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Religion, Religious Actors, and Roma Inclusion
in Romania and Beyond

Religion, religiöse Akteure und Roma-Inklusion
in Rumänien und darüber hinaus

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Editorial RES 3/2022

Religion, Religious Actors, and Roma Inclusion in Romania and Beyond Religion, religiöse Akteure und Roma-Inklusion in Rumänien und darüber hinaus

This issue of *Review of Ecumenical Studies* is linked to The Role of Religion and Religious Actors in Roma Social Inclusion: Towards a Participatory Approach (PARI), a research project aiming to initiate, stimulate, and sustain research on Roma inclusion by addressing the (potential) role of religion and religious actors in the exclusion and inclusion of Roma in Romania and Norway. Both the PARI project and the issue speak to a longstanding — and highly relevant — academic interest in religion and religious actors among Roma across Europe. This issue follows a recent special issue of *Romani Studies* (31, no. 2) on Romani religiosity and spirituality in twenty-first century Europe, as well as numerous books and many articles published in recent years. It features articles by researchers affiliated with PARI and researchers unaffiliated with the project, who broaden its scope. The six articles and one essay in the issue cover Roma exclusion from, inclusion in, relations to, and agency within religious actors belonging to different Christian denominations — most prominently Orthodox, Lutheran, and Pentecostal and charismatic actors.

Die vorliegende Ausgabe von RES steht im Zusammenhang mit dem Forschungsprojekt „Die Rolle von Religion und religiösen Akteuren bei der sozialen Inklusion der Roma: ein partizipativer Ansatz“ (PARI). Dieses Projekt zielt darauf ab, Forschung zu initiieren und zu unterstützen, die sich mit der (potenziellen) Rolle von Religion und von religiösen Akteuren bei der Exklusion oder Inklusion der Roma in Rumänien und Norwegen befasst. Seit vielen Jahren ist in Europa von einem relevanten akademischen Interesse an dieser Frage die Rede. So schließt diese Ausgabe von RES an eine kürzlich erschienene Sonderausgabe der *Romani Studies* (31, Nr. 2) über die Religiosität und Spiritualität der Roma im Europa des 21. Jahrhunderts an. Einige Aufsätze stammen von Forscherinnen und Forschern, die mit PARI verbunden sind, und andere gehen über diesen Rahmen hinaus. Sechs Aufsätze und ein Essay befassen sich mit der Einbindung oder dem Ausschluss von Roma und mit deren Beziehungen und Handlungsspielräumen innerhalb verschiedener christlicher Konfessionen (vor allem orthodox, lutherisch oder pfingstlerisch-charismatisch).

First out, **Daniela Popescu**'s article presents representations of the Roma in Romanian press during the first half of the twentieth century (1900-1943). The article describes different "public figures" disseminated by the press, including that of the Roma as "pagans" towards whom the Romanian Orthodox Church presumed a missionary role.

Drawing on the archives of the Securitate, the Romanian secret police, **Manuela Marin**'s article shows how religious institutions such as the so-called "Gypsy neo-protestant churches" and practices such as pilgrimage strengthened Romani networks, community, leadership structure, and identity in Romania in the communist era (1947-1989). Through an original application of the "lived religion" concept, Marin's reading of official documents and memoirs shows how Romani religious practices can be seen as acts of resistance against the communist regime and its religious policy, as well as supporting Roma civic emancipation and demands for recognition as a national minority.

Bridging the historical and contemporary perspectives, **Mirel Bănică**'s essay at the end of the issue presents his reflections on the contemporary memorisation of the historical Roma slavery in Romania. Departing from a distinction between history as a specialized field of knowledge and memory as a subjective and social process of remem-

Der erste Aufsatz von **Daniela Popescu** befasst sich mit dem Bild der Roma in der rumänischen Presse in der ersten Hälfte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts (1900-1943). Der Aufsatz beschreibt verschiedene von der Presse verbreitete „öffentliche Darstellungen“, darunter die Roma als „Heiden“, denen gegenüber die rumänisch-orthodoxe Kirche eine missionarische Rolle einnahm.

Der Aufsatz von **Manuela Marin** stützt sich auf die Archive der Securitate, der rumänischen Geheimpolizei, und zeigt, wie religiöse Institutionen wie die so genannten „neoprotestantischen Roma Kirchen“ und Praktiken wie die Pilgerfahrt die Netzwerke, die Gemeinschaft, die Führungsstruktur und die Identität der Roma im Rumänien der kommunistischen Ära (1947-1989) stärkten. Durch eine originelle Anwendung des Konzepts der „gelebten Religion“ zeigt Marins Lektüre offizieller Dokumente und Memoiren, wie religiöse Praktiken der Roma als Akte des Widerstands gegen das kommunistische Regime und seine Religionspolitik gesehen werden können und wie sie die bürgerliche Emanzipation der Roma und ihre Forderungen nach Anerkennung als nationale Minderheit unterstützten.

Der Essay von **Mirel Bănică** am Ende der Ausgabe schlägt eine Brücke zwischen der historischen und der gegenwärtigen Perspektive und stellt Überlegungen zur heutigen Erinnerung an die Roma-Sklaverei in der Geschichte Rumäniens an. Ausgehend von einer Unterscheidung

branch, Bănică describes a plurality of histories and memories of Roma slavery at play in present-day Romania. Roma activists and the Romanian Orthodox Church are important actors in the ongoing memory work, which they conduct differently and often at odds with each other.

Marian Zăloagăs article reviews twenty-first century academic literature by Romanian Roma intellectuals. It shows how the first generation of post-communist Romanian Roma intellectuals has addressed the religious affiliation and profile of the Roma in their writing. The ethnopolitical significance of religious affiliation and practice becomes clear as a cacophony of voices and positions emerge.

Moving beyond Romania and into the contemporary relations between Roma and religious actors, **Nikolaos Tsirevelos**' article presents an informal education programme for Roma under the Orthodox Church in Greece. The education programme is composed of remedial teaching in Romani, cultural activities, sport, and vocational orientation and training for adults. Tsirevelos shows how it is based on the church's mission to care for the needs of the people, interwoven with an Orthodox theological tradition for openness to different cultures, and designed to complement public education.

In our article, we, **Bjørn Hallstein Holte and Stephanie Diet-**

zwischen Geschichte als spezialisiertem Wissensgebiet und Erinnerung als subjektivem und sozialem Erinnerungsprozess beschreibt Bănică eine Vielzahl von Geschichten und Erinnerungen an die Roma-Sklaverei, die im heutigen Rumänien zu finden sind. Roma-Aktivisten und die rumänisch-orthodoxe Kirche sind wichtige Akteure in der laufenden Erinnerungsarbeit, die sie auf unterschiedliche Weise und oft im Gegensatz zueinander betreiben.

Marian Zăloagăs Aufsatz gibt einen Überblick über die akademische Literatur des einundzwanzigsten Jahrhunderts aus der Feder von rumänischen Roma-Intellektuellen. Er zeigt, wie die erste Generation der postkommunistischen Roma-Intellektuellen die religiöse Zugehörigkeit und das Profil der Roma in ihren Schriften thematisiert hat. Die ethnopolitische Bedeutung der religiösen Zugehörigkeit und Praxis wird deutlich, wobei allerdings sehr disparate Stimmen und Stellungnahmen zu finden sind.

Der Aufsatz von **Nikolaos Tsirevelos** geht über Rumänien hinaus und befasst sich mit den heutigen Beziehungen zwischen Roma und religiösen Akteuren. Er stellt ein informelles Bildungsprogramm für Roma vor, das von der orthodoxen Kirche in Griechenland angeboten wird. Das Bildungsprogramm besteht aus Förderunterricht in der Sprache Romanes, kulturellen Aktivitäten, Sport und beruflicher Orientierung und Ausbildung für Erwachsene. Tsirevelos zeigt, wie das Programm auf

rich, focus on organisations providing humanitarian services to Roma travelling to Norway since 2007. In Norway, as elsewhere in Europe, Roma who travel to work or make money in other ways often lack access to public welfare services and live precariously. Non-governmental organisations, many of them religious actors, fill in gaps by providing humanitarian services. Focussing on two such actors, our article discusses their motivations for engaging in this work and teases out the modes of inclusion it implies.

The last article in the issue is **Melody Wachsmuth's** exploration of how Christian Roma — that is, Romani Pentecostals — engage with the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine in Eastern Europe. While the Roma are disproportionately affected by the unfolding events because of widespread poverty among them and racism against them, Romani Pentecostals (alongside other religious movements) have mobilised to help those in need. Wachsmuth ends her article — and the issue — by reframing commonly asked questions about religion, religious actors, and Roma inclusion: Perhaps we should not ask whether religion and religious actors promote Roma inclusion, but whether religious actors and broader society are open to accommodating Roma lived religion.

The combination of historical, empirical, and theological research

dem Auftrag der Kirche basiert, sich um die Bedürfnisse der Menschen zu kümmern, mit der orthodoxen theologischen Tradition der Offenheit gegenüber anderen Kulturen verwoben ist und das öffentliche Bildungswesen ergänzen soll.

In unserem Aufsatz konzentrieren wir, **Bjørn Hallstein Holte** und **Stephanie Dietrich**, uns auf Organisationen, die seit 2007 humanitäre Dienste für Roma leisten, die nach Norwegen reisen. In Norwegen, wie auch anderswo in Europa, haben Roma, die zur Arbeit herkommen oder auf andere Weise Geld verdienen, oft keinen Zugang zu öffentlichen Sozialleistungen und leben in prekären Verhältnissen. Nichtregierungsorganisationen – viele von ihnen religiöse Akteure – füllen die Lücken, indem sie humanitäre Dienste anbieten. In unserem Aufsatz konzentrieren wir uns auf zwei dieser Akteure und erörtern deren Beweggründe für diese Arbeit sowie die damit verbundenen Formen der Integration.

Im letzten Aufsatz dieser Ausgabe untersucht **Melody Wachsmuth**, wie christliche Roma der pfingstlerischen Prägung mit den Folgen der Covid-19-Pandemie und des Krieges in der Ukraine in Osteuropa umgehen. Während die Roma aufgrund der unter ihnen weit verbreiteten Armut und des gegen sie gerichteten Rassismus unverhältnismäßig stark von den Ereignissen betroffen sind, haben sich die pfingstkirchlichen Roma (neben anderen religiösen Bewegungen) mobilisiert, um den Be-

featuring in this issue reflects the interdisciplinarity of the PARI project with which it is linked. The articles provide historical background for, reflections over, and examples and critique of inclusion practices targeted at the Roma. We would like to express our gratitude to the *Review of Ecumenical Studies* for having us as guest editors, facilitating the review and production process, and publishing the issue.

PARI has received funding from the NO Grants 2014-2021, under Project contract UEFISCDI no. 38/2021. For more details about the project please visit <https://www.participatory.ro> and PARI Project on Facebook.

dürftigen zu helfen. Wachsmuth beendet ihren Aufsatz, indem sie häufig gestellte Fragen über Religion, religiöse Akteure und die Integration der Roma neu formuliert: Vielleicht sollten wir nicht fragen, ob Religion und religiöse Akteure die Eingliederung der Roma fördern, sondern ob religiöse Akteure und die breitere Gesellschaft offen dafür sind, die gelebte Religion der Roma aufzunehmen.

Die Kombination von historischer, empirischer und theologischer Forschung in dieser Ausgabe spiegelt die Interdisziplinarität des PARI-Projekts wider, mit dem sie verbunden ist. Die Aufsätze liefern historische Hintergründe, Überlegungen sowie Beispiele und Kritik zu Eingliederungspraktiken, die auf die Roma ausgerichtet sind. Wir möchten der Zeitschrift RES dafür danken, dass wir als Gastherausgeber fungieren durften und dass die Redaktion den ganzen Entstehungsprozess begleitet und zu einem guten Abschluss geführt hat.

PARI wird mit Mitteln aus den NO Grants 2014-2021 unter dem Projektvertrag UEFISCDI Nr. 38/2021 finanziert. Für weitere Informationen zum Projekt besuchen Sie bitte <https://www.participatory.ro> und das PARI-Projekt auf Facebook.

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Perceptions and Misperceptions on Roma People during the First Half of the 20TH Century. A Glimpse into the Romanian Press*

DANIELA POPESCU**

History has shown a 20th century marked by political, geopolitical, social, and economic metamorphosis, especially for the European continent. Romanian's physical borders were reshaped during the first half of this century and caught between a political, social, and ethnic whirlwind. For Roma people, the 1920s and 1930s came with substantial turmoil as their efforts to establish various forms of representation and organization were not supported by the Romanian authorities, nor by public opinion. The public discourse was dominated by prejudice, stereotypes, and amplified marginalization. The far-right's extreme tendencies, compounded by public discourse, spread Roma stereotypes such as "the thief", "the other", "the diseases carrier", "the pariah", "the unwanted" etc., and generated the idea of "us against them" which heavily impacted the deportation process.

Keywords: *Roma, Perception, Stereotypes, Press, Public Opinion, Romania.*

Introduction

In May 1900, a Transylvanian magazine dedicated to cultural and social aspects of Romanians from Transylvania published an article criticizing how various nationalities can be identified. It also referred to these nationalities' main cultural and identity trademarks reflected through the proverbs and anecdotes with negative connotations and it compares various negative traits of Roma, Romanians, and Jewish exemplifying these with the help of the Romanian proverbs. There was one excerpt that caught our attention because it compresses half of a century of stereotypes, public perception and misperception:

"The (n.a. the idiom) Jewish fuss" is a trait of the noisy Jewish nature specific for their (n.a. religious) gatherings. So, Romanians describe this situation referring to how Jewish act in the synagogue similarly to how

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Romanians use another representation from the Gipsies' spectrum "(n.a. fighting) at the tent entrance". So, the Gipsy and the Jew resembles.

It is said: "until the Gipsy steals, he will not accomplish his work", idiom that is similar to: "the Jew will not eat until he will duff somebody." (...) The Gypsy is brave just for showing off, but he is not truly courageous. (...) On the other hand, "the Jew is brave just when he is cunning." (...)

Poor Gipsy! We will allow the readers to comment and understand on their own the proverbs: "to drown at the shore like the Gipsy". (...) "Once the Gypsy becomes emperor, first time he hangs his father".¹

We chose this excerpt to begin our paper since it provides an example of the most common representations perpetuated in Romanian folklore and public discourse. This helps us understand the general landscape of Romania from 1900-1940, and how these images were weaponized as stereotypes by various politicians to help shape the image of "the enemy".

The first decades of the 20th century were marked by the ideas of national unity, international recognition, and the search for actions to define the national identity. This was also the case for Romania. The growing tendencies towards the extreme right, the ideas of race, exacerbated nationalism, eugenics and antisemitism that rapidly spread across 1930s Europe were present in Greater Romania as well. We should mention here that after the 1918 union one main issue was the process of nation building.² Although the most targeted group was the Jewish minority, during 1930s and 1940s, the Roma minority also became a target and were presented to public opinion as "the Gypsy problem". Even though they were not a numerous ethnic group, their political, economic, religious, cultural, or even regional organization lacked so they were not representing a powerful group or a threaten.³ On the contrary, during the 1920s and 1930s, Romanian authorities did not oppose Roma initiatives to form organizations, to participate in politics, to vote, and to cooperate with the state and the Romanian Orthodox Church.⁴ This raises

¹ George Coşbuc, "Cum se judecă popoarele," *Familia*, no. 21 (21 May 1900): 243.

² See for a detailed analysis: Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 1995).

³ See: Ernest Gellner, *Națiuni și naționalism. Noi perspective asupra trecutului* (Oradea: Antet, 1997).

⁴ See: Petre Matei, "Romii în perioada interbelică. Percepții naționaliste," in *Spectrum. Cercetări sociale despre romi*, eds. Toma Stéfania and Fosztó László (Cluj-Napoca: Editura

important questions: why did hatred peak in the 1940s? What led to deportation to Transnistria? How was the portrait of “the enemy” shaped and politically instrumentalized? Did the press play a role in disseminating a certain type of message to mislead public opinion? These are just a few questions this study aims to answer.

Methodological and theoretical considerations

This article attempts to create a framework for understanding the social and economic discrepancies attributed to Roma representations and stereotypes from Romanian space after unification in 1918. One main purpose of this article is to identify the main stereotypes/images spread across public opinion, such as “the thief”, “the unsettled”, “the diseases bearer”, “the charlatan” or “the beggar” and how the national newspapers and press disseminated such stereotypes. For this purpose, we selected national newspapers (based on circulation rate), such as “Universul” or “Adevărul”, and regional newspapers or professional medical journals, such as “Ardealul Medical”, which was one of the eugenics’ loudhailer. Another example was the newspaper “Țara” from the Transylvanian space as it was the region with the most complex spectrum of ethnicities and minorities.⁵ As a methodological aspect, we mention that since we could not find consistent references to Roma during a full year in only one newspaper, we chose several ones, especially those with the highest printing rates. Secondly, we did not choose the publications and newspapers affiliated to extremist parties or political factions as these have a different type of discourse that will be reserved for a separate study.

Another goal is to draw attention to how the press acted as a loud hailer for eugenic speeches and how the representations of Roma people became increasingly aggressive and, by the end of 1930s and during the 1940s, these amplified representations were shaped and infused with deprecating ideas that were invoked as arguments for deportations to Transnistria.

This paper is divided into two main sections. First, we set some methodological and theoretical guidelines; Second, we identify and analyse

Institutului pentru Studierea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, *Kriterion*: 2011), 15–41. Matei, “Raporturile dintre organizațiile țigănești interbelice și Biserica Ortodoxă Română,” in *Partide politice și minorități naționale din România în secolul XX*, vol. 5, eds. Vasile Ciobanu and Sorin Radu (Sibiu: Techno Media, 2010), 159–73.

⁵ See: Ioan Scurtu and Ioan Dordea, eds., *Minoritățile naționale din România 1925-1931* (București: Arhivele Naționale ale României, 1996).

some of the most frequent representations of prejudice and stereotypes of Romanian Roma people present in the mainstream press. Finally, we will summarize some of the most common representations that were transmitted to the next generation under communism and when Roma communities faced new problems and challenges.

The impact of two world wars in less than half a century brought to light the need to study and understand how societies and public opinion function as a social mechanism and how it impacts political decision making. Scholars from various fields, like Walter Lippman⁶, Edward L. Bernays⁷, Gordon W. Allport⁸, Francis G. Wilson⁹, Thomas A. Bailey¹⁰, Gabriel Almond¹¹, Vincent Price¹² and many others have attempted to define and analyse how public opinion functions and how people and communities' representations form and spread. We mention just a few pioneers in this field, but there is an enormous number of schools and theories during the past century dedicated to this topic. For the purposes of this paper, we will not subscribe to a certain school or theory. Instead, we will draw attention to some of the definitions and concepts we consider to be the most suitable theoretic instruments for the aims of this paper.

First, we will draw attention the notion of "stereotype". It is quite interesting to note that at the roots of this concept, a stereotype referred to the process of printing by using a specially designed mould to duplicate various forms or pictures on a page. Later, in 1922, Walter Lippman used this term in the attempt to analyse how public opinion functions and defined a stereotype as "the world outside and the pictures in our heads"¹³, arguing that each individual or group forms mental representations on the external world influenced by various internal and external factors.

⁶ Walter Lippmann, *Public opinion* (New Brunswick-London: Transaction Publishers, 1998). It was originally published in 1992 by The Macmillan Company.

⁷ Edward L. Bernays, "Manipulating Public Opinion: The Why and The How," *American Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 6 (May 1928): 958-71.

⁸ Gordon W. Allport, *The nature of prejudice* (Boston: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1954).

⁹ Francis G. Wilson, "Concepts of public opinion," *The American Political Science Review* 27, no. 3 (June 1933): 371-91.

¹⁰ Thomas A. Bailey, *The Man in the Street* (New York: Macmillan, 1948).

¹¹ Gabriel Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy* (Harcourt: Brace and Company, 1950).

¹² Vincent Price, *Public Opinion. Communication Concepts*, vol. 4 (Newbury Park: SAGE Publications, 1992).

¹³ Lippman, *Public opinion* 3.

According to Rupert Brown, a stereotype refers “to attribute to a person some characteristics which are seen to be shared by all or most of his or her fellow group members” and it is “an inference drawn from the assignment of a person to a particular category.”¹⁴ In our case, there are a set of characteristics or attributes projected by a dominant group upon a smaller, minority group. As Brown argues, a stereotype is mostly based on “the perception that most members of a category share some attribute” and the stereotyping process “arises directly from the categorization process, particularly the assimilation of within-group differences.”¹⁵

Several studies on this topic were initially published in the 1950s (we refer especially at G. Allport’s contributions) and were revised years later.¹⁶ These studies argued the idea that at the core of a stereotype there is a minor true aspect; this idea became known as the “grain of truth” theory. This mostly refers to the fact that there are usually some events, situations or isolated incidents that are amplified, and a dominant group generates an image/stereotype that is generalized and associated with another group. Moreover, research on how stereotypes form indicates that one considerable aspect refers to the fact that in each community or in each group there are certain visible indicators regarding that group’s socio-economic statute, social or cultural position that could be transposed and misinterpreted in the belief or in the perception that the group is “poor”, “unintegrated”, “lazy”, “sick”, etc.¹⁷

The literature on Romanian Roma groups on the selected timeline focused more on analysing the evolution Romania’s Roma communities. We draw from Viorel Achim’s work examining the interwar beginnings to establish juridic and political forms of representation, Petre Matei’s studies on the topic of Roma movement¹⁸ and on deportation to Transnistria. Among the richly documented research on this latter topic we mention

¹⁴ Rupert Brown, *Prejudice. Its Social Psychology* (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 69.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁶ See for instance: Marilyn B. Brewer and Donald T. Campbell, *Ethnocentrism and Intergroup Attitudes: East African Evidence* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976).

¹⁷ Brown, *Prejudice*, 69.

¹⁸ We mention here: Petre Matei, “Between Nationalism and Pragmatism: The Roma Movement in Interwar Romania,” *Social Inclusion* 8, no. 2 (2020): 305–15.

Viorel Achim¹⁹, Radu Ioanid, Michelle Kelso, Luminița Mihai Cioabă²⁰, Vladimir Solonari²¹, Mihai Surdu²², Zoltan Barany²³ and other great contributions²⁴. Using this prior research as reference, our aim is to see how the public identity of Romania's Roma minority was present in public opinion and how it changed.

In Irina Livezeanu's words, East European space was less industrialized and less economically powerful, so the nationalism in eastern countries "was motivated more by politics than by economics".²⁵ This was a key factor in what concerns how nation-building was defined, understood, and made.²⁶ The modernization goal and the nation-building process was accompanied by the dynamic eugenic discourse.²⁷ The period of 1918-1939 faced a growing group of intellectuals, scientists, scholars, and doctors²⁸ that wanted to change the structure of Romanian people according to some eugenics criteria, such as: the disapproval of marriages between ethnic Romanians and non-Romanians, certain group's sterilization and others.²⁹ While this Romanian discourse was first aimed toward "the Jewish problem", by the end of 1930s, it found another target: "the Gypsy problem".

¹⁹ Viorel Achim, ed., *Documente privind deportarea țiganilor în Transnistria*, vol. I-II (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2004).

²⁰ Radu Ioanid, Michelle Kelso and Luminița Mihai Cioabă, eds., *Tragedia romilor deportați în Transnistria* (Iași: Polirom, 2009).

²¹ Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press; Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2010).

²² Mihai Surdu, *Those Who Count: Expert Practices of Roma Classification* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2015).

²³ Zoltan Barany, *The East European Gypsies. Regime Change, Marginality and Ethnopolitics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁴ For the Roma press during interwar years we recommend Rareș Grigore Beuran's study, "Aspecte ale presei rrome din România," *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai* 2 (2011): 113–24.

²⁵ Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 6.

²⁶ See the case studies from: Balázs Trencsényi et al., eds., *Nation-Building and Contested Identities: Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies* (Iași: Polirom; Budapest: Regio Books, 2001).

²⁷ Marius Turda, *Eugenism și modernitate (1870-1950). Națiune, rasă și biopolitică în Europa (1870-1950)* (Iași: Polirom, 2014).

²⁸ Proeminent eugenics were Sabin Manuilă, Iuliu Moldovan, Petre Râmneanțu, Iordache Făcăoaru, Gheorghe Preda, Dimitrie Gusti, Gheorghe Marinescu, and others.

²⁹ Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

Prejudice, stereotypes, and public discourse regarding Romanian Roma people

There are various studies and theories in social psychology that address how stereotypes, prejudice, perception, and misperception on certain groups forms and that people are not immune to labelling or to prejudice, no matter their social, cultural, religious, or economic background is.³⁰ In fact, these studies indicate that everyone has a “blind spot”³¹ generated by past individual or social experiences. Also, the way we perceive others is influenced by their ethnicity, age, education, culture, profession, and race. Our brain creates categories and representations based on these criteria. Instead of relying on social psychology theories, we will focus on the historic perspective. However, it was important to briefly mention these contributing factors because of human nature’s tendency to create representations and categories that can be manipulated by ideologies, political factors, or leaders, as was the case with Nazism. In what concerns Romania’s Roma people, the first two decades of the 20th century could be described in terms of perception and of public discourse as a partial qualm. This aspect was generated also by the fact that the Roma minority was invisible for the authorities, they were not perceived literally as a minority and the only public references were just the cases of local criminalities.³²

During the 1930s, political changes in various countries combined with international tendencies towards racism and an exacerbated nationalism. The Roma people became more present and visible in the public sphere through the press and various public figures. The Roma became labelled as “the unwanted”, “the other”, “the enemy”, “the thief”, “the pagan”, “the unsettled”, “the plague”, “the monster”, “the witches”, “the beggar”, “the kidnapper”, “the lazy”. These were some of the most common representations present in the mainstream press, and even in some regional newspapers or journals, especially during mid 1930s and early 1940s.

Two of the most frequently depicted representations were “the thief” and “the charlatan”. These representations typically developed from a

³⁰ See: Cristian Tileaga, *The Nature of Prejudice. Society, Discrimination and Moral Exclusion* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 63.

³¹ Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald, *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* (New York: Bantam Books, 2016), 94–123.

³² See: Achim, *The Roma*.

negative event that was described in press articles with informative intentions. Yet, articles with titles such as “a gang of counterfeiters in Severin County” often went beyond the event itself and introduced language that was framed as “us against them”:

Our Romanians, seeing themselves deceived, complained to the Făget (Severin) gendarme station, accusing the Gypsies of stealing their money. Investigations were carried out, both the defrauded householders and the scammer gypsies were arrested and referred to the prosecutor’s office in Lugoj.³³

In many cases, this representation was associated with the nomad Roma as they were perceived as unsettled and pariahs of the community: “the scam of some nomadic gypsies”.³⁴ This image was used in 1942 as a strong argument to convince the public on the need to find solution to get rid of them. An article entitled “The Gendarmerie and the police from Brasov captured a band of thieves” argued that events like these are a proof that nomad Roma are a social danger: “A permanent danger: the nomad gypsies“ and for this reason the solution suggested was to concentrate them in labour camps: “(...) consequently, they propose concrete measures to concentrate the nomadic Gypsies in labour camps.”³⁵

Linked to these two aspects is another representation that was present as late as the 1990s in public discourse – “the kidnapper”. Many generations of children heard from their parents or grandparents that the consequences of their bad behaviour, or the punishment, might be to be “stolen”, “given” or “kidnapped” by the gypsies. The origin of this representation is difficult to track down. Yet, we encountered this stereotype, although very rare, in the 1920s press. For example, an article in *Dimineața* newspaper in 1929 caught the reader’s attention with the title: “Children kidnapped by gypsies. The story of a child kidnapped and found, after dramatic adventures in Romania.”³⁶ However, the article did not refer to a clear case of kidnapping and the event took place in Hungary, not Romania. Additionally, the supposed kidnapped child ran away from home and was later found in Romania.

³³ “Bandă de falsificatori de bani în jud. Severin,” *Universul*, no. 59 (March 1, 1937): 7.

³⁴ “Escrocheria unor țigani nomazi,” *Universul*, no. 36 (February 7, 1942): 2.

³⁵ “Un pericol permanent: Țiganiii corturari,” *Universul*, no. 131 (May 16, 1942): 2.

³⁶ “Copiii răpiți de țigani: Povestea unui copil răpit și regăsit, după dramatice aventuri în România,” *Dimineața*, no. 3168 (September 9, 1929): 1.

In what concerns the religious aspects associated with these three above exemplified images, the Romanian Roma people were also portrayed as the “pagans”, especially the nomad Roma. This representation is connected to the missionary role the Romanian Orthodox Church assumed as a dominant church.³⁷ This knotty and complex topic refers to the fact that along the Romanian space before and after the 1918 union were different religious confessions (e.g., Catholic, Lutheran, protestant and a few others) in Transylvania. In this confessional and ethnic diversity, the Orthodox Church adopted a missionary role in the attempt to preserve its role as the dominant Church. This role targeted not only people of different confessions, but also people who did not belong to any Church or confession.³⁸ Many of these cases were Roma people who were either part of a different church or, had no belonging at all and were frequently labelled as “pagans”.

Romanian folklore has abundant references to paganism, to pagan rituals or symbols. Often, the image of the pagan was associated with the image of the gypsy: “to be heathen like a gypsy”, or “to practice gypsy pagan customs”. Even the anecdotes or press articles about various events that involved Christian Roma persons hid a sceptical note – the reluctance that although born or later baptised as an Orthodox Christian, the pagan traits or bad habits remain. For instance, in a 1907 newspaper, there was a brief column entitled: “A gypsy’s confession” where an anecdote portrait an Orthodox Christian Roma asks the local priest for a confession of his sins, but does not want to admit that he stole some candles from the church and ends up beating the priest.³⁹ The moral of the anecdote was that old habits die hard.

The frequent press references to Roma people’s religion or religious affiliation is most notable near January 6, when The Orthodox Church celebrates the Baptism of Christ (the Theophany). For instance, an article entitled “Gypsies’ baptism” published on January 8, 1936 and signed by an editor who declared himself “a gypsy with a modest and self-taught

³⁷ See also: Lucian N. Leuștean, “Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism: An Introduction,” in *Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Southeastern Europe*, ed. Leuștean (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 1–14.

³⁸ See: Mirela Banică, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română, stat și societate în anii '30* (Iași: Polirom, 2007).

³⁹ I. Rodina, “Dascălul lui Solomon Vârtelniță,” *Veselia*, no. 51 (December 21, 1907): 2.

education”⁴⁰ wrote that gypsies on the Romanian territories arrived in Europe and have Indian roots and were forced to be baptised in the 15th century across Moldavia and Wallachia. Since the voivode made baptism compulsory, some of the gypsies escaped, hid in forests or caves, and so they became and remained nomads.⁴¹ In this article, we will not discuss the historic accuracy of these claims, but the references from a religious perspective. The same article argues that original gypsies were pagans, worshipped the Sun, and had various customs and rituals and, even though most of them are now Christians, the old generations of nomad gypsies still practice and invoke pagan songs and rituals.⁴²

A related article described a public baptism involving one hundred Roma people in Ploiești city “who had neither asked nor been offered the offices of the Orthodox Church or of any other religion”⁴³. The event took place on the Baptism of Chris day, and it was organized in a fastuous manner, in the presence of press, local authorities, local Roma representatives, Orthodox Church’s representatives, even the Patriarch’s presence:

Mr. I. Vasilescu, the president of the Roma people from Prahova, walks and stirs among the crowd. He is in formal attire and is helpful as a diplomat, he is sharing smiles, handshakes, and dispositions. After the general president of the Roma people, Mr. Gh. Niculescu, arrived from Bucharest it followed an emotional meeting between the two leaders.

(...) Most of the expenses required for the event were borne by Mr. Mayor Manolescu, the general godfather of the Roma Christians.⁴⁴

The historical context for these examples refers to the missionary role that the Romanian Orthodox Church took upon itself and promoted during the 1930s. This was also influenced by similar activities from the Russian space by the Russian Orthodox Church.⁴⁵ This role was not limited just

⁴⁰ G. A. Lazurica, “Botezul țiganilor,” *Universul*, no. 7 (January 8, 1936): 6.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ Lorin, “O solemnitate creștinească la Ploiești. În prezența Patriarhului au fost botezați o sută de țigani nomazi și spoitori,” *Curentul*, no. 2408 (October 16, 1934): 2.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ John Meyendorff, *Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today* (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996), 107–09.

to the Romanian territory, but also to the Balkan space and far beyond it.⁴⁶

Another frequent representation was the one of the diseases' carrier, especially after World War II started. During a war, or a natural disaster, it is common place for outbreaks to spread because communities are lacking food, water, hygiene, and other basic products. This was the case for Romanian cities and villages during the war, specifically typhus and other infectious diseases. Medical journals from those years reported the location of the outbreaks, described the evolution, symptoms of the disease, and the main causes. When listing causes of the spread, they mention the poor condition and human nature of local Roma communities:

But the virus persists in the lice on the clothes of the deceased ones, which, as I mentioned before, in the case of gypsies and of the poor population, these clothes are shared between relatives and friends, etc and thus, produces the closest serious cases since the beginning of the epidemic, with vast new sources of infection.⁴⁷

The distinction “us” and “them” was drawn once again, even in the context of spreading disease: “analysing the results of the first offensive, these demonstrate, firstly, that the intensity of the pediculosis is quite high and, secondly, that the typhus did spread in the villagers' households, and it failed to invade the staff of the border guards, but instead it contaminated the entire gypsy colony.”⁴⁸ This situation is explained not due to medical reasons, but due to the nature of Roma and by generalizing the occupation of Roma people as felons:

The latter situation is explained by the fact that the gypsies, securing their existence through thefts committed across the border by well-organized gangs, resorted less to the public jobs and thus made contact only sporadically with the households of the villagers. In the framework of our activity in the field of decontamination, we paid special attention to beggars, vagabonds, nomadic gypsies and, finally, servants, knowing that these professionals are often true traveling cultures of this kind of parasites.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Bănică, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 124–26.

⁴⁷ Dr. T. Turcu, “Epidemiologia tifusului exantematic clasic,” *Ardealul Medical* 3, no. 7 (1943): 282.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

If this example was the case of a medical journal, the representation of the disease, poverty and unwanted presence was perpetuated in mainstream publications. In one article, they were portrayed as a social problem, “a plague”: “A plague of Blaj. Who does not know that many Gypsies live in Blaj? And do you know where? In the immediate vicinity of the train station, with Barbu Lăutarul street as the entrance to the «Citadel of the Roma».”⁵⁰ Moreover, apart from the distinction between the majority (“us”) and “them”, the article made a second distinction, this time inside of their community based on the profession – if amongst them were masons, musicians, craftsmen, there were no labels but for those without a job or a profession, and the stigma attached was “laziness” and “dirt”:

Except for a few craftsmen – masons and musicians, these gypsies are the most painful expression of what is called laziness and dirt. They knock on every door every day to beg, but never to ask for work. It is shameful for a city the size of Blaj that such “faces” adorn the surroundings of the station, to welcome all the travellers and populate its streets. In a meeting at the town hall, Mr. E. Negruțiu, the mayor of the city, made this sad observation and qualified it, expressing his disturbing thought of moving these “Roma” to another part of the city. We will return with updates.⁵¹

This excerpt brings to our attention another aspect we noticed in the press from the beginning of 1940s: the terminology used – “Gypsy” and “Roma” – the latter mostly used in a pejorative sense. It is known that during the first half of the 20th century, this was a period of struggle for Romania’s Roma have visibility with the state and broader Romanian society. These were the years when Roma communities and groups began to establish associations, publications, attempted at seeking cultural and political recognition and fought for replacing the term “Gypsy” with “Roma”.⁵² It is worth mentioning that some newspapers noticed and paid

⁵⁰ *Țara* II, no. 6 (January 10, 1942): 6.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

⁵² See: István Horváth and Lucian Nastasă, eds., *Rom sau țigan. Dilemele unui etnonim în spațiul românesc* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului Pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2012); Lucian Nastasă and Andreea Varga, eds., *Minorități etnoculturale. Mărturii documentare. Țigani din România (1919-1944)* (Cluj-Napoca: Ethnocultural Diversity Center, 2001).

attention to these endeavours and to the international ones, such as the Gypsy Lore Society's activity.⁵³

The representation of the beggar and the image of children begging was another frequent way to depict Roma in the press. Without nuances or a neutral perspective when reporting the news, it shaped the beggar as an argument for the distinction "us" and "them"/ "good (respectable) people" versus "bad people". To illustrate this distinction, we chose an excerpt from a newspaper article describing in September 1942 one of Bucharest's issues:

The Gypsy children on Pache boulevard and Iancului road are a local calamity for the peaceful inhabitants of these populated neighbourhoods. We receive numerous letters from several well-respected people from around the place, officials, freelancers, etc., who are terrorized by gangs of little beggars and gypsy children, who have no other occupation than to steal from the yards, to rob the fruit trees, break the windows with stones and make an infernal noise all day long.⁵⁴

Two months later, the same publication wrote again on this topic, depicting this time in dark and shades "the beggar children" who are sent to wander downtown to make "white pennies for... black mothers":

The beggar children (...) full of sores, ragged, withered, and persistent like flies before the rain, appeared again in the downtown restaurants, collecting white pennies for... black mothers (*sic*). I had the patience to follow the manoeuvre of the disinherited minor beggars to verify, once again, the suspicion I had.⁵⁵

The last examples mentioned above from 1942-1943 have a complex political background: the government led by Ion Antonescu enforced his personal decision to solve along the "Jewish issue" the "Gypsy issue" together – although there was not a national "Gypsy issue" previously present in Romanian public or political discourse. At first, Roma were not supposed to be deported in Transnistria along with the Jews. Instead, Roma were supposed to be relocated in some special future villages in Bărăgan. However, after Transnistrian territory was regained, it

⁵³ "It is a pity, however, that the snobbery of the Gypsy Academy in Liverpool did not take into account the fact of collaborating in its congresses with the representatives of the 6,000,000 Gypsies, that are spread over the entire surface of the globe.", "Desbaterile Congresului de țiganologie din Liverpool", *Curentul*, no. 3779 (August 10, 1938): 9.

⁵⁴ "Copiii de țigani," *Curentul* XV, no. 5253 (September 30, 1942): 8.

⁵⁵ "Copiii cerșetori," *Curentul* XV, no. 5256 (November 12, 1942): 3.

was decided to deport them along with the Jews because of a faulty census in May 1942.⁵⁶

This political decision led to an increase in stereotypes, eugenic discourses, and aggressive speeches: the representation of the person with a monstrous appearance, soul, and nature. Amongst the stereotypes associated with Roma men was the one of the bear leader – this was referring to the activity of entertaining people in circus with bears, or at various local funfairs. The image of the bear leader is associated with a strong person that can train and have control of a bear. Yet, this image was amplified and doubled by the image of a monstrous creature and an example of an article published in *Curentul* newspaper in June 1943 illustrates how this image was shaped:

The power of the bear leader... Everyone knows the expression: «the power of the bear» but very few know what extraordinary power the bear leader has, that unkempt gypsy; with a fiercely mug and cruel to the poor animal whom he drags starving, tormenting it from dusk till dawn, in order to earn from it good money to spend on drink and for his “gal”.⁵⁷

This portrait of a cruel and vicious person was amplified by the description of atypical human with negative traits that make them unwanted for the society:

(...) but I don't want to talk about the physical strength of the *bar-agladină* (n.a. pejorative for gypsy) with lice in his unkempt hair, the bear leader is usually frail and skinny, and his physical strength relies on his cosh when he doesn't make use of his knife... I want to show another strength of this unwanted Romanian citizen; an inexplicable and strange power which should be abolished as soon as possible.⁵⁸

All the above-mentioned examples draw attention to some of the most common representations and stereotypes spread about Roma people within Romania. These are not singular and there is still an enormous amount of press articles, public speeches, and archives to be studied to offer a larger perspective on the topic. However, we chose to exemplify the dominant images and portraits via press' lens. Therefore, our focus was on the national, mainstream newspapers and a few local publications

⁵⁶ Comisia Interanțională pentru Studierea Holocaustului în România, *Raport final* (Iași: Polirom, 2004), 228–35.

⁵⁷ A. Pomescu, “Puterea ursarului,” *Curentul* XVI, no. 5512, (June 23, 1943): 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

to identify the types of discourse and how (if at all) it changed over time. The international tendencies toward extremes, hate, racism, eugenics, and antisemitism became more and more present in Romania. While the references to Roma communities in 1920s were mostly short and tied to a certain event, this changed in the 1930s. The Roma references expanded and did not peak until the mid-1940s when the main aim seemed to have been to create the image of a social danger and enemy which was always there, but had now become unbearable. For Ion Antonescu's regime, these types of representations were used as an alibi to justify the deportations.

As a last example from 1942, here is an article where the author criticized the fact that Romanians swear a lot, and that this bad behaviour must be corrected. The author uses the Roma people to draw a comparison between "us" – the reliable, the normal – against "them", the untrustworthy, the inferior, or "another race of people":

Our people are used to saying about those who have no control over their mouths that: "they swear like gypsies" or "they swear like a postilion", which, after all, is one and the same thing, because this profession of being a postilion for the boyar's courts was somehow a privilege of the gypsies. The Romanians, however, renounces at this bad behaviour, identifying its origins in the bosom of another race of people.⁵⁹

Conclusions

Although the time frame chosen for this article was the first four decades of the 20th century, the representations, stereotypes, and forms of racial prejudice are (unfortunately) timeless. These tropes are perpetuated, reinterpreted, and used to antagonise and destroy social bonds. Frequently, the political spectrum, tacitly or not, encouraged the dissemination of such negative traits, misperceptions and stereotypes and contributed to a negative public identity that was transferred to the next generations and anathematized Roma minority.

As Ole R. Holsti notes, public opinion is volatile⁶⁰ and is vulnerable to certain messages, especially when these ideas are portrayed as having a potential negative impact. The press, and later forms of media, proved

⁵⁹ "Prohibirea sudălmilor," *Țara* II, no. 379 (August 6, 1942): 1.

⁶⁰ Ole R. Holsti, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: Challenges to the Almond-Lippmann Consensus Mershon Series: Research Programs and Debates," *International Studies Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (December 1992): 439–66.

to be an essential instrument in shaping public opinion about stereotypes, images and events concerning a specific group. As a matter of fact, it “reflects and shapes the attitudes and beliefs others will hold toward that group.”⁶¹ This was the case of Roma groups in Romania, and the press played an important role in disseminating eugenic ideas. Put simply, printed words matter – especially when these words are promoted by reputable intellectuals, doctors, or scientist.⁶²

The selected examples above illustrate how external factors such as political, scientific or religious ones can create an artificial, negative identity of an ethnic group. This allows the majority to then label the minority as “the enemy”, “the problem”, “society’s illness or plague” and enables extreme movements to the right. This was exemplified by Antonescu’s regime to find “solutions” to eliminate “the problem” by ostracizing them even more, or by deporting and considering the possibility of sterilisation.⁶³

These excerpts were examples of small pieces as parts of a complex puzzle that concerns not only the beliefs and faiths of a community, but also its identity as it shaped itself negatively influenced by these representations.⁶⁴ We have highlighted how public opinion is volatile, especially when the press or media can produce their own truth: if the message was that there was “a Gypsy problem”, and the authorities have the obligation to solve it, then the masses, the ordinary Romanians believed that it is justified to take measures against those who were portrayed to represent a real social issue. As Viorel Achim argued, in the process of organizing deportations, many police or gendarme officers were not entirely aware of the fact that the reasons behind deportations were ethically motivated.⁶⁵ Public opinion was exposed to these intoxicating messages, yet the reaction to deportations (such as the attempts of the liberal Constantin I.

⁶¹ Lawrence Bobo, “Race, Public Opinion, and the Social Sphere,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 61, no. 1, Special Issue on Race (1997): 7.

⁶² See: Marius Turda, “Legacies of eugenics: confronting the past, forging a future,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42, no. 9 (July 2022), DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2022.2095222.

⁶³ Achim, *The Roma*, 163–80.

⁶⁴ Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, eds., *Roma Portraits in History. Roma Civic Emancipation Elite in Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe from the 19th Century until World War II* (Brill: Brill Schöningh, 2022).

⁶⁵ Achim, “Romanian Public Reaction to the Deportation of Gypsies to Transnistria,” in *The Roma: a minority in Europe: historical, political and social perspectives*, eds. Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 90.

C. Brătianu, also the interventions of various landowners arguing about the negative impact the deportations will have on the economy or even letters sent to Marshall Antonescu from small groups of villagers)⁶⁶ were not enough to convince Antonescu to stop them. After Antonescu was removed from power, and after the war ended, some of the deported Roma returned. The press toned down its aggressive messages, and references to Roma people became fewer, but other issues remained on the horizon such as the refusal of the newly installed communist regime to acknowledge their existence, the actions against nomad Roma in order to force them to settle and their complicated relation with the communist Romanian state.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, 92–100.

Faith on the Margins: Religion and Civic Emancipation among Roma People during Communist Rule in Romania*

MANUELA MARIN**

This paper analyzes the way in which religion bolstered Roma people's demands for civic emancipation and strengthened their ethnic and cultural identity in 1970s and 1980s Romania. Based on documents mainly from the former secret police, the Securitate, the paper is divided into two main parts. The first is a general overview of the state of the Roma people in communist Romania and the main initiatives for their civic emancipation. Next, the paper uses the perspective of "lived religion" to study three elements that informed the religious life of Roma during the 1970s and 1980s. These are the persistence of religious beliefs, the creation of Gypsy Neo-Protestant churches, and religious pilgrimage. Moreover, the paper will show that religious practice strengthened ethnic identity, favoured individual agency, and raised questions about equal rights and religious freedom.

Keywords: *Roma People, Lived Religion, Civic Emancipation, Neo-Protestantism, "Gypsy Nationalism," "Gypsy Church," Pilgrimage.*

Introduction

At the end of 1986, a report from the Securitate – the Romanian secret police – identified “a growing preoccupation with Gypsy intellectuals converting to Pentecostalism.”¹ From the Securitate’s point of view, this situation posed a problem due to the foreign contacts it entailed. The Romanian secret police also connected conversion to Neo-Protestantism to the birth of what it called “Gypsy nationalism,” namely the demands for the recognition of Roma people as a national minority. Indeed, the 1980s witnessed a growing number of requests for the emancipation of Roma people. These came from certain Roma leaders, including Ioan Cioabă and Nicolae Gheorghe, and from Roma who had converted to Pentecostalism or other Neo-Protestant religions. This paper will analyze

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¹ Arhiva Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității (hereafter abbreviated as ACNSAS), Fond Documentar, dosar 8685, f. 56.

the way in which religion was used to strengthen Roma people's demands for civic emancipation during the 1970s and 1980s. Its main argument is that religion, especially Neo-Protestantism, bolstered Roma people's demands for civic emancipation and contributed to strengthening their ethnic and cultural identity.

Until the fall of communist rule in Romania in December 1989, Roma people were not officially recognized as a national minority, a situation only deepening their social and economic marginalization. Not only did religion remain an important part of Roma people's lives, but it also became a means to overcome their marginalization through the emancipatory faith-based initiatives spearheaded by two Roma leaders, Nicolae Gheorghe and Ioan Cioabă. The creation and running of the so-called "Gypsy churches" (exclusively for Roma people with religious services held in the "Gypsy language") underlines the fact that Roma people envisaged themselves as constituting a national minority. Having their own church was a way of facilitating their social integration or acceptance within Romanian society, given that members of other minority communities (e.g., Germans and Hungarians) attended their "own" churches where sermons were held in their mother tongue. The authorities' refusal to grant authorization for these Neo-Protestant churches was countered with strong political arguments: Romania was a signatory to a series of international agreements obliging it to observe religious freedom and other minority rights. Religion empowered Roma people in their struggle for civic emancipation from another perspective as well. As my paper will show, the traditional pilgrimage to Bistrița Monastery in Vâlcea County strengthened Roma people's ethnic identity and provided their leaders with an opportunity to exhibit the traditional richness of Roma folklore.

For the purposes of this paper, I define civic emancipation as the "constant struggle to achieve the equal civic status of the Roma as an ethnic community and as individual citizens with their rights in all fields of all social life (political, religious, educational, economic, cultural etc.)."² Focusing on how religion contributed to Roma civic emancipation is essential for two reasons. On the one hand, it reveals that participation in religious life led Roma to actively seek to change their civic status on both the collective and individual level. On the other hand, through specific means including pilgrimages and religious services, the Roma people

² Elena Marushiakova, Vesselin Popov, "Introduction," in *Roma Voices in History, A Source Book*. eds. Marushiakova, Popov (Paderborn: Brill, 2021), xxiv.

used religious affiliation to strengthen their ethnic identity and ease their acceptance as equal members of Romanian society. Although the primary sources in this study are documents from the communist authorities, they contain hints of the Roma people's "lived religion", or in other words, "how religion is practiced (...), encountered and experienced" in everyday life. "Lived religion" also raises the issue of "what «counts» as religion and who decides this." In this case, I subscribe to the notion that "what is commonly understood to be «religion» is shaped through countless daily practices, habits, and patterns of social life."³

A significant part of "lived religion" is religious pilgrimage. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, pilgrimage is "a journey undertaken for a religious motive" to "a specific place that has been sanctified by association with a divinity or other holy personage."⁴ Moreover, as Victor Turner and Edith Turner state in their classical analysis of pilgrimage in the Christian world,

all sites of pilgrimage (...) are believed to be places where miracles once happened, still happen and may happen again. Even where the time of miraculous healings is reluctantly conceded to be past, believers firmly hold that faith is strengthened and salvation better secured by personal exposure to the beneficent unseen presence of the Blessed Mary or the local saints.⁵

While pilgrimage is "an individual good work," it also brings individuals close to "like-minded souls", becoming a social enterprise in which "organized parties make the journey; devotions at the shrines are collective and according to the schedule."⁶ Consequently, visits to sacred places create or reinforce social identities "that are lived out as intrinsic parts of the journey."⁷ Lastly, pilgrimages are responsible for reinforcing specific conservative values of gender and sometimes favour alternative

³ Kim Knibbe and Helena Kupari, "Theorizing lived religion: introduction," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 35, no. 2 (2020): 159 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537903.2020.1759897>. On "lived religion", see Meredith B. McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴ Simon Michael Coleman, "Pilgrimage", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/pilgrimage-religion>, accessed August 26, 2022.

⁵ Victor Turner, Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 6.

⁶ *Ibidem*, 31.

⁷ Willy Jansen, "Old Routes, New Journeys: Reshaping Gender, Nation and Religion in European Pilgrimage," in *Gender, Nation and Religion in European Pilgrimage*, eds. Willy Jansen, Catrien Notermans (New York: Routledge, 2016), 6.

interpretations of the supernatural that subvert the dominant understandings of it.⁸ Such subversion can be related to myths surrounding the development of the pilgrimage over time.⁹ This study takes up the traditional religious pilgrimage of the Căldărari (Coppersmith) Gypsies to the Bistrița Monastery in Vâlcea County during the 1980s. The examination of the event, which takes place yearly on the 8th of September, will show how the Căldărari Roma preserved the Orthodox faith¹⁰ but also the way in which this event reinforced the ethnic identity of Roma people in support of their claim for civic emancipation. The notion of “Lived religion” demonstrates the way in which Roma people appropriated the dominant (Orthodox) religion and adapted it in order to transform a mainstream religious celebration into a Gypsy celebration.

This research contributes to a growing body of scholarship that examines the history of Neo-Protestant denominations during communist rule in Romania and their influence on Roma believers. Vasiliță Croitor¹¹ and Valeriu Andriescu¹² have studied Pentecostalism during the communist period, but they devote scant attention to the situation of Roma converts to Pentecostalism. Also, Dorin Dobrinu’s excellent overview of Neo-Protestant denominations contains but scattered mentions of Roma believers.¹³ By contrast, my paper maps the growing influence of Pentecostalism (and other Neo-Protestant denominations) among Roma communities during the 1980s. It also illustrates how Roma believers managed to organize themselves even though Romanian authorities and the official leaders of religious denominations refused to accept them as part of (their) religious community.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 9.

