europe anonymizing in most

cases is meaningless, since everybody who knows the field could easily discover the hidden places and even concealed names. Hiding of this data creates reasonable doubts about the credibility of the conducted research and leads to the suspicion that it is anonymized in order to limit possibilities for verification of information; and, as the scandalous discoveries of manipulation of field research data from the famous Dutch anthropologist Mart Bax have shown, these fears are fully justified.

At least we are not aware of any other share of academic knowledge in the world that basically rejects the possibility of examination and verification of the obtained results. This sound especially absurd for Romani studies – how can anonymized research, which cannot be verified, be valid for the whole heterogeneous Roma community? For us it is a reasonable fear here that anonymizing, complemented with self-reflections of the researcher, will lead to the death of social science and to its transformation into a specific genre of fiction.

But not only this, in our eyes the problem has also another important dimension – the anonymisation in several cases leads to irresponsibility and to flagrant violations of the ethics of scholarship. In several instances, anthropologists (Tesar 2012: 113-140) describe such details of the lives of their informants that may discredit them in one way or another, or touch the intimate areas of their personal space. Obviously, these anthropologists are convinced that none of their informants is literate enough to read what they wrote about them in a foreign language, and that nobody will recognize who is hidden under a pseudonym. This attitude towards Roma informants is perhaps the most blatant example of Orientalism. Today most of the Roma in Eastern Europe are literate, many of them highly educated and knowledgeable in foreign languages, and as already mentioned above, it is not a difficult to uncover the real name of an anonymised place, community and even of individual person. Maybe in this approach to informants lies the reason why often Roma are closed community in front of anthropologists and reluctant to assist them in their research.

As for the ethnologists working in the tradition of Eastern European ethnology, they are usually not rejected by the informants in such a way. The Eastern European ethnologists -- or rather ethnographers, as ethnography was the official name of the discipline during the socialist times -- are sometimes criticized by their colleagues from the West, and sometimes also by scholars from their own circle (Tishkov 1992: 371-394), for a lack of scientific ethics in regard to their way of information recording, and compliance with the interests of the community studied, etc. In Eastern European ethnology however, there is no practice of publishing personal stories of informants, rather numerous personal stories are collected and from them are derived patterns and general rules, that are published. In other words, Eastern European ethnology, fairly or not, is instead often accused of essentialism and holism. But seen from the perspective of academic ethics, this approach proves more acceptable because it depersonalized subject of study. While dominant Western social anthropology approaches, despite all attempts to render anonymous the researched people and personalities, are completely unsuccessful (and meaningless), and ultimately more vulnerable to abuse.

An interesting issue is the impact of the research of Roma living in Eastern

Europe, conducted by scholars from the West, on their local colleagues. In this respect, the situation is seemingly paradoxical, but in fact not surprising. In recent years, several otherwise important studies were published, also as a result of their authors' ambitions to open new theoretical horizons. In them, we find claims of new views about Roma as a whole, e.g. the above-mentioned theory about non-Indian origin of Gypsies (Okely 1983), the concept of "brotherhood" among the Gypsies (Stewart 1997), identity as a form of "performance" (Lemon 1999), or the definition of their culture as a "contrasting" one (Streck 2003), etc. We will not enter here in a discussion about the scientific soundness and relevance of these concepts, in which we can discover both – some reasonable elements and much more theoretical misleading generalisations. More importantly, we see more and more young scholars (from East and from West as well) repeating uncritically these concepts, taken as an obligatory academic gesture, in which the field-research material should be embodied, regardless of the fact that in some cases their own research findings could contradict them. Sometimes this is noted by the authors, but usually only in a short note below the line, but without openly expressing doubts about leading theoretical postulates.

Even more absurd is the situation where authors of Eastern Europe accept the findings of Western researchers and try to apply them to Eastern European realities. About two decades ago, in the 1990s, when the Roma topic became relevant to international donors, we had the opportunity to read a manuscript of a currently well-established expert at European level on Roma issues in Eastern Europe, who was employed for a number of years in a renowned international organization and subsequently now is working in an equally well-known European institution. The young author assumed as an undisputed and undeniable historical truth the above mentioned concept promulgated by Judith Okely about the Gypsies as local population, who started nomadic way of life because they were unable to find its place in the social structures of industrial society. On this basis, the young author explained the presence of Roma in Eastern Europe as a result of massive migrations of this marginalized population from Western Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries in the East (sic!). Fortunately for the author, this manuscript was sent for the opinion to various Roma organizations (from whom we actually received the text with request for advice how to react). They advised him tactfully to delete this part of the text and fortunately he followed this advise otherwise the history of Romani studies would be enriched with the next (but unfortunately not the last) absurd scientific concept on Roma.

