

SEVERAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS OF THE GYPSIES (ROMA) FROM THEIR FIRST PRESENCES IN THE ROMANIA AND UNTIL THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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Abstract: This study presents the complex image of one of the most interesting and personalized ethnicity from Romania: the Gypsies. The paper makes a quick note on the origins and the beginning moments of this ethnic group on Romanian land. This article seeks social characteristics, economic and demographic characteristics of Gypsies during the Middle Ages and early modern times, focusing on emancipation period and the consequences of great importance it has triggered. The specificity of this ethnic group, led to significant differentiation from most ethnic in these periods that is registered also in the interwar period. This paper contributes to shaping the image of an ethnic group that strongly individualized through traditional features that had done in a small degree to integrate in Romanian society of those times and continues to experience difficulties in adjusting to new realities and requirements arising from EU membership.

Key words: Gypsy, ethnicity, assimilation, integration, emancipation

INTRODUCTION

All nations that have reached a certain stage of crystallization and consolidation have, in addition to the basic ethnicity, a number of different population groups in comparison to the majority. These groups differ from the majority ethnic group in a series of features from differentiation based mainly on ethnic and socio-economic basis and which undoubtedly come from history. Romania has also a multi-ethnic population, called generic ethnic minorities, such that, in addition to basic ethnicity – Romanian has held and still holds more minorities: Hungarian, German, Jews, Roma, Lippovans, Ruthenians, Turks, Albanians, etc. Following a general rule, ethnic Gypsy (Roma) in Romania has some the features that define a specific profile of the population concerned, both in terms of similarities, but especially the differentiation from the population majority, Romanian. To capture this ethnic specificity, we consider necessary to follow its evolution from their first presence in the Romanian space, highlighting the socio-economic and demographics aspects.

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MIDDEL AGES AND THE BEGINNINGS

Early History of the Roma remains a true "terra incognita", despite to numerous studies that have offered hypotheses and explanations of the most diverse but the most fanciful. The linguistics remains one that was able to clarify some of the unknowns of the ancient history of this ethnic group. The comparative philology studies in the late eighteenth century showed the Indian origin of Gypsy language, nor ethnology or anthropology could not determine with certainty the region of origin of European Gypsies. India, a true subcontinent, today, has many nomadic peoples, poorly researched. Thus, it could not locate where the Gypsy migration to Europe began or the causes that generated it, the issue remaining a land of assumptions.

The Gypsy migration to Europe was not one to attract attention, took place in a long time and was not a spectacular, thus chronicles and other documents did not provide information to allowing determination of the period and the passage of crossing. The linguistics, through loans identified in Romanian, provides clues to the route followed by Gypsies to Europe, Persian and Armenian elements and also Greek and Slavic.

THE FIRST ACTS OF PRESENCE ON ROMANIAN TERRITORIES

In the Romanian territory Gypsies are mentioned in documents since the late XIV century. The sources are scarce that registered donations, sales, inheritance of some Gypsy belonging to the prince, boyars and monasteries. The history of Gypsies in the Romanian countries does not belong from macro-history, political history, but it is undoubtedly part of economic history.

The period of centuries XIV-XV is one of economic prosperity, the Romanian countries being territory of transit in the great trade of the East with the West, the Byzantine Empire with German-Polish space. After this period, the Romanian lands covered Ottoman rule, which causes a downturn. Thus, appeared the great lands and was born the institution of slavery, the Gypsies, in majority, have become slaves. The Gypsies in the Romanian countries have become an important economic value, becoming a class located between boyars and peasant. To prevent them from fleeing, the boyars and the Church have turned them into slaves, and every stray Gipsy became state property. In the Middle Ages, craftsmen in the Romanian space were aliens (German, Jews). In the extra-Carpathian Romanian countries this place was busy by Gypsies, who became craftsmen in the cities, but particularly in the villages. The Gypsies have been interested much less in agricultural pursuits in the Middle Ages, holding an insignificant role. The gypsies were called "vătrași" and raised their homes stable and became close sedentary and lost many of the specific ethnic characteristics.

