

“Being a part of the
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 of **complications.**”

by **Kimmo Granqvist**

Corina Ceamă, Ion Duminică, Ian Hancock, Tomasz Koper, and Hristo Kyuchukov reflect on their views and aspirations for Romani Studies, as well as their own roles as Roma scholars.

Romani Studies gathers scholars from different disciplines, and thus naturally many come from different entry points. Corina Ceamă, for instance, became interested in the study of the Romani language in 2005 when she became a student of Foreign Languages and Literature of the University of Bucharest.

Corina Ceamă: My BA thesis was “The Influence of the Romani on the Romanian language”. From 2008 until now I have been a professor of Romani Language and Literature and Romanian Literature, and through a fruitful collaboration with the Romanian Language and Literature Department of the University of Bucharest I have begun to systematically enrich my knowledge in different areas of linguistics, and lexicology has become my main field of research. For many years I have participated in the dialectal surveys conducted by the members of the Romani Language Department, while at the same time I have undertaken some special research on ways of developing the Romani language.

Ceamă continues: Since 2005, I have been investigating the problem of the origin and adaptation of the neologisms in Romani language, focusing on the process of the formation of Romani scientific terminology. This research has enabled me to broaden my linguistic expertise, with particularly useful results for the history of the Romani language.

Other researchers might have another entry point into the field. Ian Hancock mentions an urge to establish the details of “our true history” when asked what his research field is in Romani Studies.

Ian Hancock: Making the world know about it, and especially the 550 years of slavery and the Porrajimos (Holocaust). Education, because this leads to self-determination and inter-group ethnic unity.

“Each ethnographic group of Roms in the Republic of Moldova has its own professional, linguistic, and cultural characteristics.”

Ion Duminičă

A slightly broader research area is suggested by Tomasz Koper who states that his research interests focus on “historical, social, and cultural issues of Romani Studies”.

Ion Duminičă is yet more specific in the scope of his field and tells that for the last 15 years he has focused on highlighting information on the historical evolution and ethno-social situation of the Romani community in the Republic of Moldova.

Duminičă goes into more detail and informs us that the Roms are an ethnic group found mostly in Europe and who have lived in the territory making up modern-day Moldova since the beginning of the 15th century (1414).¹ There are no exact figures regarding the number of Roms living in the Republic of Moldova, which continues to pose challenges when discussing policies and programs directed towards the Roms. The official data for the census in 2014 counted 9,323 Roms in the Republic of Moldova,² and data collected by the Bureau of Inter-ethnic Relations in 2012 suggest that the figure is closer to 20,000, while Romani leaders claim that the figure can be up to 250,000 Roms living in the Republic of Moldova.³ Thus, there is an enormous disparity between official records and the self-assessment of the Romani community provided by local Romani NGOs and Roma community mediators, summarizes Duminičă.

Ion Duminičă: My fields of research are concerned with Romani history, culture, and identity. Moldavian Roms are spread all over the country, although most of the representatives of this community currently reside in the cities of Otaci, Soroaca, Edinet, and Riscani; the districts of Drochia, Orhei, Calarasi, and Hincesti; and the villages of Ursari, Parcani, Schinoasa (Calarasi district), and Vulcanesti (Nisporeni district).⁴ Also, due to the geographically cross-border location of the Republic of Moldova, nowadays there are unique congregations of ten Romani ethnic subgroups: *Laesi* (nomads), *Catunari* (inhabitants in tents), *Ciocanari* (nomadic blacksmiths), *Ciori* (horse thieves, which simultaneously refers to those who care for and traditionally trade with horses), *Ciurari* (sieve makers), *Brazdeni* (plowmen), *Ursari* (bear trainers), *Lingurari* (spoon makers), *Lautari* (musicians), and *Curteni* (servants and casual laborers in the nobles’ courtyards).

A follow-up question to you Duminičă since a defining characteristic of the Romani population is its diversity. How complex is the picture in Moldavia?

Ion Duminičă: Each ethnographic group of Roms in the Republic of Moldova has its own professional, linguistic, and cultural characteristics. Among others, following the new socio-economic changes in the trans-national global society, the Moldavian Romani community can be divided into three distinct ethno-social groups:

- a. *Traditional Roma with emphasized identity* (“Ciocanari”, “Catunari”, “Ciori”, and “Ursari”) – those who respect and preserve the unwritten paternal Romani customs inherited from their ancestors and who speak/think in Romani languages.
- b. *Roma with fragmentary identity* (“Laiesi”, “Brazdeni”, “Lautari”, and “Ciurari”) – those who are partially self-integrated into contemporary Moldavian society. Members of this secondary group are Romani speaking (occasional)/Moldavian thinking (regular), and they take on the lifestyle and habits of the majority population of the Republic of Moldova.
- c. *Assimilated Roma with hidden identity* (“Lingurari” and “Curteni”) – those who are cross-discriminated against by both the majority population and the traditional Romani groups. This group includes Moldavian speaking/thinking Roma who during their history gradually lost their ethno-psychological markers of Romani identity, including language, cultural paternal customs, and a nomadic/romantic lifestyle determined by a community spirit of mutual support. Poor living conditions and the individualization of social problems through enforced segregation of families has led most representatives of this group to become socially vulnerable.