Some of the books offering these Western theoretical concepts concerning the Roma were translated into various Eastern European languages with the support of various donors, and especially Open Society Network of Foundations, through its special program dedicated to this task. As consultants of the chair of this program, we witnessed the strong rejections of any proposal to translate also books written by authors from Eastern Europe; and how in the network of foundations was distributed a special instruction which recommended to use widely as a model how to conduct research among Roma the famous book of Isabel Fonseca (1995), which was declared to be an "anthropological research" (sic!). All these books on Roma, translated in various

countries of Eastern Europe, were considered as an absolutely essential methodological basis for the researchers from the region and indeed they (or at least some of them) are among the most frequently cited titles until nowadays (especially the works of Judith Okely and Michael Stewart). Seen from the perspective of their actual use, it appears that in spite of the obligatory quotation (in the same way as before the changes in the region it was a norm in every scholar text to have several quotes from the classics of Marxism-Leninism), they are not used in practice – neither as theoretical concepts, nor as conclusions. The explanation of this fact is quite simple. To summarise it, the main distinction between West and Eastern scholars is in the epistemological approach toward the research. The Western scholars starting point is the methodology and theory, in which they try to include the field research materials, while Eastern scholars were taught to start from the field, and on its basis, they make analysis and conclusions and sometimes (but not obligatory) also theories. Because of that for the vast majority of local authors the Western European scholars' type of research of Roma in Eastern Europe remains in the sphere of curiosity and is not perceived seriously from those, who are well familiar with Roma and their ethnic culture.

The opposition between scholars from Eastern Europe and Anglo-Saxon social anthropology, apart all other reasons, has a basic methodological basis. We cannot but agree that they are different approaches of ethnology and social anthropology – “the ethnologists strive to reveal objective historical truth”, in contrast to social anthropologists whose position is: “if people believe a thing to be true, then it is true” (Jakoubek 2016: 25). Studying Eastern Europe (including the Roma in this region) many of Western authors in fact are exploring their concepts and ideas, beforehand formulated in the West and misrepresent their field-research material according their preconceived theoretical concepts, which in other words means that they are working according to the principles of Orientalism. From this point of view, the title of the article of Michal Buchowski (2006) *The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother* is not only extremely accurate, but can be applied to the exotic approach to Roma in Eastern Europe (and in their own countries), which can be found in the work of many Western social anthropologists.

The exoticising approach of social anthropology is obviously leading to natural reactions among the studied communities (cf Scheffel 2000). In our case, such reaction is an introduction in Romani studies to the principles of the so-called ‘Native science’. Native science is currently an expanding research field in the USA and Canada that arose to describe the local native population, as well as the Indigenous people in Australia. One cannot become a representative of the ‘native science’ or ‘indigenous science’, one can only be born as such, because the object of his study is his own culture, looking at which for him is inborn, while others, who are not born into the culture, cannot possess such insight, and cannot acquire it. The opponents of this approach indicate that it imposes the fundamental principles of racism, although with an opposite (positive) sign.

Against this backdrop, it is quite logical that in recent years there emerged the idea of including Roma researchers in the field of Romani studies, which should be

implemented in the form of native science. Some authors formulated these calls clearly, while in other cases they can be inferred from the logic of their texts. But the leading trend is already unmistakable (Ryder et al. 2015). It is important to note that this “politically correct” approach as a desired principle was introduced firstly by non-Roma authors, as an expression of “growing concern for the relationship with the people they study” (Scheffel 2000: 175), and only in recent years is embraced by Roma authors (mostly former Roma activists who have passed from NGO-sector to NGO-science). And now things have reached the point where we have received a set of requirements of “ten things Gadje scholars can do” in order to “decolonise Romani studies”, where along with some useful author’s thoughts, one is able to find requirement made entirely in spirit of “native science”, e.g. to “Involve Roma as equal partners in Roma-related research, not only to validate findings but also to participate equally and substantively in all stages of studies” (Matache 2017).

