

# Segmentation vs. consolidation: The example of four Gypsy groups in CIS

ELENA MARUSHIAKOVA and VESSELIN POPOV

Processes with different directions, velocity and frequency flow constantly among Gypsy groups. These processes can be reduced to two main contradictory and correlated tendencies: segmentation of the group into separate subgroup divisions, and consolidation of the separate subgroup divisions into one group. In both cases, the newly formed communities gradually accept the dimensions of a new, unique Gypsy group. The purpose of this article is to examine the processes of segmentation and consolidation based on the example of four Gypsy groups, Dajfa/Tajfa, Krimurja/Kırimitika Roma, Kišinjovcurja/Kišinjovurja, Kitajcurja/Kitajake Rom, based on an evaluation of the history of the groups and their contemporary situation. The material shows the way in which the processes are running under different circumstances and allows us to arrive at the conclusion that a single universal model and directional development of the Gypsy group does not and cannot exist.

*Keywords:* Gypsy group, segmentation, consolidation, Dajfa/Tajfa, Krimurja/Kırimitika Roma, Kišinjovcurja/Kišinjovurja, Kitajcurja/Kitajake Rom,

## Introduction

One of the key problems which Gypsy studies have always faced is the question of the internal structure of the Gypsy community. Even though it is still quite debatable whether the Gypsies can be regarded as an integral and united community (Marushiakova and Popov 2001b: 35–53), there is no doubt that the Gypsies are a non-homogeneous socio-cultural unit that is hierarchically structured on different taxonomical levels.

A main scientific category, which is traditionally used by scholars of Romani studies, is the 'Gypsy Group' (the notions tribe, nation or even caste are also used). There are many excellent descriptions of separate Gypsy groups and several attempts to elaborate a more or less comprehensive picture of the existing groups in separate regions or countries. Less attention is paid

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov are assistant professors (*wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiter*) at the Institute of Ethnology at the University of Leipzig and at the Institute of Ethnography and Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Correspondence address: kv. Emil Markov, bl. 110, vh. G, ap. 64, Sofia 1404, Bulgaria. E-mail: studiromani@geobiz.net.

to the question of what a Gypsy group is (i.e. what its essence, main characteristics, etc. are), and to the processes of its historical and/or contemporary development.

In our earlier works, based on materials mainly from Central Europe and the Balkans, we developed a general theoretical model of the Gypsy group, with its main characteristics and its key place in the internal hierarchy of the Gypsy community (Marushiakova 1985: 694–708; Marushiakova and Popov 1997: 45–89) which we will present here briefly.

Gypsies are a specific type of community, 'the intergroup ethnic community', the descendants of early (at least a thousand years ago) migrants from India.<sup>1</sup> This community is divided into a number of separate (sometimes even opposed to one another) groups, subgroups and metagroup units with their own ethnic and cultural features. We can present the following characteristics that represent the typical ideal Gypsy group:

1. Presence of group consciousness.
2. Only a person who is born into the group can be a member of it.
3. Strict observance of group endogamy.
4. Use of a common language—the Gypsy language (Romanes, also Lomavren, Domari, etc.) or another language among the Gypsies who lost their mother tongue.
5. Common traditional lifestyle (sedentary or nomadic).
6. Common means of subsistence (group profession or traditional occupations).
7. Existence of a potestary structure and internal self-administration.
8. Strict observance of group rules and norms.
9. Common life perceptions (including religion), common values and behavioral patterns, common opinions and moral principles.
10. Large and strong families regarded as the highest value.
11. Restriction of friendly contacts outside the boundaries of the group.
12. Mutual solidarity and obligation to lend support.
13. Maintenance of group authenticity and isolation (the rule of non-interference in other groups' affairs).
14. Strict observance of group prohibitions (e.g. *mahrime*, *magerdo*, *muxros*).

1. We do not use the word Gypsies in the sense of different traveling communities, but in the way in which it is understood in Eastern Europe, namely, as a designation for an ethnic community (here called Cigani, Cygane, Cikani, Cziganyok, etc.) that migrated from India to Europe around 1,000 years ago.

Based on these main characteristics, in the process of comparing and confronting with the 'others' (including 'other' Gypsies), group identity is created. Group identity, ultimately, is the essential expression of the existence of a given group (a Gypsy group can not exist without group consciousness, which is different from e.g. dialectal group). The construction of this model is not an end in itself: It only helps to obtain a sufficiently clear notion of what the Gypsy group is. Following a thorough analysis that takes into account the presence or the absence of certain elements of the ideal group model, we can gain some insights into the set-up of a contemporary group. Using this model as a yardstick we can easily recognize and distinguish one Gypsy group from another.

On the basis of the Gypsy group so defined, it is possible to reveal the different levels of the Gypsy community—group, subgroup divisions and metagroup units. These communities are on different hierarchical levels, and depending on different kinds of factors, one or another of these levels could be main, leading and determining.

Gypsy groups are not static and unchangeable social and cultural units. Processes in different directions, velocity and frequency that flow constantly among them can be reduced to two main contradictory and correlated tendencies—segmentation and consolidation. On the one hand a process of segmentation of the group into separate subgroup divisions formed according to family and/or territorial factors takes place. On the other hand, the separate subgroup divisions consolidate gradually into one group, or separate groups consolidate into one metagroup community. And in both cases the newly formed communities gradually accept the dimensions of a new, unique group (Marushiakova 1985: 694–708; Marushiakova and Popov 1997: 46–7).

Actually these are both sides of a common process, and there are enough reasons for this process to be considered characteristic of the Gypsies in the earlier historical periods as well. This process explains to a great extent even the contemporary picture of the mosaic of the Gypsy groups in the world.

Our research, carried out in the territory of the former Soviet Union (namely, Russia, the Ukraine and the Republic of Moldavia) between 2001 and 2003,<sup>2</sup> gave us the opportunity to gather field information that illus-

2. The article is part of research within the framework of the SFB project 586 'Differenz und Integration. Wechselwirkung zwischen nomadischen und sesshaften Lebensformen in Zivilisationen der Alten Welt / Dienstleistungsnomaden in städtischem und ländlichem Kontext' at the Universities of Leipzig and Halle.

trates the different variations of the processes among four Gypsy groups which we are about to present here. These four groups can be compared in pairs according to their historical destiny and they are as follows:

- Dajfa/Tajfa and Krimurja/Kırimitika Roma on the one hand;
- Kišinjovcurja/Kišinjovurja and Kitajcurja/Kitajake Rom on the other hand.

These groups are almost unknown in Romani studies. The community of Kitajcurja/Kitajake Rom have so far not even been in the scholarly literature. The ancestors of the Dajfa/Tajfa and Krimurja/Kırimitika Roma are described only in the ethnographic literature of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century (Svyatskii 1888; Shtiber 1895; Lyzhin 1890; Kondaraki 1883; Filonenko 1929); Kišinjovcurja/Kišinjovurja have been researched only in the context of contemporary Russia (Bessonov), and on the Krimurja only linguistic studies of their dialect from Southern Russia are available (Toropov 1994, 1999, 2000, 2003).

In this article the materials gathered during our fieldwork will be presented mainly in summarised and generalised form. The quoted examples have only illustrative character (and are not the only ones that form the basis of our analysis).

### 1. 'Crimean Gypsies'

The first pair of Gypsy groups is closely connected with the Crimean peninsula, and because of this they have been called in the literature 'Crimean Gypsies' (Kondaraki 1883: 71–80; Svyatskii 1888; Lyzhin 1890: 1–24; Filonenko 1929: 329–42; Shtiber 1895: 519–54). Actually there are two separate Gypsy communities, which are usually covered with this appellation, which are considerably different in their main ethno-cultural characteristics and historical fate.

The Tatar Crimean khanate, encompassing the Crimean peninsula and the adjacent steppe regions, was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire as a vassal state from 1475. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Gypsies from the Ottoman Empire settled in the Crimean peninsula. The first historical data about Gypsies in Crimea are from 1666 when Evliya Çelebi writes that in Caffa city (nowadays Feodosiya) along with the houses with different population in the city outskirts, there are Gypsies living in 'tents and wagons'. He also writes about Gezlev city (nowadays Evpatoriya) where he mentions two Gypsy neighborhoods (Evliya Çelebi 1928: 564, 679). In 1784,

soon after the incorporation of Crimea into Russia, 723 local Gypsy families were registered, called by the local population *Chingene* or, insultingly, *Frauni* ('Pharaohs'). Nominally they are Muslims, but they do not go to mosque and because of this in the Crimean khanate they paid a *harach* (i.e. poll-tax for non-Muslims) of 60 kopeikas silver per capita, together with Christians and Karaims<sup>3</sup> but not *tithe*, for they had no immovable property (Smirnov 1887: 107; Svyatskii 1888: 6).

The 1768–74 war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire ended with the Kyuchuk–Kainardzha treaty, according to which Russia gained the Crimean khanate, which in 1783 was finally incorporated into the Russian empire.