Duminičă describes further that the history of the Roms from the Republic of Moldova is characterized by the survival of some ethno-linguistic traits and cultural patterns over the centuries.

Ion Duminičă: Lower social condition, specific symbiosis with the majority population, and their own lifestyles have been perpetuated up to today. Adequate knowledge of their present aspirations, the acceptance of social progress, and the accommodation of the Romani community with low educational potential through new trends in economic development are absolutely necessary. Unfortunately, lack of knowledge of the “Roma issues” often generates fear and unfounded stereotypes being deeply implanted in the collective mind of the majority population.

Hristo Kyuchukov brings psycholinguistics to Romani Studies, and he has also done a lot of research into the teaching of the Romani language in kindergartens and primary schools because this is also applied linguistics.



Corina Ceamă is a teacher and is the General Inspector for Romani Language, Ministry of Education, Bucharest. Ceamă is now in her third year as a doctoral student in human sciences at the University of Constanța, Romania. She previously worked within a Roma NGO and implemented a number of projects for the benefit of the Roma community in Braila. She teaches Romanian and Romani language in Suțești village, where in 2012 she initiated the first national literature contest for the Romani language, called "Ștefan Fuli", after the eponymous Roma poet (1950–1995).



Ian Hancock (o Yanko le Redjosko) is the Director of the Romani Archives and Documentation Centre at the University of Texas. For many years he represented the IRU at the United Nations ECO-SOC/DPI/NGO-UNICEF, and he was appointed by President Clinton to serve as the sole Romani member of the US Holocaust Memorial Council. He also served as a State Commissioner on the Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission.



Tomasz Koper is a PhD candidate in sociology at the Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw. His doctoral thesis focuses on Gypsy identity and social and cultural adaptation strategies and is based on ethnographic research among two Romani groups in Poland.



Ion Duminiță, PhD in Political Sciences, is the Head of the "Ethnic Minorities" Department of the Institute of Cultural Heritage, Academy of Sciences of Moldova, Chisinau. Duminiță is a Moldovan citizen of Roma ethnicity, born in Taganrog, Rostov-na-Donu region, Russian Federation, with Romanian and Russian as his mother tongues. He has published works in the field of Romani studies, including such topics as Roma history/ethnology, Romani tradition and culture, Social integration of the Moldavian Roma, etc. Also, Duminiță has given numerous presentations at international conferences and seminars related to the evaluation of the socio-economic situation of Roma people in Eastern Europe, especially in the countries of the former USSR, including the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, and the Russian Federation.



Hristo Kyuchukov, professor at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, is working in the fields of linguistics, inter-cultural education, bilingualism, bilingual education, and anti-Gypsyism. Over the last 15 years he has focused on the acquisition of the Romani language from a very early age, how babies learn Romani, and what kinds of grammatical categories are learned first.

Have you, Kyuchukov, ever looked at Romani varieties that are not learned as often during childhood?

– No, I have not looked into that, but I started a project seven years ago with Peter Bakker to work on acquisition of Romani as a second language. I gave a presentation at Aarhus University, but that project was never completed.

– I have worked on the experiences of Romani teachers and the level of competence of Romani children when they start school.

That's interesting, I was doing this based on some observations on Romani children from Serbia in Vienna, but we didn't finish that work. What do you, Kyuchukov, think about the Domari?

– Well, if they say that they are Roms who are you or who am I to tell them that they are not Roms.

What about the ones living in India?

Kyuchukov replies that in India they don't call themselves Roms, and he continues:

Hristo Kyuchukov: They call themselves Gypsies in the area. There are no Roms in India. I went there three times, and I was doing some research. For me, Romani Studies is study dedicated to the people who identify themselves as Roms. They could also be individuals; there are gadže people who identify themselves as Roms.

Let us now get back to the broader picture and reflect on one specific characteristic of Romani Studies – multidisciplinary. What are your different viewpoints on this?

Corina Ceamă: From my point of view, the Romani language cannot be studied unidirectionally because in order to have a clear vision of a people, we need to speak about language, history, and customs. Social practice does not





Christina Rodell Olgaç and Angelina Dimiter-Taikon lead a course in Romani Chib for future teachers together at Södertörn University.