We cannot but agree with desire to involve Roma in Roma-related research, but with the clarification that this cannot be a mandatory requirement, which must be in condition of an obligatory specification – the involving of Roma should not be done because of their origin, but on bases of their academic qualifications. Without making such specification the place and role in the research of the Roma involved remain unclear, and their ability to “validate findings” is very doubtful.

It is also unclear what should do these Roma who want to enter or have already reach a position in the academia without taking advantage of these special preferences for the Roma (including Professor Ian Hancock, to whom this collection is dedicated) or those who found their realization outside Romani studies.

What is striking is that the principle of inviting representatives of the researched community as validators of quality applies only to Roma, and never to other nations and other minorities in/from Eastern Europe, so for example, no one writes that non-Poles should not study and write about Poles, non-Czechs about Czechs, and so on. The question remains open whether such approach really helps to integrate Roma into academia. It is by no way accidental that some of the Roma scholars and activists, who think more critically, define this principle as hypocrisy, which conceals a hidden or subconscious racism and which underestimate the high educated scholars from Roma origin, who are working in field of ‘regular’ and not of ‘native’ science. The appeal of those authors, who are part of the global mainstream academia and who are themselves Roma again the increasingly common practice of lowering the general academic criteria for Roma authors is wrong and leads to the creation of second-hand Romani scholarship, (Kyuchukov 2015: 240-243) remains unheard.

What has been said above does not mean that we try to deny the right of the Roma to create their historical mega-narratives or even their historical mythology, just in opposite (Marushiakova and Popov 2000). During similar processes have passed (or are passing through) many peoples all over the world, and there is no reason why the Roma should be some special exception. And even less necessary are the attempts of some members of academia to hinder or supervise Roma in this legitimated historical process.

In fact, this is best expressed by Ian Hancock himself, and no more comments are needed to it:

Surely if groups of individuals who identify themselves as Romanies seek to assert their ethnicity, and to ally themselves with other such groups similarly motivated, then this is entirely their own business, and the non-Romani anthropologists, linguists, sociologists, folklorists and others who have taken upon themselves the role of ethnic police are interfering and presumptuous at best, and are perpetuating paternalistic attitudes. I call for a new respect and *a new cooperation between Romanies and gadje* (sic! – authors' note), and an end to the 19th century cultural colonialism that lives on in only slightly modified guise (Hancock 2007: 53).

It should be noted that quoting this paragraph Yaron Matras (2015: 309) omitted the last sentence, which completely changed the meaning of the general message and wrongly attributed to the author an “attempts to diminish confidence in mainstream scholarship” (Ibidem). Unfortunately such an approach may at the end turn to a self-fulfilling prophecy and to create real confrontation which we are already observing as can be seen in above examples.

As far as the “Decalogue” of Matache (2017) mentioned above is concerned, it do not deserve special attention in full because some of the “commandments” cannot simply be accomplished because they do not fit the established rules in academia. In fact, the only thing that becomes clear from her writing is that the attempt to transfer models from the Roma NGO sector to the academic sphere, without knowing well its character and functioning, is doomed to failure.

From more general point of view, these 10 points are a manifestation of a new direction in midst of Roma activism that has emerged in recent years and merged with Antiziganism studies and actions. On this backdrop and in order to reach a balance in knowledge and actions, Ion Duminica, Roma scholar from Moldova, who is head of Section *Ethnic Minorities* of Institute of Cultural Heritage at the Academy of Sciences of Moldova and a representative of Republic of Moldova in the *Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues ad Council of Europe*, proposed:

“So far, the representatives of the Roma Civil Society in partnership with pro-Roma international organizations have, to a large extent, organized campaigns to combat the phenomenon of Antigypsyism. At the same time, in order to diminish the stereotypes and prejudices of the majority population towards the Roma, it would be welcome to organize in the Roma community and campaigns to combat the phenomenon Antigadžism. The phenomenon of the perception of majority population (the so-called “Gadže”) by the Roma community is unfortunately less well known and so far is not countered. Thus, it is proposed to organize at the international level campaigns for combating the phenomena Antigypsyism (generated by the stereotypes of the majority population towards Roma) and Antigadžism (based on the stereotypes of the Roma population towards the majority population.” (Duminica 2017).