⁹ Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage*, 23.

¹⁰ The Căldărari Roma are a group of Roma people whose traditional craft is copper-smithing. They make and repair copper vessels for domestic use (cauldrons such as those for making țuica, trays, pans) and religious purposes (baptismal fonts, church chalices). See Delia Grigore, Gh. Săraru, *Istorie și tradiții române* (București: Salvați Copiii, 2006), 23, 35–36.

¹¹ Vasiliță Croitor, *Răscumpărarea memoriei: Cultul Penticostal în perioada comunistă* (Medgidia: Succeed Publishing, 2010).

¹² Valeriu Andreiescu, *Istoria penticostalismului românesc*, vol. 1-2 (Oradea: Casa Cărții, 2012).

¹³ Dorin Dobrinu, “Sub puterea cezarului,” in *Omul evanghelic: o explorare a comunităților protestante românești*, eds. Dorin Dobrinu and Dănuț Mănăstireanu (Iași: Polirom, 2018), 137–243.

Oral history has also allowed scholars to better understand religious practices among Neo-Protestant denominations during the communist period. Monica Vlase has focused on the lives of Pentecostal believers in Cluj-Napoca,¹⁴ while Călin Olariu has investigated how conversion to Adventism changed the lives of the Gabor Roma in Mureș County.¹⁵ Instead, my paper focuses on religious practices as recorded in official documents and memoirs and considers them part of “the lived religion” of the Roma people. Several studies have considered the way in which leaders or members of Neo-Protestant denominations have pressured the Romanian communist regime to observe the rights of national and religious minorities.¹⁶ I add to these valuable contributions by showing how Baptist and Pentecostal dissident Roma believers openly challenged the communist regime and its religious policy on a daily basis. For instance, they ignored official regulations and organized illegal “Gypsy churches” which were exclusively for Roma believers and in which self-proclaimed Roma pastors performed religious services in the “Gypsy language”, acting as spokesmen for the community by denouncing the authorities’ abuses against Roma believers.

The Securitate, documents from which form the basis of my investigation, collected information about the religious life of the Roma people as part of its operations designed to halt the spread of Neo-Protestant denominations in Romania and to monitor the foreign contacts of Roma local leaders and their “nationalist” activities in pursuit of recognition of the Roma as a national minority. From these documents, I only use raw data (e.g., about the numbers of Roma believers) and personal documents (e.g., letters, declarations, transcripts of interrogations) that the Securitate collected to meet its operational needs. I am fully aware that the secret police nearly always instrumentalized this information to portray local Roma leaders as being involved in “hostile” actions against the communist regime. I do not take such portrayals at face value, and the

¹⁴ Monica Vlase, “Viața și practica religioasă a comunității creștin penticostale din Cluj-Napoca în perioada dictaturii comuniste,” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Orală*, 2002, 133–56.

¹⁵ Călin Olariu, *Povestea mea-povestea noastră. Gaborii din județul Mureș* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, Mega, 2016).

¹⁶ Dobrințu, “Culte neoprotestante și drepturile omului în România. Un memoriu din 1977,” *Archiva Moldaviae* IV (4), 2021, 351–402; Marius Silveșan, Bogdan Emanuel Răduț, *Culte neoprotestante și drepturile omului: un strigăt la Radio Europa Liberă* (April 1977) (Cluj-Napoca: Risoprint, 2014), etc.

collection and instrumentalization of this information by the Securitate in fact aids my analysis in two ways. On the one hand, it identifies the secret police's and, by extension, the regime's fears or concerns about the influence of Neo-Protestant denominations among the Roma. These fears concerned Roma people's initiatives to secure recognition as a national minority. On the other hand, documenting the "hostile" actions of Roma converts to Neo-Protestant denominations also entailed the exhaustive collection of information, including direct or indirect recording of personal testimonies by Roma leaders who expressed opinions about the social and political marginalization of their ethnic group.

The paper comprises two main parts. The first part deals with the Roma people's situation in communist Romania and the events that led to initiatives for their civic emancipation. In the second part, I discuss how religion supported these initiatives by focusing on the persistence of religious beliefs, the creation of the so-called Gypsy Neo-Protestant churches, and religious pilgrimage.

Fighting for their Rights: Roma People in Communist Romania

The change of regime in 1948 did not significantly alter the situation of the Roma people in Romania. Although they were numbered separately in censuses, the communist authorities did not recognize them as a national minority.¹⁷ One can only speculate about the reasons behind this decision. It was probably related to the many problems the so-called "Roma issue" posed for the communist regime, which questioned their social and cultural "worth" as a minority. It is impossible to accurately estimate the number of ethnic Roma living in Romania at the time. Some refrained from declaring their Roma identity, instead identifying as Romanians or Hungarians, depending on local circumstances. Furthermore, nomadic and semi-nomadic¹⁸ Roma eluded the

¹⁷ For more details on the subject, see Viorel Achim, "The Communist Authorities' Refusal to Recognize Roma as a National Minority," *Baltic Worlds*, IX, no. 2-3 (2018), 51-57, https://balticworlds.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/BW_2.3_2018_Viorel_Achim_pp51-57.pdf, accessed September 13, 2022.

¹⁸ According to Romanian authorities, *nomadic Roma* people lived exclusively in tents, were always on the move, and resided in one place only for several days. *Semi-nomadic Roma* people sought refuge in "their shabby and dirty cottages" during winter. They traveled for the remainder of the year to various places to procure raw materials for "their rudimentarily manufactured" objects to be sold during their trips to the country. See, Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (hereafter abbreviated as ANIC), *fond*

official censuses since they were always on the move.¹⁹ Another difficulty was related to the partial registration of Roma people in public records. Despite their efforts, some Roma people did not hold any identification documents (birth certificates, ID cards). They did not register their marriage with the Office of Vital Records and some newborns were never registered in public records. Additionally, studies carried out in the 1950s suggest that some only had a first name and no surname.²⁰ No significant improvements were achieved until the late 1970s, especially concerning nomadic and semi-nomadic Roma, who remained outside public records and had no ID documents.²¹

Social aspects influenced how Romanian authorities referred to the “Roma issue.” From their point of view, the nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle was the leading cause of endemic poverty among the Roma. Selling artisanal objects or performing unskilled seasonal work did not provide them with sufficient income for a decent living. Traveling also prevented them from attending school, which would enable them to acquire professional training.²² Extreme poverty also reached the settled Roma, and was mainly due to the high level of illiteracy within the community. Illiteracy put professional training and working in the state system out of their reach.²³ “Social parasitism” (i.e., the refusal to work in exchange for benefits offered by the state) was another dimension of the Roma social issue. Official documents mentioned that some Roma refused to carry out “activities useful for society” while at the same time being beneficiaries of social welfare.²⁴ In addition to not compensating for the social benefits they were granted by the state through productive activities, some ethnic Roma were also involved in criminal activities.²⁵

The Romanian regime considered forced sedentarization to be the best solution for solving the “Roma issue.” At the end of the 1940s, the

Consiliul de Miniștri–Subsecretariatul de Stat al Naționalităților, dosar 1929/1952, folios 26, 29, 39, 71.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, ff. 33, 71–73.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 31.

²¹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR–Secția Organizatorică, dosar 23/1977, f. 3v.

²² ANIC, Fond Consiliul de Miniștri–Subsecretariatul de Stat al Naționalităților, dosar 1929/1952, ff. 30–31, 73–85.

²³ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR–Secția Organizatorică, dosar 25/1978, f. 2f.

²⁴ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR–Secția Organizatorică, dosar 25/1978, f. 3 f-v and dosar 23/1977, f. 2 v.

²⁵ *Idem*, dosar 23/1977, f. 4 v and dosar 25/1978, f. 2v.

Roma people's sedentarization became part of the "civilizing" plans of the new regime. These plans had the objective of "emancipating from a material and spiritual point of view" all segments of the population (including national minorities or specific social categories) who had been socially, culturally and politically mistreated during the former regime. Revisited in the late 1970s, the issue of sedentarization once again followed this civilizing pattern. However, this time the purpose was not the integration of the Roma, but their assimilation into mainstream society.²⁶ As shown elsewhere, Roma people identified various ways of resisting the official plans for their assimilation during the 1970s and 1980s. The Securitate labeled these activities as "Gypsy nationalism." They included refusal of forced sedentarization, denouncing their lack of religious rights, protests against ethnic discrimination, and writing memos addressed to Romanian leadership about the problematic situation in which the Roma people found themselves. Lastly, they organized public events which demonstrated the cultural richness and distinct ethnic identity of Roma people, thus supporting their claims for recognition as a national minority.²⁷

Ioan Cioabă and Nicolae Gheorghe²⁸ were the prominent Roma leaders who spoke out against the communist regime's discrimination against the Roma people. As a sociologist, Nicolae Gheorghe conducted his research among Roma communities in Sibiu, Teleorman, Braşov, and Vaslui counties and collected evidence in order to build a case for recognizing the Roma as a national minority. His research reports highlighted the problems confronting this population. Both leaders considered civic emancipation as the principal means for improving the social, cultural and political situation of the Roma people.²⁹ Cioabă was the leader (bulibasha) of the Căldărari (Kalderash) Roma in Romania and a close

²⁶ Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2004), 189–202.

²⁷ Manuela Marin, ed., *Romii și regimul communist din România*, vol. 1 (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2017), 38–68.

²⁸ Nicolae Gheorghe was a Roma sociologist and a close collaborator of Ioan Cioabă. After the fall of the communist regime, he founded Romani CRISS, which became one of the leading Roma rights NGOs in Romania, and was head of the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues in the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. See: Dezideriu Gergely, "Introduction," *Roma Rights* 1 (2015): 3, http://www.erc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/roma-rights-1-2015-in-search-of-a-contemporary-roma-identity-in-memoriam-nicolae-gheorghe.pdf, accessed September 13, 2022.

²⁹ Marin, *Romii și regimul communist*, vol. 1, 42–47.

collaborator of the communist regime.³⁰ In 1981 he was elected to the Presidium of the Romani Union, an event which facilitated his contacts with foreign Roma leaders and allowed him to learn about the situation of Roma in other communist countries.³¹ Also, new means were identified about how he and Gheorghe could plead the case of the Roma minority in front of the Romanian authorities.³²

Based on Gheorghe's research conclusions, Cioabă (alone or perhaps together with Gheorghe) addressed two memoranda to the Romanian authorities in 1981 and 1982. At the same time, in October 1982, they had the opportunity to present the ideas of these two documents regarding Roma (civic) emancipation during a meeting with Vasile Vălcu, the first vice-president of the State Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania.³³ These two documents underlined the need for the "integration of Gypsy families into work and society." They identified several solutions to this end, including sedentarization, employment, children's schooling, political representation at various levels, and the promotion of Roma ethnic and cultural identity.³⁴ Gheorghe and Cioabă's proposals fell on deaf ears as the Romanian authorities refused to recognize the Roma as a national minority until the fall of the communist regime in December 1989.

Similar initiatives, this time faith-based, multiplied during the 1970s and 1980s. The next section of the paper will show how religion played a significant role in raising awareness among a subset of the Roma about

³⁰ For more information about Ioan Cioabă, see Marin, "«Un prieten devotat nouă»: Ion Cioabă și Securitatea comunistă," in *Traversând comunismul. Conviețuire, conformism, compromis*, eds. Lucian Vasile, Constantin Vasilescu, Alina Urs (Iași: Editura Polirom, 2016), 361–83.

³¹ The Romani Union is an international organization created at the beginning of the 70s which is affiliated with the UN and brings together activists and researchers of Roma and non-Roma ethnicity. It represents and defends the interests of Roma across the world and promotes their cultural traditions, customs, and language. At the same time, the Romani Union is meant to cooperate with national authorities to solve social, economic, and cultural problems of the Roma. See: Ioana Bunescu, *Roma in Europe: The Politics of Collective Identity Formation* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), 83–94; Ian Hancock, "The East European Roots of Romani Nationalism," in *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe*, eds., David Crowe and John Holsti (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1991): 145–50.

³² Marin, *Romii și regimul comunist*, vol. 1, 40–42.

³³ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, dosar 8685, ff. 263–65, 292–97; ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, dosar 234356, f. 196.

³⁴ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, dosar 8685, ff. 263–65, 292–97.

their ethnic identity. Religion and religious practice also influenced their decision to seek equal rights in Romanian society.

Religion, Religious Practices and Emancipation. Persistence of Religious Beliefs

Although communist rule in Romania lasted nearly forty-five years, religion remained an essential part of the lives of the Roma people. The Securitate's inquiries about Roma people's foreign contacts in 1986 provide a comprehensive image of their religious beliefs and the increasing influence of Neo-Protestant denominations among them. Despite competition from Neo-Protestantism, the Christian Orthodox faith remained the main religion of the Roma people. Several county departments of the Securitate (Gorj, Neamț, Olt, Hunedoara, Sibiu, Buzău, Botoșani, Vâlcea, Vaslui, Vrancea, Bistrița-Năsăud, Tulcea, Bacău) reported that the great majority of the Gypsies within their jurisdiction were Orthodox. In some cases, such as Tulcea County, some Roma were Muslim.³⁵ In 1989 in Harghita County,³⁶ Roma people were Catholic and spoke Hungarian instead of Romani or Romanian.³⁷

From the point of view of the Romanian authorities, the increased appeal that Neo-Protestant (especially Pentecostal) denominations started to have among the Roma people was a worrisome evolution. In 1986 the local branches of the Securitate recorded the existence of a Neo-Protestant community in almost every county. For example, in the city of Arad, Roma people attended a legal Baptist church and branch of the Pentecostal church located in one of the prominent neighbourhoods in Arad.³⁸ In the commune of Pătrăuți in Suceava County, 70 Roma families (or about 600 out of a population of 1,500) were members of the Pentecostal Church.³⁹ A small group of 60 Roma Gabor from Mureș and Sibiu counties gathered in an unauthorized Pentecostal house of prayer in Oradea.⁴⁰ Most of the Gypsies in Bistrița-Năsăud County were Orthodox, as out of 12,000 Roma identified only 150 converted to Pentecostalism,

³⁵ Idem, dosar 4965, vol. 1, f. 19 v and dosar 144 vol, 11, ff. 220, 224 f, 225, 227–28, 230–31, 237, 241, 244, 249 f, 252, 270 f-v.

³⁶ Harghita was a county where many Hungarians lived and continue to live today.

³⁷ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, dosar 144 vol. 13, f. 60.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 221.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 222 f.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 223 f.

21 to Baptism and 14 to the Adventist denomination. In one rural settlement (Corvinești), the Gypsy (46) outnumbered Romanians in the local Pentecostal community.⁴¹ In Reșița (Caraș-Severin County), two Pentecostal groups of Roma attended religious services in unauthorized houses of prayer.⁴² The situation was similar in Timișoara, where Roma Pentecostals were divided among two churches, one that functioned legally and one that lacked official authorization from the Romanian state.⁴³ There were two Pentecostal groups in Maramureș County: one with 50 members in Baia Mare and another with 35 in Șomcuța Mare commune.⁴⁴ In Dâmbovița County, the majority of the Roma people attended the Pentecostal houses of prayer in the villages of Fântânele, Gloveanu, and Drăgăiești.⁴⁵ Small numbers of Roma converted to Pentecostalism in other counties: 10 in Hunedoara County, 4 out of 5,800 in Constanța County, and 19 out of 430 in Cheud village (Sălaj County).⁴⁶

The documents of the Securitate recorded partial data about the numerical and geographical distribution of Roma believers only for the year 1986. Although gathering information about Roma's religious beliefs was not an end in itself and served operational purposes, this data reveals two significant trends. On the one hand, it proves that at the end of the 1980s the Orthodox faith not only survived but also dominated religious life in different Roma communities across the country. This situation was especially true in the former historical provinces of Moldavia and Wallachia, where the Romanian Orthodox Church had a strong influence.

On the other hand, Neo-Protestant denominations (especially Pentecostalism) began to gain ground in Roma communities, particularly in the counties near the borders. However, the number of Roma believers in these denominations remained insignificant compared to the total number of Gypsies and other people living in those areas. The Securitate identified Roma converts in several cities in Romania (county seats, in fact). The explanation for this data is two-fold: first, the Securitate tended to focus on cities and regions, especially if they were near the state border. Another explanation owes to a general tendency noticed across the entire

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, f. 249 f.

⁴² *Ibidem*, f. 260.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, f. 264.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 236.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 246 f-v.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, ff. 225, 234, 246 f-v

country, which was that Neo-Protestant denominations (or sects, as the authorities pejoratively labeled them) won adherents especially in urban areas.⁴⁷

Conversion to another religion or the refusal to convert attest to the strength of religious faith among Roma people. Aiming to gain as many new Roma believers as possible, (Roma) Neo-Protestant and Protestant pastors tried to convert local leaders, hoping that their communities would soon follow in their footsteps. Given the fact that Căldărari Roma recognized Ioan Cioabă as their leader *bulibasha*, he received several proposals for conversion. In August 1986, Cioabă received visits from three priests (two of them from West Germany) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. They told him that “they were the messengers of God, and God required them to make [the Roma people] repent.” They argued that only the Gypsies were missing from the Bible and that “the Bible cannot be closed” for this reason. The religious emissaries promised that a priest would be appointed for the Roma community in Sibiu who would explain “the real meaning of the Bible and rid them of their sins.” According to his testimony, Cioabă refused politely, saying that “he and other Gypsies are believers of the Orthodox denomination.”⁴⁸ Another attempt to convert Cioabă also took place in October 1986. Visiting Gabor Iancu, the bulibasha of Oradea, Cioabă met a Roma convert who proposed to convert him to Pentecostalism. He argued that bringing Cioabă “to the faith would mean a lot because then all Gypsies in Romania would repent.” The bulibasha of Sibiu replied that he could not convert because “he had to marry his daughters, to be like the others, and a decent man had to respect his faith.” When his interlocutor asked him about the possibility of establishing a Gypsy church, Cioabă answered that “We [Roma] do not deal with such things because we have the Orthodox Church for prayer, and if one prays at home, it is the same as in a church.”⁴⁹ If Cioabă successfully resisted all attempts to convert until the end of 1989, others did not. A well-known case is that of the famous Gypsy musicians Gabi Luncă and Ion Onoriu, who converted to Pentecostalism in 1970.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Idem, vol. 11, ff. 187–88.

⁴⁸ Idem, dosar 8685, f. 122 f-v.

⁴⁹ Idem, vol. 11, f. 172; Fond Informativ, 375351, vol. 1, f. 36 f.

⁵⁰ Gabi Luncă and Ion Onoriu, *Povestea vieții noastre* (Medgidia: Succeed Publishing, 2010), 85–86.

Consequently, the Gypsy Pentecostalist community in Bucharest and around the city increased despite being repeatedly harassed by the Securitate.⁵¹

Lastly, the persistence of religious beliefs among the Roma people was connected to their “lived religion.” The reports of the Securitate mentioned that Roma believers regularly attended their local church or house of prayer. Small groups gathered most of the time in unauthorized buildings, usually in one of the believers’ home or the pastor’s home, to attend religious service. Participation in an illegal religious meeting posed a great danger for those present. They were breaking the law and could receive fines or be detained by the local police.⁵² Despite that, Roma people continued to regularly attend religious services and pray with their “brothers.”⁵³ Gabi Luncă remembered how conversion to Pentecostalism changed her life: her family grew to include four more children, while she and Ion Onoriu gave up drinking and other forms of entertainment. They usually attended the religious service at “Gypsy gatherings because there were many of our relatives and we felt very good among them.” They even considered giving up their careers as musicians, although singing was their source of income and they found a way to reconcile their work with their religion. After each show, Gabi Luncă and Ion Onoriu contacted “their brothers” and joined them for prayer or helped those in need.⁵⁴

Roma people’s religious materials usually consisted of “old, dirty and tattered Bibles and several audio cassettes with low-quality recordings in the Gypsy language.”⁵⁵ Some Pentecostal communities were fortunate enough to have a VCR “for playing tapes with religious content during sect meetings.”⁵⁶ Romanian authorities strictly forbade missionary work, but this did not prevent some Roma believers from trying to win new adherents.⁵⁷ After converting to Pentecostalism, Căldărariu Carolea

⁵¹ Croitor, *Răscumpărarea memoriei*, 247.

⁵² Dobrinu, “Sub puterea cezarului,” 164.

⁵³ Luncă and Onoriu, *Povestea vieții noastre*, 89–90, 93.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 90–91, 93.

⁵⁵ ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, dosar 1041381, f. 15 f.

⁵⁶ Idem, dosar 326720, f. 39 f.

⁵⁷ Idem, dosar 140878, f. 34 f.

engaged in the “work of persuading and corrupting others to join this Pentecostal sect”⁵⁸ in his home village of Cristian, Sibiu County.

The Securitate documents also provide details regarding the organization of Pentecostal religious services. One of them concerns the ritual of washing believers’ feet, which the Securitate officials acknowledged as being “an important thing in the observance of this religion”:

Each month there is a day when men and women, in separate groups, sit in pairs facing each other across a basin of water and wash the other’s feet in turns, thus mirroring apostle John’s washing of Christ in the River Jordan.⁵⁹

Although the ritual of washing feet is not specific to Pentecostalism,⁶⁰ the fact that Roma people performed it (and the Securitate recorded it) demonstrates their observance of religious rituals and perhaps the fact that they understood its meaning. Washing each other’s feet served as a reminder of Jesus Christ washing the feet of his disciples during the Last Supper, and thus of the way in which He set an example of humility and love for others.⁶¹ Surprisingly, the cited fragment refers to the baptism of Jesus Christ in the River Jordan and equates it wrongly with the feet washing ritual of the believers. In Neo-Protestant denominations, pastors perform a baptism in running water, whereas the washing of the feet is a religious ceremony involving believers. The purpose of the two rituals is also different.

The last point to consider when discussing “lived religion” is what Roma people “counted” as religion. For some Roma converts to Pentecostalism, their religion was not the officially recognized Pentecostal denomination. Instead, they adhered to the Pentecostal offshoots that flourished during the communist period. The Romanian authorities considered them “Pentecostal dissidents.”⁶² Lacking the support of Pentecostal leadership and Romanian authorities, the Roma people took matters into their own hands: they named their own pastors and began

⁵⁸ Idem, dosar 8702, vol. 9, f. 189.

⁵⁹ Idem, dosar 8702, vol. 9, f. 238.

⁶⁰ Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia, “Foot washing,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/foot-washing>, accessed September 2, 2022.

⁶¹ Amanda Idleman, “Why Did Jesus Wash the Disciples’ Feet at Passover,” <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/holidays/why-did-jesus-wash-the-disciples-feet-at-passover.html>, accessed September 2, 2022; <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-qa/qa-archives/question/what-is-the-meaning-of-foot-washing/>, accessed September 2, 2022.

⁶² Dobrinu, “Sub puterea cezarului,” 164–65.

to perform religious services and other acts of worship for the local Roma community without official authorization.⁶³ As I will show in the next section, Roma pastors came out and asked for Gypsy churches. Moreover, they framed their request as part of the larger project of the civic emancipation of their Roma believers.

“Gypsy Churches”

One major problem facing Neo-Protestant denominations was that houses of prayer were small and overcrowded. Requests for opening new places of worship multiplied as the number of believers increased. In order to function, a church or a house of prayer had to secure an authorization from the Department of Religious Denominations (hereby the DRD). Similarly, it was this department that granted individuals the official authorization to act as priest or pastor in one or several communities. The DRD frequently delayed granting their approval for the buying and opening of new houses of prayer, or the rebuilding or expansion of existing houses of prayer, in order to halt or hinder the spread of these so-called “sects.”⁶⁴ If the initial plan for repairs or reconstruction of a building resulted in its expansion, the local authorities (*împuternicitul de culte* or the local inspector or representative of the DRD, or the construction or building inspectors) intervened. The pastors were fined and new decisions were imposed to restore the building to its initial form, accompanied by threats to demolish the construction which were occasionally even implemented. Consequently, many religious buildings functioned pending official authorization or continued to function even if the authorities refused to grant authorization. The existence of illegal houses of prayer was possible because some of them were the personal houses of pastors or believers.

Another problem that undermined the functioning of Neo-Protestant denominations was the lack of religious personnel. The communist state refrained from using open violence against the believers and

⁶³ Croitor, *Răscumpărarea memoriei*, 247.

⁶⁴ The Romanian authorities used the pejorative label “sects” to identify the Neo-Protestant denominations (Pentecostals, Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Christian Evangelical Church) officially recognized by state and other religious groups, including Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Lord’s Army, the Stylists within the Orthodox Church, the Bethanists within the Reformed Church, or the dissident Pentecostals within the Pentecostal Church that were not granted official recognition and thus, functioned illegally.

focused instead on undermining the functioning of religious institutions. Consequently, the Romanian state imposed the so-called *assignation* (in Romanian, *arondare*), under which two or three groups of believers in close proximity to one another merged into one community. Those communities that could not be merged because of the distance between them continued to function as separate entities (in Romanian, *filie*) or branches of an existing house of prayer. As a result, a single pastor was forced to perform the religious service in three to five places of worship. This situation undermined the quality of the pastor's work and pushed believers to gather clandestinely and choose a member of their community to perform the needed religious services.⁶⁵

Securitate documents record many cases in which (self-made) Roma pastors organized illegal religious gatherings. They would later ask for approval to have exclusive places of worship (the so-called "Gypsy Churches") for their Roma believers. The first cases were documented in the beginning of the 1970s and their number increased during the last decade of communist rule. These requests were justified by the need for religious personnel within the local community. Many Roma believers did not have the means to travel to the next locality to attend religious service. The case of the Adventist community of 14-16 Gypsies in Nou village, Sibiu County, is worth mentioning. For a period of time, this group of believers gathered for religious service in their village. Then, for unknown reasons, the leadership of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church withdrew its official endorsement and advised them not to gather anymore. One of the community members, Ținea Toma, reacted by asking the Adventist Church to get permission from the DRD to meet again in Nou. He explained that Roma Adventists lacked the financial means to go to Sibiu every Saturday to attend religious services. When discussing the situation in Nou, one of the Securitate's informers mentioned that left without spiritual guidance, Roma believers could be easily convinced to convert to the Reformed Church. The same informer mistakenly believed that this Church was not an officially recognized denomination.⁶⁶ In fact, the Reformed Church was one of the denominations officially recognized by the communist regime. The "source" who informed the Securitate about Ținea Toma probably did not know this detail. Alternatively, he

⁶⁵ Dobrinu, "Sub puterea cezarului," 154, 162, 169-71.

⁶⁶ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, dosar 8702, vol. 9, f. 234.

or she was talking about the Bethanists, a dissident group within the Reformed Church not recognized by the Romanian authorities.

Ioan Stoian was another (self-proclaimed) Roma pastor who became a spokesman for Pentecostal Roma in Reșița, Caraș-Severin County. He performed the religious service illegally in his own house “mentioning that the sermons were in the Gypsy language.”⁶⁷ Because the location was illicit, Stoian applied to obtain authorization for his house of prayer in 1983. The authorization was not granted, and moreover local authorities fined him with 32,000 lei for having demolished two walls to transform his house into a place of worship. Furthermore, the local council of Reșița asked him to pay for the reconstruction of the two walls, probably to increase the building’s structural stability. Instead of acquiescing, Ioan Stoian and his wife sent a letter of protest to unnamed central authorities (most likely to the DRD). In their message, the Stoians expressed their wish that “the many men and women of Gypsy nationality” might open a “Gypsy church in our mother tongue.” They also wrote about the fine they received for transforming (probably without authorization) their home into a Roma house of prayer, and about the sacrifices they made to comply with the rules of local authorities (they built one of the two walls). Consequently, they requested authorization for their house of prayer in the name of the Roma believers in Reșița. The motives they invoked in support of their actions were the legal status of Pentecostalism in Romania (“our faith is recognized by our state, in which we live; we are not a secret faith, we do not do any kind of politics or propaganda, we keep public order and discipline”) and the respect of minority rights. In relation to this last argument, the Stoians invoked a decree signed by the Romanian president, Nicolae Ceaușescu and published in *Buletinul Oficial* on 20 November 1974.⁶⁸ This was Decree no. 212 for ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.⁶⁹ In particular, the latter states in Article 27 that:

In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own

⁶⁷ Idem, dosar 144, vol. 11, f. 260.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, vol. 12, ff. 271–73.

⁶⁹ http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act?ida=56797, accessed September 3, 2022.

culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.⁷⁰

Ioan Stoian, a Roma himself, sacrificed his home and money and risked his freedom to organize a Gypsy Pentecostal Church. Moreover, he dared to protest against the decision that denied his church authorization. Besides highlighting the infringement of religious freedom at hand, Stoian also pointed to the fact that the Roma believers who attended his religious services formed a minority entitled to practice their religion and use their language in religious practices. Consequently, in this case, religion became a means for raising a community's awareness of their ethnic identity and supporting their quest for civic emancipation. At that time when the communist regime refused to recognize Roma as a minority and strove to erase any trace of their ethnic identity, the request for a Gypsy Church in which the Gypsy language was spoken which was framed in terms of religious freedom and the observance of minority rights constitutes unquestionable proof of the role religion played in supporting Roma's civic emancipation and social integration into Romanian society.

The bulibasha of Oradea, Iancu Gabor, was another (self-proclaimed) Roma pastor who ran an unauthorized Pentecostal "church". He was a Gabor Roma, just like his coreligionists, who had come to Oradea from Sibiu and Mureş counties.⁷¹ He was first targeted by the Securitate in October 1979, when the Miliția in Târgu Mureş stopped a car in which he was travelling with several others. A search of the car's trunk revealed "eight Bibles in Romanian and Hungarian, books of religious poems, one cassette player and its bag, eight cassettes with religious songs."⁷² It was not unusual for the Securitate to use the Miliția as a smoke screen for its investigative activities or to start an investigation based on their findings. Those in the car were taken to the station and questioned, afterwards signing declarations among which Iancu Gabor's stands out. He had the courage to denounce the discriminatory behaviour of the Miliția against them because they were Roma: "People should not immediately suspect me of all sorts of things because I am a Gypsy. I feel totally wronged for

⁷⁰ "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights," <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>, accessed September 3, 2022.

⁷¹ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, dosar 144 vol. 11, f. 223 f.

⁷² ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, dosar 375351 vol. 1, ff. 3 f-v-4.

the way I was treated and outright robbed on the open road.”⁷³ He criticized the fact that the Miliția seized the goods found in his car without any justification and did not provide him with an “act of confiscation.” He openly condemned the abuses of the Romanian authorities, and underlined that he did not break and had not broken any laws:

I cannot understand, nor do I know of any law that would give anyone the right to violate my personal property without reason, doing as he pleases and whatever his eyes see. I cannot be accused of breaking any law. I have not created any propaganda, and I think I have the right to listen and read what I like.⁷⁴

In order to further underline the abusive behaviour of the Miliția, Iancu Gabor invoked Articles 18 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. According to him, these articles “give me the right to be free in thought, conscience and religion.” He asked rhetorically, “Knowing this text, I wonder, based on which letter of the law were my things confiscated?”⁷⁵ Indeed, article 18 states that “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”⁷⁶ and this was the main argument invoked by Gabor in denouncing the abuses of the Romanian authorities against him in Târgu Mureș. Iancu Gabor and Ioan Stoian invoked the same international document in condemning the abuses they endured from the authorities as Roma and Pentecostal believers. The fact that they opted for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to defend their rights instead of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 ran counter to the general tendency of that time, as protests against communist rule in the former Soviet Bloc typically referenced the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. One can only hypothesize that the two Roma pastors had not learned of the Helsinki Final Act and the fact that it was being used to force the Romanian communist state to respect human rights. Or they might have reasoned that a UN document (an international convention including a wide range of protections for civil and political rights)⁷⁷ had greater symbolic power to bring about compliance

⁷³ *Ibidem*, f. 5.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁶ “International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>, accessed September 5, 2022.

⁷⁷ For more details, see: <https://www.aclu.org/other/faq-covenant-civil-political-rights-iccpr> or <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/the-international-cove>

from the Romanian authorities as compared to an international treaty between East and West.

Gabor's protests continued and even intensified during the 1980s. He decided to attend the congress of the Romani Union scheduled to be held in Strasbourg in 1986 in order to "raise the issue of the right to freedom of belief, the creation of churches for Pentecostal Gypsies in Romania and the recognition of the Roma as a minority."⁷⁸ In 1987, he collaborated with another Roma leader, Barbu George, who planned to set up a Gypsy committee "to make as many Pentecostal brothers as possible and in this way to be able to make a big church for the Gypsy Pentecostal brothers."⁷⁹ Iancu Gabor did not make it to Strasbourg as the Romani Union Congress was postponed, and the Gypsy committee was not established due to the intervention of the Securitate. What Gabor did manage to achieve was the establishment of an illegal Gypsy church in his house in Oradea. Giving Roma people access to religious services in their language was a means of ensuring their social integration into mainstream society. Other minorities in Romania attended their "own" churches where sermons were held in their mother tongue. Consequently, if the Roma people wanted to be recognized and accepted as a national minority, establishing a Gypsy church was an important starting point. However, Gabor also considered the Gypsy church as a means to protect his peers, since "Romanian believers look down on some of them who are careless with their clothing and body hygiene."⁸⁰ Consequently, in this case, religion performed two contradictory functions. On the one hand, it opened the way for the civil emancipation of Roma and their social integration into Romanian society as a national minority. On the other hand, (lived) religion strengthened the separation between Roma and the rest of society.

Because his Gypsy church in Oradea was illegal, in August 1988 Iancu Gabor asked the official leadership of the Pentecostal denomination to apply for authorization for it. To support his request, he invoked two main reasons: "the particularities of the nationality" of Roma believers and the existence of "psychological complexes."⁸¹ A Gypsy church,

nant-on-civil-and-political-rights, accessed September 5, 2022.

⁷⁸ ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, dosar 375351 vol. 1, f. 41 f.

⁷⁹ *Idem*, dosar 144 vol. 13, f. 218.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 238 f.

⁸¹ *Idem*, dosar 375351 vol. 2, f. 4.

he argued, would allow its members to manifest through music, preach and pray in their way, and avoid discrimination. Gabor's requests went unanswered, and his Gypsy church remained illegal, "being just tolerated within the cult"⁸² until the fall of the communist regime in Romania.

Being a (self-proclaimed) Roma Pentecostal pastor posed additional problems, primarily if one was engaged in missionary work and a member of the Romanian Communist Party. This was the case of Căldărariu Carolea, who began his work as a pastor in Sibiu. After a while, he stopped commuting to Sibiu and began to perform religious services for Roma in his home without official authorization. His work, especially his missionary work, drew the attention of local authorities. After the chief of the local Miliția gave him a warning, he "verbally promised not to continue with such meetings," but was subsequently caught in the act during a religious gathering of seven persons in his home. Because of his actions, Căldărariu Carolea lost his membership in the RCP (the Romanian Communist Party).⁸³ Being a party member and also a believer was not mutually exclusive; some Neo-Protestants joined the RCP in order to protect themselves and their families from the harassment of the authorities, to enjoy certain material advantages, or to climb the professional ladder. Still, as a rule, party members who converted to Neo-Protestantism lost their membership.⁸⁴ In some cases, local authorities ignored or turned a blind eye to the religious activities of party members. Căldărariu Carolea was one such example. He preferred to lose his RCP membership (and other material advantages attached to his position) and to continue to preach to his Roma fellows. His gesture demonstrates his strong character, high moral standards, genuine attachment to religion, and his work as a pastor.

Pilgrimage

As mentioned, going on pilgrimage was an integral part of the Roma people's "lived religion."⁸⁵ I will focus on the pilgrimage of the Căldărari (Coppersmith) Roma to Bistrița Monastery in Costești, Vâlcea County,

⁸² *Ibidem*, f. 18 f.

⁸³ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, dosar 8702, vol. 9, ff. 188–189.

⁸⁴ Dobrinu, "Sub puterea cezarului," 151.

⁸⁵ For a comprehensive account of the Roma pilgrimage in Romania see, Mirel Bănică, *Bafta, Devla și Haram: Studii despre cultura și religia romilor* (Iași: Editura Polirom, 2019), 259–94.

which took place every year on September 8. This phenomenon was brought to a halt in 1985, when the communist authorities refused to authorize the organization of the pilgrimage and the festival that followed it.⁸⁶

Little is known about the origins of Roma pilgrimage to Bistrița Monastery. Delia Grigore recorded a famous Gypsy narrative about the event. The story says that a few hundred years ago, there was a monk living at Bistrița Monastery (presumably a Roma) who healed sick Gypsies using natural remedies and gave them food to eat. After he died, this body remained intact, and consequently, he was sanctified. As a token of their deep respect for this mythical figure, on September 8 each year, the Roma undertook a religious pilgrimage to the monastery. On this occasion, they prayed to God to protect them from hunger and sickness.⁸⁷

For the căldărari Roma, the association of Bistrița Monastery with healing and miraculous powers is related to the presence there of the holy relics of Saint Gregory the Decapolite. Saint Gregory was a Byzantine monk who lived during the eighth century. Due to his ascetic life and prayers, he was granted the gifts of prophecy and wonderworking. He was buried at a monastery in Constantinople after his death in 816, and due to the miracles that took place at his tomb, his holy relics were moved to the church where people could venerate them. After the Turks conquered Constantinople in 1453, the relics were removed from the church. Having heard about the miracles of Saint Gregory, Barbu Craiovescu, “Ban”⁸⁸ of Craiova, bought the holly relics in 1497 or 1498 and took them to Bistrița Monastery, which he founded in Costești commune.⁸⁹ Romanian sources over the centuries have mentioned the miracles performed by the relics of Saint Gregory: they supposedly saved Bucharest from bouts of the plague in 1765 and 1813, protected Craiova from drought and a locust invasion in 1779 and from cholera in 1831, saved Oltenia from the cholera epidemic in 1848 and protected Râmnicu Vâlcea (a city near Costești) from disease and drought. Recent testimonies of miraculous

⁸⁶ For details see, Marin, ed., *Romii și regimul communist*, vol. 1, 82–85.

⁸⁷ Grigore and Săraru, *Istorie și tradiții rome*, 55.

⁸⁸ Ban was the highest state official, second to Walachia’s Voivode (the ruler).

⁸⁹ For more details about the life of Saint Gregory Decapolite see, <https://www.oca.org/saints/lives/2007/11/20/103340-venerable-gregory-decapolite>, accessed August 27, 2022; Mircea Păcurariu, *Sfinții daco-romani și români* (Editura Apologeticum, 2006), 99–101; Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1991), 375–76.

healings of epilepsy, paralysis, meningitis, muteness and even cancer have been recorded.⁹⁰ As one of the former Roma leaders mentioned, căldărari Roma undertook the pilgrimage to pray to Saint Gregory for health, wealth and their families.⁹¹ Another testimony identifies the same saint as the Roma people's protector, which is why they undertook the pilgrimage to Bistrița Monastery.⁹² The fact that the church has a Marian dedication (according to the Christian Orthodox calendar, September 8 is the birth date of the Virgin Mary) testifies to the pilgrims' wishes to win the goodwill of Mary. She is believed to "respond to anyone who invokes her name"⁹³ and also to be the protector of the family.⁹⁴

During the communist period, Coppersmith Roma continued to pray to Saint Gregory the Decapolite and the Virgin Mary at Bistrița Monastery each year on September 8. The pilgrimage became a Gypsy event that was "very well attended, partly out of religious devotion and partly as an opportunity to meet up with family groups."⁹⁵ The religious devotion that ensured the survival of the traditional pilgrimage testified to the persistence of the Christian Orthodox faith among the Roma people. Other indications of the vitality of the Roma's religious faith are the baptism of newborns at the monastery⁹⁶ and the worship of Saint Gregory and the Virgin Mary. However, the Căldărari Roma subverted the dominant meaning of the pilgrimage and religious celebration. Their "lived religion" identified Saint Gregory as the patron saint of the Roma. Moreover, if we consider the tale recorded by Delia Grigore, Saint Gregory was in fact that very Gypsy monk who cared for the poor and marginalized Gypsies.

I should also consider the significance of this event as ascribed to it by Gypsies. Coppersmith Roma were nomads, and for nomad Gypsies, pilgrimage represented a point of reference in their annual calendar as their way of measuring time differed from that of the rest of the society.

⁹⁰ Veniamin Micle, "Un mare făcător de minuni: Sfântul Grigore Decapolitul," *Telegraful roman*, no. 433–44 (1998): 2.

⁹¹ "Sărbătoarea națională a romilor," *Cuvântul liber* (16 September 1995): 6.

⁹² Bunescu, *The Politics*, 162.

⁹³ James Bugslag, "Medieval Marian Pilgrimage in the Catholic West," in *The Oxford Book of Mary*, ed. Chris Maunder (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 561.

⁹⁴ Bunescu, *The Politics*, 162.

⁹⁵ Jean Pierre Liégeois, *Roma in Europe* (Council of Europe Council Publishing, 2007), 79.

⁹⁶ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, dosar 144 vol. 11, f. 3 f.

The pilgrimage was also an opportunity to unite and strengthen the ethnic identity of the group and its leadership structures.⁹⁷ During the event in Costești, tents or carriages (in Romanian, *șatre*) of Coppersmith Roma gathered from all over the country. After performing the purification ritual in the church through prayers, worship and offering, Roma gathered to make decisions about the internal organization of their group.⁹⁸ In 1978, this gathering elected Ioan Cioabă as the leader *bulibasha* of the Roma Kalderash.⁹⁹ Moreover, the pilgrimage was an opportunity to facilitate communication and economic relations between different local Roma groups, alleviate family conflicts, and arrange marriages between Roma men and women.¹⁰⁰ The arrangement of future marriages on this occasion is considered to be auspicious in Romanian popular culture since September 8 (the Virgin Mary's birth date) is the day associated with the fertility and protection of mothers and (unborn) children.¹⁰¹ Consequently, the pilgrimage strengthened the ethnic identity and cohesion of the Căldărari Roma and reinforced specific traditional and conservative values, including the authority of the bulibasha and the practice arranged marriages.

The pilgrimage to Bistrița Monastery was used by Roma people to strengthen their demands for civic emancipation. The official refusal to recognize Roma as a national minority was related their social marginality, a fact which also obscured their ethnic and cultural particularities as a community. In order to demonstrate otherwise, Nicolae Gheorghe and Ioan Ciobă decided to use the religious pilgrimage in 1984 as a pretext to organize “a Roma festival, the first of its kind in Romania.” The event would ensure “an even greater and visible affirmation (in public life) of the culture” of the Roma Coppersmiths. According to its organizers, the Roma festival in Costești was a folklore show demonstrating “the richness of Roma folklore.” The spectators participated in recitals of poems in the

⁹⁷ Bănică, *Bafta, Devla și Haramul*, 291.

⁹⁸ Grigore, *Curs de antropologie și folclor rrom* (București: Credis, 2001), 37.

⁹⁹ László Fosztó, *Colecție de studii despre romii din România* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura ISPMN, Kriterion, 2009), 111; ACNSAS, *fond Documentar*, dosar 144 vol. 11, f. 3 f.

¹⁰⁰ Grigore, *Curs de antropologie*, 37; ACNSAS, *Fond Documentar*, dosar 144 vol. 11, f. 3 f or D 4965, f. 14.

¹⁰¹ Camelia Diaconu, “Sfânta Maria Mică sau Nașterea Maicii Domnului, sărbătorită pe 8 septembrie-tradiții și obiceiuri,” *Libertatea*, Online edition, 7 September 2021, <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/sfanta-maria-mica-nasterea-maicii-domnului-2386232>, accessed August 27, 2022; Bunescu, *The Politics*, 162.

Romani language, singing and dancing competitions, and a parade of traditional Roma costumes.¹⁰² “Gypsy nationalism,” as the Securitate labelled any public manifestations of Roma culture to support their demands for civic emancipation, influenced the decision of the Romanian authorities to ban the festival and the pilgrimage of Roma Coppersmiths¹⁰³ until after the fall of the communist regime in December 1989.

Conclusion

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Romanian communist regime witnessed an increased number of initiatives for the emancipation of Roma people. They were socially marginalized, impoverished, not officially recognized as a national minority, and targeted for assimilation. Despite their situation, Roma found ways to voice their demands for emancipation and equal rights with the rest of Romanian society. This study has shown that religion, especially Neo-Protestantism, remained an important part in the lives of Roma people and contributed to and supported their demands for civic emancipation. These emancipatory faith-based initiatives were not singular. Roma leaders Nicolae Gheorghe and Ioan Cioabă petitioned Romanian authorities for the recognition of the Roma as national minority and for measures to ensure their integration into Romanian society. The creation of the so-called “Gypsy churches” signaled that Roma people saw themselves as a distinct national minority that, similar to other minority groups in Romania, should have the right to practice their own religion and use their language during religious services. Moreover, local Roma leaders framed their request for a “Gypsy church” in terms of Romania’s fulfillment of its international obligation to observe religious freedom and other minority rights. Religious practices supported Roma people’s struggle for civic emancipation from another perspective as well. As this paper has shown, the traditional pilgrimage to Bistrița Monastery strengthened Roma ethnic identity and ensured the survival of their traditional values and leadership structure. At the same time, its transformation into a Roma festival in 1984 was meant to demonstrate the cultural “worth” of Roma people and thus support their request for official recognition as a national minority. The persistence of religious beliefs, the organization and functioning of Gypsy churches, and the pilgrimage to Bistrița Monastery are evidence of Roma people’s

¹⁰² ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, dosar 144 vol. 11, f. 3 f-v.

¹⁰³ For additional information, see: Marin, *Romii și regimul comunist*, vol. 1, 82–85.

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“lived religion.” They attest to how religious practice strengthened ethnic identity, favoured individual agency, and raised questions about equal rights and religious freedom.

The Religious Affiliations of the Romanies from Post-Socialist Romania. Considerations Concerning the In-Group Academic Productions*

MARIAN ZĂLOAGĂ**

After the fall of communist regime religion returned to play a significant role both in the public life and the research agenda in Romania. Admittedly disadvantaged by many factors, Romanian Roma intellectual elites addressed the topic as part of an effort to give voice to their ethnic group. Their writing back to the negative profiling of the ethnic group involved confrontation of the antigypsist narratives produced and shared by non-Roma academics, which reflected the power relations between the majority population and the Roma minority. Some of the narratives were articulated and culturally reproduced in religious terms. Like the other ethnic groups living in post-communist Romania, Romanian Roma intellectuals have not missed their chance to address religion as an element in the identity politics they take part in. In this paper, I examine the manners in which the first generation of post-communist Romanian Roma intellectuals addressed the religious profile and religious affiliation and/or affinities of their ethnic group. I will also try to highlight whether there are consonances or, on the contrary, dissonances between the Western Roma and Romanian Roma narratives in this matter.

Keywords: *Romanian Roma, Religious Affiliation, Identity Politics, Writing back, Traditional Religious Actors, Neo-Protestant Churches.*

The fall of the Iron Curtain opened Eastern Europe to renewed public manifestations of religious life. After 1989 the dominant actors who had been able to find settlements with the officially proclaimed atheistic state structures (e.g., the Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed churches) and totally or partially banned religious groups revitalized their existence and began to play a role in the liberalized religious landscape. Institutional rebirth and legal battles followed. In the context the appeal to religion was an essential reference for all social actors involved in re-shaping the post-communist public landscape. The recovery of pre-communist overidealized traditions gave the ecclesiastical institutions a new

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chance to play a role in the identity politics among the different ethnic groups living in Romania.

Hampered under the communist regime, ecclesiastical history and religious studies gained renewed scholarly interest. One has witnessed a steady increase in the production of publications dealing with the relation between churches and society and the churches contribution to building the nation. Yet, the revisit of the entanglements between religion and the process of nation building, in cultural and political terms, has been marked by occasional hateful or vengeful claims. Many publications engage in political discourse relevant for the in-group and in inter-group relations. These general considerations, mostly relevant for the traditional religious actors in Romania, confirm that despite of how an undeniable process of secularization has taken place, religion has remained “a key metric of historical consciousness.”¹

Despite the rich and multifaceted academic approaches to religious matters published in post-communist Romania, little attention has been paid the Roma and their interaction with either the traditional or non-traditional religious actors.² Intriguingly, this happens in a context where non-Roma sociological and cultural anthropological researches have turned towards researching the Roma.³ The acceleration in conversions

¹ Stefan Benz, “Measurable Effects of Denominations on Narrative Patterns: The German Case of Diversity in Narrating Histories,” *Historical Social Research/ Historische Sozialforschung* 42, no. 2 (2017): 171.

² Viorel Achim, “The Orthodox Church and the Emancipation of Gypsy Slaves in the Romanian Principalities in the 19th Century” in *Slavery in the Black Sea Region, c.900–1900: Forms of Unfreedom at the Intersection between Christianity and Islam*, ed. Felicia Roșu, (Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2022), 117–42; Petre Matei, „Raporturile dintre organizațiile țigănești interbelice și Biserica Ortodoxă Română,” [The Relations of the Interwar Gypsy Organisations with the Romanian Orthodox Church] in *Partide politice și minorități naționale din România în secolul XX* [Political Parties and National Minorities in Romania during the 20th Century], Vol. V, ed. Vasile Ciobanu, Sorin Radu, (Sibiu: Techno Media, 2010), 159–73.

³ See: Joahannes Ries, *Welten Wanderer. Über die kulturelle Souveränität siebenbürgischer Zigeuner und den Einfluß des Pfingstchristentums* [World Wanderers. The Cultural Sovereignty of the Transylvanian Gypsies and the Influence of Pentecostalism] (Würzburg: Ergon, 2007); László Fosztó, *Ritual Revitalisation after Socialism. Community Personhood and Conversion among Roma in a Transylvanian Village* (Münster: LIT, 2009); Martin Olivera, *Romanes. Tradiția integrării la romii gabori din Transilvania* [Romanes. The Tradition of Integration to the Gabor Romanies from Transylvania] (Cluj–Napoca: ISPMN, 2012), 54–81, 92–126, 306–26; Mirela Bănică, *Bafta, Devla și Haramul. Studii despre cultura și religia romilor* [Baht, Devla and Haram. Studies on Roma Culture and Religion] (Iași: Polirom 2019), 361–410.

among Romanian Roma to neo-protestant religious churches can be traced back in interwar and communist times.⁴ In the post-communist years this trend was accelerated and re-dimensioned by the liberalization and diversification of religious actors and offerings. At first the research of these matters was undertaken by the Romanian and non-Romanian researchers who realised the potential of researching the relation between the marginalized but heterogeneous Roma minority and the advance of different religious movements among them. Increasingly, this body of academic literature shows how religious conversion has been intertwined with identity politics and complemented NGOs' and state agencies' Roma integration strategies.

With perceptible delay and uneven results, Roma academic elites joining the process of knowledge production could not turn a blind eye on the religious affiliation and profile of their ethnic group. It has been recognized that it was relevant for the process of political emancipation and articulation of a sense of common belonging to a trans-national minority spread all over Romania and the world. With all the recent critique, raised by the Roma sociologist Vasile Ionescu stating that the Romanies' assertiveness project shall stop reproducing any longer the Romanian paradigm,⁵ most of the literature I am concerned with in this study brings evidence that the reflection on the religious affiliation (or lack thereof) and practices of the Romanian Roma was interpreted with reference to the Romanian majority population.

In my research I adopt the methodology of close reading to envision how the references to the religious affiliations of the Roma have been addressed by the first generation of Roma intellectual elites from Romania during the last three decades. Roma intellectuals' involvement in knowledge production can be understood as located between academic research and a large spectrum of activities dedicated to raising awareness

⁴ Anne-Marie Kool, "Eastern European Churches Engaging Roma People: Historical and Missiological Perspectives," in *Mission in Central and Eastern Europe: Realities, Perspectives, Trends*, eds. Corneliu Constantineanu, Marcel V. Măcelaru, Anne-Marie Kool and Mihai Himcinschi (Oxford: Regnum, 2016), 520–43; Iemima Ploscariu, "Faith Church: Roma Baptists Challenging Religious Barriers in Interwar Romania," *Social Inclusion*, Volume 8, no. 2 (2020): 316–26; Gabriel Sala, *Neamul țiganilor gabori: istorie, mentalități, tradiții* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 2007), 38–40; Manuela Marin, "Studiu introductiv," in *Romii și regimul comunist: marginalizare, integrare și opoziție*, vol. 1, ed. Manuela Marin (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2017), 57–63.