A first classification of Gypsy slaves can be made according to the feudal lords:

- Gypsies of the prince, of the state;
- Gypsies of the monasteries;
- Gypsies of the boyars.

But this says little about occupational and ethno-cultural diversity of this population that was not at all a homogenous. Gypsies, spread across the country, without a preference for one place or another, for one region or another, formed distinct groups, specialized in certain occupations, with cultural features, ethnographic or dialects apart.

Gypsies of the prince is divided as follows:

- "rudari" or goldsmiths, were dealing to pursuit the gold in rivers;
- "ursari", who wandered the country with their bears;
- "lingurari" dealing with domestic products of wood tools;
- "lăieși" who were blacksmiths, builders, manufacturers of combs, were small thefts. They did not have stable housing, living in tents and wandered the country in order to get the bare necessities of life.

Gypsies in the Romanian area have developed a habitat type and form their own organization in the Middle Ages, a form of individuality it is nomadism.

MODERN TIMES

The Romanian area was sparsely populated, in the Middle Ages there was not a demographic pressure that the West, thus these aliens could be admitted that that preferred living nomadic. Nomadism was one controlled, Gypsies were slaves. The nomadic Gypsies, in the winter, retreating on estates and in forests, where they built the huts. The rest of the year, crossing the settlements with tilts wagons, camping on the outskirts of towns or villages. The Gypsies named "Ursari" played the bear, made screeners. Goldsmiths were a special brotherhood, a true caste "noble" of the Gypsies, but they know occupation a decline due to exhaustion of sources of gold in the rivers of the country. They turned to crafts that were as raw material wood. With the advent of masonry houses, many of them have become brick makers. Some of the nomads were busy with the production of copper products, in particular boilers, hence the name of brotherhood – tinker (caldarari). Jobs have made the extension Gypsy nomadism and after the Middle Ages, and given that the modernization of the Romanian countries was such a slow and long.

Early nineteenth century does not change too much legal status of Roma, the same mind, the same restraints as the centuries XV and XVI. An elite that came from studies from the West was artisan Roma emancipation, a process that lasted from 1837 until 1856 and which marked the emancipation of all categories of gypsies.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, there were no concerns for a systematic researches Gypsy or a study designed to evolution their demographic, but we can estimate from the time the source material: in 1837, Kogalniceanu see a number of 200,000 Gypsies in Moldova and Romanian Country; A. Ubcini appreciated in 1856 to 250,000 souls, and JA Vaillant considers that in Moldova were 137,000 souls, and the Romanian country - 125,000. The Walachia, with emancipation was achieved in a statistical Gypsy registered 33,267 families, which would have meant an estimated 166,335 souls, representing 7 % of the total population. Moldova has never made a statistics that would indicate separately the Gypsies, but found that the proportion of Roma in the country's population was more than 7 %, about 100,000 people. It is estimated that one third of European Gypsies lived in Romania¹.

The Rural Law of 1864 led to the granting of land for some Gypsies, ex- "vătrași", who adopted the former habitat in agricultural areas. These communities have lost during 2-3 generations ethnic character. The Gypsies in the villages, who hadn't to led, have continued to practice traditional crafts (in a rudimentary rural society in terms of productivity were its place, they become

¹ Chelcea, I. op.cit., p.101-102 și Achim, V., op.cit., p.89.

masters of villages). For artisans, one of the solutions was the migration to cities, settled in the suburbs. And in villages they settled artisan's families, especially blacksmiths, necessary to the agricultural communities. But, in general, large Gypsy communities have retained more specific language and culture, regardless of social and employment changes which have passed their members.

The authorities wanted eradication to the nomadic gypsies and managed only to a certain extent. Some nomadic gypsies continued their itinerant living, formally settled in villages, but did not have a piece of land, only pasture during both sat on it, living in tents and winter shelter in huts on the edge of forests. Smaller communities' even villages consisting of monastic slaves lost their ethnic character. The ethnic and linguistic assimilation had a greater power in Moldova. Note that until the emancipation of Gypsies registered by mid-nineteenth century, Gypsies had different arrangements of obligations to the rest of the population, there were economic relations, but gypsies formed different communities. The term Gypsy was first a social and then an ethnic connotation.

