

Roma civic emancipation as reflected in the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society in the Interwar Period

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Abstract

This paper seeks to give an overview of the publications of the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society (JGLS) in the interwar period (between 1918 and 1939). It will explore the main themes and issues of the publications of the JGLS from the period between the Two World Wars. The relevance of the studied period stems from the fact that it follows the dissolution of major empires such as the Ottoman, Russian and the Austro-Hungarian and the emergence of several nation states with the Treaty of Versailles. Additionally, it is a critical period in which nations endeavoured to re-think their visions for their futures along with their policies, politics and different forms of activism. The premise of this study is that Roma live simultaneously in two dimensions: as inseparable part of the societies they happen to occupy and at the same time as separate ethnic communities. Thus, as nation-states sought and tried to shape new and more favourable policies and places for their future, this study seeks to examine the visions and struggles of Roma as citizens and as integral part of their societies. For the purpose of this analysis, this paper looks exclusively at the countries that such activities have been reported in the Interwar period and pays a particular attention on the following countries: Bulgaria, Russia, Romania, Serbia, Greece, Turkey, Moldova, Hungary and Finland among others.

The Gypsy Lore Society is one of the world's oldest scholarly organisations studying Gypsies, Roma and Travellers since its establishment in 1888 and its Journal has been serving as a basis informing and inspiring future and further scholarly research. At the same time, its publications have been critically analysed while some of its findings refuted and challenged. Since there is a great deal to be learned from this well-established organisation, its Journal and the scholars who have contributed to it, the reading of this research seeks to extrapolate the visions, visionaries and the role

of Roma in the interwar period in the aforementioned countries as reflected in the Journal's pages. The importance of this research stems from the relatively little knowledge on the Roma civil, political and religious visions of the Roma themselves as well as their place and role in the struggles of community development and emancipation in the interwar period. At the same time, it is informative to find out to what extent the contributing scholars of the Journal in the studied period were in fact in tune with the struggles, visions and achievements of Roma in Europe as these relate to their emancipation and in the making of their own future.

Introduction

The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society (JGLS) is the oldest scholarly journal dedicated exclusively at studying Gypsies and Gypsy-like communities. Founded in 1888 even today it is still considered as the leading scholarly organisation in Romani Studies. Even though the Journal has seen and experienced changes in its organisation and visions; its name has changed from *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* to *Romani Studies, Continuing Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, it has largely remained open to different and various takes in studying Roma and especially in the more recent years its ranking has soared due to the quality of its papers and research, and impact. The Journal and the Gypsy Lore Society still continue to act as and be regarded, by and large, as respective and credible and continues to inform readers and researchers on Romani Studies.

This research is part of the ERC project "Roma Interbellum: Roma Civic Emancipation between the Two World Wars" and studies the civil initiatives, struggles and visions of Roma in the interwar period. The relevance of this period is critical because that was a time when Europe saw major restructuring and geopolitical re-organisation, as a result of the end of the WWII and the fall of major powers such as the Russian Empire, the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian. Since 'Gypsies,' as they were widely known at the time, have been present and integral subject and citizens of these empires and later, the nation-states of Europe, by large, there has been not widely available information and research on their visions, struggles, policies by the state nor by the 'Gypsies' themselves prior to birth of "RomaInterbellum Project." Therefore, in accord with this rationale and in search of relevant information, what a better place to begin

with than the oldest organisation dealing with Romani Studies since 19th Century?! This paper tries to learn from its publications and extrapolate relevant information that relates to the Roma civic visions, struggles and initiatives.

Themes

In the period between 1922¹ and 1941, the author managed to identify 172 articles in the JGLS as relevant as they related to the countries which are of interest in this research and namely, Bulgaria, Finland, Romania, USSR and Ukraine, Yugoslavia, while countries like Hungary, Turkey, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Greece, Lithuania and Latvia are also of interest here².

One way to start our analysis is by offering a thematic representation of the contents of the articles figuring in in the JGLS in the studied period. There were articles referencing Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Norway, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union, Ukraine, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Albania. As far as the themes that seem to characterise all these articles and that have been identified by the author are: “Exploratory” – which have been broken into: ‘Anthropology/Ethnography,’ ‘collection of Folk-tales,’ those relating to ‘Identity,’ ‘Literature,’ ‘Migration and History,’ and ‘Royalty and Kings.’ Other main themes include: “Language and Linguistics,” “Music,” “Political and Relevant,” “Slavery” and “Romantic Images.”

This paper will firstly involve in bringing examples of the themes identified above and secondly it will concentrate on the relevant theme “Political and Relevant” materials from the JGSL as they may refer to the Roma civil situation and endeavours from the interwar period and on the studied countries.

1.0 Part 1

¹ Even though the start of the interwar period can be regarded as 1918, the earlier articles were те са available, само трябва да се потърсят и прочетат, така че по-добре пиши че на този етап си решил да се ограничиш със статии от 22 г., and that was the reason 1922 is given as the earliest year in the period.

² This research must be considered as work in progress and it will expand depending on the relevant information and materials that are found. Therefore, we will engage here only with the countries we have most available information and data which are worth discussing.

1.1 Exploratory Node

The “Exploratory” Node contains references from articles and notes that contain descriptive accounts in the journals. Within it, the author has created several sub-notes which include *anthropological* themes, collection of *folk-tales*, those that are useful in perceiving the *Identity* of the Roma; as well as there are articles that give references to *Romani history and migrations*.

As a way of example, in 1923 in the *Notes and Queries* section in the 3rd Series, Vol. 2, there is a piece by Scot Macfie on “Servian Gypsies” which gives description of Serbian Gypsies in the book “*Servia and the Servians*” (London, Bell and Daldy, 1862) written by Rev. W. Denton. MacFie mentions there are quite many Gypsies in Serbia, reports they are Orthodox in faith, have fought along with the Serbians during the war with Turkey, that they have been excluded from voting and that there are Gypsies who “profess Mahomedan faith” and live on the borders of Turkey; describes their occupations and mentioned there are Gypsy musicians in Belgrade. Other articles of descriptive character, for example, may report about relevant news articles. For instance, in the 1931 issue in the *Notes and Queries* T. W. Thompson brings readers’ attention about an article appearing in *the Observer* printed in 12 July, 1931 about a *Tzigane* and five naked children in a train stop at Marosvasarhely, Rumanian territory, claiming to the train passengers he is very poor and not able to earn enough by making music or by mending pots and pans anymore. Later, he is reported to have crossed Hungarian border with £25. In the same light, A. P. Barannikov (1932), Professor of Indian Language in the University of Leningrad appears with a note in in Vol. 6, No 2 with an article which deals with Ukrainian Gypsy Burial Customs. There he starts saying that “in the future, when there are a great number of educated Gypsies in Russia, we may hope that this study will develop more quickly.” (:87) as he remarks that there have been insufficient knowledge on Ukrainian and Russian Gypsies, despite a mass literature dealing with Gypsies in the Soviet Union. A field which has been largely unexplored appears to be the burial customs so, with his note he seeks to address to this gap.