This trend is not a leading one in modern Roma activism yet, but as we have noticed in several conversation with some Roma scholar and Roma activists too, it already commenced in one form or another, and its presence must not be overlooked.

As scholars, who over the years have put a lot of effort for the inclusion of Roma in the field of Romani studies, we don't doubt that such inclusion is a very good idea. In this way, this academic field will not only significantly expand its scope and gain new dimensions, but will also significantly increase its scientific value and credibility. Our desire however is to include Roma as academic equals. Directing the Roma authors to the field of Romani studies with the ultimate goal of turning the discipline into a form of native science is, according to us, a development in the wrong direction. Detachment of Roma researchers and creating opposition between Roma and non-Roma researchers in practice leads to self-segregation and the creation of a new 'Roma ghetto', this time in the field of Romani studies, which cannot positively affect either the Roma themselves nor Romani Studies in general. Because of different reason, about which we wrote earlier (Marushiakova and Popov 2014: 109) Romani studies as a whole still largely remains in "splendid isolation" (Willems 1997: 306) and is still often in periphery of contemporary academia. The hypothetical transformation (in the near or farther future) of Romani studies in Romani form of native science exoticise once more Romani people and ultimately will further marginalize this academic discipline.

The current state of native science developed by indigenous people in the United States, Canada, and Australia is the best proof of the complete lack of prospects for the development of Romani studies in this direction. Native science in general doesn't lead to mainstream academic career. It is mostly oriented towards community work, e.g. as announced on the webpage of Humboldt University in US, it "provides a rich environment for studying the Native American heritage and for preparing for careers in areas such as Indian education, counseling, and cultural and natural resource management" (Humboldt 2017). Significant numbers of indigenous people themselves continue to live in their reservations (where they have the possibility to preserve their "specific culture"), and the degree of their overall social integration is at a rather low level. In practice, the achievements of native science and the patterns of their traditional culture (to what extent they are truly based on their ethnic traditions is a separate issue) are widely offered in the numerous art galleries in major cities and are presented as modern expressions of their identity. We feel deep doubts that Roma from Eastern Europe desire such kind of social inclusion and that they will willingly accept such a perspective on their future. As for those Roma, who want to develop their own native science, isolating and confronting themselves from the non-Roma authors, they will have to concede that this "science" is doomed to be of second and third class.

However, there is a hope that Romani Studies will not become a native science, and the Roma authors who want to work in this area will not build up their own scientific reservation. Reasons for such hope give us the significantly higher social and cultural integration of Roma in Eastern Europe in comparison with Indigenous people in the United States, Canada and Australia. In support of this hope is also the fact that in recent years a new tendency emerged and developed, and Roma are more and more choosing mainstream academia, in Romani studies and other disciplines too. It is still too early to draw conclusions about this trend, but the example with Bulgaria is indicative. During the last decade several Roma from Bulgaria defended PhD thesis. From those of them,

whose thesis were in field of Romani Studies two are working in mainstream academia, all others are currently working outside it (in the state administration and in the NGO sector). Those, whose thesis are in different disciplines and have nothing in common with Romani Studies, have achieved good (and even some of them high) academic positions without giving up or concealing their Roma background and Roma identity, according to the standard accusations in similar cases.

Returning from academia to the practice, we can see that transferring the exoticizing paradigm into the sphere of social policy leads to the outcome that the Roma are not perceived and treated as a community of the same rank as all other ethnic communities, but that a very special approach towards them is required; an approach which will take into account and will preserve and further develop the extremely specific Roma ethnic culture. Comparative analysis of the national programs that have been recently approved and implemented in Eastern Europe however clearly shows that their chief objectives and specific activities are not to preserve diversity or to enable conditions for development of Roma culture, but rather to bridge and remove differences between Roma and other nationalities in various areas, encompassing virtually the entire social life including the legal system, employment, housing, healthcare, education, etc. (i.e. all areas that, at least in contemporary terms, could hardly be considered as part of traditional ethnic culture not only of Roma, but of any other people). The desired social integration on one hand, and the importance of preservation and development of Roma ethnic culture on the other are in serious contradiction, which constantly comes to the surface and becomes apparent in various situations.

