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***LES LIEUX DE MEMOIRE* AND THE LEGACIES OF
ROMA SLAVERY IN THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY.
CASE STUDY IN TISMANA, GORJ COUNTY, ROMANIA**

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LES LIEUX DE MEMOIRE AND THE LEGACIES OF ROMA SLAVERY IN THE COLLECTIVE MEMORY. CASE STUDY IN TISMANA, GORJ COUNTY, ROMANIA

Adrian-Nicolae FURTUNĂ¹

Abstract

This article aims to analyse the content of the local collective memory regarding slavery in Tismana, the place of the first documentary attestation of “Gypsies”² in Romanian territory as slaves. To construct my theoretical framework, I use theories particularly from the field of sociology, but I also take in consideration works from the field of history and cultural studies. The research model I use is a qualitative one – ethnographic, based on the theory of social representations. The case study is based on the relationship between the local mnemonics (the presence of the monastery) that refer to the phenomenon of slavery and the Roma community. After I identify the content of local collective memory regarding the phenomenon of “Gypsy slavery” and the meanings attributed to the mnemonics relating to slavery, I analyse how this content influences the construction and assumption of Roma ethnic identity, today, in this locality. I argue how the heritage of slavery shapes the relations between Roma and the majority population nowadays. This article also aims to introduce the debate on Roma slavery in Romania into the global discussion on collective memory, identity, and the legacies of slavery.

Keywords: mnemonics, Roma slavery, collective memory, social memory, cultural memory, ethnic identity, legacies of Roma Slavery.

Short historical context

It is less known that the Roma population from the actual territory of Romania was enslaved for more than four and a half centuries. The first documented attestation of the “Gypsies” on Romanian territory is as slaves of the Tismana

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Monastery in 1385 (Achim, 2004, 10). For over four and a half centuries, slavery was a harsh reality of Romanian social life.

The institution of slavery was regulated over the centuries by different laws. The beginning of the nineteenth century for Moldova and Wallachia is marked by the introduction of the first civil codes in 1817, respectively 1818. The codes, named after the names of the princes of Moldova and Wallachia, *Calimach* (Scarlat Calimachi) and *Caragea* (Ioan Gheorghe Caragea) contain special references to regulate the institution of slavery.

The code from Moldova states that: “Slavery and everything that has to do with ownership, although they are against the natural right of human beings, have been common of old in this Principality, not as the Romans do for a while, but in a special way. For here the power of the master can never be extended upon the slave’s life, under any circumstances” (Furtună, & Turcitu, 2021, 69).

The seventh chapter of the civil code from Wallachia is named “For slaves and Gypsies”. Listing some parts from these articles helps us understand the broader image of this institution in the Romanian territory:

“1. Slaves are those who are somebody’s property. This is the status of the Gypsies in Wallachia. 2. All people born from slaves shall remain slaves. 3. All born from a slave mother shall be slaves. 4. A Gypsy’s master has no power over his life. 5. A Gypsy’s master is free to sell or donate him. 6. All Gypsies in Wallachia who cannot prove who their master is, belong to the Royal Court.” (Furtună, & Turcitu, 2021, 71).

We see like a common point of the two civil codes the fact that the master of the slave has no power over the slave’s life.

The abolition of slavery in Moldova and Wallachia was a complex process due to the particularities of slavery in the Romanian territory. There were three categories of owners: the state, the monasteries and the boyars (nobles). This determined the adoption of a law for each category of ownership, being adopted six laws in total (three in Moldova and three in Wallachia) of emancipation between 1843-1856.

Overall, some 250,000 people were legally freed from slavery in the two principalities of Wallachia and Moldova between 1843 and 1856 (Achim, 2005, 115)³.

The abolition of Gypsies slavery was the first reform adopted by the Romanian countries of Wallachia and Moldova to express their will to be accepted in the modern Europe of the nineteenth century (Tomi, 2010, 58). In the newspaper *Gazeta de Moldavia* from 28th of November 1855, published in Romanian and French, prince Grigore A. Ghica was arguing for the abolition of slavery, stating:

“At a time when the whole of Europe is showing such keen interest in the Principalities and is pondering the determination of their future destinies, it is the duty of Our country to also take a step forward on its side. Many years have passed since slavery was abolished in all the civilized states of the ancient world: only the Moldo-Valachian

Principalities have still preserved this withering vestige of a barbarous society; in these Principalities alone slavery is part of the social order! such an anomaly, must not and can no longer exist!" (Gazeta de Moldavia, 28th of November, 1855)⁴.

The academic production related to slavery in the Romanian space is coming especially from the field of history (Achim, 2004, 2022; Tomi, 2010; Mateescu, 2015; Petcuț, 2015). The legacies of the slavery in Romanian society haven't been explored so far. This article is part of a broader research project on the social memory of "Gypsies's slavery" based on a series of seven case studies conducted in seven Roma communities from former slave *dwelling*⁵ (*sălașe*, in Romanian). Each case study is included in the research based on criteria that I present at length in the chapter on methodology.

I aim to identify the local mnemonics on the period of slavery, their content, and the meanings that locals currently ascribe to them. The relevance of this article in relation to the literature in the field of social memory is given by the challenge of researching the reflection in the local collective mind of a historical phenomenon that ended 166 years ago. The study becomes even more difficult given that the phenomenon of slavery was not institutionally represented from the second half of the nineteenth century until 2011, when the Romanian Parliament adopted the Law 28/2011 on the commemoration of Roma enslavement in Romania, by which February 20 was officially declared as the date when the abolition of The Roma slavery is marked at national level.

To identify the content of the local social memory related to slavery I will use a qualitative methodology. Through the content analysis technique, I will discuss a series of data collected through direct observation and semi-structured interviews. I will also include in my analysis the content of two monographs relating to the population of Tismana, Gorj county.

In the first part of the article, I make a brief description of the locality Tismana, describe the content of the local memory on slavery, highlighting the main categories that emerge from my research, and finally I present the main elements by which the Roma in Tismana define themselves from the perspective of ethnic identity.

Theoretical considerations

The study of social memory is a field shared by sociology, social psychology, history, and cultural studies. For a time, the sociological study of social memory was regarded almost as a field of sociology of knowledge and broadly as the structure that links societies (Olick, & Robbins, 1998, 105). In my study, I will follow the functions of the local memory related to slavery for the social relations between Roma and Romanians.

Olick and Robbins (1998) show that in the recent decades, the public interest in memory has grown. The main vectors for this are the fall of communism, the

rise of multiculturalism, and the policies of victimization and regret (based mostly on the memory of the Holocaust). In this framework multiculturalism highlights that historiography functions as a source of cultural domination, interrogating and deconstructing the dominant historical discourse on behalf of underrepresented groups. As Weadon and Jordan underline, “recent years have seen the rise of widespread interest in cultural and collective memory and their relation to questions of power, voice and identity” (Weadon, & Jordan, 2012, 143).

If in sociology the studies on the memory (of the past) of human groups or societies have been consecrated by the elaboration of concepts that define group memory from the perspective of the way in which it is influenced by the social system on the one hand and of the consequences of these influences on human relationships (social dynamic), in history it is approached primarily through inheritance (values and information) left by the past, translated by the term *cultural memory* (having from my point of view more of a static character).