⁵ Vasile Ionescu, *Rromii – o istorie culturală. A doua abolire și imperativul etic al recunoașterii* (București: Editura Centrului Național de Cultură a Romilor, 2022), 25–26.

both inside and outside the group itself. Fundamentally, it is a process of participative rethinking of the religious profile of the Roma as a transnational people. The topic is of significance because it mirrors and supports the empowerment process of a minority group which, for a very long time, has been without a voice and unheard in academic research.

1. Western Roma productions and the religious affiliation(s) of the generic Romanies

My discussion starts by looking to the most quoted historical dictionary published by the non-Roma but very engaged pro-Roma activist Donald Kenrick. In an attempt to cover a very complicated puzzle when it comes to the religious affiliation of the Gypsies/Romanies, in the entry on “Religion” in his dictionary, Kenrick wrote:

Gypsies have tended to adopt the religion of the country where they live or travel, so we find Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians, as well as Muslims. It is said that some customs, such as burning the possessions of the deceased, are relics of Hinduism. Recently many Romanies have adopted Pentecostalism.⁶

In a synthetic and unexpectedly brief formulation Kenrick covers religious matters from the formalistic point of view only, suggesting that the strategy of the Gypsy/Roma is to adopt the religion of the majority groups where they are, while briefly also affirming the phenomenon already widely studied all over the world, namely, the preference of the Romanies to convert to neo-Protestant churches. Although at first glance unsatisfying, the text should be taken for what it is: a dictionary entry expected to have a generalizing and at the same time neutral tone. Undeniably, Kenrick's formulation succeeds in this respect. However, when compared to the very complex problematic of the religious profile and religious affiliation of the heterogenous, transnational, and non-territorial Roma, who for decades have been struggling for national and international recognition, it may be oversimplifying. If things would have been as straightforward as suggested in this dictionary entry, a shared religious affiliation might inhibit or stand in the way of the exclusionary practices against the Roma even within the same religious denomination.

A more contextualized approach to the same issue can be found in the works of the Austin (Texas, USA) based professor and Roma activist

⁶ Donald Kenrick, *Historical Dictionary of the Gypsies (Romanies)*, Second Edition (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc 2007), 211.

Ian Hancock. In his classical book *The Pariah Syndrome. An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution*, Hancock deals with the knowledge production of Westerners, more precisely the reports of the Scottish missionaries from 1839 who came across the Roma groups in the Danube Principalities. In a very synthetic observation these Western Christians, driven by missionary credo, reproduce the old view that the Roma groups they had encountered “seem[ed] to have no system of religion, yet are very superstitious in observing lucky and unlucky days.”⁷ In the best case, religiously and culturally, Romanies’ attitudes with regard to religion were seen as forms of mimicry.⁸ This type of narratives are traced back to the Middle Ages but are recurrent even nowadays in the press and academic writing. They are part of what Hancock called the “pariah syndrome,” a long-term manifestation of European antigypsism. According to Hancock, antigypsism is deeply rooted in the religious practices and discourses of the majorities’ Christian cultures, which “instil a negative image of the Gypsy in the Western tradition.”⁹ In his opinion, antigypsism is not unique to the Western Christian countries but can be identified in the Eastern Christian tradition as well. Hancock presents a sequence of data from the Romanian states, where Orthodox clergy refused to bless mixed marriages, since such relations between Roma and non-Roma were legally defined as a “deed being hateful to God and contrary to human nature.”¹⁰ Besides this tacit complicity of the Romanian Orthodox ecclesiastical body, Hancock documents the high level of stigmatization and exclusion of the Roma from Romanian cultural milieu by revisiting the remarks of another Western traveller in the Romanian lands. In a book published after the emancipation laws had been passed, Alexander G. Paspatis observed that “[n]o Gypsy is ever permitted to enter into any of the sacerdotal offices of the Greek church,”¹¹ an observation that in Hancock’s interpretation is further evidence of structural societal and institutional antigypsism.

The Pariah Syndrome can be seen as a landmark in the involvement of the in-group intellectuals in academic knowledge production concerning

⁷ Ian Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome. An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution* (Ann Arbor: Karoma Publishers, Inc., 1987), 42.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 116.

⁹ *Ibidem*, 115.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, 25.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

the emergent transnational Roma identity. It has been regarded as one of the three must read books in the field of contemporary Romani studies.¹² Therefore, it is worth to consider its effects in the long run on both its authors' career and in the consciousness and writings of other Roma participating in knowledge production about their ethnic group. At first glance, its echo can be detected in a selection of commented essays written years after by Hancock himself. The volume entitled *Danger! Educated Gypsy*, the title itself being an authentic slogan intended to underline the empowering effect of the writing back from the part of Roma intellectuals, was meant to "help the *gadže* develop a balanced view of *Rromanija* by making the authentic voice of the Roma heard through their own publications and spokespersons" and to "challenge misinformation peddled by Gypsilorists,"¹³ a category of external knowledge producers who were disregarded as being "unaware of the separation of the myth from the reality."¹⁴ When it comes to the matter I am discussing in the present paper, Hancock writes:

Romani religion is an overview of the religious practices followed by the Roma. While the ancestral religion of the proto-Roma must have been some form of Hinduism, the religious practices of the Roma are similar to those of their neighbours. But some beliefs and practices akin to those of the Hindus yet survive in Romani culture.¹⁵

The volume is actually a revisionist retake on a lifetime topic of research. Subtly, Hancock replaces the idea of the Roma as non-European and exotic with the idea that the ethnogenesis of the Roma people is deeply rooted in the European and Christian milieu.¹⁶ This paradigmatic shift cannot leave untouched the religious profile of the Romanies and their religious affinities and affiliations. However, to those who traditionally claimed over the centuries that Romanies have no religion, Hancock responds that, currently, the Romanies are rediscovering an ancestral spiritual and cultural system, although they may nevertheless declaratively assume a religious identity in line with the neighbouring people wherever they live. Consequently, Hancock writes:

¹² "Foreword" by Thomas Acton, in: Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome*, XII.

¹³ Hancock, *Danger! Educated Gypsy. Selected Essays*, ed. Dileep Karanth, (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2010), 2.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, 42.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 46.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, 277–78.

Because Romanies come ultimately from India, it is in Hinduism that the roots of their religion are to be found. However, awareness of this has become lost over the centuries and is only now being relearned by Romanies today. Likewise, the daily cultural behaviour in which Indian-based spiritualism (called *Rromanipen*) manifests itself so clearly is not recognized as such; asked what his religion is, a Romani is likely to say Orthodox or Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Mormon, Muslim, Bahá'í, or any one of the non-indigenous faiths acquired, voluntarily or not, since arrival in the West.¹⁷

The cultural translations and accommodations that Hancock is very much aware of are discursively embedded in the *Rromanipen*, which is basically explained as a set of customs that enables Romanies to internally regulate between a pure and impure way of being in the world often explained as a reflection of Hinduism and dualistic Zoroastrianism.¹⁸ Besides the agreement that Roma may assume the predominant religion of an area (e.g. Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Orthodox),¹⁹ Hancock avoids adopting a resentful tone in the narrative about the “syncretistical”²⁰ religious profile or the religious affiliation of his fellow Roma. He acknowledges the phenomenon of Pentecostalism spreading among Romanies since the 1950s and greets the coming into being of “hundreds of Romani churches, with pastors and congregations who are Romani.”²¹ However, Hancock cannot withhold the observation that “the growth of «Born again» Christianity has produced a split in the Romani population, some of whom believe it is a major factor in the loss of traditional *Rromanipen*.”²² Else said, in the process of conversion to Pentecostalism, Romanies’ cultural-spiritual peculiarity has paid the price, losing its relevance. However, Hancock provides encouraging examples in which the synthesis between *Rromanipen* and Pentecostalism had been successfully achieved.²³ Truthful to the narrative embraced in his first book, traditional religious actors are regarded as direct or indirect promoters of antigypsism. Hancock suggests that contrary to what has happened in neo-protestant environment, not much has changed from the unspecified

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 106.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 107–11.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 113.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 114.

²¹ *Ibidem*, 113.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ *Ibidem*.

moments in the past when the “Romanies were routinely forbidden from entering churches to worship, and had to listen from outside through the windows. Such incidents are not entirely unheard of *today*.”²⁴ Thus, the paradigm of antigypsism nurtured by the traditional religious actors remains a recurring idea in the writings of one of the most internationally acclaimed Roma academics. Generally speaking, Hancock’s writings may be taken as illustration of the state of the art of the discourse of the members of the Roma intellectual elite active in the Western academia.

Starting from these academic accomplishments, I found it relevant to learn how Romanian Roma knowledge producers responded to the Western Roma academic discourses.

2. Who are the Romanian Roma intellectual elites participating in post-socialist knowledge production?

Most of the heterogenous texts examined in the present paper were written by Romanian citizens with a Roma ethnic identity. I chose to focus on a specific category of texts, namely those which have fulfilled the standards for an academic publication. For reasons imposed by editorial conventions, I have also selected to discuss only the texts written by a first-generation of post-communist Romanian Roma authors who have reached seniority and gained a degree of academic and public prominence. Like other titles I have deliberately omitted from my research, these texts were authored by intellectuals with university degrees from Romanian institutions. With few exceptions, the authors have an academic track in the field of social sciences²⁵ and work in Romanian higher education institutions. My examination of their works will help establish whether their discourse on religious matters is instrumental in the identity politics of the Romanian Roma intellectuals who initiated the affirmative voicing of the Roma in the academic milieu. Conceptual nuances will be specifically discussed as they are able to highlight whether the religious references have served certain political agendas such as the increasingly attractive and vastly visited paradigm of antigypsism.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, 112–13.

²⁵ See: Mihai Neașu, “«Românizarea» Rromilor” in *Rromii ... În căutarea stimei de sine*, eds. Delia Grigore, Mihai Neașu and Adrian-Nicolae Furtună (București: Vanemonde, 2007), 62; Adrian Neculau, Mihai Curelaru, Daniela Zaharia and Daniela Tarnovschi, “Elites rom dans les anciens pays communistes. Le cas de la Roumanie,” *Transitions. Nouvelles Identités Rom en Europe Centrale & Orientale*, eds. Andrea Boscoboinik and François Ruegg, vol. XLVIII, (2), 2009: 73.

Topics such as the spirituality, religious practices, and religious affiliation of the Romanies may represent crucial elements in the crafting of a dignified profile of the minority ethnic group. Although a common path has been regularly followed by most of the authors of the texts under scrutiny, the personal takes on the matters have made the debate more complex and vibrant. They can show how participation in knowledge production can be influenced by the degree of individual engagement with the process of political assertiveness.

3. Idolatrous, Romanian Orthodox by default with an orientalist twist or pragmatic religious converts/dissidents? A pathway with many detours

The last 30 years have witnessed a steady growth in the number of texts published by Romanies from Romania. They have materialized in NGO reports, newspapers, television broadcastings, and a series of academic writing. The last category, representing the empirical material for the present article, came out in form of articles and books. Some meet the peer review standards, others partially fail to do so. I will address this matter contextually.

In her most often quoted ethnographical text Delia Grigore, who teaches Romani literature and culture at the University of Bucharest, considers the “elements of the religious life [to be] able to synthesize the essential framework for the ethnic identity”, their manifestation being understood as a “«conservation instinct» of certain markers.”²⁶ For Grigore, nomadism is central to the identity of the Roma, and this seems blatantly proved by the “religious model (including the pilgrimages), by the magic-ritualic configurations and by some structures of mentality.”²⁷ In her understanding, the pilgrimages of the Romanies involve the presence in the geographical and ritualistic sacred space and practices of the Romanian Orthodox Church, but they are given new meanings. They serve different social necessities for the Romanian Romanies in representing ways to “resettle the power hierarchies in the clan.”²⁸ For instance, Grigore refers to the yearly held Costești assembly from September 8, when the Orthodox believers celebrate Sfânta Maria Mică (the birth of

²⁶ Delia Grigore, *Curs de antropologie și folclor rrom: Introducere în studiul elementelor de cultură tradițională ale identității contemporane* (București: Credis, 2001), 12.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, 31; my translation.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, 37; my translation.

Virgin Mary). According to Romanies' practices, it is ritually opened by a "purification ritual undertaken by praying in the church, worship and ritual sacrifice [and as Grigore emphasizes, it is] followed by the demarcation of the territory where the caravans will camp for the next two days."²⁹ In other words, the religious practices described by Grigore are the formalistic attempts of an imagined mobile group to find a compromise with the normative religious celebrative culture of the sedentary Romanian Orthodox believers. In essence, the adaptation to the locally and nationally normative religious environment of certain customs specific to the nomadic Roma culture becomes significant in the account of Grigore, the armchair ethnographer.

Grigore also looks to the ritual of baptism in a similar manner, regarding it mainly in terms of pragmatical choices aiming at relative tolerance, ultimately understood in terms of a more or less acknowledged empowerment. In this respect, she wrote that "the child is also baptized by the priest, it is possible to be baptized several times, a proof of overcoming of a social status given by the internalization of the stigma imposed by the alterity."³⁰ An argument which serves the stigmatization of the Roma as non-believers and profiteers of the popular piety of the contact sedentary Christian cultures, giving birth to institutional practices of mistrust and exclusion,³¹ is thus answered back by an inverted in-group interpretation meant to lessen the authority of hegemonic Gypsolorists' discourses. Classical texts of the Gypsolorist from the end of the 19th century that gave Roma women's religious practices a central place in the description of Romanies' beliefs³² are assigned an entirely new meaning by Grigore. Hence, when Grigore rediscusses the practices around Romanies' baptism, she points out that the "Christian baptism is understood as a magical act of purification, the Holy Water (*aghiazma*) being taken by the women from the church who later will spray it over their own and their relatives' houses in order to protect them from impurity – «maxrimos»."³³ In general, Grigore's endeavors are meant to demonstrate that certain rituals, such as the baptism, the pilgrimages, and "*pomana*,

²⁹ *Ibidem*; my translation.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 45; my translation.

³¹ Marian Zăloagă, *Romii în cultura săsească în secolele al XVIII-lea și al XIX-lea* (Cluj-Napoca: ISPMN, 2015), 142, 152, 167, 312–13.

³² *Ibidem*, 326–40.

³³ Grigore, *Curs de antropologie*, 139; my translation.

a commemorative ceremony [are] nothing else but borrowed custom, an example of the acculturation phenomenon.”³⁴ However, despite the inevitable acculturations, the ideal nomadic Roma that Grigore chooses to epitomize as the authentic Roma is engaged in other religious practices and affinities than are publicly displayed.

Grigore’s statements reach their apex when she states that the Roma have an uncanonical religion in “*Rromanipen*, the Rroma law, a system of norms and communitarian concepts” built around the concept of «purity» (*maxrime*), which “is not in direct relation with the idea of sin, like in the classical religion [...] but with the idea of shame.”³⁵ Grigore’s main purpose is to underline the peculiarity of the Romanies’ religion, and, thus, to imply that any accommodations were necessarily undertakings which, until recently, have been misinterpreted not only by the Gypsologists but also by the common people belonging to the sedentary Christian cultures across Europe. The echoes of Hancock’s texts are easily detectable, Grigore reaching a point when she underlines the effects of antigypsist narratives. Significantly, Grigore blames the traditional churches for conceding to be used as a tool in the Enlightenment policies. She is very critical when it comes to addressing the set of imperial ordinances which forced the so-called “«new-peasants» [...] to attend the school and the church.”³⁶ Hence, the clergy were implicitly regarded as the accomplices of the secular state authorities which have imposed measures of “forced sedentarization and ethnic assimilation” of the Romanies, a policy denounced by Grigore as a veritable “ethnocide.”³⁷

Grigore imagines a strongly ethicized Roma system of beliefs and religious practices, only in part tangential with the popular Christian practices and undeniably parallel to the dogmatic teachings of Christianity. In this respect, she brings evidence for processes of re-semanticization and re-functionalization of the Christian celebrations customarily undertaken by her essentialized Romanies. In this line of argument, it does not come as a surprise to see Grigore greeting the initiatives of her activist colleagues at the Romani studies department at the University of Bucharest who engaged personally to transfer celebrations from the Western Roma subgroups to Romanian Roma local communities. To make her point,

³⁴ *Ibidem*, 150; my translation.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 161; my translation.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, 25; my translation.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, my translation.

Grigore mentions the pilgrimage to the relics of the Saint Sala/la Kali (The Black Sarah). Accordingly, the

so scantily recognized by the Church, but tolerated, Saint Sarah is considered the protector of the Rroma. [...] Saint Sarah was painted, for the first time in an Orthodox Church from Eastern Europe, in the year 2000, in the Saint Paraschiva Church from Segarcea Vale, Teleorman County, on the initiative of professor Gheorghe Sarău.³⁸

The affair is interpreted as the transfer of an idealized, established model, commenced by an university staff member engaged in the Romanian Roma intelligentsia, who enthusiastically instrumentalized uncanonical beliefs and practices in an effort to contribute, in his own way, to the transnational Roma agenda. The Segarcea experiment, if one can call it that, appears as an attempt to work out an inclusive approach in close partnership with the local Romanian Orthodox parish. It is possible that the initiator of this cultural transfer saw this grass root experimental approach as a move that could enable the local Romanies to engage more closely with the the Orthodox church. Since it was initiated with an apparent consideration for Romani culture, this take on things can be appreciated as entirely different from the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment approaches enforced by the state authorities during the long 19th century, when the evangelization of the Roma was conducted in an assimilationist fashion. Else said, in Grigore's argument, Sarău's initiative may represent an attempt to undermine the previous harsh judgements of the traditional communities of faith. Moreover, the transfer itself, coming from the West to the East, can only confirm the relevance and the vitality of *Rromanipen* across European Romani culture. Insisting on its diffused presence, Grigore suggested that the traditions embedded into *Rromanipen* should receive some degree of institutional consideration from the side of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

In broad terms, Grigore is able to recognize that her "delimitations have a didactic and theoretical feature [and that] in the social practice [various religious elements] have combined, in the course of time, [and] gave birth to new cultural syntheses."³⁹ Yet, the awareness of the factitiousness of the resulting discourse does not discourage her from thinking of the Roma religious profile in essentialized terms and, in doing so, Grigore often operates with data from the Gypsolorist's literature.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, 37; my translation.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, 27; my translation.

I have insisted on Grigore's first book for several reasons. Her text has been revisited by the author herself and many passages from it either came to be quoted in a more or less accurate manner or were incorporated in handbooks and studies written by Roma and non-Roma authors from Romania. The different ideas in Grigore's first book have been reproduced, augmented, and have undergone processes of revisions to a variable extent. Moreover, it is one of the most elaborate texts available, which starts from the importance of Rromanipen to explain the Roma's historical interactions with different traditional religious actors and the recent mass conversion of the minority group to neo-protestant churches.

In a handbook for the 6th and 7th grade of the primary school especially compiled for Roma classes and to be read by the pupils' families,⁴⁰ two of the authors tackle the topic Romanian Romanies religious affiliation and practices. The religious affiliation is inserted in the wider historical context of south-eastern Europe, dominated for several centuries by the Ottoman Empire. The historical sections of the volume, authored by Petre Petcuț is visibly anti-Orthodox, but, that is a matter I will discuss in another study. It is important, however, to mention here that one can notice a change in the tone, which is also visible in the ethnographical part of the edited volume in which the religious beliefs and practices are re-examined. The section about religious affairs was written by Grigore. This time she rehearses and punctually elaborates on certain aspects already dealt with in her first book. She finds it useful to readdress the practice of baptism and comes to differentiate between two types of baptism: "a Christian one undergone into the church, according to all the religious rule, with the partaking of a priest" and another one "in which the presence of the priest is excluded, even the mention of his name being regarded as bringing bad luck." The second sort of baptism appears to her to be significant because "Rromano baptism means purification and the attribution with a value. That is the earth baptism [...] in which, during the times when the nomadism was in place, the child was placed at a crossroad – a space regarded as magic" and spells of good luck where uttered over the new born.⁴¹ In order to articulate a collective attachment to some primordial religious believes, Grigore goes even further when she examines the burial rites. She claims that in "nomad times, the

⁴⁰ Petre Petcuț, Delia Grigore and Mariana Sandu, *Istoria și tradițiile rromilor* (București: Ro Media, 2003).

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, 108; my translation.

incineration of the death and of the personal belongings, [which were] regarded as bringing anathema (*bibaxt*) and *marime*, had been a common practice.”⁴² More poignantly than in her first book, Christian practices are regarded to be purely formalist manifestations and/or inevitable cultural contaminations. Hence, as a Roma and a professional ethnographer, Grigore teaches her presumed Roma readers about the alleged original meanings of certain practices, which may particularize and also dignify the Romanies’ religious life.

In another text, published in a handbook in 2006, Grigore readdressed *Rromanipen* as a site of sacred beliefs and practices of the essentialized Romanies. This reexamination reflects her increased interest in the Romanies’ relation to God and particularly their worship of The Virgin Mary. Grigore wrote:

The most important celebration of the coppersmith Roma is the birth of Virgin Mary, on September 8, a day of major pilgrimage for them. The Romanies exceptional worship of Virgin Mary can have a supplementary explanation: she is related to the Mother Goddess worshipped by the pre-Arians from India.⁴³

In my view, such analogies can be interpreted as attempts to answer back to the hegemonic discourse debasing the Roma. Grigore is well aware of the harmful impact of popular Romanian sayings such as “the Gypsy is still a Gypsy even in the Easter Day” or “Who the Hell has seen a Gypsy priest and a wedding celebration on Wednesday.”⁴⁴ Grigore operates on two levels. First, she attempts a resemantization by relating the present-day religious practices of a traditional Roma subgroup to the ancestral Hindus set of religious beliefs. This is a subtle way to suggest that the Roma have had agency and were capable of preserving their religious peculiarity by means of cultural translations. Second, the references to the sayings from the popular culture of the Romanian majority population are supposed to articulate an indirect critique towards the non-Roma parishioners who have traditionally disparaged and stigmatized the Roma population. It is difficult to say if Grigore’s rhetoric really has the intended effect of stimulating potential Roma readers’ self-esteem. However, it appears that behind Grigore’s authorship stays the grim acknowledgement

⁴² *Ibidem*, 109; my translation.

⁴³ Grigore, Gheorghe Sarău, *Istorie și tradiții rome* (București; Editura Salvați Copiii, 2006), 60.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 17, 66; my translation.

of the general anti-Romani attitude that may indirectly justify the shyness of the Romanies in relation to the other Romanian Orthodox members, be them clerics or church-goers.

It has become more common in recent years to look at the Romanian Orthodox Church as responsible for, if not the main institution which contributed to, the degradation of the Romanies to the condition of slaves. Highlighting the dehumanizing practices associated with this infamous social institution, of which the Romanian Orthodox Church took advantage, has the consequence that church is seen as a perpetrator of injustice and oppression. Indeed, with the passing of time, Grigore and several other Romanian Roma intellectuals have claimed that exactly this might represent an explanation for the tendency of the Romanian Romanies to disaffiliate from the Orthodox church and convert to neo-Protestant churches.

It is obvious that during the last three decades the victimizing narrative has been gaining weight and significance within the Romanian Romanies' participative knowledge production. There are, however, Roma academics who could write somehow independent of the growing anti-Orthodox discourse which recognizably is variable in its pitches from one author to the next. Hence, in a general overview of the Romanian literature on the Roma from the timespan 1990–2011 titled *Rroma Chronicle*, the dean of the Romani Studies department at the University of Bucharest, Gheorghe Sarău, pointed out that the Romanin Orthodox Church has actually engaged in missionary activities directed specifically at Romani spiritual needs. He wrote that in 2008,

... the initiatives of Romanian Orthodox Church continued [...] by promoting the access to the preaching of the holy Biblical word in Romani idiom, by editing of the Sacred Scripture in a translation made by the actor Sorin Aurel Sandu [...]. The project was patronized by His Grace Varsanufie of Prahova, in partnership with «Vasiliada» Foundation. Thursday, December 23, 2008, at the Radu Vodă Monastery from Bucharest was held the Mass in Romani, delivered by His Grace Varsanufie of Prahova, and two CD-s with (religious music) were launched, the event being attended by priests and the choir of high-school and faculty students⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ Sarău, *Cronica rromă (1990–2011)*, First Edition (București: Editura Universității din București, 2012), 229; my translation.

Outstanding Roma supporters and representatives such as Gheorghe Sarău, himself, Gheorghe Rădulescu, Ilie Dincă, and Cătălin Manea were also invited to attend.⁴⁶ This may serve to testify to the religious affiliation of the Roma elite members attending the event. Indirectly, it can illuminate the support received by Gheorghe Sarău who took action and, with the financial support of the Partida Romilor (Roma Party), requested the muralist Ion Alexe to paint the image of Saint Sarah in Saint Paraschiva Church from Segarcea Vale in 2001. The image came to be celebrated every year on May 24–25.⁴⁷ Initiatives of this sort show that some of the Roma intellectual elites could assert their Romani identity and acknowledge a traumatic past without rejecting a collective or personal affiliation to the Romanian Orthodox Church. Rather than adopting a provocative stand, they anticipated that by following this path their actions could receive the blessing of the main religious actor in post-communist Romania. As the event testifies, both sides found themselves willing to participate in the invention of a tradition by representing among the murals of an Orthodox church a saint worshiped by the French Catholic Romanies.

In his chronicle, Sarău also finds it significant to make a brief reference to a presentation held by Vasile Burtea, a Roma sociologist and political activist. It was entitled *The Religiosity of the Romanian Romanies and their Relation to the Churches* and was delivered at the “International conference of the traditional churches,” which took place in Bucharest in 2007.⁴⁸ Mentioning it together with details about where the paper was presented may be understood as an attempt to emphasize that with all the historical trauma acknowledged, an elder generation of the intellectual Roma did not find it necessarily to define their ethnic identity in opposition to the traditional churches. Instead, some of the Romanian Roma elites showed willingness to engage in a dialogue with the clergymen and seek for solutions to buck up the inglorious past.

The presentation held by Burtea finally came out in print in a book published in Cluj-Napoca. Before dealing with it, I consider it advisable to examine the same author’s first book, which was published in 2002. A chronological approach may show whether the Romanian Roma sociologist has chosen to operate revisions with respect to the religious profile and the motives behind the distinct religious affiliations of his

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*; my translation.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 169; my translation.

fellow Roma. In his book, Burtea had enough room to elaborate on the subject of the religious profile and affiliation of the Roma in Romania. Listing a set of internal solutions that could facilitate the preservation of identity markers in a syncretical tabular overview, Burtea admitted that it is particularly challenging to be specific on the matter. The topic must be tackled with a serious degree of subtlety, he admitted, because “The Roma people represent the single ethnic minority from Romania which does not have their own religion and church.”⁴⁹ Beforehand, he enumerated possible causes that stood in the way, leading to the situation that the “Romanies did not develop their own religious life.”⁵⁰ Among the impeding factors Burtea listed was the medieval “ferocious religious intolerance” from the Christian cultures with which they were in contact and “also the cultic elements and edifices much too costly and hard to be built up” as a consequence of their virtually gigantic size and very peculiar architectural style. Presumably these edifices would have reproduced the ancestral Indian religious architectural design and planning, hence, Burtea implying that their erection could have added to the already existing otherness of the Romanies in the Christian environment. To all these, he also reckons the shortages of pecuniary means attributed to a “highly dispersed” and spatially mobile population.⁵¹

In opposition to the deep-rooted and condescending narrative formulated by non-Romanies in terms of a presumed “lack of religion,” with religion being understood as an hierarchical, institutional system, ritualist declaration, and manifestations of faith and a network of worship sites, Burtea ventured to affirm that “it was inconceivable for [the Romanies ...] to adapt the traditional forms and principles, instead, choosing the lack of institutions and cultic practices rather than to divert from the tradition which confounded to their very existence.”⁵² In part leaving behind the territory of generic analogies marked by blatant primordialist overtones, Burtea admits that “the Romanies have «adhered», in most of the cases, to the dominant religions where they have settled or preferred to ignore as simple as it comes the cultic norms and practices.”⁵³ To some

⁴⁹ Vasile Burtea, *Rromii in sincronia si diacronia populatiilor de contact* (București: Lumina Lex, 2002), 150.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 148; my translation.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*; my translation.

⁵² *Ibidem*; my translation.

⁵³ *Ibidem*; my translation.

extent, Burtea had conceded to the discourse of Gypsolorists but in a personal way suggested that archetypal or ideal type Romanies, allegedly living a nomadic way of life, saw themselves encouraged to invent their own religious practices. The practice of “baptism of the sun”⁵⁴ seems to be the most convincing and usable ethnographical reference to support the idea of Romanies’ religious and cultural distinctiveness. By incorporating ethnographical data, the Romanian Roma sociologist hoped to formulate a reply to the theories of religious adoptions, to the syncretism or, even worse, to that of simple mimicry.⁵⁵

However, Burtea reached a point where he disregarded the ancestral religious references. He does so as he accounts for the Romanies in Dobrogea. He wrote that in the region, Roma groups “converted to Muslim religion, specific to the Turkish population, which at a certain point in time represented the majority ethnic group in the area.”⁵⁶ In this context, when Burtea relates the Romanies religious choices to another ethnic and religious minority, the he finds it adequate to explain the process in pragmatic terms, in terms of acculturation. Else said, the adoption of Islam is understood as resulting from the interplay of external factors encountered by the Roma groups. Yet, when it comes to the relations between the Roma and the established churches in Europe, Burtea’s explanations may gain slightly different connotations. In Burtea’s book, the religious affiliation of Romanian Roma are codified in synthetic formulations such as:

Many Romanies who were not attracted or were not satisfied by the existing “traditional religions”, have oriented towards other confessions, by far, the Pentecostal cult standing out in this respect. One can also meet Adventists, Baptist, Apostolic and even Semitic Romanies, etc. but not in a large number as in the aforementioned cult.⁵⁷

The assertion suggests that criteria such as the level of satisfaction can explain Romanies’ disaffiliation from the Romanian Orthodox Church and the affinity to new confessions or to other religions.

Burtea tried to elucidate the religious polarization of the Romanies. He suggested several potential explanations: “The fact that [Romanies] did not have their own church to «assemble» them around it, allowed this

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*; my translation.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*; my translation.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*; my translation.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, my translation.

religious «scission» which, essentially, lead to a marginal participation to the spiritual life of other population.”⁵⁸ The term “scission” may appear as unfortunate since Burtea himself admitted that there had been no previous agreement over the affiliation to a specific religious denomination. Although the concept was dropped out, I think it was introduced purposefully rather than unwittingly. By using this term, Burtea could highlight the agency of those Romanies who have not accepted to be any further Orthodox by default and feel marginalized. The correlation between the neo-protestant affiliation and the aforementioned criteria of satisfaction may provide some support to my interpretation. Moreover, Burtea spoke about the phenomenon of “religious marginalization reflecting in the «*religious mosaic*» of the Roma populations.”⁵⁹ The abandonment of the formal and pragmatic affiliation to the traditional churches is also justified by the non-usage of “Rromani as a cultic language as it happens in the case of Romanian, Hungarian, German, Turkish etc.”⁶⁰ Yet, Burtea is either selective or uninformed when he blamed the traditional religious actors for having ignored the Romanies’ spiritual needs, particularly since they have not provided translations of the religious texts in Romani.⁶¹ While some steps have been taken, their impact remained insignificant among the traditional churches in Romania. This is presented as a contrast to what occurred in the neo-protestant churches. Burtea insists that besides the marginalization of the Romanies, the attraction represented by the “evangelical religions, more permissive and more tolerant,” made “the adherence to these [churches] be intensified by the fact that these cults facilitated the holding of the religious service in their own language.” Thus, preaching in Romani language became widespread.⁶²

In a chapter in an edited volume following an ecumenical conference held in 2007, Burtea was voiced the relation of the Romanian Romanies with the main religious actors in Romania. In this context, five years after his first volume, Burtea had the chance to revisit his discourse regarding

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 149; my translation.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*; my translation.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, 149–150; my translation.

⁶¹ See: Lev Tcherenkov and Stephane Laederich, *The Roma*, vol. 2 (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2004), 580–81; Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, “The Birth of a Group: Two Roma Micro-Groups in Bukovina and Transylvania”, *Transylvanian Review*, Vol. XXVI, no. 3 (autumn 2017): 117.

⁶² Burtea, *Rromii in sincronia* 149–150; my translation.

the religious affiliation of the Roma and the cultural expressions associated with them. In an unspecific way, he condemned the manifestation of the secularized ethnic discrimination, which occurs “even under the dome of the same church.”⁶³ Burtea rehearses the thesis that the “religious mosaic” describes the “marginal participation of the Romanies to the religious life of the coinhabiting majority population,” but he now writes about an “alienated participation”⁶⁴ ensuing from the lack of “cultic institutions, and of their own church.”⁶⁵ The absence of “cultic institutions” is subtly reinterpreted. This time it is understood as leading to a set of concessions whereby the Roma were only allowed to be present as beggars in front of the worship houses “and not exactly in the aisle of the churches as committed participants to the appropriate church services and religious processions.”⁶⁶

Burtea describes a long term adaptative and hybrid, but inconsistent, religious affiliation to the traditional religious actors resulting from the necessity to attenuate asymmetric power relations. He identifies some processes of cultural translations of the Hindu practices which Romanies resemantized to gain acceptance and have marginal access to the more or less canonical religious practices of the majority populations. Again, Burtea claims that the disregard of the traditional churches for the cultural specificity of the Roma, more specifically their not using the Romani language, conducted to a limited attendance or even to ignorance of the norms and cultic practices of the long established religious actors, be they Romanian, Hungarian, German or Turkish.⁶⁷ In his opinion, this cultural blindness of the ecclesiastical servants of the traditional churches explains why, “unfortunately,” Romani speakers preferred to build up Roma churches.⁶⁸ Thus, in Burtea’s slightly revised interpretation, cultural ignorance and disregard towards the Romanies represented the weak points of the traditional religious actors. These weak points have in recent times been capitalized on by neo-protestant religious actors. Accordingly,

⁶³ Idem, “Religiozitatea rromilor din Romania și raporturile acestora cu bisericile”, in *Un proiect de reîmpăcare a bisericilor – Punte între biserici, culturi și religii*, eds. Dieter Brandes and Olga Lukacs (Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 2007), 244; my translation.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, 243; my translation.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*; my translation.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, 244; my translation.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*; my translation.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*; my translation.

Burtea wrote, “[m]any Romanies who were not attracted, were not welcomed or were not satisfied by the existing «traditional religions» have reoriented towards other confessions, a significant progress being gained by the Pentecostal cult,” but also other confessions such as Adventists, Baptists, and apostolic churches, and even the Semitic religion, has become an option for them.⁶⁹

To some extent Burtea’s statements in the 2007 chapter were made in a tone of desolation. However, he had no other choice but to acknowledge that the religious affiliation of present-day Romanian Roma is the consequence of centuries of ignorance from the part of the traditional religious actors. In his view, the post-communist years only accelerated a process of religious reaffiliation made possible through the diversification of the Romanian religious landscape. Choices made in this respect could enable the preservation and manifestation of the ethnic identity of various Roma sub-groups. It is interesting that in the book alone Burtea dealt with the relation between denominational practices and the group’s ethnicity. At one point, Burtea briefly mentioned the willingness of some traditional religious actors to respond positively to the affirmative action of the transnational Roma group he was voicing from what was still at the time a candidate to become a Member State of the European Union. Burtea praised a traditional religious actor, the Spanish Catholic Church, which from 1997, Mai 7th started to celebrate a Roma who was beatified as Saint Zefirino. Burtea held that this approach of the Catholic Church was not without solid grounds, on the contrary, it had been specifically situated in a tense political context characterized by “increased hostility and intolerance towards the Roma people across Central and South-Eastern Europe. [Therefore, the Spanish Catholic Church’s stance] represents an immense support, paving the way to dialogue, cooperation, collaboration and peace between peoples and ethnic groups.”⁷⁰ Even though Burtea remained unspecific about the confessional conflict from south-eastern Europe to which the Roma had fallen victim, he expressed his confidence that the religious institutions have to take an open and official stand in the de-escalation of the resurging conflicts between non-Roma and Roma. From many perspectives, Burtea’s efforts to reconcile the ethnic

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, 243; my translation.

⁷⁰ Burtea, *Rromii in sincronia*, 90; my translation.

group he was voicing with the majorities' contact groups indicates his awareness of the political and societal implications of religious affiliation.

Gheorghe Sarău, Vasile Burtea, and in some respect, Delia Grigore can be regarded as representing a first generation of Romanian Roma intellectuals from post-communist Romania. However, they were not insular individuals, but actively engaged with policy making and, at the same time, participants in the knowledge production about the Roma. They represent a generation educated in an atheistic communist environment and who become aware of and reflected upon the importance of religious actors in promoting tolerance between ethnic groups after the fall of communist regime. To this group one must add the name of the sociologist and internationally acclaimed Roma activist Nicolae Gheorghe.

More elaborate in his understanding of the historical and sociological issues at stake, constantly marked by power differentials between non-Roma cultures and the Roma groups, Gheorghe also had some personal thoughts to share on the topic. In an interview given to the young, aspiring intellectual Iulius Rostaş, Gheorghe provided a personal testimony about the strategies available in the process of the social and political affirmative action in support of the Roma identity project, in which he participated before and after 1989. Nicolae Gheorghe linked the ethnopolitical agenda to the religious practices and specifically to the Christian denominations to which Romanies have increasingly affiliated in the post-communist years. In an organicist fashion reminiscent of the rhetorical strategies used by the nationalist entrepreneurs representing the ethnic groups originating in the Central and Eastern Europe, Nicolae Gheorghe claimed that:

Identity, ethnos, communion/community with others ... all these have to do with birth, ethnos having as a fundament a «natural classification»; through birth there is a blood bond that emerges. Then there is a *church, where other bonds of religious beliefs and specific church rituals are established: community events, of life in a community ... there are the weddings, the christenings, rituals, religious holidays and so on and so forth.*⁷¹

Looking in retrospect to the institutional beginnings of the Roma political organization in post-communist Romania, Gheorghe briefly testified

⁷¹ "Roma or Țigan: The Romani Identity – between Victimisation and Emancipation. Nicolae Gheorghe in dialogue with Iulius Rostaş," *Roma Rights. Journal of the European Roma Rights Centre*, 1, (2015): 46. (my Italics)

his personal attraction to non-traditional Christian religious denominations. In an attempt to indirectly explain his position, Gheorghe talked about his collaboration with the neo-Protestant Roma pastors and how this contributed to the foundation, in May 1990, of the Ethnic Federation of Roma. Among his closest collaborators, Gheorghe mentioned the involvement in this political affirmative action of “Boldor from Baia Mare, himself a Pentecostal believer.” Gheorghe stated that he “felt quite drawn to the Evangelist believers, because before 1990 I had attended the Pentecostal meetings. When we were supposed to eat something brought from home by one of the participants, first, there was a prayer uttered by our pastors, with God, a blessing ... And so the Ethnic Federation came into being.”⁷² Similar to Burtea’s statements and to other research undertaken by non-Roma social scientists in various communities, Gheorghe points out and even provides personal evidences of the importance of religious affiliation in the affirmative movement of the Romanian Roma elites during the first years after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

As noticed, the initiators of the process of political assertiveness of the Roma highlight the role of the neo-Protestant congregations in developing an encouraging climate and framework for the manifestation of cultural specificity of a marginalized and stigmatized minority group. Voluntarily or not, they represent a contrast to the Romania Orthodox Church, which, at the time, was engaging in affirmative activities that could seem indifferent if not insensitive to the Roma. It is true that inconsistent efforts of accommodation from the side of the Romanian Orthodox Church are accounted for in the writings of the first post-communist generation of Roma intellectuals. However, in a more or less overt way it is implied that the Romanies have been regarded as Orthodox by default, recognizably of second rank, due to the prejudices shared by the non-Roma lay people and clerical body alike.

More recently, some of the members of the first generation of Roma intellectuals have begun to express feelings of frustrations in light of the accumulation of knowledge about the historical ill treatment and the daily confrontation with racist stereotypes. This has left its marks on their understanding of the religious affiliation of the Roma. It is becoming a pattern that the texts engaged with the collective identity of the Roma people address the taxonomy of “*țigan*”. It has been almost unanimously

⁷² *Ibidem*, 43.

accepted that it represented the root of the historical negative experiences of the Romanies in relation to the traditional Christian communities of faith. The exonym, deriving from the Greek “*athinganos*”, emphasizing the “impure,” “pagan,” and “untouchable” nature of the Roma, has become widely rejected because of its connection to stigmatization of the Roma. Although it may be acknowledged that the exonym was not initially used in ethnic but in social terms,⁷³ in the process of writing back, the use of the external label bearing undisputable religious connotations has come to represent one of the sturdier legitimisations of the criticism of the traditional churches. Thus, in her more recent studies, Grigore insisted that this labelling of the Roma has gained solid ground in the Romanian collective consciousness. Many of the popular sayings Grigore collected and examined reflect how the Roma represented the most radical religious deviant whose rejection from the services and practices of the traditional churches was legitimized by the widely shared belief that association with them would bring impurification.⁷⁴ Therefore, strict symbolic demarcations and borders have been codified in widely popular formulations like the folk sayings, some of these going so far to even dehumanize the Roma,⁷⁵ hence amplifying the Romanies’ “implacable inferiority.”⁷⁶

The effect of these discourses, rooted in popular religious beliefs, have been recognized as highly insulting. Since these long-lasting popular narratives and practices have been internalized among the Roma themselves, an increasing number of Roma intellectuals engaged in knowledge production consider it is reasonable to imply the existence of an intrinsic antagonism between the traditional church and the ethnic Romanies.

However, writing about the peculiarities of the Roman in religious matters has not always conducted to a victimary tone which eventually opened a site of contestation of the traditional religious actors in Romania. Some Romanian Roma intellectuals concerned with rethinking of the representation of the group over the last 30 years have had a different take

⁷³ Anca Balcanu, “Romany Issue(s): The Images of Romanian Gypsies at Home and Abroad,” *Transtext(e)s Transcultures. Journal of Global Cultural Studies*, 4 (2008): 72.

⁷⁴ Grigore, “Consecințele istoriei asupra imaginii de sine și structurării identității rromilor. Heteroidentificare stereotip-negativă și autoidentificare stigmatizată în mentalul colectiv rrom”, in *Rromii ... în căutarea stimei de sine*, 23; my translation.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, 18; my translation.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, 20; my translation.

on the same topic. Occasionally, Romanies' religious peculiarity could be turned into a veritable asset as it results from an overstatement of the attorney Nicolae Bobu, himself an amateur Roma author.⁷⁷ In an extravagant work in which the weight falls on the oriental religious elements adapted in the course of the centuries by the Romanies to the European Christian milieu, Bobu came to advocate that even "Jesus Christ spoke in Aramaic about Bahkt."⁷⁸ The statement recalls the theory of Black Christ that has helped African-Americans activists raise their voice by articulating an empowering paradigm known as Black liberation theology.⁷⁹ Notwithstanding the overstatement, an assertion like the one formulated by Bobu needs to be understood as an attempt to identify imaginary ties between the essentialized and orientalized Romanies' set of beliefs and the normative Christian narratives. Bobu's postulate may be intended to deliver a dignified profile for the marginalized and stigmatized Roma.

Bobu is not the only example of a Roma intellectual pursuing the idea of a collective and emancipated Roma identity by underscoring the religious peculiarities of the ethnic group. In his most recent book, the sociologist Ionescu tackles the relevance of religion in the building of a Roma ethnic identity in a very distinct manner. In Ionescu's collection of studies *Rromii – o istorie culturală. A doua abolire și imperativul etic al recunoașterii*, published in 2022, at a mature age and after years of disillusioned experiences in the Roma movement, the author chose to begin almost every chapter with a reference to the biblical texts or to use biblical verses as opening mottos.

Ionescu's reflections cannot be overlooked as they profess a call to an authentic and liberating critical attitude towards the practice of knowledge production among the Roma intelligentsia. It is true that he pessimistically assesses the achievements as an "enormous quantity of pseudo-academic waste"⁸⁰. Ionescu inspects the knowledge developed

⁷⁷ As a member of the early generation of post-communist activists, Nicolae Bobu was seriously engaged to build a political representative party and to give voice to the Romanian Romanies' demands for compensations from German state for the persecution and exploitation suffered during the Second World War. See: Franz Rimmel, *Volk ohne Hinterland* (Wien: Picus Verlag, 1993), 93, 96.

⁷⁸ Nicolae Bobu, *Creația în viziunea limbii și judecării de pace a Rromilor* (Târgu Jiu: Editura "Gorjeanul", 2002), 108; my translation.

⁷⁹ See: Gaytraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism. An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans* (Maryknoll N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998).

⁸⁰ Ionescu, *Rromii – o istorie culturală*, 30.

for many years under the umbrella of “Gypsiness.” To his dissatisfaction, although the syntagm appears to have been delegitimized by other Roma academics, in reality, the resulting outcomes prove to be nothing else than a form of captivity in “a mystic or rather pantheistic imaginary, resulting from an heterogenous melting of religions and heresies gliding from a shamanic Turkish Mongolian Tengrism, Persian magic/ Zoroasterism and Indian Buddhism, to the revenging Christian proto - Protestantism and the Islamic Sufism (in particular the Shiite version).”⁸¹ In broad terms Ionescu highlights the devastating impact of the antigypsism⁸² which would mirror the failure of both Christianity and the secular modernity “to integrate the Roma in sacred Law, in the humanist – egalitarian, divine or secular definitions of communion and communities.”⁸³

With no reference to a specific religious actor, Ionescu underlines that in everyday practices, the traditional Romanian mentalities function against any “formal attribute of sacrality” because it fails to recognize the humanity and the dignity of the Romanies. In his opinion, the common Romanian saying “the Gypsy is a human being only when is looked at from a certain distance”⁸⁴ is testament to the disparagement with which the Roma have lived. Ionescu identifies the manifestations of antigypsism in ordinary religious practices occurring even in the present. They become apparent in very specific situations like those when “Gypsies [who] go to attend the church services [but] have to stay behind the Romanians and to receive the holy host only after them; in the graveyards Gypsies have to be interned separately so that their bones would not jumble to those of the Romanians.”⁸⁵

In response to all the acknowledged and internalized demeaning practices, rooted in prejudicious religious representations and affecting the self-esteem of the Roma, Ionescu chooses to comment on the sacrality of the *Rromanipen*. He states that *Rromanipen* is “sacralized through a vow (*Solah*) attained between God and the community, the ancestral forefathers or, in extreme circumstances, renewed by reconciliation (*Pakimos*).”⁸⁶ Similar to the anthropologists’ distinction between

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, 31; my translation.

⁸² *Ibidem*, 23; my translation.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, 58; my translation.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 60; my translation.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, 61; my translation.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, 106.

perspectives internal and external to the ethnic group in question, Ionescu is ready to adopt a culturalist approach when he addresses the sacrality of the *Rromanipen*. He explains that “the sin of breaking the *solahaimos* is immutable and has nothing to do with the human, [or] priestly absolution, the unrighteous person losing its credibility”, consequently, not being recognized as a Roma any further, but as homo sacer/athinganos (cursed; who lost its sacrality), a damned, an excluded.”⁸⁷ Such a system of beliefs and practices of the sacred is associated with the traditional Roma sub-groups and, noteworthy, is situated outside the services of the churches.

To Ionescu, the accusation of irreligiosity and the exoticized Indian paradigm are replaced by a new perspective. He writes that the traditional Roma share a “heretic” set of beliefs and practices which go beyond the strict doctrinarian Christian precepts. Ionescu chooses to imagine a veritable system of beliefs translated in the “confidence of ushering from the pain attainable by renunciation and abandonment in the hands of God, [which] should be researched and re-examined in the present-day religious practices of the Romanies, [more precisely] of some traditionalist Roma subgroups”. Those practices include “the rejection of the cult of icons, the refusal of baptism or the rediscovery of the religious customs within the neo-Protestant cults (in particular, the Pentecostalism, as a revelation of the Holy Ghost).”⁸⁸

Ionescu claims that the Roma have found it practical not to become apostates by renouncing to their “heresy,” an act that could be assimilated to a deadly sin. Instead, they have preferred to adopt a “formalistic conversion in order to comprehend the values of the sedentary communities.” In this respect, they “recodified the similarities with the dominant religion and culture, in order to obtain tolerance, although, the suspicions towards them were not at all wiped out.” In this manner, the Roma “avoided the excommunication [although this attitude only] guaranteed [them to live the] life of those *Homo sacer* (cursed human, the Latins’ synonymous label for the Byzantine *athinganos*).” The “Roma rainbow culture,” as Ionescu calls it, has a strong and heterogenous religious component, even if it involved

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, 120.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, 119.

the accommodation to the dominant cults and cultures, alongside with the preservation of the spiritual peculiarities of a «highly musical people», which [has helped Romanies] to dissimulate under an outward identity a magical religion [which facilitates] a fusion with God.⁸⁹

What stands out from Ionescu's approach to the religious dimension of Roma culture is his ability to demonstrate how ancestral elements have resisted and been resemantized by means of transcultural comparisons in order to ultimately emancipate the Roma from the frequent accusation of mimicry, indifference, or even lack of religiosity. By indirect hints, Ionescu identifies the misreading of the religiosity of the Roma as it has been undertaken, over the centuries, by non-Roma elites and ordinary people. He is not only aware but openly critical about the effects of the negative labelling of the Roma within the Orthodox and Catholic communities. Consequently, the burden of external knowledge production needs to be contested as it is an act of personal and collective liberation. Despite all the prejudices rehearsed in the literature dedicated to the Roma, Ionescu underlines that thanks to the adaptative feature of the Roma culture, the ethnic group was not merely a passive receiver of external influences. On the contrary, Romanies got actively involved in a process of accommodation which finally conducted to a heterogenous and "heretic" religious profile.

The reiteration of the "heretic"⁹⁰ feature of Roma religiosity is indissolubly linked to the agentive borrowings from various religions. Ionescu insists on this innovative and liberating rereading. In my opinion, the choice of this concept enables him to imagine a religious subculture that may find itself in asymmetric relations with the dominant religious actors but that nevertheless has relevant internal spiritual resources to build upon. This revisionist standpoint suggests an aware and steady effort of

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, 164.

⁹⁰ I believe Ionescu's preference for the concept is not aleatory but intentional and politically instrumental. I base my assumption on the working definition of the term, which can express an individual and/or collective choice and agency. In this respect see the definition given to the concept in a specialised dictionary: "Heresy": In the Christian church, the conscious, wilful choosing (from Greek *hairesis*: "choice") of doctrine held to be contrary to apostolic teaching. Most of those deemed to be heretics from the standpoint of victorious orthodoxy thought of themselves as true Christians. Hence the term "heresy" cannot be used in the history of religions without adopting an a priori partisan standpoint. "Heresy" voice in *Macmillan Dictionary of Religion*, ed. Michael Pye (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1994), 107.

Ionescu to emancipate himself and his readers from the overwhelmingly stigmatizing external narratives.

In a sophisticated manner, Ionescu evades the idea of irreconcilability or the mere antagonism between Christian precepts and the spirituality of the Roma. Adopting a very critical attitude towards the writings of both Roma and non-Roma academics, Ionescu calls for the decolonization of knowledge production. His book was a first step in this direction in showing the effects of antigypsism and its religious manifestations perceptible in both Eastern and Western Christian traditions. In this way Ionescu wrote back, in an empowering manner, to the pre-existing discourses, explaining what has determined the Romanies to affiliate to or to disaffiliate from an older or newer confessional actor present in the Romanian religious landscape during the last 30 years.

