



# We Are Here!

**Discriminatory Exclusion and Struggle  
for Rights of Roma in Turkey**

**Edirne Roma Association  
European Roma Rights Centre  
Helsinki Citizens' Assembly**

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for Rights of Roma in Turkey

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## Preface

Historically, Turkey has been an important place for Roma and for the development of Roma culture; according to some scholars in the field, Sulukule neighbourhood in today's İstanbul is considered to be the first Romani settlement in Europe. Despite the continuous presence of sizeable Romani communities over the course of centuries, Roma in Turkey are not an integral part of society today and face serious obstacles to the exercise of fundamental rights on equal footing with other citizens. While the protection of fundamental human rights and minority rights in particular, has become prominent in recent years in Turkey, especially within the process of EU accession, Roma rights issues have not yet been an integral part of this discussion.

There are various reasons explaining the invisibility of the human rights problems affecting Roma in Turkey. In the first place, as this book reveals, Roma in Turkey face high levels of prejudice, discrimination and exclusion by society at large, as well as by other minority groups, which has marginalised them in the public sphere. Secondly, at least until recently, many Roma have shied away from civic activism, especially from getting organised to pursue an agenda of claiming their rights, in reaction to nationalist pressures which perceive such activities as a betrayal to the Turkish state.

With the aim of contributing to the advancement of the Roma rights movement in Turkey, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) developed and implemented the project "Promoting Roma Rights in Turkey", in partnership with the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly (hCa) and the Edirne Association for Research, Development and Solidarity with Roma / Edirne Roma Association (EDROM) in the period December 2005-April 2008. The project received financial support from the European Commission, The Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation–Turkey, and ERRC core donor Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The main objectives of this project have been to:

- Collect reliable data regarding the social, linguistic, historical and geographical profile of Romani communities in Turkey;

- Empower Romani communities in Turkey to seek justice for human rights violations and build the capacity of Romani civil actors to mobilise for effective advocacy for government action to address racial discrimination against Roma in all spheres of life;
- Give prominence to the human rights problems facing Roma in Turkey and mobilise resources within civil society, including strategic litigation, to advocate respect and protection of the rights of Roma at domestic and international levels; and
- Promote government action, including the creation of adequate legislative, institutional and policy frameworks, to protect Roma and other ethnic minorities against human rights violations and ensure access to fundamental social and economic rights without discrimination.

Within this framework, the project made the first steps paving the way for mobilising Roma rights activism in Turkey. In addition to capacity building of Romani organisations, networking opportunities for Romani and non-Romani NGOs, the project “Promoting Roma Rights in Turkey” has broadened the human rights field in Turkey by introducing to it the aspect of Roma rights advocacy and strategic litigation. It should be noted that until this project was initiated, there had been no serious academically viable study profiling Romani communities in Turkey.

The book “We Are Here!” is one outcome of the project “Promoting Roma Rights in Turkey”. It draws on research and experiences during the project and reflects partners’ expertise in Roma rights advocacy, the promotion of values of democracy, social justice and peace, and the grassroots mobilisation of Romani communities. This book is an attempt to provide an overview of the situation of Romani communities throughout Turkey and present human rights issues of particular concern. It focuses on those legal norms (or the absence of such), practices and conditions which affect Roma and deny members of this community equal access to rights and opportunities. The other broad topic in this book is the emergence and the development of Romani civil society organisations in Turkey with an overview of their place in civil society, their goals, activities and needs.

As one of the first works aimed at bringing Roma rights concerns to light in Turkey, this book presents a comprehensive view of the issue, including a historical and ethnological background, human rights research documentation as well review of human rights instruments and policies. Above all, “We are Here!” seeks to portray the Roma of Turkey as citizens of the Republic, with their own history, social positions and relations, and their specific problems. In doing so, the book also describes the recent efforts of Turkey’s Romani activists to organise themselves to help their own communities.

The book is organised as follows: *Chapter 1* provides a brief presentation of the history of Roma in present Turkey. *Chapter 2* describes the various Romani groups throughout Turkey, their identities, occupations and relations to majority society. *Chapter 3* is a review of Turkey’s

obligations under international and regional human rights instruments and the compliance of domestic legislation with these instruments. This chapter concludes with specific recommendations to Turkish authorities for bringing the state's legal framework in compliance with international human rights standards. *Chapter 4* summarises the findings of field research highlighting the most serious human rights problems documented and provides specific recommendations for government action to remedy discrimination and social exclusion facing Romani communities. *Chapter 5* is an attempt to map out the process of the emergence of Romani civil society organisations in Turkey. An interview with the leader of one of the Romani federations in Turkey and partner to the project gives insight into the major challenges facing young Romani civil society groups and the prospects of their development. *Chapter 6* is an account of the historic roots and development of nationalist ideas in Turkey and their impact on the position of Roma in Turkish society. *Chapter 7* makes a critical examination of several major academic research works focusing on Roma in Turkey.

Throughout this report the terms Roma and Gypsy are used interchangeably, in accordance with the author's preference. In the ongoing debate in Turkey with regard to these terms, one position is that due to the negative stereotypes associated with the term Gypsy, it is the term Roma which should be given preference. The opposite opinion argues that the term Gypsy should be stripped of its stigmatising content and its legitimacy reclaimed as a neutral and inclusive term designating a variety of groups in Turkey – Roma, Dom, Lom and Travellers.

Savelina Danova/Roussinova  
*European Roma Rights Centre*  
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## A Brief History of Gypsies in Turkey

*Adrian Marsh*

Gypsies first appear in Turkey during the Byzantine period in records that describe the practices of the so-called Atsinganoi or Athinganoi. The original Atsinganoi were a group of Phrygian heretics that seemed to have practised various forms of divination and magic related to a mixture of Kabbalistic rituals, astrology and dualist Christianity. They were also credited with magical practices, but their influence was strong during the ninth century when Michael the Phrygian (the area around modern Eskişehir became Emperor. At other times they faced persecution at the hands of the Orthodox Church and were frequently condemned by prelates and patriarchs. However, by the middle of the tenth century their numbers had dwindled significantly and they were no longer treated as a threat but merely misguided.<sup>1</sup>

The conflation with some early groups of Gypsies would seem to have come about because of the link with divination and magical practices ascribed to them. In a hagiography of St George the Athonite of Iviron,<sup>2</sup> we find a tale related about a group of Atsinganoi who are requested by the Emperor Constantine the IX Monomachus in 1054 CE [Common Era], to clear the royal park of troublesome wild beasts that were decimating the tame deer and other creatures there.<sup>3</sup> A corroboration of this regarding the presence of Gypsies in Byzantium at this time comes from Byzantine prelate Theodore Balsamon in his commentary on the Canons promulgated at the Council of Trullo 691-692 CE. In his exegesis of certain rulings, Balsamon describes the kinds of people who are referred to implicitly in Canon 61, including "... those who tell the future, fate, horoscope, and whatever else may be the multitude of words of this erroneous trumpery.

<sup>1</sup> See B. and J. Hamilton (1998), *Christian and Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World, c.650 to 1405*, Manchester University Press.

<sup>2</sup> The hagiography was written c.1062; see Paul Peeters (2002), Traductions et traducteurs dans l'hagiographie orientale à l'époque byzantine, [Extracted from *Analecta Bollandiana*], Brussels, 1922, pp. 102-104.

<sup>3</sup> See Nancy P. Ševčenko (2002), "Wild Animals in the Byzantine Park", in Anthony Littlewood, Henry Maguire and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn [eds.] *Byzantine Garden Culture*, Washington D.C. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, pp. 69-86; Angus Fraser (1992), *The Gypsies; Peoples of Europe*, Blackwell, Oxford, pp. 46-7.

The same is true for the interpreters of the clouds, sorcerers, furnishers of amulets, and soothsayers. We decree that those who continue doing so, who neither show repentance nor avoid these destructive and pagan customs, shall be totally expelled from the church according to the holy canons.”<sup>4</sup>

Fögen follows the majority of scholars<sup>5</sup> in identifying this as a reliable reference to Gypsies in Byzantium, and subsequent records from ecclesiastical sources elaborate on this theme of penance for those who consult the “Aiguptoi” or “Egyptians”.<sup>6</sup> The Patriarch of Constantinople, Anastasios I (14 October 1289 – 16 October 1293, 23 June 1303 – September 1309), in a text dating from his second period as hierarch, admonished his clerics to warn their parishioners not to associate with those fortune-tellers, bear-leaders and snake-charmers, such as the Atsinganoi who taught “devilish things”.<sup>7</sup> A less reliable but nevertheless curious reference exists in the 12th century account of Binyamin Me Tudela, a Jew from the Spanish Navarre who travelled extensively for a period of some fourteen years (1159-72 CE).<sup>8</sup> Binyamin describes the festivities that took place at Christmas in Constantinople at the Hippodrome (now at Meydan in the Sultanahmet district of Istanbul, close to Hagia Sophia and the Topkapı Palace), held by the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos (1118-80 CE): “... Close to the walls of the palace is also a place of amusement belonging to the king, which is called the Hippodrome, and every year on the anniversary of the birth of Jesus the king gives a great entertainment there. And in that place men from all the races of the world come before the king and queen with jugglery and without jugglery, and they introduce lions, leopards, bears, and wild asses, and they engage them in combat with one another; and the same thing is done with birds. No entertainment like this is to be found in any other land.”<sup>9</sup>

It could be speculated that the “Egyptians” made up part of the entertainment as one of the groups “from all the races of the world”. In 1314 CE, Nikephoros Gregoras spoke to a group of “Egyptians” who were in Constantinople performing complex acrobatic feats. The group had begun their journey in Cairo some time before and were intending to make their way to Spain,

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<sup>4</sup> Marie Thérèse Fögen (1995), “Balsamon on Magic: From Roman Secular Law to Byzantine Canon Law” in Henry Maguire [ed.] *Byzantine Magic*, Washington, D.C. Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, pp. 99-115.

<sup>5</sup> Elena Marushiakova and Veselin Popov (2001), *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire: a Contribution to the History of the Balkans*, Olga Apostolova [trans.], Donald Kenrick [ed.], Interface Collection, Paris and Hatfield, Centre de Recherches Tsiganes and University of Hertfordshire Press, p. 13; Angus M. Fraser (1992), *The Gypsies, Peoples of Europe Series*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, p.46; George C. Soulis, “The Gypsies in Byzantium and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages”, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 15, pp.142-165.

<sup>6</sup> Soulis, “The Gypsies in Byzantium and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages”, pp. 143-65.