2015 Gypsy Lore Society annual meeting and conference on Gypsy/Romani Studies, Chisinau, Moldova.

even recognize unidisciplinary issues; on the contrary, it calls for openness for and comprehension of all areas of knowledge – for the sake of theoretical approaches.

Ian Hancock: It is essential. The areas of the study of our people cross disciplines; for example, we cannot study cuisine properly without also studying medicine. We cannot study our language without studying our history, if we are to do an exhaustive job.

Tomasz Koper: The Romani community is not a cultural and social monolith, and differences in their living conditions, cultural patterns, and mentality are significant. Science has the right tools to identify all of the differences underlying generalizations. Therefore, researching this community from the position of one research orientation will lead to misunderstandings. Instead, a broader description becomes necessary and facilitates insights into the deeper perception of understanding the research problems. Multidisciplinary will be a challenge for Roma studies in the future.

Ion Duminičă: At the moment, within the “Ethnology of Roma” Group of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova there are three areas of investigation in the Romani Studies field – Romani History, Culture and Identity; Romani Ethno-Literature and Fairytales; and the Ethno-psychology and Ethno-sociology of the Roma. Thus, multidisciplinary in Romani Studies is an indispensable milestone; it is impossible to approach Romani Studies from the perspective of a single socio-humanistic science.

Hristo Kyuchukov: I think multidisciplinary is important because the subject of the Roms shouldn't be treated from just one discipline, just one angle. Instead, this needs to be looked at from a linguistics point of view, sociology, from health, from every issue. I think it's absolutely necessary in order to understand a group of Roms in this or that, in belonging to this or that linguistic group or professional group. We need multidisciplinary.

Thus, how would you define Romani Studies?

Corina Ceamă: Romani Studies represents for me the research done over more than a century on the Romani language, its origin, its dialects, its socio-linguistic evolution, and on other aspects of Romani culture.

Ian Hancock: A field that has been dominated by non-Roma, who have remained in control of who and what we are and what they think is best for us.

Tomasz Koper: It is a scientific area where the Gypsy communities (and their peculiar problems) are the core subject.

Ion Duminičă: Romani Studies are a component part of the socio-humanistic sciences. They make up a multidisciplinary research field that addresses aspects of the historical evolution of the Romani community, Romani linguistic

approaches, Romani politics, the ethno-cultural heritage of the Roma, etc. The main goal of Romani Studies is not focused on publishing an “interesting bestseller” concerning “undiscovered poor living or rich Roma people”.⁵ This is a relatively new science that applies classical research methods, including case studies, participatory observations, field interviews, etc. Unlike other socio-humanistic sciences, Romani Studies is not a science based on laboratory experiments or office research. The specificity of this science is that the “objective results of the research” can be obtained only with the direct participation of the “research object”. The researcher who wants to embrace Romani Studies first of all must eliminate the hidden fear concerning the traditionally diverse community of Romani people. Secondly, the researcher must respect the Romani community, eliminating any trace of bias implanted in the collective mentality of the majority population. Lately, interest in Romani Studies is growing because it addresses the challenges of contemporary globalized society, including permanent migration, illiteracy, unemployment, lack of personal identification documents, etc. Finally, we can conclude that Romani Studies is a contemporary science.

Hristo Kyuchukov simply underlines that, for him, everything connected with Roms and everyone who identifies as Roma is included in Romani Studies.

What could in your opinion be done to extend or consolidate academic teaching in Romani Studies?

Corina Ceamă: Speaking from the point of view of my small contribution to Romani Studies, namely the Romani lexicology, I would consider a priority to be the consolidation of the standard Romani language.

Ian Hancock: Have more Roms involvement, and make it easier to hold more Romani-dominant conferences.

Tomasz Koper: It seems that goodwill, successful circumstances, and powerful tools are needed to achieve the goal.

Ion Duminică: Currently “Introducing Romani Studies teaching into the national school curriculum” – which is a subject that is still in the process of informal discussions. Most former Soviet countries avoid including the topic “History and ethno-cultural heritage of minorities” in their national textbooks. Unfortunately, the Soviet teaching methodology – to teach only acts of heroism of the majority population (“the main nation”) – negatively affects the formation of the collective image of the Roms in society. A lack of awareness generates stereotypes, which in turn lead to “anti-Gypsyism” behaviors. Therefore, the Roma people are more “objects of indifference” than “subjects of participation” in those kinds of history textbooks. Promoting skills in the prevention of conflict over the use of any type of violence is a milestone for schools.