After the incorporation of the Crimea into Russia a new population of Gypsies arrived on the peninsula in two waves. Already during the war there was an order issued by the Russian authorities that 456 Gypsy families, divided into five groups with their leaders, had to move from Bendery (in Bessarabia) to Novorussia (the steppes east of the Dnester river). However, of these 456 Gypsy families, in 1794 only 255 men and even fewer women were left. They were 'nomads, horse traders, made various deceives' and according to the definition of the people of that time they had been the 'plague of the population', and that is why part of them had left these lands and settled in the Crimea (Barannikov 1934: 10–11; Lyzhin 1890: 7). Another Gypsy group settled in Crimea later, after the Russian–Turkish war of 1806–12. According to the Bucharest peace treaty of 1812, Russia gained land between the Dnester and Prut rivers. This land included the territory of what is now the Republic of Moldavia (part of the Principality of Moldavia at the time) and the Budzhak district (today in Ukraine, formerly part of the Ottoman Empire). Budzhak had been populated with Nogay Tatars. The Nogays, according to conditions of the peace treaty were moved to Crimea, where they massively populated the steppes of northern Crimea and it is very likely (even though there is no concrete historical evidence) that Gypsies migrated with them.<sup>4</sup>

The historical and linguistic data shows clearly enough that there are two main waves of Gypsy migrations that reached Crimea in different times and via different routes. They are (or were) both bearers of the so-called 'Balkan'

3. Karaims are a Turkic speaking community, confessing non-orthodox Judaism (they did not accept the Talmud).

4. The continuous life together with Nogay Tatars already in Budzhak could explain the strong influence of the Nogay Tatarian dialects on the Romani dialect of Kırımıtika Roma (Toropov 1994: 8), which would not make sense if their first language contacts were in the steppes of northern Crimea during the 19th century.

dialect of Romanes (Boretzky 1999), also defined by other authors as the 'non-Vlax' dialect (Petulengro 1915–16: 1–54, 65–109).<sup>5</sup>

### 1.1. *Dajfa/Tajfa*

Nowadays, a community lives in the Crimea that refers to itself as *Dajfa/Tajfa*<sup>6</sup> (the initial sound is determined by the dialect of the Tatar language which they speak). Their ancestors are described at some length in the nineteenth-century Russian ethnographic literature. In some recent works they are sometimes wrongly identified as the Krimurja/Kırımıtika Roma (Besonov, Demeter, and Kutenkov 2000: 106–9), a different community which we will describe later.

#### *History*

In the nineteenth century, Gypsies in Crimea are described by the authors of the time as divided into several groups. They are presented in different ways by the different authors but as a whole they are defined as 'local' or 'chingene' (called that way in order to differentiate them from another Gypsy community which entered the Crimea later, as part of the second wave of settlement, at the end of eighteenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries). Thus, according to the sources Chingene include the following communities. *Gurbeti/Kurbeti* (sometimes called *Turkmen*), had been living mostly in the cities in the steppe regions, they traded with horses and horse bacon, and with foods, produced from horse meat (for example the popular patties *chir-chirbyurek* filled with horse meat and fried in horse fat). The *Elekči* made sieves from leather and baskets. The *Demirdži* (sometimes called *Ustalar*) were blacksmiths (settled in cities, or nomads who rounded villages in countryside); some of them (*Kujumdži*) produced different kinds of silver and gold jewellery. They were related to the *Xalajdži* who had made their living by tin-smithing and mending of household items. The *Davuldži* (sometimes called *Kemenči*) were musicians who lived mainly in *Akmechet'/Simferopol'*,<sup>7</sup> *Bakhchisarai* and *Kara-su bazar/Belogorsk* (Kondaraki 1883: 74–5; Lyzhin 1890: 7–8; Svyatskii 1888: 20; Shtiber 1895: 547–8; Filonenko 1929: 331–3, 336).

5. For more about the classification of Romani dialects, see Matras (2002: ch 2).

6. The etymology of *Dajfa/Tajfa* seems likely to derive ultimately from Arabic (via Turkish/Persian) *ta'ifa* meaning '(religious or ethnic) community', the Arabic term having connotations of a kin-based community as well (i.e. a group of related clans that share customs, religious beliefs and practices, and in some cases language) (Yaron Matras, p.c.)

7. The names of the villages in the Crimea are presented in their Russian and Tatarian versions.

A characteristic of the Crimea is that the majority of the Gypsies, including the nomadic (or, rather, semi-nomadic) communities, were in fact city dwellers, at least nominally. This is because, up to the nineteenth century, the northern steppe part of the peninsula was only lightly inhabited and began to be reclaimed only gradually by rural colonists from different ethnic origins, attracted by the policies of the Russian government. Some of the Gypsies had lived and settled in the cities, but even the nomadic Gypsies moved to the cities during the winter periods, while during the warm season they traveled for longer or shorter periods, mainly within the borders of Crimea (Kondaraki 1883: 73–5; Svyatskii 1888: 12).

The local Gypsies ('Chingene') in the Crimea are Muslims, and as such they are connected with the Tatar population of the peninsula (especially in the conditions of the Russian Empire.). In the beginning they were bilingual (alongside Romanes, they also spoke Tatar), but afterwards the majority of them lost their native language almost entirely and as early as the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century their main language became Tatar (Kondaraki 1883: 74–5; Lyzhin 1890: 7–8; Svyatskii 1888: 20; Shtiber 1895: 547–8; Filonenko 1929: 331–3, 336). In the population census (in Russia and later in the USSR) they began to declare themselves as 'Tatars'.

The bond (based on the common religion and later the common language) between Gypsies and Tatars, however, had hard consequences for the Gypsies during the following historical periods. During World War II the ancestors of today's Dajfa/Tajfa were treated as 'Gypsies' by the Nazi occupiers of the Crimea and as such they were doomed to complete annihilation. In some cases the Tatar religious leaders (mulla) and local authorities protected them as Muslims in front of the Nazis, but this kind of defense did not always succeed (Memish 1996). The exact number of Crimean Gypsies shot by the Nazis is still uncertain.

The memory of these events is well preserved in the oral history of the community. The stories we heard most often related to what happened in Simferopol. At the time the occupation authorities declared that the Gypsies were to be resettled in Romania, where they were promised a better life, and many Gypsies went on their own to the collection points. After the majority of the Gypsies in Simferopol had been gathered in this way they were loaded on trucks and shot in the steppe together with Jews and Krimchaks<sup>8</sup> near

8. Krimchaks are Tatar-speaking Jews.

Vishterek/Donskoe village in December 1941. Nowadays there is a monument for the victims of the Nazi genocide (however, the inscription on the monument mentions as victims only Jews and Krimchaks).

After the arrival of the Soviet army in Crimea the mass deportation began of the local population accused of collaboration with Hitler's Germany. On the 11th of May 1944 Stalin signed a special decree of the State Committee for Defense of the USSR for 'the banishment of Crimean Tatars from the Crimean ASSR to the Uzbek SSR', soon followed by a new decree 'for the additional banishment of the Crimean Tatars from Crimea to the Mari SSR and in the regions of Gorky, Ivanovo, Kostroma, Molotov and Sverdlovsk' (Broshevan 1995: 44–9; Vozgrin 1995: 24–31).

On the 18th of May 1944 the mass deportation of Crimean Tatars began. Together with the Tatars from Crimea, all Crimean Gypsies ('Chingene') were deported. The grounds for taking them together with the Tatars was that they had Tatar names, were Muslims, spoke Tatar, and most of them had declared themselves as Tatars during the censuses. Most of the Gypsies had been banished to different parts of Uzbekistan (mainly in the region of Samarkand), where they lived for more than four decades together with the Crimean Tatars (Broshevan 1995: 44–9; Vozgrin 1995: 24–31). Only a small part of them, from the Gurbeti/Kurbeti, had succeeded in 'proving', on the basis of the preserved Romani language, that they were not Tatars, but Gypsies, and were offered the possibility to return to their home towns.

At the end of the 1980s, during the so-called Perestroika, the return of the Crimean Tatars to their home towns gradually began. This return was connected with many difficulties, despite the fact that it had been officially legalized by the 'Declaration for the recognition of the repressive acts against the people subjected to violent persecution as illegal and criminal', accepted by the High Council of the USSR on 14 November 1989 and had been coordinated by a special commission. The situation was complicated by the establishment of an independent Ukraine, which encompasses the territory of the autonomous Republic of Crimea, and by the conflicts between the Ukraine and Russia about its statute (and about the Black Sea fleet with Sevastopol as its main base) (Pribytkova 1995: 85–90; Moskalets 1995: 91–7). In the Crimea itself the Tatars encountered many problems of different kinds, even violent collisions with the local authorities and the Russian speaking population. Gypsies also returned, together with the Crimean Tatars, and nowadays despite all the difficulties most of them are permanently settled in the Crimea.

*The contemporary situation and formation of the Group*

Today the Gypsies that were deported (Dajfa/Tajfa) live in Crimean cities such as Simferopol/Ak mechet', Evpatoriya/Gezlev, Belogorsk/Kara-su Bazar, Dzhankoi as well as in the surrounding regions. They deal mainly in different kinds of small trade in the markets. Those who are wealthier have their own restaurants and cafes and many are musicians (some of them are quite popular).