Conclusions

In the process of developing a participative and empowering narrative Roma intellectual elites from all over the world could not prevent to debate the affiliation, disaffiliation, and forms of alleged dissidence from different religions and confessions. Over the last 30 years the Romanian Roma intellectual elite have gradually caught up with the Western Roma and non-Roma knowledge production and in various ways and degrees responded to and incorporated the victimizing antigypsist narrative emerging in the 1980s. Voicing Roma perspectives, the first generation of Roma intellectual elites from Romania addressed religious matters in two major ways. They understood religious affiliation as a formal or pragmatic way of resisting antigypsist practices and as an alternative symbolic space where emancipation seemed attainable by overemphasizing the spiritual dimension of *Romanipen's* ethos or conversion to neo-Protestant churches.

It is visible that the discussion around the willingness of the Romanies to affiliate or disaffiliate from the Romanian Orthodox Church has been subordinated to the articulation of the Roma political assertive movement. In their effort to dismantle and combat the religiously rooted prejudices and sententious judgements, the first generation of post-communist Romanian Roma intellectual elite glided from general European considerations to country-specific peculiarities. If, at first, the hegemon position of Orthodox church in Romania was dealt with in relatively neutral terms, channels of dialogue being embedded in incipient knowledge

production, with the passing of time, the callous history of slavery of the Roma and the partaking of the Romanian Orthodox Church to it, progressively marked how the religious profile of the Romanian Roma was (re-)conceptualized. From that point on, the consideration paid by religious actors to the *Romanipen* became central to the affirmative and emancipative ethnogenetic narratives. Henceforward it has been deemed to be a decisive element standing behind the processes of adhesion to or disaffiliation from a religious actor.

Religious Education of the Roma People in Greece. The Ecumenical Theological Framework of Communication, Intercultural Inclusion Interventions and a Case Study of Non-Formal Education from the Orthodox Church

NIKOLAOS TSIREVELOUS*

The main concern of this article is to examine the conditions for Roma education through church and religious education. The program of the Holy Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros "Agios Thaddeos" for the education of Roma is taken as a case study. This program belongs to the non-formal education sector. At the same time, the theological prerequisites of such programs by the Orthodox Church are examined in connection with the cultural identity of the Roma. The article concludes with an exploration of the conditions for the inclusion of Roma in formal education through religious education. The main purpose of Roma participation in religious education is religious literacy rather than catechism, as well as the preservation of their particular cultural identity. Emphasis is placed on the use of the tools of intercultural education and differentiated teaching in religious education based on the new curricula in Greece. In this way, formal and non-formal education are linked.

Keywords: *Communication, Differentiated Teaching, Intercultural Education, Religious Education, Roma, Orthodox Culture*

Introduction

Everywhere in the world, groups that have been carriers of different ethnic cultural identities have coexisted for many centuries. This is due to the movement of populations, which is caused by economic migration, refugees, forced relocation of populations (e.g., due to war, exchange of ethnic groups), trade, etc.¹

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¹ Χρήστος Γκόβαρης, *Εισαγωγή στη Διαπολιτισμική Εκπαίδευση* (Αθήνα: Διάδραση, 2011), 19. Elliane Padilla and Peter Phan, *Θεολογία της μετανάστευσης στις Αβρααμικές θρησκείες: Ιουδαϊσμός, Χριστιανισμός, Ισλάμ*, trans. Νίκος Κουρεμένος (Βόλος: Εκδοτική Δημητριάδος, 2021), 31.

In the Balkans and especially in Greece, the Roma, known as Gyphti, Athyghans, Gypsies, Sidids, Greeks of Romani origin, live together along with the dominant ethnic group and other minorities.² Some of the Roma are bearers of a differentiated culture and way of life compared to the majority population. The stereotypical perceptions and prejudices that have been cultivated about this way of life lead to the expression of racist language, social discrimination and negative attitudes towards them. This pathogenesis and the educational system, which has a different orientation from that of the Roma (e.g., in terms of being itinerant, households unable to afford education), are the main causes of school drop-out³ and even illiteracy among a large part of the Roma population.⁴

Modern education that seeks to be effective in its objectives must take into account the characteristics of the cultural groups that coexist in a particular place. In the context of formal education, the curricula of the various subjects (e.g., Modern Greek Literature, History, Religious Education), need to be distinguished for their cultural pluralistic character⁵ and offer possibilities for inclusion in public schools and equal participation by pupils with different cultural backgrounds and lifestyles,⁶ such as the Roma. However, working in non-formal education can also be important. In particular, the cooperation of various institutions, such as universities and church communities, can be decisive for the education of people different from the dominant cultural group and thus for their smooth social integration of people with different cultural backgrounds.

² Αθανάσιος Γκότοβος, “Πολιτικές διαχείρισης της ετερότητας στην εκπαίδευση: η πολιτισμική και δομική ενσωμάτωση των πολιτών με ρόμικη προέλευση στην Ελλάδα,” in *Διά βίου εκπαίδευση και επιμόρφωση των εκπαιδευτικών υπό το πρίσμα της διαπολιτισμικής οπτικής: το πρόγραμμα “Εκπαίδευση των παιδιών Ρομά” ως αφετηρία νέων θεωρητικών και πρακτικών*, eds. Γιώργος Φλουρής et al. (Αθήνα: Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών/Κέντρο Διαπολιτισμικής Αγωγής, 2013), 42–61.

³ Solvor M. Lauritzen and Tuva S. Nodeland, “«What is the Problem Represented to Be?» Two Decades of Research on Roma and Education in Europe,” *Educational Research Review* 24 (2018): 148–69.

⁴ Ελληνική Ομάδα για τα Δικαιώματα των Ρομά, “Οι Ρομά στην Ελλάδα. Ιστορία και σημερινή πραγματικότητα,” http://6dim-diap-elefth.thess.sch.gr/Greek/Ekpaidefsi_Tsigganopaidon/EishghseisEkpshsTsigg/EishghseisEkpshsTsigg2002/oi_Roma_stin_ellada.pdf, accessed, August 22, 2022.

⁵ Γκόβαρης, Εισαγωγή, 56–57.

⁶ Marios Koukounaras Liagkis, “Can an Educational Intervention, Specifically Theatre in Education, Influence Students’ Perceptions of and Attitudes to Cultural and Religious Diversity? A Socio-Educational Research,” *British Journal of Religious Education* 33, no. 1 (2011): 76.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the conditions for effective education and especially religious education of the Roma people. The first part of the paper briefly describes the socio-cultural context of the Roma in Greece. Then, as a case study, the action of the Holy Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros is investigated, which, in cooperation with the University of Thessaly and other institutions of Volos, developed a three-year social intervention program for Roma children. The study of the program is linked to the exploration of the theological presuppositions for this project and examines the boundaries between conversion and ministry in Roma education. The paper concludes with a discussion of the conditions of inclusion of Roma pupils through formal religious education in public schools. In this thematic area, ecumenical Christian theology is linked to intercultural education and differentiated teaching. In this way, a comprehensive study of formal and non-formal Roma education through the course of religious education and the ecclesiastical sphere is offered.

1. Culture and Education of the Roma in Greece

1.1 Socio-cultural characteristics of the Roma in Greece

There are different estimates of the Roma population. According to the Council of Europe, the Roma population is estimated at around 12 to 15 million in Europe.⁷ The European Roma Rights Center states that 150,000 to 300,000 officially declare that they live in Greece, while the “Network” estimates that there are about 160,000 to 200,000.⁸ The difficulty in determining the exact number is due to the fact that many Roma choose not to declare their origin in order to avoid racist expressions. In addition, there are people who have one Roma and one non-Roma parent, people who do not speak a Romani language but have Romani heritage. Therefore it is not always easy to determine the number of Roma.

⁷ Council of Europe, “Moving Forward 2022, Annual Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe,” <https://rm.coe.int/moving-forward-2022-annual-report-of-the-secretary-general/1680a661d6>, accessed August 22, 2022. See also: European Commission, “A Union of Equality: EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation,” <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0620>, accessed November 11, 2022.

⁸ Dimitrina Petrova, “The Roma: Between a Myth and the Future”, *Roma Rights*, no. 1 (April 2004): 9.

Historical references record the presence of the Roma in the Peloponnese as early as the 14th century.⁹ More recent evidence indicates that in the last century most Roma received Greek nationality in the 1970s and 1990s. “Until then they were considered ‘foreigners of gypsy origin’ and were issued special documents by the Department of Foreigners, documents that had to be renewed every two years.”¹⁰ This was helped by the fact that they embraced the prevailing religion, which is the doctrine of the Orthodox Christian Church. Even today, a small group of Roma who belong to Islam are not granted Greek citizenship.¹¹ According to survey data, most of the Roma adhere to the Orthodox Christian denomination, while in Western Thrace and other areas they are Muslims.¹² Muslim Roma in Western Thrace are recognized as members of the local Muslim minority.¹³ Research shows that the Roma Muslims of Western Thrace live in poorer areas, which makes it difficult for them to adapt socially.¹⁴

The Roma do not have a separate religious faith with holy books, traditions, rules, but usually many Roma engage in the forms of religion that prevail around them. What characterizes their religiosity as a cultural construct is its flexibility and the association of various customs with magic, various superstitions, esoteric rituals and spiritualistic practices.¹⁵ Of course, these all outline a general view of religious and cultural presence, because the Roma, like other citizens, are agents of globalization and interact with the urban or rural environment in which they live. In a similar way, this interaction is also felt in religious expression, which is why it is necessary to study religiousness on a case-by-case basis in each

⁹ Ελένη Σκούρτου, “Η εκπαίδευση των παιδιών Ρομά,” in *Διγλωσσία και Διδασκαλία δεύτερης Γλώσσας*, eds Ελένη Σκούρτου, & Βασιλεία Κούρτη-Καζούλλη (Αθήνα: Ελληνικά Ακαδημαϊκά Συγγράμματα και Βοηθήματα, 2015), 28.

¹⁰ Ελληνική Ομάδα, “Οι Ρομά”.

¹¹ Undoubtedly, this fact indicates the use of religion by the state for ideological-type political pursuits. Πολύκαρπος Καραμούζης, “Θρησκεία και κυρίαρχη ιδεολογία στη νεοελληνική κοινωνία,” *Επιστήμη και Κοινωνία: Επιθεώρηση Πολιτικής και Ηθικής Θεωρίας*, no. 21 (Spring 2009): 83–84.

¹² Ελληνική Ομάδα, “Οι Ρομά.”

¹³ Ελένη Σελλά Μάζη, “Η διγλωσσία στην Ελλάδα,” in *Διγλωσσία*, 43.

¹⁴ Alexandros Vavasis, *L'altérité musulmane en Grèce: Problèmes d'intégration et exclusion sociale des minoritaires de Thrace* (Genève: Institut européen de l'Université de Genève, Publications Europa, 2007), 68.

¹⁵ Petrova, “The Roma,” 22.

region,¹⁶ as well as the socio-cultural elements, customs and practices in their places of residence.¹⁷ Apart from the various cultural influences, the Roma maintain their particular social organization and customary law. The basis of this organization is the family in the broadest sense of the term, with patriarchy predominating. Another characteristic of some Roma families is early marriage and families with many children.¹⁸

Undoubtedly the distinct cultural element of the Roma, which is linked to their broader way of life and therefore to their religiosity, is their language, which has come to be called Romani or Greek Romani. Their language differs from the official language of the country and belongs to the minority or otherwise less spoken languages of the country. Romani is fragmented into several dialects and is influenced by other local dialects. Almost all Roma are bilingual, i.e., they speak Romani and Modern Greek at the same time.¹⁹ Of particular interest is that Muslim Roma as bilinguals speak Romani-Turkish, while Christian Orthodox speak Romani-Greek. In addition, there are also trilingual populations, who speak Romani-Turkish-Greek.²⁰ However, what is observed is the “language shift”, which is due to religious reasons, i.e., the influence of the Muslim majority among the minority. As far as the Christian Roma are concerned, their language has many influences from the Modern Greek language. The important thing is that their language has not been altered to a great extent, but has dynamically taken on these loans and retains its autonomy. One such typical example is popular romantic poetry.²¹

For many centuries music was the profession for many Roma and ensured the survival of the whole family. Various studies indicate that it is a key feature of their cultural identity and expression, maintains a positive

¹⁶ Tatiana Podolinská and Tomas Hrustič, “Religiosity and Spirituality among the Gypsy/Roma in Twenty-First-Century Europe: Theoretical Framing and Ethnographic Perspectives,” *Romani Studies* 31, no. 2 (December 2021): 143–54.

¹⁷ Χρήστος Παπακόστας, *Σαχά ισί βαρό νι νάι. Ρόμικες μουσικές και χορευτικές ταυτότητες στη Μακεδονία* (Αθήνα: Πεδίο, 2013), 50.

¹⁸ Χριστίνα Νόβα – Καλτσούνη, “Η τσιγγάνικη οικογένεια στην ελληνική κοινωνία, Ιωάννινα 2004,”

http://reader.ekt.gr/bookReader/show/index.php?lib=EDULLL&item=265&bitstream=265_01#page/10/mode/2up, accessed August 22, 2022.

¹⁹ Σελλά Μάζη, “Η διγλωσσία,” 21 and 42.

²⁰ Σωφρόνης Χατζησαββίδης, “Οι Ρομ της Ελλάδας: γλώσσα και πολιτισμός (συμβολή στη διαπολιτισμική εκπαίδευση),” *Μακεδόνον*, no. 2 (1996): 98.

²¹ Σελλά Μάζη, “Η διγλωσσία,” 44.

orientation and is interwoven with their cultural ethos. According to Papakostas,

dance and music are understood as cultural practices through which the Roma ethnic group integrates the elements of contemporary developments, reconstitutes itself symbolically and manages its cultural identity.²²

There are many generalizations about their culture, as well as elements that are idealized. These elements may be since many people have the belief that the Roma are an itinerant population. Earlier researchers, in the spirit of romanticism, have idealized the cultural characteristics of the Roma, sometimes linking them to a mythical character that characterizes the wandering gypsies.²³ On the other hand, the view that they are a nomadic people has also given rise to various prejudices and stereotypes.

At this point it is necessary to note that a large percentage of Roma are permanently settled in various countries, while there are also migrant populations. In Greece, it is estimated that 70 per cent are permanently residing in one place and are not wandering.²⁴ This is also evident from the various districts around the country where large numbers of Roma live, such as Ano Liosia, Zefiri, Menidi and Agia Paraskevi in Attica, Dendropotamos in Thessaloniki, Nea Smyrni in Larissa, Aliveri and Agia Paraskevi in Volos. The equation of the Roma with nomadic life has led to the entrenched view that they are a people without roots and history.²⁵ This perception has contributed in its own way to the formation of racist expressions and cultural degradation of the Roma.²⁶

Moreover, most Roma live below the poverty line, find it difficult to find work, are treated with suspicion by public services and lack health insurance.²⁷ They are often mistreated by the police, and many citizens

²² Παπακόστας, *Σαχά*, 36 and 301–02.

²³ Jean-Paul Clebert, *The Gypsies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), 73.

²⁴ Γεώργιος Μάρκου, “Η προσπάθεια ανάπτυξης μιας εθνικής πολιτικής για την οικονομική και κοινωνική ένταξη των τσιγγάνων,” in *Οι Ρομά στο σύγχρονο ελληνικό κράτος: Συμβιώσεις, αναρέσεις, απουσίες*, ed. Σεβαστή Τρουμπέτα (Αθήνα: Κριτική, 2008), 153–88.

²⁵ Παπακόστας, *Σαχά*, 29

²⁶ Ρωζάνη Κωνταντζόγλου, *Στη σκιά του ιερού βράχου. Τόπος και μνήμη στα Αναφιώτικα* (Αθήνα: Ελληνικά Γράμματα, 2001), 40

²⁷ Panagiota Gkofa, “Lifelong Learning for Roma in European Countries: The Greek Case,” in *Lifelong Learning and the Roma Minority in Western and Southern Europe*, eds. Andrea Óhidy and Katalin Forray (Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, 2019), 48.

suspect them of various offenses.²⁸ Many Roma families live in camps or temporary structures in deplorable conditions, which function as “ghettos” because they are cut off from the places of residence of the culturally dominant group.²⁹ These conditions contribute to the cultivation of more prejudice, social discrimination and racist attitudes. One consequence is that Roma youth drop out of school and engage in delinquent activities.

1.2 School drop-out, illiteracy and educational integration programs for the Roma

In general, the Roma in Greece do not consider themselves as belonging to an ethnic minority. Despite their cultural characteristics, they consider themselves Greek.³⁰ These particular characteristics as well as racist ideas have resulted in prejudices and stereotypical perceptions being developed by some people of the dominant cultural group, giving rise to racist attitudes and a variety of direct and indirect discrimination.³¹ These perceptions undoubtedly also affect the education of Roma students and have an impact on their social integration.

According to various surveys, the school drop-out rate of Roma children reaches about 75% in the province and especially in areas where there are settlements. The corresponding rate is very high in urban centers, where it reaches about 50%.³² School drop-out is mainly due to poor living conditions, lack of basic needs, poverty, child exploitation and labor, lack of social security and medical care. An additional cause is the racism and discrimination they face from other children, their families and often from their teachers. In the face of this situation, many Roma pupils react by engaging in delinquent inter-school and social behavior or dropping out of school.³³

²⁸ Ελληνική Ομάδα, “Οι Ρομά.”

²⁹ Λένα Διβάνη, “Η κατάσταση των Τσιγγάνων στην Ελλάδα,” Εθνική Επιτροπή για τα Δικαιώματα του Ανθρώπου, https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:B3mLUxgvoL0J:https://eclass.uoa.gr/modules/document/file.php/ARCH258/Divani_Tsiganoi.doc+&ccd=1&hl=el&ct=clnk&gl=gr, accessed August 22, 2022.

³⁰ Δημήτριος Τσακίρης, “Πολιτική ευρωπαϊκών κρατών και Τσιγγάνοι-Rom: μια ιστορική επισκόπηση,” <http://www.openarchives.gr/visit/492827>, accessed August 22, 2022.

³¹ Θανάσης Παπαθανασίου, “Διδάσκοντας γύπτους και τζελέπηδες περί περιτομής και αβατάρα,” *Σύναξη*, no. 98 (April 2006): 36.

³² Χρήστος Αβραμίδης, “Σχολική αποτυχία των Ρομά: ένα πρόβλημα βαθιά κοινωνικό,” <http://www.eled.auth.gr/>, accessed August 22, 2022.

³³ Άγγελος Χατζηνικολάου, “Εμπειρίες από τη σχολική ένταξη παιδιών Ρομά της Θεσσαλονίκης,” in *Η διδασκαλία της γλώσσας*, ed. Σούλα Μυτακίδου (Θεσσαλονίκη:

The dropout of Roma from school is also due to the context in which formal education is organized. Many researchers believe that this is the main problem and not the Roma's lack of interest in school.³⁴ Children who are bearers of a different culture are brought up in families with concrete rather than abstract cultural representations.³⁵ The inclusion of different pupils in lower age groups on the sole criterion of sufficient knowledge of the Greek language leads to stigmatization of pupils, since no account is taken of their knowledge and communication skills in their mother tongue, which may lead them to drop out of school.

In particular, the Curricula in the various subjects are designed with a monocultural and ethnocentric orientation. This orientation does not favor "openness" to cultural diversities. Roma education requires the organization of a learning framework that includes their values and cultural representations.³⁶ Moreover, pupils are discouraged from using their dialect in the educational process, and there is usually no corresponding material available. The inclusion of these children in smaller classes on the basis of their poor knowledge of the Greek language leads to sharp racism of Roma children by the rest of the environment. At the same time, it leads them to drop out of school because of the impossibility of communicating in their mother tongue.³⁷

In addition, the strict organization of the school and the lack of training of teachers in Romani language contribute to the formation of a school "indifferent" to Roma children. According to Hatzinikolaou, it is now an ideological challenge to create a public school that will truly embrace marginalized children.³⁸ The state therefore has the first say in the treatment of this issue and specific political interventions are required.

Επίκεντρο, 2005), 73.

³⁴ Χατζησαββίδης, "Οι Ρομ," 83–87; Χατζηνικολάου, "Εμπειρίες"; Γκόβαρης, Εισαγωγή, 28; Σκούρτου, "Η εκπαίδευση", 97.

³⁵ Χρήστος Γκόβαρης & Ιωάννης Ρουσσάκης, *Ευρωπαϊκή Ένωση-Πολιτικές στην εκπαίδευση* (Αθήνα: Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο, 2008), 146–47.

³⁶ Σωφρόνιος Χατζησαββίδης, "Οι Ρομ της Ελλάδας και η γλώσσα τους," *Ελληνική διαλεκτολογία*, no. 5 (1996-1998), 193–207.

³⁷ Χρήστος Γκόβαρης, "Διαπολιτισμική Παιδαγωγική," in *Ετερότητα στη σχολική τάξη και Διδασκαλία της Ελληνικής Γλώσσας και των Μαθηματικών: η περίπτωση των Τσιγγανοπαίδων*, eds. Ναπολέων Μήτσης & Τριαντάφυλλος Τριανταφυλλίδης (Αθήνα: ΥΠΕΠΘ/ Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλίας, 2007), 25.

³⁸ Άγγελος Χατζηνικολάου, "Σχολείο ίσο για παιδιά άνισα': Μια ιδεολογική πρόκληση στην εκπαίδευση για παιδιά κοινωνικά αποκλεισμένων ομάδων. Ένα παράδειγμα από την

Addressing Roma school failure requires a change of mindset from both the school and Roma families. Therefore, it is necessary to cultivate trust between Roma and the state. Such an undertaking requires specific interventions, such as the use of the Romani language, education in an environment friendly to their cultural characteristics (e.g., learning that uses artful thinking, music, dance and educational drama), teacher training and the use of various teaching techniques. Of course, educational programs for Roma children, adolescents and adults by various institutions, which are implemented in the context of non-formal education and complement formal education, can also be useful in these interventions.

In the context of the non-formal education of Roma students, since the mid-1990s the Universities of Greece have developed various programs (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, University of Thessaly, University of the Aegean). Skourtou lists these university programs for Roma education in chronological order and gives a brief assessment of them. The common aim of these programs was to take steps for the smooth and stable integration of Roma pupils in education, the preparation of appropriate material and the planning of relevant activities, the training of teachers, the information prepared for parents and the link between community and school.³⁹

Apart from these University programs, initiatives were also taken by local church communities belonging to the Orthodox denomination, i.e., the predominant religion in the Greek state. Among these, it is necessary to mention the “Lighthouse of the World (O Faros tou Kosmou)” of the Metropolis of Neapolis and Stavroupolis under the responsibility of Archimandrite Athenagoras Loukataris from 2004 until today,⁴⁰ as well as the “St. (Agios) Thaddeus the Apostle” program of the Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros under the supervision of Metropolitan Ignatios (Georgakopoulos) and under the responsibility of Archimandrite Maximos Papaioannou. The following is a case study of the program of the Metropolis of Demetriados.

εκπαίδευση των παιδιών Ρομά (παιδιών Τσιγγάνων),” http://www.elliepek.gr/documents/4o_synedrio_eisigiseis/63_70.pdf, accessed August 22, 2022.

³⁹ Σκούρτου, “Η εκπαίδευση,” 98.

⁴⁰ The Program of “Faros (Lighthouse) of the World” (Φάρος του κόσμου), <https://faros-toukosmou.com/en/home/>, accessed August 22, 2022.

2. Case Study: “Saint Thaddeus the Apostle”. A non-formal education program from the Holy Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros

2.1 The educational program “Saint Thaddeus the Apostle”

In October 2014 the Holy Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros started its cooperation in the local network of support for Roma students for the start and completion of their compulsory education. This network includes the Roma Support Centre of Aliveri of the Public Benefit Enterprise “ΚΕΚΠΑ-ΔΙΕΚ” of the Municipality of Volos, the Roma Children’s Education Program of the University of Thessaly under the responsibility of the professor of the Department of Primary Education, Christos Govaris, while schools of Volos attended by Roma are also cooperating. The actions of the network were designed to complement the State and essentially create the conditions for Roma pupils to start school and complete compulsory education, to acquire knowledge in a creative way, to provide their families with the necessary socio-economic support and to prepare them for their integration into society (e.g., send their children to school, find a job) without losing their cultural identity.

This cooperation led in January 2017 to the implementation of the program entitled “Agios Thaddeos the Apostle- three-year program of social intervention in Aliveri and Agia Paraskevi Volos” by the Holy Metropolis of Demetrias. The program is the inspiration of Metropolitan Ignatios (Georgakopoulos), while the responsible person is Archimandrite Maximos Papaioannou.

Aliveri and Agia Paraskevi are districts of the city of Volos, where Roma are permanently settled. The program is addressed to Roma students in primary and secondary schools as well as in high school, and up to adults. The main purpose is to link these people to school, to provide them with a variety of support for the completion of compulsory education, to offer them motivation for their subsequent enrolment in Vocational Lyceums and General Lyceums, to communicate with their parents and to promote social integration through vocational guidance. The program is funded by European funds and by the global organization “Church helps Churches-Bread for the World”, and has the support of

the local bodies mentioned above. Its activities are implemented in the old schools of Metropolis Demetrias and Almyros.⁴¹

The achievement of this key objective is developed along four axes. The first relates to the remedial teaching of Roma pupils in primary and secondary school and the learning of English. Remedial teaching is an initiative to further support children in their school subjects. It is particularly important for Roma pupils because the lessons are given in Romani, which is not used in Greek education. According to Govaris, teaching in Romani “strengthens their identity and helps them take their lessons seriously”.⁴² Thus, after the school program, students are able to make up for past gaps in their education, prepare for the day’s lessons and gain an in-depth understanding of the curriculum with the help of experienced teachers. In this way, they are enhanced in their learning and can participate effectively in the daily lessons.

The second axis refers to learning music and dance. As already mentioned, music and dance are key elements of the Roma cultural construction. In this program, students have the opportunity to learn music theory, clarinet, percussion, harmonium, lute, guitar, i.e., instruments that belong to their own and the wider cultural tradition of the place. The music lessons also include Byzantine –ecclesiastical music. The music lessons are supported by the Association for Traditional Music Dissemination “IONIA” and are complemented by artistic activities.⁴³ Learning music cultivates the emotional world, promotes critical attitude and various skills, stimulates self-confidence, facilitates social development and communication and develops children’s creativity.⁴⁴

The next axis is linked to sport. Sports activities are carried out with the help of the sports club and the football team “Demetrias”. Sports activities include athletics, football, basketball and rowing. The benefits to children from participating in sporting activities are manifold. It undoubtedly contributes to children’s physical and mental development. At the same time, it fosters their social skills, develops good manners and

⁴¹ “2η χρονιά του προγράμματος εκπαίδευσης για παιδιά Ρομά,” <https://imd.gr/2018/10/2/>, accessed August 22, 2022.

⁴² Γκόβαρης, *Εισαγωγή*, 199.

⁴³ “Εγκαίνια του Προγράμματος ‘Άγιος Απόστολος Θαδδαίος’ για παιδιά Ρομά,” <https://imd.gr/2017/09/thaddaios/>, accessed August 22, 2022.

⁴⁴ Θεανώ Κουτσουπίδου, “Μουσική συνεργασία και δημιουργικότητα στην πρωτοβάθμια εκπαίδευση: Έρευνα και διδακτική πράξη,” *Μουσικοπαιδαγωγικά*, no. 6 (2008): 43–65.

builds their morale, cultivating virtues such as honesty, fairness, mutual respect and care for others.⁴⁵

The last axis refers to vocational orientation and is addressed to older Roma men and women. The vocational training courses are held in cooperation with the “Thessaliko IEK Giatsos” and refer to cooking, grooming, make-up and the house-keeping profession. Thus, an effort is made to help Roma adults to realize their abilities, to cultivate their skills, but also to discover new knowledge and to make decisions about their professional path.⁴⁶

This Program is distinguished by its realistic ambitions. According to Metropolitan Ignatios, with these interventions “we will not solve all the problems, but we will keep alive the hope that these children, who are in our hands, will be able to take life in their own hands, escape from delinquency and will progress.”⁴⁷

The wide participation of Roma children and adults, the reduction of school dropout in the area, the progress and excellence of Roma students, the learning of English, music and dance, the pluralistic nature of the actions and interventions, the response and cooperation of various local institutions show the success of this program. At the same time, they offer the possibility of new and even more dynamic and pluralistic interventions.⁴⁸ This program of the Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros has received wide recognition in Greece. On an institutional level, the visit to the President of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Prokopis Pavlopoulos, by the children of the program, who were accompanied by Metropolitan Ignatios of Demetrias and Professor Christos Govaris of the University of Thessaly, can be mentioned.

Undoubtedly, these actions are a model for formal education as well. However, they also raise a number of concerns. Why should a Metropolis be involved in Roma education? Does it intend to? What is the theological foundation for the development of such educational interventions and how can they be linked to contemporary religious education?

⁴⁵ Peter Arnold, “Sport, Moral education and the Development of Character,” *Journal of the Philosophy of Education*, no. 2 (1984): 275–81.

⁴⁶ Διβάνη, “Η κατάσταση.”

⁴⁷ “Επιτυχημένη η κοινή συνεδρίαση για τους Ρομά,” <https://imd.gr/2017/11/roma/>, accessed August 22, 2022.

⁴⁸ “Πανηγυρική λήξη του προγράμματος ‘Απόστολος Θαδδαίος’,” <https://imd.gr/2019/06/>, accessed August 22, 2022.

2.2 The theological conditions of the program: Ecumenical theology and intercultural communication and ministry (diakonia)

This initiative of the Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros under the supervision of Metropolitan Ignatios Georgakopoulos is in accordance with the theological requirements of Orthodox Christian ministry (diakonia). The mission of the Church is the revelation of the God of love to people and cooperation in His plan to confront evil and reconcile all the races/nations of the earth. But for reconciliation to occur, respect among the diverse groups, cooperation and acceptance must be cultivated.

The starting point of every ecclesiastical action is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and this experience motivates Christians in witness and ministry⁴⁹. The message of the Resurrection is particularly relevant in our modern times, when there are various social problems and pathologies.⁵⁰ Today the Church is called to work for the holistic renewal and transformation of every aspect of the world.⁵¹ In this way, the Church constantly revives the Pentecost event and invites through the Holy Spirit people of every nation and race into the family of Christ.⁵²

Consequently, ecumenism is the theological basis of the Orthodox Christian message. The Church works ecumenically and cooperates in the timeless and universal work of the Triune God in history. This ecumenism is a new way of life, which is established in the encounter with God. At the same time, it creates and moves towards a new center, the eschatological New Jerusalem, that is, a “multi-ethnic state”⁵³ and strives for the foreshadowing of the eschatology in the present.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Coexistence. Peace, Nature, Poverty, Terrorism, Values (Religious Perspectives)*, trans. John Chryssavgis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2021), 47.

⁵⁰ Athanasios Papathanasiou, “Anchored in the Future; Globalization and Church Consciousness,” *The Ecumenical Review* 56, no. 2 (April 2004): 183.

⁵¹ Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012), 83–84.

⁵² Kalaitzidis, “Holy Lands and Sacred Nations,” *Concilium: International Review of Theology*, 15/1 (2015): 115–23.

⁵³ Papathanasiou, “Christian Fasting in Postmodern society: Considering the Criteria,” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 60, no. 1–2 (2016): 260.

⁵⁴ Kalaitzidis and Nikolaos Asproulis, “Greek Religious Nationalism and the Challenges of Evangelization, Forgiveness and Reconciliation,” in *Just Peace: Orthodox Perspectives*, eds. Semegnish Asfaw, Alexios Chehadeh, Marian Simion (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012), 72.

The universality of the gospel message is not confined to certain norms or ways of life. Rather, it embraces the whole person as the image of God, regardless of his or her origin, gender, social class, religion and culture. The foreigner, the Roma, the refugee, the migrant, the hetero-ethnic, the hetero-religious and every different person belongs to this universal embrace of ministerial witness.⁵⁵ The ecumenical word of the Christian Church, if it really wants to be true and diaconical, must oppose racial discrimination. This fact is of particular importance for the support of the Roma, who are a vulnerable social group.

This initiative of the Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros expresses the experience of the “liturgy after the Liturgy”.⁵⁶ The “liturgy after the Liturgy” refers to the Eucharistic experience of Christians who, after the end of the Liturgy, when they leave the church, move to share the gift they have received, so that the world may be transformed into the Kingdom of God. So, after the Divine Liturgy in the temple, a new function begins in daily life.⁵⁷

For the Orthodox theological tradition and ecclesiastical experience, the Holy Eucharist creates a new blood bond with Christ and is the starting point to leave one’s self-centeredness, to minister to every human being and to strive for the salvation of every human being, especially those on the margins.⁵⁸ The constant eucharistic attitude of life in everyday life expresses the anxiety and struggle for the transformation of the world into the Church of Christ in an eschatological journey. This attitude of

⁵⁵ Papathanasiou, “Mission in Orthodox Theology,” in *Christian Mission, Contextual Theology, Prophetic Dialogue*, eds. Dale Irvin & Peter Phan (New York: Orbis Books, 2018), 50.

⁵⁶ The code phrase “the liturgy after the Liturgy” was formulated for the first time by the then Bishop of Androusis and now Archbishop of Tirana, Durres and All Albania Anastasios (Yannoulatos) in Etchmiadzin, Armenia in 1975. Since then, it has been used by many theologians to declare the multifaceted mission and ministerial witness of the Church in the world. See: Νικόλαος Τσιρέβελος, Θεολογική θεμελίωση της Ορθόδοξης μαρτυρίας. Σπουδή στο έργο του Αρχιεπισκόπου Αλβανίας Αναστασίου (Θεσσαλονίκη: OstraconPubl., 2015), 102. See also: Nikolaos Tsirevelos, “‘Liturgy after the Liturgy’. A code phrase exhorting missionary outreach, introduced by Archbishop Anastasios of Albania,” *Theology & Culture* 5 (December 2022): 2–14.

⁵⁷ Yannoulatos, *Mission sur les traces du Christ*, trans. Isabelle Tambrun-Karamoudis (Suceava: Apostolia, 2021), 110–11.

⁵⁸ Kalaitzidis, “New Wines into Old Wineskins?: Orthodox Theology of Mission Facing the Challenges of a Global World,” in *Theological Education and Theology of life*, eds. Atola Longkumer, Po Ho Huang, and Uta Andree (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2016): 141–2.

life leads to the dynamic presence of the Church in the public sphere and in dialogue with contemporary secularized society.⁵⁹

Thus, the specific program addressed to Roma is a basic ministry of the Church to people in need of multifaceted support and especially education. The question that arises, however, is whether such programs are acts of proselytizing and buying the faith.

The Church's mission is to care for the material and social needs of people. This is what the Christians in the first community of Jerusalem did (Act 2:42–74; 4:32–37). Concern for the underprivileged, defending of human rights, material support for the weak and protection of the natural environment are experiences of foreshadowing the end of life in this life. The Fathers and Mothers of the Church saw in the face of every person in pain the face of Christ. Their love was not limited to their city or country but embraced the whole world.⁶⁰

The issue of selfless service and giving to every human being is not a moral “must”. For the Orthodox it is an expression of life. Thus, Church ministry therefore contributes in various ways (e.g., the establishment of schools for all children) to the formation of the cultural identity and self-awareness of various races, but also to the improvement of the living conditions of many peoples (e.g., health infrastructure).⁶¹

Christian ministry (diakonia) is linked to solidarity with the victims, the oppressed and the underprivileged in life. Let us not forget that the Roma are subject to racism and are considered a marginalized group. The new way of life that Christianity has offered humanity is the indiscriminate care of those who suffer. Ministry is the Christian's way of being and is in no way an opportunity for proselytism.⁶² What is urgent is that the transmission of ecumenical truths should correspond to the cultural reality and experience of each group.⁶³

The Christian cannot reconcile himself to indifference to the lives of millions of people who live in conditions of decay, alienation, deprivation of

⁵⁹ Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy and Political Theology* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012), 82.

⁶⁰ Yannoulatos, *Facing the World. Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns* (Geneva: St. Vladimir's Seminary, Crestwood NY & WCC, 2003), 28–32.

⁶¹ Idem, “Orthodox Mission: Past, Present, Future,” in *Your Will Be Done: Orthodoxy in Mission*, ed. George Lemopoulos (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1989), 83–84.

⁶² Papathanasiou, *Future, The Background of History: Essays on Church Mission in an Age of Globalization* (Montreal Quebec: Alexander Press, 2005), 86–97.

⁶³ Θανάσης Παπαθανασίου, “Διδάσκοντας γύπτους,” 41.

their fundamental freedoms and violation of their personal dignity without any hope. According to Metropolitan Ignatios (Georgakopoulos), the trigger for the launch of the program was the miserable living conditions of the Roma. In particular he states:

And from there I started to learn how they live in this society here. What it means to have a family with no electricity, and children reading with an oil lamp, poverty, difficulties, all the things that we often pretend not to see, because we are used to being in a society of prosperity. And so, I became convinced that it was worth it to give a bit, if not all of one's heart, to make something happen. And I invited people to join me, and today I praise God, because what is happening is a fruit that came from the faith to do something better.⁶⁴

All of the above is an outgrowth of Christian anthropology, which is founded on non-violence, social justice, solidarity and the struggle for change in the social system and is always intercultural in character.⁶⁵ This is what the Holy Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros seeks to do with the “Saint Thaddeus” program. According to Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, “our social program is the dogma of Trinity”⁶⁶. However, the effectiveness of such programs is judged by the diversities of the curricula in each subject. The following discussion explores the perspectives of religious education in contemporary public schools.

3. Discussion - Religious education of Roma in Greece. Intercultural interventions of experiential learning and differentiated teaching in an ecumenical context

The public school must reflect the cultural diversity of society, because the members of the school community are themselves bearers of different cultural traditions. However, the segregation and division of pupils in the public school on the basis of their cultural, religious and secular beliefs, where it has been practiced, has been considered contrary to the principle of creating a single school. Indeed, it was also described as a degradation

⁶⁴ “Εγκαίνια του προγράμματος ‘Άγιος Απόστολος Θαδδαίος’ για παιδιά Ρομά,” <https://imd.gr/2017/09/thaddaios/>, accessed, August 22, 2022.

⁶⁵ Papanthanasίου, “Contemporary Missionary Efforts in the Orthodox Churches: Limitations and Possibilities,” *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 6, no. 2 (2015), 120.

⁶⁶ Kallistos Ware, *Orthodox Theology in the Twenty-First Century* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012), 39.

of the education system itself.⁶⁷ What is therefore urgent is the equal acceptance in practice of all cultural groups and the provision of inspiration for pupils to practically cultivate trust in diversity.

In this process, the role of religious education as a course of culture, literacy and not catechism, which will respond to contemporary multi-cultural conditions, is considered important.⁶⁸ It should be mentioned in passing that the real inclusion of all diversity in religious education requires a course of inter-religious education.⁶⁹

In Greece, religious education has a confessional character. The religious education curriculum is based on Orthodox Christian teaching, while only in the last grades of primary school, secondary school and high school is knowledge about other religions and their culture offered. Although the character of the course is confessional, the aim of the course is not catechism, but religious literacy based on the monuments and cultural constructions mainly of the Orthodox tradition, but also of other religions, especially the monotheistic ones.⁷⁰

Modern religious education that seeks to address phenomena such as nationalism and religious fanaticism, violence, racism and fundamentalism, must include Roma students and all cultural, racial, gender and social diversity. Therefore, the classes should be mixed and composed of pupils belonging to the dominant cultural group and cultural minorities, such as the Roma. In order to achieve this, it needs to be oriented along two main lines that are functionally harmonized.⁷¹ The first refers to the promotion of the ecumenical and universal cultural elements of Orthodox theology. The second is linked to the adoption of the principles of intercultural education and differentiated teaching.

⁶⁷ Heid Leganger-Krogstad, "Dialogue among young citizens in a pluralistic religious education classroom," in *International Perspectives on Citizenship. Education and Religious Diversity*, ed. Robert Jackson (London: Routledge Falmer, 2003), 169–90.

⁶⁸ Παντελής Καλαϊτζίδης, "Τα Θρησκευτικά ως πολιτιστικό μάθημα," *Σύναξη*, no. 74 (Απρίλιος 2000): 69–83.

⁶⁹ Polykarpos Karamouzis, "Religions, Education and Democracy the Necessity of Inter-Religious Education in the Modern Public School System," *Politics and Religion* III, No. 1 (Jan. 2009), 111–25.

⁷⁰ Κωνσταντίνος Κορναράκης et al., *Οδηγός εκπαιδευτικού Θρησκευτικά Λυκείου* (Αθήνα: Ινστιτούτο Εκπαιδευτικής Πολιτικής, 2021), 13–14.

⁷¹ The reference here is to Greek religious education, however these positions apply to Curriculum with a confessional character.

Regarding the first dimension, teachers are required by the Curricula to promote the ecumenical values of the Orthodox Church. As Archbishop Anastasios of Albania clearly emphasizes, ecumenism has been the self-evident spiritual space of the Orthodox.⁷² This means that the design of the teaching will be directly related to the local cultural tradition and through the proposed teaching techniques will lead students to explore the Orthodox ethos and its impact in the contemporary world. This orientation seeks to have students discover the ways in which the Gospel is encoded in different cultures.⁷³

The investigation of cultural monuments, festivals, customs and traditions, music, songs, literary texts, poems and generally the robust art related to ecclesiastical and secular life contributes to this process.⁷⁴ Such an approach also includes the cultural elements of the Roma. To be effective, the use of these contents must be free of moralistic interpretations but must aim to highlight the human person. Let us not forget that the place of encounter with Christ is the face of every human being.⁷⁵ In other words, the ecumenical cultural and educational goods of Orthodoxy can be an inspiration for students for a dynamic and transformative life, which includes all diversity.⁷⁶

At the same time, the investigation of social issues must be conducted on the basis of Orthodox theological presuppositions and must lead to the realization that the fundamental causes of today's global inhumanity, injustice, war, racism, destruction of the environment and all evil are rooted in the exaltation of human egoism. Let us not forget that the New Testament advocates the need for reconciliation and unity among all people (2 Cor. 5:18; Jn. 17:11), while "confining Christ to national boundaries may indirectly result in His denial."⁷⁷

In this context, teachers need to highlight the importance of inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogue. The ecumenical dialogues in

⁷² Yannoulatos, *Facing*, 201.

⁷³ Tsirevelos, "Christian Witness, Communication and Education: The Example of Archbishop of Tirana, Durres and all Albania Anastasios (Yannoulatos)," *Theology & Culture* 1, no 1 (November 2020): 25.

⁷⁴ Vasiliki Mitropoulou, "Approaching the Monuments of the 'Other': A Model for Their Presentation," in *Cultural Tourism in a Digital Era*, ed. Vicky Katsoni (Athens: Springer: 2015), 131-44.

⁷⁵ Παπαθανασίου, "Διδάσκοντας," 46.

⁷⁶ Καλαϊτζίδης, "Τα θρησκευτικά," 77.

⁷⁷ Yannoulatos, *Facing*, 87.

which the Orthodox Church participates promote mutual understanding, fellowship and cooperation between Christian Churches and religions in general. Their main purpose is not to create a pan-religion, but to work together for the domination of peace, the fight against poverty and violence, the prevalence of gender equality, and the solution of contemporary social problems. Such a universal spirit is framed by interdisciplinary approaches that highlight humanistic values such as peace, equality, social justice and the protection of the natural environment.

In short, the theological tradition of the Orthodox Church contains the elements that can cultivate and develop reconciliation between nations, so that their harmonious coexistence can flourish. Such a religious education, which does not seek catechism but religious literacy, is addressed to all students, regardless of their religious or non-religious faith and of which they are bearers. In this way, it leads them to become acquainted with universal values⁷⁸ and to confront religious prejudices and superstitions. Highlighting the ecumenical theological presuppositions of Christianity provides the basis for pupils to discover that racism, fundamentalism, fanaticism and adherence to comparative cultural representations are a diversion from the Gospel itself. Such an effort highlights every culture and ensures the inclusion of all children and certainly the Roma.

Religious Education as a cultural subject offers the appropriate framework for intercultural education and the didactic use of Roma culture. This is the second axis of religious education for Roma pupils. Such a model does not seek to exclude diversities, nor of course to assimilate them into the culturally dominant group. Although it aims at anti-racist education and multicultural education, it nevertheless seeks the interaction of people of different cultural backgrounds.⁷⁹

That is why religious education must also aim at the academic examination of the religious phenomenon and the objective study and evaluation of various elements from the cultures of religions. In this way “religious knowledge lies in the coexistence of different philosophical and religious concepts of life and man and in the formation of those

⁷⁸ Χρυσόστομος Σταμούλης, “Το μάθημα των Θρησκευτικών στη Δευτεροβάθμια Εκπαίδευση,” <https://antidosis.wordpress.com/2012/11/05> accessed August 22, 2022.

⁷⁹ Γκόβαρης, *Εισαγωγή*, 53–76. See also: Κώστας Μάγος, *Το πέταγμα του Ερόλ. Κριτική διαπολιτισμική εκπαίδευση στην προσχολική και πρωτοσχολική ηλικία* (Αθήνα: Gutenberg, 2022), 33–44.

conditions in which a contact with diversity is attempted, even when it is not religious.”⁸⁰

This implies that the course offers the possibilities to explore different perceptions and positions concerning religion and its relation to culture, ethics, arts, politics, economy. The compulsory nature of the course is thus highlighted,⁸¹ while objective knowledge cures problems “generated by ignorance, such as prejudice, stereotypes and fanaticism”.⁸²

This kind of learning, to be effective, must promote the meeting and exchange of views with people of different cultural traditions. Especially in a school with Roma pupils, religious education can contribute to the transformation of the school community into a real democratic community, which in practice promotes and defends human rights. In this way the school community will act as a real preparation for life itself.

On the other hand, the isolation of Roma children through the establishment of separate special schools (ghetto schools) or their withdrawal (exemption) during religious education breed division and possibly conflicts, because it creates the conditions for the development of extreme ideological positions referring to their racial identity. Therefore, the knowledge that can be discovered and used in religious education needs to be shared. This will refer to all students, foster empathy and, based on the principles of democracy, guide them towards peaceful coexistence.⁸³

Based on all the above, it is necessary today for religious education to make use of the tools of intercultural education. Such an effort seeks to help students: a) to get to know and creatively engage with cultural diversity; b) to discover the importance of intercultural dialogue between communities and the interaction of cultural groups in the same place;⁸⁴ c) to become familiar with educational techniques of empathy⁸⁵ and critical

⁸⁰ Πολύκαρπος Καραμούζης, *Πολιτισμός και Διαθρησκευτική Αγωγή* (Αθήνα: Ελληνικά Γράμματα, 2007), 61.

⁸¹ Marios Koukounaras-Liagkis, “Religion and Religious Diversity within Education in a Social Pedagogical Context in Times of Crisis: Can Religious Education Contribute to Community Cohesion?,” *International Journal of Social Pedagogy* 4, no. 1 (2015): 90.

⁸² Karamouzis, “The Greek Religious Education: From Religion Tradition to Religion Innovation”, *Journal of Education and Training* 1, no. 2 (2014), 321–33.

⁸³ Koukounaras-Liagkis, “Religion and Religious,” 90.

⁸⁴ Τσιφρέβελος, *Θεολογική*, 183.

⁸⁵ Γκόβαρης, *Εισαγωγή*, 178–83.

confrontation of stereotypical perceptions;⁸⁶ d) to strive for the peaceful coexistence of diversity in the social space.⁸⁷

Intercultural education in no way implies cultural syncretism and relativisation or denial of the cultural traditions of the teacher or the students. It is much more interested in the fruitful interaction of differences and in the opportunities “afforded to «foreign» students to present their experiences in class and to process their experiences with local students.”⁸⁸ This approach seeks to create the conditions for the harmonious coexistence of minorities in the school environment and subsequently in society. The achievement of this goal is linked to the basic principles of interculturality, which are the cultivation of empathy, the development of a critical attitude towards norms and stereotypes of religious origin, sober dialogue and communication and interaction with difference.⁸⁹

Achieving these two axes requires specific teaching methods and techniques that will contribute to the inclusion of Roma pupils in religious education. A decisive factor in this process is the continuous acquaintance of the children in each class with each other and with the teacher throughout the school year. The aim is therefore to make the classroom a learning community.⁹⁰ In religious education in particular, the concept of a community of persons interacting in freedom is an essential element of the Christian world.⁹¹

Equally important is the use of collaborative teaching. The creation of groups contributes to a meaningful acquaintance among children. At the same time, however, it helps interaction, the exchange of positions, cooperation, support for weaker pupils and mutual complementarity through the gifts of each individual.⁹² In intercultural education, collaborative

⁸⁶ Karamouzis, “The Greek,” 331.

⁸⁷ Tsirevelos, *Formimi dhe Edukimi i Krishtere: Nga teoria ne praktike*, trans. Rozeta Baba (Shen Vlash: Departamenti i Theologjise dhe Kultures, Kolegji Universitar Logos, 2020), 62.

⁸⁸ Γκόβαρης, Εισαγωγή, 204.

⁸⁹ Karamouzis, “Religious Education, National Tradition and Multicultural Societies. The necessity of Multi-Religious Education in the Modern Greek Society,” *Παιδαγωγικός Λόγος*, no. 1 (January 2008): 67–76.

⁹⁰ Koukounaras-Liagkis, “Religion,” 93.

⁹¹ John Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness* (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2006).

⁹² Κατερίνα Δημητριάδου, *Νέοι προσανατολισμοί της διδακτικής* (Αθήνα: Gutenberg, 2016), 221.

group teaching is a basic prerequisite for fulfilling its objectives.⁹³ Its effective implementation requires the creation of heterogeneous groups in order to ensure interaction and to prevent the marginalization of cultural minorities.⁹⁴

In addition to being a basic educational tool for intercultural education, collaborative teaching is equally necessary for differentiated teaching. The implementation of differentiated teaching serves to integrate cultural and social learning for heterogeneous students in every subject. With differentiated teaching, the teacher responds in advance to the particular and unique needs of each student, and each student can actively participate and continuously learn to the best of his or her ability.⁹⁵ In essence, the teacher opens new ways of learning in which students participate based on their own identity.

In religious education of the Roma, differentiated teaching is based on the use of Romani language. It is very important that students can work in their own language. Even in collaborative group teaching, the use of different languages is an expression of pluralism and thus adds multifaceted cultural value to the classroom and society itself.⁹⁶ Diversity as a linguistic expression and experience of the students should be the skeleton of the pedagogical organization.⁹⁷ Thus, Roma pupils can discover religious knowledge, perceive and process it in Romani as well as in the dominant language, and certainly create religious material based on their own cultural elements.

Achieving all of the above also depends on the choice of the appropriate teaching method. Research has shown that the experiential

⁹³ Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching, Theory, Research and Practice* (New York: Teachers College Press), 218.

⁹⁴ Kostas Magos, "Like Flying Birds": Raising Candidate Teachers' Intercultural Competence of Refugee Identity," *Educational Journal of the University of Patras UNESCO Chair* 5, no. 2 (2018): 36–37.

⁹⁵ Carol Tomlinson, *The Differentiated Classroom: Responding to the Needs of All Learners* (Alexandria: ASCD, 1999), 3–4.

⁹⁶ Ελένη Σκούρτου, Κωνσταντίνος Βρατσάλης & Χρήστος Γκόβαρης, *Μετανάστευση στην Ελλάδα και Εκπαίδευση: Αποτίμηση της υπάρχουσας κατάστασης-Προκλήσεις και Προοπτικές βελτίωσης* (Ρόδος, Πανεπιστήμιο Αιγαίου, 2004), 65.