Duminică continues: Obviously, it is a very important issue to find an optimal solution and to undertake the necessary actions regarding bridging the gap between Romani academic research and school textbooks. The new cultures will become known when they are respected for their rich heritage. Meanwhile, the efforts for the reformation of the educational system still suffer some limitations. The central authorities (represented by the Ministry of Education) control the textbooks, there are still no clear definitions of teaching outcomes or standards for history as a school subject, and “Romani Studies” teacher training is completely non-existent. In any case, the role of educational institutions remains central, and for this reason various examples of teaching of Romani Studies in schools at various levels of education must be developed and introduced, and the aim should be to provide an integrated education in the national educational system in accordance with the multi-ethnic reality of the former Soviet countries.

Finally, the intended models for the improvement of a policy response towards inclusive education might include:

- a. Elaboration of a separate curriculum for the subject “Roma history and culture” and distributing these textbooks among the teachers and pupils of the pre-university educational institutions in the densely Romani-populated localities.
- b. Elaboration of the optional curriculum “Intercultural education” with teaching support materials in partnership with international organizations and including this “alternative subject” in the secondary schools.
- c. Promotion of Romani Studies as extracurricular activities in partnership with local authorities and Roma NGOs, in accordance with the celebration and commemoration of international Romani events.
- d. Introduction of Romani and Other Minority’s History and Culture into the national school curriculum and elaboration of the textbooks based on the new Romani and minority studies.
- e. Popularization of Romani history research among non-Romani students who opt to study history at universities and who are majoring in socio-humanist science.

“Everything connected with Roms and everyone who identifies as Roma is included in Romani studies.”

Hristo Kyuchukov



And what is your view on academic teaching in Romani Studies, Hristo Kyuchukov?

Hristo Kyuchukov: Maybe this is not the way it should be done. We are thinking very conservatively. This is an old-fashioned way to teach only in the university. Maybe we should think about other ways of teaching Romani Studies, maybe to big companies, private companies, or maybe through some kind of virtual university. There are nowadays so many models, but maybe this classical way with classes and an office at the university must be changed. When we see that classical models don't work, we should think of other ways to reach people.

Hristo Kyuchukov: I support the existing universities cooperating on joint PhD supervision. There are not so many people teaching and working at universities with Romani Studies who are entitled to provide supervision or become opponents. It's a very good idea to establish a kind of independent network of scholars who are interested in Romani Studies.

What would you then consider to be the greatest achievements in the history of Romani Studies?

Corina Ceamă: The greatest achievement in the history of Romani Studies is the discovery and adoption of a common lexicon, a literary form, which is preferable to various dialects.

Ian Hancock: The increasing involvement of scholars who are themselves Roma.

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Tomasz Koper: Certainly contributing to understanding of the Roma origin is an important element in the development of Romani Studies over the last decades. These explanations became possible thanks to the development of comparative linguistic studies. Therefore, I think that linguistic studies have a great scientific potential.

Ion Duminiță: First of all, the institutionalization of Romani Studies – the gradual passage of research from the “land of amateurism” towards academic institutions. The establishment of academic research groups in different countries, including Eastern Europe, has produced a significant impetus for the development of Romani Studies. Unfortunately, this process in that area was initiated too late, only towards the end of the 20th century. In the Republic of Moldova, on January 3, 2004, according to the Government Decision No.131 of 16.02.2001 “On some measures to support the Gypsies from Moldova” (Item 2. Make a study on Moldovan Gypsies’ language and culture), a Moldovan Gypsies’ Culture and History Department was opened within the Interethnic Research Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, and it was tasked with initiating a programme in Romani Studies. Then, after the reorganization of the Interethnic Research Institute through the merger with two other institutes (the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography and the Institute of Arts Studies) on August 9, 2006, the Institute of Cultural Heritage was founded. Currently, Romani Studies in Moldova is conducted by scientific collaborators of the “Ethnology of Roma” group working within the “Ethnic minorities” Department of the Ethnology Center of the Institute of Cultural Heritage of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova.⁶

Duminiță continues: Secondly, starting in 1979 – the organizing and holding of the Annual Meetings of the Gypsy Lore Society and Conferences of Romani Studies. These annual meetings are significant for the international dissemination of new results in the field. Here new relationships and new networks of scientific cooperation and research projects are established. In 2015, one of these annual meetings was hosted by the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, and more than 100 researchers from 25 countries participated.⁷

Hristo Kyuchukov: The greatest achievement of Romani Studies is that the subject of Romani Studies motivates young Roms to look at their history and culture and that we now have PhD students, young Roms with PhDs who defended their PhDs in linguistics, sociology, and cultural studies.

You interestingly mention both the increased involvement from scholars that are themselves Roms and the networking among Roma scholars, as well as the institutionalization of the discipline itself. How do you then see the position of a Roma scholar as part of the academic community and in relation to the Roma communities? How does it differ from the position of non-Roma scholars?

Corina Ceamă: The trained Roms are already excluded from the Romani community; they are no longer part of the compact group. Compared to the others, they are better prepared, and they want to overcome their social condition and no longer be discriminated against.