We will point there only some examples in this regard. The most outspoken example involves the process of school desegregation, which has been running or at least has been envisaged for some years now in various countries in Eastern Europe. As a part of this process, Roma children are taken from segregated (on territorial or other basis) schools and transferred into “mixed” (mainstream) schools. The idea of desegregation was born among Roma activists on the basis of decades of Roma experience gained in time of socialism in Eastern Europe. The staunchest opponents of desegregation were representatives of international and national institutions and NGOs who argued that Roma children will lose their identity and ethnic culture in the mixed schools. In fact, the opponents wish was to keep the problematic situation unchanged because policies and projects, implemented in such schools, are attractive and lucrative. If we further develop this logic, the only chance for Roma to survive as a community and to preserve their culture is a total ghettoization and isolation not only of their schools, but also of their settlements, and in final end of whole Roma population. Recently the approach towards desegregation at least on level of rhetoric is changed and now even segregational practices are carried out with justification of desegregation and combating discrimination. The most outspoken example we can observe in Sweden, where are steadily implemented projects experimenting various forms of that which in East will be called special (segregated) education, for example under the pretext of combating discrimination (according the Antidiscrimination Centre for the Roma in

Stockholm “one of the major discriminatory aspects in the Swedish schools is the Romani pupils feeling of being invisible” (Englund and Dalsbro 2004: 15) and to secure linguistic and cultural rights of Roma, numerous projects are initiated by municipalities are implemented in organising particular classes or schools for the Romani pupils. (ibidem)

From this perspective, the concept of particular specificity of Roma culture proves to be an extremely convenient argument for explanation the difficulties and to justify the lack of results of policies for the social integration of Roma and in fact for “blaming the victims” (Marushiakova and Popov 2015b: 19-31). In the frames of this exoticizing paradigm, in the name of preserving “otherness” from the point of view of diversity and uniqueness of the Roma ethnic culture, majority of Roma national programs and many European programs, as well as projects of NGO sector, are build on the principle of stigmatization, i.e. separation of the Roma community, as well as on the principle of bridging this separation through mediation by “Roma mediators” in various areas of public life such as education, healthcare, social policy and administration. This idea of Roma mediators, born of the non-governmental sector, is increasingly embedded in the principles of European Roma policy, the most prominent illustration of which is the ROMACT and ROMED projects of the Council of Europe, implemented by a number of national governments in Eastern Europe. The Roma in frame of this project are assigned to the role of “assistants” (teacher assistant, medic assistant, social assistant, etc.), and not of “regular” teachers, medical, social workers, etc. We need to emphasize that such an approach is applied exclusively to Roma, but not to other ethnic minorities in Eastern Europe, whith whom they live side by side.

This stigmatizes additionally the Roma communties and confirms the mass anti-Gypsy attitudes of the surrounding population towards Roma. This leads to perceiving of Roma as an inferior community in need of a special approach (in contrast to all other ethnic minorities in the region). Again, the validation of such approach is usually based on the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the Romani ethnic culture. According to it, the Roma are so specific that the rules that apply to them should be different from the rules that apply to any other nation. If there are protests against this approach, they come from individual Roma activists in various countries of the region and remain unheard. Much higher is however the strata or the so-called “Roma by profession” who find their professional realization as mediators between their community and various public structures (administrative, educational, health, etc.). Respectively this is a very comfortable approach for public structures, which find the principle of mediation very convenient for them and when solutions of a problem are needed they could be guided by the principle “the Roma themselves should resolve the issues”.

What are the roots of all these contradictions? Is it true that the Roma do not understand their interests and need “good white brothers” to decide in their stead about what is good and bad for them as a whole? If we consider this all the time, it is logical that the diversity and ethnic uniqueness of the Roma could be best protected if they were separated in reservations where their “white brothers’ would have the opportunity to observe the extraordinary and unique Roma ethnic culture and then would go home

satisfied, feeling they have done their best to preserve the Roma identity and culture. We are not exaggerating because we all know similar situations involving other ethnic communities in various places of the world, e.g. Native Americans in USA and Canada or Aborigines in Australia.