⁹⁷ Χρήστος Γκόβαρης, "Δίγλωσση-Διαπολιτισμική Ταυτότητα. Μια εμπειρική προσέγγιση των διαδικασιών υποκειμενικής νοηματοδότησής της," in *Η ελληνική ως δεύτερη ή ξένη γλώσσα: Μια διαπολιτισμική Προσέγγιση*, ed. Παντελής Γεωργογιάννης (Πάτρα: Πρακτικά 2ου Διεθνούς Συνεδρίου, 2015), 401–05.

method is suitable for religious education and for multicultural classes.⁹⁸ The experiential method is linked to the children's own experiences⁹⁹ and their social and cultural environment as well as to their learning development.¹⁰⁰ According to Kalantzis and Cope,¹⁰¹ the experiential method has four stages. Based on the Big Idea and the expected learning outcomes,¹⁰² the first stage refers to the children's experience. In the second stage, children's experience is linked to religious knowledge. The third stage is the deepening and processing of new knowledge. The fourth and final stage is followed by application. Essentially, students are asked to apply the new knowledge in a creative and reflective way to their life circumstances.¹⁰³

The following example is illustrative. In a mixed class of 14-year-olds, the topic of the two-hour lesson is the "Resurrection of Christ" and its importance for the pupils in their personal and social lives. In the first stage, the children's experience of the Roma festival "Enterlezzi" or some spring-related events experienced by the other children can be shown in pictures or videos. In the second stage, with the help of a hymn, the pupils' experience can be linked to the new religious knowledge, i.e., the celebration of the Resurrection. In the third stage, pupils delve into the theological and social meaning of the Resurrection by using texts and action teaching techniques. In the final stage they can apply what they have learned through creative activities, such as making collages on the theme "Love stronger than death".

Of course, the effective implementation of such a course requires student-centered learning. Based on their experience and interaction with each other, students self-act, discover and construct knowledge.¹⁰⁴ Teaching techniques such as personal journals, artful thinking, educational

⁹⁸ Μάριος Κουκουνάρας Λιάγκης, *Τι θρησκευτικά χρειάζεται η εκπαίδευση σήμερα* (Αθήνα: Gutenberg, 2019), 113.

⁹⁹ Lev Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1978), 79.

¹⁰⁰ Jean Piaget and Barbel Inhelder, *The Psychology of Child* (New York, Basic Books, 2000), 114.

¹⁰¹ Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope, *New Learning: Elements of a Science of Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 260.

¹⁰² Κουκουνάρας Λιάγκης, *Τι θρησκευτικά*, 117.

¹⁰³ Kalantzis and Cope, *New Learning*, 260.

¹⁰⁴ Dale Schunk, *Learning Theories. An educational perspective* (Boston, Pearson, 2009), 228–344.

drama, exit slips, projects (e.g., the Roma Holocaust¹⁰⁵) are useful in this process. This pedagogical approach helps students to cultivate their critical faculties and evaluate new knowledge according to their perceptions of religious diversity, violence, dialogue with people of other religions and the importance of the natural environment.

This overall pedagogical approach is based on the theory of “learning by doing”.¹⁰⁶ This enables students to revise racist and intolerant perceptions of the culturally different, such as their Roma classmates. At the same time, they learn what the Orthodox tradition really believes about people who are bearers of different cultures. Yet all of this is linked to questions about their own lives and reflections on how they themselves can apply it in their daily lives. Each lesson therefore seeks to lead to reflection.¹⁰⁷

The use of works of art from the religious sphere and secular art contributes to this process. The use of various forms of art in education, such as painting, sculpture, architecture, music, literature, comics and cinema, helps to ensure that the message is transmitted and received more directly and interpreted gradually and in depth.¹⁰⁸ The didactic use of art in religious education makes it easier for students to connect theological knowledge with life, to dialogue with people from different cultural backgrounds,¹⁰⁹ to transform their own erroneous positions¹¹⁰ and to cultivate empathy.¹¹¹ Art can act as an antidote against religious fanaticism and violence, suspicion and lack of communication between people of

¹⁰⁵ Council of Europe, *Right to Remember. A Handbook for Education with Young People on the Roma Genocide* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2014).

¹⁰⁶ Kalantzis and Cope, *New Learning*, 94.

¹⁰⁷ Λιάγκης, *Τι θρησκευτικά*, 140; Apostolos Barlos et al., *Orthodox in Encounter. Teacher's Book* (Educ8 Project, 2021), 8.

¹⁰⁸ Dimitra Koukoura, “The Homiletic Paradigm of the Fathers of the Church and its Impact on Preaching Today,” <https://www.academia.edu/42983000/>, accessed August 22, 2022.

¹⁰⁹ Πολύκαρπος Καραμούζης & Τσιρέβελος, “Εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση εκπαιδευτικών στη θρησκευτική αγωγή: Το παρόν και το μέλλον για το όραμα του Νέου Σχολείου,” in *Παιδαγωγικά Τμήματα και το μέλλον τους. Εκπαίδευση εκπαιδευτικών: Προκλήσεις και προοπτικές σε έναν κόσμο που αλλάζει*, eds. Λοΐζος Σοφός, et al. (Αθήνα: Γρηγόρη, 2020), 230.

¹¹⁰ Βάσω Γώγου, Απόστολος Μπάρλος & Σταυρούλα Ραχούτη, “Ένα σπίτι μακριά από το σπίτι,” *Σύναξη*, no. 157 (2021): 83.

¹¹¹ Δημητριάδου, *Νέοι προσανατολισμοί*, 281.

different cultures.¹¹² Therefore the student practices dialogue with the different and struggles with possible prejudices or stereotypes from his/her family or social environment.¹¹³

In this way, at the end of the learning path students enter a process of reflection on the artistic treatment of a theme. Thus, they learn to recognise new knowledge themselves and to value it. At the same time, however, the teacher can also evaluate the whole teaching process and whether the expected learning outcomes have been achieved.¹¹⁴

Epilogue

The Roma people are a distinct cultural group that have been living in Greece for many centuries. Their language is Romani and expresses the particular cultural elements of their life. Many consider the Roma to be a nomadic people. However, the majority of them are permanently settled in different regions of the country. Because of their particular culture, customs, traditions and lifestyle, various prejudices and stereotypical expressions have been developed by the culturally dominant group. They are often subjected to racism and excluded from rights enjoyed by other citizens. In this way – formerly legally – they are now informally regarded as an inferior race or inferior people. The consequence of these situations is delinquency and dropping out of school.

Education is a key way of dealing with racism from the dominant cultural group but also of helping the Roma to integrate smoothly into society without losing their particular cultural identity. In this context, both formal and non-formal and lifelong education is considered important.

The “Agios Thaddeos” Program of the Metropolis of Demetrias and Almyros, under the care of Metropolitan Ignatios Georgakopoulos and the scientific responsibility of Christos Govaris, Professor of the University of Thessaly, succeeded in activating and pushing various local institutions to cooperate for the education and social integration of the

¹¹² Angeliki Ziaka, “Interreligious Dialogue in Promoting Peace and Overcoming Religious Conflicts,” in *Religion and Conflict. Essays on the Origins of Religious Conflicts and Resolution Approaches*, eds. Eric Eynikel and Angeliki Ziaka (London: Harpree Publishing, 2010), 251–90.

¹¹³ Vasiliki Mitropoulou, “Intercultural Model for the Teaching of Religion (with Reference to Greece),” in *Anerkennung in religiösen Bildungsprozessen*, eds. Thomas Krobath, Andrea Lehner-Hartmann and Regina Polak (Vienna, Vienna University Press, 2013), 73.

¹¹⁴ Λιάγκης, *Τι θρησκευτικά*, 140.

Roma, who live in various areas of Volos. At the same time, it provided the foundations for a multifaceted education of Roma pupils, their remedial teaching, sports and learning music and dance. The basis for change is the support of children at an early age. But the program is also aimed at Roma adults, supporting their vocational orientation and training, with the aim of finding employment and smooth integration into society. It therefore offers in a holistic way the conditions for their social integration without losing their identity.

This effort of the Metropolis, which belongs to non-formal education, is directly interwoven with the Orthodox Christian theological tradition that is open to other cultures and intercultural relations, the ecclesial experience and the Eucharistic experience of the “liturgy after the Liturgy”. It therefore has nothing to do with proselytism or the buying of consciences. Rather, it is an extension of the ecumenical love of the Triune God in the world. As Metropolitan Ignatios clearly points out.

This is the vision that becomes true. I invite you all to continue, in the same way, to cooperate, to join together. God blesses one thing: faith and unity. Faith, which literally works miracles, and unity, which is the quintessence of our Church. This is what we want to have as our motto, this love and service to every person, and I am glad that day by day, I find even more people joining us for similar works.¹¹⁵

In these words of the Metropolitan Ignatios, one finds the confluence of theory and practice from the Christian Church and above all the will and struggle for the transformation of society in the New World of God (Kingdom of God).

Realizing such visions requires changes in formal religious education as well. Such changes require the inclusion of cultural diversity through the use of intercultural education, differentiated teaching, experiential methods and modern teaching techniques.

Religious education can provide the “tools” for the inclusion of Roma pupils. Achieving this goal is linked to the religious literacy of Roma pupils as well as to the use of ecumenical theology. At the same time, however, it requires building on the fundamental principles of intercultural education and differentiated teaching for the education of Roma pupils. Intercultural education and differentiated teaching aim to provide a deeper, objective, scientific and anthropological understanding

¹¹⁵ “Εγκρίναι,” <https://imd.gr/2017/09/thaddaios/>, accessed August 22, 2022.

of religious faith, in order to clarify religious misunderstandings and the various stereotypes and prejudices that foster fanaticism and intolerance. In this way, the humanistic elements of the religious world are highlighted and students approach diversity with respect, so that trust, cooperation and practical respect for human rights can be fostered through the educational process.

“If we Throw the Roma out of the Tent, we Throw Jesus out of the Tent”: Reflections on the Role of Religious Actors in Roma Inclusion in Oslo, Norway*

BJØRN HALLSTEIN HOLTE AND STEPHANIE DIETRICH**

This article presents reflections on Roma inclusion in the context of intra-European mobility. It begins with accounts of visits to two religious actors running centres providing humanitarian assistance, social services, and opportunities to exercise religion to Roma and other migrants in Oslo, Norway: the Lutheran Church City Mission welcoming Roma migrants as guests in the City Mission Centre at Tøyen Church and the Pentecostal organisation Evangeliesenteret, where Roma migrants receive food and participate in religious gatherings at the Contact Centre. The article reflects on the modes of inclusion represented in these two accounts in relation to three different approaches to inclusion: EU Roma policy, the work of the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, and diaconal theology. The article ends with reflections on what inclusion might mean in the context of intra-European Roma mobility.

Keywords: *Charity, Diakonia, Empowerment, Exclusion, Free Movement, Inclusion, Lutheranism, Migration, Mutuality, Pentecostalism, Transformation*

1. Introduction

Roma migrants travelling between European countries have featured in cities across Europe, especially since the European Union’s (EU) eastward expansions in 2004 and 2007. Free movement in the EU meant that the poor and unemployed segments of the relatively large Roma populations of countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia,¹ whose livelihoods already depended on mobility to a large extent, could “go

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¹ Despite difficulties in defining and counting Roma precisely, estimates by the Council of Europe, “Estimates on Roma population in European countries,” <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/publications>, accessed October 4, 2022, indicate that around 750,000 live in Bulgaria, 750,000 in Hungary, 1.85 million in Romania, and 490,000 in Slovakia, constituting 7%-10% of the population in each of the countries.

If we Throw the Roma out of the Tent, we Throw Jesus out of the Tent abroad «looking for greener pastures».² Citizens of EU countries can enter and stay legally in other countries in the European Economic Area (EEA)³ for up to three months. To stay longer, they must register with the authorities, which requires documents proving employment or the possession of the economic means to sustain themselves.⁴ Yet, in the receiving countries of their migration, Roma migrants have been met with hostility and exclusion.⁵ Without the formal qualifications generally requested in the labour market, many engage in street work such as collecting and recycling bottles and cans, playing music, selling magazines, and begging that make them conspicuously visible in European countries with low poverty levels.⁶ With EU regulations and public controversy leaving “a very limited scope for policymaking in relation to the street-working EU migrants,” what migration scholars Miika Tervonen and Anca Enache aptly called a “policy of no policy” has emerged in the receiving countries.⁷ It has resulted in the relegation of service provision for these migrants to non-governmental organisations, a tendency exacerbated by changes to welfare legislation barring legal migrants from accessing public welfare

² Ada I. Engebriksen, “Mobile Subjects: Power Relations and Tactics for Survival,” in *Movement and Connectivity: Configurations of Belonging*, eds. Jan Ketil Simonsen, Kjersti Larsen and Ada I. Engebriksen (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018), 53.

³ The European Economic Area comprises the EU member states, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway.

⁴ Can Yildiz, and Nicholas De Genova, “Un/Free mobility: Roma migrants in the European Union”, *Social Identities* 24, no. 4 (2018), 434, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2017.1335819>.

⁵ Liz Fekete, “Europe against the Roma,” *Race & Class* 55, no. 3 (January/March 2014): 60–70, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396813509196>. From Norway, see: Engebriksen, “Mobile Subjects”; Cathrine Moe Thorleifsson and Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “Human waste in the land of abundance: Two kinds of Gypsy indeterminacy in Norway,” in *Indeterminacy: Waste, Value, and the Imagination*, eds. Catherine Alexander and Andrew Sanchez (Oxford: Berghahn, 2018).

⁶ Anne Britt Djuve, Jon Horgen Friberg, Guri Tyldum, and Huafeng Zhang, *When Poverty Meets Affluence: Migrants from Romania on the Streets of the Scandinavian Capitals* (Oslo: FAFO, 2015), 55–71.

⁷ Miika Tervonen and Anca Enache, “Coping with everyday bordering: Roma migrants and gatekeepers in Helsinki,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 7 (2017): 1117, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2017.1267378>. See also: Djuve, Friberg, Tyldum, and Zhang, *When Poverty*, 9–10; Turid Misje, “Queuing for food and playing lottery for beds: A parallel social service system and the lived experiences of humanitarian service provision to homeless EU migrants in Norway,” *Nordic Social Work Research* 11, no. 2 (September 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1080/2156857X.2020.1857820>.

services in some countries, including Norway, referred to as “welfare bordering” in the research literature.⁸

Access to public social services is restricted for people without habitual residence in Norway, even if they are legally in the country; migrants travelling itinerantly and staying temporarily only have social welfare rights in emergency situations.⁹ The anthropologist and social worker Turid Misje wrote that they are “precariously included” in the welfare state – included, that is, “in fragile and insecure ways, through short-term provisions directed at solving emergencies and safeguarding bodily survival.”¹⁰ “Itinerant Roma,” wrote the anthropologists Cathrine Thorleifsson and Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “are provisionally included and ascribed value by non-governmental organisations and concerned individuals.”¹¹ These organisations and their services constitute what Misje called “a parallel social service system.”¹² What is downplayed (but not unrecognised) by these authors is how many of the organisations including Roma migrants in Norway are religious actors.

We are engaged in research on the role of religion and religious actors in the everyday life of Roma migrants in Oslo, the biggest city and capital of Norway. In this article, we recapitulate from and reflect on our visits to two centres run by religious actors providing humanitarian assistance, social services, and opportunities to exercise religion to migrants in Oslo: the City Mission Centre run by the Lutheran Church City Mission and the Contact Centre run by the Pentecostal organisation Evangeliesenteret. These are only two of a larger number of religious actors that we could have included in this article, not to mention the secular actors. When we focus on these two actors, it is because the modes of inclusion implied by

⁸ Simon Guentner, Sue Lukes, Richard Stanton, Bastian A. Vollmer and Jo Wilding, “Bordering Practices in the UK Welfare System,” *Critical Social Policy* 36, no. 3 (August 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018315622609>; Turid Misje, “Social Work and Welfare Bordering: The Case of Homeless EU Migrants in Norway,” *European Journal of Social Work* 23, no. 3 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2019.1682975>.

⁹ Misje, “Social Work,” 406, “The Precarious Inclusion of Homeless EU Migrants in Norwegian Public Social Welfare: Moral Bordering and Social Workers’ Dilemmas,” *Critical Social Policy* 42 (2022): 463, 450, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183211036580>. See also: Cecilia Bruzelius, “Freedom of movement, social rights and residence-based conditionality in the European Union,” *Journal of European Social Policy* 29, no. 1 (February 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928718756262>.

¹⁰ Misje, “The Precarious Inclusion,” 451.

¹¹ Thorleifsson and Eriksen, “Human waste,” 90.

¹² Misje, “Queuing for Food.”

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their engagements represent a particular contrast to prevailing inclusion concepts, a contrast we find productive when reflecting on what inclusion might mean in the context of intra-European Roma mobility.

In the Norwegian context, the Church City Mission, Evangeliesenteret, and other organisations engaged in Christian social practice are conceived of as diaconal organisations. As faith-based social practice, diakonia can either be understood as the provision of public welfare services or as a Christian and church-related practice founded explicitly on biblical principles. In between these extremes, diaconal actors provide services within welfare state structures while still advocating for Christian values based on a radical commitment to those who are “hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison” (Matthew 25:44). We write this article as a contribution to diaconal studies, an academic field seeking to improve diaconal practice through interdisciplinary studies including empirical research, praxis-oriented theories, and a normative value-base supporting radical commitment to the value and dignity of every human being. We also see the article as a contribution to Romani studies and migration studies in emphasising the role of religious actors in Roma inclusion in the context of intra-European mobility.

In what follows, we will first recapitulate from our visits to the Church City Mission’s City Mission Centre at Tøyen Church and Evangeliesenteret’s Contact Centre in Oslo. We then present three conceptual approaches to inclusion that intersect in our reflections over the visits in the final part of the article: the inclusion concept found in EU policy documents on Roma, representing both a powerful formulation of the concept and a backdrop for our research; the inclusion concept as it appears in the work of the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, which relates both inclusion and religious social practice to social structure; and inclusion as it is understood in diaconal theory, which helps understand inclusion in religious contexts and provides cues to our reflections on inclusion through a taxonomy of different forms of inclusion. In the reflections in the last part of the article, we let the accounts and approaches to Roma inclusion come into dialogue and inform each other.

2. Two accounts of Roma inclusion

We will first recapitulate from our visits to the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre. These accounts are based on notes from our visits to the centres, including transcripts of interviews with some of those we met

there, which we supplement with references to relevant literature.¹³ The accounts highlight the perspective and self-representation of the organisations and their employees rather than those of their volunteers or users. They also represent the level of discourse and practitioners' reflections rather than an observation of the activities as they played out. Yet, what the accounts lack in empirical depth, they make up for in theoretical and critical relevance. Our main concern here is how Roma were included in the two organisations, which we take to represent particular modes of inclusion that we can relate to the conceptual approaches to inclusion we will present below.

2.1 The City Mission Centre at Tøyen Church

Founded in 1855 to respond to destitution in Christiania (present-day Oslo), which was industrialising and growing rapidly in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Church City Mission presents itself as “an inclusive, nonprofit organisation, which works in towns and cities across Norway, among people who face challenges in life for various reasons.”¹⁴ Among other initiatives, the Church City Mission operates cafés, meeting places, and activity centres where people get meals, rest, and seek fellowship. The City Mission Centre at Tøyen Church in central Oslo, which we visited in August 2022, is the hub of the organisation's work with Roma migrants.

According to one of the employees we met at the City Mission Centre, the Church City Mission first came into contact with Roma migrants at a café for people using drugs in another location in downtown Oslo shortly after the accession of Romania to the EU. “They came there because it was the one open, available door,” the employee said.¹⁵ At a time when terms such as “Roma people” (*romfolk*), “Gypsies” (*sigøynere*),

¹³ In addition to one visit to each of the centres to conduct the interviews that these accounts are structured around, we have had informal conversations with other people affiliated with the organisations that also inform the accounts. We have also interviewed a sample of Roma migrants, some of whom had used these organisations' services. We do not draw explicitly on the interviews with Roma migrants in this article, although they did provide a backdrop to our questions when we visited the centres and have influenced our reflections.

¹⁴ The Church City Mission, “The Church City Mission,” <https://kirkensbymisjon.no/about-us/>, accessed 10 August 2022.

¹⁵ Interview with anonymized employees at the City Mission Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte, Stephanie Dietrich, and Annette Leis-Peters, August 10, 2022.

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and “beggars” (*tiggere*) were widely used in public discourse,¹⁶ the Church City Mission started referring to this segment of their users as “destitute migrants” (*fattige tilreisende*). The term highlights their structural position rather than a racialized category or implicit moral judgement and represented a radical reconceptualization at the time. It is still the most widely used term within the Church City Mission, although a more recent focus on anti-Romani sentiments conceptualised as “antiziganism” within the organisation means that attention is also directed towards the racialisation and stigmatisation of Roma migrants.¹⁷ Either way, and in the words of one of the employees who met us at the City Mission Centre, working with destitute migrants in the downtown café posed “a dilemma” to the organisation: “Why should they be together with the drug users?”¹⁸

The work with destitute migrants was gradually moved from the downtown café to Tøyen Church. Tøyen Church had been running an open church with a café for people with lots of time and little money, as an old slogan had it. It was a drug-free scene. Various activities were started at or relocated to the City Mission Centre at Tøyen Church, which was the hub of the organisation’s work with destitute migrants by 2018. After adjusting their work continuously to respond to the needs they detected among their predominantly Roma users over about fifteen years, the City Mission Centre served meals, offered laundry services and storage lockers for rent, and employed social workers speaking different languages, including Romanian, at the time of our visit. The organisation charged its users small fees for most of the services. For example, a bowl of soup cost kr. 5,- (roughly €0,50) on weekdays. The Church City Mission had also started emergency shelters at Tøyen Church, which were moved to a new address before our visit, and continued to hold weekly services in Tøyen Church.

¹⁶ See: Silje M. Eriksen, “Rom for sigøynere: Begreper, retorikk og moderne sagn om rom. En kulturhistorisk analyse av romdebatten” [Room/Roma for Gypsies: Concepts, Rhetoric, and Contemporary Legends. A Cultural Historical Analysis of the Debate on Roma.] (Ma. Thesis, University of Oslo, 2016); Maria Tårland, “Tigging i Oslo” [Begging in Oslo] (Ma. thesis, University of Oslo, 2014).

¹⁷ See: Mari Seilskjær and Marit Nybø, eds., *Den aksepterte rasismen: Tekster om antiziganisme* [The accepted racism: Texts about antiziganism] (Oslo: Church City Mission, 2022).

¹⁸ Interview with anonymized employees at the City Mission Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte, Stephanie Dietrich, and Annette Leis-Peters, 10 August 2022.

We noticed that the employees we met at the City Mission Centre referred to their users as “guests” (*gjester*). When we asked about this, they confirmed that any person coming through the door was called a guest, and one of them reflected:

It’s in the walls here because this was supposed to be a place that was not clientifying, it was supposed to be a church and a café for everyone. I think the reasoning was diaconal. This place adopted the terminology of “guests” very early on. It’s very much a part of our identity.¹⁹

Conceiving of users as guests can be effective in countering clientification, but it does not do away with hierarchies of belonging and power in favour of the implied hosts.²⁰ Furthermore, as Eriksen suggested, hospitality is “a universal sign of openness and respect, a relationship which places a burden not only on the host but also on the guest, and which can easily turn awry when the parties either do not understand or do not respect each other.”²¹ Guests are generally expected to be grateful and to leave eventually, while hosts should be attentive to their guests and accept return gifts when they are offered – sometimes in the form of questions or stories. Using the term guest implies high expectations of all parties.

With reference to the destitution among some migrants in Oslo, the researcher Helena Schmidt questioned the applicability of the term guest in a hospitable church offering free meals in Oslo:

... are people who have no real choice when accepting the offer of food in fact guests at all? Is the idea of hospitality based on universal principles, intending to accommodate all those who need this hospitality, losing its intimacy, its embodied attention, and thus producing shameful conditions for survival only? Stripping meals of their inclusive nature, their fundamentally sociable and sacred function leaves a purely physiological act of eating to survive. Subsequently, the guest, treated as just another body, remains a *no-body*.²²

¹⁹ Interview with anonymized employees at the City Mission Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte, Stephanie Dietrich, and Annette Leis-Peters, 10 August 2022.

²⁰ See: Synnøve K. N. Bendixen and Trygve Wyller, “Conclusion: Rethinking hospitality in the Nordic region,” in *Contested Hospitalities in a Time of Migration: Religious and Secular Counter Spaces in the Nordic Region*, eds. Synnøve K. N. Bendixen and Trygve Wyller (London: Routledge, 2020), 190. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429273773-12>.

²¹ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “Epilogue: Frictions of hospitality and the possibilities of cosmopolitan justice in everyday life,” in *Cosmopolitan Justice and its Discontents*, eds. Cecilia Bailliet and Katja Franko Aas (London: Routledge, 2011), 218.

²² Helena Schmidt, “What about No-Bodies? Embodied Belonging, Unspecific Strangers, and Religious Hospitality in Norway,” in *Contested Hospitalities in a Time*

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Although it is more contextual and elaborate, Schmidt's critique is broadly in line with the critique of how charitable giving positions those who receive as recipients, which we return to below.

Intriguingly, the second employee we met at the City Mission Centre framed their guests differently by emphasising the fees charged to sleep at the emergency shelter. Many of their guests, she said, were in fact *paying* guests:

At the emergency shelter one is a guest and we have purposely chosen that they pay fifteen kroner (roughly €1,50) to get in because then they can demand that there should be good order and safety and clean linen and everything.

Her colleague, the first employee, pitched in – “Like a hotel, or a motel” – before she continued:

It has an empowering effect, too, that when you pay you can demand that we give you what we have promised. You shall get your money's worth. You are not in debt. We often talk about how we have a lot of power because we run all the services. We try to normalise as well and as much as we can. That's the tone. Have completely informal relations to people. They shouldn't feel they have to shape up before they talk with us and so on. We want to be seen as people even if we work here.²³

Even if the small sum paid was symbolic and the services were funded through public grants and donations, paying guests do not imply the “intimacy” and “embodied attention” of non-paying guests, to use Schmidt's phrases. They “are not in debt,” as the employee at the City Mission Centre put it. The (implicit, open) invitation does not have to be reciprocated socially since it has been reciprocated directly when paying for a service: paying guests are customers. This may be all the more important in light of how Roma migrants have been refused access to shops and cafés in Oslo and other cities and thus been refused as customers.²⁴ Against this backdrop, both wanting to be “seen as people” and treating guests as customers reflect the employees' acknowledgement of their guests' inherent value, agency, and dignity as human beings.

of Migration: Religious and Secular Counter Spaces in the Nordic Region, eds. Synnøve K. N. Bendixen and Trygve Wyller (London: Routledge, 2020), 141. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429273773-8>.

²³ Interview with anonymized employees at the City Mission Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte, Stephanie Dietrich, and Annette Leis-Peters, 10 August 2022.

²⁴ Djuve, Friberg, Tyldum, and Zhang, *When Poverty*, 99–101.

The Church City Mission keeps its humanitarian and social work separate from its religious activities. The organisation employs social workers, as well as priests. Guests at the City Mission Centre, including the predominantly Roma destitute migrants, are welcome into the open Tøyen Church. Many Roma guests light candles, some speak with the priests, but few attend the services held on Wednesdays. Both the social workers and the priests we met were attentive to the denominational differences at play, remarking that their Roma guests are generally Orthodox or Pentecostals and not Lutherans. Perhaps, one of them reflected, Tøyen Church should do more to accommodate a wider range of religious expressions, or perhaps this should not be their concern as a Lutheran church. A few minutes before sharing this reflection, the same employee pondered the potential value and risks of religious inclusion of people in vulnerable situations:

The Church City Mission would say ... you have to distinguish between diakonia and congregational life, or proclamation. But you could also say that you know there are some qualities about that way of including people in communities that save lives ... Then we can dislike it very strongly because it can lead to abuse and ugly things. It just is so complicated.²⁵

With this dilemma fresh in mind, we move on to Evangeliesenteret's Contact Centre in Oslo, our second religious actor.

2.2 The Contact Centre

Founded in 1983 by Lise and Ludvig Karlsen – Ludvig incidentally from a Norwegian Romani family²⁶ – Evangeliesenteret is a Pentecostal organisation running drug addiction treatment centres in Norway. In 2012, Evangeliesenteret started a Contact Centre (*kontaktsenter*) in central Oslo,²⁷ serving and distributing surplus food to people in need, holding worship

²⁵ Interview with anonymized employees at the City Mission Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte, Stephanie Dietrich, and Annette Leis-Peters, 10 August 2022.

²⁶ Karlsen came from a Romani/Tater family. Norway features different Romani communities and recognizes Romani people/Taters and Roma as distinct national minorities with differing histories. See: Thorleifsson and Eriksen, "Human waste," 93, 101–106; Engebriksen, "Mobile Subjects;" 55–58.

²⁷ Before opening the Contact Centre, Evangeliesenteret distributed food and clothes and held services from a bus in Oslo. Olav Helge Angell, *Misjon eller terapi i rusomsorga? Tradisjon og modernitet i religiøse behandlingsinstitusjonar* [Mission or therapy in drug treatment? Tradition and modernity in religious treatment centres] (Oslo: Diakonhjemmets høyskolesenter, 1994), 213.

If we Throw the Roma out of the Tent, we Throw Jesus out of the Tent services on Monday evenings, and recruiting people to the organisation's treatment centres. We visited the Contact Centre in November 2021 and were impressed by the scale of the operation. According to a newspaper article published the day before our visit, Evangeliesenteret distributed 318 tonnes of free food in Oslo in 2020, mainly to people using drugs and Roma migrants.²⁸

As remembered by the employee we met at the Contact Centre, Evangeliesenteret first came into contact with Roma migrants in 2012, when they were serving hotdogs and waffles – staples of Norwegian public celebrations – in a tent in downtown Oslo to mark the opening of the Contact Centre. The events were staffed with volunteers, many of them former drug users who had gone through treatment and were serving old friends who were still in the drug scene. When some Roma who had loitered nearby came into the tent, attracted by the free, rich food on offer, mutual allegations of theft were levelled between the Roma and the drug users. The situation became tense, prompting action. “We did what Karlsen would have done,” said the employee telling us the story. They prayed, opened a Bible, and pointed at a verse with their eyes closed. He recited from the Bible: “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in” (Matthew 25:35). “God has spoken,” they reasoned: “Whoever doesn't want the Roma in the tent can go. Those who want the Roma here can stay.”²⁹

The decision to include Roma migrants – referred to as “EEA migrants” (*tilreisende personer fra EØS*) on the Contact Centre's webpage³⁰ but

²⁸ Tobias Schildmann Mandt, “Kutt truer tilbud til rusbrukere” [Funding cut threatens service for drug users] *Dagsavisen*, 23 November 2021. <https://www.vl.no/nyheter/2021/11/23/kutt-truer-evangeliesenterets-tilbud-til-rusbrukere-i-oslo/>, accessed October 4, 2022.

²⁹ Interview with anonymized employee at the Contact Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte and Stephanie Dietrich, 24 November 2021. Thorleifsson and Eriksen, “Human waste,” 96–97, retell the same story, but the details differ slightly from the story as we heard it. In line with our sense of working with the perspectives and self-representations of the organisations and their employees and the level of discourse and practitioners' reflections, we see the story as a myth in the anthropological sense. Thus, we understand it as a story about how Evangeliesenteret first met Roma migrants, which also justifies and legitimises their continued engagement with Roma migrants. The structure of the story is more important to us than the details.

³⁰ Evangeliesenteret, “Evangeliesenteret Kontaktsenter Oslo” [Evangeliesenteret Contact Centre Oslo], <https://www.evangeliesenteret.no/avdeling/kontaktsenter-oslo/>, accessed 4 October 2022.

“Roma people” (*romfolk*) during our visit – as a target group for the Contact Centre was controversial: some volunteers quit, and some donors threatened to withdraw their support. Even so, they stood by the decision. “We are not a political organisation,” the employee who told us the story said. “We do not have a view on whether the Roma should come to Norway. But people standing on our front steps asking for food, they will get food.”³¹ In this context, the story about the epiphany in the tent contributed a legitimisation of the engagement, which the employee at the Contact Centre summarised using the phrase we quoted in the title of this article: “If we throw the Roma out of the tent, we throw Jesus out of the tent.”³² The phrase can link to a Christian identity based on a call to serve other people like Jesus served humankind according to the biblical narratives and as underlined in Matthew (25:40, 45): “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me”. It can also be understood as a reflection on the Roma as created in the image and likeness of God and therefore deserving the same respect and dignity as other people.

The engagement with Roma migrants at the Contact Centre soon moved beyond charitable food distribution. Only after the epiphany in the tent, the employee who received us said, did they learn that “many Roma are Pentecostals”,³³ a phrase we have also seen used by other researchers who have visited the Contact Centre.³⁴ While academic literature has described Pentecostalism as “one of the foremost religious orientations amongst Roma in Europe and beyond,”³⁵ such generalisations do not account for the relationship between the Romanian Roma and the Orthodox Church, “a relationship of five centuries [that] cannot be hastily judged through today’s perspective, just like the mass conversion to other confessions does not have to be looked at «in a triumphant,

³¹ Interview with anonymized employee at the Contact Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte and Stephanie Dietrich, 24 November 2021.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ Ada I. Engebretsen and Are Vegard Haug, *Evaluering av tilskuddsordningen for humanitære tiltak til tilreisende EØS-borgere som tigger* [Evaluation of the Grants for Humanitarian Efforts for Migrant EU Citizens who Beg]. (Oslo: Nova, 2018), 29, 31. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12199/5213>.

³⁵ Adrian R. Marsh and David Thurfjell, “Introduction,” in *Romani Pentecostalism: Gypsies and Charismatic Christianity*, eds. David Thurfjell and Adrian Marsh (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014), 7.

If we Throw the Roma out of the Tent, we Throw Jesus out of the Tent superficial tone».³⁶ Nevertheless, the emphasis on religious like-mindedness at the Contact Centre contributed to a sense of community – especially compared to the concern for denominational differences we encountered in the Church City Mission. There was also appreciation of the shared genealogy of the Romanian Roma and not only Karlsen, but “many”³⁷ – once again – of the employees, guests, and volunteers at Evangeliesenteret, whom we were told were of Norwegian Romani descent.³⁸ These Norwegian Romani employees, volunteers, and guests, we were told, recognised historical analogues between their experiences and those of the Roma migrants as Romani minorities in their respective countries, and their languages were interlegible, at least to some extent.³⁹ If anything, relations between the Roma migrants and at least some of the employees, volunteers, and other guests at the Contact Centre became friendly.

Services are held in the Contact Centre on Monday evenings. Roma migrants are welcome to join the services, and many do.⁴⁰ The services are translated from Norwegian into Romanian by a volunteer translator. Sometimes Roma migrants tell their stories in the services, too, and they

³⁶ Alexandru Ioniță, review of *Bafta, Devla și Haramul. Studii despre cultura și religia romilor* [Bafta, Devla, and Haram. Studies on the Culture and the Religion of the Roma], by Mirela Bănică, *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 13, no. 1 (April 2021), 86, <https://doi.org/10.2478/ress-2021-0009>. See also: Tatiana Zachar Podolinská, “Traditional Romani Christianity vs Pentecostal and neo-Protestant Christianity: A grounded picture of religiosity and spirituality among the Roma in the twenty-first century in Slovakia,” *Romani Studies: Continuing Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 31, no. 2 (December 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3828/rs.2021.9>.

³⁷ Interview with anonymized employee at the Contact Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte and Stephanie Dietrich, 24 November 2021.

³⁸ Analogously, Ingrid Myklebust, “Å tolke bibelen på romanés: Å artikulere etnisk samvær gjennom pinseteologi. En empirisk undersøkelse av den norske rom-gruppens pinsemenighet,” [Interpreting the Bible in Romanés: Articulating an Ethnic Community through Pentecostal Theology. An Empirical Study of the Norwegian Roma’s Pentecostal Congregation] (Ma. thesis, University of Oslo, 2012), 10–11, 52–53, 64. <http://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-32371>, remarked in her thesis on the Pentecostal congregation of the Norwegian Roma in Oslo that Norwegians of Romani/Tater descent described the distinction between the Romani/Tater and the Roma as artificial, while the Norwegian Roma emphasized the same distinction.

³⁹ As a result of the Norwegianization policy, few Romani Norwegians speak the Norwegian Romani language well today, but many know some words.

⁴⁰ Here, our empirical observations depart from those of Thorleifsson and Eriksen, “Human waste,” 90, who wrote that Roma migrants were “receivers of charity but not redemption” at the Contact Centre. The differences may relate to how our observations took place some years apart or how the foci of our research was different.

are translated from Romanian into Norwegian. On a tour of the centre, the employee showing us around told us that some participants kneel, crying in desperation during the services. The floor in front of the pulpit has, on occasion, been “wet with human tears,” he said.⁴¹ Roma migrants have unfulfilled “spiritual needs”, he reasoned, and belonging to a worshipping community strengthens their hope and resilience, helping them cope with the challenges of life. They can receive meals and food packs on Tuesdays and Thursdays, when there are no services, but many come on Mondays and join the services. Some were also baptized in the baptistry at the Contact Centre, as a great event symbolising their full inclusion into the community.⁴²

3. Three approaches to Roma inclusion

Before we turn to our reflections on what these accounts can say about inclusion in the context of intra-European Roma mobility, we need to present a backdrop to our reflections. Inclusion is both a political and a theoretical concept used in policy discourse and different academic disciplines, including sociology and theology. We will outline three approaches to inclusion that intersect in our reflections, highlighting the differences between them: the use of the concept in EU policy documents, representing both an influential formulation of the concept and a backdrop for our research; the concept as it appears in the work of the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann, which Holte has worked on; and the concept as it is understood in diaconal theology, which is Dietrich's field of expertise. Although Luhmann did not write about Roma specifically, his sociological terminology lets us frame Roma exclusion and the potential of religious inclusion in relation to social structure. A diaconal perspective contributes to understanding the value-framework of the Church City Mission and Evangeliesenteret and to discussing the modes of inclusion their engagements represent.

3.1 EU Roma policy

According to the political scientists Eva Sobotka and Peter Vermeersch, inclusion became a concern in EU Roma policy following the enlargements

⁴¹ Interview with anonymized employee at the Contact Centre, Bjørn Hallstein Holte and Stephanie Dietrich, 24 November 2021.

⁴² Earlier belonging to other faith traditions and denominations was not addressed as only believer's baptism is recognised as proper baptism in the Pentecostal tradition.

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in 2004 and 2007, which, as we have noted, turned the relatively large eastern European Roma populations into EU citizens.⁴³ As the Roma populations of the new EU member states became part of the internal policy agenda rather than an enlargement issue, the conceptual framework of EU Roma policy shifted away from minority and human rights and towards integration and inclusion.⁴⁴

Key EU policy documents published since the 2004 and 2007 expansions of the EU frame the Roma as socially and socioeconomically excluded, a situation prompting policy action in a Europe geared for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth.⁴⁵ In *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, the European Commission noted that the “prejudice, intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion” faced by Roma who are also “marginalised and live in very poor socio-economic conditions ... is not acceptable in the European Union (EU) at the beginning of the 21st century.”⁴⁶ In *The social and economic integration of Roma*, an earlier communication, the European Commission framed Roma inclusion in terms of the demographic transition facing European countries: “The full integration of Roma will have important economic benefits for our societies, especially for those countries with a shrinking population which cannot afford to exclude a large part of their potential labour force.”⁴⁷ Both documents argued that Roma integration would

⁴³ Eva Sobotka and Peter Vermeersch, “Governing Human Rights and Roma Inclusion: Can the EU Be a Catalyst for Local Social Change?” *Human Rights Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (August 2012), <http://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.2012.0050>.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 808–809; Rachel Guglielmo and Timothy William Waters, “Migrating Towards Minority Status: Shifting European Policy Towards Roma,” *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 43, no. 4 (November 2005), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2005.00595.x>; Joanna Kostka, *Financing Roma Inclusion with European Structural Funds: Why Good Intentions Fail* (London: Routledge, 2019), 22–23.

⁴⁵ European Commission, *The Social and Economic Integration of the Roma*, COM(2010) 133 (Brussels, 2010). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0133>, accessed 4 October 2022; *An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, COM(2011) 173 (Brussels, 2011). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0173>, accessed 4 October 2022; *A Union of Equality: EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation*, COM(2020) 620 (Brussels, 2020). <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0620>, accessed October 4, 2022.

⁴⁶ *Idem*, *An EU Framework*, 2.

⁴⁷ *Idem*, *The Social and Economic*, 2.

bring social and economic benefits to mainstream society, as well as to the Roma.⁴⁸

The 2011 framework outlined goals in four “key areas” that national Roma integration schemes in the member states should be designed or adapted to meet: education, employment, healthcare, and housing and essential services.⁴⁹ In the framework, integration centred around education and labour market participation.⁵⁰ In the words of the legal scholar Morag Goodwin and Roosmarijn Buijs, a student, “economic integration as participation in the wage economy precedes social integration and is a precondition for it, not only in raising Romani living standards, but by enabling Roma to gain the acceptance of the general public.”⁵¹ The approach, argued historians and ethnographers Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, presented a catch-22 whereby exclusion would be addressed through a targeted policy that “stigmatises Roma and sets them even more apart.”⁵² A new framework from 2020 titled *A Union of Equality* departed from the observation that progress had been limited for the duration of the 2011 framework.⁵³ In the new framework, the European Commission suggested that “a strengthened commitment is necessary to tackle persistent discrimination, including antigypsyism.”⁵⁴ The framework added three “horizontal objectives” to the four key areas from the 2011 framework (which were dubbed “sectorial objectives”), one of which was to “Fight and prevent antigypsyism and discrimination.”⁵⁵

⁴⁸ Idem, *The Social and Economic, 2; An EU Framework*, 2–3.

⁴⁹ Idem, *An EU Framework*, 4–7.

⁵⁰ The third paragraph in the framework document, for example, can be read as suggesting that ensuring “equal access to all fundamental rights enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights” and breaking “the vicious cycle of poverty moving from one generation to the next” can be achieved through investment “in the education of Roma children to allow them later on to successfully enter the labour market.” European Commission, *An EU Framework*, 2. See also: Morag Goodwin and Roosmarijn Buijs, “Making Good European Citizens of the Roma: A Closer Look at the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies,” *German Law Journal* 14, no. 10 (October 2013): 2044–45, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S2071832200002637>.

⁵¹ Goodwin and Buijs, “Making Good,” 2045.

⁵² Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, “European Policies for Social Inclusion of Roma: Catch 22?” *Social Inclusion* 3, no. 5 (September 2015): 29, <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v3i5.241>. See also: Goodwin and Buijs, “Making Good,” 2049.

⁵³ European Commission, *A Union of Equality*, 2.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, 3.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 2–4.

The 2011 framework stated that “the social and economic integration of Roma is a two-way process which requires a change of mindsets of the majority of the people as well as of members of the Roma communities.”⁵⁶ The mode of inclusion outlined in the document required that Roma adapt to the requirements of the labour market and the majority population be more open and tolerant to allow the Roma to do so. There was no discussion of structural issues. “The contribution that Roma make within the economic version of integration laid down in the Framework is simply one of additional manpower, not a specific contribution to society and the workforce,” wrote Goodwin and Buijs.⁵⁷ Rather than adjusting “the understanding of what it means to be economically active so as to include another economic way of life, one that may not be based upon individual participation in the market economy,” the framework suggested that “Roma must integrate into the formal labour market.”⁵⁸ Thus, the activities that sustained – and continue to sustain – many Roma, including the intra-European migration undertaken by the Roma migrants coming to the City Mission Centre and Contact Centre in Oslo, came across as undesirable within the 2011 framework. In Goodwin & Buijs’ words, Roma were framed as “the wrong kind of economic actors”.⁵⁹

Free movement was not mentioned in the 2011 framework. Goodwin & Buijs understood that “the apparent hope is that they [the Roma] will stay put. Thus, whereas all other EU citizens are encouraged to see themselves as such and to activate their rights under that citizenship, Romani EU citizens are not.”⁶⁰ Reflecting change in EU Roma policy, “mobility” was mentioned as one of several “personal characteristics” that go into constituting a diversity of Roma in the 2020 framework.⁶¹ Effectively suggesting that receiving countries take more responsibility for Roma migrants, the framework stated: “Member States should ensure that their

⁵⁶ *Idem*, *An EU Framework*, 2. See also: *The Social and Economic*, 5.

⁵⁷ Goodwin and Buijs, “Making Good,” 2047.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 2055.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 2052.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, 2053. See: also Huub van Baar, “Contained Mobility and the Racialization of Poverty in Europe: The Roma at the Development–Security Nexus,” *Social Identities* 24, no. 4 (2018), 449, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2017.1335826>; Yıldız, and De Genova, “Un/Free mobility,” 427–30.

⁶¹ European Commission, *A Union of Equality*, 7.

strategic frameworks cover all Roma on their territory and reflect the needs of diverse groups through an intersectional approach.”⁶²

Comparing the 2011 and 2020 frameworks shows changes in EU Roma policy. The 2011 framework implied an inclusion concept based on market participation facilitated through education and employment. This is a narrow conceptualisation of inclusion, one deemed “awfully close to assimilation” by Goodwin and Buijs, in that it takes “mainstream economic and social norms and practices as the default standard.”⁶³ Retaining the same goals, the 2020 framework nevertheless acknowledged intra-European Roma mobility and opened new questions about the responsibilities of the receiving countries. However, it did not go into what this might mean in practice.

3.2 Luhmann’s sociology

As an alternative to “a general concept of inclusion” implying full membership in a social unit through citizenship, integration, or otherwise, Luhmann suggested that a “growing complexity of society ... appears to dissolve classical, fixed inclusion patterns and to individualise inclusion more strongly.”⁶⁴ The inclusion concept he proposed related closely to his overall theory of society. He posited that inclusion in modern society is not regulated by “a central authority” but passed on to what he called “functional systems” and, in turn, organisations.⁶⁵ Although Luhmann did not write about Roma specifically, his sociological terminology lets us frame both Roma exclusion and the potential of religious inclusion in relation to social structure.

In Luhmann’s terms, modern society is differentiated into – and composed of – function systems that operate autonomously, even if they are interconnected.⁶⁶ Examples of function systems include the economy, politics, and law. The function systems do not exclude people, but meaningful participation in a function system requires access to communication

⁶² *Ibidem*.

⁶³ Goodwin and Buijs, “Making Good,” 2047.

⁶⁴ Luhmann, we should note, argued against “a sociological tradition” from T. H. Marshall to Talcott Parsons. Niklas Luhmann, *Theory of Society*, ed. Mieke Bal, trans. Rhodes Barrett, vol. 2. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 17, see also 21.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, 24. See also: *A Systems Theory of Religion*, ed. André Kierseiling, trans. David A. Brenner. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 167–68.

⁶⁶ *Idem*, *Theory of Society*, 87–88, 108–15.

If we Throw the Roma out of the Tent, we Throw Jesus out of the Tent media, which people generally access through organisations.⁶⁷ For example, economic participation requires money, which people generally access as employees of an organisation such as a company, while political participation in liberal democracies depends on voting rights and the right to stand for elections, which are generally granted to the citizens of a state. In a Luhmannian analysis, then, inclusion is effectively a question of people's affiliations, which Luhmann referred to as "membership".⁶⁸

Inclusion in a function system impacts people's affiliations in other function systems to a limited extent: having money does not translate into political influence (although it might make it easier to build such influence) and voting rights do not provide an income. However, in modern society, the inverse is true of exclusion. Exclusion from a function system begets other exclusions:

Without an address, one cannot register for school (India). People who cannot read and write have hardly any chance on the labour market, and serious discussion (as in Brazil) about depriving them of the franchise becomes feasible. People who find no accommodation outside shanty towns enjoy no legal protection in emergencies ... Many examples can be cited, and they demonstrate links across all functional systems.⁶⁹

The situation of many Roma migrants to Norway, which we sketched at the beginning of the article, can be laid out similarly: without formal qualifications or other marketable skills, it is hard to find employment; without employment, it is hard to find a place to live and nearly impossible to register with the authorities; without an address, even migrants from EU countries have few rights in the welfare state, and without registering, they do not have the right to stay permanently in the country.⁷⁰ "And, at a certain threshold point," as Luhmann wrote, "all remaining time and energy are taken up with bodily survival"⁷¹ – which is how the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre encounter Roma migrants.

⁶⁷ There is much to be said about Luhmann's organisation concept, but it suffices here to suggest that it should be understood in the broadest possible sense.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, 142–43.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, 25; See also: *A Systems Theory*, 173–74, 218–19; "Beyond Barbarism," *Soziale Systeme* 14, no. 1 (May 2008), 45, <https://doi.org/10.1515/sosys-2008-0104>.

⁷⁰ Like Luhmann's own examples, this is merely an illustration and could be expanded further in each direction.

⁷¹ *Idem*, *A Systems Theory*, 174.

Thus, Luhmann's theory shows a relationship between the destitution among these Roma migrants and the prevailing social structures.

Luhmann's sociology also links the potential of religious inclusion to social structure. Luhmann saw religion in modern society as more or less isolated from other function systems in the wake of secularisation – the historical process whereby other function systems differentiated from religion.⁷² In his words, religion has “few interdependencies with the inclusion/exclusion regulations of other function systems” and “can blithely ignore any near exclusion from other function systems, such as not having money, an education, an identity card or a chance of being taken seriously by the police or the judge.”⁷³ For people subject to exclusion, Luhmann asked, “perhaps religion could offer an exceptional opportunity?”⁷⁴ This might also provide “opportunities” for religious organisations, he suggested,⁷⁵ although he was pessimistic about their prospects of growing their membership or attaining social relevance by engaging people subject to exclusion.⁷⁶ What Luhmann did not address, however, was the possibility of an intrinsic theological motivation to do so.

3.3 Diaconal theology

Diaconal theology emphasises that every human being is created in the image and likeness of God and deserves to be treated with respect.⁷⁷ According to *Called to Transformation*, a recent ecumenical publication on diakonia, “[r]ecent developments within diaconal sciences emphasise that there has been a paradigm shift within the understanding of diakonia from humble service, to diakonia as a bridge-building and empowering ministry of the church's «go-between» service in the world.”⁷⁸ Ecumenical studies emphasise that diakonia should not primarily be understood as service for people at the margins, but as emanating from the margins, as “diakonia of marginalised people” and “action «from below».”⁷⁹

⁷² *Ibidem*, 205–206, 228.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, 220.

⁷⁴ *Idem*, “Beyond Barbarism,” 45.

⁷⁵ *Idem*, *A Systems Theory*, 220.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, 174–75, 220–21; “Beyond Barbarism,” 45.

⁷⁷ World Council of Churches, *Called to Transformation. Ecumenical Diakonia* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2022), 15, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/publications/ecumenical-diakonia>, accessed 30 September 2022.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, 90, see also 43–44.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, 38–40.

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Diakonia has a strong tradition of addressing the needs of people at the margins with their own participation, as agents and subjects of their own life. The scholar Carlos Ham thus argued for a model of “Empowering diakonia” addressing “the needs of the people with their own participation, as subjects, since they experience the power of God manifested in their daily struggle and lives.”⁸⁰ Such an understanding of diakonia sees marginalised groups, such as Roma migrants, as agents and people with the right to define their own life. It also emphasises that everyone can need help or be in a position to help at different times and in different contexts.

Within diaconal studies, there is an ongoing discourse on the understanding of diakonia as either acts of charity, mutuality or reciprocity, or transformation.⁸¹ Thus, from a diaconal perspective, inclusion can be understood in different ways.

One is to underline that inclusion implies access to the basics of life, in accordance with human rights.⁸² The services provided at the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre address the basic needs of the Roma migrants coming to their doors. Motivated by Christian faith and a call to help those in need (cf. Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 25:31-46), both the Church City Mission and Evangeliesenteret decided to let Roma migrants through their doors. Inclusion, in this sense, can mean supporting people’s basic needs of life through acts of charity.

When it comes to mutuality, both the Church City Mission and Evangeliesenteret sought to meet Roma migrants with respect, but they did so in different ways. At the City Mission Centre, Roma migrants were met as guests and customers, implying a level of mutuality. They were welcome in the services at Tøyen Church, but few participated. At the Contact Centre, on the other hand, Roma migrants participated in the worshipping community, and some also contributed by telling their stories. This can represent a mode of inclusion based on mutuality, but it can also imply a quest for adaptation to the faith practices that are predominant in a Pentecostal context.

⁸⁰ Carlos E. Ham, “Empowering Diakonia: A Perspective From the World Council of Churches,” in *Diakonia as Christian Social Practice*, eds. Stephanie Dietrich, Knud Jørgensen, Kari Karsrud Korslien and Kjell Nordstokke (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 119.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, 109–110.