Ian Hancock: Being a Rom oneself allows an entrée into the Romani world that non-Roma do not have. But there are still social barriers in place that distance the “educated” Roms from the majority of the population.

Tomasz Koper: Being a part of the community that is being investigated creates a number of complications. The key is to be aware of who you are – as a man, a son of your own mother, and a co-worker. It is a moral problem on the one hand, and on the other a formal one. Only knowing the boundaries and the consequences of crossing them can the answer to that question be found. Although reliable solutions are possible to achieve, I am strongly convinced that each of them is not enough and is not the only solution. These kinds of struggles do not trouble non-Romani scholars.

Ion Duminiță: A Romani scholar is a habitual part of the academic community. At the same time, unfortunately, Romani scholar is an “unusual profession” in the Romani community. Traditionally, the Romani community has perceived another material value system that is not characteristic for the scientific field. Therefore, any scientist, including the Romani scholars, is considered to be a person who “has lost his mind within the books”. That is why it is better to introduce yourself to the Romani community as a journalist than as a scholar.

Duminiță continues: Within the Romani community, the different ethno-social positions between non-Romani scholars and Romani scholars do not really matter. Unfortunately, this difference is publicly accentuated only by a part of the Romani scholars who accumulate some “inappropriate frustrations”. In accordance with the opinion promoted by most Romani scholars – they are the real experts on Romani Studies because they have Romani identity backgrounds. But, in fact, many of them have just... incomplete higher education. In contrast, I meet many “happy non-Romani scholars” who are involved in the deployment of Romani Studies without ever meeting with the representatives of the Romani community. In the opinion of these scholars, research is done only in libraries or archives among books, documents, and manuscripts; there is no need to complicate things by getting involved in trying to solve Romani issues. I think both approaches are flawed. For the continuity and development of Romani Studies, it is important to welcome multidisciplinary collaboration between Romani and non-Romani scholars.

Hristo Kyuchukov: There are many differences between Roms and non-Roms working on Romani Studies. I am not going to say names. There was a young non-Romani girl doing her research with Romani communities, and then we met and she was telling me what kind of research she was doing and how she was doing. Then I realized that this young non-Romani woman was simply not being taken seriously by the Roma, and she was being fooled. They were telling her stupid funny things, and she took everything seriously, she was telling this to me, she was absolutely 100% sure, our Roms speaking like this and that, but it was not correct, they made a joke with her. These kinds of things do not happen to Roms because immediately you understand. Being a Rom, you say stop.

How would you characterize the dynamics between scholars in Romani Studies?

Corina Ceamă: In my opinion, in order to improve the dynamics between scholars in Romani Studies, there should be a promotion of working languages during the annual meetings of Romani scholars and experts. This is an opportunity to make the trained Roms visible.

Ian Hancock: Generally, the small number of Romani scholars cooperate very well. The contention comes (mainly, but not entirely) from the non-Romani specialists.

Tomasz Koper: I do not have much experience in these kinds of issues. Each researcher has different experiences in working in the Romani environment – and they themselves are different. It seems that the most appropriate indicator of good cooperation is the building of common concepts in the theoretical field.

Ion Duminiță: Along with the development of information technologies, the dynamics of collaboration among



Researchers and activists together at the International Roma Day. Ladislav Balaz (Europe Roma Network), Veerendra Rishi (Indian Institute of Roma Studies) and Grattan Puxon (Gypsy Council, World Romani Congress).

PHOTO: WWW.BESTFOOTMUSIC.NET





Ion Duminičă at a meeting with Roma in Sangerei city (2009).



PHOTO: GYPSY COUNCIL UK

Romani International Day celebration in London, April 8, 2018.

scholars in Romani Studies has increased significantly. Most of the publications in Romani Studies are disseminated among the scientific community and among experts in Romani issues in a digital format.⁸ The only current obstacle is related to the language of communication between Romani and non-Romani scholars in Western and Eastern Europe. Traditionally, most of the Romani Studies works have been published in three international languages – English, French and Russian.

Hristo Kyuchukov: Well, between scholars it is up and down. There are scholars who can destroy everything that other people do, and there are people who can unite the scholars. For example, for me, one person who was uniting the scholars, supporting every single scholar, was Milena Hübschmannová. She was very supportive of everyone, very positive, very nice.

I have heard the most beautiful words about her, Milena Hübschmannová.

Hristo Kyuchukov: And I had a very good relationship with her in the 15 years before she died. If I have to name experts in Romani Studies, there are only two people in my life, the first person is Milena Hübschmannová, she made a Romani scholar out of me, and the second person who influenced my life a great deal was Ian Hancock. Hancock has served as a role model for me. I have learned a great deal from my communication and collaboration with him. He is also very nice and supportive, but the most important person in my life was Milena Hübschmannová.