Another example of the reporting style of memos is of the like by Erasmus Senseus in 1935 (pp. 167-168), in his *Note* "A Gypsy Coachman" where the note relates about Mr Skene's experience as a traveller who has employed a Gypsy Servant to help him in his travels. The servant is described as one who knows about horses and also who has the inclination to drink.

Several have been also the reports of Dorothy Una Ratcliffe of the like where she describes her encounters with Gypsies while travelling. For example, in the Journal in 1933 she contributes with an article "Armenian Gypsies near Marathon" in Volume 7, No. 3 where briefly she explains how she has come across some Armenian Gypsies living in tents and how she has stopped in order to photograph them. Again, 1938, Ratcliffe contributes with a couple of her notes which describe how she met Gypsies in Boetia (pp. 88-90) and again about her discovering some in Thessaly, Greece (pp. 90-91). Very similar of her notes appear also in subsequent issues, in No. 1, in 1939 where she describes the most beautiful Gypsy Coppersmith couple she has come across while for the first time she saw a Gypsy man openly giving affection to his wife near Larris, Northern Greece (pp. 51-52). Another of her notes is about Gypsy obstinacy this time in Sparta, Southern Greece (pp. 52-54). In 1939, in Issue 8, No. 4 Ratcliffe describes how she and her company came across Vlakkis (Vlachs) allegedly from the village of Metzovo in the Pindus Mountains, while on her travels. According to the women, they are "Arumani" and their forefathers had fought with the Roman armies in Great and little Wallachia while they speak a Roman language (:192). All of Ratcliffe's writings then appear in her book, published in London in 1939 entitled "News of Persephone" where she deals mainly with flowers and human beings, complementing her work with good photos. A review of her book is given by R. M. Hewitt in 1940, Volume 9, Issue No, 1 and 2 (pp. 56-57).

Similar to Ratcliffe's is the article of Prof. N. B. Jopson, appearing in 1939, No 2 and 3, in which he gives an account of how he has come across Lithuanian Gypsies in the summer in the Nemunas and how a Gypsy woman taught him some Romanes (pp. 118-122) which subsequently has been grouped into the node/theme of exploratory articles and notes.

1.1.1 Folk-Tales

Collecting and preserving Romani folk-tales seem to also be of big interest to the editors of the Journal in the interwar period and there seem to be a good deal of articles with examples. From the available data there were coded about 24 articles on the topic of *Folk-tales*. Dora Yates (1928), for example, contributes in the Journal with a tale from Rumanian Coppersmith Gypsies on their way to Canada in 1913 who have settled in Liverpool with: 'God and the Gentile' (O Gazo hai o Dil). Gilliat-Smith on his part offers a number of folk-tales which, besides his contributing to the studies of the Romani language, would be of great relevance for those seeking to capture, preserve and analyse Romani narratives. In 1925 thus Gilliat-Smith presents 'The Song of the Bridge' in Romanes and in English offering some elaboration on the different versions that exist on this song (JGLS (3), 4, pp. 103-114). Gilliat-Smith contributes also with a tale collected in 1915 by his wife from the village of Bulgaria's small village in the south-east, Zheravna. The tale was taken from a Drindari sub-group of Roma and it appears in the 1931 publication of the Journal (Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 76-86). In the same issue, Moses Gaster also re-publishes the tale 'The Golden Children' which has been originally published in German by Gaster in Ausland in 1881.

Gilliat-Smith's (1938) review of Rade Uhlik's 1938 publication of "The Gospel according to St Luke," translated in Romanes, appreciates also his earlier publication of *Romane Gjilja* translated to *Songs in Romani*, which are grouped into: Songs of the Road, Songs of Wandering and Thieving, Songs of Merriment and Joking, Drinking Songs, Love Songs, and Kissing Songs.

Moses Gaster is another example who has collected a number folk tales from Romania: in 1931 his "Rumanian Gypsy Folk-Tales" appeared (pp. 153-171) to be continued in 1933 (pp. 166-189), twice in 1936 (pp. 10-21; 160-182) as well as in the Special Jubilee issue of 1938 (pp. 58-67).

Stuart T. Mann on his part contributed substantially with his research in Albania with "Albanian Romani" appearing in Journal twice in 1933 (pp. 1-32; 147-152); "Albanian

Romani Texts, No. 3” in 1934 (pp. 37-45; pp. 153-158), “South Albanian Romani” (1935, 174-184), “South Albanian Romani Texts, Nos 2 and 3 (1937, pp. 186-195) and “North Albanian Romani Texts (1941, pp. 85-87).

Similarly, Tihomir R. Gyorjevic (1934) contributed with his collection on stories from Serbia – “Two Bible Stories in the Tradition of Serbian Gypsies” offering five versions of a tale that contains two Old-Testament themes – the Crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites and the story of the Flood; and his book “*Siganske Narodne Propovesti*” translated to *Gypsy Popular Tales* appearing in Belgrade in 1933 was noted and reviewed in 1934 by M. Gaster (pp. 215-216).

1.1.2. Identity

Only by studying the articles which appear in the interwar period the student of Romani Studies will be able to get the main points which define the contemporary research on the topic. Clearly, a node which ought to have been created was on “Identity” because the articles, on the whole, manage to give, in my opinion, a very good sketch about the complex identity of the Roma.

For example, at the time, and just like today, there has been the ever integral question of: *Who are the Roma?* By reading the JGLS publications the student may not find a clear answer to this question, however, they will be able to grasp, if not get rather perplexed, by the various and diverse traits that would define the Romani identity. Authors demonstrate that it is not way of life, religion, music, profession, dress, appellation or even the use of Romani language that would define the Roma. At the same time, it would be still possible to identify them by their ‘ways’ and by still not conforming or assimilating to the societies they live.