⁸² See: United Nations General Assembly, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” 217 [III] A (Paris, 1948), art. 25.

Neither the City Mission Centre nor the Contact Centre engaged directly in transformation or the empowerment of Roma migrants. Advocacy work and work on a structural and political level is a part of the Church City Mission's agenda, also regarding Roma migrants.⁸³ The work at the City Mission Centre focused on addressing basic needs and acknowledging their guests' inherent value and dignity as human beings. The prospects of baptism and full inclusion in the community of believers at the Contact Centre may have transformative elements, but on the individual and religious level rather than the structural or political level.

Overall, the inclusion offered by the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre focused primarily on the provision of basic needs, but also on doing so with dignity and respect. It was based on charitable humanitarianism and ideals of mutuality and reciprocity. At the Contact Centre, Roma migrants were also included as believers and members of a worshipping community. This constitutes particular modes of inclusion based on a view of Roma migrants as human beings rather than an economic and social problem to be solved.

4. Reflections on Roma inclusion

In this final part of the article, we relate the accounts of and approaches to Roma inclusion we have outlined so far to each other, reflecting over the different modes of inclusion represented and how they relate. We do so reflexively, aware that our own research relates closely to what we have identified as EU Roma policy. The funding of a research project on the role of religion and religious actors in Roma inclusion, such as the one we are engaged in, might reflect an interest – or curiosity – among authorities in the role and potential of religious actors in contributing to Roma inclusion – in Romania and in Norway. However, the implied instrumentalization of religion and religious actors to serve EU Roma inclusion policies or governmental objectives more broadly must be understood against the different modes of inclusion intended by the different actors. What modes of inclusion do the authorities envision, and what modes of inclusion can and do religious actors provide? And – importantly – how does this relate to whatever forms of inclusion Roma migrants want or expect?

⁸³ See: Seilskjær and Nybø, *Den aksepterte rasismen*.

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European and Norwegian authorities tend to conceptualise Roma inclusion in terms of market integration. In the EU policy documents we have reviewed this was reflected in the four “key areas” of the 2011 framework and “sectoral objectives” of the 2020 framework.⁸⁴ Relatedly, the inclusion envisaged for Roma migrants in Norway is based on employment: migrants who do not possess large sums of money can only register and stay permanently in the country if they get employed, even if they come from EU countries. Thus, Roma migrants are included in Norway as European citizens and potential workers, but most are simultaneously excluded from important domains as neither citizens, employed, in possession of funds, nor already living permanently in the country.⁸⁵ These migrants are legally present in Norway but only “precariously” or “provisionally” included by non-governmental organisations – including religious actors – and concerned individuals,⁸⁶ all of which is broadly in line with what Luhmann described as “more strongly” individualised inclusion and the forms of exclusion compatible with it.⁸⁷

Our Luhmannian analysis departed from an understanding of exclusion as a structural phenomenon, emphasising how exclusions reinforce each other. Thus, migrants who do not have money and do not find employment are also excluded from other domains, such as housing and right to permanent residence. For citizens and those with legal and habitual residence in Norway, the welfare state would offer support with public social welfare aiming to “contribute to social and economic security” for “everyone residing in the realm” as a last resort.⁸⁸ However, as we mentioned in the introduction, the social welfare legislation prevents legal migrants who do not have habitual residence in Norway from accessing public social welfare, even if they are legally in the country.⁸⁹ Broadly in accordance with Luhmann’s suggestion that religion could provide opportunities for those subject to exclusion,⁹⁰ the accounts from the City

⁸⁴ European Commission, *An EU Framework, 4–7, A Union of Equality, 2–4.*

⁸⁵ See: Misje, “Social Work,” 406.

⁸⁶ See: Idem, “The Precarious Inclusion,” 463; Thorleifsson and Eriksen, “Human waste,” 90.

⁸⁷ Luhmann, *Theory of Society*, 17.

⁸⁸ Sosialtjenesteloven [Social Welfare Act] (2009), §1, §2. <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2009-12-18-131>, accessed 4 October 2022.

⁸⁹ Misje, “Social Work,” 405–407, “The Precarious Inclusion,” 450.

⁹⁰ Luhmann, “Beyond Barbarism,” 45.

Mission Centre and the Contact Centre presented modes of inclusion that did not presuppose citizenship, employment, or habitual residence in Norway. However, these engagements did not represent attempts at growing the organisations' membership or otherwise obtaining social relevance but were based on a view of Roma migrants as human beings.

From a diaconal perspective, Roma migrants and other vulnerable people are first and foremost human beings and should be treated as such, which implies a call to address their unmet basic needs. When the Church City Mission offered basic services to Roma migrants in the City Mission Centre and Evangeliesenteret served meals and distributed food at the Contact Centre, they did so because they saw Roma migrants as human beings in need of help. Engaging for Roma migrants and other people in precarious situations can be framed as a Christian duty based on a Christian anthropology of human beings as created in the image and likeness of God and ideals of care for people at the margins.

This was captured well in the phrase we quoted in the title of this article. It relates to the intrinsic value of human beings as a motivation for religious engagement for all people, including those subjects to exclusion. We heard the phrase at the Contact Centre, but it could apply equally to the City Mission Centre.

More than the City Mission Centre, however, the Contact Centre emphasised that their worshipping community welcomed and included anyone wanting to participate. The Church City Mission kept its humanitarian and social work separate from its religious activities. Guests at the City Mission Centre, including Roma migrants, were welcome to participate in the services in Tøyen Church, but remained guests rather than participants even if they did. The guests lit candles, prayed, or sat in silence in the church rather than participating in the services. In welcoming anyone into the congregation, Evangeliesenteret offered inclusion into a community based on a shared Christian identity; in letting Roma migrants tell their stories during services and offering baptisms, the organisation offered them full path to inclusion. The employee who showed us around the Contact Centre emphasised the sameness of the Roma migrants and their volunteers and other users in religious, ethnic, and linguistic terms. While this kind of inclusion can "save lives," as one of the employees we interviewed at the City Mission Centre suggested,

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there is also a danger of proselytising, forced conversion, and abuse when including vulnerable people religiously.⁹¹

Despite the different modes of inclusion offered by their organisations, the people we spoke to at the Church City Mission and Evangeliesenteret recognized the strengths in each other's approaches: When saying it could "save lives," the employee we interviewed at the City Mission Centre reflected over the value of including vulnerable people in a community of faith. On the other hand, the employee who showed us around at the Contact Centre emphasised that they also gave out food on days when they did not hold services, and that their Monday services were held after the food distribution was over so it was possible to come and receive food without attending the worship services. We cannot resolve this tension between offering full inclusion and the risk of doing harm here, only note that there are broadly recognised limits to the desirability of inclusion.

As a consequence of their engagements, the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre formed part of what Misje called "a parallel social service system" for migrants in which help was "meted out through benevolence, charity, and compassion ... rather than comprehensive, inclusive social rights."⁹² Misje was critical of the inferior services provided to migrants in the parallel social service system relative to the public system available to citizens and migrants with habitual residence in Norway. The parallel social service system is not rights-based, the level of provision is lower than that in the public social welfare system, and it "includes no measures for appeal."⁹³ Overall, Misje concluded, the parallel social service system "takes on a bordering function" and "feeds into the totality of policies ultimately meant to discourage people from coming to Norway or encourage them to leave."⁹⁴ Also the diaconal theology presented above framed charity, mutuality, and transformation as distinct "phases or models of diakonia" with charity situated in the past.⁹⁵ Another view is that humanitarian support for people in precarious situations is indispensable,

⁹¹ We cannot discern from our visits whether the inclusion offered by Evangeliesenteret had such problematic sides.

⁹² Misje, "Queuing for Food," 106, see also: 113.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, 113.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, 114. See also: Nicolay B. Johansen, "Controlling the Roma in Norway: Governing Through the Administration of Social Distance," in *Punishing the Other: The social production of immorality revisited*, ed. Anna Eriksson (London: Routledge, 2015).

⁹⁵ Ham, "Empowering Diakonia," 109; World Council of Churches, *Called to Transformation*, passim.

also in Norway, where the extensive public welfare system does not cover all people in the country. Yet, despite being offered only marginal modes of inclusion, Roma migrants have continued to travel to Norway since the expansions of the EU in 2004 and 2007.⁹⁶ Travelling to Norway, the migrants enact their rights as EU citizens.⁹⁷ The migration can be framed as a “purposeful and rational” adaptation to their situation drawing on “social capital in the form of family and village networks, which provide people with information, opportunities, resources and support that are vital in overcoming the risks and challenges of migration outside formal institutions.”⁹⁸ In other words, Roma migrants are economic actors, even if they may be “the wrong kind of economic actors” from the authorities’ perspective.⁹⁹ Migration can be framed as a reflection of their agency – as the conscious use of personal and collective resources, including their right to free movement in Europe as citizens of an EU country. In such a framing, the charitable humanitarian service provision and religious inclusion at the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre can be seen to empower European Roma to employ their resources by migrating. When providing basic needs, the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre did not only alleviate human suffering but also contributed to facilitating the free movement of EU citizens. Rather than assuming hierarchy of diaconal action that distinguishes between charity, mutuality, and transformation,¹⁰⁰ charitable humanitarianism can be seen as empowering if it helps European Roma realise – or make the most of – their rights as citizens of an EU country.

In presenting modes of inclusion that do not presuppose citizenship, employment, or habitual residence in Norway, the accounts from the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre in this article may

⁹⁶ While many individuals stay in Norway only for shorter periods – often engaging in itinerant mobility or circular migration between Norway, Romania, and third countries, either because they are unable to register and stay longer in Norway, because they have commitments in other countries, or a bit of both – Roma migrants have a permanent presence as a particular structural position in Norway.

⁹⁷ See: Goodwin and Buijs, “Making Good,” 2052–53; Yıldız, and De Genova, “Un/Free mobility,” 427, 435–36.

⁹⁸ Jon Horgen Friberg, “Poverty, Networks, Resistance: The Economic Sociology of Roma Migration for Begging,” *Migration Studies* 8, no. 2 (June 2020), 245, <https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mny038>.

⁹⁹ Goodwin and Buijs, “Making Good,” 2052.

¹⁰⁰ See: Ham, “Empowering Diakonia.”

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offer indications of what offering services for all Roma within a territory and reflecting the needs of diverse groups – in line with the European Commission’s 2020 framework¹⁰¹ – can mean in practice. The modes of inclusion offered by these religious actors differ significantly from the modes of inclusion envisioned by European and Norwegian authorities, which are based on employment and longer-term settlement. They also differ from idealised modes of inclusion implied in diaconal and social work theory, which are based on mutuality or transformation. At the City Mission Centre and the Contact Centre, inclusion is first and foremost based on a Christian vision of the inherent value and dignity of Roma migrants as human beings. Their services are offered in response to the needs detected while working among migrants over the last ten to fifteen years, based on acknowledgement of inter-European mobility as a right and adaption by Roma as EU citizens and economic actors – rather than a vision of employment and permanent settlement. Yet, from a diaconal viewpoint focussed on perspectives and action from the margins,¹⁰² it would be important to ask what forms of inclusion the Roma migrants are seeking. Without stereotyping or romanticising the Roma as nomads, and while recognising the diversity contained within the broad category, there is an urgent need to ask what modes of inclusion the Roma themselves want – in all their diversity, as migrants and otherwise. This perspective is conspicuously omitted from this article, and research on the perceptions of inclusion among Roma migrants is acutely needed.

¹⁰¹ European Commission, *A Union of Equality*, 7.

¹⁰² World Council of Churches, *Called to Transformation*, 38–40.

Roma Christians in Times of Crises: Social Impact of Faith During a Pandemic and War

MELODY J. WACHSMUTH*

Roma communities in Eastern Europe have long experienced socio-political and religious marginalization, a current phenomenon resulting from complex factors spanning over centuries. The rise of evangelical and Pentecostal movements among the Roma over the last decades have contributed to social uplift and more integration in certain contexts. However, societies in crisis are often an unexpected gauge to assess realities and tensions—in this case, the war in Ukraine and COVID-19 revealed the deep suspicion and prejudice still existing toward the Roma. Nonetheless, a number of Roma Pentecostals and Baptists became actively involved in responding to both crises. First placing the relationship between religion, society, and the Roma in historical context, this paper will explore how Christian Roma reacted to the dual crises and the implications for their relationship to the wider church and society.

Keywords: *Pentecostalism, Evangelicalism, Eastern Europe, COVID-19, War, Ukraine, Refugees, Integration, Pentecostal Theology*

Introduction

When the lockdown was enforced in Greece in 2020 as a result of COVID-19, the small church in the Roma camp outside Thessaloniki sprang to action. The camp is cut off from city services – no roads, no water, no electricity and the makeshift houses are constructed from paper and wood. The community committee who mediated between city authorities and the camp consisted of Christians from the church – they translated the instructions regarding hygiene and information about the situation into Romani and made sure it was distributed to Roma communities throughout Greece. The Roma Christians also mediated the cleaning of the camp and distribution of supplies. The church gathered food and made sure each home in the camp received some. This young church, founded around ten years ago by Greek evangelicals, proved to be crucial for this disenfranchised Roma community in a time of crisis.¹

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¹ Zoom Interview conducted by the author with John and Katarina Papadopoulos, May 1, 2020.

This vignette illustrates a confluence of intersecting events pertinent to this paper and leading to the question—what happens to marginalized minorities in global crises and does Christian faith impact the social outcomes?

The Roma have long been part of the European peoples – 1000 years ago, groups of people who would later identify as Romani, began migrating out of northwest India.² By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, groups were well populated in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).³ Today, there are ten to twelve million Roma in Europe, and this estimate encompasses a variety of groups with different languages and dialects of Romani as well as cultural and religious practices.⁴ Although Roma groups are also diverse in terms of socio-economic status, they often have higher rates of illiteracy, unemployment, and health problems than that of the majority populations around them, as well as experiencing social exclusion.⁵ In addition, many are subject to frequent stereotyping and discrimination in the societies in which they live. This is a present reality of complex making, fostered by shifting socio-cultural, political, economic, and religious norms over the centuries as well as ideas and images of the Roma constructed by societies in which they lived. In fact, despite their longevity and history in Europe, they are still frequently considered “non-European” and relegated to the margins of history.⁶ Currently in

² Becky Taylor, *Another Darkness, Another Dawn: A History of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014), 20.

³ Donald Kenrick, *Historical Dictionary of the Gypsies* (Romanies), 2nd ed., Historical Dictionaries of Peoples and Cultures vol. 7 (Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2007); Ian F. Hancock, *We Are the Romani People = Ame Sam e Rromane Džene* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2002); Angus M. Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995); David Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

⁴ Sometimes a group is called “Roma” by the majority culture, although they would not identify with this label. In some contexts, people call themselves “Gypsies” although in other contexts that is considered offensive. Thus, I strive to use the same identifiers as a specific community uses. For this paper, I use “Roma” to refer to a wider umbrella of groups who self-identify as such and I sometimes use “Gypsy” in historical context.

⁵ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights FRA, *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey. Main Results* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2017), https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2017-eu-midis-ii-main-results_en.pdf, accessed December 13, 2017.

⁶ Huub van Baar, *The European Roma. Minority Representation, Memory, and the Limits of Transnational Governmentality* (Amsterdam: School for Cultural Analysis, 2011), <http://dare.uva.nl/record/1/352514>, accessed May 16, 2015.

Central and Eastern Europe, society's image of Roma identity is all too often inextricably intertwined with poverty, marginality, and criminality.⁷

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, transnational, national and non-governmental entities have increasingly focused on Roma integration, which is largely defined in terms of reducing the socio-economic gaps. This is captured in such initiatives such as the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” (2005–2015) and the EU framework for “National Roma Integration Strategies to 2020.”⁸ Both of these initiatives had marginal and uneven results for numerous reasons.⁹ Most recently, in July 2019 (less than a year before COVID-19 overtook the globe), the prime ministers of the Western Balkans issued a commitment to integrate Roma in their respective societies, as part of the EU enlargement process. This integration is defined within the specific domains of: Employment, Housing, Education, Health, Civil registration, and Non-Discrimination.¹⁰ A second follow up meeting in the fall of 2021 noted the COVID-19 pandemic deteriorated many Roma communities' economic situation. It also recognized that Roma integration is an “integral” part of general socio-economic policies.¹¹ The initiative attributed the

⁷ Óscar Prieto-Flores, “Does the Canonical Theory of Assimilation Explain the Roma Case? Some Evidence from Central and Eastern Europe,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32, no. 8 (2009): 1387–405, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870903006988>.

⁸ “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015,” http://www.romadecade.org/index_ accessed October 23, 2013; European Commission, “An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020,” http://ec.europa.eu/justice/policies/discrimination/docs/com_2011_173_en.pdf, 2011, accessed October 23, 2013.

⁹ Aleksandra Bojadjieva, coord., *Roma Inclusion Index 2015* (Budapest: Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, September 2015) <https://www.rcc.int/romainegration2020/files/user/docs/Roma%20Inclusion%20Index%202015.pdf>, accessed December 12, 2017; Office of the High Commission, “Lessons learned. Views in the Context of Mid-Term Review of Implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies 2012–2020” (Brussels: United Nations Human Rights 2017), <https://europe.ohchr.org/EN/Stories/Documents/Lessons%20Learnt%20EU%20Framework%20for%20National%20Roma%20Integration%20Strategies%202012%202020.pdf>, accessed December 12, 2017.

¹⁰ Prime Ministers of Western Balkans, “Declaration of Western Balkans Partners on Roma Integration within the EU Enlargement Process” (Roma Integration 2020, 2019), <https://www.rcc.int/romainegration2020/files/admin/docs/3c105cda9e6e62eb1a6cdab7968f77f5.pdf>, accessed August 12, 2022.

¹¹ Ministers of Western Balkans, “Conclusions of the Second Ministerial Meeting on Roma Integration” (Roma Integration 2020, 2019), 2021, <https://www.rcc.int/romainegration2020/news/360/conclusions-of-the-second-ministerial-meeting-on-roma-integration>, accessed August 12, 2022.

lack of progress to the gap between mainstream policy-making and the issues to be addressed in Roma communities.

Of course, state and transnational authorities have little interest in assessing religious integration of the Roma, nor how this might affect other spheres of life, although in some contexts, the holistic activity of religious groups in Roma communities has been recognized.¹² Historically, Roma have shared the religious identity of the majority culture of which they are surrounded, a reality sometimes attributed, however erroneously or correctly, to “survival strategies,” rather than to genuine belief. However, there are many nuances to studying religious faith in Roma communities, including the exclusion sometimes fostered by religious authorities, the “mixing” of various religious or spiritual traditions, and the gap between religious identity and religious belief and/or practice. The rise of Pentecostalism and evangelicalism among the Roma over the last sixty to seventy years in Europe has also added a new dimension to the religious landscape.¹³

Like any other ethnic or cultural group, the religious landscape among the Roma over the last few hundred years is intertwined with changing cultures, social milieus, and geopolitical realities. Throughout the course of history, new events or shifts in socio-political and economic states can unearth tensions and cause new social anxieties. In the last two years, two major events brought into sharp focus the question of the current relationship between Roma communities and the majority societies: COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. How did these recent crises impact Roma communities? More specifically, how did Christian Roma react to these crises and what did this mean for their relationship to the wider church and society? These questions are ongoing as the crises and

¹² For example, Hungarian Gypsy Missions International does holistic work in Roma communities – focusing on mind, body, and soul – and because of their successes, has cooperated with local governments, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations. (“Hungarian Gypsy Missions International,” <http://www.gypsymissions.org/>, accessed September 9, 2022).

¹³ Evangelicalism is a non-denominational focus on the “gospel” or “good news” that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Bebbington’s classic definition of evangelicalism highlights the authority of Scripture, God’s sovereignty, human depravity, salvation through Jesus Christ alone, proclaiming the gospel to others, and the hope of the return of Christ to fulfill his kingdom. David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, Ebook Central (London; Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 1–10.

the effects of the crises are unfolding; thus, the purpose of this paper is to begin to reflect on these questions by situating them in historical context.

This paper will first offer several examples of religious attitudes toward the Roma and the interrelationship with wider societal and cultural forces. Next, it will briefly discuss the impact of Pentecostalism on Roma in both West and Eastern Europe, since that is the form of Christianity that is most rapidly growing among the Roma. After that, the paper will move into the impact of COVID-19 on Roma communities and the war in Ukraine. Finally, the paper will conclude by discussing implications of crises and social impact.

Images of the Roma in Europe: Social Anxieties and Religious Attitudes¹⁴

It is a highly subjective process to discuss historical elements of Roma in Europe in a way that helps illuminate the current situation. Writing history is not an “objective” engagement, as the historian will make choices that may have ideological and political implications.¹⁵ This is related to one’s phenomenological horizons—that is, the cognitive structures by which we interpret experience. It is individual but also related to the interpretative framework of our communities, countries, and cultures.¹⁶ There are many layers to this: the researcher’s epistemological framework, her particular questions and assumptions with which she approaches the questions, the divergent experiences of the Roma spread across different contexts, and the fact that very few accounts from the past are written by Roma themselves.¹⁷ Nonetheless, for the purposes of this paper, I will summarize general attitudes of religious institutions over the centuries.

¹⁴ Part of this section is summarized from the dissertation: Melody J. Wachsmuth, “Understanding Identity and Social Change through Narrative. With Special Reference to Roma Pentecostalism in Croatia and Serbia” (PhD, Middlesex University, London, 2020).

¹⁵ Hayden V. White, *The Content of the Form. Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore- London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), ix.

¹⁶ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Sheed & Ward, 1989); Bradley H. McLean, *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: University Press, 2012), 177.

¹⁷ Yaron Matras, *The Romani Gypsies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 157.

Religious institutions of the Orthodox, Catholic, and Islamic were often suspicious that the Gypsies were “irreligious.”¹⁸ In fact, religious institutions have all too often been complicit in maintaining the images of the Roma as “Other.”¹⁹ For example, between 1497 and 1774, 146 decrees were issued against the Gypsies by the Holy Roman Empire.²⁰ In Italy, the Church refused them mass, and in 1635 in Portugal, Gypsies were excommunicated if they did not go to mass. In the Orthodox world, patterns of exclusion were also evident. Orthodox priests were not allowed to bless Gypsy marriages. One account in Macedonia in the nineteenth century emphasized the taboo marriage of a Gypsy with a non-Gypsy, despite the fact they were both Christian. From the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries, the monasteries in Wallachia, Moldova and Transylvania capitalized on the labour from Gypsy slaves.²¹ Islamic institutions had similar attitudes, as viewed by the relegation of Muslim Gypsies to obscure places in the Muslim graveyards.²² Western European travellers noted the bad image Christians and Muslims had of the Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire: pagans, sexually loose, criminals, and rarely keeping religious ordinances.²³ Despite this grim picture, there are counter-examples; for example, in the late nineteenth century, a Serbian bishop Melentije

¹⁸ Gilad Margalit, “The Image of the Gypsy in German Christendom,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 33, no. 2 (April 1999): 75–85, <https://doi.org/10.1080/003132299128810560>.

¹⁹ David Thurffjell, *Faith and Revivalism in a Nordic Romani Community. Pentecostalism amongst the Kaale Roma of Sweden and Finland*, Library of Modern Religion; vol. 21 (London: IBTauris, 2013), 34.

²⁰ Margalit, “The Image of the Gypsy in German Christendom.”

²¹ Viorel Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004).

²² Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire: A Contribution to the History of the Balkans* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press; Centre de recherches tsiganes, 2001), 74–75. The Roma under the Ottoman Empire (1299–1922) seemed to have a greatly divergent experience from European Roma in general, lasting until the nineteenth century when the Ottoman Empire began to crumble. They were not systematically persecuted in the Ottoman Empire, and they were able to continue to operate within their own cultural ethos and had a defined place. Sources from the Ottoman time period make it clear that the Gypsies either mixed Muslim, Christian, and their own traditions or switched their religion. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there seemed to be primarily Christian Gypsies, but by the nineteenth century, Muslims were in the majority.

²³ Eyal Ginio, “Neither Muslims nor Zimmis. The Gypsies (Roma) in the Ottoman State,” *Romani Studies* 14, no. 2 (December 2004): 127.

confidentially instructed Serbs to convert Gypsies to Orthodoxy – in three years, Melentije baptized 2222 Gypsies in his diocese.²⁴

Of course, there were many complex socio-political and religious factors that contributed to these attitudes. One example can be seen in shifting religious interpretations of poverty over the centuries. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a religious renewal burgeoned in the Church. This renewal manifested as a return to simplicity and poverty modelled after the wandering life of Jesus and the disciples. In fact, a renunciation of wealth and an embrace of itinerancy, begging, and poverty became inextricably connected to spiritual and moral growth.²⁵

Thus, in the fifteenth century, when groups of dark-skinned strangers began appearing in Western Europe, they were noted as pilgrims and penitents. Reports describe a foreign group's arrival into a town, sometimes with a leader called a "Duke," "Lord," or "Count," and carrying safe passage letters and claiming to be persecuted Christians, in exile, or on a pilgrimage as penance for relapsing from Christianity.²⁶

However, in the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformation was a significant religious change that impacted the European socio-political landscape. Since the twelfth century, Christianity had only been conceptualized in two major streams (Catholic and Orthodox), but a series of reforming movements led to new confessional identities, which had profound religious and political effects; by 1600 the Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, and Anabaptist Protestant streams were robust and spreading. Kings and city councils assumed greater control over churches in their realm, which increased the church's national identity.²⁷ Contributing to this was the rise of vernaculars in religious and administrative usage – a "print capitalism" which contributed to the beginnings of a national consciousness.²⁸ This shattering of the universal religious worldview into competing streams began to challenge the relationship between territory, authority, and governance, creating new imaginations of political

²⁴ David Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 209.

²⁵ Dale T. Irvin and Scott W. Sunquist, *History of the World Christian Movement*. (Maryknoll and Edinburgh: Orbis, 2012), 407.

²⁶ Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 62–7; Matras, *The Romani*, 20, 166; Crowe, *A History*; Hancock, *We Are the Romani*.

²⁷ Irvin and Sunquist, *History of the World*, 7, 72 and 123.

²⁸ Benedict Richard O'Gorman Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 44.

and social belonging, all of which, of course, had impact on how Roma groups were perceived as belonging or not belonging.²⁹

This religious shift resulted in changed attitudes and new social anxieties. One of these anxieties was a sudden fear of witchcraft and magic, linking these things to disasters.³⁰ Subsequent writings referring to Roma groups depicted prejudices based on the Roma's "heathenish practices and sorcery."³¹ In 1538, the Spanish Inquisition began investigating Gypsies, accusing them of sorcery and superstition, although again there are always counter-stories of local priests offering sanctuary.³² Another example was the shifting attitudes toward the "wandering penitents" and the idealized poverty characteristic of the Middle Ages. Already in the fifteenth century, poverty began to be related to the "sin of sloth," and humanists began to portray poverty as a social disorder and created the idea of the "deserving poor" (widows, children, etc.) versus the "non-deserving poor," those who chose begging as a means of employment. This dynamic can be seen in Eastern Europe too, as in 1860, a Bulgarian bishop said it was a "sin" to give alms to Gypsies and infidels.³³ From the mid-sixteenth century to the mid-seventeenth century, a series of religious wars caused large movements of people toward the cities, which overwhelmed the cities' resources, and a return of the plague in various places caused further anxiety.³⁴

Another example of a cultural shift which affected the way Roma may have been perceived was the Renaissance period's (14th–17th century) emphasis on "civility," which connoted a certain way of behaving with the opposite being "savages."³⁵ In *The Civilizing Process*, Norbert Elias traced the emerging meanings of civility in Western Europe to the writings of the humanists and manners, culminating in a short work by

²⁹ Taylor, *Another Darkness*, 45.

³⁰ Irvin and Sunquist, *History of the World*, 73–4. The authors estimate over 40,000 alleged witches were killed in a four-hundred-year period.

³¹ Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 129.

³² Matras, *The Romani*, 171 and 177.

³³ Miroslav Atanasov, "Gypsy Pentecostals. The Growth of the Pentecostal Movement among the Roma in Bulgaria and its Revitalization of their Communities" (Asbury Theological Seminary, 2008), <https://place.asburyseminary.edu/ecommonsatsdissertations/10/>, accessed October 24, 2014, 99.

³⁴ Taylor, *Another Darkness*, 53; Irvin and Sunquist, *History of the World*, 166 and 270.

³⁵ Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 35.

Erasmus of Rotterdam regarding civility in boys of the upper classes in 1530. Erasmus's work discusses the appropriate behaviour of people in society in terms of manners, outward appearance including facial expressions, dress, gestures, and ways of speech.³⁶ This designation pointed to which behaviours belonged to the "civilized" and which to the "barbaric" or "uncivilized," although there were also those who advocated for a return to the "wild" as the path to virtue.³⁷ The movement toward "civility" involved discipline, of not just the individual, but society itself through economic, military, religious, and moral training, aiming toward a so-called "polished" and developing society.³⁸

The Catholic, Orthodox, and later Protestant Churches took a strong role in mandating standards for Christian morality and civility, according to how civility was interpreted in society. For example, since it was believed that Gypsies did not marry in church or baptize their infants—this was believed to be a direct challenge to the church's moral authority in a civil society.³⁹ In addition, emerging concepts of civilization were also formed by exploration and colonization, beginning with the "Age of Discovery" in the fifteenth century. As Enlightenment ideas of reason, liberty, progress, and the rule of law began taking shape in the eighteenth century, these ideas clashed with slavery and colonialism as European monarchies expanded their empires. To account for this, elites fostered "strategies of exclusion, grounded in racial dichotomy between human and sub-human, or civilized and savage." Thus, certain concepts of modernity and progress were developed in opposition to the "Other" as "... pre-modern, not fully human, irrational, outside history."⁴⁰ This connection between civilization and progress also became linked to Christian missionary efforts—civilizing the "savages" became inextricably related to spreading the Christian faith.⁴¹

In the nineteenth century, a Protestant concern for "Gypsy souls" developed but, in keeping with the intertwining of Christianity and

³⁶ Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 47–8.

³⁷ Taylor, *Another Darkness*, 35–8.

³⁸ Tayyab Mahmud, "Postcoloniality and Mythologies of Civil(Ized) Society," *Chicana/o Latina/o Law Review* 26, no. 1 (2006): 53; Taylor, *Another Darkness*, 36 and 39.

³⁹ Taylor, *Another Darkness*, 58.

⁴⁰ Tayyab Mahmud, "Colonialism and Modern Constructions of Race. A Preliminary Inquiry," *University of Miami Law Review* 53, no. 4 (1999): 1221.

⁴¹ Irvin and Sunquist, *History of the World*, 11–5 and 165.

civilizing, some Protestants combined the gospel with a chance to teach practices more in line with how society operated, such as encouraging them to “settle” and “preparing them for occupations which relied on values of dependence and submissiveness.”⁴² Gypsy Smith, an evangelist from England with an impressive ministry, demonstrates these tensions in his own memoir. In his first sermon, for example, he tells the people he is “only a gypsy [sic] boy,” and excuses himself as he describes eating in a “civilized manner”:

Please forgive me. I do not know any better. I am only a gipsy boy. I have never been taught what these things are. I know I shall make lots of blunders, but if you correct me whenever I make a mistake, I will be very grateful. I will never be angry, and never cross.⁴³

Later, he writes a prayer to God that in a foreign territory people “could not understand my wildness and my romantic nature.”⁴⁴

Some of these external attitudes became internalized in different Roma contexts, as seen by some of the longstanding folk and oral traditions from the fifteenth century. Stories are repeated such as Roma stealing the nails from Jesus’ cross, or forging the nails, or failing to offer shelter to Joseph, Mary, and Jesus when they fled to Egypt to escape Herod’s murderous intentions.⁴⁵ These stories and fables are aimed to explain the situation many Roma find themselves in—as being social marginalized and poor. Even today some Christian Pentecostal Roma attribute the Roma suffering to evidence of a curse upon their people that must be broken.⁴⁶

Through this brief summary, one can see the way how certain larger religious, social, and political forces and shifting ideas impacted the Roma. Although certainly Roma groups were not passive recipients of historical events, rather active agents in the history, stereotypes still developed—for example as “pre-civilized,” as problems to be solved or developed, as incapable of genuine religious belief, or as having a tendency toward criminality and deviousness.⁴⁷ Given these snapshots of the shifting dynamics between religious authorities and Roma communities in

⁴² Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 198.

⁴³ Rodney “Gipsy” Smith, *Gipsy Smith. His Life and Work* (Jawbone Digital, 2017).

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵ Atanasov, “Gypsy Pentecostals,” 101; Hancock, *We are the Romani*.

⁴⁶ Wachsmuth, “Understanding Identity,” 36.

⁴⁷ Taylor, *Another Darkness*, 113–14.

various contexts, the evolving story of Pentecostalism among the Roma added other dimensions to the societal relationships.

Pentecostalism - A force for integration?

Numerous sources have related the growth of Pentecostalism in Romani communities in France in the 1950s, Spain in the 1960s, England in the 1970s, and in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989.⁴⁸ In fact, Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon. Beginning in various locations in the early twentieth century, it is now the fastest growing branch of Christianity. By 2020, estimates put the global number at over 635 million, which is a quarter of all Christians in the world.⁴⁹ Pentecostalism is an expression of Christianity that prioritizes the activity and experience of the Holy Spirit, which can result in dynamic expressions of power and spiritual gifts and a fervour for mission and evangelism.⁵⁰

Pentecostalism can be considered a religious phenomenon that is both local and global, as it shares certain elements of a Pentecostal global culture accessed through the internet, conferences, books, and articles. However, the flexible ecclesiology of Pentecostalism and its emphasis on the Holy Spirit's guidance and giftings has allowed a certain autonomy

⁴⁸ David Thurfjell and Adrian Marsh, eds., *Romani Pentecostalism. Gypsies and Charismatic Christianity* (New York: Peter Lang, 2014); Manuela Cantón-Delgado, "Gypsy Pentecostalism, Ethnopolitical Uses and Construction of Belonging in the South of Spain," *Social Compass* 57, no. 2 (June, 2010): 253–67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768610362418>; Sue Locke, *Travelling Light The Remarkable Story of Gypsy Revival* (England: Hodder & Stoughton, 1997); Velislav Altanov and Milena Benovska-Sabkova, "The Protestant Conversion Among Roma in Bulgaria. Between Global and Local," *Българска Етнология*, no. 1–2 (2010): 32–50; László Fosztó, "Conversion Narratives, Sincere Hearts, and Other Tangible Signs. Communicating Religious Change among the Transylvanian Roma," *Transitions: Nouvelles Identités Rom En Europe Centrale & Orientale* 48, no. 2, eds. Andrea Boscoboinik and François Ruegg (March 2009): 109–32; Melody Wachsmuth, "Roma Christianity in Central and Eastern Europe. Challenges, Opportunities for Mission, Modes of Significance," in *Mission in Central and Eastern Europe: Realities, Perspectives, Trends*, eds. Corneliu Constantineanu, Marcel V. Măcelaru, Anne-Marie Kool and Mihai Himcinschi (Oxford: Regnum, 2017), 544–68.

⁴⁹ Allan Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth. Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity* (Oxford: University Press, 2013); Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds., *Encyclopedia of World Christianity*, 3rd Edition (Edinburgh: University Press, 2020).

⁵⁰ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, ed., *The Spirit in the World. Emerging Pentecostal Theologies in Global Contexts* (Grand Rapids, Mich.-Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2009); Wonsuk Ma, "«When the Poor Are Fired Up»: The Role of Pneumatology in Pentecostal/Charismatic Mission," in Kärkkäinen, *The Spirit in the World*, 40–52.

and empowerment for both leadership and the local expression of the churches themselves. Further, Pentecostalism has impact both because of social-contextual factors and internal factors. Social-contextual factors would include migration, meeting local needs, displacement from urbanization or economic hardship, resonance with the spiritual world, non-hierarchical and democratic approaches in participation and leadership. Thus, if Pentecostalism is a global culture in terms of beliefs, there is not the same socio-political level of engagement in each context, but rather each local context becomes a different synthesis of how “ethnicity, gender, class and other historically constructed social forms shape Pentecostal experiences and their institutionalization at specific moments in time and space.”⁵¹ Even as a significant percentage of Pentecostalism emerged from poor contexts, unequal power relations play a role in the local manifestations.⁵²

Consequently, Roma Pentecostalism has been free to shape itself based on its own culture, selected influence of the surrounding majority culture, and the global culture of Pentecostalism.⁵³ The result has been “Roma Pentecostalism,” maintaining the tensions between global influence and local expressions. Thus, it cannot be assumed that Pentecostalism’s impact and influence on Roma communities is one and the same in every context, nor how that changes, if at all, their relationships with the majority society.⁵⁴

That being said, in various studies across divergent contexts, Pentecostalism in Roma communities has been shown to be linked to social change ranging from a rise of education levels and literacy, a decrease in crime and domestic violence, and better relationships with the majority culture.⁵⁵ For example, Atanasov’s 2008 PhD thesis concluded

⁵¹ Ronald N. Bueno, “Listening to the Margins. Re-Historizing Pentecostal Experiences and Identities,” in *The Globalization of Pentecostalism. A Religion Made to Travel*, eds. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus and Douglas Petersen (Carlisle: Regnum Books International, 1999), 270.

⁵² Vinay Samuel, “Pentecostalism as a Global Culture. A Response,” in Bueno, *The Globalization of Pentecostalism*, 253.

⁵³ See, for example: Wachsmuth, “Between Global and Local. Roma Pentecostal Church Identity in Serbia,” *Romani Studies* 31, no. 2 (January 2021): 189–209.

⁵⁴ Thurfjell and Marsh, *Romani Pentecostalism*, 11; Melody Wachsmuth, “The Good Life: Descriptors of Change in Roma Pentecostal Communities in Serbia and Croatia,” *Spiritus. ORU Journal of Theology* 2, no. 2 (August 2017): 99–118.

⁵⁵ Gellért Gyetvai and Zoltán Rajki, “Cigánymissziós Mozgalmak Hatása Magyarországon (The Effects of Roma Missionary Movements in Hungary)”, (Békés:

that Pentecostalism among the Roma resulted in the transformation of individuals, families, and communities in various degrees.⁵⁶ As another example, in Southeastern Serbia, where the two Pentecostal churches in Leskovac are active in mission activity locally and throughout Serbia, Todorović concluded that “Protestantization” of the Roma has led to less social exclusion, a recalibrating of cultural identity, and rethinking and adaptation of *Rromanipe*.⁵⁷

However, as noted by Cantón-Delgado et al., one must be careful to not relegate questions of the influence of Pentecostalism only within the framework of neoliberal values as this might just be another tool to meet the goals of state integration.⁵⁸ As noted in the wider literature of the anthropology of Pentecostalism, shifts in culture caused by Pentecostalism can align with modernity, but cannot be conflated with it.⁵⁹ In fact, the opposite question is rarely being asked: If Pentecostalism or other forms of Christianity grow among the majority cultures, does this impact their relationship to the Roma in a way that aligns with Christian theology? In reality, exclusionary practices from various church traditions and wider Protestant and Evangelical movements continue to be the norm, although in the last few years, large Christian evangelical networks in Europe, such as Lausanne Europe and European Evangelical Alliance have made greater efforts to include Roma Christians into their European-wide conferences.⁶⁰

Cigány Módszertani és Kutató Központ, 2014); Tatiana Zachar Podolinská and Tomáš Hrustič, “Religious Change and its Effects on Social Change for Roma in Slovakia,” *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 59, no. 1 (June 2014): 235–56, <https://doi.org/10.1556/AEthn.59.2014.1.12>, Wachsmuth, “Roma Christianity”; Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, “The Relations of Ethnic and Confessional Consciousness of Gypsies in Bulgaria,” *Facta Universitatis. Series Philosophy, Sociology, Psychology and History*, no. 06 special (1999): 81–9.

⁵⁶ Atanasov, “Gypsy Pentecostals,” 273.

⁵⁷ Dragan Todorović, “Protestantization of the Roma from Southeastern Serbia,” *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 38, no. 1 (March 2018): 92.

⁵⁸ Manuela Cantón-Delgado, Marcos Toyansk, and Jiménez-Royo, “Suspicion and Prejudice. The Role of Ideology in the Study of Christian Revival among the Roma,” *Social Compass* 66, no.4 (October 2019), 455–470.

⁵⁹ Matthew Engelke, “Past Pentecostalism. Notes on Rupture, Realignment, and Everyday Life in Pentecostal and African Independent Churches,” *Africa* 80, no. 2 (May 2010): 177–99, <https://doi.org/10.3366/afr.2010.0201>.

⁶⁰ For example, Roma Networks, a Christian mission network involving numerous Roma Christians in Eastern Europe, was invited to be part of the “Hope for Europe” conference in Tallinn, Estonia in 2018. This conference was sponsored by the European

This connects to Štěpán Ripka's 2014 study on Roma Pentecostalism in the Czech Republic and Slovakia as he interrogates the concepts of the so-called "empowerment" and "social inclusion," arguing that the conversion to Pentecostalism does nothing for the structural oppression, only for the internal community governance and autonomy. He notes that this empowerment is viewed by majority churches and non-Roma institutions as positive if it causes the Roma to "change their values" and "participate in society," but not explicitly to fight the prejudice, discrimination, and oppression.⁶¹

Some Roma pastors, even while condemning prejudice, believe that change is only possible if the majority culture first sees the change in Roma individuals and communities. However, because the negative images are rooted so deep in society, the images thus act as a lubricant to maintain structural racism. Therefore, there is a kind of "glass ceiling" of Roma integration unless enough individuals in the majority society experience a transformation of attitudes regarding the Roma.⁶² Consequently, a "one-way integration" is inadequate for facilitating, maintaining, and even deepening meaningful societal change. This observation is particularly poignant in relation to the church at large – as mentioned earlier in this paper, rather than asking the question whether Pentecostalism facilitates more integration into the general society, one should ask why Christian conversion in general society does not facilitate more movement to integrate with the Roma. In fact, various research conducted

Evangelical Alliance and involved 370 participants from 37 countries. Roma Christians led music, shared a morning devotional, and network groups. Joel Forster, "«Unity in Diversity». Hope for Europe Week Starts in Tallinn," *Evangelical Focus* (October 2018), <https://evangelicalfocus.com/print/3893/tallin-hope-for-europe-european-evangelical-alliance>, accessed September 6, 2022. Roma Christians were also involved in Lausanne Europe 2021, which took place in an online forum and involved around 1200 participants from around Europe. A workshop was offered regarding working with Roma Christians and one of the final speakers was a Roma woman. Jim Memory, "«Hearing the Muted Voices» at Lausanne Europe 20/21," *Evangelical Focus* (March 2022), <https://evangelicalfocus.com/vista-journal/15909/hearing-the-muted-voices-at-lausanne-europe-20-21>, accessed September 6, 2022.

⁶¹ Štěpán Ripka, "Pentecostalism Among Czech and Slovak Roma. The Religiosity of Roma and the Practices of Inclusion of the Roma in the Brotherhood in Salvation. Autonomy and Conversions among Roma in Márov" (PhD, Prague, Czech Republic, Charles University in Prague, 2014), 80–1.

⁶² Melody Wachsmuth, "Separated Peoples. The Roma as Prophetic Pilgrims in Eastern Europe," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 37, no. 3 (July 2013): 145–50; idem, "The Good Life"; idem, "Roma Christianity," 562–63.

through interviews by this author has found that one of the contributing factors to conversion among the Roma was unexpected love and acceptance exhibited to an individual.⁶³ With this being noted, I propose that true integration would be a mutual integration, where groups move toward each other in some aspect, however small the movement is.

It is in this nexus – Pentecostal conversion, personal transformation, and structural disempowerment – that I introduce the next part of the paper. How does a crisis that stretches over the whole society impact these dynamics? Does it cause a one-way integration, mutual integration, or further rejection and marginalization? This article is not presented as a piece of conclusive qualitative evidence, but rather seeks to bring these questions into the field of research and raise further questions for later research.

Crises, Christianity, and the Roma

Past Wars and the Roma experience

In any context, crisis often spurs the very best and the very worst of human tendencies, and sometimes just reveals what has been existing under the surface. When considering past wars and the experience of Roma groups, for example, one can see that at worst they were targeted or scapegoated, and at best their experience ignored or forgotten, although current historians are rectifying that epistemological injustice.⁶⁴ During the Second World War, the Roma, alongside the Jews, were singled out for extermination, but this atrocity was hardly acknowledged until the 1960s.⁶⁵ Part of the reason for their persecution was Robert Ritter's racial mapping research which was based on the idea that criminality was hereditary and should be prevented by halting the reproduction of groups in that bracket.⁶⁶ According to Nazi policies, Croatia, Austria, Hungary and Romania deported and exterminated parts of Roma populations,

⁶³ See, for example, Wachsmuth, "Roma Christianity," 563, idem, "Understanding Identity."

⁶⁴ See, for example: Danijel Vojak, Bibijana Papo and Alen Tahiri, *Stradanje Roma U Nezavisnoj Državi hrvatskoj 1941–1945 [The Suffering of the Roma in the Independent State of Croatia]*, vol. 24, Biblioteka Studije (Zagreb, Croatia: Institut društvenih Znanosti Ivo Pilarč Romsko Nacionalno Vijeće, 2015).

⁶⁵ Eve Rosenhaft, "New Reasons to Remember the «Forgotten Holocaust» of the Roma. Anti-Gypsy Rhetoric is once again becoming Politically Respectable in Parts of Europe," *The Scotsman; Edinburgh* (April 2018), sec. News.

⁶⁶ Matras, *The Romani*, 214.

indicative of the derision in which the communities were held.⁶⁷ Like many after the war, the Roma needed to completely rebuild their lives again. Although initially some Roma had filed for and received compensation in Germany, their status as victims was not recognized like the Jews'; instead, they continued to be associated with criminality; being "asocial," they were consequently subtly blamed for their victimhood in the war and therefore had trouble reclaiming their citizenship rights.⁶⁸

In more recent years, the wars in former Yugoslavia wreaked devastation across countries and peoples – and yet the Roma again made up their own special category of suffering, often caught between warring ethnicities (Serbs and Croats, Kosovar Albanians and Serbs). Their experience largely remained as a lacuna on official reports, histories, and oral testimonies and thus the negative public opinion of them was exacerbated, due to the small amount of media reports that were primarily negative. To make matters worse, as a large number did not have certain documentation in newly formed countries, they struggled to gain rights and citizenship.⁶⁹

War in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine which began in February 2022 was another crisis that spread destruction, affecting millions of peoples; however, it created more complicated scenarios for many Roma fleeing Ukraine, whose Roma population is an estimated 400,000.⁷⁰ In the first few months of the war, millions fled Ukraine to escape the fighting or potential fighting. Numerous reports from various sources cited the problems that Roma refugees faced on various borders (alongside people of African or Asian

⁶⁷ Van Baar, "The European Roma," 3.

⁶⁸ Further, the sterilization procedures in the concentration camps made it impossible for some to start new families. Matras, *The Romani*, 225–26.

⁶⁹ Melody Wachsmuth, "Counter-Storytelling in Croatia. Roma Oral History During Croatia's Homeland War," in *Boyash Studies. Researching "Our People,"* eds. Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković, Thede Kahl and Biljana Sikimić (Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2021). Although see: Borna Marinića. *I Mi Smo Branili Hrvatsku: Romi u Domovinskom Ratu* [We Also Defended Croatia: Roma in the Homeland War] (Zagreb: Kali Sara, 2019).

⁷⁰ The 2001 census notes around 50,000 but due to issues such as statelessness and reluctance to declare ethnicity, NGOs and intergovernmental bodies estimate 120,000–400,000. "Roma Belong – Statelessness, Discrimination and Marginalisation of Roma in Ukraine" (Brussels: European Roma Rights Centre, 2018), http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/4616_file1_roma-belong-ukraine-english-language.pdf, accessed August 5, 2022.

descent). They faced challenges due to lack of proper documentation, due to poverty or other barriers, prejudice and hate speech.⁷¹ In addition, there were reports of discrimination or issues in host countries, of Roma refugees receiving different or substandard treatment compared to ethnic Ukrainians. There have been documented cases of discriminatory treatment of Roma refugees in Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Moldova.⁷²

On July 11, 2022 a statement drafted by 16 Roma civil society representatives and activists expressed the ongoing challenges concerning Roma refugees from Ukraine. The statement details unequal treatment involving “access to housing, employment, transportation, and exclusion from resources and services available to refugees.”⁷³ The statement published that Roma refugees were more likely to be labelled “economic refugees” or “social tourists” which contributed to discriminatory attitudes. According to the statement, many Roma refugees remain unable to cross the border because of lack of documentation, and some mothers and their children in asylum countries have received little access to education or are in substandard refugee facilities. The statement also notes that the primary instruments of interventions for the Roma refugees are activists, and Roma civil service organizations and thus calls on OSCE states (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) to investigate, monitor, and protect the rights of Roma refugees as well as offering numerous recommendations regarding how to address the complex and changing situation.

This report makes no mention of the church’s activities in relation to Roma refugees, but in reality, many churches (both Roma and non-Roma) actively help Roma refugees. Churches in Moldova, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine as well as wider Christian

⁷¹ Gabriela Hrabanova, “Call for EU Action for Roma from Ukraine,” European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network, (March 2022), <https://ergonetwerk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Joint-letter-End-the-war-in-Ukraine-EC-final.pdf>, accessed August 5, 2022; Betsy Joles, “Roma Refugees Who Fled from Ukraine to Moldova Are Now in Limbo,” NPR (May 2022), <https://www.npr.org/2022/05/21/1098489307/roma-refugees-moldova-ukraine-war>, accessed August 5, 2022.

⁷² Stéphane Laederich, “Roma in the Ukraine. From the origins to present days, the war and the refugees,” (Zurich: Rroma Foundation, 2022), <https://trroma.org/reports/reports-nav/Roma-in-the-Ukraine.pdf>, accessed August 6, 2022.

⁷³ International Roma Contact Group (IRCG), “IRCG Joint Message on Roma Refugees from Ukraine” (Brussels: ERGO, July 2022), <https://ergonetwerk.org/2022/07/ircg-joint-message-on-roma-refugees-from-ukraine/>, accessed August 5, 2022.

networks such as Gypsies and Travellers International Evangelical Fellowship (GATIEF) and Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) have worked to help Roma as refugees and also those who remain in Ukraine because they are unable to leave. They provided for such things such as basic needs, help to solve the lack of documentation, and money to travel to where they have relatives in Europe.⁷⁴ They have also tried to warn and protect against the danger of human trafficking. The various news articles of Roma Christians actively serving refugees act as “positive press” to dispel stereotypes.

Hungarian Gypsy Mission International, for example, accommodated 150 in their centre, trying to provide holistic care involving mental, emotional, spiritual, and material support, but also thinking about their future. The founder and President, Albert Durkó, envisions that their care of refugees would be both a refuge but also a continuation of his vision to bridge the gaps between non-Roma and Roma: “Being with other Roma is reassuring for people who have suffered bad experiences from wider society where they come from. With us, they are also surrounded by the love of a Christian community.” However, they also teach skills which will allow them to eventually move in the wider culture as well as employ Roma and non-Roma staff to do educational and social work in order to create more trust between the two groups.⁷⁵

Roma churches and Christians work together across networks and denominational lines to provide long-term and short-term solutions for the refugees, even buying buildings to convert to apartments and supply storage in Slovakia. One Roma couple from Romania, church leaders of five churches, ventured into Moldova in order to help and are trying

⁷⁴ Wachsmuth, “Ukraine’s Refugee Crisis ‘Woke Up’ Networks of Roma Evangelicals,” *Christianity Today*, (April 2022), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2022/april/roma-church-refugees-ukraine-eastern-europe-welcome-discrim.html>, accessed August 5, 2022; “The Power of One | Roma Feeding Refugees, Ukraine,” Orphan’s Promise, (May 2022), <https://www.orphanpromise.org/the-power-of-one/>, accessed August 5, 2022; Jana Vargová, “V Pavlovciach pomáhajú utečencom, ktorých nikto nechce,” *Pravda.sk*, (March 2022), <https://spravy.pravda.sk/regiony/clanok/618919-v-pavlovciach-pomahaju-utecencom-ktorych-nikto-nechce/>, accessed August 9, 2022.