This and other cases raise the question whether it is at all possible for one ethnic community (the Roma in our case) to endure in today's globalized world if they exist only in a form that someone (it is not clear who) designated as distinctive, exotic and typical only for them. In this sense, the subject of preservation of ethnic identity and ethnic cultural traditions of the Roma is meaningful only when included into a wider context of general social and cultural processes taking place, in which Roma are perceived not only as separate ethnic community but along with this as a part of respective nation of the countries where they are living and in frames of contemporary global world.

Conclusion

On the basis of everything said above we can conclude: the main problem with both Roma paradigms (marginalization and/or exoticisation) in academia (and in politics as well) is the adoption of the features valid only for certain Roma segments as common and/or mandatory for the whole.

Both paradigms lead to the same end result – to the stigmatization of Roma as a very “special” community with a very “special” social position and a very “special” culture that cannot be approached (either in the field of scholar research or in the sphere of policies) in the same way as to other European peoples. Good example for this is a project, financed by Daphne 2009 Program of the European Commission, which main aim is “Preventing Early/Forced Marriage of Roma”. In the introduction to presentation of this project we can read, that this phenomenon (Early/Forced Marriage) is common among “traditional and marginalized groups” (Amalipe 2011). Palpable, the two main paradigms, the marginalization and exoticisation of Roma, often go hand in hand, both in Romani studies and in Roma policies, and in practice they are two sides of one coin – orientalism.

We consider that the basic problem is in misunderstanding of distinctiveness (but in no case of as uniqueness) of Roma as an ethno-social and ethno-cultural phenomenon. The Roma case is an excellent example of how one community can exist in two dimensions – as a distinct ethnic community and also as a section of the society as a whole. Whenever the two dimensions come together or one replaces the other, we arrive at what we have been discussing so far – an approach to one entire ethnic community as a marginal group (if we replace the dimension of the community itself) or as a completely exotic group (if we do not consider the dimension of their belonging to the society as a whole). Mixing of the two dimensions is the major reason for the double approach to the Roma implemented in various policies as well as in scholar research.

Imposition of the two main paradigms here in the global research area takes place in the spirit of Orientalism, which paradoxically has the effect of putting both the

Romani communities themselves and Romani studies scholars from Romani origin, as well as their Eastern European Romani studies scholars in general, in the same quandary. Of course, this similarity of the positions of these two circles of scholars (a scholars from Romani origin in general and scholars from Eastern Europe) science does not -- from point of view of postcolonial Western – mean that they are identical, but certainly in many respects the problems which they face are similar. As for the Romani studies scholars from Roma origin living in Eastern Europe, they are placed in the unique position of ‘double orientalisation’ – once as Roma, and secondly as bearers and representatives of the academic traditions of Eastern Europe. Not accidentally the article of Longina Jakubowska (1993) was published in a collection with meaningful subtitle, “Confrontations of Western and Indigenous Views”. Indeed, however strange it may seem at first glance, the Eastern European scholars and the Roma from this region who desire for academic career face the same complex and severe dilemma - to remain shut off in their ethnic/national “ghetto”, or trying to impose themselves in the field of global science where their ethnic/national origins do not matter, or are held against them. It is very difficult to give advice and recommendation on what should be done! The only thing we can be sure of is that those who choose to stay among their own must do so with the clear consciousness that they are doomed to be a second class scientists in terms of modern global academic realities.

From here comes the very simple and unequivocal answer to the question of what Romani studies should be like – like of all other nations, with the same methods and criteria specific to the individual sciences, that direct their interest toward Roma. This does not mean that Romani Studies should not exist as separate area of study. But Romani Studies cannot be a monopoly of one or another academic discipline, and, instead, the common object of this research could be the basis of a new, multidisciplinary approach, in which all disciplines that deal with Roma topic have their place without any of them (or any of their directions) claiming leading and decisive positions.

This is not enough. Real prospects for the development of Romani studies can be found only if it ceases to matter which kind of ethnic origin the scholar has, and to which academic traditions he belongs. Only one thing should remain – the quality and reliability of scholar work – without prioritizing any preconceived in the spirit of orientalism. Or, if we literally quote the words of an old friend of ours, said about two decades ago in conversation about Roma and Roma policies: “they just have to understand that we are normal people, like everyone else, and cease to look at us as aliens“. There is nothing more to add to that.

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