That's interesting to hear because many people, both Roms and non-Roms, express their appreciation for Hübschmannová. She did an excellent job establishing Romani Studies in Prague. What do you, Kyuchukov, think about important personalities such as Miklosich and Grellman, who are often listed as milestones?

Hristo Kyuchukov: Well, thanks to their work, we know something about the Roms. Without their work, there wouldn't be any Romani Studies. Of course, we should also mention the names of Pott and Paspati, and Gilliat-Smith. We could mention many, Kogalniceanu and all those Gypsiologists, not Gypsologists, whoever, without them we wouldn't know their work and we wouldn't have the Romani Studies that we have today.

A reflection on this to you, Kyuchukov. Do we suffer from that fact that we Romani Studies people have a tendency of only cooperating with each other?

Hristo Kyuchukov: Well, I don't think so. I, for instance, work with American professors. They didn't know anything about Romani Studies, Romani language, or Romani childhood education until meeting me. And I work with professor Jill de Villers. She is a psycholinguist and a psychologist, and we have worked together for around 15 years. And now she is so much interested in this, and she actually motivated me to look at how the Romani children learn Romani and what grammatical categories they learn, and I learned a lot from her through this cooperation.

Cooperation is of course essential. What do you think about the role of international academic networks in developing Romani Studies?

Corina Ceamă: Through these academic networks, Romani and non-Romani scholars can deepen their knowledge by spreading out on the local, regional, and international level. Romani graduates could collaborate with non-governmental institutions, promoting “exemplary good practice” activities through their own personas.

Ian Hancock: An excellent idea.

Tomasz Koper: The idea seems to be an adequate one, but I prefer to wait for the more serious results. I think many initiatives and projects have emphasized Romani issues, most of them in East – Central Europe. Honestly, none of them have fully resolved the problem of social inclusion processes among the Roms. I see every day many Romani groups (especially from the Balkan states), they have to spend their nights in the middle of the forest in tents. It has been more than 25 years since the political *Romani movement* has achieved measurable attainments, mostly in the imagined (symbolic) arena. It's time to change things in reality...

Ion Duminiță: International networks are an indispensable element of any field of research, including Romani Studies. It is important that such networks are established based on the mutual interests of the scholars and for a sustainable period. The example of the Gypsy Lore Society is an eloquent model. The International Academic Network is a great link for discussing the latest achievements and to initiate new projects and collaborations on Romani Studies.

Hristo Kyuchukov: Well, networks can do a lot, just meeting people, collecting people, giving the opportunity to people to have contacts with each other, to exchange information, to collaborate on this or that project. But sometimes networks are taken over and want to publish your individual results as if they belonged to the network, which I find wrong. Very often the networks are used to fight between each other, or to solve our problems between each other, or simply to show how the other people are stupid and I am the cleverest one.

Kyuchukov continues: However, I think there still are networks that can be functioning. In such networks, there are no dominant people or one person to dominate, and everyone has an equal opportunity, an equal platform to say something or express his feelings or thinking or opinion about one thing or another.

How, then, should a Romani Studies scholar co-operate with NGOs, GOs, and other non-academic organizations? What goals should be prioritized in third-stream activities?

Corina Ceamă: Yes, they should be active, to be the voice of the people, to capitalize on the trained young people.

Ian Hancock: Scholars are usually not politicians, and politicians are usually not scholars. The two should cooperate, but not take on each other's roles.

Tomasz Koper: The scholars should be convinced of objectivity at every level of the co-operation, and they should pay attention to the interests of the individuals or groups that the project relates to. It would be appropriate to remain open to any doubts and to be able to solve particular problems as a matter of course.

Ion Duminiță: Romani issues are a permanent workplace involving engagement of the five main stakeholders – Governmental institutions, Local authorities, Romani civil society, Romani community representatives, and International organizations. Before proceeding to implement sustainable partnerships regarding Romani projects, these five actors must be guided by professional analyses and by the expertise presented by Romani Studies scholars. The involvement of the Romani Studies scholar's expertise in the process of solving Romani issues is an indispensable approach. Unfortunately, there are often cases where decisions are taken in a hurry without any scientific support. After that, the results obtained in these “Romani projects implemented in the booklets” are criticized.¹⁰ Thus, beyond all doubt, the scientific expertise of the Romani Studies scholars becomes an imperative for solving the Romani issues.

“Scholars are usually not politicians, and politicians are usually not scholars. The two should cooperate, but not take on each other's roles.”

Ian Hancock



“As a scholar with a Romani background, I do see myself as a mediator between the Roma and academia because there are Roma who are interested and read my things and they write to me.”