⁷⁵ Alexander Faludy, “Roma Refugees from Ukraine Begin New Life,” *Church Times* (July 2022), <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2022/29-july/news/world/roma-refugees-from-ukraine-begin-new-life>, accessed August 5, 2022; Laszlo Adamik, “With Bread in One of Our Hands and a Bible in the Other,” Hungarian Gypsy Missions International (July 2022), <http://www.gypsymissions.org/2022/07/with-bread-in-one-of-our-hands-and-a-bible-in-the-other/>, accessed August 5, 2022.

to foster a new Christian network that will strengthen the effort. Many times, these efforts come from Roma churches or leaders who have few resources themselves.⁷⁶ However, there are those who still practice exclusion—one church in Moldova, for example, who was helping refugees, initially posted a sign forbidding Roma refugees.⁷⁷

As the war is ongoing, the question, of course, is what will happen to the refugees long-term, especially those who do not have papers. If history is any predictor, many Roma were subject to years of statelessness after the wars in former Yugoslavia.⁷⁸ However, war is not the only recent crisis. The initial and long-term impacts of COVID-19 also had a significant impact on many Roma communities.

COVID-19 and the Roma

Historically, pandemics and infectious diseases such as syphilis, cholera, smallpox, and the 1918 influenza put enormous stress on governments, economic systems, and society in general, triggering intense fear and anxiety. In turn, this contributed to scapegoating of ethnic minorities, given their “outsider” status and rising xenophobia in the contexts of exclusive nationalism.⁷⁹ Elias et al. point to several historical examples such as the way in which during the 1918 flu, African Americans were scapegoated and resulted in great racial violence.

Given these general historical precedents, which impact did the COVID-19 pandemic have on Roma communities? Although the effects of COVID-19 and resulting governmental measures affected everyone, there is a disproportionate effect on disadvantaged communities. In fact, the results of COVID-19 only deepened the exclusion, poverty, and discrimination that many Roma communities face in certain areas. For example, poor access to healthcare, a widening education gap during online school because of lack of adequate technology, lack of access to

⁷⁶ Wachsmuth, “Ukraine’s Refugee Crisis.”

⁷⁷ Zoom interview with Graeme Innes, April 11, 2022.

⁷⁸ Julija Sardelić, “Romani Minorities and Uneven Citizenship Access in the Post-Yugoslav Space,” *Ethnopolitics* 14, no. 2 (March 2015): 159–79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2014.991154>; Gëzim Krasniqi and Dejan Stjepanović, “Uneven Citizenship: Minorities and Migrants in the Post-Yugoslav Space,” *Ethnopolitics* 14, no. 2 (March 2015): 113–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2014.991153>.

⁷⁹ Amanuel Elias et al., “Racism and Nationalism during and beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 44, no. 5 (April 2021): 783–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2020.1851382>.

clean water and sanitation, loss of employment and inability to access welfare if individuals had informal jobs or housing, and general increase in poverty.⁸⁰

In fact, some scholars argue that COVID-19 contributed to more populism and ethno-nationalism, leading to more racism.⁸¹ Not only that, there was a rise in anti-Gypsyism as well as a scapegoating that emerged in some contexts, illustrated by walls or roadblocks erected to keep the Roma in their communities, as well as inflammatory statements issued by political leaders or the media. The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) issued a detailed report in September of 2020 describing human rights abuses such as police violence toward the Roma in Romania, Roma being called “carriers of disease” in Moldova, and public hostility in Italy. The 2020 FRA report detailed the example of Bulgaria, where six Roma communities with populations of tens of thousands were locked down in March, although no cases of COVID had been discovered. Another article offered examples of disproportionate numbers of young Roma dead in Romania, a national newspaper claiming Roma are immune to the virus, and anti-Roma propaganda. In fact, in April 2020, the EU Commissioner for Equality asked EU Member States to implement special measures as it was recognized that COVID-19 exacerbated structural inequality.⁸²

The situation deteriorated more quickly in cases where the Roma community was segregated from the majority populations. In Spain, for example, 9,000 Roma families live in so-called “slums” that have minimum

⁸⁰ “Overview of the Impact of Coronavirus Measures on the Marginalized Roma Communities in the EU” (European Commission, 2020), https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/overview_of_covid19_and_roma_-_impact_-_measures_-_priorities_for_funding_-_23_04_2020.docx.pdf, accessed July 20, 2021; “Coronavirus Pandemic in the EU – Impact on Roma and Travellers” (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, August 2020), https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-coronavirus-pandemic-eu-bulletin-roma_en.pdf, accessed July 20, 2021. This FRA 2020 report was built on evidence from Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and Sweden. “Persistent Roma Inequality Increases COVID-19 Risk, Human Rights Heads Say” (Warsaw/Vienna: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, April 2020), <https://www.osce.org/odihr/449668?fbclid=I-wAR1lSy5oHshRKVhvrR8VDF2wz9npwp1ZTTM0v1-3cZAqE6D09jQEpoCCc5IA>, accessed July 21, 2021.

⁸¹ Elias et al., “Racism and Nationalism.”

⁸² Margareta Matache and Jacqueline Bhabha, “Anti-Roma Racism is Spiraling during COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Health Human Rights* 22, no. 1 (June 2020): 379–82.

standards of liveability. The United Nations Special Rapporteur described the pandemic's effects on such a situation:

Spanish Roma, like Roma elsewhere in Europe, have suffered the pandemic from an exceptionally disadvantaged position (...). More than 80% of the Roma population faces poverty or social exclusion, and 46% are extremely poor, with a monthly income of less than 310 euros. Child poverty rate is 89% and unemployment is 52%.⁸³

Reports issued from countries not in the EU have similar findings. One European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) 2020 study looked at the disproportionate economic effects of the COVID pandemic on marginalized communities in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Ukraine and found that 73% experienced reduced income. Economic relief is often tied to formal employment, thus those working in the informal job sector were left with little recourse.⁸⁴

Where the government failed, NGOs and Christian groups tried to intervene. In Spain, for example, the Evangelical Church collected and mobilized resources to try to meet basic needs.⁸⁵ When the lockdown measures began in early 2020, a Christian grassroots movement, Roma Networks—whose vision is to network, connect, and research for the sake of sharing the gospel and seeing transformation in Roma communities throughout Europe—began meeting virtually.⁸⁶ Roma Networks is run by a volunteer Board of six people in Finland, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Serbia, and includes around 40 country representatives. The first meetings were merely informational and allowed leaders to share what was happening to and in their communities, particularly since local media often cannot be relied on to report the situation in Roma communities according to their perspectives, although there are notable

⁸³ Almudena Macías León, "View of Impact of the Pandemic on the Eastern European Roma Population in Spain," *Migration Letters* 19, no. 4 (July 2022): 509–22.

⁸⁴ Craig Willis, "Economic Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Roma Communities in Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Ukraine," Research Paper (European Centre for Minority Issues, 2020), <https://www.ecmi.de/publications/ecmi-research-papers/122-economic-effects-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-roma-communities-in-albania-bosnia-herzegovina-moldova-montenegro-north-macedonia-serbia-and-ukraine>, accessed July 20, 2021.

⁸⁵ León, "View of Impact," 516.

⁸⁶ Wachsmuth, "Christian Justice in a Global Pandemic. The Church's Call to Merciful Advocacy for Roma Communities and Asylum Seekers in Southeastern Europe," *Empowered21 Scholars' Consultations* (Dubai, 2021), <https://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/e21scholars/2021/>, accessed September 13, 2022.

exceptions to that.⁸⁷ People shared the stress and many challenges in their communities as a result of the virus and the restrictions, including fear of food shortage, loss of jobs, scapegoating, little access to education. Later, Roma Networks began to do live prayer sessions, highlighting different contexts and inviting people to share their needs. Vlogs and articles were written to highlight injustices and the situation in various Roma communities.

Like churches worldwide, Roma pastors struggled with properly functioning in the midst of the lockdowns—some were tech savvy and creatively thrived in terms of putting their music and services online.⁸⁸ This resulted in reconnecting with some disengaged members who had left the country for Western Europe for work in Serbia, the development of leadership training in Bulgaria, and an activation of church members to serve the needy in Hungary. Others struggled in the online space or couldn't reach members without good internet access.

Implications and Concluding Thoughts

The above two crises were purposely presented after discussing various historical events—events which impact socio-political realities, increase social anxieties, and thus influence how the Roma are “imagined.” In some ways, the two recent crises—COVID 19 and the war in Ukraine—act as a temperature gauge assessing how well EU programs, transnational initiatives, and NGO work have shifted societal attitudes toward the Roma. As the above summaries indicate, the crises reveal the deep suspicion and antipathy that many in the majority societies still hold toward the Roma. Thus, although in certain contexts in Eastern Europe, small progress has been made in regard to the goals of integration—involving housing, health, job market, and education—this conceptualization of integration is inadequate to transform these hostilities. Should, therefore, integration entail transformation of relationship, and if so, how? In fact, these crises suggest that neoliberal and human rights frameworks are useful but incomplete epistemologies by which to understand the complex situation.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ See, for example, a BBC video report on the Roma situation in Sliven, Bulgaria, home to one of the Roma Networks country representatives: BBC News, “Europe’s Roma Community’s Life under COVID,” Sliven, Bulgaria, February 5, 2021, <https://youtu.be/IBY-BQIFWSE>, accessed September 12, 2022.

⁸⁸ Wachsmuth, “Between Global and Local.”

⁸⁹ Idem, “Understanding Identity.”

Thus, Roma Pentecostals and evangelicals bring a unique epistemology to the question of integration, and this can be seen through their attitudes and actions in the aforementioned crises. On the one hand, Roma Christians who sprang to action during these two crises were motivated by their Christian faith. The global theology of Pentecostalism and evangelicalism prioritizes evangelism and usually has a missional impulse embedded in its spirituality and its posture to the world outside the church. This impulse is based in its eschatology of moving toward the “last days,” and for Pentecostals, driven by the belief in the power of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁰ Often this missional impulse is holistic—to care for those in need is to display the self-giving love of God as modelled by Christ. For example, in the 2015 refugee crisis in Europe, Roma Christians were noted for serving in the crisis.⁹¹

However, there is also another motivation, one shaped by socio-cultural needs, demonstrated by the aforementioned Roma pastor from Romania. He explained that part of his motivation for his trips to help a Roma church in Moldova and to care for the Roma refugees from Ukraine was that he doubted anyone would take Roma families into their homes.⁹² This illustrates a general lack of faith in governmental policies to include the Roma as well as mistrust of society’s compassion toward Roma refugees. Thus, his involvement in the crisis was a pre-emptive response to the structural inequalities he knew would surface as a result of the crisis. However, in some way, it is also a form of witnessing and resisting to both societies’ dominant image of the Roma and the wider church’s exclusionary attitudes. This is the advantage of Pentecostalism’s adaptive ecclesiology and egalitarianism based on the Holy Spirit, not bound by structured hierarchy. Another leader demonstrated this dual rationale in his story of helping Ukrainian refugees—it was a way to demonstrate the love of Jesus, and at the same time he made sure his Ukrainian colleagues

⁹⁰ Kärkkäinen, “Pentecostal Mission and Encounter with Religions,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, eds. C. M. Robeck and A. Yong (Cambridge: University Press, 2014), 294–312.

⁹¹ Jillian Melchior, “Muslim Migrants, Meet Christian Gypsies,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 22, 2015, sec. Opinion, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/muslim-migrants-meet-christian-gypsies-1445556478>, accessed September 12, 2022; Melody Wachsmuth, “Refugees on the Roma Road,” *ChristianityToday.com* (December 31, 2015), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/january-february/refugees-on-roma-road-syria-iraq-balkans.html>, accessed September 12, 2022.

⁹² Interview with Ionel Cocos, Zoom, April 14, 2022.

know that he was Roma and proud of this identity: “No matter what we hear, bad feedback from your people or my people, we are here and we will help you.”⁹³

This concept can be seen in other contexts in Pentecostal history, for example in China and Africa, when independent churches arose at least partially as a response to colonial mindsets of the “Other.”⁹⁴ In fact, many (although not exclusively) Pentecostal outpourings of the Holy Spirit began among poor and disenfranchised peoples, and the outpouring of the Spirit on all ethnicities, women and men, rich and poor, created an equality leading to reconciliation.⁹⁵ This “equality” is a form of prophetic resistance in social contexts that are exclusionary in both their structures and attitudes.

Pentecostal expression as “resistance” has a number of historical precedents. For example, Francisco Olazábal’s (1886–1937) Pentecostal healing and evangelistic ministry often crossed racial, denominational, and linguistic lines. He resigned from the large Assemblies of God Pentecostal denomination in 1922 after Euro American leaders attempted to wrest control of a Latino convention in Texas. He then became president of the first autonomous Latino Protestant denomination in the United States in 1923. When he suddenly died, he was responsible for 150 churches and 50,000 followers in North America and Latin Caribbean.⁹⁶

Interestingly, this “protest” and “resistance” to the Church’s exclusion is not just something Roma Christians began with the advent of Pentecostalism. A letter written by an anonymous “Egyptian” from Prilep, Macedonia in the nineteenth century challenges Greek Orthodoxy’s superiority attitude and suspicion toward the Gypsies, citing that Christians are “clothed with Christ” and are therefore a “new creation” (Galatians 3:27; 2 Corinthians 5:17) and should therefore have the religious rights that everyone else has.⁹⁷

⁹³ Wachsmuth, “Ukraine’s Refugee Crisis.”

⁹⁴ Anderson, *To the Ends*, 38–9.

⁹⁵ Walter J. Hollenweger, “After Twenty Years’ Research on Pentecostalism,” *International Review of Mission* 75, no. 297 (January 1986): 3–12, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6631.1986.tb01446.x>.

⁹⁶ Gastón Espinosa, “Latino Pentecostal Healing in the North American Borderlands,” in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, ed. Candy Gunther Brown (Oxford: University Press, 2011), 129–49.

⁹⁷ Ginio, “Neither Muslims,” 77.

In conclusion, governmental policies addressing integration and frameworks of human rights are important and needed in response to the present-day situation in Europe in reference to Roma groups. However, these two crises revealed the gaps existing between policies, implementation, and social change. A Christian theological framework may expand on the concept of integration to envision human flourishing through transformed relationships; however, the Church all too often imitated societal attitudes toward the Roma rather than reflecting its own theology. With the rise of Pentecostalism in Roma communities, leaders have been able to side-step some of these exclusionary barriers and the growing number of Roma Christians may well contribute to social transformation. Their service in times of crises is fuelled by their theology and shaped by the socio-cultural realities. As stated earlier, perhaps it is the wrong question to ask as to whether Christianity leads Roma to greater integration with society; rather, is society and the Church open to change as Roma Christians demonstrate a lived Christian theology in times of crisis?

Le Travail de Memoire. Im Dienste einer traumatischen Geschichte. Der Fall der Roma-Sklaverei

MIREL BĂNICĂ*

Vorbereitende Maßnahmen

Im Sommer 2019 habe ich den Band *Bafta, Devla und Haramul. Studien zur Kultur und Religion der Roma*¹ veröffentlicht. Während der Vorbereitung dazu habe ich mehrere öffentliche Vorträge gehalten, in akademischen und universitären Einrichtungen, aber auch einige für die breite Öffentlichkeit. Nach den Vorträgen gab es immer eine Fragen- und Antwortrunde. Fast ausnahmslos ging es dabei um die Zeit der Sklaverei und die Situation der Roma als Sklaven, ihr tägliches Leben und die aktuelle Haltung der Rumänisch-Orthodoxen Kirche (im Folgenden BOR) zu diesem Thema. Abgesehen von dem aufrichtigen und berechtigten Wunsch, etwas über dieses „heikle“ und sensible Thema unserer kirchlichen und nationalen Geschichte zu erfahren, waren all diese Reaktionen, Fragen und Unsicherheiten des Publikums nichts anderes als eine Widerspiegelung des Prozesses der *Erinnerungsarbeit* (*travail de memoire*). In der Zeit, die seit diesen öffentlichen Veranstaltungen vergangen ist, fast ein Jahrzehnt, kann ich mit Sicherheit sagen, dass der Prozess des *travail de memoire* gewachsen ist und weiter zunimmt. Im Folgenden werde ich mich der Zeit der Sklaverei aus sozialgeschichtlicher Sicht nähern und dann versuchen, den Prozess selbst detailliert zu analysieren: Geschichte, Akteure, Rezeption in der Gesellschaft.

Einige historische Daten und Terminologie

Die historischen Fragen im Zusammenhang mit der Leibeigenschaft der Roma und der Chronologie ihrer Befreiung sind zu gut bekannt, als dass man darauf näher eingehen müsste. Ich möchte mich auf eine

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¹ Mirel Bănică, *Bafta, Devla si Haramul. Studii despre cultura si religia romilor* (Iași: Editura Polirom, 2019). Der Band wurde inzwischen auch in deutscher Übersetzung publiziert: *Glück, Gott und Gaben. Kultur und Religion der Roma* (Berlin: Frank & Timme 2021).

Feststellung beschränken: Die Befreiung war ein komplizierter Prozess, der im Laufe der Zeit, nach Zögern, Rückschlägen und einer ganzen Reihe von Gesetzen erreicht wurde, ein schrittweiser Prozess,² was einige der regionalen Unterschiede erklären mag, die bis heute in Bezug auf die Rezeption der historischen Erinnerung an die Sklaverei/Leibeigenschaft bestehen, aber auch einige soziale und wirtschaftliche Unterschiede.

Auch die Terminologie und das Vokabular sind Teil des komplexen Prozesses der Erinnerungsarbeit, der im Gange ist. Der Unterschied zwischen den Begriffen *Knechtschaft/Leibeigenschaft* und *Sklaverei* ist mehr als nur ein lexikalischer Streit. Der Begriff, der in der rumänischen Sprache verwendet wird, um den Zustand der Roma zu dieser Zeit zu definieren, ist *rob*, mit der folgenden Definition des DEX–Referenzwörterbuchs, 2009: *rob, roabă* 1. Im Mittelalter (in den rumänischen Fürstentümern) ein Mann in völliger Abhängigkeit vom Lehnsherrn, ohne dass dieser das Recht hatte, ihn zu töten. Ein Mann, der hart arbeitet, eine Person in Gefangenschaft. 2. Ein Mensch in sozial–politischer Beziehung der Unterwerfung, der Knechtschaft. 3. (fig.) Eine Person, die von einer Leidenschaft, einer überwältigenden Beschäftigung, einer Verpflichtung unterworfen ist. Aus dem Slavischen *robŭ*. Der Begriff *Sklave* ist ein Neologismus, der erst relativ spät in die rumänische Sprache eingegangen ist, und zwar durch die rumänischen Eliten, die im Westen studiert haben, vom französischen Wort *esclave*. Auch wenn der Begriff tief im Lateinischen verwurzelt ist (*sclavus*), hat er sich nicht als solcher ins Rumänische übertragen. In der französischen Sprache gibt es keine Entsprechung für das Wort Sklave, geschweige denn für „Zigeunersklave“. In J. A. Vaillants „Wortschatz der *Bohémien*“ von 1868 wird der Begriff **rob** mit *Sklave*, aber auch mit „geduldig, resigniert“ und dem Verb „robim“ (robim = wir warten, erdulden)³ gleichgesetzt.

Auch während der Vorbereitung des eingangs erwähnten Bandes hatte ich eine eingehende Diskussion mit einem renommierten rumänischen Historiker über die Verwendung dieser Begriffe. Er wünschte, dass sein Name anonym bleibt, was viel darüber aussagt, dass sich die Wahl zwischen „Sklave“ und „Sklavin“ aus dem Bereich der Geschichte in den Bereich der Erinnerung und der psychologisierenden Faktoren der Erinnerung an die traumatische Vergangenheit verlagert hat. Er machte

² *Țigarii în istoria României* (București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1998), 8.

³ Jean Vaillant, *Grammaire, dialogues et vocabulaire de la langue des Bohémiens ou Cigains* (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1868), 38.

mich darauf aufmerksam, dass die Roma im rumänischen Mittelalter weder ein Thema der Differenz darstellten, noch das kollektive Imaginäre der Zeit bevölkerten, sie waren kein Symbol für soziales Anderssein. Der Andere (*l'autre*) wurde durch den Türken, den Juden, den Armenier, den Russen, aber nicht durch den Zigeunersklaven repräsentiert. Die gemalten Außenfresken der Kirchen in der Bukowina sind ein Beispiel dafür.

Die meisten heutigen Roma-Forscher und -Aktivisten haben die Verwendung des Wortes „Knecht“ ganz aufgegeben, zugunsten des Begriffes „Sklave“. Wie in anderen historischen Situationen, in denen es um die Erforschung und Aufarbeitung einer traumatischen Vergangenheit geht (ich verzichte auf die Aufzählung von Beispielen, da sie leider sehr zahlreich sind), ist die emotionale Betroffenheit mit einer psychologisierenden Dimension verbunden, wobei letztere sowohl mit der Erforschung des Selbst als auch mit der Wiederentdeckung der realen Geschichte eines ganzen Volkes verbunden ist. Und eine kleine persönliche Erläuterung: Ich bin rumänischer Staatsbürger und habe viele Jahre im Westen gelebt, und ich habe die Macht von Stereotypen, Vorurteilen und Ressentiments aus erster Hand erfahren. Ich glaube also, dass ich dieses Phänomen zumindest teilweise verstehen kann.

Der italienische Anthropologe Leonardo Piasere, einer der führenden Spezialisten auf dem Gebiet der *Roma-Studien*, hat vor Kurzem einen äußerst interessanten Artikel über einige weniger bekannte Schriften von Karl Marx über die „Bohème“ veröffentlicht, die für das weitere Verständnis des Marxismus und des Klassenkampfes wichtig sind.⁴ Hier finden wir eine Tabelle, die sich mit den Unterschieden zwischen „Sklaverei“ und „Leibeigenschaft“ aufgrund der Art ihrer Rechte befasst und aus den Werken eines bekannten französischen Wirtschaftswissenschaftlers, Yan Moulier Boutang,⁵ stammt. Angesichts ihrer Bedeutung für das Verständnis sowohl der Geschichte als auch der späteren Entwicklung des Gedenkens an die Zeit der Sklaverei, habe ich mich entschlossen, sie im Folgenden wiederzugeben. Es sieht so aus:

⁴ Leonardo Piasere, „Karl Marx et les Roms dans les Principautés roumaines“, *Etudes Tsiganes*, no. 56–57 (2015): 236–60.

⁵ Yann Moulier Boutang, *De l'esclavage au salariat*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), 680.

Art der Rechte	Vollständige Sklaverei	Mildere Sklaverei
Veräußerbarkeit	vollständig	teilweise
Persönliche Rechte	nur theoretisch	indirekt
Abstammung	keine	indirekt (Nachkomme eines Sklaven)
Sexualität	männliche Kastration	Kastrationsverbot
Sexuelle Beziehungen mit einem freien Subjekt	verboten und bestraft	unter bestimmten Bedingungen geduldet,
Heirat	verboten	toleriert, religiös, aber ohne zivilen Wert
Freie Vereinigung (Paar)	verboten und bestraft	toleriert und anerkannt
Status der Kinder	an den der Mutter gebunden	an den des freien Elternteils gebunden
Eigentumsrechte	verboten	abweichend
Stück Land	nein	geduldet und genehmigt
Habitat	nein	geduldet und genehmigt
Werkzeuge	nein	geduldet und genehmigt
Geld	nein	geduldet und genehmigt (kleine Beträge)
Etwas für sich selbst tun oder anderen helfen	nein	wird unter bestimmten Bedingungen toleriert
Verkauf von Produkten	nein	geduldet und zugelassen
Besitz von Land und Sklaven	verboten	toleriert
Befreiung	möglich, aber selten	möglich und häufig
Freikauf	verboten	unter bestimmten Voraussetzungen und Bedingungen

Bei der Analyse dieser ungewöhnlichen Tabelle, die, wie ich wiederhole, von einem Wirtschaftswissenschaftler stammt, fügt Leonardo Piasere hinzu, dass im Falle der „abgeschwächten Sklaverei“ bestimmte Rechte bestehen, wie das Recht auf Leben (der Herr hatte kein Recht auf Leben und Tod, zumindest theoretisch), das Teilrecht auf Eigentum (ein kleines Haus, ein für den Lebensunterhalt notwendiger Gemüsegarten) und vor allem die Möglichkeit, mit den von ihnen als Handwerker hergestellten Produkten zu handeln.⁶ Eine klare und prägnante Darstellung der Situation der Sklaven liefert der Forscher Gelu Neagu. So gab es *Klostersklaven* (die mit Klöstern und Einsiedeleien verbunden waren), *Gutsklaven* (öffentliche und staatliche Einrichtungen) und schließlich Bojarensklaven (Privatpersonen, Landsklaven = *de ogor* genannt, mit sehr unterschiedlichen und genau definierten Berufen). Gelu Neagu listet auch die Berufe auf, die sie einst ausübten und von denen viele heute verschwunden sind, vom Kesselschmied über den Glockengießer bis hin zum Goldschmied und zum Pferdeschlachter, ein Zeichen für die Komplexität bestimmter historischer Situationen und für den Grad der „Integration“ (soziale und wirtschaftliche Notwendigkeit) der Roma in die damalige Gesellschaft.⁷

Ich möchte noch kurz auf den *Ursprung* der Sklaverei in den rumänischen Fürstentümern eingehen, auch wenn das Thema nach wie vor umstritten und unklar ist und die Meinungen derjenigen, die sich damit befassen, recht widersprüchlich sind. Interessant finde ich, dass gerade dieser wesentliche Aspekt, der Ursprung des Prozesses und dieses gesellschaftlichen Zustandes, im aktuellen Gedenkdiskurs nicht mehr thematisiert wird. Ohne ins Detail zu gehen, können zwei Haupttheorien hervorgehoben werden. Die erste ist die der Roma als Kriegsgefangene der Tataren, die mit den großen Invasionen des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts in Verbindung stehen. Nach ihrer Niederlage wären die Tataren und Zigeuner selbst zu Sklaven geworden, und der Status der Zigeuner änderte sich nicht.⁸ Diese Hypothese stützt sich auf die Tatsache, dass die Roma gefragte und geschätzte Arbeitskräfte waren, sehr gute

⁶ Piasere, „Karl Marx et les Roms“, 122.

⁷ Gelu Neagu, „Paradigme rome“, in: *Profesorul Gheorghe Sarău, o viață închinată limbii romani*, Hrg. Marcel Courthiade und Delia Grigore (București: Editura Universității din București, 2016), 348–60.

⁸ Emmanuelle Pons, *Tigani din România, o minoritate în tranziție*, (București: Compania, 1999), 12.

Kunsthändler, die sich in der Holz- und Metallverarbeitung sowie in der Haltung von großen Zugtieren (Büffeln) auszeichneten. „Der beste Weg, sie zur Sesshaftigkeit zu zwingen, war die Unterdrückung ihrer Unabhängigkeit.“⁹ Eine andere Hypothese, die jedoch nicht weit davon entfernt ist, stammt von dem Historiker Alexandru Gonța in einem der wenigen Artikel, die dem Thema gewidmet sind.¹⁰ Die Roma wurden zusammen mit anderen Nomadenvölkern, wie den Petschenegen, den Kumanen und den Tataren, als die eigentlich Anderen betrachtet. Alles, was seinen Lebensunterhalt nicht in der Landwirtschaft verdiente, jeder Wanderer, wurde als potenziell Verdächtiger, als Feind betrachtet und versklavt, um ihn für den Wohlstand und das Leben der Einheimischen unschädlich zu machen. Hier kommt die Kirche als historischer Akteur ins Spiel. Ich zitiere:

Einst wurden sie in der Schlacht gefangen genommen und von den kriegerischen Rumänen versklavt, und zwar aufgrund eines Brauchs, der von der Tradition der orthodoxen Kirche bewahrt wurde, die lehrte, *dass sich die ganze Seele der höchsten Herrschaft unterwerfen muss*. Die Kirche wurde von der herrschenden Klasse in der Moldau und der Walachei dazu gezwungen, den bereits politisch verordneten Zustand der Sklaverei der Kriegsgefangenen ideologisch gutzuheißen und abzusegnen, zumal auch sie mit vielen dieser Sklaven ausgestattet war. Die christliche Vernunft hat dieses Mal den Grundsatz der christlichen Lehre besiegt, der die Gleichheit aller Menschen vor dem Himmel propagiert. Auf diese Weise wurden die Zigeuner zusammen mit den Tataren und anderen Völkern zu Sklaven der Rumänen, und das erklärt, warum die orthodoxe Kirche Zigeuner und Tataren als Sklaven zuteilt bekam, die sie im Mittelalter in diesem Zustand beließ.¹¹

Kulturelle und räumliche Vertrautheit. Ihre Auswirkungen und mögliche Entwicklungen

Neben den historischen und rechtlichen Aspekten dieser langen Zeit der Roma-Knechtschaft gibt es eine ganze Reihe von möglichen Entwicklungen und offenen Fragen. Dazu gehört das, was man als einen Zustand *kultureller Vertrautheit* bezeichnen könnte, der durch die traditionelle Kultur und Religion vermittelt wird, aufgrund der massiven und

⁹ *Ibidem*, S.13

¹⁰ Alexandru Gonța, „Robi țigani și tătari în satul moldovenesc din Evul Mediu“, *Rromathan. Studii despre romi*, no.1 (1997): 69–87.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

intensiven Präsenz der Roma an den Adelshöfen, in den Klöstern, in den Handwerksbetrieben der Städte und Dörfer usw. So werden die Roma in den Tagebüchern und Berichten ausländischer Reisender jener Zeit häufig erwähnt – eine sehr vielfältige Welt, bestehend aus Abenteurern aller Art, Diplomaten, Gouvernanten und Sprachlehrern, Spionen usw. Es konnte nicht anders sein, die Roma konnten einfach nicht ignoriert werden, da sie in der damaligen Gesellschaft absolut überall präsent waren, von der Feldarbeit bis in die Küche.

Unter den zahlreichen verfügbaren Quellen habe ich ein Album des Schriftstellers, Malers und Kupferstechers Auguste Lancelot mit dem Titel „De Paris a Bucarest. Causerie geographiques“ ausgewählt, gerade weil es zahlreiche grafische Darstellungen von großer Qualität und dokumentarischem Wert enthält,¹² die die Veränderungen in der rumänischen Gesellschaft zum Zeitpunkt der Abschaffung der Sklaverei festhalten. Bei der Schilderung seiner Reiseeindrücke wird das außergewöhnliche Beziehungsgeflecht und die Kontakte zwischen Sklaven und ihren Herren deutlich, ebenso wie die physische und räumliche Vermischung von religiösem (Mönche) und weltlichem (Zigeunersklaven und externes Hilfspersonal) Personal, die diesen Franzosen, der eher an die strikte Trennung zwischen den beiden Welten, der weltlichen und der religiösen, in den Klöstern des Westens gewöhnt war, beeindruckte. In dem Band werden auch einige von den Roma ausgeübte Berufe schriftlich und mit Abbildungen vorgestellt: Holzschnitzerei, Tischlerei, Tierpflege, Landwirtschaft.

Die Nähe, die Intimität, wird auf Abbildungen wie der mit dem Titel „Der Hof der Bediensteten, Kloster Surpatele“ deutlich, dem bekannten Kloster, das noch heute im Kreis Vâlcea existiert. Im Hintergrund dominieren der Klosterturm und die starken Umfassungsmauern, an die mehrere kleine Häuser und Hütten angebaut sind. Haustiere laufen frei umher und es gibt auch Holzstapel, die von Handwerkern bearbeitet werden. Das Ensemble hinterlässt den Eindruck von Natürlichkeit und Flüchtigkeit, aber gleichzeitig ist *die Verflechtung* der beiden produktiven und sozialen Einheiten, der Roma und der Mönche, deutlich zu spüren. Ich möchte noch hinzufügen, dass die alte Zusammenarbeit, die auf dem angestammten *Know-how* der Roma im Bereich des Handwerks und der Natur beruht, auch heute noch besteht. Im Sommer 2019 führten wir

¹² Auguste Lancelot, „De Paris à Bucarest. Causeries géographiques“, *Le tour du monde*, Nr.17–18 (1865): 307.

eine ethnologische Feldstudie im Kloster Surpatele durch, die sich mit den im klösterlichen Umfeld produzierten Bio-Lebensmitteln befasste. Ich muss zugeben, dass ich überrascht war, direkt an der Quelle zu erfahren, dass es die Roma um das Kloster herum sind, die immer noch die Heilpflanzen, Beeren und Pilze liefern, die das Rohmaterial für die Herstellung sind. Verarbeitet und verpackt, werden sie dann unter der „Marke“ des Klosters verkauft.

Im Zusammenhang mit diesem Prozess der kulturellen Annäherung und Zusammenarbeit, aber auch mit den historischen Beziehungen zwischen der Kirche und den Roma, möchte ich eine Studie des Historikers und Soziologen Bogdan Mateescu erwähnen. Er hat die Archive (Register, Güterverzeichnisse) von zwei bedeutenden Klöstern, nämlich Cozia (1836) und Sadova (1843), eingehend studiert, die auch ihre Listen von Zigeunersklaven enthalten. Eine erste Beobachtung betrifft die Vielfalt der von den Roma ausgeübten Berufe, die als solche erwähnt werden und von denen viele heute verschwunden sind, wie z. B. der des *masalagiu* (Fackelträger für Kutschen). Entgegen den weit verbreiteten Stereotypen unterscheidet sich das demografische Verhalten und das Heiratsverhalten der Leibeigenen nicht von dem der übrigen Mehrheitsbevölkerung: das Heiratsalter der Frauen ist niedriger als das der Männer, Männer heiraten häufiger wieder als Frauen. Das Verhältnis von Männern und Frauen ist ungefähr gleich, aber es gibt auch Bitten an den Abt, Leute von anderswo zu heiraten. Die Vorstellung von der Kontrolle der Äbte (Äbte und Klosterfürsten) über die Heiratsfreiheit der Leibeigenen wird folgendermaßen beschrieben:

Die Leibeigenen heiraten mit oder ohne den Willen der Äbte oder heiraten nicht aufgrund der von den Äbten auferlegten Beschränkungen. Dieser Zwang durch die Domänen, denen sie angehörten, könnte zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt und für einen bestimmten Zeitraum die vorherrschende Haltung der Herren gegenüber der Heirat der Leibeigenen gewesen sein.¹³

Als Teilschlussfolgerung könnte man sagen, dass die Entwicklung dieser Idee von Studien, die sich der „kulturellen Vertrautheit“ widmen, in Zukunft „detaillierte Erklärungen für die auf beiden Seiten bestehenden Vorurteile und Stereotypen“ liefern könnte, wie der Soziologe und

¹³ Bogdan Mateescu, *Familia în timpul robiei. O perspectivă demografică* (Iași: Editura Universității A. I. Cuza, 2015), 63.

Roma-Aktivist Gelu Duminică in einem Artikel schreibt. Auch wenn viele Quellen und direkte Zeugenaussagen aus dieser Zeit

einen viel ausweichenderen Ton anschlugen und es vorzogen, über die unerlaubten Beziehungen zwischen den Bojaren und ihren jüngeren Mägden zu schweigen, entweder aus Scham und Selbstzensur, oder um die Strenge der offiziellen Zensur zu umgehen.¹⁴

Auf einer anderen Ebene und in einem anderen Entwicklungsstadium würde eine historische und soziale Studie *a la fois*, die eine gründliche Analyse des alltäglichen Lebens einschließt, den derzeitigen Aufarbeitungsprozess ausgleichen und mit Leben erfüllen.

Le travail de memoire

Wann immer Nachrichten über die Zeit der Versklavung der Roma in Rumänien erscheinen, lösen sie in der Öffentlichkeit Debatten mit polemischen Untertönen aus. Man kann sagen, dass es sich um eine typische Situation des *travail de memoire handelt*, die mit einer traumatischen Vergangenheit verbunden ist, auch wenn die rumänische Öffentlichkeit mit dieser Art von Debatte, die in westeuropäischen Ländern üblich ist, wenig oder gar nicht vertraut ist. Es sind einige zusätzliche Klarstellungen erforderlich. Seit dem Erscheinen grundlegender Werke, die sich mit der komplexen Beziehung zwischen Geschichte und Erinnerung befassen, wie zum Beispiel Paul Ricoeur, *La Mémoire, l'Histoire, L'Oubli* (2000) oder die berühmte Trilogie von Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1984-1993), erlebt die westliche akademische Welt eine wahre Flut von Beiträgen zu Geschichtsaufarbeitung, Formen des Umgangs mit der traumatischen Vergangenheit, der Kultivierung von Erinnerungsorten usw. Diese Debatten im akademischen Rahmen sind inzwischen Teil des allgemeinen Sprachgebrauchs und der Wörterbücher geworden; es gibt sogar Schulprogramme, die sich mit der Versöhnung in binationalen Gedenkstätten befassen, wie z. B. die deutsch-französischen.

Angesichts der Flut von Begriffen und Konzepten werde ich versuchen, einige begriffliche Klarstellungen vorzunehmen. *Geschichte* ist die wissenschaftliche Untersuchung von Ereignissen in der Vergangenheit mit einer genauen Kontextualisierung. Geschichte ist Sache von Spezialisten, und *die historische Zeit* ist eine starre, strenge *Zeit*, die für

¹⁴ Gelu Duminică, „Mărturiile călătorilor străini despre robia romilor“, *Adevărul* (12. November 2019), <https://adevarul.ro/blogurile-adevarul/marturiile-ale-calatorilor-straini-despre-rob-1903577.html>.

wissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse offen ist. Das *Gedächtnis* ist eine subjektive Übertragung von Erinnerungen und mentalen „Bildern“, um die Vergangenheit zu bewältigen. *Die Zeit des Gedächtnisses* ist eine abrufbare, zyklische *Zeit*, die von der Vergangenheit ausgeht und darauf abzielt, die Zukunft zu „gestalten“ (zu erziehen). Im Gegensatz zur Geschichte ist die Erinnerung für alle zugänglich, nicht nur für Spezialisten. Jede denkmalpflegerische Rekonstruktion der Vergangenheit wirft auch die heikle Frage der Verwendung psychoanalytischer Begriffe und Kategorien in der Geschichte auf, wie Paul Ricoeur in seinem bahnbrechenden Werk so treffend festgestellt hat. Selbst die Gedankenkonstruktion, die als *travail de memoire* bezeichnet wird, ist mit einer gewissen Ambivalenz behaftet und bringt bestimmte kritische und institutionelle Zwänge mit sich, die sich aus der Dringlichkeit ergeben, historisch komplizierte oder traumatische Situationen anzuerkennen. Es gibt Fälle, in denen sie den Weg für mehr oder weniger sichtbare Formen des „Erinnerungswettbewerbs“ zwischen den am Prozess beteiligten Parteien öffnet. Glücklicherweise stehen Geschichte und Erinnerung in den meisten Fällen nicht im Widerspruch zueinander und konkurrieren auch nicht miteinander, wobei die gegenseitige Anerkennung unmittelbare Auswirkungen auf die Konstruktion einer neuen Verantwortung gegenüber der Geschichte hat.

Die Art und Weise, wie das Thema Sklaverei und *in extenso die* Verantwortung der orthodoxen Kirche als ehemalige Sklavenhalterin heute in Rumänien behandelt wird, ist exemplarisch für das Verständnis des traumatischen Geschichts-Erinnerungs-Verhältnisses in Osteuropa. Wir sind Zeugen einer Pluralität von Geschichts- (die von der Kirche, professionellen Historikern und Roma-Aktivisten gefördert wird) und Erinnerungsdiskursen (dieselbe Gruppe sowie die Medien, Künstler, Schriftsteller, Filmemacher). Aus diesem Grund ist es interessant, die Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede des Begriffs „Erinnerung“ für alle Beteiligten und die Veränderungen, die in den letzten Jahren stattgefunden haben, im Rahmen einer kritischen Analyse darzustellen. Zu der Liste der oben genannten Akteure im laufenden Erinnerungsprozess könnte man noch das hinzufügen, was wir sehr großzügig als „interessierte Öffentlichkeit“ bezeichnen, die sich über soziale Netzwerke und virtuelle Diskussionsforen an den Debatten beteiligt. Eine Art „kollektiver Charakter“, unmöglich genau zu definieren, aber sehr reaktiv und polemisch. Denn die heutige Welt ist zu einem riesigen „sozialen Netz“ geworden, in dem die Erinnerung, die von Natur aus so direkt

und emotional ist, leicht ihre Daseinsberechtigung findet. Ich möchte noch eine weitere Bemerkung machen: Die orthodoxe Kirche ist der einzige Akteur aus der Zeit der Sklaverei, der das Ende der Sklaverei bis zum heutigen Tag überlebt hat. Die Großgrundbesitzer, die auch große Eigentümer von Roma-Sklaven waren, sind in den Geschichtsbüchern erhalten geblieben, aber sie sind nicht mehr Teil der aktuellen Geschichte.

Wie geht es mit der *Erinnerungsarbeit* nach den 2000er Jahren weiter, die eine Intensivierung dieses Prozesses bedeuteten? Ich werde versuchen, sie in drei verschiedene Komponenten aufzuteilen, je nachdem, welche Akteure beteiligt sind: **Roma-Aktivisten, die orthodoxe Kirche, die Medien und die Kunstwelt.** Im Zusammenhang mit den Roma-„Aktivisten“ (ich hätte sie lieber als „junge Roma-Intellektuelle, die sich der Sache ihres Volkes verschrieben haben“, bezeichnet) bin ich auf einen Artikel von Ciprian Necula¹⁵ aufmerksam geworden, der mir in Bezug auf das Verständnis ihrer Forderungen programmatisch zu sein schien, ein fast „offizieller“ Gesichtspunkt. Eine Zusammenfassung der Ideen zeigt, dass ihrer Meinung nach die fast fünf Jahrhunderte andauernde Sklaverei der Roma tiefe Spuren hinterlassen und sogar zur heutigen Aufteilung der Roma nach Berufsgruppen beigetragen hat: Musikanten, Schmiede, Kesselschmiede usw. Die informelle Wirtschaft und die Ausbeutung marginaler Ressourcen sind weitere indirekte Auswirkungen der Sklaverei, da die Roma keine Eigentümer, sondern nur Anbieter von Ressourcen und Dienstleistungen waren. Die grausamen Leiden der Sklaverei, die Fähigkeit zur Integration und die Bedeutung der Roma für das gegenwärtige „soziale Gefüge“ Rumäniens müssen besser bekannt und dokumentiert werden. Den letzten Absatz, der zum Zeitpunkt des Artikels in der Öffentlichkeit weit verbreitet war, gebe ich als solchen wieder. Ich persönlich habe es nicht als Anklage empfunden, sondern eher als einen Aufruf zur gemeinsamen Heilung einer verwundeten Erinnerung:

Die BOR ist die einzige Institution, die Roma-Sklaven besessen hat und sich bis heute nicht einmal öffentlich für den Mangel an Menschlichkeit entschuldigt hat, mit dem sie im Namen des Christentums und Gottes gehandelt hat. Es scheint, dass die einzigen de facto Sklaven der rumänischen Orthodoxie (Gottes Sklaven) die Roma waren. Wir warten immer noch auf diese historische Entschuldigung, nicht um unsere

¹⁵ Ciprian Necula, „158 de ani de la dezrobirea romilor în Principatele Unite“, *Adevărul*, (20. Februar 2014), <https://adevarul.ro/blogurile-adevarul/158-de-ani-de-la-dezrobirea-romilor-in-1514712.html>.

Zeitgenossen zu verurteilen, sondern um sicherzustellen, dass sich diese Geschichte niemals wiederholen kann.¹⁶

Die BOR hat den Wandel im Umgang mit der Zeit der Versklavung und die Lage der Roma-Sklaven durchaus zur Kenntnis genommen, auch wenn sie noch nicht die von Roma-Aktivisten geforderten expliziten, öffentlichen Erklärungen abgegeben hat. Nur sind ihre Handlungen diskret und punktuell. Die BOR hat eine andere Art, mit dem Gedächtnisprozess umzugehen. Öffentliche Entschuldigungen, wie sie im Westen üblich sind, sind nicht ihr Markenzeichen. Doch wie reagiert die BOR auf die Änderung im Aufarbeitungsprozess und was ist ihr Beitrag zur Debatte? Erstens werden in Artikeln und offiziellen Stellungnahmen Persönlichkeiten aus dem kirchlichen Umfeld, die Mitgefühl mit den Roma und den Ursachen ihrer unmenschlichen Behandlung gezeigt haben, wie Antim Ivirean oder Neophytos Critean, in den Vordergrund gestellt. Neophytos Critean zum Beispiel bezahlte als Metropolit der Walachei den Freikauf der Roma von den kirchlichen Ländereien von seinem eigenen Geld.¹⁷ Zweitens veröffentlicht die kirchliche Presse regelmäßig Artikel, in denen versucht wird, die Versklavung der Roma zu kontextualisieren, und fordert alternativ dazu eine wissenschaftliche historische Untersuchung des Phänomens, die wie folgt aktualisiert wird:

Eine ehrliche Untersuchung (meine Hervorhebung) des Phänomens muss den internationalen Kontext der damaligen Zeit berücksichtigen, nicht nur den lokalen. Die Sklaverei war Teil des sozialen Lebens in den mittelalterlichen rumänischen Territorien und eine Institution der Nachbarländer. Es sollte nicht vergessen werden, dass es damals auch Sklaven anderer ethnischer Gruppen und sogar rumänische Sklaven gab.¹⁸

Eine letzte Komponente schließlich bezieht sich auf die Vervielfachung von Gedenk- und Erinnerungsaktionen. Wie bereits erwähnt, ist in der Stilistik der Orthodoxie die diskrete, punktuelle Geste manchmal wichtiger als die offizielle. Im Jahr 2016 wurde am bekannten Tismana-Kloster im Kreis Gorj in Anwesenheit des örtlichen Hierarchen und des US-Botschafters in Bukarest eine Gedenktafel zum 160-jährigen Jubiläum

¹⁶ *Ibidem.*

¹⁷ Ion Vicovan, „Preocupările filantropice ale Mitropolitului Antim Ivireanul“, *Analele Stiințifice ale Universității A. I. Cuza din Iași*, Nr. VIII, 2002, 190–97.

¹⁸ „Minoritatea Romilor, de la robie la libertate și speranță“, *Basilica.ro*, (9. Februar 2016), <https://basilica.ro/minoritatea-romilor-de-la-robie-la-libertate-si-speranta/>.

der Befreiung der Roma enthüllt. In Zusammenarbeit mit verschiedenen zivilgesellschaftlichen Roma-Organisationen, -Verbänden und -Botschaftern werden in Klöstern, die selbst echte „Gedenkstätten“ sind, wie das Kloster Pasărea in der Nähe von Bukarest, Gedenkfeiern für die in Lagern, Deportationen und Sklaverei umgekommenen Roma organisiert.¹⁹ In Iași hat die Abteilung für Minderheiten der Erzdiözese Iași mehrere Konferenzen und Treffen organisiert, die sich mit der Seelsorge an Roma und, in einem breiteren Kontext, mit ihren religiösen und kulturellen Besonderheiten befassen.²⁰ Meiner Meinung nach zeigen all diese Gesten, die relativ diskret sind, dass die Kirche die Botschaft der Gesellschaft verstanden hat und versucht, sich an die neue Art der Geschichtsaufarbeitung anzupassen. Der Historiker und Diplomat Adrian Cioroianu fasst diesen Sachverhalt sehr gut zusammen:

Die Kirche kann nicht gezwungen werden. Im Laufe der Zeit haben sich alle Kirchen an die Entwicklung der Gesellschaft angepasst, aber ich wiederhole: im Laufe der Zeit. Selbst wenn sich die Geschichte beschleunigt, wird die Idee einiger, die Aktualisierung der Kirche zu beschleunigen, genau den gegenteiligen Effekt haben. Man kann von einer im Grunde konservativen Institution nicht verlangen, dass sie von heute auf morgen zu einer NRO wird, die an der Spitze der gesellschaftlichen Enthüllungen steht, und andererseits ist jeder Angriff auf die Leitung der BOR ein *Cui prodest*. Hier gibt es viel zu besprechen.²¹

Auf der Medienseite sehe ich in den letzten fünf bis sechs Jahren eine signifikante Entwicklung des Gedenkkonzepts bezüglich der Leibeigenschaft, mit der Entwicklung von Medienplattformen, die Text, Ton und Bild integrieren, was zu einem neuen journalistischen Produkt führt, in Formen, die fesselnd, einfach zu konsumieren und hochwirksam sind. Ich möchte hier die Initiative der Zeitschrift DOR (Decăt o Revistă/Nur eine Zeitschrift) und eines ihrer Projekte erwähnen:

ein multimediales journalistisches Projekt über die Sklaverei der Roma und die Auswirkungen dieser 500 Jahre auf die Gegenwart fördert.

¹⁹ Iulian Dumitrașcu, „La mănăstirea Pasărea au fost comemorați duminică romii care au murit în lagăre, deportări și robie“, *Basilica.ro* (20. Februar 2022), <https://basilica.ro/romii-care-au-murit-in-lagare-deportari-si-robie-au-fost-comemorati-la-manastirea-pasarea/>.

²⁰ Flavius Popa, „Pastorația romilor, în trecut și actualitate“, *Doxologia.ro* (18. Februar 2022), <https://doxologia.ro/pastoratia-romilor-trecut-actualitate-la-muzeul-mitropolitan>.

²¹ Adrian Cioroianu, „Cum se scrie istoria. Surprize în trecut și nostalgii în viitor“, *Dilema Veche*, Nr. 912 (6. Oktober 2021), 8.

Die Sklaverei begann 1385 und wurde erst 1856 abgeschafft. In dieser Zeit waren die Roma das Eigentum der Herrscher, der Kirche und der Grundbesitzer. Dieses Generationentrauma findet häufig seinen Widerhall im Rassismus der Gegenwart. Heilung erfordert Anerkennung, Versöhnung und Wiedergutmachungsmaßnahmen.²²

Es begann im Dezember 2021 und dauert zum Zeitpunkt der Abfassung dieses Artikels (Mai 2022) noch immer an, unter Beteiligung der bekanntesten Roma-Aktivist*innen der Gegenwart, von Künstler*innen, jungen Roma-Journalist*innen und -Forscher*innen usw., mit anderen Worten, eine umfassende Reflexion der Sichtweise des einen beteiligten „Lagers“, was für den laufenden Prozess des Auf- und Abbaus von Gedenkstätten von Bedeutung ist. Technisch gesehen handelt es sich um ein sehr erfolgreiches, gut produziertes Medienkommunikationsprodukt mit entsprechenden finanziellen Mitteln. Es richtet sich an ein bestimmtes Publikum (städtisch, gebildet, privat), das nicht zum ersten Kreis der Gläubigen und Anhänger der Kirche gehört. Es sollte auch darauf hingewiesen werden, dass die Texte und Interviews des Projekts Worte und Begriffe enthalten, die für Aufarbeitungsprozesse typisch sind, wie „Heilung, Akzeptanz, Schuld, Orte der Erinnerung, Trauma“ und andere, was die Entwicklung und Konsolidierung eines westlichen Gedenkdiskurses anzeigt. Und noch ein Hinweis, denn die Details sind für diese Erinnerungserzählung wesentlich: Das Wort „Knechtschaft“ wird völlig vermieden, stattdessen wird die Form „Sklaverei“ verwendet. Was die sogenannte „traditionelle“ Presse betrifft, so begnügt sie sich eher mit der Berichterstattung über offizielle, staatliche Ereignisse anlässlich verschiedener wichtiger Daten im historischen Kalender der Befreiung von der Sklaverei und beteiligt sich kaum an der „Erinnerung“ an das Ganze.