Nomadism or vagrancy were thought to be typical traits of the Romani identity. The articles in fact discuss that this is partially true. There were authors who discovered that Roma could be both sedentary and vagrant. In his notes on the Gypsies of Turkey, W. R. Halliday (1922) describes the Gypsies of Rumeli, Turkish Empire, as nomadic and “living in tents similar to those of the Illyrauts in the Arabian Desert” (: 165). The author also conveys that it is hard to get facts about Gypsies of the Asia Minor as there

exit in the peninsula other nomads such as Yuruks, Taktaji and others generally described by Turks as Kyzylbash. The author also notes a clash between nomad and sedentary Gypsies. In his study with Ukrainian Gypsies, Barannikov (1931) describes the sedentary Roma of Ukraine as different from the Moscow Roma and as speaking a completely different dialect of Romani from that of the settled Russian Gypsies. In his review of Barannikov's (1931) historical ethnographical survey about Gypsies in the USSR, Sergievski (1933) also points to the difference between nomad Gypsies who have come during the Great War by refugees from Austria and Romania, have preserved, more or less, their characteristics and have not assimilated, compared to the sedentary Gypsies. Gilliat-Smith (1934), in his review of Bulgarian scholar Nayden Scheitanow's (1932) publication notes also a distinction between wandering Gypsies and sedentary Gypsies. In his review of A. German's (1931) book "The Gypsies of yesterday and to-day," A. Barannikov (1932) also mentions the establishment of the All Russian Union of Gypsies in Moscow in 1925 which sought, among other things, to help transit from a nomadic way of life to a settled one. Barannikov (1934) himself has collected prose and poetry of both sedentary and nomad Roma (Smith, 1935, pp. 101-105). W. O. Williams (1936) too, in his note "Albanian Gypsy Jottings" seeks to add to Stuart Mann's work on Albanian Romani and he maintains that in Albania, Gypsies can be divided in nomads and sedentaries. The nomads have supposedly preserved their race "in the purest forms" (:47) while the sedentary ones have manners similar to the native Albanians.

Not surprisingly, nomad Roma groups have been subjected on policies of sedentarisation. H. G. Ward (1936), for example, makes a review in the *Journal on Einar Gisholt's* publication in which are described Pastor Jakob Walnum's suggestions that homes for vagrant Gypsy children are built in Norway, "before they had time to acquire a taste for wandering" (:42). In her review of Martin Block's (1936) work "Zigeuner: ihr Leben und ihre Seele" (translated to *Gypsies: their Life and their Soul*), Dora Yates (1936) notes about Block's appreciation of initiatives aiming to civilise and sedentarise Roma such as the ones undertaken by the British and Foreign Bible Society and their translation of the Gospel, the USSR's Romani newspaper and the Gypsy Theatre of Moscow and Czechoslovakia's Gypsy school at Uzhorod. The notion of sedentarisation is also present in the first ever made Gypsy – Soviet Union's movie "The Last Camp" which clearly portrays a story of a transition from a nomadic way of

life of Russian Roma to them settling down on a *kolhoz* farm (Gilliat-Smith, 1937: 91-93). Alexander Petrovic (1940) asserts similarly that in 1860s-1870s Serbian authorities took actions and managed (by force) to settle down their Gypsies and in 1940s already they could hardly see a Roma who does not have a permanent dwelling place.

The question of transitioning from nomad to sedentary way of life has also raised questions whether this process would lead to the whole erasure of the Romani identity and their assimilation. This concern was raised by some authors such as Alexander Petrovic (1939) who leaves the readers with the question - "If Gypsies are kept Gypsies by their nomad life and their mother-tongue, Romani, it follows that when permanently settled they soon forget their language, change their manner of life and slowly become Gadze themselves." (:144). Such a concern was echoed also by Ethel Tauszky (1940) in his article "The Life of the Sarret Gypsies of To-day" where we read that now that Roma in Budapest are settled, "now they stand on the peripheries of Society – just as their mud huts at the outskirts of the villages and hamlets – and their gain is very doubtful" (:69). Tauszky (1940) continues to say that "[life] gets more and more difficult, and as it grows increasingly intricate through the development of technical civilization, bureaucratism interweaves like an immense cobweb of steel the whole of Society which used to be broken into thousands of tiny parts, and anyone not able to accommodate or adapt himself to it is condemned, perhaps doomed to death. What, then, will become of Gypsydom? Will they conform to this mode of life, or will they perish?" (:69).

These questions, even though raised some 80 years ago, seem to be pertinent still today; an age characterised with a much more globalised world, interconnected and interdependent. That is especially the case when access to the World Wide Web becomes increasingly more accessible today; smart phones and access to the internet contribute significantly to the spreading and influence of mass-culture and here arises the same question – what will happen to the Roma? Are they forgetting about their identities or prefer to conform and assimilate in order to be part of this society and world?

Answers to these concerns or key questions could be found in the findings of the scholars in the interwar period. Even though questions like: Will sedentarised Roma

become Gadzhe? Will the needs of living contemporary Society force them to conform and assimilate? If they no longer have language, culture or dress – what will be left from the Roma and would we be still able to speak about the Roma? Such concerns and real questions were credible before and they are still today, however, their answers, even though not directly addressed, could be inferred from the scholars contributing to the Journal in the interwar period.