<sup>7</sup> Angus Fraser (1995), *The Gypsies, Peoples of Europe*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, [2nd ed.] p.47; Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*, p.13.

<sup>8</sup> Marcus Nathan Adler (1907), *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela: a Critical Text*, Translation and Commentary, London, Philip Feldheim Inc. pp. 19-21.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p.20.

but a number of them had died along the way as a result of accidents whilst they were performing.<sup>10</sup>

Like all non-Christians, Gypsies in Byzantium paid a particular “head tax” (the kephalition or “capitation tax”<sup>11</sup>), to the Christian Emperor whilst living in the Empire. Prejudice against Romitoi (as these people are recorded as calling themselves on occasions; see below) was widespread. In addition to financial penalties such as the kephalition, there were a number of occasional imposts levied by the Church.<sup>12</sup>

One interesting reference to the Gypsies of the sea-port of Modon, Greece, at this time comes from Lionardo di Niccolò Friscobaldi in 1384 CE, when he notes that these penitents outside the city walls called themselves Romiti or Romitoi.<sup>13</sup> This indicates that the notion of group identity was linked to the idea of previous location; Romiti meaning something like “sons of the people who rule Rome” (i.e. Byzantine Greeks). The same link is in the modern Turkish self-appellation of “Roman” and in the self-appellation of English Gypsies, “Romanichal”. An earlier reference to Gypsies can be found from Simon Simeonis in 1323 CE, when he notes a group in the island of Crete who asserted “... themselves to be of the family of Chaym ... always wandering and fugitive...” and living in black tents similar to the Arabians’ he had seen elsewhere on his travels.<sup>14</sup>

Other references are scattered in various texts (for which Fraser provides the most reliable survey)<sup>15</sup> to indicate the presence of Roma, but there is little that suggests that the Dom or the Lom<sup>16</sup> were noticed by the Byzantines in this period. There are good reasons for this, as the turbulence and dislocation of the eastern regions of the Empire meant that the primary concerns of Byzantine chroniclers was directed towards the irruption of the Seljuks and their Türkmen allies into the region. Our most valuable sources in this context are Armenian chroniclers such as Matthew of Edessa (now Şanlıurfa in modern Turkey), who records an unusual incident about twenty years before the destruction of the Armenian Baghratid Kingdom by the Seljuk sultan Alparslan in 1064 CE at Ani (near present day Kars in Turkey), following which “the Oriental peoples... [Armenian, Georgian and Syrian Christians] ...began to decline, and the country of

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<sup>10</sup> Soulis, “The Gypsies in Byzantium and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages”, pp.148-9.

<sup>11</sup> See A. Andreades, “Public Finances”, in Norman Baynes and H. Moss, *Byzantium*, Oxford, 1948.

<sup>12</sup> Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*, p.16.

<sup>13</sup> Lionardo do Niccolò Frescobaldi (1818), *Viaggio di L. di Niccolo Frescobaldi In Egitto E In Terra Santa*, G. Manzi [ed.] Rome, p. 72. See also E. O. Windstedt (1909-10), “The Gypsies of Modon and the Wine of Romeney”, *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, New Series, no. 2, pp.57-69.

<sup>14</sup> Angus Fraser (1995), *The Gypsies*, p.50.

<sup>15</sup> Angus M. Fraser (1992), *The Gypsies*, pp.45-59.

<sup>16</sup> Dom and Lom are distinct linguistic groups originating from India and linked linguistically to Roma. Nowadays, Dom groups are to be found mainly in the Middle East and North Africa, while Lom (or known by the pejorative term “Bosha” or “Poşa”) in eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus.

the Romans... [Byzantium] ...became desolate”,<sup>17</sup> when the state of affairs resulted in “very important and illustrious personages – nobles, princes and stately ladies – [who]... roamed about begging... Because of the famine and vagabond life, there was great mortality throughout the whole land...”<sup>18</sup> The incident Matthew describes refers to a caravan, in Antioch (modern Antakya in south eastern Turkey) “twenty years before this time [i.e. 1044]” when a group described as “from the East” set up in the market place of the city and began to “make merry”.<sup>19</sup> The Antiochenes pounced upon them and beat them, ejecting them from the city. The men of the caravan, eighty in number, retaliated by fighting with truncheons and forcing the Antiochenes from the city gate at Sewotoy to the Church of St Peter, where they swore on the Gospels to leave the caravan in peace, and “the caravan returned to its place of origin”. The description is possibly of Dom or Rom, as Matthew is careful to name other groups of Arabs, Turks, Persians and other “Oriental people”.

The presence of Gypsies in Byzantium’s capital and the remaining territories is attested,<sup>20</sup> but the picture in the rest of Asia Minor, as it became Anatolia,<sup>21</sup> is not recorded, or if it was it is lost in the waves of destruction that follow the defeat of the Greeks at Manzikert (1071) and a century later at Myriokephalion (1171). Despite attempts to recover the eastern Empire such as the campaigns of John III Doukas Vatatzes,<sup>22</sup> the combination of the Seljuks onslaught and the Latin conquest of the Byzantine Empire by the Fourth Crusade in 1204 CE (finally recovered in 1261 CE by the Emperor Michael VIII Paleologos), weakened the Byzantines to an almost fatal degree. Documentary evidence for Gypsies in these lands during the Latin period is sparse, suggesting that Latin rule was perhaps unconcerned, or unaware, of this particular group at this time, somewhat surprising given the interest the “Egyptians” attracted two centuries later upon their arrival in Western Europe.

The revived Byzantine Empire saw a cultural renaissance under the Paleologi emperors,<sup>23</sup> and the records we have of Gypsies in the Empire become more frequent, though usually in a negative context. There are occasional mentions of them as Egyptians and Atsinganoi, such as in the account by Nikephoros Gregoras mentioned earlier regarding acrobats in Constantinople at the beginning of the 14th century, and the scholar Joseph Bryennius (1340-1431 CE) who notes

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<sup>17</sup> Ara Edmond Dostourian, “Armenia and the Crusades; the Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa”, *Armenian Heritage Series*, University Press of America, 1993, p. 143.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 148-149.

<sup>20</sup> See Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*, pp.13-21.

<sup>21</sup> See Spyros Vryonis Jr. (1971), *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*, [Publications of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies 4] Berkeley, California, UCLA.

<sup>22</sup> See John S. Langdon, “Byzantium’s Last Offensive in Asia Minor; the documentary evidence for, and hagiographical lore about John III Ducas Vatatzes’ crusade against the Turks, 1222 or 1225 to 1231”, *Hellenism: Ancient, Medieval, Modern 7*, New Rochelle N.Y. Aristide D. Caratzes, 1992.

<sup>23</sup> See Tim Mackintosh-Smith, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1996.

that the ordinary people associated daily with those like the Atsinganoi who practised magic, fortune-telling and enchantment to the detriment of the Empire.<sup>24</sup> Egyptian women are specifically mentioned as Aiguptíssas in a reference to the penance required for those who were caught consulting them or inviting them into their homes to practice sorcery or cure illnesses.<sup>25</sup> This indicates that whilst there were serious penalties for associating with the Egyptians (in this case five years of penance required of the transgressors), the market for their services remained active enough to concern the Church. In a text known as Mazaris' Sojourn in Hades, a satirical pamphlet written in September 1415 CE by a courtier of Manuel II Paleologos, who had been banished from the capital, there is a clear reference to the Egyptians amongst the 'races' of the Peloponnese and to their barbaric 'babble', in what Mazaris portrays as a chaotic cacophony of the seven nations that inhabited the Morea. The Greeks, the Latins, the Slavs, the Jews, the Illyrians (Albanians) and the Egyptians (Gypsies) are all cited as contributing to the decline of Hellenic culture and the descent into barbarism, or Hades.<sup>26</sup> This must be one of the earliest references to the language of the Egyptians and allows us a glimpse of the process by which the origins of Romanes came into being. The emergence of Romanes appears to have been a long process that occurred in Asia Minor (now Anatolia), as attested to by the influence of Byzantine Greek, greater in some dialects than in others.<sup>27</sup> The differences would indicate that some groups left the Byzantine lands earlier than others, thereby lessening the impact of Greek upon their dialect, whilst others passed relatively rapidly through the Balkan lands and into the Baltic, Polish and Russian lands, or adopted a pattern of migration that meant their dialect acquired Greek and South Slavic loan-words, but none from Rumanian or Hungarian.<sup>28</sup> Clearly by the 15th century the Egyptians were recognisably a people with another language in the Byzantine Empire, as the reference in Mazaris shows.

The Byzantine Empire by the time of the Mazaris text was beleaguered from all sides by the expansion of the Ottomans, who had risen from the position of a frontier beylik, one of the many 'lordships' to emerge in the wake of the Seljuk collapse in the 12th century, to become a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Empire in the 15th century. Ottoman expansion had been halted in the early years of the century by the Mongol-Turkic Timur-i Lenk, or Tamerlane as he is known to western European historiography.<sup>29</sup> He defeated the Ottoman Sultan Bayezit Yıldırım (the Thunderbolt, c.1389-1402 CE) at Ankara, but the Ottomans recovered after a period of interregnum (1402-13 CE) and by 1444 CE had re-established control over south eastern Europe and western Anatolia under Murad II (1421-1451 CE, with interruptions),

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<sup>24</sup> Fraser (1992), *The Gypsies* p.47.

<sup>25</sup> Soulis, "The Gypsies in Byzantium and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages", pp.146-7.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. pp.142-165.

<sup>27</sup> See Ian Hancock (2002), *We Are the Romani People (Ames am e Rromane dzene)*, Interface Collection 28, Paris and Hatfield, Centre de recherches tsiganes and University of Hertfordshire Press, pp.139-49

<sup>28</sup> See Yaron Matras (2002), *Romani: a Linguistic Introduction*, Cambs. Cambridge University Press, pp.5-13, 218-37.