Social memory involves, at the official level, a set of practices, such as commemoration, building monuments, teaching history in school, and representations of history in state museum spaces. At the community level, social memory takes several elementary forms, such as tradition, myths, or identity (Olick, & Robbins 1998, 105). During my field research in Tismana I focused on the impact of the memory of slavery on the identity of the people that have the consciousness they belong to the community. This community has its roots in the old dwellings of slaves that were in the property of Tismana monastery.

The one who lays the foundations of the theory of social memory, but also of social representations, is Emile Durkheim (1995), through his work “Elementary forms of religious life”, showing that religious representations are in fact, collective representations. Referring to the similarities and differences between the two concepts (social memory and social representations), Ticu Constantin and Oana Dănilă show that social memory is a set of representations about the past, and social representations are a set of representations about the present (Ticu, & Dănilă, 2006). My paper collects the representations about the past - the legacy of slavery, and puts them in relation to the actual representations of Roma identity.

Maurice Halbwachs, Durkheim’s student, emphasizes that social memory is structured by social arrangements. Without society, we cannot remember, anchor, and objectify (the theory of social representations) the content of representations about the past or present. (Halbwachs, 1992, 38). I want to highlight by what social arrangements the local social memory of slavery is determined at Tismana. What is the impact of history in structuring the memory of slavery and Roma identity at Tismana? Can we find a causal relationship between the historical past and the present representation of slavery?

Halbwachs (1992) distinguishes between autobiographical memory, historical memory, history, and collective memory. Autobiographical memory is the memory of those events that we have experienced ourselves, while historical memory is the

memory that reaches us through archives, “records”; history is the past preserved in relation to which we no longer have an “organic” relationship – the past that we consider it no longer influences us, while *collective memory is the active past, the one who forms our identities* (Olick, & Robbins, 1998, 111).

Regarding my research, it is obvious I will not identify an autobiographical memory related to slavery, now it ended 166 years ago. Concerning the historical memory I will try to determine what “records” related with slavery can be found in Tismana. In regard to history – as the past does not influence us, we understand that this issue is different from one group to another, what can be relevant from a historical point of view for a group can be irrelevant from another. The power relations between two groups often determine the content of history.

The sociologist Lewis A. Coser, in the preface of the translation in English to *On Collective Memory*, shows that for Halbwachs the present generation becomes self-aware by superimposing the present on its own built past. (Coser, & Halbwachs, 1992, 24). In this context I will emphasize how the Roma from Tismana understand and interpret their past, from the perspective of slavery, and how their interpretation of the past determines their “present”.

The nature of the object of this study compels me to analyse the historical facts and phenomena related to the studied group in order to understand the values to which it currently relates (Mills, 1975, 214-243).

Olick and Robbins (1998) show that memory inevitably makes way for history as we lose touch with our past. Historical memory can be *organic* or *dead*, as the authors quoted above show: we can celebrate or commemorate even what we have not directly experienced ourselves, keeping that past alive for us, or it can be alive only in the “historical records” (archives), the so-called *cemeteries of knowledge*.

The methodology of identification and selection of the localities is based on the concept of *lieux de memoire* (places of memory) as defined by the historian Pierre Nora: “certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists” (Nora, 1989, 7). Nora’s definition of the *places of memory* implies a multiple set of domains like sociology, cultural studies, and history. According to Nora, *les lieux de memoire* implies a game, a set of interchanges between memory and history. A true, genuine *lieux de memoire* isn’t affected by the intervention of the historian, who comes and gives a personal sense, opinion on that *lieux de memoire*. As Nora points out: “The passage from memory to history has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history.” (Nora, 1989, 15).

With the intervention of the researcher on the sense of a certain place of memory, that sense also becomes political, a matter of social responsibility or social justice, being integrated on what we call public memory – as a common (accepted) view on a certain historical issue.

In my research, I use the mnemonics related to “Gypsy” slavery as places of memory. In this case study, I consider the Monastery of Tismana as a place

of memory, discussing its material, symbolic and functional (Nora, 1989, 19) dimensions in relation with Gypsies slavery and Roma identity construction.

I choose to start my field research in Tismana, because here is the first attestation of the Gypsies in the Romanian space, as slaves of Tismana monastery, in 1385. In a deed from that year, Dan I, ruler of Wallachia, confirms the possession of Tismana Monastery upon a set of villages, mills and 40 families of *țigani*⁶ (Gypsies) (Achim, 2004, 13; Petcuț, 2015, 35).

As Jan Assman, show, establishes four dimensions of cultural memory that he defines as follows: 1. Mimetic memory – the transmission of practical knowledge from the past; 2. Material memory - the history contained in objects; 3. Communicative memory – past residues reflected in the vocabulary of a language, including the ability to communicate in that language; and 4. Cultural memory – the transmission of meanings from the past, which represent explicit historical content and consciousness (identity) (Olick, & Robins, 1998, 111-112). I analyse each of them as analytic lenses with which to discuss the information that I have accumulated so far at Tismana.

In the last years the historian Ana Lucia Araujo published a series of important works regarding the memory of slavery. In her last work „Slavery in the age of memory”, she underlines that cultural memory, as described by Jan Assman, uses a set of tools (rites, commemoration ceremonies, texts, material traces - monuments, objects and other mnemonic devices) „that activate meanings connected to what happened, but at the same time go „beyond their practical purpose”.” (Araujo, 2020, 251). She shows that these objects „have significance for a particular group or society” (Araujo, 2020, 251). In my research I try to determine what is the place occupied by Tismana Monastery in the process of collective memory building.

A few theoretical considerations regarding the use of the terms Gypsy (“țigan”) and Roma in my research

First, I use the term “țigan” as a mnemonic related to slavery in Romanian territory. As Viorel Achim shows, in the period of slavery the term “țigan” could be confounded with the term “slave”. So, according to some historians, the term “țigan” (Gypsy) during the period of slavery had first a social and a juridical meaning and not a one-off defining of an ethnicity (this is because in the category of slaves could fall into some circumstances also Romanians of ethnic origin). This approach is based on the fact that during the four and more than a half century of slavery the syntagm “robi țigani” (Gypsy slaves) disappeared from the archive documents being replaced with the term “țigani”. On other hand this approach creates a very sensitive debate regarding if slavery – as an institution, wasn’t first addressed to the “strangers”, only the Roma, and the Tatars, as ethnic

groups, were characterized in the Romanian countries by this social and juridical status, of slaves⁷.

Using the term “*țigan*” (Gypsy) as a mnemonic, as a legacy of slavery, I am interested in its symbolic meanings. I try to determine in what measure the people living in the communities coming from the old dwellings of slaves (near a monastery or near a boyar (noble) mansion) have interiorized the label of “*țigani*” (Gypsies) in the context in which after the abolition of slavery, the freed “Gypsies” were officially named by the authorities as “emancipated”, the term “*țigan*” losing its juridical and social meaning - of “slave”⁸.

Using this approach, I include in my broader research localities named after the term “*țigan*”, like “*Țigănia*” or “*Țigănești*”.

I use the term “*țigan*” (Gypsy) because I also take in consideration the lengthy historical process until the Roma were recognised in Romania as an official ethnic minority, in 1990.