Hristo Kyuchukov

Hristo Kyuchukov: Well, I think that NGOs can be very helpful in cooperation, because the NGOs can bring to the people, to the grassroots, somehow to transform the information the academics bring from their research and their studies. They can be a bridge. The cooperation with NGOs is important.

There seems to be a difficult line to draw between direct active involvement and objective knowledge production. Should Romani Studies scholars be socially or politically active? If so, in what way?

Corina Ceamă: More openness from decision-makers, offering more training to specialists.

Ian Hancock: As I said previously, scholars and politicians should cooperate, but not take on each other's roles.

Tomasz Koper: I believe that researchers should not be involved in any political debate. This is conducted with a moral fusion to the methodological aspects. I understand that some researchers want to be socially active, and perhaps this will resolve particular problems, but I do not notice any general trends regarding such behaviors.

Ion Duminiță: Romani Studies is a socio-humanist science. Obviously, Romani Studies scholars have to be socialized. Their participation in public events and debates (conferences, seminars, round tables, workshops, etc.) has helped disseminate the results of many recent investigations. The Romani Studies scholar is not “a closed scholar” working in some secret laboratory. His knowledge must constantly meet the public reality. Without proactive involvement of the Romani Studies scholar in a public life, their research results become sterile for the Romani community.

Hristo Kyuchukov: As a scholar with a Romani background, I do see myself as a mediator between the Roma and academia because there are Roma who are interested and read my things and they write to me. And there are Roma who simply don't care, and for them, you are a Gypsy like them,

what does it matter what you think; there is nothing different between a Gypsy from the settlement and from the Ghetto. Mostly I am perceived kindly, but there are some Romani activists who don't like me. They don't read, they

commentary

The Post-Gypsy Lore Moment: Defining Romani Studies

THIS IS A VERY interesting discussion that Kimmo Granqvist moderates here. It is unusual to have scholars reflecting on the potential of their discipline, so this is a great occasion for Romani studies. If one looks at the contributions closely, one can see the emergence of a struggle by scholars to wriggle their way out of a long-standing and narrow agenda created for the study of “gypsy” issues and to demarcate a wider territory called Romani Studies.

In 1888 a group of enthusiasts and amateur scholars created the Gypsy Lore Society with a specialist journal that had a small readership. The goal

of the society was to encourage and promulgate knowledge about what at that time were called “gypsies”, in essence all groups that lived a peripatetic existence. Thus the thrust was on the imagined free-wheeling lifestyle and customs of nomadic or semi-nomadic peoples living on the margins of their communities. Much of the research was placed on comparative linguistics, folklore, and connections to the languages and culture of India as well as documentation of European anti-gypsy policies. The Gypsy Lore Society still exists with annual conferences that now are entitled conferences on “Gypsy/Romani Studies”. This addition

is indicative of a new turn of scholarship that has also caused the recent mutation of its journal to being no longer Gypsy Lore but rather one dedicated to Romani Studies, of which Granqvist is now editor.

THE KEY TO this transition is the opening up of Eastern Europe for studies of its native Romani population and the necessity to distance scholarship away from its earlier focus on “gypsies” as quintessentially colourfully nomadic. Refocusing demands new kinds of studies (previously quite rare) on the large groups of permanently settled Roms of South-Central and South-Eastern Europe. Suddenly, new issues have emerged. How should one approach the dilemma that many marginal groups in Eastern Europe are considered by the majority population

are not interested. I have met these kinds of people. Who reads your publications, who reads your books? Why do you write them? You write just because you have money from this project or that project. For them, this is always connected with projects. And money.

And politically. No, I don't think that scholars should participate in politics. When they start with the politics, they stop being scholars. We can't solve the problems of the Roms in all societies. What we can do is to bring knowledge, and then this knowledge can be used by the policy makers to improve the living conditions of the Roma.

Lastly: In what way would you wish to develop Romani Studies as a discipline?

Tomasz Koper: I see a significant value in changing the way the Roms are treated as a marginalized group, located outside the human world. I would like to see the Roms having a strong potential for freedom of social and cultural choice, and not have to choose between the destruction of their culture and social participation. For many reasons, such expectations are difficult to realize, and in fact might be a part of the mythical sphere. As many scholars suggest, the Romani culture in the face of inclusion procedures is not able to defend itself against the loss of cultural patterns.

Ian Hancock: Create Romani Studies curricula for permanent inclusion in high schools and colleges. Either as modules in "ethnic diversity" classes (ALL countries are multi-ethnic, most just don't acknowledge it) or as full semester-long courses at university level. We have that at my university. How do the academic aspects addressed here help the 99% of Roms who struggle each day to find work, food, health care, safety from racism, and hope for the future? This is an important question. Were these questions devised by Roms or non-Roms?