<sup>29</sup> See Beatrice Forbes-Mainz (1999), *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*, Cambs. Cambridge University Press; David Morgan (1991), *The Mongols*, Peoples of Europe Series, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, pp.200-3

before the final conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II Fatih (the Conqueror, 1451-1481 CE) in 1453 CE. The continuing conquest of the Ottomans throughout the 14th and 15th centuries brought many Gypsies into the orbit of Osmanlı rule, though the early sources do not mention, in the same way that Byzantine or later Ottoman commentators do, the presence of Gypsies in the lands of the sultans as unusual. It is in the tax registers that the presence of Gypsies is to be found, in that the Ottomans registered them as part of the process of enumerating the populations in the lands they conquered.<sup>30</sup> The first such mention is in a tahrir defteri that relates to the tax assessments for the region of Nikopol (1430-1 CE), recording some 431 ‘çingene hanesi’ (Gypsy households) who were obliged to pay taxes to the local cavalry officers, the sipahi.<sup>31</sup>

The Ottoman taxation system was a complex and highly differentiated series of measures that frequently reflected previous local conditions, considerations regarding the sultans’ desires to incorporate newly conquered regions with the cooperation of the local elites and non-Muslim populations and calculations as to the costs of assessment and collection.<sup>32</sup> The inheritance of Romano-Byzantine procedures also influenced the decisions of Ottoman administrators, but clearly the choice of what elements to retain and why was more complex than merely reliance upon continuing existing practice.<sup>33</sup> The basis for the Ottoman taxation system was the division of taxes into three main categories; taxes exacted on a personal or household basis, imposts upon trade in the form of taxes on goods and services brought to markets, and production tariffs upon agriculture and manufacturing. Other revenues came from fees and fines (such as marriage licences and fines upon criminals), port fees and import duties, tribute payments from subject princes and booty or plunder from raids and warfare.<sup>34</sup> In the context of personal taxation, the principle assessment was based upon the independent economic household or “dwelling unit”, the çift hane led by an adult male (households of widowed women were exempt from taxation).<sup>35</sup>

Conceptually, the Ottomans envisaged the taxation system as a reflection of an ideal organisation. The term çift hane did not necessarily relate to a separate domicile; for example married children living with their parents and having independent incomes would be categorised

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<sup>30</sup> See Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*, pp.26-41.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p.27.

<sup>32</sup> See Metin M. Coşgel (2004), “Efficiency and Continuity in Public Finance: the Ottoman System of Taxation” *Department of Economics Working Paper Series*, Storrs, USA, University of Connecticut, pp.1-44.

<sup>33</sup> Halil Inalcik suggests a more direct inheritance, though without explaining the logic behind this; see Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert [eds.] *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, Cambs. Cambridge University Press, p.105.

<sup>34</sup> Coşgel (2004), “Efficiency and Continuity...” p.8.

<sup>35</sup> Justin McCarthy (1979), “Age, family and migration in nineteenth century Black Sea provinces of the Ottoman Empire”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 10

as a separate hane.<sup>36</sup> Family members living in proximity to each other were often recorded in the same section of a tahrir defteri.<sup>37</sup> These components, together with the addition of two draught oxen, formed the bedrock of Ottoman rural organisation and agricultural production, the çiftlik.<sup>38</sup> This fiscal unit was regarded as indissoluble (often expressed in the notion of the “Circle of Equity”<sup>39</sup>), intended to provide sustenance for the family, a surplus for taxes and a basis for reproducing the peasant household. The Ottoman commitment to maintaining this agrarian organisation was expressed in the notion of the miri land regime; namely the ownership of all arable lands by the sultan.<sup>40</sup> Most crucially, the fiscal basis of this element of the system was the çift-resmi, the tax levied upon the peasant family, based upon the ‘labour-capacity’ of the family unit and assessed in combination with the two oxen and land, approximately defined at between 5-15 hectares, divided into tarla, or fields.<sup>41</sup> The position of Ottoman Gypsies was regarded as outside of this system (despite the actual existence of large numbers of rural Gypsy communities engaged in peasant agriculture<sup>42</sup>). Other taxes were also determined by this assessment. The rêyâ or individual raiyyet (peasant households), were liable for the payment of additional taxes levied on the basis of male marriage status (bennak for those married, and mücerred for bachelors), the tütün resmi, or hearth-tax, the dönüm or land tax and a variety of avarız, or ‘exceptional’ war taxes. Each raiyyet assessed as bive (taxable) and possessing a çiftlik was liable for these taxes to the Ottoman treasury.<sup>43</sup> These liabilities were characterised as kulluk akçesi, allowing us to perceive the underlying nature of the fiscal system, as the term kul is often translated as ‘slave’, but in this context meant ‘servant, in relation to Allah’, therefore ‘dependent’ and ‘subject to the will of God’.<sup>44</sup> Kulluk is therefore a reference to the condition of being kul, the status of dependency.<sup>45</sup> Akçe were the monetary unit these taxes were assessed in, the silver coinage of the Empire.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Inalcik, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p.125.

<sup>37</sup> McCarthy, “Age, family and migration in nineteenth century Black Sea provinces of the Ottoman Empire”, p.313.

<sup>38</sup> Inalcik, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p.146-7.

<sup>39</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, “Ottoman Political Writing, 1768-1808”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1, (Feb.), pp.53-69; the “Circle of Equity” was a continuing motif of Ottoman political theory suggesting the ideal social organisation as “...no sovereign authority without an army. No army without wealth. No wealth without loyal subjects. No loyal subjects without justice. No justice without harmony... No harmony without a state. No state without law. No enforcement of law without sovereign authority. No sovereign authority without a sultan or caliph...”; Tariq Ali (2001), *The Stone Woman*, London, Verso, p.55.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p.146.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p.147.

<sup>42</sup> Alexander G. Paspates (1888), “Turkish Gypsies”, *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 3-5.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. pp.148-150.

<sup>44</sup> Clifford E. Bosworth (2008), “Kul” in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs [eds.] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Brill Online, Malmö University, last accessed on 16 April 2008 at [http://www.brillonline.nl.support.mah.se/subscriber/entry?entry=islam\\_SIM-4490](http://www.brillonline.nl.support.mah.se/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_SIM-4490).

<sup>45</sup> Inalcik, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, p.150.

<sup>46</sup> H. Bowen (2008), “Akçe” in P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs [eds.] *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, last accessed on 16 April 2008.

The taxation status of Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire appears to have been anomalous, in that both Christian and Muslim Gypsies paid the *cizye* or poll-tax, normally only collected from the non-Muslim (*zimmi*) communities.<sup>47</sup> The collection of this tax from the Ottoman Gypsy populations was an example of their marginal status in relation to the central authority, particularly their economic marginality.<sup>48</sup> The Ottoman treasury held all nomads and pastoralist groups in suspicion, and would appear to have treated Gypsies as an element of these groups, even when they were settled.<sup>49</sup> In this context, the Gypsies were treated as a group that essentially sought to avoid paying taxes, and measures such as the taking of hostages, inflicting heavy fines upon ‘tax-dodgers’ and ignoring documents that certified exemptions were common practice amongst Ottoman tax collectors.<sup>50</sup> Arguments have been made that the Ottoman system made Gypsies a special case and designed a system of collection that catered only for them,<sup>51</sup> but the collection of taxes from all mobile groups was problematic for the Ottomans and measures often included these groups as a general category.<sup>52</sup> Ginio argues that the origin of this discriminatory tax upon Gypsies in the Balkan lands has its precedent in the Byzantine fiscal system (though he does not identify the source, the *kephalition*, or head tax paid by non-Christians referred to above).<sup>53</sup>

Tax registers are also an indication of population figures, in that the record of those liable for payment can give us some ideas as to the composition of the communities that were assessed. The *tahrir defteri* (cadastral tax register) of the 1520’s taken in the European province of the Empire, the *vilayet* (province) of Rumeli, may provide us with Ottoman information on numbers of Gypsies, locations of Gypsy communities and their religious ‘beliefs’ or identities.<sup>54</sup> If we accept the figures suggested by Marushiakova and Popov (following Stojanovsky), the *vilayet* of Rumeli or European Turkey, contained 66,000 Gypsies at the time of the *defter*, 47,000 of whom were registered as Christian.<sup>55</sup> Todorov (following Barkan) records 10,294

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<sup>47</sup> Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 27-29.

<sup>48</sup> See Zoltan Barany (2002), *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality and Ethno-Politics*, Camb. Cambridge University Press, pp.58-64.

<sup>49</sup> See Rudi Paul Lidner (1983), *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia*, Indiana University Uralic and Altaic Series vol. 144, Bloomington, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, Indiana University for Ottoman fiscal measures against nomads and pastoralists; Eyal Ginio (2004), “Neither Muslims nor Zimmis: The Gypsies (Roma) in the Ottoman State”, *Romani Studies*, 5th Series, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 117-44

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 124-7.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* p. 125.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p. 130 where Ginio mentions “Gypsies, Bedouins, Turkmen and Kurdish tribes, as nomadic groups”

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 131-2; A. Andreades, “Public Finances”, in Norman Hepburn Baynes and Henry St Lawrence Beaufort Moss [eds.] (1948), *Byzantium: an Introduction to East Roman Civilization*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

<sup>54</sup> Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*, pp. 27-29; Noel Malcolm (1998), *Kosovo: A Short History*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, p.206; Nicolai Todorov (1983), *The Balkan City, 1400 – 1900*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, pp.51-53.

<sup>55</sup> Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*, p. 29.

Christian and 6,897 Muslim Gypsies over a series of defter 1520-1535.<sup>56</sup> The large-scale social disruption of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and subsequent decline of the defter system after 1597-8 CE and before the reforms of 1691-2 CE, mean that population figures for this period are less reliable.

In the 17th century, Evliya Çelebi's *Seyahatnamesi* (1671-2 CE) provides us with some details of the occupations and locations of Gypsies in the empire; for example he writes of İzmir that, "According to the register that İsmail Pasha made of İzmir in 1657-58, this city had ten Muslim mahalles, ten Greek Orthodox, ten Frank and Jewish, two Armenian and one Gypsy..."<sup>57</sup> Even taking into account the problems of Çelebi's commentaries noted by scholars,<sup>58</sup> the presence of Ottoman Gypsies in some of the Anatolian towns he visited between 1650 CE and 1670 CE can be clearly seen; there is little else that provides us with any information about Ottoman Gypsy communities in Anatolia during this period.