Research design

The research design follows the historical realities that defined the status of the Roma population during the 471 years of slavery (1385-1856). The “Gypsy” slaves were owned by the rulers, monasteries and boyars (by boyar we mean any person who owned land, according to the meaning of C. Giurescu) (Giurescu, 1943, 470-475), from here deriving the three categories of slaves: “Gypsies” belonging to the prince (or of the state⁹), “Gypsies” belonging to the monasteries, and “Gypsies” belonging to the boyars. Every category of owners of slaves could have under its possession nomad and settled slaves. The nomads had the freedom to move on the territory of Moldavia or Wallachia and to practice their traditional crafts, paying an annual tax to their owners. In general, the prince had in his possession nomad slaves. Instead, the settled slaves in possession of monasteries or boyars were generally used for agricultural work or labour near the household (Achim, 2004, 31). My study focuses on a community that originates in the dwellings of the slaves of Tismana Monastery.

A fact that I consider in the elaboration of the research design is that I will question the content of the collective memory of slavery after 166 years since the adoption of the last law of emancipation from February 20th, 1856, by which the General Assembly (Adunarea Obștească) of Wallachia, under the reign of Barbu Știrbei, abolished slavery.

Given this long period of time, corroborated with the lack of this information in the school environment (only starting with the school year 2020-2021, a case study on Roma emancipation was introduced in the History textbook for the eightth grade) and with the fact that around this topic there were no commemoration practices (only starting with 2011 based on the “Law 28/2011 on the commemoration of

the enslavement of Roma in Romania”, when the Romanian Parliament officially adopted the day of February 20th as the date when the abolition of Roma slavery is marked at the national level), the probability of identifying an organic content of the collective memory of slavery at the level of Roma communities is very low.

The research hypothesis from which I start is that the more frequent mnemonics which refer to the period of slavery appear at the local level, the stronger the meaning(s) attributed to them by the Roma in that locality in defining their ethnic identity.

In order to narrow down the questioning scope concerning the content of the social memory of Roma slavery and its meanings at the local level, and to increase my chances of identifying a number of Roma communities in which this content exists, I used a series of local mnemonics (places of memory) that make direct reference to the phenomenon of slavery: 1) related names of localities (Țigănești¹⁰, Țigănia, Dezrobiți¹¹, etc.); Ovidiu-Constantin Craiu (2012, 125-126) shows that by decree 799/1964 the names of 866 localities in Romania were changed, of which 44 were ethnonyms – names of localities referring to names of peoples or ethnicities -. The author also shows that the most numerous ethnonyms referred to “Gypsies”: Rudari, Rudarii din Deal, Șetrari, Lingurari, Lingurari, Țigănia, Ursari, Rudăria, Șătrăreni, etc.; 2) the presence of the monastery/boyar’s mansion near the Roma community (accompanied by documentary evidence).

The research design is qualitative based on the ethnographic research method. Out of each community in the analysis I make a case study based on the relationship between the local mnemonics that refer to the phenomenon of slavery and the Roma community.

By the method of direct observation, I have collected a series of information on the following indicators:

- the presence/lack of informational content at the level of the local collective memory on the phenomenon of slavery;
- the number of members of the Roma community in relation to the total number of inhabitants of the entire village;
- the settlement of the community in relation to the monastery or the boyar manor (distance);
- the degree of preservation of identity (customs, traditions, customs, language);
- declaring /not declaring the ethnicity at censuses;
- the main occupation(s) of the members of the respective community in the past in relation to the occupations of community members at present.

I also conducted semi-structured interviews with two categories of people: some aged 40-60, and others over the age of 60 to observe modifications of the content, and of the sense of local collective memory to different generations (Eyerman,

2004, 69-78). Some of the interviewees are generally part of an extended family. In total I interviewed 10 persons (five persons belonging to one extended family).

The contact persons in the community were the health mediator of the town of Tismana and the director (whom I will call TT) of the Popular Costume Museum, these two persons being married. Regarding the profile of our contact persons in the community, they represent the Roma elite at the local level, even if there are no “Roma” at the official level. Even on the part of the mayor’s office, one can see a kind of entry into a game of masking the identity of the Roma; although there are only three declared Roma in Tismana, a health mediator was hired, and he really proves his usefulness in the community, representing a real link between municipality and community.

This case study approach also gives me the possibility to comparatively analyse two locally produced monographs. The first monograph is written by a local historian, Nicolae Tomoniu, and describes the entire locality, including the Roma community, and the second monograph is a description only of the Roma community in Tismana and is written by a Roma woman from “The Mahala”¹², a high school graduate, Elena Trîncă Buzneri. Having access to a monograph written by a Roma person living in that community brings an increased contribution of information for analysing the content of local memory on slavery. Also, by its content, this document can be considered an autobiographical memory document, giving us access to a series of data to which it would be particularly difficult for us to access.

A series of articles from the local press referring to the Roma in Tismana are added to these documents.

The data collected through direct observation, interviews and documents were systematized and analysed according to the main categories that emerge.

Overview of the locality

Tismana cannot be presented without considering the Tismana Monastery, the oldest monastic establishment in Wallachia. The first documentary attestation of the Tismana Monastery is from 1385, being the same charter through which the first documentary attestation of the “Gypsies” in the Romanian space is made. The development of the Tismana fair is in close connection, during the Middle Ages, with the economic dynamics of the Tismana Monastery, which is demonstrated by the archival fund of the monastery. “The town of Tismana” is recorded in documents of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, which conveys the idea of the development of local elites, the “ban (the *ban* was a governor delegated by the lord to govern a region) from Tismana” and the “fair” mentioned by Paul of Aleppo suggesting this idea (Tomoniu, 2016, 20).

At that time, Tismana Monastery owned properties that worked with both *Gypsy* slaves and *rumâni* (Romanian dependent peasants, serfs), and over time they became the inhabitants of the fair.

The slaves formed the “The Mahala” (the quarter inhabited by Roma) immediately after they were emancipated and put in possession of land, following the Agrarian Reform of 1864 initiated by Al. I. Cuza. Mahalalei Street was, therefore, the main street in Tismana at that time.

In the past, the main occupation of members belonging to the majority population was sheep breeding. During communism, this occupation continued, the area not being collectivized, and a large part of the women worked within the “Cooperativa Arta Casnică” [Household Art Cooperative], founded in 1950. The one who founded the “Household Art” Cooperative was Traian Burtea, who managed to create in 1980, the top year of the cooperative in terms of production, 1,580 jobs (the work was also organized as work at home, this model being followed today as well). The first women who were employed were Roma owing to the fact that among the Roma there was a tradition already in making Romanian folk costumes; they came from “The Mahala”.

The cooperative began to decline immediately after the fall of communism as access to export markets in the former communist countries was interrupted. Currently, the cooperative still exists, but it has a small number of employees. However, several private companies have appeared (most of them belong to Roma) that produce Romanian folk costumes, their employees and specialists coming from the ranks of the former workers of the “Household Art” Cooperative.

Marian Bucur shows that in the case of the weavers, the work at home was practiced since 1853, the period when the Golescu family of boyars had founded the “Furnica” Cooperative, based on the local weavers’ work at home for a certain payment (Bucur, 2011, 24).