Ion Duminičă: Up to now, the most common method of multidisciplinary teaching of Romani Studies for the students was just informal summer courses. In the future, in my opinion, I think it will be more relevant to combine this informal summer education with the introduction of academic lectures on "Romani and Minority Studies" at universities among MA/PhD students within the departments of history, anthropology, and social and political science. Nowadays, the teaching of Romani Studies is carried out in Romania only at the National School of Political Science and Public Administration (Bucharest) within a post-graduate study program¹¹ and in Hungary only at the Central European University (Budapest) through Postdoctoral Research Fellowships.¹²

Hristo Kyuchukov: I have the feeling that Romani Studies is closed to certain people and universities, that this is a

to be "gypsies", but who themselves insist that they are not "Roms"? This question has political repercussions as in political contexts pro-Roma activists tend to claim very large numbers and to include groups that reject being termed Roms. This creates confusion when money and other forms of support are designated to Roma inclusion. The Gypsy Lore heritage of focusing on nomadic groups leads in some cases to policies that were designed for problems of nomadic life such as access to housing, caravan sites, schooling and so on, and are not suited to the problems of the permanently settled. Also, in the effort to standardize Romani language what variant should be considered the base – should it be the relatively prestigious Kalderash variety spoken by a wide-spread previously nomadic group of Romanian origin, or

should it be the Yerli variant spoken by an even larger but permanently settled population in the southern Balkan region?

AS ILLUSTRATED by the discussion the transition is on-going with as yet no clear definition of what can constitute the core of the new Romani Studies. The heritage of the Gypsy Lore Society weighs heavily on thinking about the new path. For instance, professor of linguistics Ian Hancock's main point does not deal with a new agenda, but rather the need to recruit more scholars with a Romani family background, taking for granted that their research will be better representative than that of the non-Roms who dominate the field.

Professor of pedagogics Hristo Kyuchukov brings unique psycholinguistic perspectives to how young children

learn the Romani language. This new type of perspective has considerable actuality as in many countries efforts are being made to revive the Romani language, as many families no longer have it as their daily spoken language and pupils and students are learning it a second language. Both Corina Ceamă in Romania and Ion Duminičă in Moldova are engaged in state-supported efforts to promulgate the teaching of the Romani language. Ceamă created a national Romani language literature contest. Duminičă has been successfully working with Moldovan government departments to introduce school education on Romani language, customs, folklore, and history into the curriculum.

Ceamă, Duminičă, and Tomasz Koper stress the importance of being multidisciplinary, which is an obvious



much closed subject. It's not known in other universities, in mainstream universities. We should bring knowledge and awareness about Romani Studies as a subject to other universities. For instance, my job now in Poland has nothing to do with Romani Studies. I am appointed there as a professor in inter-cultural education. Inter-cultural education in Poland means to work with Czech and Ukrainian people in Poland, to work with Catholic people. Romani Studies as a discipline should be brought to other universities.

It seems to be a consensus of the importance of developing space for Romani Studies into full courses, and that the education as well as the research should be open for exchange and interactions with other disciplines and universities. ✕

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Note: The questions were sent to the interviewed by e-mail from autumn 2017 to spring 2018 and collected and edited thereafter.

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>> stance for a field as complex as that of Romani Studies. The people to be researched live in many countries, have had many different historical experiences and have been formed by contacts with the surrounding community in manifold ways. As well as this point of general agreement the core is still on the Romani language. Duminică is the most explicit of the discussants. For him Romani Studies is a "new science", but which uses "classical research methods" like case studies, participatory observations, field interviews and so on. The major problem for the researchers is gaining access to and the trust of the studied community. Objectivity is attained when the community participates directly.

DUMINICĂ IMAGINES a situation that may be difficult to attain. To gain ac-

cess to a community's trust there must be some sort of mutual respect. Yet the discussants, particularly Kuchukov, stress that they have difficulty of finding respect inside the Romani community. As academics, they have become unusual outsiders. However, the further development of Romani studies lies in greater professionalism. Greater use of research methodology from other disciplines, greater degree of co-operation with researchers from other disciplines, increased research co-operation within networks and sophisticated graduate education. All of this will contribute to a professional academic identity that probably will make "being part of the community" more than just complicated even for a researcher of Romani origin.

Interestingly, a number of previously important scholarly projects are not

discussed here. One of them is the debate on the Indian origins of the Roma and when and how they left India to arrive in Europe. Another not here discussed theme is the semi-political project to unite all the various groups into for instance the International Romani Union which has now split into several parts. I personally would like to see more sociological research as to the local social structures of Roma communities, more economic studies of the division of labor and everyday life of families, and political research into the reasons for the failure of Romani political parties to mobilize their potential voters. ✕

David Gaunt

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