Sources for information regarding Ottoman Gypsy population numbers are difficult to ascertain before the introduction of population counts in 1831. Indeed, until the latter half of the 19th century the kind of material recorded in even these documents has a number of flaws.<sup>59</sup> Despite these, the most reliable and comprehensive data for differing Ottoman populations is still to be found in the official statistics produced by the Ottoman government. A breakdown of the 1831 census returns by vilayet shows that Rumeli Gypsies numbered 9,955 and Silistre 8,779.<sup>60</sup> In Anadolu, Cezayir-ı Bahr-ı Sefid and Çıldır eyalets or sub-provinces, a total of 1,802 Gypsies were counted.<sup>61</sup> In figures based upon the census of 1844 (now lost), Jean Henri Ubcini noted 214,000 Tsigani in Rumeli, while none were recorded elsewhere in the Empire.<sup>62</sup> In the Ottoman General Census of 1881/82-1893, the number of non-Muslim Gypsies is recorded at 1,644 males and 1,509 females in the Empire.<sup>63</sup> The more comprehensive population census of 1905-6 CE resulted in numbers of Gypsies being recorded at 8,629 males and 7,841 females in the Ottoman commonwealth as a whole.<sup>64</sup> In the population count of 1914, 11,169 Gypsies are

<sup>56</sup> Todorov (1983), *The Balkan City*, p. 52.

<sup>57</sup> Evliya Çelebi (1834-50), *Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia & Africa, in the Seventeenth Century* by Evliya Efendi, J.von Hammer (Purgstall)[trans. from the Turkish], vols. 1-2, London, Oriental Translation Fund of Great Britain and Ireland, pp. 92-93.

<sup>58</sup> Eldem Erdem, Daniel Goffman and Bruce Masters (1999), *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, İzmir and Istanbul*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization, Cambridge, CUP, pp. 79-81

<sup>59</sup> Kemal H. Karpat (1985), *Ottoman Population 1830-1914. Demographic and Social Characteristics*, Turkish and Ottoman Studies, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, pp.8-10.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. pp. 109-110.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 114.

<sup>62</sup> Jean Henri A. Ubcini (1856), *Letters on Turkey*, [trans.] Lady Easthorpe, London, pp.18-19; see also Alexandros G. Paspatis (1860-63), "Mémorial on the Language of the Gypsies, as now used in the Turkish Empire", Rev. C. Hamlin [trans.] *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 7, pp. 143-270.

<sup>63</sup> Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, p. 152.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 169.

recorded in the remaining provinces of the Empire.<sup>65</sup> Paspati, in his study of language from 1860, suggests that none of the figures given by various writers are reliable, nor does he consider the official statistics to be so but remarks, “Still, such information is valuable, as showing the great numbers of Gypsy population...”<sup>66</sup> The major problem with regard to any estimation of the figures for Gypsy populations in the Ottoman Empire remains the issue of accuracy; Ottoman enumerators under-counted women and young girls significantly, boys under the age of 15 years and men over the age of 60 years, and not infrequently only counted Christian Gypsies who were sedentary.<sup>67</sup>

The notions of social differentiation in the Ottoman Empire have frequently been identified with the idea of the millet system, the concept of Ottoman society being divided along confessional lines and each of the non-Muslim groups (Jews and Christians primarily) being self-governing to a degree. Such notions have been substantially revised in recent historiography, and the argument made that the nature of the so-called millet system has been greatly exaggerated.<sup>68</sup> The complex social structure of the Ottoman Empire relied upon subtle articulations of religious, ethnic and class identities.<sup>69</sup> Within this imperial paradigm, the Gypsies occupied a shifting space that altered over time, in common with other groups such as the Kurds, Bedouins, Türkmén and other nomads (as mentioned above). This process of change took place arguably as a result of the introduction of ideas from Europe concerning Gypsies, and the development of what Makdisi has defined as ‘Ottoman Orientalism’.<sup>70</sup>

The place of Gypsies in Ottoman commercial organisation was such that the guilds they dominated (such as the horse-traders, dancers, musicians, blacksmiths, porters and basket-makers) sometimes grew to be very wealthy and in one instance, wealthy enough to build a sultan’s palace in gratitude for his patronage of them (Sultan İbrahim I was a basket-maker by trade and the 1643 CE Sepetçiler Pavilion on the Golden Horn was built with money from the Gypsy basket-makers’ guild).<sup>71</sup> Gypsies were not entirely the equal of other Ottoman subjects,

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.p. 189.

<sup>66</sup> Paspati, “Memoir on the Language of the Gypsies as now used in the Turkish Empire”, p.147.

<sup>67</sup> Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, pp. 8-10; Stanford Jay Shaw (1978), “The Ottoman census system and population, 1831-1914”, *International Journal Middle East Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3 (Oct.) pp.325-338; Cem Bahar (1998), “Sources pour la démographie historique de l’empire ottoman: Les tahrirs (denombrements) de 1885 et 1907”, *Population*, 53e Année, No. 1/2, *Population et histoire* (Jan. - Apr.), pp. 161-177; Kemal Karpat (1978), “Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/82-1893”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3 (Oct.), pp. 237-274, for discussions regarding the accuracy of Ottoman population figures.

<sup>68</sup> Benjamin Braude (1982), “Foundation myths of the millet system”, in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis [eds.] *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: the functioning of a plural society*, Volume 1 The Central Lands, New York and London, Holmes and Meier.

<sup>69</sup> Usamma Makdisi (2002), “Ottoman Orientalism”, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 7, no. 3, p.768.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. pp. 768-96.

<sup>71</sup> Norman H. Penzer (1936), *The Harem: an Account of the Institution as it Existed in the Palace of the Turkish Sultans*, with a History of the Grand Seraglio from its Foundation to the Present Time, Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott Co., pp. 77-78.

being taxed the cizye tax, whether Muslim or Christian, in what was a continuation of Byzantine practice, nor was their testimony always accepted as valuable as other litigants or defendants in the courts of the judges (in the Salonika sicil the records indicate such a disparity),<sup>72</sup> but neither were they subject to the persecution and violence that Gypsies elsewhere in Europe suffered. Some held office and public positions, others led campaigns against the Habsburgs (in Kosovo in 1787 for example),<sup>73</sup> or those who defended Bosnia.<sup>74</sup> Some were given exemptions as essential to the needs of the Empire as miners and metal-workers that were granted privileges by Selim II in 1574 CE.<sup>75</sup> Ottoman miniatures of processions and festivals are filled with images of acrobats performing extraordinary feats, jugglers, dancers, musicians, masked players and entertainers.<sup>76</sup> Gypsy blacksmiths carry lengths of chain that they supplied to the navy from the Tophane foundry and the basket makers pass by the pavilion of the sultan carrying their goods and wares. In the days of Ramazan, Gypsy drummers would call the faithful to rise and eat before the morning ezan, and in the Eid mubraka holiday that followed, the evenings saw many Gypsies bringing entertainments to Kağıthane and other fairgrounds. On saints' days and holidays, Gypsies also performed and entertained the celebrants.<sup>77</sup>

The period of the 17th and 18th centuries saw the decline of central authority and the rise of the ayân, the notables in the Ottoman Empire (derebeyis in Anatolia). These warlords sought to wrest power from the sultan and Porte with their own retinues, many of whom were Gypsies. Ali Paşa of Ionia had many hundreds of Gypsies in his personal service and others too.<sup>78</sup> The slavery that existed in Wallachia and Moldavia under the Phanariotes<sup>79</sup> never found its counterpart in the Ottoman Empire proper, but as European ideas regarding Gypsies became more prevalent and the Ottoman variety of Orientalism developed its own discourse of the 'other', the conditions of the Gypsies deteriorated overall. The notions associated with the predominantly negative stereotypes and prejudices stemming from Europe were quintessentially defined by Heinrich M. G. Grellmann in his 1783 thesis.<sup>80</sup> In his treatise (that drew heavily

<sup>72</sup> Ginio, "Neither Muslims nor Zimmis: The Gypsies (Roma) in the Ottoman State", p. 128.

<sup>73</sup> Noel Malcolm (1988), *A Short History of Kosovo*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, p.207.

<sup>74</sup> Noel Malcom (1996), *A Short History of Bosnia*, [New, Updated Ed.], Basingstoke, Macmillan, p.116.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p.115.

<sup>76</sup> See Metin And (2002), *Osmanlı Tasvir Sanatları: Minyatür*, Istanbul, Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, p. 65, p.96, p.262, p.271, p.375, p.381, p.384, p.387, and p.437.

<sup>77</sup> Raphaela Lewis (1971), *Everyday Life in Ottoman Turkey*, New York, Dorset Press, pp. 130-1.

<sup>78</sup> A. G. Paspati, (1888), "Turkish Gypsies", *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, vol. 1, pp. 3-5.

<sup>79</sup> The Hospodar rulers appointed by the Ottoman Porte from 1711-1821 that were traditionally Greeks or Hellenised Rumanians of the Phanar quarter in Istanbul (modern Fener); they most often 'bought' their office and then recouped the costs through rapacious taxation and other financial exactions; see D. Mitrany (1915), "Rumania: her history and politics", in D. G. Hogarth [ed.] *The Balkans: a History of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, Rumania, Turkey*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 96.

<sup>80</sup> Heinrich M. G. Grellmann (1783), *Die Zigeuner: ein historischer Versuch über die Lebensart und Verfassung, Sitten und Schicksale dieses Volks in Europa, nebst ihrem Ursprung*, Dessau and Leipzig; (1787) *Dissertation on the*

upon the work of previous scholars,<sup>81</sup> Grellmann produced data upon the numbers of Gypsies (he estimated some 750,000 living in Europe at the time), locations (he suggested that the Gypsy population was concentrated in eastern Europe and the Balkans, but paid no attention to the Ottoman lands in general, and established the generalised and mistaken perception that the majority of Gypsies remained ‘wandering’ and living in tents. Grellmann also noted a series of stereotypes that, following his work became common currency, such as the moral laxity of Gypsy women, and accused them of cannibalism in Hungary.<sup>82</sup> Grellmann also sought to use linguistic evidence to confirm the Indian origin of Gypsies in Europe, amongst the lowest social levels in profoundly negative terms.<sup>83</sup> In the late Ottoman Empire, the aspirations of the Hamidian regime after 1878 sought to define modernity and progress and redefine as ‘backward’ and ‘unreformable’ groups such as the Arabs, Kurds, Druze, Maronites and Gypsies, in terms such as these.<sup>84</sup>

The advent of the Republic by 1923 and the massive population exchanges that brought many Gypsies into the new nation-state from the southern Balkans appeared to offer a different model as citizens of a modern Turkey. Indeed, the offer of asylum to those expelled from Greece, Bulgaria and Romania in the 1920s and 1930s did provide a new opportunity and some safety from the later Nazi occupation of Greece and the totalitarian regimes in Bulgaria and Romania. Pursuant to the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations signed at Lausanne in 1923,<sup>85</sup> many Greek and Orthodox Gypsies were forcibly removed from Greek territory to become Turkish through a change of language, religion and identity, and part of the narrative of journey that defines so many communities as mübadiller.<sup>86</sup> Originally agreed as the means of repatriating detainees held by both sides, around 1.5 million Greeks from Anatolia (the regions around İzmir, Samsun, Trabzon and the small Turkophone Greek population of central Anatolia, the Karamanlides) and about half a million Muslims from Greece and Crete (including

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Gypsies, being an historical enquiry concerning the manner of life, economy, customs and condition of this people in Europe, and their origin, [trans. Matthew Raper], London, P. Elmsley.