To start with, the idea of Romaness, Gypsiness, Romanipe, Romahood – a concept used nowadays often with the intention to unify and describe a transnational Roma nation and bearing essentialised images and ideas about what Roma are and without such terms being actually defined - seem to have been adequately addressed. Gilliat-Smith (1928), sharing “Some Notes on Bulgarian Marriage Customs” believes that ‘Romanipe’ seems to be composed of the elements of the nation Roma happen to be in. Thus, there is nothing ‘exotic’ about their music as Andalusian Gitanos in Southern Spain play the guitar, or the fact that they deal with horses in England. “The Gypsies not only assimilate the customs and the music of the countries of their adoption. They steep themselves therein to the extent of becoming the most typical exponents and practisers thereof. Hence, to give but one more example, the Hungarian Gypsies are, both in their mode of life and their music, intensely Magyar.” (Gilliat-Smith 1928: 137). One typical trait of the Gypsies, which supposedly is tending to disappear is the wearing of young girls bands of chastity or the *diklo* or a band of chastity. Thus, for example, even though society and time may have made this typically Roma custom to disappear, we are still able to speak about them and identify them as Roma. Furthermore, in his “Albanian Gypsy Jottings,” W. O. Williams (1936) as mentioned earlier considers nomad Gypsies as having preserved their race “in the purest forms” (: 47). Sedentarised Gypsies of Albania, in contrast are seen as mixed and therefore less pure or real. Williams (1936) provides at first an assimilated image of the sedentary Gypsies as having the same speech and manners like those of the native Albanians, women having adopted “the wide gaily-coloured Turkish trousers, and the men invariable wear the Albanian black and white fez.” (:48). Notwithstanding, he seems to be not thoroughly convincing as he describes them having a special place and still being different from the ordinary Albanians, i.e. the sedentarised Gypsies reside in special quarters of towns while and in larger towns, such as Durazzo and Scutari, they have Mosques and Hodjas of their own. Thus, at face value, they may

seem assimilated, however, they continue to be identified as Gypsies not only by the society and narrative but also geographically.

Music is yet another major indicator of the Romani identity and it cannot be avoided in our analysis of 'typical' Roma traits, Romanipe, Gypsiness, or Romahood. Living in and being part of the (major) Society or an increasing globalised world naturally would require Roma groups to adapt to it accordingly. This has been namely reflected in their choice of music. The Gypsy orchestras of Hungary have in fact been of interest of researchers in the interwar period. The mere description 'Hungarian Gypsy orchestras' bears in itself an amalgamation of something typical of Hungary and at the same time something that typifies it as 'Gypsy.' Walter Starkie (1937) describes Hungarian Gypsies as "the deffest flatterers on earth. We can only flatter in one language, but they can flatter in seven or eight. Walk down the banks of the Danube past the majestic hotels and you will hear the swarthy fellows flattering every member of that cosmopolitan crowd in his own national music." (: 98). To the concern with the erasure of Romani language and Roma identity being lost, the note made by Dora Yates (1938) about Hungarian Gypsy Boy's Orchestra performing in the London Palladium in 1937 concludes that Romani is becoming fast a "dead language" to Hungarian Gypsy musicians (:89). Yet, this group continues to be 'Gypsy' and identified as such. The Romani language becoming obsolete by Hungarian Roma musicians has been explained by the need to be practical. Spur (1938) explains that if before the Great War Hungarian Gypsy musicians used to speak Romanes, this was no longer the case in 1938 as they moved and began living into the bigger cities and have been surrounded by a "higher culture" and having neighbours who spoke the "cultured Hungarian language" (: 49-50). Also, as musicians are required to memorise and know Hungarian songs, the Gypsy musicians saw no practicality and a real reason to keep and preserve their own Romanes. Thus, it is due to practical reasons that professional Hungarian Gypsy musicians have forgotten and no longer play the tunes of their forefathers. Very useful is also Endre Spur's (1939) review in which he clarifies to the general public and especially to the Hungarians who think they may be listening to 'Gypsy music' that "Gypsy music signifies a peculiar style of interpretation or instrumental performance of Hungarian tunes, which are partly true folk-songs, partly popularized quasi folk-songs, or dance-music. Just as 'Jazz' music does not mean the music of 'Jazz' people, but the special instrumental style of a modern 'Jazz' band, so

Gypsy music means the 'Gypsy' band's musical performance, independent of the sort of music they interpret." (: 185). In this light, it would be useful also to add Istvan Nagy's (1940) article about Gypsies of the Sarret who used to travel around in Hungary who writes that "[it] is a mistake to think of Gypsies as a conservative race, zealously guarding their ancient customs. They are not. And it is rather by their utter disregard of the civilization surrounding them than by any typical characteristics that the Tziganes are distinguished from other races." (: 1).

1.1.2.1 Hybridity and Romani Identity

Reading the contributions of such authors in the Journal, readers may already have been able to grasp that a quest of finding a 'True Gypsy' may be a futile task indeed. Thomas Acton (2015) have already demonstrated that scientific racism has been in fact informing the beliefs and approaches of scholars contributing to the JGLS well into 1970s. Contributing to the Journal since 1908 and a President of the Gypsy Lore Society from 1933-1936, Eugene Pittard was described by Acton (2015) "one of the leading international racial scientist, linking physical to social anthropology as historical explanation (: 1192). In his review of Pittard's book "Les Tziganes ou Bohémiens. Recherches anthropologiques dans la Péninsule des Balkans," Scot Macfie (1932) praises his physical anthropological work. Professor Pittard had supposedly examined "the extraordinary number of 1213 free Gypsies men and women" and that "readers of his book will understand his success" (: 99) and that Pittard "did not spear his measuring rod" (: 100). Macfie's (1932) appreciation of Pittard's research comes from his belief that "a race may change its language in a century or so but almost astronomical ages to alter the shape of its head..." (: 98). Thus, Macfie (1932) remarks that "What a Gypsy is, is now better known than what is a Frenchman or a Briton: he is not a person who lives in a tent, likes traveling, and speaks Romani; but, quite prosaically, a person who fits Professor Pittard's tables." (: 101).

Today, the idea of existence of distinct races does no longer hold water. The *UNESCO Statement on Race*, first published in 1950 (largely the work of social scientists) and a second statement published in 1952 (the work of physical anthropologists) states that "...mankind is one: that all men belong to the same species, Homo sapiens..." and

that “Americans are not a race, nor are Englishmen, nor Frenchmen nor any other national group.” (*Concept of Race and The UNESCO Statement on Race*).