According to the statements of the interviewed persons, the main occupations of the Roma in the locality were, over time, fiddlery and masonry for men, while for women, the sewing of Romanian folk costumes. Currently, some men have set up construction companies, and others are working abroad.

The population of Tismana¹³, according to the 2002 census, had the following composition: 1,903 people, of which 1,881 were Romanians and 21 were Roma. According to the 2011 census, out of the approximately 1,000 Roma estimated in the locality, only three declared their belonging to the Roma ethnicity.

The contacts in the community were the health mediator and the informal leader of the Roma community (which I will call TT), own together a workshop of Romanian folk costumes representative for Romanian folkloric area of Oltenia. The health mediator began from the very first moments of our interaction to give us a description of the people of “The Mahala”, a description that repeatedly contained the adjectives “hardworking” and “honest”. This kind of description was also promoted by the local media, for example, a title from a local newspaper sound

in the same way: “The Roma from Mahala of Tismana, modern and hardworking” (Vertical, 11th of May 2011).

The content of local memory on slavery (interviews and monographs). People over the age of 60

I started the documentation visit with a trip to the monastery, where in 2015, at the initiative of a Roma Member of the European Parliament, Damian Drăghici, a commemorative plaque about slavery was placed. An interesting fact is that our contact persons in the locality didn't mention the existence of the plaque and didn't present it to us as an object related to slavery.

After, I paid a visit to the workshop of folk costumes and carpets from the region of Oltenia. The most important part of the visit to the workshop was that we interviewed two workers, “Mama” (Mother of TT) and “Fina” (goddaughter of Mama), both over the age of 60.

Tape 1

TT – The gentlemen are here for the history of the Roma in Tismana, when they appeared, how they appeared, is this the first documentary attestation; so, the first Gypsies in the country are of ours, who were the slaves of the monastery.

Mother – What about the other monasteries?

TT – Ours is the oldest monastery! And if it's the oldest, of course the first Gypsies are also certified with [archival] documents.

An important remark for our study is made by “Mama”: “- *What about the other monasteries?*” This shows that she is aware of the spread of the phenomenon of slavery.

In the community, the interviewed persons, every time they were questioned about the phenomenon of slavery, made automatic connections in their speech with the fact that the former slaves of the monastery were put in possession of land during the agrarian reform initiated by the prince Al. I. Cuza in 1864.

Tape 2

No.	Content Category 1. <i>We know that we have been slaves because we have been put in possession of land</i>
1.	Sheet 2, Male, 80 years old, former mason: Q – Tell me, do you know if the Roma were ever slaves of the monastery? Interviewed – My parents were like that, and their parents, too. My parents, my grandparents were slaves of the monastery. <i>This land here was given by the monastery to the Gypsies, because they were slaves.</i>

2.	<p>Woman, 64 years old, needlewoman</p> <p>Q - Do you know if there were ever slaves to the monastery?</p> <p>Aunt – <i>Yes. And they were put in possession of land in the meadow, in the village meadow.</i></p> <p>Q – What did it mean to be a slave?</p> <p>Aunt – They worked there, from morning to night, for almost nothing, for food, for almost nothing.</p>
3.	<p>Woman, 60 years old, needlewoman</p> <p>I - You know what I want to ask you: do you know how long the Roma were enslaved at the monastery?</p> <p>Fina (laughs) – I don't know...</p> <p>TT – Well, since then (that is since the first documentary attestation), that is about five hundred years.</p> <p>Fina – <i>Up to Cuza. Cuza put Gypsies in possession of land, that's what I know, my grandmother used to tell me. He distributed the lands to each of them.</i></p>

The emphasis of information among those interviewed is on the fact that slaves have been put in possession of land, this being the mnemonic that connects the past to the present from the perspective of the historical past, of slavery. This fact is also highlighted in the writings of the local historian, N. Tomoniu:

Tape 3

“In time, however, their status near the monasteries changed, the enslaved Gypsies were disregarded, following centuries of unhuman life. Except for those from Tismana! They were musicians and masons and the most hardworking of them have obtained land from the monastery and have raised the Mahala with their own hands.” (Tomoniu, 2011)

In other words, the bridge between the traumatic past and the present is made through a measure, perceived as reparative, which had as a consequence the raising of the former slaves of the Tismana Monastery to the same status as that of the Romanian corvee peasants (clăcași).

In fact, the slaves belonging to the monasteries in Wallachia were emancipated from slavery in 1843, being passed among the *dajnici* (taxpayers) of the state. Through the Agrarian Reform of 1864, initiated by Al. I. Cuza, 467,080 peasants were put in possession of 1,654,964 hectares of land¹⁴, some of the former slaves being among these peasants.

Meanings attributed to mnemonics relating to slavery

In the community, the person from whom we could find out (through the interview) most of the data was TT's aunt, Mrs. Elena Trîncă-Buzneri, aged 64, author of a monograph of the Roma community in Tismana.

The monographs of the localities included in the research are important for us not only from the perspective of their content, but also from the perspective of how the information is presented, of the interethnic relations that emerge from them, and of the cultural picture that they manage to present. Elena represents a key source for our study, because she presents in detail the life of the community of the Mahala, emphasizing, in her monograph, a series of identity elements, which describe in detail the members of the community, especially from the perspective of their occupation as fiddlers.

However, the central element of the subject of this article is missing from the monograph written by Mrs. Elena Trîncă Buzneri: the memory of slavery. How could this be explained? Maurice Halbwachs points out that we place our family memories in the social frameworks in which the society in which we live locates or builds its past (Halbwachs, 1992, 81) ["Or we place our family recollections in the frameworks where our society retrieves its past."]

Since the general tone of the work has the role of suggesting to the reader the relations of good cohabitation between *the Gypsies* and the Romanians in Tismana, I consider that the absence of any indication of slavery in the monograph may suggest the author's intention to avoid assigning blame for slavery and preserve good relations between the two groups. Instead, the community of the Mahala is presented in relation to those who live on the main street of the town and describes the fiddler families in Tismana.

In the second part of the work, the author writes a general description of the Roma cultural subgroups, which confirms that this community is indeed Roma, as a confession, as a return to the "roots".

Tape 4

I – What do you think, [slavery] has had any effect on generations over time...

Aunt (anticipates) – Yes! Yes! How not to!

Q – Do you believe it?

Aunt – This name [of slave]? If I tell you something, look, ex officio, like that, instinctively, and at church [Tismana Monastery], my niece should tell you (the health mediator), unwittingly, but no one offends us, no one offends us, the women here in the Mahala sit down on one side, look, she can confirm...

Health mediator – That's right, yes...

Aunt – And women... the Romanians, look! I can say so... [that is, to say things by name] on one side, as there are two rows of chairs on the left and on the right. So, it had repercussions, it had...

TT – Yes, it was a bit of a... [differences] And it is now, too.

Aunt – We feel alone. They don't offend us, they eat with us, they stay with us, they don't offend us, absolutely no one ever, not necessarily my nephew as he's an entrepreneur now, or my niece as she's a nurse, or me...

TT – It goes without saying. It's something mutual.

Aunt – Indeed, indeed.

The health mediator – As for how we feel, we feel [inferior].

Aunt – Look, at a wedding, it was a wedding last year. TT's sister was the godmother.

TT – Yes.