<sup>81</sup> See Wim Willems (1998), *In Search of the True Gypsy: from Enlightenment to Final Solution*, [trans. Don Bloch], London, Frank Cass, chap. 2.

<sup>82</sup> See Fraser (1995), *The Gypsies*, pp. 194-6.

<sup>83</sup> On page 10 of *Die Zigeuner* (1783), Grellmann describes Gypsies as “...black, horrible men with dark brown or olive complexions... their white teeth appearing between their red lips... [who] may be a disgusting sight to an European...”, very similar to those descriptions of African slaves given by Edward Long (1774), *The history of Jamaica : or A General survey of the ancient and modern state of that island; with reflections on its situation, settlements, inhabitants, climate, products, commerce, laws, and government. Illustrated with copper plates*, London, T. Lowndes, and clearly establishing what Mayall notes as the “foundation of the racial picture present in a great number of nineteenth century studies.” David Mayall (2004), *Gypsy Identities 1500-2000: from Egyptians and Moonmen to the Ethnic Romany*, London, Routledge, p.32.

<sup>84</sup> Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism”, p. 770.

<sup>85</sup> The Turkish-Greek Convention signed on 30 January 1923 in Lausanne, Switzerland, provided for the repatriation of all civilian internees on both sides regardless of number, as well as all of the Turkish prisoners of war and an equal number of Greek prisoners of war. See ICRC, 2005, “The Turkish-Greek Conflict (1919-1923)”, International Committee of the Red Cross, available at: <http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/html/5GKE3D>.

<sup>86</sup> Lozan Mübadilleri is the Turkish name for the Lausanne Treaty immigrants.

Turks, Pomaks, Cham Albanians, sedentary Meglen Vlachs and Muslim Roma) were displaced or de jure 'denaturalised'.<sup>87</sup> The Lausanne exchanges would have appeared to also include numbers of other Gypsies who were Greek-speaking and Orthodox, according to testimony from one informant in Mersin (İçel)<sup>88</sup>, although this may have been as a result of the ill-treatment of Muslims in Thrace during 1921, many of whom fled (Christian Turks in central Anatolia were also subject to ill-treatment during the same period and neither the Greek nor Turkish governments would allow the ICRC to send relief missions to these areas).<sup>89</sup> The intention of creating stability in the emergent nation-states of Turkey and Greece in the wake of the War of Independence (the Fundamental War as it is known in Turkish) following the invasion of Anatolia by Greece, would seem to have taken little account of the destruction of communities that inevitably followed, and the end of millennia of Greek habitation of the Ionian and Pontus regions and centuries of Muslims in Greece and the Aegean islands. Studies conducted upon the exchange populations in the aftermath demonstrate that communities faced discrimination and marginalisation as a result of displacement, especially the Greeks of Piraeus<sup>90</sup> but there has been no study conducted regarding the Gypsy mübadele populations to date.

The seeming tolerance of the early Republic soon dissipated as the 1934 Settlement Act made it clear that Gypsies were to be regarded with suspicion and not awarded citizenship in every case, even when they sought asylum in the Turkish state.<sup>91</sup> The Settlement Law of 1934 No. 2510 which was in force until September 2006, stipulated that "those that are not bound to the Turkish culture, anarchists, migrant gypsies, spies and those that have been deported, are not recognized as migrants" [emphasis added]. It also stipulated that nomads and Gypsies are to be settled in sites designated by the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance in accordance with the programme to be made by the Council of Ministers with "a view to ensuring their loyalty to Turkish culture and improving the establishment and distribution of the population".<sup>92</sup> In 1993, the then -Meclis (Turkish Parliamentary) Representative for Edirne, Mr Erdal Kesebir presented a motion to address this inequality, but this proposal was refused by the Prime Minister's Office of the time. In 2002, five representatives of various regions also attempted to present a motion proposing the amendment of this section of the law, but this was unsuccessful as an early election was called that effectively curtailed this proposal. The discriminatory references to

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<sup>87</sup> See, among others, Renée Hirschon [ed.] (2003), *Crossing the Aegean: an Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey*, Oxford and New York, Berghahn Books; Stanford Jay Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw (1977), *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Volume 2: Reform, Revolution and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808-1975*, Cambs. Cambridge University pp. 239-241.

<sup>88</sup> In May 2007, ERRC/hCa/EDROM researchers interviewed an old woman in the Barış mahallesi in Mersin who described the 1930s migration she had experienced from Selanik (Saloniki); the process of conversion from Greek Orthodox Christianity to Islam at some point around Diyarbakir; and the shift from being Greek-speaker to Turkish-speaker.

<sup>89</sup> See ICRC, 2005, "The Turkish-Greek Conflict (1919-1923)", International Committee of the Red Cross.

<sup>90</sup> See Bruce Clark, *Twice A Stranger: How Mass Expulsion Forged Modern Greece and Turkey*, London, Granta, 2006.

<sup>91</sup> Researcher/writer Mustafa Aksu. Presentation at the International Gypsy Symposium, Edirne, 7-9 May 2005.

<sup>92</sup> Settlement Law No. 2510. Unofficial translation.

Turkish Gypsies were revoked only in 2006 with the adoption of the new Settlement Law No. 5543. As of May 2008, another discriminatory text remains unchanged, however, in the Law on the Movement and Residence of Aliens<sup>93</sup> which states that “the Ministry of Internal Affairs is authorised to expel stateless and non-Turkish citizen gypsies and aliens that are not bound to the Turkish culture” [emphasis added].

There has been relatively little research focussed upon the Turkish Gypsy communities of the modern Republic, in comparison to other minorities such as the Kurds, Alevis, Greeks and Armenians, for example. Scholarship and research has shown a marked lack of curiosity about the situation of Rom, Dom and Lom groups in Turkey and the quondam Ottoman Empire in the Middle East, in comparison with groups elsewhere in Europe and the United States. The situation of other minorities in the Turkish Republic has effectively rendered ‘invisible’ the differing Gypsy communities in the decades following the foundation of the Republic and the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, that contemporary commentators suggested had failed to address the issues of minorities and their status in general.<sup>94</sup> Outside of those works detailed below, the picture of Turkish Gypsies in the early Republican period remains obscure.

The first serious attempt to analyse aspects of the Gypsy communities in Turkey comes from Dr Alexander G. Paspati M.D. (also Alexandros G. Paspates) who attempted, in the 1860s, to describe the language in use amongst them in his “Memoir on the language of the Gypsies as now used in the Turkish Empire” in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.<sup>95</sup> In his introduction to the history of Gypsies, Paspati refers to the fact that “no general persecutions ever took place against them, either on religious or political grounds...” and as a consequence “they have been suffered quietly to live in those provinces [of the Ottoman Empire]... and have multiplied to such a degree that they are superior in number to their fellow-countrymen in all other states in Europe...” though he goes on to stress what many European commentators also suggested in arriving at an estimate of the population, namely how difficult this was. He goes on to note that Gypsies in Turkey follow the religion of those whom they live amongst, and that they inter-marry with Turks but not with Christians.<sup>96</sup> In the following pages Paspati goes on to analyse the language of Gypsies after making his famous remark, “The entire history of this race [sic.] is in its idiom...”; a maxim that might be said to have guided many studies on the Gypsy communities ever since.

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<sup>93</sup> Law No 5683. Unofficial translation.

<sup>94</sup> See Editorial (1924), *Time Magazine*, Monday 14 April; Philip Marshall Brown (1927), “The Lausanne Treaty”, *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 21, no.3 (July), pp.503-5.

<sup>95</sup> Paspati, “Memoir on the language of the Gypsies as now used in the Turkish Empire”, pp.143-270.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

Other writers who referred to Gypsies in Turkey included Sir William R. Halliday<sup>97</sup> who depicted the inter-dependence of certain nomadic Gypsy groups and Yörüks in the Anatolian plateau, as well as suggested that some of the latter were indeed Gypsies rather than Türkmén. Juliette de Bairacli Levy also provided a description of İstanbul's Gypsies, based upon her earlier travels, in particular those of Sulukule.<sup>98</sup> Others had noted the Dom Gypsies of the Ottoman Empire's Arab lands, such as Father Anastás, the Carmelite, who gave a detailed description of the lives of these itinerant metal-workers and traders.<sup>99</sup> Robert Alexander Stewart Macalister also wrote of the Nawar or Zutt in this period, though concentrating upon their language (Domari), which he noted as maintaining a third neuter gender and therefore being related to, but separated from Romanes and indicative of an earlier migration from India by Dom.<sup>100</sup> Both the Carmelite priest and Macalister noted the considerable degree of prejudice shown towards Dom by the Arab population just at the eve of the explosion of Arab nationalism in the revolt against Ottoman rule of 1915.

Much of the scholarship from the late 19th and early 20th centuries continued to focus upon the paths laid out by Paspati, namely language and origins. Other Gypsylorists, such as 'Petulengro' (Bernard Gilliat-Smith) chose to focus upon the customs and culture of Gypsies in the European provinces of the Empire attempting to capture something of the occupational and cultural distinctions between groups in the rapidly changing post-Ottoman Gypsy populations of the Balkans, many of whom would migrate or be forced to do so in the inter-war years.<sup>101</sup> For these researchers, the continued pattern of 'traditional' trades and occupations amongst these groups<sup>102</sup> suggested that the Ottoman Gypsies had preserved cultural and linguistic forms that were not present in the rest of Europe. In many ways the dominant ethos of Eurocentric anthropological and folklore research with its basis in scientific racism and post-Darwinian taxonomies is to be found in all of these works, reflecting the wider Orientalist notions of the "Turk" in general that had come to permeate the discourse around the "sick man of Europe" for the previous century.

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<sup>97</sup> William R. Halliday, "Some notes upon the Gypsies of Turkey", *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 1922, 3rd Series, vol. 1, no. 4, pp.163-189.

<sup>98</sup> Juliette de Bairacli Levy, "The Gypsies of Turkey", *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 1952, 3rd Series, no. 31, pp. 5-13.