In our quest to understand *Who and What is Roma* one can perhaps garner more insight from the contributions of other scholars who touch on the idea of a hybrid or a mixture of often contradicting images. Alexander Petrovic (1940), for example, writes about the Bijeli (White) Gypsies of Serbia. There, he describes the women of the Bijeli Gypsies who have been historically brought up in harems, “and even though they have been only maids there, they strictly keep the harem life,” covering their faces when in public and staying home, doing housework (: 96). Their mahalas could not be recognised as *Gypsy*, they are clean, quiet, and not crowded, as we would know them. “If the observer had not been told that he was in a Gypsy settlement, he would never have thought it possible.” (Petrovic, 1940 :97). In Turska Trnava, where the research has been done, Bijeli Gypsies allegedly differ from the Muslim Gadze by the places they live, because they are poorer, they follow their own trades as blacksmiths or brick-moulders and they do not intermarry with other Muslims. Thus, from this article one can appreciate that even though ‘Bijeli Gypsies’ may seem to have assimilated into Gadzhe life, acquiring some new the habits due to their past history and proximity with Ottoman Beys’ harems and way of life, they continue to be considered as Gypsies, this time existing as a separate sub-group Bijeli, do live in a ‘Gypsy’ quarter and prefer to not mix with others but marry between themselves.

Another very informative piece contains two legends, collected by Petrovic (1940), by the ‘Bijeli Gypsies’ of Turska Trnava themselves. The legend interestingly bears the theme of hybridity or a special amalgamation. The collected piece states that Phiraun, or the Egyptian, Biblical, Pharaoh is a Gypsy called Penga. Phiraun, while crossing the sea, seeking to catch and kill Musa (Moses), drowned as God wished so. Only one woman came out alive. When the Devil, coming in the form of a man, spoke to her and because she was all alone they made slept together and as a result a child was born, which is believed to have given the beginning of the Gypsy race. The second legend says that when Phiraun intended to get rid of Ibrahim Pejgamber (a saint who was inviting people to the religion of God) he could not throw him into the fire. So, Pharaoh ordered a brother and a sister to perform a sexual act in order to break the spell of Ibrahim and therefore be able to burn him. The child which was born as a result of the

act of the siblings is believed to have given the beginning of the Gypsy race. These example were brought in order to demonstrate not only a peculiar narrative about origin but also to contribute to the earlier points about a unique hybridity which the Roma have, embedded even in their own legends, and even though impossible to clearly define, still able to direct us towards the constant evolving and changing nature of their identities.

2.0 Part 2. Articles which note the political and civic struggles of Roma

Since the reading of the articles was intended to 1) identify emerging themes and 2) find out more about the social, political and civic struggles of Roma in Central and South-East Europe, this section will give an overview of what has been reported on this topic by the contributing authors of the Journal in the interwar period. It turns out there is information that authors report, however, it appears mostly in the form of reviews and notes. Also, the political and civil theme may be inferred and extracted, it is not a central theme and it is in many cases it is given in a form of supplementary information.

2.1. The U.S.S.R.

The attempts and initiatives of the USSR from the interwar period do appear in the Journal, however, it seems they have not received much attention from the contributing authors. For example, Barannikov has included in his 1931 article “Songs of the Ukrainian Gypsies” a short section entitled “Social and Political Status” (pp. 18-20). There, it is mentioned, what seems to be only in passing, about the organisation of collective farms, *kolhozes*, in the Soviet Union which aim to re-educate Gypsies in a new psychology and way of living and earning. In the same article the author also notes the “important cultural work ... among the Soviet Gypsies” including the creation of three Gypsy schools and two clubs, many books in the Romani language as well as the magazines “Romani Zora” (The Romani Dawn), and “Nevo Drom” (The New Way) which have been published in Moscow (Barannikov, 1931: 19). Again, without providing any further details, the author finds it interesting that the majority of the authors of the Romani magazines and books are “Gypsies themselves” (: 19). Barannikov’s 1931 article, as the title suggests, does not engage fully with USSR

initiatives but rather the focus is on the Romani language and dialects of Ukrainian Gypsies, their vocabulary, as well as the collected songs themselves.

In a note in the Journal from 1932, Barannikov mentions that “in spite of the considerable mass of literature relating to the Gypsies in the Soviet Union, Ukrainian and Russian Gypsies have hitherto been studied only superficially. In the future, when there are a great number of educated Gypsies in Russia, we may hope that this study will develop more quickly” (: 88). In his note then he directs the readers’ attention towards the need for more knowledge on the customs of the Ukrainian and Russian ‘Gypsies.’

In a second article from 1932, Barannikov tries to address the altered status and position of Russian Gypsy singers in the Bolshevik regime. Barannikov (1932) argues that with the Russian Revolution in 1917, the new social organisation has managed to change “the old Gypsy way of life by the roots” (: 187), and thus both sedentary and nomad Gypsies have begun to work in *kolkhozes*, or collective farms. Speaking about the sedentary Soviet ‘Gypsies,’ they have been reported to be living in villages and as being used to working the land before the growth of the ‘kolkhoz’. The nomads Soviet ‘Gypsies,’ in comparison, have been no longer mobile but settled down in camps near the collective farms and they have also been working the collective farms. Town Gypsies, are given as a third group of the Soviet ‘Gypsies’ and they are those living in the bigger towns such as in Moscow and Leningrad; *town Gypsies* are described as another type of Russian ‘Gypsies’ who in turn are seen as rarely working in the collective farms but instead choosing to perform town trades. As a result, the since 1927 Gypsy choirs have faced less popularity and have begun to fall apart due to crisis because of to the fall of the aristocracy and the rich bourgeois, and a lack of public which would no long appreciate Gypsy singers’ old repertoires. With the introduction of a new economic policy of Soviet Russia (1923-1925) and the appearance of restaurants and small cafés, many Gypsy musicians have begun their performances while their music has been enjoyed widely. Conversely, on a considerable much harder position have been the Soviet Gypsy singers and dancers because their repertoires have been deemed by the ‘new’ proletarian public as obsolete and inappropriate; they have been deemed not suitable for, and even resented by, the common folk as compared to the tastes of the aristocracy and bourgeois of before. As

a result, Gypsy repertoire, or 'tsiganscina' where, for example, the theme of love used to be prevalent, was associated with then the old 'Tsarist Regime' and the Gypsy choirs have been banned by law (Barannikov, 1932: 190).