The shared historical fate of the Gypsies (Dajfa/Tajfa) and the Crimean Tatars in the places of deportation created a new kind of relation between them. The alienation from the other Gypsies is also strengthened by the Tatars' attitude towards them (as brothers by fate), and this accelerates their integration into the Crimean Tatar community. Nowadays the Gypsies are accepted by the Crimean Tatars as an integral part of their community, the 'Crimean Tatar nation', composed of different components—steppe Tatars (Nogays), mountain Tatars (Tats), Coastal line Tatars and 'Crimean Gypsies' (regarding only Dajfa/Tajfa).<sup>9</sup> This is the first and the only case in history where the Gypsies are recognized as a fundamental structural element in a newly constructed ethno-nation.

On the official, public, level all Crimean Tatars accept this concept. However, on a daily, common, level many different variants of relations between Crimean Tatars and Gypsies can be observed. Along with the cases of the acceptance of the Gypsies as full-fledged members of the newly constructed Crimean Tatar nation, participation in joint initiatives and organisations, friendly relations and even cases of mixed marriages, there are also cases of their silent rejection. An outspoken example of this is when the Crimean Tatars did not allow those Dajfa/Tajfa who returned from exile to settle in Bakhchisarai, not even to their ancient mountain-cave settlements (Lyzhin 1890: 5; Kondaraki 1883: 73; Filonenko 1929: 330, 332).

The Crimean Tatars accept the Crimean Gypsies as Muslims, they include them in their religious communities and religious lives, but there are biases

9. Several officials of the Crimean-Tatar community explained this concept to us. The quotation marks here reflect that nowadays there are two powers in the Crimea. The Crimean Tatars run their own inner elections (in which the Crimean Gypsies also take part), which elects the Kurultai (the equivalent of parliament), which in turn elects the president and the Medzhilis (the government). Local Medzhilises are also elected in the places where Tatars live. This parallel Crimean-Tatar power structure is officially accepted by no-one, but it does exist and its real dimensions are far from insignificant.

that they are not really Muslims but covert Shiites (only Sunni Muslims are considered to be real Muslims by the Crimean Tatars). For example, there is a statement from a representative of the Crimean Tatar community: 'They profess Shiite Islam, I noticed this, when I asked them for water and I said a Shiite blessing, which should be said when drinking water (for the soul of Hassan and Hussein) and they replied me in the same way'. It is interesting to note here that similar suspicions towards the Gypsies that they are Alevi are widespread among the Sunni Turks in Turkey.

The community of Dajfa/Tajfa nowadays has a complicated identity, which appears differently in different contexts. The local Russian speaking population considers them as 'Tsygane', but in front of Russians the Dajfa people categorically deny any connections to the Gypsies and declare themselves 'Tatars'.

For the Krimurja and the other Gypsy groups nowadays living in Crimea, Dajfa are not 'real' Gypsies as they do not know Romanes, they do not keep Romani traditions and on the whole in their eyes they are 'Tatars' (even though they are still differentiated from the other Crimean Tatars). Dajfa, for their part do not feel connected with the other Romani speaking Gypsies and when faced by them they insist on their Tatar identity.

For the surrounding Crimean Tatar population they are usually simply 'Chingene', but the Dajfa do not accept this name, regarding it as offensive, just like the Dajfa did not accept the rarely used names 'Frauni' and 'Gurbeti/Kurbeti'. In a Tatar environment they declare themselves either as just Tatars or (which is more frequent) as Dajfa/Tajfa, which is considered to be one of the Crimean Tatar clans. In other words, there is a double (or, more precisely, a two-level) identity with the domination of the Crimean Tatar identity (regarded as a higher level) over the group's one. When they are in their own community, the Dajfa/Tajfa are not really sure about their identity, and most of all they are not sure about their historical origins. Variations can be met even within one family.

The years of deportation led to a final loss of the old group divisions (described in scholarly works in the nineteenth century), and today they have melted into one community (the previous group divisions and professional specialization are sometimes preserved at the family level, for example, with the famous musicians). As a self-appellation of the community Dajfa/Tajfa is definitely preferred (Tajfa is used in the cities in the steppe region, while Dajfa in the cities in the mountain regions and on the south coastal line), which is usually translated by them as 'kin, big family'. However, some-

times the self-appellations *Urumčel'*, *Urmačel'* or even *Romačel'*<sup>10</sup> are used, the meanings of which they are unable to explain.

According to the memories of some representatives of the *Dajfa/Tajfa* (confirmed with memories of some of the Crimean Tatars) in the past they also frequently identified themselves as *Turkmen/Trukmen*.<sup>11</sup> Today some of them connect the origin of their community to Turkey (as a specific place of origin they sometimes mention the city of Mersin). Different stories are told about how their ancestors had been led away as home servants from Turkey or as slaves and how they were sold at big slave markets in the Crimea. In that case it is obviously a question of secondary legend (based on some historical sources and monuments; for example, in the center of the town of Belogorsk/Kara-su there are ruins of a bazaar that the local population perceives as a huge former slave market). It is clear that some *Dajfa* wish to be connected by origin with Turkey, to be 'real' Turks by origin who became Tatars after that.

Other accounts of the origin of the community can be met, which are obviously influenced by modern scientific knowledge and which link them in some way to the Gypsies. Such is, for example, a legend that *Dajfa/Tajfa* originated from India, where a long time ago a city called 'Tajfa' existed (compare the similar model in the legend about the origin of Gypsies from India, from the river 'Tsygan') (Marushiakova and Popov 2000: 81–93). In the same time the attitudes of the *Dajfa* towards the *Krimurja*, who are considered typical representatives of the 'Gypsies', are definitely negative: 'they are not like us, we do not understand their language, we are settled, we have always had homes and even if some of our ancestors traveled in the past it was only for a couple of days, we are honest, etc. so we must not be mixed with them.'

Generally speaking, a huge part of *Dajfa/Tajfa* accept this complex, two-dimensional identity (in the first place Crimean Tatars, and then of Gypsy origin). A smaller part are those who generally deny their Gypsy origin and declare themselves only as 'Tatars'. Only very few consider that the *Dajfa/Tajfa* are first of all Gypsies who do not declare themselves as such only because they fear the Tatars. This attitude is exceptional and is ostracized by their own community.

10. The self-appellation *Romačel'* is used only by some educated representatives of the *Dajfa* community. It is possible that this appellation is an expression of their wish to connect the *Dajfa* with the wide Roma community.

11. Today we meet this appellation mostly at the family level, e.g. 'the family of my grandmother on mother's side was *Trukmen'* or 'my mother married a *Trukmen'*.

A difference can be observed in the identity declarations of the different generations. While the older informants tend towards full identification with the Tatars and firm denial of a Gypsy origin, the younger ones accept, quite often with interest, their Gypsy origin but it is accepted mainly as a historical heritage that does not conflict with their Crimean Tatar identity today.<sup>12</sup>

In this aspect we witnessed some curious situations. For example, the young representatives of the Dajfa/Tajfa tried to remember separate words and expressions in Romanes from the language of their grandparents (*maro* 'bread', *so keres* 'what are you doing', *xoxaves* 'you are telling lies', *o čhav but taro piidi, matolašty* 'the boy drank a lot of vodka, and he is drunk now', *jekin*<sup>13</sup> 'money'), while the older ones are not willing to reveal such words and expressions and condemn the youth's interest. As an explanation for this behavior the old generations said: 'We are not Gypsies, we are only called "Chingene", and that is why we are mixed with Gypsies. But this doesn't mean that we are Gypsies, this is because our ancestors often quarreled and spoke ugly and so we were called "Chingene"'. The ridiculous thing here is that the name 'chingene' is explained as derived from Romanes (from the word 'čingar' [quarrel]), or in other words from the language of the community with which they refuse to have anything in common. A similar situation is well known to us also from Bulgaria, where this naive etymology of 'chingene' occurs specifically among the so-called Milliet (Turkish speaking Gypsies with preferred Turkish identity).

As a whole we come to the conclusion that among the Dajfa/Tajfa a process of two-stage consolidation has taken place. In the beginning the separate Gypsy groups and subgroups (Elekči, Demirdži, Xalaidži, Davuldži/Kemenči, etc., as well as parts of Gurbeti/Kurbeti) merged into one community, losing their internal differences. At the same time, because of the common historical fate and specific historical circumstances (especially the common deportation), the consolidation of the Dajfa/Tajfa into new

12. The explanation of this difference in identity declarations is very simple: the old generation is not sure about their place in the Crimean-Tatar nation and is afraid that their Gypsy origin can undermine it. The young generation of Dajfa take an active part in the Crimean-Tatar movement, such as membership in organisations, participation in political actions, demonstrations, strikes, and they feel as full-fledged members of the Crimean-Tatar nation and so they do not see any danger in their historical heritage.

13. The etymology of the word is not exactly clear to us, nor to Krimurja, but the representatives of Dajfa/Tajfa insist that this is a word from Romanes.