<sup>99</sup> R.A.S. Macalister (1913-14), "The Nawar or Gypsies of the East" [trans. A. Russell], *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 1913-1914, New Series, vol. 7, pp. 298-320.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> "Report on the Gypsy tribes of north-east Bulgaria", *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 1915-1916, New Series, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 1-28, 65-109.

<sup>102</sup> See also T. R. Gjorgjevic, "Rumanian Gypsies in Serbia", *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 1929, 3rd Series, no. 8, pp.7-25.

After the work of Halliday, there is more interest in the historical past of Turkish Gypsies<sup>103</sup> though the linguistic and cultural aspects of Turkish Gypsies also continue to be discussed by authors (see Hermann Arnold, 1967, “Some observations on Turkish and Persian Gypsies”, *JGLS*, 3rd Series, vol. 46, pp. 105-122). It would seem to be the case that observations of Turkish Gypsies relied upon a series of notions of mobility and nomadism, despite clear evidence of Gypsy settlements since the Ottoman period. Paspatis’s suggestion that the majority of Turkish Gypsies were ‘nomadic’ seems to have been observed as a ‘touchstone’ without considering the evidence to the contrary, by all that followed him. In many ways the scholarship of the 20th century continued to reflect the 19th century concern with Orientalised models of Gypsy identity, in common with those applied to Turkish society generally, even following the modernisation programme of the Kemalist regime.<sup>104</sup>

Modern Turkish Gypsy populations include Roma, Domari and Lomari, the three major linguistic groups under the overall term ‘Gypsy’. They have each maintained a distinct culture (including to a greater or lesser extent their historical languages of Romanes, Domari and Lomavren), and many of the traditional occupations and crafts that Gypsy populations elsewhere have long-since lost. Dialectical differences amongst the groups show that the migrations and shifts in populations have created a microcosm of the wider Gypsy world within the boundaries of one territory, and one can trace groups that have originated all over the Balkans and Middle East, Russia, and the Caucasus. Gypsies from elsewhere still continue to come and trade with Turkish Gypsies, and celebrate the annual festival of Kakava, in Edirne, or Erdelezi as its known throughout the Balkans. Much of the common heritage of the Ottoman past is to be found in the Gypsy communities of Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Serbia and even parts of southern Hungary. These communities maintain traditions, cultural forms and linguistic patterns that are part of what might be seen as the imperial legacy of the Ottomans.

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<sup>103</sup> See for example, Malcolm Burr, “Gypsies as Executioners in Turkey”, *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 1948, 3rd Series, Vol. 27, no. 1; and “Firman of A.H. 1013-14 (AD 1604-5) regarding Gypsies in the Western Balkans”, *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 1949, 3rd Series, Vol. 27, no. 1.

<sup>104</sup> Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938) was the founder of the Republic of Turkey as well as its first President. The principles of Atatürk’s reforms are referred to as Kemalism and form the political foundation of the modern Turkish state.

## Ethnicity and Identity: Who are the Gypsies?

*Adrian Marsh*

There are few countries in the world where the issues of identity and ethnicity are so contested as in Turkey. The historical past of the multi-ethnic, multi-confessional and, some would argue, pluralist Ottoman Empire<sup>1</sup>, has been frequently contrasted with the modern Turkish nation-state, seen as similar to many others in that it is considered as ethnically homogeneous with a number of minority populations.<sup>2</sup> These populations are principally identified with non-Muslim groups that stem from the Ottoman period (Greeks, Armenians and Jews), and whose recognition is guaranteed in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne.<sup>3</sup> The notion that other minorities exist and are entitled to recognition is one that has been contested since the earliest days of the Republic, and the history of the relationship between Turkish state and society and these groups is one of frequent conflict and confrontation.<sup>4</sup> Even when these groups have been clearly aligned

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (1982), [eds.] "Introduction", *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire, the Functioning of a Plural Society: The Central Lands*, vol. 1, New York and London: Holmes and Meier.

<sup>2</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher (1993), *Turkey: A Modern History*, London: I. B. Tauris.

<sup>3</sup> The second Treaty of Lausanne (the first was signed between the Ottoman Empire and Italy on 18 October 1912), signed by representatives of the Republic of Turkey (successor to the Ottoman Empire) and by Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Greece, Romania, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes on 24 July 1923, after a four-month conference; the preceding conference at Lausanne faltered when the Turkish National Assembly refused to ratify the treaty imposed upon Turkey by Lord Curzon of Great Britain in February 1923. The final draft established peace between Greece and Turkey after the War of Independence 1919-23 and the borders of the Turkish Republic, and revised the terms of the Treaty of Sevres (1920) between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire. In addition to the Treaty, the Straits Convention regulated the control of the Dardanelles; see the full text at:

<http://www.hri.org/docs/lausanne/>. The United States and Turkey signed a separate treaty "of amity and commerce" at Lausanne on 6 August 1923, but this failed ratification in the US Senate in 1927 due to concerns including those for the Armenians; see Philip Marshall Brown (1927), "The Lausanne Treaty", *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 21, no.3 (July), pp.503-5.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Alford-Andrews (2002), *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, [with Rüdiger Benninghaus] Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients Reihe (Geisteswissenschaften) Nr. 60.2, vols. 1 and 2 [1994], Weisbaden: Germany.

with the dominant ideology of Kemalism, the position of minority communities in Turkey has not been one that the state has been willing to readily acknowledge.

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the perceived negative role of minority communities in that process, the suspicion that all minorities are oppositional (and that to articulate a minority identity is itself a challenge to the integrity of the state), remains strongly embedded in the national consciousness. Increasingly in Turkey, the conservative conception of the state is being employed in partnership with a hitherto surprising emphasis upon a religious conception of Turkish identity in ways that would seem to complicate the picture still further, though are recognisably part of the overall notions of identity exported by European nationalism over the last two and a half centuries.<sup>5</sup>

Turkish Gypsies (this report will use the term ‘Gypsies’ to encapsulate the widest possible community and reclaim a term that, in its Turkish form *Çingene*, is argued as valid for all by some activists such as Mustafa Aksu,<sup>6</sup> stripped of its pejorative associations), are articulate in their identity as citizens of the Republic and loyalty to the state. Many consider Turkey to have offered their ancestors a “place of greater safety” during the *mübadele*, population exchanges of the 1920s and 1930s, with a long history of accepting European Roma that goes back centuries (there are accounts of a group of English Gypsies seeking the sanctuary of the Sublime Porte during the reign of Elizabeth I in the 1570’s, due to persecution under draconian laws against “vagabonds, sturdy beggars and counterfeit Egyptians”).<sup>7</sup> For Gypsies, the identification with the Turkish state is paramount to their own conception of identity. Yet many of those interviewed during the course of this research argued that they were clearly seen as second-class citizens by the majority, denied the full entitlement to many of the guarantees of the Constitution for citizens of the Republic and forced to live in circumstances and conditions that they felt degraded and devalued them.

The basic premise of the ERRC/hCa/EDROM research has been that the Gypsies of Turkey can be identified in three major groups – *Romanlar*, *Domlar* and *Lomlar* (Rom, Dom and Lom)<sup>8</sup> and

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<sup>5</sup> Nergis Canefe (2002), “Turkish nationalism and ethno-symbolic analysis: the rules of exception”, *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 8, no.2, pp.133-55.

<sup>6</sup> See Mustafa Aksu, “Romans and Identification Problems”, Second International Roma Symposium, Tarik Zafer Tunaya Culture Centre, Istanbul, 6-7 May 2006.

<sup>7</sup> See Angus M. Fraser (1992), *The Gypsies*, Peoples of Europe Series, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, pp. 113-122.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to acknowledge the diversity and differences amongst Gypsy populations in Turkey, as the Dom are clearly not Romani-speakers, being a similar group but not directly related, the linguistic and historical evidence demonstrating an earlier migration from the Indian lands; see Ian Hancock (2002), *We Are the Romani People (Ames am e Rromane dzene)*, Paris and Hatfield, Centre de recherches tsinganes and University of Hertfordshire Press, pp. 5-7, 13-14; Ralph Lilley Turner (1927), “On the position of Romani in Indo-Aryan”, *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, vol. 5, no. 4, pp.145-83; and John Sampson (1923), “On the origin and early migration of the Gypsies”, *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, vol. 2, pp.156-69. Rom, Lom and Dom are all Gypsy groups but it cannot be claimed that they are all Roma or *Rroma*, terms in this context referring to related groups of primarily east and

what might be termed *Göçebe* or *Gezginler*, or Travellers, and that self-identify operates in complex ways in relation to each other, within the larger collectives between sub-group identities such as *Çelgar*, *Mangostar*, *Gevende*, *Karaçi*, and *Mıtrıp*, for example, and between neighbourhoods (*mahalles*). Boundary markers are permeable and individuals may move in and out of occupational groups: Between neighbourhoods as did a resident of Tophane in İstanbul who relocated to Sulukule when faced with debt problems for a year, then Balat, finally returning to Tophane after a period of eighteen months; or between cities -- numbers of Dom have migrated to Üsküdar, İstanbul, from Van; or between sub-groups -- Gevende who have 'become' Mıtrıp or 'musicians' in Urfa, adopting the spoken dialect of the latter and practising music. Mobility is also a flexible concept or "state of mind" as one respondent in Diyarbakır put it, and settlement (in Saray, Thrace, for example) can change the status of a group (in this case Mangostar who were clearly subjugated to the settled Romanlar community upon first arriving), or even identity (in İstanbul's Kuştepe where the Teber-Abdals have settled after migrating from Çinçin Bağları in Ankara, who acknowledge the existence of Alevi<sup>9</sup> Gypsies, but ardently assert an alternative identity).