Interestingly, the same actors who criticised Russian 'Gypsy' songs and dance and advocated for their limitation have been in fact interested in preserving "the genuine national ethnographic Gypsy folk-songs, and especially those *g'il'a which* relate to the present day." (Barannikov, 1932: 190). Thus, because of such demands various organisations endeavoured to select and showcase the art of Gypsy songs and dance to the general public on stage. The article mentions in this light the pioneer work of the State Theatre of the Ethnographic Department of the Russian Museum in Leningrad which has been interested in the songs, dance and music of the many nationalities living in the Soviet Union. As a result, in 1929, to the invitation of the State Theatre a 'Gypsy' company has been added and hundreds of Gypsies, both sedentary and nomad, have turned up showing interest to take part in its programme (Barannikov, 1932: 190). Soon, after the Gypsy Company of the Ethnographical Theatre in Leningrad has been completely formed and trained to perform, it has begun to enjoy considerable success and popularity touring across Russia. Barannikov (1932) also mentions the formation of a similar company in Moscow as part of the State Theatre which has similarly received relative success. Because of their gained new experience as performance on stage, the 'Gypsy' actors from Leningrad were written a special play by the director of the theatre, W. N. Wsevolodsky – *Romano Drom* (the Roma Road). Ultimately, the Federation of Gypsy Writers in Moscow have endeavoured "to compose a Romani Play reflecting the contemporary life of the Tsiganes." (Barannikov, 1932: 192). With this article, Barannikov (1932) directs readers of the JGLS about a major political and social initiative coming from the Soviet space which is to a great extent new and unique.

In the same year, Barannikov (1932: 40-41) contributes to the Journal with a review of A German's book, "The Gypsies of Yesterday and To-day." (in Russian), issued in Moscow in 1931. This review is also extremely relevant as it draws the attention to the works of Germano and especially about the situation of 'Gypsies' in the present day Soviet Russia. Here are referenced the establishment of the All-Russian Union of the Gypsies in Moscow in 1925 whose aims have been to advocate for the economic

interest and rights of the Gypsies, raising their cultural level and their transition from nomadic to sedentary life-styles. This union has been eventually abolished in 1928 and its functions were in the People's Commissariat of Agriculture and of Public Instruction (: 41). Germano's book mentions about thousands of 'Gypsies' who in 1931 already are reported as working in the collective farms (*kolkhozes*). Furthermore, it references the existence of three Gypsy schools in Moscow, one in Smolensk and one in Samara, the 'Gypsy' Club *Loli Chergen* (The Red Tent) having 350 of members in Moscow and 300 members in Simferopol, Crimea. Also, the book mentions the creation of Federation of Gypsy writers in Moscow in 1928, *Romengiro Lav*, publishing novels, manuals and journals. Germano's work refers about the creation of a Gypsy State Studio and a Theatre in 1931 whose actors have been performing across the Soviet Union and among Gypsies themselves.

Not unnoticed by the JGLS have been also several valuable publications and initiatives of the USSR. In the same year, 1932, part 3 and 4 (pp. 192-199), Frederick George Ackerley gives a review of several exclusively Gypsy publications which appeared in the Soviet Union, published in Moscow. The titles he engages with, though not fully, are *Russian Gypsies under the Soviets* by Dudarova and Pankov, *Nevo Drom*, Moscow, 1928, *Nevo Dziiben*, Moscow 1929, by German; *Buti I Dzinaiben*, Moscow, 1929 by Pankov; *Zurnalo Romany Zoryja*, Nos. 1 and 2, Moscow, 1927 and 1929; *Nevo Drom*, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4-5, Moscow, 1930 and Nos. 1 and 2, Moscow, 1931.

The real value of the review, which is just shy of seven pages long, is that it brings the attention to the reader about a unique initiative, which engages with the Soviet Gypsies in a mass scale. Even though the tone of Ackerley (1932) touches on the sceptical, suspicious, critical and humoristic, it is valuable not least it directs those who wish to give it a fair try, research and judge for themselves the titles and authors Ackerley mentions. For example, commenting about A. V. German's 1930 publication with compiled books and articles relating to Gypsies, containing 692 sources, 400 of which are dated since 1926, Ackerley says that it "deserves a review to itself" (1932: 194). German's (1930) book in question, published in Russian, is "Bibliografija o Tsyganax. Ukazateli knig I statej s 1780 g. po 1930 g. Vstupiteljnaja statja prof. M. V. Sergievskogo."

From the reviewed publications there are many written in Romani all of which are seen by the reviewer as aiming to “tame, to educate and to industrialize the Gypsies” (Ackerley, 1932: 193).

1 “Nevo Drom Bukvarjo vas bare Manusenge” (*The New Road Book About Important People*) - a reading book which has been intended to be a supplementary source for teaching, reading and writing; by N. Dudarova and N. Pankov (1928)

2 “Nevo Drom” (the New Road)– a monthly journal with the same title; six issues are available (from August 1930 to Feb 1931 and a double number for November and December;

3 “Romani Zorja” (*Roma Dawn*)– another journal, 1927 (No. 1); 1929 (No. 2)

4 “Buty i Dzinaiben” (*Work and Knowledge*) by N. A. Pankov – booklet for free distribution

5 “Nevo Dziiben” (*New Life*) by A. V. German – booklet for free distribution

From these publications, reviewer Ackerley (1932) extracts a fair bit of propaganda. For instance, he highlights the beginning of the reading book “Nevo Drom” the word “*Buty*” (*Work*), being printed on a single page, and is a whole theme which sits well in the then new context of a new regime which tries to raise high the value of work, in pretty much every field, including on the fields, factories and homes. Besides rendering these Moscow publications as clear propaganda trying to infiltrate the Soviet Gypsies’ minds, Ackerley judges the level of the used Romani language and adds that since the Soviet machine aims at influencing all citizens, the Romani language, or no dialect of Romani, “could cope with the terms required for the expression of ideas which the authorities desire” (1932: 195) and that “Russian Romani [...] suffers from having to cope with the new ideas which the Soviet rule has introduced (: 197).

A couple more of Barannikov’s publications have been reviewed in the 1933 by M. V. Sergievskij (1933). Barannikov’s works under review both appear in 1931 one is in Russian published in Moscow: “Gypsies in the U.S.S.R.: a brief historical ethnographical survey” and the other is in Ukrainian, published in Kiev: “Gypsies of the Ukraine. (The National Minorities of the Soviet Ukraine: Collection of National Minority Lore, J. 2.)”. The first work gives an overview about the origin of the Gypsies, their migrations from India to Europe and their character in the Soviet Union. Among other things, Barannikov gives a summary of the Soviet measures for the economic

and cultural revival of the Soviet Gypsies and discusses their results. Sergievski (1933) notes that in the new Soviet Russia almost all Gypsies have abandoned their traditional occupations, are settled down, work on the farms or trade, and are educated thanks to their own publications and national schools they take part in. This has not necessarily been the case with the Soviet Nomad Gypsies who have preserved “their original character” and are not easily assimilated (Sergievskij, 1933: 54).