Aunt – At one table, only Romanians were sitting, but no one told them to sit like this, ex officio, and at another table, only Gypsies.¹⁵

(Group interview, TEB 80 years old, TT, health mediator – The Mahala, Tismana)

In small communities, “the Church”, “the weddings” represent those spaces of interaction in which actors display the history of their family or community. This way, they become public spaces with significance, especially for those who perform inside them at a certain time, as well as for those who observe from the outside the interactions that take place inside these spaces. The interviewees seem to suggest that *Gypsies* know where they belong, and the Romanians the same. The gap between historical memory and the present is filled by collective memory.

Comparing these data from the field with the data regarding the “Gypsies” collected and discussed by Domnica Păun in the monograph of Cornova village made in 1931, I observed the similarity of the content of the data, the distance in time being of 86 years between the data collected by the researcher from the Gustian school and those collected by me: “In general, the still fresh memory of a slightly distant past in which Gypsies were slaves makes them far from being able to sit next to the Romanians: “Besides, how to be Gypsies in line with us? They do not sit at the head of the table; they sit more and more in line. [...]” “When you ask the Romanian if he is the same with the Gypsy, there is not one who does not answer that <it was never mentioned to be Gypsies the same with the Romanians>” (Păun, 1932, 525).

This similarity of information, which also determines the form of the social relations between Roma and Romanians, suggests regarding the continuities and discontinuities in the process of collective memory-building that the historical past of the groups is crucial for the way in which they perceive themselves. For the Roma from Tismana seems to be a “normality” the fact that they stay separated in the church even today. What is interesting is that, when questioned about this separation today, it is explained by Ms. Elena Trîncă Buzneri as a legacy of the slave past.

Content of social memory on slavery among people under the age of 60

The people who were able to give us information about the slavery of the Roma were generally people over the age of 60. Younger people could not provide us with information about slavery, but their testimonies help us better anchor the social representation of slavery today.

Tape 5

No.	
1.	Woman, 40 years old, needlewoman. I - Did you know these stories about the Roma, that they were the slaves of the monastery? Interviewed – No..., the elders know. I – It means that those in their 20s don't know either. Interviewed – We don't know either.
2.	Woman 2, 60 years old, needlewoman. Q - Do you know if those who live here worked for the monastery or were slaves in the past?? Woman 2 – They were not, but they went and worked at the monastery for money. The people who worked at the monastery were paid. I've heard of... these slaves..., but we are not..., the elders know, we don't know.

I formulated the question in this way “- Do you know if in the past those who live here worked for the monastery or were slaves?” because I noticed at the community level a reluctance on the part of the inhabitants of the “Mahala”, in the sense that I would like to “dig” into a past that they would otherwise like to bury. The term “work” is associated with the idea of dignity and formulated in this way the question became less embarrassing. The answer received from the interviewee shows instead a fact from the recent past, that some of the Roma in the locality worked for the monastery, but as day laborers, being paid (in Dezrobiți, Vâlcea County, I also noticed this fact even today. This locality represents also a *lieux de memoire* in my research; the name of the village, *Dezrobiți*, meaning *The Emancipated*).

Among these people, the consciousness of the phenomenon of slavery is lost. The association of the knowledge of the phenomenon only by the “elders” comes from the desire or need to be forgotten because “I have heard of... these slaves ..., but we are not ..., the elders know, we do not know.” The association of this history with the present contradicts the new coordinates or values according to which they want to build a future today, and it embodies a traumatic historical past. This traumatic past takes the form of what is called cultural trauma, as defined by the sociologist Ron Eyerman, in the book chapter “Cultural trauma. Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity”: “The trauma in question is slavery, not as institution or even experience, but as collective memory, a form of remembrance that grounded the identity-formation of a people” (Eyerman, 2004, 60).

The shame of slavery is experienced at Tismana to our present days through collective memory. If the older generations keep the memory of slavery, the newer generations reject it. In this case study, a possible explanation can be linked with

the main mnemonic that kept the presence of the slavery in collective memory – the receiving from the state of a small piece of land in 1864 by the former slaves who were considered now as *emancipated* and put in the same row with the Romanian peasants. At present, this has no signification for the new generation, who faces the same economic problems as the rest of Romanians, and for which agriculture isn't anymore a means for supporting life.

The cultural trauma, expressed through the lack of public acceptance of the Roma ethnic identity, is a result of the lack of public acknowledgement (museums, education system, monuments) regarding the explanation and interpretation of the slave past during the decades. The dissociation from the slave past is a response to the need to be defined on new coordinates, and to be seen by the others if not as Romanians at least as equal citizens.

Ethnic identity today

Another category found in the speech of the interviewees is that of “people in Tismana who are not in trouble with the law”. During the visit to the community, the health mediator told me proudly that we could leave the car unlocked, “no one is stealing anything here”. So, I noticed a kind of pride in being very honest among the inhabitants of the ‘Mahala’, a pride that sometimes wanted to convey the idea that in this (Roma) community, you feel very safe, compared to others. Here are some excerpts from Mrs. Buzneri’s monograph and Mr. Tomoniu’s articles included in my analysis:

Tape 6

Content category 2. They are we are honest people.	
N. Tomoniu	E.T. Buzneri
<i>“Many honest people live in the Mahala, even prominent people, many are Romanians, in some time the population will be mixed as it is now even on the main axis of the city.”</i>	<i>“And the reason I am glad is that so far neither the Gypsies nor the Romanians in Tismana have committed acts against the law.”</i>
<i>“In our Mahala there are people with a special musical sense, always looking for honest work, they do not think about stealing, they have built most of Tismana’s houses, and at work they have a special respect for the master of the house so that they can be asked again to work.”</i>	

My attention is particularly drawn to the expression “... *always in search of honest work, they do not think about stealing ...*”; it resembles so much the way in which the Roma themselves define themselves at the local level. Certainly, at the level of public discourse, “Gypsy” means in Tismana “to be in search of dishonest work, to think about stealing”. The central element that defines them, from an ethnic point of view, is not one of a cultural nature, but one of a social nature, which is related in this case to crime.

Analysing the data from the censuses, starting with 1930, I determined that in the interwar period there was a significant number of Roma in Tismana locality, compared with the number of the total population, who declared belonging to Roma ethnicity: from 740 inhabitants, 185 were Roma (a percentage of 25%). After 1930, there were no self-declared Roma in Tismana.

A fact that can contribute as an explanatory factor is that after the Roma deportation to Transnistria in 1942, part of the Holocaust in Romania, the Roma from Tismana, already acculturated, stopped declaring their belonging to Roma ethnicity, as a survival strategy. The deportation was preceded by a census of the “undesirable” Roma from the end of May 1942. In the category of the “undesirable” - Roma were counted first the nomadic Roma, and from the category of the settled Roma those Roma who had a criminal file: “a total of 40,909 people were listed: 9,471 nomadic Roma and 31,438 settled Roma” (Raport final, 2004, 230).

Ms. Elena Trîncă Buzneri informed us that from Tismana weren't any Roma deported.