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central European origins identified as sharing a series of *Vlach Romanës* ethnolects; see Yaron Matras (2002), *Romani: a linguistic introduction*, Camb. Cambridge University Press, pp. 214-37. Lom groups are also different from Turkish Rom and Dom, being separated by language though more closely related to Rom; see Vardan Voskanian (2003), "The Iranian Loan-words in Lomavren, the Secret Language of the Armenian Gypsies", in *The Journal of Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 6, no.1-2, Leiden, E.J. Brill, pp. 169-80; Ian Hancock (2006), "On Romani Origins and Identity: Questions for Discussion" in Adrian Marsh and Elin Strand [eds.] *Gypsies and the Problem of Identities: Contextual, Constructed and Contested*, Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul Transactions 17, İstanbul and London, I. B. Tauris, pp.69-92. Historically, Lom in Turkey have been related to Armenian *Miaphysitism* and Catholicism, though this is no longer the case. The Geygelliler are more closely related to Alevi Yörüks (the latter groups regarded as descending from Türkmen tribal groups and separated in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, nowadays most of whom are settled but some remain nomadic. Yörüks inhabit Anatolia and the Balkans); see Ingvar Svanberg (1982), *A Bibliography of the Turkish-Speaking Tribal Yörüks*, Etnologiska institutionens småskriftserie, Uppsala, Uppsala University Press; Daniel G. Bates (1973), *Nomads and farmers. A study of the Yörük of Southeastern Turkey*, Michigan, Ann Arbor; also Yaşar Kemal's 1971 novel, *Binboğalar Efsanesi*, İstanbul, YKY Yayınevi [*Legend of the Thousand Bulls*, London, Harvill Press, 1976]. Geygelliler, however, do speak some Romanes, as Lewis has demonstrated; see G. L. Lewis (1955), "The Secret Language of the Geygelli Yörüks", *Zeki Velidi Togan'a Armağan* [A Collection Presented to Zeki Velidi], İstanbul.

<sup>9</sup> Alevi is a religious and cultural community in Turkey who revere the Fourth Caliph Ali ibn Abi Talib (the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law) and the Twelve Imams of his house. Anatolian Alevism originated from a complex mix of mystical (Sufi) Islam, Shi'ism, and the rivalry between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires in 16<sup>th</sup> century Anatolia. Marginalised and discriminated against under the Ottomans, and in periods during the Turkish Republic, especially in the 1980s and mid-1990s (see Aliza Marcus, 1996, "Should I Shoot You?": An Eyewitness Account of an Alevi Uprising in Gazi', *Middle East Report*, No. 199, Turkey: Insolvent Ideologies, Fractured State (Apr. - Jun.), pp. 24-26) the Alevi and Alevi identity were increasingly in a process of transformation. See David Shankland (2007), "The Alevi in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition", *Islamic Studies Series*, London, Routledge; Hege Irene Markussen (2004), *Alevi and Alevism: Transformed Identities*, İstanbul, Isis Press, esp. Adrian Marsh and Elin Strand, "Gypsies and Alevi: The Impossibility of Abdallar Identity?", *Ibid.* pp.154-74; David Zeidan, "The Alevi of Anatolia", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 3, No. 4, December 1999; Tord Olsson, Elizabeth Özdalga and Catherina Raudvere [eds.] (1998), *Alevi Identity: Cultural, Religious and Social Perspectives*, İstanbul and Stockholm, Swedish Research Institute in İstanbul, Transactions 8.

The number of Gypsies (Rom, Dom, Lom and Travellers) living in Turkey is still a matter of debate. Officially data regarding ethnic minorities is not recorded in Turkey. Since the mid-1960s, there are no questions regarding ethnicity included in population counts. The academic research on numbers in Turkish Gypsy groups is limited and fairly recent. The widely quoted figure for the number of Roma living in Turkey is 500,000 – 600,000. This figure is based on Ottoman census figures of 1831.<sup>10</sup> Kemal Karpat described the total population of the Ottoman Empire at this time as approximately 3.6 million, whilst the Gypsy population (including Roma in the Balkans) was approximately 36,500.<sup>11</sup> Estimations of the number of Gypsies in today's Turkey are calculated according to demographic projections based on these figures by some scholars. However, the Ottoman statistics frequently under-counted women, young men and boys under 15 years old and men over 65 years old, and in the case of the Ottoman Gypsies, Muslims and nomadic groups. Thus, the original numbers upon which these contemporary calculations are based on are unreliable. In recent years, researchers as well as activists from Roma and other civil society organisations have suggested numbers ranging between 2-5 million persons across the country.<sup>12</sup>

The complexity of identities among Gypsies in Turkey needs to be examined in more detail, as to many the particulars surrounding the various groups in Turkey are little known, and knowledge of Dom and Lom communities in Turkey is extremely sparse save for brief references in late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century reports that occasionally found their way into the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society, in the “Notes and Queries” sections of this publication. The most important consideration with regard to Gypsies in Turkey is the multiplicity of identities, a model that may challenge in some ways the more widespread European notions of a unified Romani identity that could be said to underlie the political movement that has evolved from Romani activism in the past decades.

### Who are the Gypsies of Turkey?

Romanlar is a group to whom European Roma are directly related, sharing much in the common culture, language and economic specialisms. There are many sub-divisions amongst the Romanlar, mostly defined by occupation (*sepetçiler* - basket makers; *kalaycı* - tin smiths; *bohçacı* - pedlars; *hamamcı* - bath attendants; *hamal* - porters and carriers; *arabacı* - horse drawn carriage

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<sup>10</sup> Kemal Karpat (1985), *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics*, Madison, Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, pp. 109-15.

<sup>11</sup> Extracted from Karpat's figures. Ibid. pp. 109-15.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, International Romani Studies Network. “Reaching the Romanlar. A report on the feasibility studies “mapping” a number of Roman (Gypsy) communities in Istanbul.” British Council, Turkey, 2005. During the ERRC/hCa/EDROM research (2006-2007) which covered parts of each of Turkey's seven regions (Marmara, Aegean, Mediterranean, Black Sea, Central Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia, and Southeast Anatolia), researchers have suggested a figure of 4.5 - 5 million. The percentage of Roma in the European provinces of Turkey has been estimated at 6-7% of the total population, and Roma, Dom and Lom, with small groups of Travellers in Anatolia, at about 2% of the population.

and wagon drivers, etc.) The class system amongst the Romanlar means that the musicians (unlike in other countries such as Sweden or the UK) are frequently the elite. Most are Sunni Muslim in faith, but there are significant numbers of nomadic and settled Alevi Romanlar, particularly in the eastern part of the country and around the outskirts of İstanbul. They mostly occupy distinct mahalles or neighbourhoods, and are socially and economically discriminated against, and spatially segregated from wider Turkish society. They are organised, with some 40 local associations and two national federations of Romani organisations.

The Domlar are related to groups of Dom Gypsies in the Middle East and may have arrived in the Turkish lands sometime in the early 11<sup>th</sup> century AD, in the south east (Diyarbakır, Antakya, Mardin), if references in Armenian chronicles are correct. They currently live in the south and eastern parts of Turkey and are primarily musicians who specialise in playing the large drum (davul) and *zurna*, a kind of simple oboe. They maintain their own language, Domari (or Domca in Turkish) and also speak Kurmanci or Zaza and Turkish, keeping Domari as a 'secret language' or in-group code. Culturally close to the Kurdish population, they nevertheless suffer significant and violent discrimination from them with documented cases of physical attacks and murder. They also suffer from the discriminatory attentions of the Turkish state security forces in the region. Most Dom are close to Sufi Islam and local sheikhs, but some are Yezidi<sup>13</sup> in the north east region close to Doğubayezit. There are some 500,000 in Turkey, though this figure needs further research to confirm. They are frequently extremely poor and many are nomadic.

The Lomlar's origins are extremely obscure and it may be that they represent a 'break away' group from the Rom during the 11th century that did not move westwards but remained in the east of Anatolia during the Seljuk and Ottoman periods. The current Lom population is largely descended from those that were forced to move to Turkey in the ethnic cleansing carried out by the Russians in their conquest of the Caucasus in the 1870's. They now reside in small communities in the north east and Black Sea region where they are called by the derogatory term "Posha" (from "boş" meaning empty or stupid). They are mostly settled and agricultural, though there are numbers who are professionals (though these, like all such Gypsies in Turkey 'hide' their ethnicity). Some of them maintain their language, Lomavren, and a tradition of musicianship but many have 'lost' this and few under 60 years old speak the language fluently. There are possibly around 150,000 of them but numbers are very hard to estimate.

The Geygelli, Gezginler and other göçebe groups are primarily nomadic Gypsy groups who are often identified as "Yörüks" in ethnographic studies. Most are Alevi and some that have settled have 'become' Alevi and deny a Gypsy heritage (though they speak creoles or contact languages

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<sup>13</sup> Yezidi are adherents to Yazidism, whose origins are traced to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and whose adherents include Kurds, Armenians and Arabs. Nowadays, most of the Yezidi live in northern Iraq, and some communities can also be found in Turkey, Syria, Armenia, the Caucasus, and in Germany; see Garnik Astarian (1999-2000), "The Holy Brotherhood: The Yezidi Religious Institution of the "Brother" and the "Sister" of the "Next World", *Iran and the Caucasus*, vol. 3, pp.79-96.

using elements of Romanes, such as the Alevis in Kuştepe, İstanbul, or the Geygelli nomads of central Anatolia). There are also some groups that have adopted other identities, who originate in Gypsy communities from the medieval period, but no longer identify with them. The picture of them is hard to discern as they are very much on the margins of Turkish society and no estimates of their numbers can be made. In Thrace they are known by a variety of names including Mangostar and Çelgar and other Gypsy communities do not, by and large, marry with or into these groups.

The notion that there are clear differences between Romanlar, Domlar and Lomlar and “Çingene” (a pejorative term roughly equivalent to “Gypsy” in its more negative connotations) was one that was often made clear to researchers.<sup>14</sup> In Bodrum and Milas, in the south western Aegean region, for example, one Romani person interviewed in the Selimiye neighbourhood stressed, “We are all Turks and Muslims”, and went on to distinguish between Roma and Çingene: “Roma are clean, hard-working and moral people, while the Çingene are dirty, itinerant, thieves...”<sup>15</sup> In almost all cases, this distinction between “Çingeneler” and others was accompanied by a string of negative stereotypes and prejudices. These exist in the communities themselves and become embedded in the notions of ‘self’ referred to by numbers of the Romani people interviewed -- for example in Bursa, one interviewee suggested that to be born Romani was to be “naturally unemployed”.<sup>16</sup>

Self-ascription and the acceptance of that identity amongst the wider group would seem to be the most reliable indicator of Gypsy-ness in any given situation. Outside definitions are also very important, as the wider community, the state and its officials can have a crucial role in defining who is and who is not a Gypsy. The Teber-Abdals (Alevis) in Kuştepe, İstanbul, are very definite that they are not Gypsies, despite common cultural forms and adaptations with the Romani community in this neighbourhood. The key factor in identification as far as the neighbourhood was concerned was that anyone from there was immediately labelled as a ‘Gypsy’ by those they came into contact with, whether through seeking employment, registering their children for education or interaction with the agents of the state (according to the testimony of all those interviewed, whether Kurd, Abdal or Romani).