Crimean Tatar Nation<sup>14</sup> is ongoing. The tendency is towards complete and voluntary assimilation of the Dajfa/Tajfa into this nation and it seems to be only a question of time for the process to be fully completed. However this does not mean that such an end result is inevitable, as with a change of the circumstances the processes can lead in other directions.

### 1.2. *Krimurja/Kırımıtika Roma*

In the Crimea and all over the territories of the former USSR lives a Gypsy group that uses different variants of one and the same self-appellation, which connected them to the Crimea (*Kırım* in the Tatarian language)—Krimurja/Krimcurja, Kırımıtika/Kırımıltika Roma, Tatarıka/Tatarıtika Roma, Krimi/Krimci, etc. As we mentioned earlier, the settlement (in two waves) of the ancestors of this group in the Crimea may date to the end of the eighteenth century or the beginning of nineteenth century, after the incorporation of the Crimea into Russia.

The dialect of Romanes used by Krimurja belongs to the so-called 'Balkan' dialect group (Cherenkov 1986:8; Toropov 1994; 2003; Boretzky 1999).

#### *History and formation of the group*

It can be said that the ancestors of the Krimurja migrated gradually from the Balkans, possibly during the second half of the seventeenth century, when there were huge migration waves from the southwest to the northeast. Moving through the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, through Bessarabia incorporated into Russian Empire and through the steppes of the northern Black Sea shores they finally had reached the Crimea in two waves in the last quarter of the eighteenth century and the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

There is a dialectal connection between the Krimurja and the Ursara living in Romania and the Ursara in the Republic of Moldavia (in 19th century this territory was part of Bessarabia) which is beyond any doubt (Boretzky 1999; Toropov 1994:10). When the Krimurja arrived from Bessarabia in Crimea the local Tatar population (and the local Crimean Chingene) called them *Ajudži/Ajudžilar* (which means 'bear trainers') and they were often described in the ethnographic literature of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries like that (Kondaraki 1883: 73–4; Svyatskii 1888: 12; Lyzhin 1890: 8; Filonenko 1929: 331–6). This term (from the word 'bear' in

14. The separate communities in the Crimea, Tatar in origin, form a completely new type of community, the Crimean Tatar Nation.

Tatar) means the same as *ursara* ('bear' in Romanian), which once again indicates the probability of close connection between those three groups in the past, although nowadays they are considered separate Gypsy groups in different countries.

In this respect, however, there are also lots of questions and unsolved problems. The term 'Ajudži' for the Krimurja is used even nowadays in the Crimea by the Tatars and by the Dajfa/Tajfa, but to most of the Krimurja it is unknown and if they hear it they do not perceive it as their group appellation. There are no memories preserved (not by the Krimurja or by the Ursara in the Republic of Moldavia) that they have ever been bear trainers (moreover, they categorically deny all kinds of similar suggestions). Then there is the problem with the former practice of itinerant (nomad) blacksmithing among the Krimurja, which is a traditional occupation among the Ursara in the Republic of Moldavia. Some authors are categorical in the past, itinerant blacksmithing was a basic occupation of the Krimurja, evidence of which they found in the remarkably rich blacksmith's terminology in their dialect as well as in the oral stories of the community, recorded outside Crimea (Toropov 1994: 29; 1999; 2000:269–73; 2003). In the old ethnographic literature about the Gypsies in Crimea it is not mentioned that Ajudži are blacksmiths, and we also did not find any memories preserved about this occupation in the past in Crimea.

During the nineteenth century, the Krimurja (Ajudži) already lived in the Crimea. They lived in the cities during the winters and during the warm season they travelled in the steppe of north Crimea, the men trading horses and agricultural products, and the women telling fortunes (Kondaraki 1883: 73–4; Svyatskii 1888: 12; Lyzhin 1890: 8; Filonenko 1929: 331–6). Some time at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, the scope of nomad travels to the north was increased significantly—initially to the surrounding steppe regions to the north and the east, and later all over the Ukraine, south and central Russia (according to the oral history they got as far as Byelorussia).

The great resettlement of the Krimurja took place mainly after the October revolution and is connected with the industrialization and the urbanization of the country, and with the creation of the new Kolkhoz system in the USSR. Groups of Krimurja continued to pass through the region of Kuban River (in the south of Russia), notably in large numbers during the starvation in 1921–22. Some of them entered the newly established Gypsy's Cooperatives and Kolkhozes. Fleeing the starvation in the Crimea and southern

Russia in 1933, some settled in Georgia (Toropov 1994:9). The first Krimurja arrived in Moscow in the beginning of the 1930s, where they were hired for the construction of the Moscow Metro (Demeter and Cherenkov 1987: 44).

It is worth mentioning that Krimurja had been deported from Crimea together with the Tatars and 'Chingene' relatively seldom, and in separate cases of deportations (which sometimes occurred) after proving that they are Gypsies and not Tatars, they had been liberated. Most of them, however, did not return to their homes and resettled in other regions of the USSR. Their place in Crimea was taken by the Krimurja, who until then had traveled in the south-east of the Ukraine.

After the Second World War the migrations and the resettling of the Krimurja continued and embraced bigger and bigger parts of the Soviet Union, reclaiming new regions, including Central Asia and Siberia. The Krimurja continued their nomadic (or semi-nomadic) way of life till the end of the 1960s, only the goods they traded changed (in those times mainly carpets). After the sedentarisation they preserved their mobility and often changed their living place. We will give only one example from the oral history of the community. One of our informants told us that he was born in 1943 in Kishinev. During the war his family travelled from place to place in the Ukraine, after that they went to Russia. The decree of 1956 banning the nomadic way of life reached them in Saratov on the Volga river. After that they lived for some time in Central Asia. They stayed longer in Bukhara; his father died in Tashkent. Then they returned to the region of the river Volga. His mother died in Saratov, they went back to the Ukraine, first lived in Nikolaev and finally they settled permanently in Odessa.

### *Contemporary situation*

After the collapse and dissolution of the Soviet Union in the beginning of the 1990s, parts of the Krimurja left the new independent states in the Transcaucasus and Central Asia and migrated to Russia and the Ukraine. Nowadays the Krimurja live spread on vast territories in the cities of Russia, mainly in the metropolises (Moscow and St Petersburg), in the regions along the River Volga (Nizhnii Novgorod, Samara, etc.) and in southern Russia (Sevastopol, Krasnodar, Rostov on Don, Novorossiisk, Anapa, etc.) as well as in the Ukraine (Kiev, Odessa, Dnipropetrovsk, Nikolaev, Herson). Significant numbers continue to live in the cities of the Crimean peninsula (e.g. Dzhankoi, Voinka, Krasnogvardeiskoe, Oktyabr'skoe, Simferopol, Alush-ta, Evpatoriya, Saki). The Krimurja in Crimea also incorporated (through

mixed marriages) small numbers of Gurbeti/Kurbeti (Krasnoperekopsk, Voinka, Sovetskii), who had preserved until then to some extent their internal separation within the larger Krimurja community.

The group of Krimurja had been formed as one integrated community in Crimea, but afterwards, according to the regions of settlement, they divided into subgroups, separated according to the regions in which they live, for instance Kirimludes (the ones that stayed to live on Crimea), Kubanludes (living in Southern Russia, in the region of Kuban), Černomorludes (living in the Caucasian coast of the Black Sea) etc. (Toropov 1994: 5). The territorial subgroups are in a complex correlation with the family-kin sub-divisions, called *tuxumja* (e.g. Ariki, Guzljuludes, Gerišlides) (Demeter, Bessonov, and Kutenkov 2000: 85).

The importance of the kinship subdivisions fades away in time and in their place come the territorial ones. The memory of family-kin subdivisions is stronger outside Crimea, and in many cases they are remembered as giving certain ethno-psychological characteristics. For example, in the Crimea many of the young and middle-aged Krimurja are able to mention only a few close kins, while the Krimurja who live outside the Crimea are prepared to conduct endless conversations about different subdivisions and their characteristics, such as Ariki are the proudest, Guzljuludes are the richest, Barginja are the most musically gifted.

The Krimurja are Muslims, probably from the time when they lived in the Balkans or at least in Budzhak (the Budzhak region is in the southern part of the former Bessarabia). It is unlikely that they adopted Islam at a time when the peninsula was already part of the Russian Empire and Islam was no longer the state religion there. In the big cities of Russia and the Ukraine, religion is perceived as an important characteristic of the community, separating them from the rest of the Gypsies (though the Krimurja are not very strict Muslims). It is interesting to note that in the Crimea itself the local Tatars and Dajfa/Tajfa mainly do not know that Ajudži (which is how they call the Krimurja) are Muslims, and often categorically reject this possibility. But in contrast, the other Gypsy groups from outside the Crimea know very well about their Muslim religious affiliation and that is why they often call them Xoraxaja (meaning 'Muslims').

An important factor in the life of the Krimurja are the relics from their Balkan cultural heritage, which are also comprehended by the community as a specific marker, separating them from the rest of the Gypsy groups on the territory of the former USSR.