Table 1. The evolution of total population and self-declared Roma population in Tismana as administrative territorial unit (a.t.u.) and as a single locality between 1930-2011¹⁶

Census	Official number of the total population in Tismana a.t.u.	Official number of Roma in Tismana a.t.u.	Official number of the total population in Tismana locality	Official number of Roma in Tismana locality
1930	7242	256	740	185
1941	Data not centralized	Data not centralized	Data not centralized	Data not centralized
1956	7,992	2		0
1966	8,212	3		0
1977	9,009	44		0
1992	1,992	237		0
2002	7,578	222	1,903	21
2011	7,035	81		3

The following category of content identified, closely related to the one above, is that of assimilation:

Tape 7

Content category 3. They have assimilated/We have assimilated.	
Tomoniu	Buzneri
<p><i>“The inhabitants of the Mahala have adapted to the Romanian way of life, and it is unfair to be called Gypsies in the bad sense of the word. At its origins, six centuries ago, in slavery, the word «Gypsy» meant «untouchable» (a tzingare). They were the most faithful and hardworking of all the slaves and that is why the rulers of that time gave them to the monasteries for work and cleaning. [...]”</i></p>	<p><i>“What I want to tell you is that in Tismana at least since I know the world and until now there has been no discrimination between the majority population, respectively between Romanians and the Romanized [Romanianized] Gypsies from Tismana. The explanation is as simple as it is real. Over time, the Gypsies of Tismana, have shared the same customs, the same occupations, the same faith, the same port as the Romanians.” p. 54</i></p>

At the level of the locality, there are several appearances that must be preserved. Both Roma and Romanians have learned how to present and how to represent the relationship between them. We encounter the same clichés, and phrases, common to both the Roma and the Romanians: *The explanation is as simple as it is real. Over time, the Gypsies of Tismana, have shared the same customs, the same occupations, the same faith, the same port as the Romanians. (Buzneri) The inhabitants of the Mahala have adapted to the Romanian way of life, and it is unfair to be called Gypsies, in the bad sense of the word. (Tomoniu).*

In this case, the adaptation of the Roma to the majority population’s lifestyle by giving up the ties with the historical past is perceived as modernization, being represented by the prototype of the Romanized Gypsies. Mrs. Buzneri defines extensively in her work what the Romanized Gypsies represent: “The Romanized Gypsies are those categories of Roma who have nothing in common with the Gypsy traditions, customs and occupations and with the Romani language. [...] For the reason that the Romanized Gypsies share the same traditions and customs, the discrimination between the Romanized Gypsies and the Romanians is a tacit one, only to themselves.” (Buzneri, 2011, 59-60).

We therefore note an awareness of the fact that there is still a barrier that is difficult to overcome even if the Roma give up their identity values – this does not really ensure communication from the same level between the two ethnicities. In this case, if the Roma renounced to their cultural values, on what basis Buzneri speaks about a “tacit discrimination” from the side of Romanians? She wants to emphasize that they still remain “Gypsies” in the eyes of the other. The communication is blocked in part by the content of the collective memory

related to slavery, like a historical past of subordination, and by a labelled Romani culture seen by both Romanians and assimilated Roma as the traditional culture of the “true Roma” – the archetype of the traditional Roma with long skirts and a specific language. This archetype is often associated with criminality: “*it is unfair to be called Gypsies, in the bad sense of the word.*” Here we meet a racialization of the Romani culture, as a result that, during the time, the Romani culture wasn’t promoted in the Romanian society.

This reinforces Catalin Zamfir’s statement that only ethnic developments integrated into the collective system of modernization are sustainable (Zamfir, 2003, 5).

The next category that emerged from the data analysis and the information from the two monographs is “we do not consider them/ourselves Roma”:

Tape 8

Content category 4. We do not consider them/ourselves “Roma”	
N. Tomoniu	T.E. Buzneri
<i>The Mahala has its identity, it has its own kind of life, here do not live “Roma” as some people try to create an artificial name, for six centuries the slaves of the monastery live here, those who have nothing to do with the kalderash Gypsies or with the nomad Gypsies (Roma).</i>	<p><i>“After the revolution of 1989, in 1990 the mayor of that time, Luculescu Ion, received from the Roma party in Bucharest a fax, as they had the obligation to make census to the Roma in Romania. [...] But the surprise was great, the mayor sent the fax back that he has no Roma citizens in Tismana, he has only citizens.” p. 54</i></p> <p><i>“At Tismana elementary school, the principal at that time said that they do not have Roma children. The principal said that he has only students. And that they come to school dressed, washed, with books and notebooks, and that they learn well. Another example is from nowadays. Specifically, in 2010, my sister has a workshop of Oltenian carpets, and three quarters of the workers are Romanian, but there is no use of words like «Gypsy» or «Romanian», they are all women”. In conclusion, Gypsies and Romanians in Tismana live in good neighbourliness and in good harmony.”</i></p>

Tomoniu’s fragment is relevant for us in two aspects: it is in line with the very position of the inhabitants of Tismania towards the word “Gypsy” (who define themselves by antithesis with the former nomadic Roma: *we are not those with skirts*); the second aspect is that it emphasizes the problem of local belonging – “locals”, being associated, by bringing it to the present, with the patrimony of the monastery: *for six centuries here live the slaves of the monastery*. Thus, a historical fact from the shared past (of the Tismana Monastery and of the Roma

community) but distant in time, that of slavery, is anchored in the present, and the social representation of the Roma community is made through the presence of the mnemonic, in this case, the monastery.

In the case of Mrs. Buzneri, a certain joy is observed, given by the fact that the local authorities assimilated the Roma at that time to the other citizens, the acceptance being the first step in becoming the “equal” of the others. The phrases and words “only citizens”, “only pupils”, “women” turn the Roma into the equals of the Romanians, who, in fact, are different from them in terms of the historical past, and of the level of social integration in the present.

Interviewing some women in the community, they told me they would never send their children to high school or college in dedicated places for “Roma”¹⁷. When applying on reserved places for Roma, it would mean a deviation from the norms of the “Mahala” and from the expectations of the members of the majority population towards how the members of the “Mahala”, who have been “the slaves of the monastery for six centuries” should behave.

The picture that must be painted continuously is that of two communities that understand each other perfectly, respect each other, and are willing to accept their differences. However, to understand more deeply the nature of these relationships, it is appropriate to present an excerpt from Mrs. Buzneri’s monograph:

Tape 9

“Anyway, do not misunderstand me that I am contradicting myself, but I have to tell the truth. Discrimination in Tismana exists, but a silent or discreet one. Discrimination happens within every man or child. Specifically, Romanians know within themselves that we are Gypsies, and Gypsies know the same thing within themselves, but life goes on for ones and for others.”

The lack of affirmation of ethnic identity and its disownment at the public level is experienced at the individual level as discrimination. The resignation of the Roma, and of the members of the majority population, in front of this fact – *that we are Gypsies* – leads to the experience of a Romanian mimetic identity on the part of the Roma.

I remember when I informed TT that I work as a counsellor for the National Centre for Roma Culture his reaction of appreciation. He mentioned immediately with joy, in his quality of musician – being hired in one of the most known Romanian folk bands from the region of Oltenia, the concert of the Roma Philharmonic in 2016, seen by him on social networks, organized by the centre at the Romanian Atheneum. I proposed him organize a concert in partnership with the local authorities on the basis that at Tismana we have the first attestation of the Roma in the Romanian territory. He refused, saying that he will organise at Tismana a festival of the local Romanian folk ensembles. He added that in these bands are playing a lot of Roma musicians from the area¹⁸.