Large Gypsy communities have retained their ethnic characteristics. Many Gypsies did not accept the establishment in the villages or other restrictions imposed by the authorities and have moved across borders, continuing a process of centuries. The authorities have resorted to a method of non-intervention on migrants and many Gypsies have passed in Bukovina, Russian Empire and Transylvania, Hungary. After emancipation, was a high mobility of Gypsy, which became an important social issue. Old Gypsy groups or new ones created wandered the country with their crafts. The documents record the reality of police authorities, highlighting its criminal side. During this period, in Western Europe there was registered a demographic process of a relative scale, reaching here from the Romanian gypsies, with linguistic and cultural aspects of different native Gypsies. An interesting phenomenon is that of Gypsy goldsmiths, who no longer spoke their own language, but they spoke Romanian.

The specialists in history of Gypsy believes that the second half of the nineteenth century has been done possible the second great migration of the Gypsies, as done in the Middle Ages to Western Europe. The Romanian countries have played an important role in the demographic process. The existing difficult economic conditions and especially the crisis through which the Gypsy crafts had pass, but the eradication of nomadic population policies imposed by the authorities were likely to lead to the emigration of large contingent of gypsies. The emigration of Gypsies from the Romanian space was a slow process, sometimes along several generations. They were part of an extensive process, but formed a large majority. Are the emancipation Gypsies at half nineteenth century at that a social and legal process such scale could be the basis of demographic and ethnic process so important.

The most important interwar census was conducted in 1930 and shows the number of Gypsies under statutory declarations. Thus, under the record Gypsies represented 1.5 % of the population, 262,501 persons. Further, there is a preference for rural areas (84, 5 %), only 15.5 % living in cities. We note that the Gypsy population remains a civilization of the village.

The leaders of the most important interwar census, one in 1930, noted that "a large number of gypsies did not said their Gypsy ethnicity, in Transylvania declared themselves Gypsies more than at home Romanian Gypsies and Moldova, this spending is a higher assimilation time. The largest proportion of Gypsies are in a Transylvanian – 2.3 % (2.5 % in villages), the

number of 75,342 people. Counties with many Gypsies were Ilfov (which held the city of Bucharest), capital and the largest city of the country), Dolj (Oltenia), Mures and Cluj (Transylvania), and cities with many Gypsies were Bucharest, Urziceni (13.4 %), Mizil (8.1 %), Târgu-Frumos (8.3 %). Analyzing the census data noted that Gypsies living in Transylvania in most localities, but in smaller numbers, some families and in Moldavia and Wallachia Gypsy population concentration is found in some areas, with villages consisting exclusively of gypsies, villages of farmers, small artisans and musicians.

Census figures are less consistent with reality many Gypsies concealed his identity, considering it an obstacle to social integration in communities where they live. For example, the General Union of Roma claimed in 1938 that represent the interests of the 784,793 Roma² and Martin Block see that a real number of 380,000-400,000 is Gypsy³. Nationalist newspaper "Time" said that Gypsies are 1 million⁴. I. Chelcea considered as double the number of Gypsies from the one shown in the abovementioned census namely 525,000 and divided it as follows:

- those external characters who had Gypsy and a real consciousness ethnicity;
- those who are about to be assimilated and which oscillates in the membership;
- those who give as assimilated, but which can be recognized⁵.

In the interwar, the Gypsies from Romania occur in heterogeneous groups, which presented into shapes more or less altered community life of yesteryear. Unit elements are formed in the Gypsy identity consciousness, common origin, marginal status, as Gypsies in isolated communities in which they lived.

The interwar period brought significant changes for the new Romanian state, has trained social dynamics and the Gypsies. In terms of occupational, we note that it persist the ethnic specificity, perpetuating of considered Gypsy crafts: blacksmithing, brick making, production of wooden objects, musicians, etc. But these occupations have suffered from competition or lack of viability. The Gypsies named "ursari" are forced to abandon the traditional "Tanana" the actions initiated by various animal protection societies. Goldsmiths become "rudari" and wooden objects they made, become and brick makers, and some are turning to itinerant trading. Gypsy musicians dominate the Romanian music scene, but they are competing by the gramophone and modern orchestras. The Gypsy smiths of villages are still those who own dominance.