Like most of the Balkan peoples, the Krimurja preserve the custom of making kurban, which they perceive as their own characteristic symbol—*amarenge romenge, mjusulmanska roma sas, alaj si mjusulmanska* ('to our Gypsies, we were Gypsies—Muslims, all are Muslims'). They slaughter a lamb for kurban on all of the big holidays (Muslim and Christian). They also make kurban when somebody is ill, when a promise is given that if recovered, an annual kurban will be given on a certain date. It is believed that if the promise is broken (if the kurban is forgotten), the man gets ill again, and he could die as well unless he undoes his mistake. Every Krimurja is ready to tell many examples of such cases.

For their biggest holiday the Krimurja (in the Crimea and elsewhere) observe Jil Baš (in Tatar, literary 'head of the year', i.e. New Year). The celebration is, however, not on New Year's eve itself, but on the evening of 13th of January (i.e. according the Old-style Calendar). Here analogies can be found with the celebrating of Vasilica/Bangu Vasij (the day of St Basil) in the Balkans, where the holiday is popular as the 'Gypsy New Year' and is also celebrated according to the old style. The name of St Vasilij (Vasiljas) is preserved, though only in the ritual songs and the Krimurja themselves do not make a connection with St Basil. They say, 'Vasiljas was probably a great-grandfather, somebody famous, that is why we are mentioning him'.

On Jil Baš all the relatives gather and a kurban lamb is slaughtered. The memory is preserved that on that day in the past a goose was also slaughtered, which was brought to the table decorated with gold coins and a red flower in its beak. At the table, fortunes are told; the children wish health and prosperity to everybody, for which they receive small gifts. When the celebration is over, the guests are not allowed to leave with empty hands, and they are given a little of everything that is on the table. The model of the holiday is in its basic characteristics identical to the celebration of Vasilica/Bangu Vasij in the Balkans (Marushiakova and Popov 1997: 130–2).

A vivid example for the Balkan origin of the Krimurja is also the song which is sung on the table of Jil Baš, called 'koljadka'<sup>15</sup> (an analogy with the east Slavic 'kolyadka', performed on Christmas Eve). The song is sung separately by every family, with the names of the husband and the wife, and is regarded as a sign of happiness and richness during the coming year.

15. This text was recorded during our field research in 2002. The same song was published only once so far, but without translation and with some mistakes in the transcription (Besonov, Demeter, and Kutenkov 2000:108).

Kas del o Del e Vasiljas,	To whom will God, will Basil, give?
Mekh bal o Del ke Petja pašas	May God give to Petja, the Pasha,
Mekh dela o Del, khuren, džoren	May God give stallions, mules,
Da len katja phurane zlotja.	May he give [three] layers old gold pieces,
Phurane zlotja, mei baxtore	Old gold pieces, lucky ones,
Phurane loša, da i but berša.	Old joys, and many years.
Kas del o Del e Vasiljas,	To whom will God, will Basil, give?
Mekh bal o Del ke Rita pašas.	May God give to Rita, the Pasha.
Mekh dela o Del khuren, džoren,	May God give stallions, mules,
Da i trin katja phurane zlotja,	May he give three layers old gold pieces,
Phurane zlotja miri baxtore	Old gold pieces, my lucky ones,
Phurane loša da i but berša.	Old joys, and many years.
Ax, dot, no, no, no,	Ah, dot, no, no, no,
Kate khuroro, kate džororo,	Here a stallion, here a mule,
Tern busilja.	Tern bosilja. <sup>16</sup>

Another holiday, characteristic for the Krimurja, preserved today mainly as a memory, is Jagorja. It was celebrated or around the 20th of April, or on the Friday before Easter—which is why the Krimurja in the Kuban region called it ‘The Gypsy Easter’. A kurban lamb was slaughtered, on the eve of the holiday big fires were lit, which were jumped over by all of the young men, women and children. Apparently here we also have a Balkan heritage, re-rationalized according to the new conditions in the Crimea. The holiday is widespread among different Balkan people, it is known as Gergjovden/Gjurgjevdan (the day of St George in its Christian version), Hıdırlez/Hederlez/Erdelez (the day of St Hıdır and İlyaz in its Islamic version).<sup>17</sup> The Krimurja, however, do not follow the celebration of Hıdırlez among the Crimean Tatars (which is celebrated in the first week of May) (Kurtiev 1996: 34–7), but celebrate the holiday according to the Orthodox calendar, on the day of St George (Yegoriy, Yuriev den’ in the east Slavic variations). (Sokolova, 1987: 386–7) The Krimurja themselves do not explain the name of the holiday in connection to east Slavic variants of St George, but say it came from the word *jag* (‘fire’) in Romanes.<sup>18</sup>

16. The words *tern*, *bosilja* in the song are kept by tradition, though nobody from Krimurja nowadays knows what they mean. They are usually considered to be old magical words. In Bulgarian folklore, where such endings are usual in choruses of the songs, we could translate them as ‘thorn, basil’. In this case we apparently have its adoption from the Balkans.

17. There is an extremely rich literature about this holiday among Slavic, and Turkic Balkan people. For more details see and Koleva (1981); Tokarev (1977: 233, 261–6, 288–90); Tenisheva (1991: 72–7); and references therein.

18. This is a typical example of naive etymology, and secondary explanation, which often confuses scholars, who tend to accept the words of the informants uncritically.

The Balkan heritage among the Krimurja can be found sometimes in most unexpected forms, connected to extraordinary events. As a whole for the Gypsies in the former USSR (including Krimurja) the replacement of their own folklore with music and dance forms of the Ruska Roma is characteristic.<sup>19</sup> Some years ago, however, wealthy members of the Krimurja from Moscow sponsored the publication of a CD,<sup>20</sup> dedicated to the memory of their relatives who tragically died.<sup>21</sup> On the CD, apart from the songs of the classical repertoire of Ruska Roma, is a song which was created especially in honor of the dead. It is completely different by its music and by the dialect of the text from the rest on the disk, and apparently it was written by using traditional Balkan folklore motives, mixed with forms of another genre (the Russian 'tyuremnye' songs).<sup>22</sup> We give here the text of the song:

E sas, mamó, mande trin phrala, zalile len, Devla, o raja, zalile man, štartone phrales, phagerde li, Devla, me vasta.	I had, mother three brothers, They were taken, Lord, by the Police, They also took me, the fourth brother, They broke, Lord, my hands.
E trine gadžen me mudardjom, štartone gadžes na ačhiljom.	I killed three gadje I couldn't kill the fourth
Avile, aj, o raja, o džukela, phagerde li Devla me vasta. (2) Bešau berš, bešau me sare trin, nikon mande, dade, na le, aja, aja, <i>staruška</i> <sup>23</sup> taj phuri, andja mange vestja na lačhi.	They came, the Policemen, the dogs, They broke, Lord, my hands (2) I was in jail an year, I was even three Nobody, father, came [to visit me] Aya, aya, [only] the old one Brought me news not good
'Tji džuvli avre muršes lija, <i>razpodlaja</i> , čhavoren gadženge ačhardja	'Your wife another man had taken, very mean she, The children left to gaje <sup>24</sup>

19. Of their own folklore usually only separate relicts are preserved, mainly in family environment, for instance in the dances of Krimurja there are chain-dance elements (dancing in a circle while holding hands).

20. Musical director, Moisei Oglu. Idea and production, Vadim Bareev and Alexander Bareev. Moscow records (2000). On the cover of the disk it says, 'We dedicate this album to the brothers Ivan and Andrei.'

21. The cruel murder of two Krimurja in the 1990s.

22. As an interesting detail we can mention that when our Gypsy friends from Sofia heard this song, they recognized it immediately and could not believe that it was not 'stolen' (in their musician's slang) from some Balkan Gypsy song.

23. To distinguish between Russian and Romani in Romani texts, here and later in the text, the Russian words are printed in italic, the Romani, in roman type.

24. i.e., left to be educated in a state institution.

Tji džuvli avre muršes lija, čhavoren gadženge ačhardja.' (2)	Your wife another man had taken, The children left to gaje' (2)
Ma rov, ma rov, daj, miri phuri, merava me, ne <i>razstravaj</i> miro ilo.	Do not cry, do not cry, Mother, my old, dying I am Do not break my hearth.
Del o Del javava me khere, čhingarava lake masore. (2)	God will let me, I will come home I will chop her body.' (2)

In the analysis of the historical development of the Krimurja it can be clearly seen how the community consolidates and forms as a group in Crimea. After its resettlement the processes go in the opposite direction, and nowadays they acquire clearer dimensions. Except for the emergence of internal divisions (territorial or family-kin ones), segmentation of another kind is observed. The connections (including the matrimonial ones) among the Krimurja still live in the Crimea and the ones settled in Russia and the Ukraine are growing weaker.