At long last, it has been in 1935 that we first are able to see a detailed and engaging article dedicated on the Gypsy Theatre in the USSR. Marie Seton’s (1935) contribution here, as compared to the one we see from Sergievski in 1933, is more thorough while her tone seems balanced, positive and even excited. Seton (1935) gives a historical overview about the evolution of the first State National Gypsy Theatre which is the first of its kind not only in Russia but in the world. Set up in January 1931 she brings the attention to the reader about its quick evolution, not only in terms of the quality of play but also its ability to grow and perform. The Gypsy Theatre is appreciated to be able to perform well not only Gypsy themes and plays such as “Life on Wheels” and “Between Fires” (their first two productions) but also classics plays such as Merimee’s Carmen. Not only that, since the initial aim of the Gypsy Theatre has been to implement the Soviet vision to promote drama in the language of national minorities, to combat anti-Gypsyism (in order to distance themselves from Tsarist Russia) and to educate Gypsies – Seton (1935) finds that the soft approach coming in the form of performing arts is suitable and effective. Thus, the reader is able to feel Seton’s excitement and commendation of the not only of the State National Gypsy Theatre of the Soviet Union itself but the approach on the whole.

Two years later there appears in the Journal a note from Gilliat-Smith (1937) bringing the attention about the First USSR Gypsy Film. Rather than providing other essential information such as when exactly was the movie made, who produced it and where was it made, the note gives us a synopsis of the Gypsy Film’s plot and the quality of the production. What he finds extraordinary is the fact that the movie is pretty much Gypsy-like, the quality of the production commendable, the acting on a high level and that the “minor roles, dancing, singing, camp life and so on are all the work of real Gypsies” (Gilliat-Smith, 1937: 93).

And perhaps for the picture to be somehow full, in the Journal appears an example of a poem from the Soviet Union, which is appreciated yet as another example and form of propaganda, so typical in the USSR at the time. The poem is “Amare Dyvesa: Gilja” (*Our Days: Songs*) created by Oljga Pankova in Moscow, 1933. It seem Hendon’s (1939) review comes only in order to bring an example of a poem which is typical for Russian Gypsy literature at the time. The poem’s verses compare the hard time of Gypsies under the days of the Tsars, with the pleasant life of the New USSR; it bears the typical new elements which are to be found in all modern Russian Gypsy literature such as work in kolhozes and factories. Not least, Pankova’s poem is appreciated because of its charm, the quality of the utilised Romani language, “much better than most literary Russian Gypsy” as Hendon puts it (1939: 145) but also something which reminds them about the typical Gypsy spirit.

Yugoslavia

From the Yugoslav space, there is not much that the reader of the Journal could learn about regarding the political and civil endeavours targeted at Roma or initiated by Roma. There seem to be only two articles which are able to inform us about the emergence of a periodic newspaper “Romano Lil (Tsiganske Novine)” appearing in Beograd in 1935; the second article comes from Margaret Hasluck from 1938 which gives somehow indicative reference about the situation of Roma in Albania.

The JGLS seems to hold a single reference from the interwar period about the life of “Romano Lil (Tsiganske Novine)” (*The Roma Paper. Gypsy News*) initiated in Beograd in 1935. It is thanks to N. B. Sapson (1936) and his review that the readers are informed that in Beograd a monthly paper has come to life whose aim has been to include the Roma in the general scene and readership in Yugoslavia. Sapson (1936) gives an informative overview about the struggles that the initiator of *Romano Lil*, Alexander Petrovic, had faced in the very launch of the paper and during the course of its life. Finance, we learn from the review, has been one of the key issues but also those Roma who have promised to pay for its early issues and were responsible for its sales. As the main initiator of Newspaper *Romano Lil*, Petrovic is reported to say,

in relation to his struggles that “a real Rom will gladly cash you a bottle of plum brandy, but you won’t catch him forking out a penny for a printer’s rag!” (Sapson, 1936: 87). Even though we are not able to learn more details about the paper, such as who in fact is its 22 year old university student Roma editor, we learn that the paper has been welcomed by the Yugoslav government authorities who were interested to have the newspaper so long as it worked towards the raising the educational levels of its Gypsies and rather than condoning, it may battle against criminality. A main issues has been that Yugoslav authorities had no records about actual numbers of Roma; rather they have been registered as Croat, Serbs or Muslim, nor information about spoken language has been kept. Thus, it has been impossible to determine where sales could have been made or how many issues may have be required to be printed. The third obstacle, apart from finance and government, has been the Roma themselves, who would not support anything that would portray them in an evil or criminal fashion. Roma had reportedly voiced criticisms that the newspaper is weak or lacking spirit and energy. This all may explain its short-lived life of only three issues.

Somehow relevant information could be also extracted for the Yugoslav space and there is an example from Hasluck’s (1938) third article on Albania. There we find useful information about the relationship between ethnic Albanians and their ‘Gypsies,’ the degree of contempt of all Gypsies and some proverbs and legends. We learn that till the end of Turkish rule over Albania few men, and no women have been literate. Even at the time around 1938, reportedly few sedentary Gypsies of Albania and no nomads attend to the schools that are provided for by the Albanian government in every town and many villages, however, there are few exceptions. To demonstrate the discontent of Albanians and also how rare being an educated Roma at the time was, let see one example. A Gypsy family, originally from Permet, South Albania, has managed to migrate to America and the daughter of the family has received a degree in History. Soon as they all returned to Albania where she wanted to work as a teacher, she was not able to practice her profession as teacher but also, she could not marry anybody. Even though she promised her husband a dowry of 2,000 napoleons (the equivalent of £1,500), in the end, the girl married a Russian refugee who had reportedly married her for the sake of her dowry (Hasluck, 1938).