CHANGES IN THE GYPSY'S "WAY OF LIFE"

Because some of their traditional occupations had felt, the gypsies went to marginal occupations. The pauperization of the small craftsman transformed into a scrub, scavenger, not workers. The agrarian reform of 1921 gave rise to new Gypsies farm owner's gypsies but also in the agricultural economy has played a marginal role, important as their contribution to repair agricultural tools, most rural towns having some Gypsy families' blacksmiths. These Gypsies are known to ease the process of linguistic and ethnic assimilation.

For the Gypsies of village, the period between the wars was a period of progress, many of them were more integrated in the rural communities in which

² Potra, G. (1939) *Contribuțiuni la istoricul...*, p. 126

³ Block, M. (1963) *Moeurs et coutumes des Tsiganes*, Payot, Paris, p. 63

⁴ „Timpul”, III, nr. 41, 29 iulie 1934, Craiova

⁵ Chelcea, I.(1944) *Țiganii din România...*, p. 71

they lived, but differences persist between Romanian and Gypsies. The Gypsies remain the poorest social class, a cheaper labour. But many of the barriers are blurring. Some Gypsies forget their language, kinship is achieved. They wanted to be apart in the affairs of the congregation, they considered Romanian. There were mixed marriages; the resulting children are considered Romanian, so assimilation is happening in a single generation.

As a result of occupational changes, changes in everyday life, traditional collective life declined. The travelers have become a small minority in number. But they remained outside of these transformations, remained outside of some rural or urban administrative units. The authorities have tried to eliminate nomadic, but without systematic involvement nomadism was preserved and was one of the great problems of the communist regime and the authorities have acknowledged the failure of their policy of ethnic assimilation and eradication of nomadic population.

The end of the peace found the Gypsies population in Romania separated in terms of policy options and how to make the modernization of the ethnicity. It still had a less homogeneous population, which could not overcome "barriers" among the groups. It still had a less homogeneous population, which could not overcome "barriers" for people. The Gypsies continued to be more a marginal social category, than an ethnicity. The World War II and the adverse events that triggered found the Gypsies too little prepared to meet them and were one of the major losers in the history of those times.

CONCLUSIONS

The minority Gypsy (Roma) from Romania presents certain features that distinguish it not only to majority Romanian, but also among other ethnic groups making up our country. These features are basically the result of an existence of more than 400 years in these parts, the effect of conservative adaptation to a life entirely different from that of Romanian natives. Specifies to a population with a lower level of literacy, the excessive birth on family and reproductive patterns, show the different origins different of the Romanian people and the nomadic base of this peoples, originally.

The Gypsies were an ethnic group strongly individualized among Romanian majority population through a series of features, the most important being the socio-economic. An exclusive feature of this population in the Romanian Middle Ages until the interwar period was the nomadism. The nomadic communities, which especially in the twentieth century have become fewer in numbers and highly dispersed, were those who kept the best ancestral features of this ethnicity. The lack of demographic pressures many uninhabited areas have condoned these people, the most faithful living touring. Traditional occupations Gypsy people, the non-intervention policy of the authorities or their mode of unsystematic action, made possible the extension of nomadic; it is a reality of the twentieth century.

It also, specifically to the Gypsies in the Romanian area until the mid nineteenth century was slavery. The Gypsies Slaves in the Romanian have played an important role in the economy of large agricultural areas, but their legal, social, economic situation was a characteristic of a semi-feudal society, not of a modern state as desired.

Their emancipation in the mid-nineteenth century did not lead to overcome "barriers" to social and economic integration, Gypsies remain the marginalized

social class more than one ethnic group, despite the modernization efforts of a young Roma elite which obstinacy could not defeat of the traditional leaders and the consequences were felt also in the communist era and are still visible today.

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