Ein letzter Akteur in der von mir aufgestellten Reihenfolge, aber nicht in der Logik der Bedeutung des Gedenkens, ist das literarisch-künstlerische Milieu mit seiner Fähigkeit, der traumatischen Vergangenheit Dramatik und Bilder hinzuzufügen. Mit dem mehrfach preisgekrönten Film *Aferim* (2015, Regie: Radu Jude), der mit außerordentlich tragischem Realismus die Abenteuer der Gefangennahme und Bestrafung eines Sklaven schildert, dem eine Affäre mit seiner Herrin nachgesagt wird, wurde es eingeweiht und ist heute ein Gedenkfaktor von größter

²² Cristian Lupsă, Hrg., *Obiceiul Pământului*, multimedia project, www.dor.ro/obiceiulpamantului.

Bedeutung. Kurzfilme (*The Pardon Note*, 2020) oder Theaterstücke (*The Great Shame*, 2019) haben den Aufarbeitungsprozess weiter belebt.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich sagen, dass es schwierig ist, ein akzeptables Ende für einen Prozess zu finden, der noch lange nicht abgeschlossen ist. Ich wiederhole: *Geschichte* ist das Vorrecht der Fachleute, die Erinnerung ist die Arbeitsgrundlage aller, die sich für ihren Teil der Vergangenheit interessieren. Das Zeugnis in seinen verschiedenen Formen und die Meinung jedes Einzelnen sind wichtig und tragen zur Entfaltung der Erinnerungsarbeit bei, die zu einer friedlicheren, gerechteren und „versöhnteren“ Sichtweise aller an der Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit Beteiligten führen soll. Idealerweise würden die Ziele dieses Prozesses, der sich auf die Zeit der Versklavung der Roma bezieht, mehrere sein, darunter: die Weitergabe und Annäherung an die Geschichte aus einer demokratischen und toleranten Perspektive, ein Zeugnis des Respekts und der Wertschätzung gegenüber Menschen, die zu Gruppen und Völkern gehören, die im Laufe der Geschichte schwer getroffen wurden. Hinzu kommt die Förderung eines echten Dialogs zwischen den Generationen über das Thema Sklaverei (vor 1990 und auch noch einige Jahrzehnte danach war das Thema in der öffentlichen Debatte völlig abwesend) und vor allem das Ideal, dass die Erinnerung nicht mehr traumatisch und konkurrierend, sondern gemeinsam und angenommen sein sollte.

Eunyoung Lim, *Entering God's Kingdom (Not) Like A Little Child. Images of the Child in Matthew, 1 Corinthians and Thomas*, BZNW 243, De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston 2021, 172 S. ISBN 978-3-11-069498-7

Hans Klein*

Die Arbeit von Lim wurde 2018 als Dissertation an der Harvard Universität angenommen. Darin behandelt Lim Texte aus Schriften des Neuen Testaments, die von Kindern und dem Eingang in die Gottesherrschaft sprechen und sehr unterschiedliche Konzepte an den Tag legen. Sie machen den Titel mit seinem „not“ verständlich. Während im Matthäus- und im Thomasevangelium Kinder von Jesus als Beispiele für den Eintritt in die Gottesherrschaft angeführt werden, sieht der Apostel Paulus in den Kindern die noch nicht reifen Christen, die für die Gottesherrschaft noch älter und verständiger werden müssen.

Das Buch ist in fünf Kapitel gegliedert, von denen das erste in das Buch einführt und das letzte die Ergebnisse festhält. Der Mittelteil besteht aus der Untersuchung der drei benannten Textkomplexe. Diese drei Kapitel sind eigentlich gesonderte Studien zu sehr unterschiedlichen Themen aus untereinander kaum vergleichbaren Schriften und mit jeweils spezifischen Zielen. Sie werden durch die Einleitung und die Schlussfolgerung zusammengehalten, können aber auch für sich gelesen werden. Das ist der Autorin auch bewusst, denn sie hat Kap. 2 bereits in einem Vorabdruck in CBQ 2021 gesondert publiziert.

Die Einleitung (S. 1-36) beginnt Lim mit einer kurzen Besprechung der Perikope von der Segnung der Kinder durch Jesus (Mk 10,13-16), zu der sie feststellt, dass sie Jesus als kinderliebend darstellt. Der Abschnitt ist von vielen Exegeten beleuchtet worden, die besonders die Liebe Jesu zu den Kindern hervorheben; es ginge aber dort um den Eingang in die Gottesherrschaft, nicht um die Liebe zu den Kindern. Damit verlässt Lim diesen Bibelabschnitt und betont, dass sie eine umfassende Darstellung der Kinder und der Kindheit im NT aufgrund der Gegebenheiten der Umwelt anstrebt. Dazu wird sie jüdische, griechische und römische Texte, gemeint sind philosophische wie medizinische, heranziehen. Ebenso wird sie Berichte über archäologische Ausgrabungen bedenken und antike Bilder zum Verständnis heranziehen. Sie will aber nicht nur Untersuchungen über den Körper der Kinder und ihre Sexualität näher betrachten, sondern auch Fragen nach ihrer Intellektualität und

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moralischen Charakteristik angehen, ihre soziale Identität im Auge behalten und ihre soziale und kulturelle Tätigkeit bedenken. Sie will also herausstellen, was für eine Bedeutung das Kind in der Antike hatte, im engeren Sinn, welches Bild vom Kind die drei zu untersuchenden Texteinheiten für die Leser*innen zeichnen. Da ein tiefer Graben zwischen der einstigen und heutigen kulturellen Welt besteht, wird Lim die Texte in ihrem historischen Kontext analysieren und dabei jeden Text für sich betrachten und nach der Stellung des Kindes für die Gottesherrschaft fragen. Das schließt eine redaktionskritische Untersuchung ein.

Im zweiten Kapitel (S. 37-68) geht Lim zwei Texten aus dem Matthäusevangelium nach, der Wundererzählung vom *Stater* im Fischmaul in Mt 17,24-27 und der beispielhaften Vorstellung des Kindes in Mt 18,1-5. Die Zusammenstellung dieser beiden von der Gattung her sehr unterschiedlichen Texteinheiten ist ungewöhnlich und darum auch interessant. Sie sieht darin eine Kontrastbildung. Geht es in Mt 17,24-27 um die Söhne dieser Welt, um Geld und Steuerzahlung, so in 18,1-5 um die Kinder und das Himmelreich. Diesen Kontrast arbeitet Lim sorgfältig heraus, indem sie auf die sozialen Gegebenheiten im damaligen Römischen Reich und besonders auf die Stellung der Söhne der Hochgestellten aus eroberten Gebieten eingeht, die Augustus zur Befriedung nach Rom genommen hat und dort erziehen ließ. Die in Mt 17,24-27 vorausgesetzten Christen (dargestellt in Jesus und Petrus) sind „andere“, die Steuer bezahlen müssen, im Gegensatz zu den „Söhnen“, die davon befreit sind. Beim kleinen Kind, das Jesus in die Mitte der Jünger stellt, wird nicht gesagt, wer die Eltern sind. Daraus schließt Lim, dass es sich um ein Kind ohne Eltern handelt, das zur unteren sozialen Schicht gehört. Es sei aus Galiläa, genauer aus Kafarnaum. Es ginge in Mt 18,1-5 nicht um die Demut, überhaupt nicht um eine geistliche Einstellung, sondern um die Solidarisierung mit dem Kinde der untersten sozialen Schicht und nicht mit den Söhnen des Herodes.

Durch die Zuordnung der beiden Texte werden diese neu gelesen. Die Verbindung dieser beiden bildet der Kontrast zwischen den Söhnen der Herrschaft und den Kindern im Hinblick auf die Gottesherrschaft. Damit kann in 18,1-5 der erwünschte soziale Aufruf herausgearbeitet werden. Aber enthält die Wundergeschichte vom *Stater* im Fischmaul nicht noch ganz andere, für den Glauben wichtige Gesichtspunkte? Kommt der Nebensatz in dieser Erzählung „damit wir nicht Ärgernis geben“ (17,27) nicht zu kurz? Und geht es in 18,1-5 wirklich nur um die Solidarisierung mit den Kindern der untersten Schicht?

Der Vorschlag von Lim ist interessant, passt aber schwerlich in das Konzept des Matthäusevangeliums. Hier fehlt die in Kap 1 angesprochene Redaktionskritik.

Im dritten Kapitel (S. 69-103) widmet sich Lim den Texten aus dem 1. Korintherbrief, die von kindlichem Verhalten handeln. Dazu stellt Lim fest, dass in 1Kor auch häufig vom Eingang in die Gottesherrschaft gesprochen wird, aber nicht im Zusammenhang der Texte, die von der Kindlichkeit sprechen. Es sind dies 1Kor 3,1-3; 13,10-12 und 14,20. In 3,1-13 meint der Apostel, dass die Korinther noch nicht auf der Stufe sind, auf der sie sein sollen. Er spricht darum zu ihnen wie zu irdischen (*sarkinoi*) Menschen, denen er leichte Kost gegeben hat, weil sie noch unmündig sind, und fragt gleichzeitig, ob sie noch „fleischlich“ (*sarkikoi*), also vom Fleisch geprägt sind. Auf diesen Unterschied geht Lim nicht genügend ein, betont nur das innere Wachstum der Christen. In 1Kor 13,10 gebraucht der Apostel das Bild vom Werden des Unmündigen zum Erwachsenen und verbindet damit das Wachsen in der Erkenntnis. In 14,20 aber ruft er die Korinther auf, vollkommen in der Sinnrichtung zu werden und unmündig zu sein hinsichtlich des Bösen. Um diese Sätze richtig verstehen zu können, zeichnet Lim das Verständnis von Unmündigkeit und reifem Alter in der Antike nach und konzentriert sich vor allem auf die Stoa (Plutarch und Epiktet), die ein Wachsen in der richtigen Erkenntnis damit verbinden, und auf Philo, der Weisheit und Tugend als Erziehungsziele beschreibt, die vom rechten Denker angestrebt werden sollen. Von hier aus ist zu verstehen, dass die Korinther, wenn sie noch dem Irdischen verhaftet sind, das Evangelium nicht vollständig verstanden haben. Lim betont, dass Paulus dies nicht einzelnen Menschen, sondern einer ganzen Gemeinde zuspricht, die gerade in Gruppierungen (Parteiungen) auseinanderklafft. Die Korinther hätten sich selbst als mit Geist ausgestattet gesehen (1Kor 4,8-12). Sie müssen bedenken, was in Gal 3,28 gesagt ist, dass sie alle Einer sind in Christus. Wenn in der Antike der Unmündige jener ist, der noch nicht zum Logos gefunden hat, gilt das für Paulus für die Botschaft. Von da aus ergibt sich für Lim die Frage, ob die „Unmündigen in Christus“ als Kinder Gottes bezeichnet werden können. Im 1. Korintherbrief werden sie nirgends so bezeichnet. Nicht genügend bedacht ist hier m. E., dass die Gotteskindschaft bei Paulus eine von Gott gegebene Tatsache ist, also mit der Gabe des Geistes empfangene. Das bedeutet, dass auch „Unmündige“ in Christus, also *sarkinoi*, Gotteskinder sind. Sie sind es nicht mehr, wenn sie vom Fleisch geprägt sind, *sarkikoi*.

Im vierten Kapitel (S. 103-133) untersucht Lim die Sprüche 4, 22, 37 und 46 aus dem Thomasevangelium, in denen das Kleinkind als Beispiel angeführt wird, welches das Leben der Adressaten bestimmen soll. Dazu klärt Lim zunächst das Verständnis der unterschiedlichen Aussagen über das Kleinkind in der koptischen Sprache, schildert den außerordentlichen Stand der Kleinkinder in der antiken Welt, die nicht als Vollbürger angesehen wurden, und kommt danach auf das eigentliche Thema zu sprechen. Sie stellt fest, dass das Kleinkind, das in Logion 4 als Beispiel angeführt wird, ein Wesen ist, das mit sieben Tagen (je nach Gegend und Kultur können es auch acht oder neun Tage sein) noch nicht als Person angesehen wurde. Es wurde Person erst durch die Namengebung. Diese Sicht kann sie mit Bildern aus der Antike und durch Feststellungen von Archäologen belegen, die Kindergräber untersucht haben. Lim stellt in Übereinstimmung mit den Ergebnissen der Forschung fest, dass das Thomasevangelium die Gottesherrschaft in Analogie zur Schöpfung sieht, und als Ideal den unschuldigen, nackten, paradiesischen Menschen hat, an dem sich der Jünger Jesu orientieren soll. Das Ideal ist somit der Einsiedler, der asketisch lebt, der die Sexualität hinter sich gelassen hat, den Unterschied zwischen Mann und Frau überwindet und so aus den zwei Eines werden lässt, wie es nach Gen 1,27 im Anfang gewesen ist. Dem antiken Ideal, wonach der rechte Bürger zur vollen Mannesreife und Verantwortung wachsen soll, ist diese Sicht diametral entgegengesetzt.

Im fünften Kapitel (134-142) fasst Lim die Ergebnisse ihrer Studien zusammen. Dabei stellt sie heraus, dass keiner der besprochenen Texte von der Sündlosigkeit der Kinder ausgeht, wie es später in der Kirche gelehrt wurde. Es ergibt sich aber, dass das Bild des Kindes in den besprochenen Texten den Anforderungen der Zeit und der Umwelt angepasst war. Dieses Bild kann heute die Hoffnung auf eine ideale Welt stimulieren, in der wir uns selbst richtig wiederfinden.

Diese Vielseitigkeit der Aufgabenstellung, gepaart mit einer gewissenhaften Durchsicht der zuständigen vor allem englischsprachigen Literatur zur Antike und zu den untersuchten Texten, macht die Stärke dieses Buches aus. Lim hat sich darüber einen guten Überblick verschafft, von dem her die Texte genauer ins Visier genommen werden. Die Schwachstelle besteht darin, dass die einzelnen Texte nicht in zu erwartender Weise exegetisch untersucht, sondern in den großen Zusammenhang gestellt werden, der sich der Autorin durch ihre umfassenden Studien ergibt. Diese Gesamtschau, die sich aus dem Gespräch mit der Fachliteratur ergeben hat, kann manchen Impuls zum Weiterdenken und Weiterforschen vermitteln.

Valeriu Nicolae, *Țigan Țândări*, Casa Buna Association, Bucharest 2022, ISBN: 978-973-0-36105-6

Mărișescu Deian-Nicolae*

Valeriu Nicolae's latest book, "*Țigan Țândări*" is an autobiography in which the author equally combines real experiences from his childhood and adulthood with fiction.

This volume is mostly written using the first person narrative, but throughout chapters of the book, he manages to use different kinds of writing methods - from introducing dialogues in which protagonists are often hard to recognize, to sometimes changing entirely the point of view, allowing him to find and present objective perspectives. The author chooses to express himself in a tough manner, giving depth to the text. On the other hand, the insights into different kinds of events from one paragraph to another may make the process of catching the author's style more difficult. Moreover, this writing technique was evidently intentional and it is what makes us, the readers, unable to distinguish a firm line between reality and fiction.

The topic of racism is addressed in this volume and we can easily observe that from the beginning, given the title. The pejorative term, "gypsy" is recurrent in his life: from his Romanian father to the teacher in primary school who judged his colleagues for choosing him as their leader and to his neighbors that made appreciative remarks on Ion Antonescu's decision of deporting the Roma community to Transnistria, he always felt like a, "gypsy".

The chapters do not have a title and are not correlated. The book is composed sequentially, not chronologically: the experiences from childhood intertwine with the ones from different parts of the world. Furthermore, in the prologue the author states that some chapters are built completely differently, these being the ones represented by prime numbers. The author presents his love stories, stories about his family, relatives, and summer holidays; but there is one recurrent thing in the whole book - the admiration for his mother. All these things I named are completed by the author's experiences in the United States, details about working at the Council of Europe, and his perspectives on observing different regions dominated by violence and poverty.

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Throughout the book, the author points out problems as well as racism or discrimination by revealing some of his personal experiences, how he is treated at school, on the street, or later how he is subjected to excessive controls at airports or how he is viewed at work. In the first part, he presents his childhood: along with some insights into Istanbul, Lebanon, etc we also find out what occurred to him when he was little. He uses a technique by which he goes from one chapter to another or even in the same chapter from childhood to an incident from adulthood. After six years in Caransebeş he moves to Craiova where another world struck him: in this new world, other children refused to play with him because of their preconceived ideas that he was just a, “gypsy with lice”, so, for him, it was challenging to make new friends. The school was another unfriendly environment for him, given the fact that he meets racist teachers. The book continues with an examination of his adult life, and we observe that this life is not much different than what he experienced in his childhood. Frequent travels, come with different jobs, through which he reaches different areas facing the problem of poverty and being a Roma are the two constants in his life: no matter where he would end up, he was always perceived as a, “gypsy”.

In my opinion, this book has an incontestable historic value, especially given the inedited perspective from which events from our recent history are presented to the large public. In this regard, telling examples are the communist period under Nicolae Ceausescu’s rule or the transition-to-democracy period of the 1990s. The shortcomings of life during Ceausescu’s regime, such as the lack of heating or the absence of money, combined with family issues caused by his father’s alcoholism are presented all on a systemic racist background that, as we are told, was already recognizable for him considering his father’s racist behavior. On the whole, the complexity of his perspective is remarkable. For each matter of discussion, the author presents many situations. The nineties are also about the difficulty of finding a stable job in Romania or choosing the path of emigration in the Occident, and he lived through making this kind of decision back then. Considering the author’s perspective we can better understand how these eras were for the Roma people.

The intensity of this book gave me the feeling that it not only depicts one’s life story but tells much more about the lives of other people. It is the expression of a larger community that fights poverty and racism.

Besides the stories from childhood and adolescence, the book is also about subsequent experiences of the author, like the ones where he was in the ghetto from Ferentari, Romania, or other Middle East countries.

These experiences show us clearly how victims suffer from poverty all around the world and what it takes to escape this kind of reality.

Considering everything, this book is necessary for Romanian historiography, because it succeeds to be a starting point for a public debate around a whole community's problems. The Roma people are still discriminated against. The poor are still discriminated against. These problems should be everyone's concern. This volume begins to fill a void in historiography, even if its main purpose was not directly related to this. It is especially for its authenticity that I can say that this happened.

Even if we may say that this book is an example of a successful man who managed to overcome societal obstacles based on racism, it is more about failure. Not a personal one, but a collective one that reflects where we truly are in terms of perception and barriers.

At the end of every chapter, I felt as if I could form my conclusions regarding the stories that were presented; many of which were truly nerve-racking. This is another way in which the author chose to reveal his experiences, coming closer to us, as readers. And this is what makes a book an impressive one. Because not only does the author give us more than I could have said in this article, but he determines us to take a part in truly understanding society's problems; where change begins.

Haim Goren, “*The loss of a minute is just so much loss of life*”: *Edward Robinson and Eli Smith in the Holy Land*. *Studia Traditionis Theologiae: Explorations in Early and Medieval Theology*, 39, Turnhout, Brepols 2020, 339 p. + XX. ISBN: 9782503589138

Cătălin Ștefan Popa*

Professor Haim Goren’s book is an important piece of research into the biographical profiles and scholarly work of Edward Robinson (1794–1863) and Eli Smith (1801–1857), two important American figures in the history of Biblical geography, archaeology, Christian mission, and Bible translation respectively. The book focuses on the complex context of Robinson and Smith’s journey to the Holy Land in 1838. The reader’s first impression when opening the *Table of Contents* and reading the *Foreword* is later confirmed by reading the book itself: namely, that it is predicated upon a solid research foundation and a labour of many (six) years that the author has put into archival study and, in his own words, in “deciphering impossible-to-read documents” (p. XVII).

The book is divided into seven chapters, with the addition of a schematic biography of Edward Robinson’s life (p. 1–4) and a substantial list of illustrations (thirty-six in total) mentioned and described on pp. XI–XIV, comprised of photographs, correspondence, alumnus and scholarly membership certifications, other personal documents, impressions on their journey, maps, awards, book covers, general notes in the period press on these two linguists and Bible scholars, as well as several of their dedications and autographs.

Chapter 1’s Introduction (p. 5–16) places Robinson among the list of prominent linguists and early explorers of Palestine, while also offering a useful analysis of the available sources and archives on Robinson and the state of scholarly research on the character.

Chapter 2: The 1838 Expedition to the Holy Land: Origins and Preparation (p. 17–58) acquaints the reader not only with the idea of the voyage but – first and foremost – with the persona and character of Robinson – a very important tool for the reader to create for themselves a subconscious image of the main protagonist of these voyages and books going beyond the portrayals the author includes in this monograph. Goren describes Robinson as being “of strong, healthy personal understanding, sober and dry, but in educated society very conversing and not

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without humour; full of good-hearted and plain sympathy – a simple, serious, solid, through and through respected character” (p. 17). The author introduces the idea of the expedition and its development as having been born of a great desire that had persisted for decades: “a journey, which has been the object of my ardent wishes, and has entered into all my plans of life, for more than fifteen years” (p. 17).

Interestingly, Goren also shows us how the German period constituted the preamble to the expedition itself. It is also interesting that Robinson accepted the position of Professor of Biblical Literature at the New York Geological Seminary (UTS) at the beginning of 1837, which did not prevent him from fulfilling his wanderlust. Here, the reader can see how Robinson presents the stakes of the journey as being both personal and professional. He accepts the position of professor in New York, with the amendment that “there remains a single point which is personal to myself”. Robinson then adds the double perspective of the journey in which he can procure books for the seminary librarian, “with reference to the preparation of a Biblical Geography” (p. 34).

Chapter 3: The 1838 Expedition: Itinerary and Development (p. 59–100) presents a series of interesting impressions of Europe, of the expedition to the Holy Land (which he again describes as the nexus of his journey) as well as from Jerusalem, seen as “the realization of a former dream” (p. 70). In addition, this chapter also discusses not only many other favourable circumstances for the expedition but also the practical preconditions of the journey itself, such as securing adequate funding, etc.

Chapter 4: In Berlin and Halle: Writing the Biblical Researches (p. 101–192) represents the most substantial chapter of the monograph, and provides the key to understanding the entire book. We first learn the interesting framework of how Robinson, the new Professor of Biblical Literature at the New York Theological Seminary, succeeded in prolonging his one-year leave to three years, and remain in Germany for his preliminary research into composing the *Biblical Researches*. Over a considerable number of pages, we are introduced not only to a complex presentation of the sources Robinson consulted (also featuring a Table of Sources on pages 159–165) for the composition of the three-volume opus of *Biblical Researches*, but also to the methodological approaches taken – noting how Robinson created a system for organizing sources (p. 171), and the considerable attention he paid to detail. The author also familiarizes the reader with the practical stages of Robinson’s fascinating writing process, from his daily routine and interaction with German academics,

his frequent use of German libraries, and his academic correspondence, to the frequency of his writing divided by month-by-month diagrams, manuscript stages, as well as publication and distribution. Interestingly, Goren notes that Robinson “never wasted a minute, and his tempo of writing, [...] was astonishing. Most of his time, however, was probably not spent in writing, but in reading his collected sources” (p. 171).

Chapter 5: Co-travellers and Companions (p. 193–244). Here, Goren begins by pointing out that Eli Smith – Robinson’s travelling companion and co-author of *Biblical Researches* – had until now remained in the shadows, with his important contribution being kept out of the limelight by Robinson throughout the publications. Indeed, as Jay Gomer Williams writes, Robinson “devotes more space to the Bedouin guides than to Smith’s contribution to the expedition” (p. 194). Of interest in this chapter is not only Smith’s contribution in the context of the expedition, but also the whole concourse of circumstances in which Smith was involved (especially in Germany); his at times surprising recognition among the circles of German Orientalists, but also his correspondence. Smith is portrayed as having made an important contribution, but having nevertheless been side-lined by Robinson about crediting the documentation and publications they produced.

Chapter 6: Revisiting the discovery of Robinson’s Arch (pp. 245–274) on the one hand presents the academic discussions in the field of Biblical scholarship which Robinson’s contribution (especially by way of his *Biblical Researches*) produced; on the other hand, it also showcases the critical opinions of nineteenth-century scholars regarding certain discoveries that had been attributed to Robinson (for example, Robinson’s Arch) but which, according to some, had interfered with other place names and were better served being attributed to other great scholars.

Chapter 7: Concluding Remarks (pp. 175–284) contextualizes Robinson’s place on the broader international stage of Biblical geography studies. Here, Haim Goren attempts to summarize his scholarship and reputation by stating that, “Robinson was an oft-praised luminary, a leading name in Biblical scholarship and the study of the Holy Land, one of the most influential and cited authorities on the country, its history, and geographical-history, and in the fields of scriptural-and theological-history and geography” (p. 276).

The volume thus far is then adjoined by a considerable bibliography which provides the reader with sufficient material to delve deeper into Robinson’s very interesting brand of biblical geography and archaeology,

as well as into the broader academic and diplomatic context of the time of Robinson's life, with a specific focus on Palestine.

Goren's monograph should be recommended not only to historians but to all those interested in the mirage of the Biblical geography of the Holy Land; to all who are interested in the context of biographies dominated by the intertwining of nineteenth-century Western academia and the discovery of the sacred geography and archaeology of Palestine. Or, put differently, in the words of the volume's author in his concluding remarks, "this is the search for 'the unknown Robinson' in all other aspects of his life and Holy Land studies, his background, research travels, and publications" (p. 282). Apart from a few minor typographical errors, which we will not mention further and which are often unavoidable in volumes with such a density of archival sources, Goren's monograph is a solid piece of research into Edward Robinson's personality and scholarly contribution.

Tackling this theme is itself akin to embarking on a fascinating journey. The reader, therefore, benefits from an interesting story whose setting is excellently described, just as needed to adequately understand Robinson's journey. The monograph's strength lies in the complexity of archival sources, which are each and all evaluated and brought to fruition in an accessible framework for the reader, thereby creating a cohesive narrative for which the author is to be greatly congratulated. What is most important in Goren's monograph is that not only does he participate in the journey of exploration of the biblical geography of the Holy Land but, through the exquisite style of prose and literary composition, he also makes the reader a companion to Robinson and Smith on their journey.

Pier-Giorgio Taneburgo, *L'ecumenismo del cuore. In cammino col Consiglio Ecumenico delle Chiese* [The Ecumenism of the Heart. Walking along the Ecumenical Council of Churches], Pref. Andrea Palmieri, Roma, Edizioni Viverein 2022, 232 p., ISBN: 978-88-7263-653-4

Alexandru Marius Crișan*

It is the second time that Professor Pier Giorgio Taneburgo, a Capuchin friar, invites readers from different ecumenical backgrounds to reflect upon Christian and human unity through a specific book. After a first volume dedicated to the inter-religious relations between the Eastern Orthodox Churches and Judaism, symbolically entitled *L'ecumenismo delle radici* (*The Ecumenism of the Roots*), the author tries to deepen “another type of ecumenism,” the one of “the heart,” through the volume *L'ecumenismo del cuore. In cammino col Consiglio Ecumenico delle Chiese*. (*The Ecumenism of the Heart. Walking along with the Ecumenical Council of Churches*). From the very beginning it must be mentioned that the book, counting 232 pages, does not only have historical or anthological value, but the volume also contains theological and spiritual preparatory reflections for 11th Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Karlsruhe (Germany) between 31st August and 9th September 2022.

The expression used in the title (The Ecumenism of the Heart) receives great attention already from the Preface drafted by Monsignor Andrea Palmieri, Under-Secretary of the Pontifical Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity, a well-known name in the ecumenical area. As the Preface's author observes, different names were added to ecumenism in the latest years, such as “ecumenism of love, of truth, of life, of saints, of martyrs,” but “an ecumenism of the heart is not a choice without risks” (p. 9) because it implies so many aspects, including an interior or spiritual one. The first intuition of any reader is that any of the mentioned expressions, especially “ecumenism of the heart,” completes, surpasses, and even opposes the official ecumenism, the one made up of official meetings and documents drafted by authorized mixed commissions and so on. “Ecumenism of the Heart” is an inspired choice also because of the nature of the Ecumenical Council of Churches, a consultative body which does not have any ecclesial value in itself. This aspect was very important for

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the Eastern Orthodox Churches during the preparation of the Holy and Great Council of Crete gathered in 2016.¹

Both *Ecumenisms* of the two books of Friar Taneburgo (*Roots and Heart*) reveal the theological line of an author engaged both in an official theological and academic work (through teaching and participating to official ecumenical events) but also in an *unofficial Ecumenism*, developed through friendships, prayer, and personal interests in other ecclesial or religious identities. The book is divided into two main parts, different by the nature of their content, but also complementing each other.

The first part has spiritual and theological content. It contains five reflections, each one focusing on different aspects: Bible, Philosophy-Anthropology, History, Theology, and Testimony. Each of these five reflections ends with a prayer introduced by a liturgical call specific to the Western Rite: “Let us pray!” (“Oremus!”). Reading the first part of this book (spanning approximately 125 pages) filled with Bible and Saints’ quotations, featuring a liturgical prayer at the end of each reflection, one has the impression of attending a true session of preparatory spiritual exercises for the ecumenical gathering in Karlsruhe. The ecumenical discourse is in itself almost a “liturgical service.” Friar Pier Giorgio writes: “the ecumenism of the heart is a profound service of obedience intent directly to the Person of Jesus Christ, according to the will of His and our Father, Giver of all Good” (p. 38). All these confirm once again the double (official and spiritual) ecumenical approach of the author.

The choice of the title is also linked to the general theme of Karlsruhe meeting: “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity,”² since there is no better symbol to unite concepts such as love, reconciliation, and unity than the heart.³ But the symbol of the heart – connected to the notion of love and representing the spiritual center of a person

¹ For the theologians who drafted the Crete Council’s official Documents as for the bishops who attended the Council it was of a crucial importance that the final Document on the *Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World* contain a clear expression on the World Council of Churches: “It is therefore very clear that the WCC does not by any means constitute a *super-Church*”. See my study referring to the denial of any ecclesial status of the WCC by the Orthodox Churches: Alexandru-Marius Crişan, “Ecclesiological Tendencies in the Ecumenical Approach of the Council of Crete,” *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 12, no. 1 (2020), 77.

² See: <https://www.oikoumene.org/about-the-wcc/organizational-structure/assembly-#assembly-theme-and-symbol>, accessed December 7, 2022.

³ Even if, the heart itself as graphic symbol is missing from the coat of arms of the Karlsruhe Assembly, present on the book’s cover and containing a cross, a dove, a circle (representing the entire world) and a fish-shaped road.

– seems to be quite important for the author who dedicates two entire chapters – the second and the fourth in the book – to develop a true theology of the heart.

Pier Giorgio Taneburgo opens this row of reflections in the second chapter through deepening the concept called “la filosofia del cuore” (*the Philosophy of the Heart*) – a concept present in the spirituality of the Eastern Orthodox Church and developed in different patristic writings found in the *Philocalia*. The author does not neglect mentioning the so-called *prayer of the heart* (known also as *prayer of the mind* or simply *Jesus’ Prayer*) a spiritual practice rediscovered in Mount Athos in the last centuries and made popular also by numerous spiritual popularization writings during the XX century. In a footnote (n. 2, p. 44) Taneburgo recommends some bibliography on the matter in Italian or translated to Italian, but unfortunately does not mention the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate’s decision to dedicate the year 2022 to the Hesychast Prayer and Hesychast Saints,⁴ so recommending the clergy and the professors of the Romanian Orthodox Church to focus their theological attention exactly on the theological meaning of the heart during all events of 2022.

The author deserves credit for putting into dialogue the Orthodox Spirituality of the Heart with some Western philosophers or theologians. Ramón Llull or Raimon Panikkar are names that suddenly draw the attention because Taneburgo mentioned them in his other book as well.⁵ In both books it is very clear why the author has a predilection for Ramón Llull, “a missionary and philosopher of the dialogue” (p. 48); Llull regards the dialogue and the conversion from the perspective of the spiritual love – a subject dear to Pier Giorgio Taneburgo. One, according Ramón Llull, does not dialogue in order to convert somebody but mostly to know through and because of love. In this sense Pier Giorgio Taneburgo quotes Sara Muzzi: “For Ramón Llull the conversion is a deed of love, a consequence of Christ’s love for all human being. But, in order to love, one must come to know firstly, because love derives from knowledge” (p. 48–49). Other remarkable philosophers or theologians quoted are Søren Kirkegaard, Franz Rosenweig, Ghislain Lafont, Yves Kongar, Pope John Paul II, Pope Francis, Cardinal Augustin Bea, Piero Rossano, and Charles de Foucauld.

⁴ See: <https://basilica.ro/en/patriarch-daniel-proclaims-2022-solemn-year-of-prayer-commemorative-year-of-hesychast-saints/>, accessed December 7, 2022.

⁵ Pier Giorgio Taneburgo, *L’Ecumenismo delle radici. Cristiani ortodossi ed ebrei: la storia dei rapporti, prospettive di dialogo* (Verona: Il Segno dei Gabrielli editori, 2017), 207–10 and 210–13.

The symbol of the heart stays in the attention of the author even when it comes to small details, apparently insignificant. Taneburgo reminds us how Charles de Foucauld – who used to call himself “the universal brother” (p. 124) – sewed a crucified heart on his scapular.⁶ If the author does pay so much attention when it comes to details linked to the spirituality of the heart, it is indeed a pity that he does not quote or mention another important Catholic theologian, expert in Orthodox/Oriental Theology, namely Cardinal Tomáš Špidlík, who, profoundly in love with the Oriental Theology, not only chose as his cardinal coat-of-arms a red crucified heart or as a motto the words “Ex toto corde,” but also developed a true theology of the heart in his books.⁷ It would have been interesting to read Špidlík’s theology of the heart through the ecumenical eyes of Fra’ Pier Giorgio Taneburgo.

This book must be read not only in the context of the preparation for Karlsruhe meeting but also in a larger one referring to aspects discussed by the author in the book: the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the climate crisis (for this purpose the author brings the well-known contemporary Orthodox theologian Ioannis Zizioulas into the discussion and uses the term “ecumenism of the space” – p. 70); a clearer reference to the so-called *Synodal-Path* – an attempt initiated last year in the Catholic world by Pope Francis in order to modernize and bring the Church closer to the people – is missing.

The book urges in an inspired way to a profound reflection on the very sense and nature of all the “non-official” ecumenisms (of heart, of blood, of martyrs, of space, of saints etc.). A primary role found by Taneburgo is *deconfessionalization* “which could continue to help the Churches to deepen their sisterhood” (p. 85–86). This might apply now to the Catholic or Protestant Churches. Unfortunately, geo-political events that touched Eastern-European Orthodox countries such as the invasion of Ukraine, the delaying to recognize the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and the refusal to grant to Romania or Bulgaria the Schengen status will probably enforce not only a national identity but also a confessional one. The ecumenism of the heart must continue, but not through suggesting *deconfessionalization* to Eastern-Europeans, at least not now, when their identity is so much attacked and undermined or when the Catholic Church itself confronts with an internal identity crisis.⁸

⁶ N.a.: Catholic monastic vestment.

⁷ See for example: Tomáš Špidlík, *The Art of Purifying the Heart* (Sufflok, UK: Sapientia, 2010).

⁸ See the *German issue* in the context of the Synodal Path.

The second part of the book has anthological value containing a short history of the General Assemblies of the WCC, the Constitution of WCC, Declarations of different Church Committees and different letters, homilies or discourses belonging to Patriarch Athenagoras or Popes Paul VI, John Paul II and Francis.

As a conclusion, I would underline that this collection of spiritual and theological reflections on how ecumenism could or must go on when political or religious crises seem to cancel almost a century of efforts is more than welcome. Far from pretending to give answers, this book accompanies the reader through the history of the love of God (Bible, Mystics, Saints, Philosophers, Church history events) – *historia salutis* (p. 28) – as Pier Giorgio Taneburgo, a priest and a monk sees it with the final purpose to get inspiration and courage to continue the heart's ecumenical path, each in his own way. From this point of view, the author manages in a remarkable way to go far beyond what might appear to be the theme of the book if we only pay attention to the title.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Dynamics of Tradition and Liberty in Byzantine Liturgy: 40 years after Alexander Schmemmann RES 1/2023

Although Alexander Schmemmann did not set out to be a “scholar”, his genius and prophetic vision of the Orthodox Church’s liturgical life places him above more well-known scholars. However, the critical eye of later scholars found, and will still find, various inaccuracies, anachronisms, or errors in his works. Some of his proposals, especially in majority-Orthodox countries, are often still seen as “dangerous liberal innovations”. These judgments stem from a misunderstanding of the eschatological and pastoral dimension of the Liturgy, at least as Schmemmann saw it, but also from too much preoccupation with the letter of the typical and the form of the rites and gestures, which Fr Alexander approached in a free manner, being focused not on the process, but on the finality.

In a 2013 interview, Robert Taft said about Schmemmann: “Fr. Alexander was a charismatic man... The resonance that, to this day, his work produces, I would call «the Schmemmann phenomenon». Nowadays it is virtually impossible to hear a lecture on the Liturgy or the life of the Church without some quotation or idea from Schmemmann. In this respect, indeed, he is without equal.”

The year 2023 marks the 40th anniversary of Fr Alexander Schmemmann’s passing (1921–1983). He was a leading figure of Russian Orthodoxy in exile, professor of liturgy and Church history, and author of numerous books and articles translated into several languages.

This special issue of *Review of Ecumenical Studies* (RES) is dedicated to the complex personality and legacy of Alexander Schmemmann. More widely, we invite the authors to reflect on the constant tension between word and spirit, between old and new, between tradition and liberty among liturgical practice and liturgical studies in the Orthodox milieu.

Guest Editor: Hieromonk Petru Pruteanu

Submission deadline: November 15, 2022

**Die Dynamik von Tradition und Freiheit in der byzantinischen
Liturgie: 40 Jahre nach Alexander Schmemmann
RES 1/2023**

Obwohl Alexander Schmemmann nicht den Anspruch hatte, ein „Gelehrter“ zu sein, ragt er durch seine Genialität und seine prophetische Vision vom liturgischen Leben der Orthodoxen Kirche aus dem Kreis der bekannteren Gelehrten heraus. Mit kritischem Blick auf sein Werk fanden und finden Gelehrte nach seiner Zeit jedoch verschiedene Ungenauigkeiten, Anachronismen oder Fehler. Einige seiner Ideen werden, vor allem in mehrheitlich orthodoxen Ländern, oft noch immer als „gefährliche liberale Neuerungen“ angesehen. Diese Urteile rühren jedoch aus der Sicht Schmemmanns von einem Missverständnis der eschatologischen und pastoralen Dimension der Liturgie her. Weiters scheinen sie auch mit einer zu intensiven, ja eingeschränkten Beschäftigung mit dem Typischen und der Form der Riten und Gesten zu tun haben, welche Pater Alexander in andere, in freier Weise angegangen ist, indem er sich nicht auf den Prozess, sondern auf die Endgültigkeit konzentrierte.

In einem Interview aus dem Jahr 2013 sagte Robert Taft über Schmemmann: „Pater Alexander war ein charismatischer Mann (...). Die Resonanz, die sein Werk bis heute hervorruft, würde ich «das Schmemmann-Phänomen» nennen. Heutzutage ist es praktisch unmöglich, einen Vortrag über die Liturgie oder das Leben der Kirche zu hören, ohne ein Zitat oder eine Idee von Schmemmann zu hören. In dieser Hinsicht ist er in der Tat unvergleichlich.“

Im Jahr 2023 jährt sich der Todestag von Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983) zum 40. Mal. Er hatte eine führende Rolle in der russischen Orthodoxie im Exil inne, war Professor für Liturgie und Kirchengeschichte und Autor zahlreicher Bücher und Artikel, die in mehrere Sprachen übersetzt wurden.

Diese Nummer der Zeitschrift *Review of Ecumenical Studies* (RES) ist der komplexen Persönlichkeit und dem Vermächtnis von Alexander Schmemmann gewidmet. Im weiteren Sinne laden wir die Autoren ein, über die ständige Spannung zwischen Wort und Geist, zwischen Alt und Neu, zwischen Tradition und Freiheit in der liturgischen Praxis und in den liturgischen Studien im orthodoxen Umfeld nachzudenken.

Guest-Editor: Priestermonch Petru Pruteanu

Einsendeschluss: 15. November 2022

The War in Ukraine and the Religious Communities
RES 2/2023

Ukraine has become a topic of public discourse due to the current war of aggression. The war has also religious dimensions, especially in the fields of ethics and ecumenism. The theological discourse of the churches has so far mainly been concerned with the historical and political classification of events and the respective involvement of the churches. However, the war also affects the individual religious communities in their self-understanding, behavior, and mutual relationships. One can note how they are both breaking apart and coming together.

This issue of RES aims at deepening the understanding of the religious situation in Ukraine and focusing more on the country's various religious communities and their mutual relations. On the one hand, authors living and researching in Ukraine should be heard and, on the other hand, the focus on Ukraine also has interdisciplinary relevance. Ecumenical and inter-religious relations should be critically examined while also highlighting obstacles and potentials for dialogue, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence. In addition to providing a better understanding of the situation in Ukraine, the volume also aims at elaborating ecumenical and interreligious perspectives for the future.

The following questions are examples of the range of topics:

How has the situation of religious communities changed because of the war and what are their main challenges and tasks (also in the field of pastoral care)?

How does the war influence the mutual relationship of religious communities, their social situation, and their ethical approaches?

What historical and political factors are relevant for the current mutual relations of religious communities? Do theological educational institutions play an important role?

Are there special ecumenical and interreligious initiatives that have ended or started, also in the field of pastoral care, and what are the expectations for the future?

Guest-Editor: Regina Elsner and Thomas Mark Németh

Submission deadline: February 15, 2023

Der Krieg in der Ukraine und die Religionsgemeinschaften RES 2/2023

Die Ukraine steht angesichts des andauernden Angriffskriegs im Fokus öffentlicher Diskussion. Dieser Krieg hat auch religiöse Dimensionen, die insbesondere in den Bereich der Ethik und Ökumene hineinreichen. Die kirchlich-theologische Diskussion war bisher vor allem mit der historischen und politischen Einordnung des Geschehens und der entsprechenden Verstrickung der Kirchen befasst. Der Krieg betrifft aber auch die einzelnen Religionsgemeinschaften in ihrem Selbstverständnis, Verhalten und Verhältnis zueinander. Es sind sowohl Bruchlinien als auch ein Zusammenrücken zu verzeichnen.

Diese Ausgabe von RES möchte zu einer Vertiefung des Verständnisses für die religiöse Situation in der Ukraine beitragen und die verschiedenen Religionsgemeinschaften des Landes und ihre Beziehungen untereinander stärker ins Blickfeld rücken. Einerseits sollen in der Ukraine lebende und forschende AutorInnen zur Sprache kommen, andererseits ist auch der Blick auf die Ukraine aus interdisziplinärer Perspektive relevant. Ökumenische und interreligiöse Beziehungen sollen kritisch hinterfragt und Hindernisse und Potentiale für Dialog, Versöhnung und friedliche Koexistenz beleuchtet werden. Neben dem besseren Verständnis der Situation in der Ukraine möchte der Band auch zur Erarbeitung von zukunftsweisenden ökumenischen und interreligiösen Perspektiven einen Beitrag leisten.

Für das Themenspektrum seien folgende Fragen beispielhaft genannt:

Wie hat sich die Situation von Religionsgemeinschaften durch den Krieg verändert und was sind ihre wesentlichen Herausforderungen und Aufgaben (auch im Bereich der Seelsorge)?

Wie beeinflusst der Krieg das Verhältnis von Religionsgemeinschaften zueinander, ihre gesellschaftliche Situation und ethische Fragestellungen?

Welche historischen und politischen Faktoren spielen in den aktuellen Beziehungen zwischen den Religionsgemeinschaften eine Rolle? Kommt theologischen Bildungseinrichtungen eine Bedeutung zu?

Gibt es besondere ökumenische und interreligiöse Auf- oder Abbrüche zu verzeichnen, auch im Bereich der Seelsorge, und welche Erwartungen bestehen für die Zukunft?

Gastherausgeber: Regina Elsner und Thomas Mark Nèmeth

Einsendeschluss: 15. Februar 2023

Miscellanea
RES 3/2023

The RES editorial board announces a miscellanea issue designed to include articles from a wide range of disciplines. The articles should nonetheless be related to religious or ecumenical aspects. Authors working in the field of Church History, Religious/Ecumenical Dialogue, Church/Religious Art, Sociology of Religion, Remarkable Religious/Spiritual Personalities etc. are invited to send their papers in this RES miscellaneous/miscellanea issue.

The Review of Ecumenical Studies fosters, through its publishing policy, an expression of an ecumenical attitude within theology, i.e. a dialogical attitude that seeks to understand the problematics of theology by constantly contextualising a given problem from different denominational and disciplinary perspectives. In the RES, different voices that are granted publishing space attest for one of the principles of the journal, namely that there is rarely only one perspective on a particular question. This does not mean that the question of truth is ignored in favor of a principled pluralism, but it does mean that the right understanding of truth must always be sought anew.

Submission deadline: July 1, 2023

Miscellanea
RES 3/2023

Die Redaktion von RES plant eine Ausgabe mit *Miscellanea*, die Aufsätze aus einem breiten Spektrum von Themen enthalten kann. Die Aufsätze sollten jedoch einen Bezug zu religiösen oder ökumenischen Fragen haben. Autorinnen und Autoren, die sich z.B. mit Kirchengeschichte, religiösem/ökumenischem Dialog, kirchlicher/religiöser Kunst, Religionssoziologie oder bemerkenswerten geistlichen Persönlichkeiten befassen, sind eingeladen, ihre Beiträge für diese Ausgabe der Redaktion RES einzusenden.

Die *Review of Ecumenical Studies* hat es sich zur Aufgabe gemacht, eine ökumenische Haltung innerhalb der Theologie zu fördern. Diese dialogische Einstellung bedeutet, ein bestimmtes theologisches Problem aus dem Blickwinkel verschiedener Konfessionen und Disziplinen zu beleuchten und unterschiedliche Kontexte zu berücksichtigen. Die Vielfalt der Stimmen, denen in RES Raum zur Veröffentlichung eingeräumt wird, ist Ausdruck der Überzeugung, dass es selten nur eine einzige Perspektive auf eine bestimmte Frage gibt. Das bedeutet nicht, dass die Frage nach der Wahrheit zugunsten eines prinzipiellen Pluralismus ausgeblendet wird, aber es bedeutet, dass das rechte Verständnis der Wahrheit immer wieder neu gesucht werden muss.

Einsendeschluss: 1. Juli 2023

Religion, Evil, and the Problem of Evil

RES 1/2024

The reality of moral and natural evil is one of the most challenging theological questions. Particularly for the Abrahamic religions, providing an explanation for the origin of evil has never been an easy task. How to explain in a sound way the presence of suffering in the world since God is omnipotent and omnibenevolent? Or, put in another way, is the existence of evil and the existence of God logically inconsistent? Is the problem of evil insoluble? These questions present us with theological challenges that cannot be fixed straightforwardly. Several attempts were made to preserve together both monotheism and God's attributes from types of dualism (e. g. Gnosticism, Paulicianism, Catharism) and the idea of God's reduced number of attributes, due to the tension between the existence of evil and the divine omnipotence and omnibenevolence. Although for early Christian theologians, reacting to the problem of evil was not meant as a response to atheism, but rather a response on how to accommodate evil with God, starting with the Middle Ages, 'the argument from evil' begins to be an issue involved in atheistic debates. Besides the apparent inconsistency of theism with the reality of evil, the question of evil is also an anthropological question, related to the way human beings tolerate suffering in the world, representing *the* evil throughout history, or understanding its own evilness.

This present issue of *RES* aims to bring together diverse and interdisciplinary approaches to the problem of evil. We invite authors to open the dialogue beyond the main theological discussions concerning the nature of evil and how non-theological disciplines (such as philosophy, art history, psychology of religion, sociology of religion, etc.) approach such an intricate subject. Papers that explore the following themes are welcome: contemporary theistic responses to the problem of evil; the question of suffering and the simultaneous existence of divine attributes; atheological answers to the problem of evil; the 'argument from evil' and its relation with nontheism; metaphysics of evil; artistic representations and answers to evil; psychological approaches on suffering and belief; psychological explorations of the evilness of human behaviour in religious context; sociological concepts of evil; how does the problem of evil developed historically: e.g. from the traditional question "why God allows evil?", to the contemporary one "does God really exist if there is evil?"; how does the incidence of evil reassess the theological discourses?; vindication of God in different religious traditions; relativisation of evil; the differences and similarities between the three Abrahamic religions

concerning the question of evil; patristic and scholastic responses to the existence of evil *versus* contemporary discussions.

Guest-Editor: Florin George Calian

Submission deadline: November 15, 2023

Religion und das Problem des Bösen **RES 1/2024**

Die Existenz des moralischen und physischen Übels ist eine der schwierigsten theologischen Fragen. Vor allem für die abrahamitischen Religionen war es schon immer eine große Herausforderung, eine Erklärung für den Ursprung des Bösen zu finden. Wie lässt sich das Vorhandensein von Leid in der Welt vernünftig erklären, wenn Gott allmächtig und allwissend ist? Oder anders gefragt: Sind die Existenz des Bösen und die Existenz Gottes logisch unvereinbar? Ist das Problem des Bösen unlösbar? Eine Antwort auf diese Frage ist nicht leicht zu finden. Aufgrund der Spannung zwischen der Existenz des Bösen und der göttlichen Allmacht und allumfassenden Güte wurden die verschiedensten Versuche unternommen, sowohl den Monotheismus als auch die Attribute Gottes vor Formen des Dualismus (wie z.B. bei Gnostikern, Paulikianern, Katharern) und vor der Idee einer Reduktion der Eigenschaften Gottes zu bewahren. Obwohl für die frühen christlichen Theologen die Reaktion auf das Problem des Bösen nicht als Antwort auf den Atheismus gedacht war, sondern eher als Antwort auf die Frage, wie man das Böse mit Gott in Einklang bringen kann, wird das „Argument des Bösen“ ab dem Mittelalter zu einem Thema in den atheistischen Debatten. Neben der scheinbaren Unvereinbarkeit des Theismus mit der Realität des Bösen geht es auch um eine anthropologische Frage, nämlich darum, wie der Mensch mit dem Leiden in der Welt umgeht, wie er das Böse darstellt oder wie er seine eigene Bosheit versteht.

Die vorliegende Ausgabe von RES soll unterschiedliche und interdisziplinäre Ansätze zum Problem des Bösen zusammenführen. Wir laden Autorinnen und Autoren ein, über die Hauptlinien der theologischen Diskussion hinauszugehen und zu untersuchen, wie sich nicht-theologische Disziplinen (z. B. Philosophie, Kunstgeschichte, Religionspsychologie, Religionssoziologie usw.) diesem schwierigen Thema nähern. Unter anderem kann an folgende Themen gedacht werden: zeitgenössische theistische Antworten auf das Problem des Bösen; die Frage des Leidens unter gleichzeitiger Annahme göttlicher Attribute; a-theologische Antworten auf das Problem des Bösen; das „Argument des Bösen“ und seine Beziehung zum Nichttheismus; Metaphysik des Bösen; künstlerische Darstellungen und Antworten auf das Böse; psychologische Ansätze zu Leiden und Glauben; psychologische Untersuchungen zur Boshaftigkeit menschlichen Verhaltens im religiösen Kontext; soziologische Konzepte des Bösen; historische Entwicklungslinien wie z. B. im Übergang von der traditionellen Frage „Warum

lässt Gott das Böse zu?“ zur heutigen Frage „Gibt es Gott wirklich, wenn es das Böse gibt?“ und damit eine Neubewertung der theologischen Diskurse durch das Auftreten des Bösen; Rechtfertigung Gottes in verschiedenen religiösen Traditionen; Relativierung des Bösen; Unterschiede und Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen den drei abrahamitischen Religionen in Bezug auf die Frage des Bösen; patristische und scholastische Antworten auf die Existenz des Bösen im Vergleich zu zeitgenössischen Diskussionen.

Gastherausgeber: Florin George Calian

Einsendeschluss: 15. November 2023

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