In fact, the festival, called after a local Roma known musician, Geagu Cătăroi, represents, in my opinion, “a scene” on which the Roma from Tismana can perform

their own mimetic identity, of people who are important for the local Romanian community, because they are the keepers of the Romanian folklore. The keeping by the Roma of the Romanian folklore through music (and making of the Romanian folk costumes), gives them a specific kind of power, in relation to the majority population.

The self-denial of belonging to the Roma ethnicity is done regardless of whether it meant increasing their access to a series of social services that could improve their quality of life: school mediator, access to special places for Roma candidates for high school and college, scholarships for educational support granted by some organisations, etc.

This reality is also recognized by the local authorities, being mentioned in the “Statute of Tismana City” displayed on the Tismana City Hall website:

Tape 10

“(4) The data regarding the population of Tismania contain, by local status, an amendment capable of simplifying the actions of supporting the minorities and therefore they include: a) the situation of the number of inhabitants of the component villages and the perspective of the future years according to Annex no. 2 to this Statute; this is a situation of law; b) the amendment also recognising a state of affairs; the overwhelming majority of the population of Tismana, according to the census, by free declaration, is of Romanian ethnicity, but in reality there are several families, generally mixed families, at the lowest limit of poverty, in which at least one of the heads of the family had Gypsy ancestors, especially in the villages of Tismana and Celei; the recognition of this reality by the Local Council, in this statute, must allow the competent organizations and bodies to carry out aid programs, to provide funds for the support, conservation and development of the living conditions of these ethnic communities.” Source: <https://primariatismana.ro/statutul-orasului-tismana/>.

What can also be noted is that the inhabitants of the Mahala do not want to be identified in general either with the term “Gypsy” or with that of “Roma”, the conclusion being that any reference that mentions their ethnicity, different from that of the members of the majority population, must be avoided. This has led over time to the creation of a special label for these Roma, namely that of *tismănari* (in Romanian: “inhabitants of Tismana”) (Zamfir, & Zamfir, 1993, 239).

Țîrcomnicu and Simion realised, in 2015, an interview with a Roma leader from the region of Oltenia who emphasize very clearly what means for the Roma from this region, who kept their traditions, language and customs¹⁹ the term “tismănar”:

Tape 11

“There are two types of fiddlers (lăutar) : the ones originating from the tismănari group and the bear taming fiddlers. The lăutari from the tismănari group are people who integrated themselves the majority losing their language and are easily recognizable through their music and virtuosity. They don’t only play a musical instrument, but also sing with their voice. Nowadays, after many years, the fiddlers transformed into musicians, some very important too. From my point of view, corroborated with the study I made, there are more than 20-30% of Roma people in the Romanian philharmonics. The Tis-mănar Gypsies represent part of a group that comes from the Monastery of Tismana. The ones that were many years ago, I don’t know exactly, Gypsies and Romanians who were in the church fortresses, meaning they were governed by the church. They [were governed] by Tis-mana. This group of the tismănari only exists in the area of Oltenia. [...]

The ones who collect waste, plastic recipients, they are part of the «tismănari» group. No traditional Gypsy will ever do that. These Gypsies are not traditional Gypsies. The traditional Gypsies are the ones that keep their tradition – the language, the way they dress, as well as their customs. Whereas the fiddler, except for his music, is no different from the Romanian. Un-fortunately, the majority of fiddlers («lăutari») doesn’t acknowledge the affiliation to the Roma ethnicity.” (Țircomnicu, & Simion, 2015, 74,75)

The rest of the Roma population has created a special label for the Roma from Tismana, who lost their language and customs, *tismănari*, associating the loosing of the ethnic identity with the “collection of waste”.

This a result of the cultural fragmentation – cultural trauma produced by a historical past (slavery and Holocaust) who wasn’t explained and interpreted by the specialists at macrosocial level, and assumed through the public memory (monuments, museums, etc.)

While the Roma from Tismana don’t present themselves neither as “Roma” or “Gypsies”, the local authorities are worried because cannot access different funds for Roma or permit the access of different Roma organizations to solve the social problems from the community. A solution in this sense, for the Roma ethnicity assumption, would be the creation of different cultural spaces, at local level (exhibitions, festivals, conferences, etc.), in order to express and explain the historical past and its consequences for the Roma identity and the interethnic relations.

Conclusions

The objective of this work was to identify the local mnemonics that refer to the phenomenon of slavery, and to determine how they influence the process of constructing the Roma ethnic identity.

At the beginning of the research, by the place of memory, I understood the monastery, regarded as an object in itself. If I were to associate directly, without any equivocation, the presence of informational content on slavery identified through the interviews and social documents presented in this article, with the mere presence of the monastery, I think it would be a mistake, or at least a half-truth. As the data collected in the field have shown, there are other factors that contribute to the presence in the local collective memory of the information on the historical past of the Roma. One of these factors is, for example, putting the emancipated in the rows of *clăcași* (peasants settled on a ruler, boyar or monastic estate – the settlers paid by days of work the landlord the rent for the land on which they lived and from which they fed) in possession of land, which took place in 1864 during the reign of Al. I. Cuza.

There are other factors that influence the presence/absence in the collective memory of historical information on one's own community, among which I mention the distance between the community/village in question and the nearest town, the migration from village to town, the extent to which the village in question preserves its folk tradition, etc. (Tismana became a city in 2004).

Regarding the meanings given to the mnemonics concerning the slavery, we could see two directions. On the one hand, there is a separation in church and at other events (weddings/ baptisms) of the inhabitants of the 'Mahala' (the descendants of the former slaves) from the rest of the inhabitants of Tismana (the descendants of the former Romanians peasants/ *clăcași*). This is understood by the Roma as normal, being in accordance with the spirit of tradition: "*At a table there are only Romanians, but no one tells them to sit like this, ex officio, at another table, only Gypsies...*". On the other hand, there is the preservation of the memory of slavery through the mnemonic of ownership of land, which placed them on a comparable socioeconomic level with the rest of the village inhabitants, removing them from the state of "*Gypsies*" (taking in consideration that during the slavery to such an extent the term "*Gypsy*" was assimilated to the term "slave"). The interpretation given by the inhabitants of the 'Mahala' to this measure as a remedy has at present the role of conferring dignity on them.

We have also noticed a few differences in memory content between the people considered older (over 60 years old) and the younger ones. While the elders know in part the historical past of their community, and assume it, and even give it a meaning, the youngest are not willing to take it over, the act of forgetting being, in their case, the strategy of reconciliation with a historical past characterized by

the shame of slavery: “I have heard of ... these slaves ..., but we are not ..., the elders know, we do not know.”

The categories of content according to which they describe themselves from an ethnic point of view belong to a field that interferes between social and cultural areas: “we are honest people”, “we have assimilated ourselves”, “we do not consider ourselves Roma”. Since the term “Gypsy” has designated over the centuries in the Romanian space both a social state – that of slavery, and an ethnic category, the way in which the inhabitants of the Mahala define their identity is in accordance with their historical past, and local tradition. After the emancipation, the term “Gypsy” no longer had its meaning in the legal sense, because they had become *clăcași*. Living for centuries near the monastery and practicing different crafts (especially fiddlery) that brought them into frequent contact with the majority population, they stopped speaking the Romani language and adopted the traditional Romanian costume, but this did not make them entirely equal to the *Romanians*. There were still a number of traces that forced them to build their identity in a negotiation with *the other*.