Bulgaria

For case of Bulgaria, there are three references appearing in the Journal all of which are by Gilliat-Smith. His 1934 contribution is a review of an article published by Bulgarian scholar Nayden Scheitanow in 1932 in the *Bulletin* du Musee National d'Ethnographie de Sofia. In his review, Gilliat-Smith (1934) flags his superior knowledge not only about the history and existing literature about the Roma but also their language and dialects. Gilliat-Smith (1934) nevertheless, seems excited to see the first scholarly attempt coming from Bulgaria, to the study of their Gypsies and their language. In Scheitanow's work, the 1912 translation of the Gospel of St Luke is referenced, initiated by the British Foreign Bible Society, however, Scheitanow seems to have been unaware who the real translator has been (Gilliat-Smith himself). To Gilliat-Smith himself, such a considerably late awakening on the part of Bulgarian scholarship is regrettable considering "that Bulgarian philologists and ethnologists are favourably situated [...] for the study of Gypsy dialects which are the purest extant, and of tribal customs which have been preserved as nowhere else in Europe [...]" (Gilliat-Smith, 1934: 159).

The second contribution, this time coming in the form of an article from Gilliat-Smith, is from the following year, 1935, and it is clearly a discussion about M. Atanasakief's translation of the Gospel of St Matthew in the Muslim Kalajdzhis (Tinnars) dialect. It is a dialect spoken by the Roma from Tatar Pazardzhik district in Bulgaria, located in the geographic south of the country. The dialect is appreciated by Gilliat-Smith (1935) as well-preserved; therefore, the translation of the Gospel of St Matthew in 1932 by Atanasakief is considered as useful only in the sense it presents a fairly good translation and in a well-preserved dialect of Bulgarian Romani. Thus, the translation of St Mathew, by M. Atanasakief, again an initiative by the British and Foreign Bible Society, it seems, is appreciated as nothing more than a great contribution to better knowledge of the Romani language.

A third review by Gilliat-Smith appears in the Journal in 1940 on the translation by M. Atanasakief of the Gospel of St John in 1937. Gilliat-Smith finds Atanasakief's translation as worse than his 1932 of St Matthew, particularly because there have been avoidable misprints but also because of reported carelessness in his compilation. Smith (1940) also adds that if this translation may be of use to anybody, they must know Bulgarian and Turkish.

Romania

William John Haley (1934) is what seems to be the first, and only, contributor in the Journal, who have ventured to engage the reader with perhaps one of the most serious endeavours coming from Roma from Romania. On the whole, the article is on the Gypsy Conference at Bucharest and it is useful by drawing the readers' attention about the civic initiatives by Roma of Romania. Even though the tone of the article, on the whole, is cynical and suspicious, similar to what we saw earlier by Frederick Ackerley's (1932) review of a number of publications from the Soviet Union, Haley's (1934) contribution could direct and inspire the more curious readers to research the topic more and judge for themselves these Romanian initiatives. For instance, in his article, Haley (1934) mentions the appearance of news article appearing in 15 November 1933 in the *Rheinisch-Wesfalische Zeitung* of a major Congress in which Gypsies mainly from the Balkans, Central Europe, including England, have organised. Another article reportedly has appeared, again in 1933, in the *News Chronicle* which has described and quoted the Romanian Gypsy Lazaresco's speech (the acting president of the General Union of Rumanian Tziganes). More importantly, Haley's (1934) article includes in its second part the "Statutes of the General Association of the Gypsies (Tziganes) of Rumania" where one could acquaint themselves, among other things, with its aims, structure, funds, administration, and major visions.

Discussion and Conclusion

If we are to have an overall synopsis about the publications coming out in the interwar period, it would be sensible and useful to try and systematise them according to the themes they discuss. Reading alone the articles appearing in the JGLS would be sufficient enough for the student of Romani Studies to form their ideas and opinion about who the “Gypsies are” especially as they come across what it seems to be the bulk of the contributions of the scholars – major themes are around gathering folktales, describing the Gypsies, works of anthropological/ethnographical character, trying to define their identities, music and migration and history. The countries they involve with are mostly those who host the majority of Romanies – the Balkans, i.e. Yugoslav states such as Serbia and Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Hungary, Poland, USSR (including Ukraine and the Crimea), Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and the UK (Wales and England). Passing and relevant references, however, could be inferred and for other European countries, nevertheless, and for any zealous scholar, it would be a good starting point for their research.

It may be not surprising, perhaps, that the early contributors to the Journal were able to touch on most relevant topics which are being discussed in Romani Studies today – i.e. major topics still include discussing Romani identity, their history, language, folklore and oral history, dialects, (various) images and situations in the various countries. What informs both the situation and study of Roma today, however, is largely linked to politics and policies. Today these come simultaneously from two directions – on the one hand, above by Nation-State policies, the EU and International Organisations and on the other hand, from below, including grass-root level, from the Roma themselves, their organisations, and NGOs. If today there is a plethora of information about such contemporary Romani initiatives, visions and policies, so far the historical information has been not widely known and available to the Romani studies scholar. Thus, if anybody would be curious to learn about the civil initiatives of Roma in older periods, such as the Interwar period, they would be able to find some information reading the Journal which, unfortunately would be insufficient for them to grasp the realities which have been informing their visions, struggles and achievements. It appears, based on JGLS accounts, the Soviet Union has got the most to offer with major state initiatives such as issuing a number of Romani books, journals, a theatre and movies. All of

these have been reaching out to their Gypsies as the Romani language has been employed, seeking to educate them, make them active citizens and at the same time change the general perception of the major societies.

In terms of other countries which were worth mentioning here were Yugoslavia, Romania and Bulgaria. Of these, what has been actually noted about Bulgaria is very little – apart from the translation in Romanes of Books from the Bible, initiated by the British and Foreign Bible Society, the quality of their translations and the regret that Bulgaria has been lagging behind with their research and (already available) knowledge on their ‘Gypsies.’ From the articles about Yugoslavia, one could say that initiatives were short-lived since there has been only one issue of “Romano Lil” in 1935. And lastly, even though Romania seems to have a lot to say, the Journal has failed to really engage the reader besides posting the “Statutes of the General Association of the Gypsies (Tziganes) of Rumania.” Contributing scholars in the Journal who side with a particular ideology of the West, when discussing endeavours, initiatives and visions of Eastern Europeans may be tempted to judge such policies or initiatives with cynicism. Such an ideological approach obviously is harmful and prevents their fair judgement. Seemingly, if one is bound to get a good understanding about the Roma civic emancipation movement in the interwar period, they would need to dive thoroughly into the archives of individual States and acquaint themselves with the alternative narratives of the nation-states in question.