Practically, nowadays the outlines of two communities with the same name are formed, which had almost entirely lost their contacts (however until now they did not lose the memory about their unity and common appellation), and each one of them starts to accept more and more the characteristics of a separate Gypsy group. Both subdivisions preserve their traditions and endogamy (more and more in its own borders), but among those living outside Crimea (who, not least because of their wealth, are regarded as the 'aristocracy' of the community), stricter preservation of the traditions and customs is observed, as well as the preserving of the memories of the family-kin divisions, while for the rest in Crimea, things gradually start to lose their significance. In the same manner, the so-called Gypsy court usually called by the Krimurja *davija* or *sindo/cândo* (under the influence of the analogical name among the Ruska Roma) is summoned more often in the new territories, where other groups are often invited to court hearings, too.

How the processes among Krimurja will develop is hard to predict, but it will not be a surprise if after a few generations we will reasonably talk about two totally separate (though closely related) Gypsy groups.

## 2. 'Laeši'

The next two Gypsy groups in the former USSR to which we will devote our attention are part of one and the same dialectal community whose repre-

sentatives live scattered in many countries all around the world. These Gypsies are usually known under many generalizing names, given to them most often by the other Gypsies, for example, in Central Europe the Olah/Olaški, in Romania the Pletoši or Lajaši, in the Republic of Moldavia and in Bessarabia the Lejaši, in the former Yugoslavia (mainly in Serbia and Vojvodina) the Leaši, in Bulgaria the Kardaraši/Kaldaraši, in the US and Canada as Vlax Rom, etc.

All these names describe a heterogeneous community with a complex internal structure, composed from hierarchically arranged groups and subgroup divisions. The separate parts of the community are more or less clearly differentiated one from another, but usually along with this they have also a consciousness of their alliance and of a certain unity of a higher meta-group order.

In many works by Romani studies scholars,<sup>25</sup> repeating the model communicated by Jan Yoors (1987), the internal division of this community is limited usually only to three groups (the Kelderara, the Lovara, and the Čurara); in the USA and in Canada, the Mačvaja group is added.<sup>26</sup> Much less attention has been paid to the Gypsies belonging to this community who live in Hungary, Slovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, as well as in the countries of the former USSR, even though they have been studied and described (or at least some of them) by local researchers.<sup>27</sup> The Gypsies from this community speak Romani dialects which are classified differently by linguists, for example, as Northern Vlax (Boretzky 2003) and sometimes also as New Vlax (Iglă 1997: 153).<sup>28</sup>

The speakers of these dialects are descendants of the Gypsy groups who migrated from the territories of the former principalities of Wallachia and

25. This note does not include the linguistic studies and linguistic terms, where the situation is different. The linguistic terms do not describe communities, but dialects, so the terms used by linguists do not pretend to identify Gypsy groups. For a linguistic classification see Boretzky (2003: 3ff).

26. To quote all publications (including those on the internet) in which 'the ideology of the four Rom natsia' (Acton 1993:79) is reproduced would take too much space.

27. Because of the large number of publications it is not possible to enumerate all of them. Here only a few examples: Erdős (1958: 449–457); Bari (1999); Kiralyi (1992); Kovalcsik (1985); Horvathova (1964, 1954: 149–175, 285–308); Holub (2000), Marushiakova and Popov (1997); Gjorgjević (1932); Vukanović (1883); Rimmel (1993); Bessonov, Demeter, and Kutenkov (2000).

28. We definitely prefer the term 'New Vlax' for determining the community who speak these dialects, because of one very simple historical criterion; the time of leaving the lands of Wallachia and Moldova (in contrast with the so-called 'Old Vlaxs', i.e. the community who speak the 'Old Vlax' dialects of Romanes and which left the Rumanian lands earlier).

Moldavia and surrounding regions during the second half of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth centuries. This is the great migrational wave of Gypsies who spread massively all over Europe, and consequently reached the New World. As a result of those migrations (sometimes called the Great Invasion of the Kelderari), within a period of a few decades the overall picture of the Gypsy presence on a worldwide scale changed significantly.

So far, different explanations about this huge migration wave have been offered. For many years the exodus of Gypsies from Wallachia and Moldavia was explained as a direct consequence of their liberation from slavery and acquired freedom of travel (Kochanovski 1963: 86; Vaux de Foletier 1970: 29; 1981: 115; Cohn 1973: 29; Ficowski 1985: 80; Vossen 1983: 58; Liegeois 1986: 45; 1994: 24; Hancock 1987: 37). An alternative causation is suggested by Angus Fraser. He suggests that the Gypsy migrations are an incessant process that began before the end of slavery and that the migrating Gypsies came not from Wallachia and Moldavia, but mainly from the territories around principalities where a Romanian speaking population lived (Fraser 1992b: 131–45).

Angus Fraser's conclusions in this case are not really original. H. von Wlislöcki already mentions Transylvania as an outlet point of a huge part of these migrations. At the same time he notes other additional factors apart from the end of slavery that affected the mass migration of Gypsies, such as economical changes of the modern epoch and the availability of new means of public transport (railways, ships) (Wlislöcki 1890: 55–6). There is no doubt that in the dialect of the Lovara (one of the main groups in this migration) there is a strong Hungarian influence that shows clearly that they had lived for a long time in a Hungarian language milieu.

In order to understand the reasons behind the mass Gypsy migrations during the second half of the nineteenth century, special attention must be paid once again to the situation of the Gypsies in Wallachia and Moldavia during slavery and after their liberation. This is the second important question to which an answer is required: What are the categories of slaves involved in these migrations? This could be an answer to the perplexities of Patrick Williams, who writes, 'it is difficult to understand how the Rom . . . manage to be what they are today after so long a period of slavery' (1984: 418–9). Repetitive statements in the literature about the cruel conditions of slavery leave unexplained how the Gypsies, scattered all over the world during these migrations, succeed to preserve so many traditional elements of culture, social structure and family relationships (Fraser 1992b:139).

The conditions and status of the Gypsies in the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia during the period of slavery is described in detail by Michail Kogalniceanu (1840). Later this description of slavery was retold not just once (and not always correctly) by many authors, so we shall present it only very briefly.

There were three main categories of slaves, distinguished clearly according to the criterion in whose ownership they were, namely, of the principal (or 'the crown'), of the monasteries and of the boyars. The Gypsies of the principal were mainly nomads. They were divided into four categories (apart from a small number who lived in the principal's yard as servants): Rudari and Aurari (in Transylvania, Beași); Ursari; Lingurari; Laeși. The common thing between these categories was that they had had no other duties but to pay annual tax to the state treasury, usually twice a year, on the days of St George (24th of April) and of St Archangel Michael (8th of November). This had been the usual practice of treaty relations also in other similar cases. The Gypsies included in these categories lived a nomadic way of life and were free to travel whenever and wherever they liked (they even had the opportunity to cross the borders of the country).

The Gypsies of the Monasteries and Boyars were of two kinds, Laeși and Vatrași (domestic<sup>29</sup>), as Vatrași, for their part, had been working in the fields of their masters (*Țigani de ogor* and *Țigani de câmp*), or as house servants (*Țigani casași* [house Gypsies] or *Țigani de curte* [yard Gypsies]). The way of life of the Laeși who were owned by the Monasteries and the Boyars is not significantly different from that of the Laeși who were the slaves of the principal: they paid annual taxes to their masters and had the right to wander freely. Most Laeși, no matter in whose possession they were, offered different kinds of blacksmith and metalwork services, but they also made copper vessels, combs, and sieves, they were hired on construction sites for seasonal agricultural work, etc. (Achim 1998: 47–53; Kogalniceanu 1840: 18).

The nomadic Gypsies had their own internal autonomy. Their travelling units (*salași*) had a leader, elected by themselves and recognized by the authorities: *žude/žuge* in Walachia and Moldavia and *voevod* in Transylvania. The first important legislative right of the leader (*žudel/žuge* or *voevod*) of the Gypsies' *salași*, had been to collect annual taxes which the Gypsies owed to the country in the case of the principal slaves, or to their owners in the case of the slaves of monasteries or boyars.

29. The word derives from the Slavic *vatra* 'fireplace'.

As time passed this system was complicated by the country administration, whose main aim was to make the collection of these taxes more efficient. The separate *salaši* began to be grouped according to different signs (territorial or professional) and a new common person started to be in charge for each group of *salaši*, called *vataf*. From the nineteenth century the Turkish term *buluk-baši* was used, transformed in *bulibaša* (Achim 1998: 58–64).

These persons in charge were chosen by the prince and they were obliged, apart from collecting taxes from the nomad Gypsies, to settle the quarrels among their separate *salaši*, between Gypsies from different *salaši* or in the frames of one *salaš*. The last one, however is most frequently in the jurisdiction of the leader (*žude/žuge* or *voevod*) of the separate Gypsy *salaš* who has had not only the right but also the obligation to administer justice (or in other words to judge and punish) the Gypsies in his *salaš*. He had been obliged to realize this right (which had been also his state obligation) based not on the state law, but on own Gypsy traditions. Compare, for example, the royal decree of the Moldavian prince Mihai Suțu, from the 25th of March 1793.