Self-ascription also maintains identities-as-past, in the sense that entire groups (such as the ones in Sulukule, Kuştepe, Çiçin or Hançepik) defined themselves occupationally and thus ‘ethnically’ by a previous definition. Once musicians and dancers now turned to recycling and paper-collection in Sulukule, İstanbul, and Hançepik, Diyarbakır; former basket-makers (speaking a dialect of Romanes heavily inflected with Athenian Greek) in Kuştepe were almost

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<sup>14</sup> See Sonia Tamar Seeman (2006), “Presenting ‘Gypsy’, Re-Presenting Roman: Towards an Archaeology of Aesthetic Production and Social Identity”, *Music and Anthropology; the Journal of Musical Anthropology of the Mediterranean*, no. 11. Available at: [http://levi.provincia.venezia.it/ma/index/number11/seeman/see\\_0.htm](http://levi.provincia.venezia.it/ma/index/number11/seeman/see_0.htm).

<sup>15</sup> ERRC/hCa/EDROM interviews, October 2006, Bodrum.

<sup>16</sup> ERRC/hCa/EDROM interviews, August 2006, Bursa.

universally trying to make a living as flower-sellers or furniture-polishers; horse-drivers and traders from Ankara's Çinçin Bağları mahalle had migrated to İstanbul's tourist areas as street shoe-cleaners (especially with the large-scale demolition of the neighbourhood through the urban renewal process). Whether metal-workers, bear-leaders or comb-makers, the shift in occupation had left its heritage in self-identifications and narratives of migration. Again, occupation was felt to be an important indicator of identity, and particular occupations especially so as they were considered to be more 'Gypsy' than others (and frequently had a higher status than others, especially musicianship), so much so that previous 'traditional' occupations remained an integral part of many respondents sense of self. Yet the reality of changing economic conditions and social realities meant that current occupations were no longer reliable indicators of identity.

In Erzurum, in the eastern Anatolian region, researchers encountered this complexity when approaching a community of Posha (the term is contested and has various negative connotations). The Sanayi district is an industrial part of the city, located in the suburbs, where both Kurds and Gypsies live. Information from those outside of the community suggested that a number of terms were used to describe Gypsies there; Posha, Dom and Göçebe (meaning Traveller), being the most common. In the Çağlayan neighbourhood of the district, researchers interviewed a group of young men, some of whom claimed to be Kurdish, whilst others identified themselves as Posha but refuted the prejudices they had encountered about being unreliable, only fit for 'dirty jobs', criminal and outside of wider society. Another family in the neighbourhood also presented a complex picture to the researchers, when initially suggesting that they were Kurdish. During the interview, one of the younger sons began to explain that they used some words that differed from others (these, it transpired, were Romani: "pani" - water, "manro" - bread, for example) and defined those within the community as "manuş" (a word which is similar to the word for 'man' in Romanes). The family had been, until the mid-1960s, Travellers living in tents. The family lived in a community of some 500 houses, the majority of which were Posha.

In Aşkale, in the eastern Anatolian region, Gypsies preferred to use the term Göçebe and one family who spoke at length to the researchers told them that they had settled in Aşkale some thirty years previously, coming from Artvin, on the Black Sea coast, as 'Georgians'. Prior to this they had wintered in Aşkale but spent the summer months around the Artvin region. Others had joined them in the migration and the community numbered some 300 households in the region, twenty in the neighbourhood.

In Adana, in the Mediterranean region, an interviewee described how he would get off the bus before he reached his own neighbourhood as he didn't wish to be identified as 'Gypsy', and preferred to call himself 'Roman', as 'Gypsies' were associated with crime, poverty and

disreputable behaviour.<sup>17</sup> Others in Adana remarked that they would get out of taxis before they arrived in the neighbourhood, as they were fearful of a confrontation with the taxi driver who might suspect them of not paying the fare, if he knew their destination and their identity.

In Keşan, eastern Thrace, researchers were told that, “We are Turks and we are Muslims, but we are also Roma”, and that one of the local associations (there are at least four in the city) was closer to the more overtly nationalist political parties, reflecting a common identification amongst Turkish Roma with nationalism.<sup>18</sup> This identification has been frequently presented to the researchers during the course of the project and reflects the success of the dominant ideology of the Turkish Republic in seeking to create a hegemonic discourse around notions of Turkish identity, in contradistinction to others in Turkish society. In different parts of the country, the researchers met individuals who regarded with suspicion the concept of being a distinct group. The interviews were frequently interrupted by individuals who were unhappy about the potential for divisiveness in identifying Gypsies as somehow ‘different’ from the surrounding Turkish community. In İstanbul’s Kuştepe district, for example, one of those who were listening from outside the discussion group became furious with the researchers and those Roma speaking to them, haranguing them for suggesting that Turkish Romanlar suffered from discrimination by other Turks.<sup>19</sup> Many respondents were at great pains to stress their commitment to the state. In İzmit, northwestern Anatolia, for example, researchers were told that Roma sent their sons to defend the Republic and thus proved their solidarity with the state in its struggle with separatists, whilst they also made it clear that they were antagonistic towards other groups (most frequently Kurds) who sought to undermine the integrity of the Republic.

The common practices that are frequently defined as being part of the shared identity amongst Gypsy groups in Turkey are those that bind all communities together: birth, marriage and death. Of these, the first and second are not identified as especially ‘Gypsy’ in any way by the Romani people themselves and reflect the wider community’s approach to such events - celebration, gift giving and religious rites (with a strong admixture of what might be described as ‘folk belief’, such as the use of tokens to ward off the ‘evil eye’ pinned to the baby’s clothing - usually red threads and distinctive beads) mark the birth of any child in any community. Differences are more marked confessionally in death, with differing rituals connected to Islam and Christianity around burial and mourning. Any distinctiveness that might be attributed to Gypsy communities lies in the extent to which they are willing to cross boundaries in appealing to a wide range of intercessors in cases of illness or demise. For example, the appeal to saints from all traditions, and to what might be described as ‘elemental’ spirits is common amongst Gypsy communities throughout Turkey (for example the celebration of Kakava or Ederlezi which Gypsies and Alevi share throughout the Balkans), but this is also a feature of many other communities, especially in rural areas, and is a reflection of the differing religious influences in

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<sup>17</sup> ERRRC/hCa/EDROM interviews, September 2006, Adana.

<sup>18</sup> ERRRC/hCa/EDROM interviews, September 2006, .

<sup>19</sup> ERRRC/hCa/EDROM interviews, January 2007, İstanbul.

the region, rather than an aspect of lingering belief patterns from a specifically 'Gypsy' past. The degree of syncretism amongst many practising Muslims and Christians (to say nothing of the clearly syncretic forms of belief amongst groups of Alevis, Abdallar and the Yezidis for instance), is high, and the influences of one upon the other profound.

Linguistically, an extremely complex matrix of competencies is emerging that will require much greater and in-depth specialist research to effectively document an entire research portfolio. Amongst Roma in western Turkey, the level of competence in any form of Romanes is relatively low, as compared to the picture in Bulgaria, for example. Where such competence exists, it is usually amongst the older population and is clustered around the Xoraxane and Arlia dialects found elsewhere in the Balkans amongst Muslim Gypsies. Isolated instances exist of extended families speaking dialects from elsewhere in the region, known as *Romanca*<sup>20</sup> in Turkish (Thessaloniki *Romanca* in Kuştepe for example, or Athenian *Romanca* in Tophane). Vlach-speaking Roma from southern and central Bulgaria are to be found in parts of Thrace, though some of these do not have resident status.<sup>21</sup> In one instance in Gelibolu, in Thrace, for example, a family that had originally lived in Romanian lands had migrated to Turkey in the 1930s to seek refuge from persecution there, bringing a heavily inflected form of Vlach into the general linguistic milieu.

In the north western part of the country the picture becomes different again: In Bursa, four different dialects are spoken amongst a population of two thousand in the Mustafa Kemal Paşa mahallesi and the even larger population of Gypsies in the Yenidere mahallesi (a figure of 10,000 was offered to researchers by one of our respondents who now lives in Dolapdere, İstanbul). Linguistic competence declines in the Ankara region but the complexity emerges once again in the eastern parts of Turkey, where linguistic competence amongst the Dom is very high, and in south eastern Turkey where the development of a "creole" made up of a mixture of Domari, Kurdish and Arabic has been extensively documented. The extent of the competence amongst the Lom population of the north eastern region is not yet known, but comparative assessment of the Ghurbeti of northern Cyprus demonstrates that the Muslim Gypsies there maintain a Vlach dialect, influenced by the Mandopolini Gypsies of southern Cyprus (Greek Orthodox in confessional adherence). Cross-fertilisation is also an aspect of the linguistic picture here as in mainland Turkey. The linguistic picture is one that will provide a rich source for research in the future, as this brief summary suggests.

Confessionally as suggested above, the patterns of belief are also complex, with a range of adherence from Sunni to Shi'ite Islam, more Sufi oriented groups (in Diyarbakır's Hançepek mahallesi and in Balıkesir, where there are two tarikats whose Romani adherents are profound in their beliefs), and even small communities of Yezidi Gypsies in the region of Ani, in north

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<sup>20</sup> Pronounced in Turkish as Roman-jé.

<sup>21</sup> ERRC/hCa/EDROM interviews, January 2008, Silivri.

eastern Turkey. There are individuals who have adopted the Yehovah's Witness creed, and some Orthodox Christians to be found in Thrace. The documenting of anything other than a broadly Muslim confessional identity has been problematic, as the notion of a Turkish citizenship is underpinned by the confessional adherence to Islam. The question of belief is one that has a particular impact upon identity, in that the notion of 'Çingene' is bounded by it. For example, the description given by both Gypsies and non-Gypsies regarding this is clearly one that differentiates between Çingene as people who are not Muslim in any meaningful way ("they have their own culture, their own way of doing things, but they are not Muslims") and others, such as Romanlar ("how can they call us Gypsies - Çingene - we are true Muslims, we are clean and we go to the mosque and pray every day"). The charge of 'faithlessness' is one that has been levelled at Gypsies frequently throughout the history of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires and the Republic, and the notion of 'minority' intrinsically bound up with 'non-Muslim' (according to the Treaty of Lausanne, 1923 which is the foundation document for the Republic and its populations). Varieties of heterodox Muslim belief amongst the Gypsy population notwithstanding (Alevism, Shi'ism), the numbers of adherents to anything other than orthodox *Sunni* Islam remain small, and divergence is often the product of the experience of living outside Turkey.