I will further exemplify these “traces” using the classification of Jan Assman (Olick, & Robins, 1998, 111-112):

- 1) At the level of mimetic memory, the inhabitants of the `Mahala` inherited fiddlery from the past, as practical knowledge practiced by both men and women. For a very long time the Roma in Tismana have fulfilled the role of providers of cultural services for the community members, without including in these cultural products elements from their ethos, but taking inspiration from the life of the members of the majority population, thus producing a folklore considered authentically Romanian, adapted to and inspired by the life of the majority population.
- 2) At the level of material memory, the monastery is the local “object” that has stood as a testimony of slavery over the centuries (some Roma being also in a state of economic reliance on it in the contemporary period). To this I add the receiving of land, as *clăcași* in 1864, the land seen in this context as a material object.
- 3) At the level of communicative memory, the inhabitants of the `Mahala` of Tismana still refer today to the members of the majority population with the appellation *rumâni* – one of the states of social dependence of the Romanian peasants during Middle Ages. Also, in this section we include the fact that they have been linguistically assimilated.
- 4) At the level of the cultural memory of slavery, the information transmitted from the past through one generation to other has shaped the identity of the inhabitants of the `Mahala`, these being built by the members of the community with the role of making them the equals of *the Romanians*.
- 5) At the macro social level, the social memory of the Roma slavery in the Romanian space cannot be regarded without considering the political regimes that have unfolded so far since their emancipation (1843-1856).

From this perspective, the most important role in defining the content of the social memory of slavery is played by communism, due to its longue presence in the Romanian history. During that period, the Roma were not officially recognised as an ethnic minority, and the plan of their integration was structured on the principle of assimilation.

My article showed that even today, 166 years after the abolition of slavery, there is an informational content at the level of local collective memory on this period, and this content is also attributed to meanings that determine, to a certain extent, the character of people-to-people relations at community level, and the way in which the Roma define themselves ethnically. To identify this content, a minimum number of factors must be met: a relatively high degree of preservation of popular traditions at the community level (Stahl, 1983, 260-263), accompanied by the presence of mnemonics (places of memory) related to slavery. We will find out whether this model will give the same results to the extent that it will be applied in the study of collective memory on slavery in other localities characterized by the same coordinates.

The limits of my field research are given by several factors. On the one hand, the analysis would have benefited from interviews with people belonging to the majority population in order to have a broader perspective on the social memory of slavery, perhaps even a comparative one. A comparative approach is particularly helpful when, as in this case, collective memory is the result of a dynamic of two or more ethnic groups cohabiting in a common space. On the other hand, the research did not include the relationship of the inhabitants of the 'Mahala' to the memorial plaque for the remembrance of slavery, which was installed at the Tismana Monastery in 2016. The reason for not introducing this aspect in the research was that the research goal was to identify the content of collective memory on slavery transmitted from generation to generation, and not the one built by public authorities in the present day. Another limitation of the present research is given by the lack of inclusion of the archival documentary material regarding the Agrarian Reform of 1864 for the locality Tismana. The inclusion of such documentary material would have offered an overview of the number of families of former slaves who had been put in possession of land, as *clăcași*.

All these observations will be integrated into further studies on the collective memory of slavery in the locality of Dezrobiți, the next on the list of localities included in my research on the social memory of *Gypsy* slavery and the building of the ethnic identity of the Roma.

Notes

- ²This article is a result of a fellowship received in 2017 from “Împreună” Community Development Agency Foundation (Fundăția Agenția de Dezvoltare Comunitară “Împreună”) in a research project on Roma Slavery financed by Roma Initiatives Office.
- ³I use the term “gypsy” as it appears in the archive documents. I also use this term because I want to showcase the building identity process throughout the Roma passed during the time. The use of the term has also methodological importance because I relate it with the memory of the slavery. My article treats the collective memory of the slavery in relation with its meaning for the identity building process.
- ⁴For more information on the statistics of Roma slaves see Gaunt and Rotaru (2021, 29-55).
- ⁵*“Dans un moment où l’Europe entière témoigne d’un si vif intérêt pour le Principautés et médite la fixation de leur destinées futures, il est du devoir de Notre patrie de faire aussi un pas en avant du son coté. Bien des années se sont écoulées depuis que l’esclavage a été aboli dans tous les états civilisés de l’ancien monde: seules les Principautés Moldo-Valaques ont conservé encore ce vestige flétrissant d’une société barbare; dans ces seules Principautés l’esclavage fait partie de l’ordre social! une telle anomalie, ne doit ni ne peut plus exister!”*
- ⁶The term used in the Romanian archive documents is *sălaşe* and can refer to a family of slaves or to the entire number of slaves hold by a master of slaves. In my research I use it to refer to the Roma communities from nowadays that are coming from the old dwellings of slaves. More dwellings of slaves were forming a *Țigănie* (a Roma community) possessed by a master.
- ⁷From this word derived in Romanian the term “țigan”, which during the slavery was synonymous with the *i*.
- ⁸In Moldova also the Tatars are documented as slaves, but during the time they disappear from documents, this indicating that very possible they mixed through marriages with Gypsy slaves. See Achim, 2004, p. 29.
- ⁹This discussion implies a more in-depth debate on the racialization of slavery, which will be approached in a further article.
- ¹⁰Once with the adoption of the Organic Regulations in Moldova and Wallachia (1831/1832) the Gypsies of the ruler become the Gypsies of the state. The Organic Regulations were the first modern constitutions of the two Romanian countries.
- ¹¹The term used in Romanian language for “Gypsy” is “țigan”.
- ¹²In English translation “The Emancipated”.
- ¹³From the Turkish “mahale” = neighbourhood.
- ¹⁴https://www.pandurul.ro/articol/probleme-la-tismana-dupa-ce-o-mie-de-romi-s-au-dec_42055.html
- ¹⁵See the archival fund no. 689 from National Archives of Romania, “The Agrarian Reform from 1864”.
- ¹⁶Interviews conducted by Adrian-Nicolae Furtună and Maria Luiza Medeleanu.
- ¹⁷In 2004 Tismana was declared officially as a town. It has in its componce ten villages: Pocuia, Vânăta, Racoți, Topești, Sohodol, Izvarna, Gornovița, Vâlcele, Celei and Costeni. In my article I refer to Tismana only as the ex-village. From the Gorj County Statistics Directorate I obtained statistical data on the ethnic structure of the village Tismana.

- ¹⁸In Romania, the Roma pupils can apply on special places, destined for Roma, at high school and faculty. This educational policy (affirmative measure) is implemented in Romania since ... and has like goal to reduce the gap between Roma and Romanians regarding the access to education.
- ¹⁹See: Festivalul de Muzică Lăutărească Tradițională - "Geagu Cătăroiu"-Tismana - Gorj - 2022 - Ediția a V-a, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByQRtxEqKo>, <https://www.gorjonline.ro/incepe-festivalul-de-muzica-lautareasca-geagu-cataroiu-de-la-tismana/>.
- ²⁰These Roma are also descendents of the Roma slaves, but from the category of the nomad ones.

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