... every kind of quarrel among them [the Gypsies, the slaves of the prince—n.a.] and it's judgement so as the giving and carrying out the sentence is in the power of their leaders, who are to find the justice according to their own old customs [sic!], and the governors and other dignitaries are not to interfere unless there is a death case. (Potra 1939: 327–31; Achim 1998: 60).

As a group the slaves of the prince (Lajaši, Rudari/Aurari, Lingurari, Ursari, as well as the Lajaši, possessions of monasteries and Boyars), do not fit the stereotypical image of the Gypsy slave conditions in the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia as it is repeatedly presented in Romani studies. Not only were they badly treated, sold as merchandise, punished cruelly, humiliated and exploited by their masters (as were the other Gypsy slaves), but they had several freedoms and even privileges, which most of the layers of the society (and mainly the peasants) in Wallachia and Moldavia during that time did not possess.

From this point of view the question about who exactly were the Gypsies in Wallachia and Moldavia who had preserved their ethno-cultural norms and customs (such as the nomadic traditions and own court, *kris*, *žudikate*, *mešariava/mešare*) and who had been the main bearers of the big Gypsy migrations during the nineteenth century is hardly beyond any doubt. Moreover the names of the categories of the slaves remain unchanged over time (or with only slight phonetic changes) and it is clear that the Lajaši are the

ancestors of today's speakers of the New/North Vlax dialects all over the world.<sup>30</sup> An interesting question, but of a different kind, is why, when there is so much clear evidence,<sup>31</sup> modern researchers cannot make this obvious connection.<sup>32</sup>

From this perspective the problem of the role of abolition of slavery as a key factor for the big Gypsy migrations requires a new explanation. The process of liberation of the Gypsy slaves in Wallachia and Moldavia lasted several decades (from 1829 till 1864), and led to significant changes in the situation of the nomadic Gypsies. Their new civil status as free people practically meant that they would have turned into peasants with numerous and heavier taxes and other obligations (Achim 1998: 99–100).

In this light it becomes clear that the end of Gypsy slavery in Wallachia and Moldavia is actually an important factor, but not the beginning and not the reason for Gypsy migrations. The migrations connected to it are not a consequence of the acquired freedom. The nomadic Gypsies had the chance to migrate before and had been doing it quite often, for instance the Gypsy migrations during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to Poland (and the Ukraine) and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the border areas of the Ottoman Empire) (Marushiakova and Popov 2001a: 50; Mroz 2001: 376, 324–5). It may sound strange and paradoxical, but the big migrations after the abolition of slavery were rather an escape from freedom and the subsequent new civil engagements and responsibilities, which the nomadic Gypsies, for different reasons, could not take on.

The beginning of this process, however, should not be connected with the

30. Angus Fraser assumed this connection in his paper presented at the GLS conference in 1991 in Leicester. However, he later decided to desist from raising this question in his publication (Fraser 1992b), probably because of critical remarks that he received during the discussion at the conference). As to Thomas Acton's (1993: 77–89) rejoinder, it is not relevant for the topic discussed here because his article is not based on specific ethnographic or historic material, but on speculation on the basis of ancient slavery and slavery in the New World.

31. See above for the widespread names *Leași* in Romania and *Lejaši* in former Yugoslavia, the Republic of Moldavia and Bessarabia. It is also worth mentioning that one of the subgroups of the *Kardaraša* in Bulgaria call themselves *Laeš/Laineš*.

32. A possible (but not the only) explanation here is methodological. Nowadays in the spirit of post-modernism and misguided political correctness, everything written by authors of Gypsy origin is often accepted as a fundamental truth. Only this can explain why the novels of Mateo Maximov are one of the main sources in research on slavery in Wallachia and Moldova or the Gypsy migration in the 19th century. For the common model among the Gypsies of the 'secondary' creation of legends or (as in this case) of fiction based on hearsay, see Marushiakova and Popov (2000); see also Matras (2000: 73, n. 4).

end of the process of abolition of slavery and with the new constitution of Romania from 1864, but with its beginning, which took place many decades earlier. The main direction of Gypsy migrations had been towards the West, to the richer Austria-Hungary, while the authorities in Wallachia and Moldavia not only had not closed the borders, but probably encouraged this process silently (Achim 1998: 106). The mass migrations to the border regions of Banat and Transylvania had complicated the situation of the Gypsies already settled there (mainly older emigrants from Wallachia and Moldavia, too).

Taking this position, the beginning of the great Gypsy migrations can be dated back with much precision. The nomad Gypsies from Wallachia and Moldavia were unable to migrate to Austro-Hungary before the eighteenth century due to laws threatening Gypsies who tried to enter state territory with the death penalty. This law was cancelled by Emperor Josef II in 1782 (Hanzal 1995: 28). Apparently big groups of Gypsies from Wallachia and Moldavia then settled in the border territories, mainly Transylvania and Banat. Finally there is the question of why the earliest reports on Gypsy migrations date from the 1860s. The explanation here is very simple; the decree of 6 November 1865 by Emperor Franz-Josef, which cancelled passport controls at the borders for those who left Austria-Hungary (Emperor's Decree Nr. 116/1865). In fact this decree is the real beginning of the big Gypsy migrations on a European and later on a world-wide scale, which began at the end of the eighteenth century in Wallachia and Moldavia.

The migrating *Laeši*, however, had become known in the world not by this old generic name of the community. This old name was preserved only in the territories neighboring to Wallachia and Moldavia in the east, south and south-west (Bessarabia, Bulgaria, former Yugoslavia). In western and northern directions they had become known by the self-appellations of the separate Gypsy groups, mainly *Kelderara* and *Lovara* (based on the dialects known to scholars, though it is doubtful whether this is always the best and most exact determination).

### 2.1. *Kišinjavcurja/Kišinjavurja*

The first community we present here are the *Kišinjavcurja/Kišinjavurja* (the Russified *Kišinjavci* is often used, even by themselves). The history of this community is one more proof that the big Gypsy migrations mentioned earlier started in the territories of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia as early as at the beginning of nineteenth century.

### *History*

The war of Russia with the Ottoman Empire, from 1806 to 1812, ended with the Bucharest treaty, according to which the territory between the rivers Dnester and Prut, at that time Bessarabia, was incorporated into Russia. In this way Russia acquired also territories which were part of the Principality of Moldavia (e.g. the contemporary Republic of Moldavia), where numerous Gypsies lived.

After the incorporation of these territories the existing legislation was changed and adapted to Russian civil norms. First, the Gypsies, former slaves of the Prince, had acquired the new status of 'state peasants' (in the documents the term 'Gypsies of the Crown' is often used as well), and later the slaves of the monasteries and Boyars, too, acquired the status of 'serfs'.

In 1818 the Cantor of the Gypsies of the Crown was established and had to register as 'state peasants' not only the former slaves of the Prince, but also those Gypsies who had escaped from their owners (in Bessarabia itself, or more often, who had immigrated from Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia). And there were many such refugees. In 1813, 221 families 'Gypsies of the Prince' registered in the province (Antsupov 2000a: 67), while in 1826 780 Gypsy families were registered by the Cantor, of which 189 families 'Laeši', 528 families 'Lingurari', 25 families 'Ursari' and 38 nomadic families of unknown categorisation (Antsupov 1962: 145).

These three kinds of Gypsy nomads, who had been 'Gypsies of the Crown', were described many times in the state documentation of the time. They are: 'Laeši' (nomads without clear economic activity, changing according to circumstances, with nonregular winter settlements or even without any winter settlement); 'Lingurari' (semi-nomads with their own homes, mainly huts; they travelled short distances and made different wooden articles); 'Ursari' (semi-nomads who had their own homes, mainly huts, they travelled short distances and made different iron articles) (Antsupov and Kryzhanovskaya 1969).

The Cantor of the Gypsies of the Crown preserved the taxation model from the Principality of Moldavia. The Gypsies of the Crown paid an annual tax, they could travel with their families and they could elect 'buluk-baši' and 'žudi', who took over the responsibility for them (Antsupov and Kryzhanovskaya 1969: 38–9, No 13). Thus some internal autonomy of the nomadic Gypsies, who were now state peasants, was preserved. Apart from collecting annual taxes, 'buluk-baši' and 'žudi' had the right to solve argu-

ments between individual Gypsies. There were several 'buluk-baši', who had the responsibility for larger groups of Gypsies, and their subordinate 'žudi' had the responsibility for a few related families travelling together (Antsupov 1962: 146).

The situation of the former Boyar and Monastery slaves was more complicated, which is why it was finally settled a little later, with the new Bessarabian charter of 1828. They were definitely set free from slavery, received civil rights and the status of serfs from the old Bessarabian boyars, from the new Russian landlords and from the monasteries (Keppen 1861: 483–4). In the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, and in Bessarabia, too, the categories 'slaves of the Boyars' and 'slaves of the monasteries' included not only the *vatraši/dvorovie*—working on the land of their masters or as domestic servants but also the nomads (Lajaši/Laeši). This could be seen from the census of the Serfs, made in Bessarabia in 1829. According to this census there 4,070 nomadic Gypsies (2,730 men and 1,340 women), 4,015 'yard' Gypsies (2,106 men and 1,909 women) and 3,964 land worker Gypsies (2,089 men and 1,875 women) or a total of 12,049 people registered (Antsupov and Kryzhanovskaya 1962: 46, N 77; Kryzhanovskaya 1962: 226).

The occupations and the way of life of the Gypsy serfs were quite diverse. The way of life of the Laeši who had been serfs was not different from that of the Laeši who had been state peasants, only the annual tax was paid not to the state but to their owners. A great part of the Gypsies who were *dvorovie* ('of the yard', 'domestic') by name had actually been nomad craftsman as well. They paid annual *obrok* ('tax') and travelled freely, not only in Bessarabia but also outside the boundaries of the region to sell their produce. This way of life explains why, in the countryhouse of prince Kantakuzin near the Markutsi village, close to the town of Khotin, there were registered 185 *chobotari*<sup>33</sup> (manufacturing a kind of felt peasant shoes, similar to boots), 100 blacksmiths, 46 cauldron makers, seven silversmiths, one tailor, one barber and 185 musicians (Kryzhanovskaya 1962: 227).

In this way practically the majority of the Gypsies in Bessarabia lived a nomadic or (most frequently) semi-nomadic way of life. They travelled in small groups (usually of one extended family), they passed through villages, towns, seasonal markets and fairs, where they offered their crafted products (mainly agricultural tools and household goods), different kinds of services (mainly blacksmith), they traded with horses, played music, and as an

33. Nowadays one of the most common families among the Kišinjovcurja is Chebotarev, sometimes in the Turkish variant of Kondur.

author of the Soviet epoch euphemistically notices that ‘there are also cases of non-labor income met’ (Kryzhanovskaya 1962: 234).

The percentage of Gypsies from Bessarabia in the borders of the Russian empire can be seen clearly from the statistical data. In 1834, of about 60 million citizens in Russia, 48,247 were Gypsies, of which around 8,000 lived in cities and 18,738 (i.e. more than one third) in Bessarabia (German 1930: 11–12; Crowe 1996: 170). A quarter of a century later the data are quite similar, when the Gypsies in Russia number about 50,000, of which between 17,000 and 18,000 in Bessarabia and about 7,500 to 8,000 in the Crimea (Pauli 1862: 148–9; Svyatskii 1888: 4; Crowe 1996: 170).

The nomad Gypsies in Bessarabia, or, more precisely, the Laeši (state peasants or serfs) in which we are particularly interested, could travel freely, even outside the borders of the province. However, the scope of their travelling was restricted by the requirement to pay their annual tax regularly. This situation changed entirely after the end of the serfdom rule in Russia in 1861. The Gypsies, mainly former serfs, registered in the cities of Bessarabia as *meshchane* (‘petite bourgeois’ and town manufacturers) (Kryzhanovskaya 1962: 240), similar to the Gypsies with the status of state peasants (Antsupov 2000b: 15–16).

The registration in the cities was not a transition to a settled way of life; on the contrary, it widened their area of nomadism. Large groups continued their semi-nomadic way of life and during the same time mass migrations of the Laeši in wide territories of the Russian empire began (Antsupov 2000b: 15–16). These migrations were mainly oriented towards South-east Ukraine, Southern Russia and Northern Caucasus which is reflected in the data from the census in 1897, according to which the population of the Russian empire was nearly 125.7 million, the Gypsies were 44,582, from which in Bessarabia there were only 8,636 people left (i.e. less than half of the number in comparison to the former census) (German 1930: 11–12; Crowe 1996: 170).

However, not all Laeši migrated from Bessarabia. In the period between the two world wars the territories between Dnester and Prut become part of Romania and after the Second World War they were once again part of the USSR. The nomadic area of the Laeši during that time included the territories of nowadays Romania and Bulgarian Dobrudzha (during this time in Romania’s territory).<sup>34</sup>

34. Several families from Bessarabia still keep the memory of relatives in Romanian Dobrudzha (the community called Čori), who today live in the region of Constanca, and who, in turn, have relatives among Kardaraša in Bulgaria.

### *The formation of the group*

During a long historical period the community in question consisted of separate units of nomadic extended families, who had some consciousness of an alliance, but without any kind of group identity or common self-appellation. Since then other Gypsy groups most frequently call them with the generalizing name *Lejaši* (with a negative sense), while they use various self-appellations—according to the different kin as *Katunarja* (i.e. ‘nomads’, in southern Moldavia and what is now Bessarabia in the Ukraine), *Čukunarja/Čokenarja* (in northern Moldavia), *Kišinjoicurja* (in the region of Kishinev), *Bryzdjaja* (the appellation of this part of the group that settled earlier mainly in southern Moldavia and Bessarabia) and the smaller groups *Čurari* and *Korbeni* in the Republic of Moldavia, etc.

In the period between the two world wars great parts of this diverse community stayed within the borders of the USSR, mainly in the river Don’s basin. During the 1920s and the 1930s their gradual resettlement began—in the beginning in eastern Ukraine and southern Russia, after the Second World War in the regions around the river Volga (Saratov, Samara, Nizhnii Novgorod) and in the 1970s they began to settle in Moscow’s suburbs. During these resettlements their group unity was gradually formed and the uniting self-appellation *Kišinjoicurja* was already used. During the last two decades most of the communities that stayed in contemporary Bessarabia and the Republic of Moldavia gradually began to consolidate into one group (most of them, at least), and began to use one common self-appellation (*Kišinjoicurja*).

In the past *Kišinjoicurja* were active nomads, covering great territories. The catalysing factor for their consolidation was the end of their active nomadism (but not the end of the mobile way of life and the tendency toward the frequent change of place of living), given by the decree for mandatory sedentarisation from 1956 (*Khronologicheskoe* 1959: 616–17). In the oral history of the community many memories from this period are preserved. Here we will present a song, recorded during 2002 in the town of Ismail, Ukraine, from Anatolij Kundur (Gypsy name *Kotja*) and his wife Julia (Gypsy name *Yura*).

... Agadaja gili e romani kana sas, kana thodja o Xruščov le Romen, thodja le Romen te kâren buki, savorrân, thodja ando kolxozo. ’aj gadja le rrom amare—*Kišinjoivci*, *Besarabci*, kât sa *Kâldârarja*—ni xajlilja gadja te kâren buki ando *kolxozo*, ’aj thode pe gadja, kârde gili rromani, kaj asanas, ke astarde le Romen te kâren buki ando *kolxozo*. Ji kârdjam e giljori, sar *balada*, kât sa rromani ... Aj te gilabas la.

... This song is about how once Khrushchev made the Gypsies, made the Gypsies to work, all of them, put them into the kolkhozes. And these our Gypsies—Kišinjovci, Besarabci, and also all of the Keldararja—were not satisfied with that—to work in the kolkhoz, and they took themselves and made a Gypsy song, which mocks [Khrushchev], who tried to make the Gypsies work in the kolkhoz. And they made a song, like a ballad, which is Gypsies' ... Let's sing it.

O Xruščov Romengâ so kârdjan, po <i>kolxozo</i> Romen kâ thoudja.	Khrushchev, what did you do to the Gypsies? Put them into the kolkhoz
Suro, suro, suro 'aj kalo, Po pripono, Devla, thodino.	Grey, grey, grey and black, He tight them, o Lord.
Baxt bari, <i>razdolija</i> cini, Pala mande žjal e šej lašji.	Big happiness, a little freedom, Beautiful girl walks after me (2).
Sas amende, Devla, jek žuvli ni kamelas te kerel buki, aj thodela te kerel kišaj, aj thodela te kerel kišaj.	There was a woman with us She didn't want to work They made her to bolt sand, They made her to bolt sand.
Gilabanas aj khelenas pala late: Dari, da, aj, da, ri, da, la, la ...	They sang and they danced then: Dari, da, aj, da, ri, da, la, la ...
Baxt bari, <i>razdolija</i> cini, Pala mande žjal e šej lašji.	Big happiness, a little freedom, Beautiful girl walks after me,
Baxt bari, <i>razdolija</i> cini, Pala mande žjal, joj, baxt bari.	Big happiness, a little freedom, Big happiness walks after me.
Aj gažikanes gilabanas, mothonas le vorbi gadja: In Russian they sang, they spoke this words:	
<i>Komsomol'ci strojat goroda, čtob cyganam vydali doma, aj cygani, prichodite vnov', budet ščastie, budet i ljubov'.</i>	The komsomol'tsi build cities To give the Gypsies homes Hey, Gypsies, come again, There will be happiness, there will be love. <sup>35</sup>

The measures for enforcing mandatory sedentarisation on the Gypsies (not only in the Soviet Union, but all over Eastern Europe as well) were evaluated only in ideological terms until now. In Eastern Europe they were interpreted in the spirit of the official ideology as 'including the Gypsies in the socialist way of life', while in Western Europe in the spirit of the 'Cold War' they were seen as a 'violation of Gypsy human rights'. All this interpretation was done without acknowledging the real social and economic situation and the existing legal system.

35. Different versions of this song can be found among other Gypsy groups on the territory of the former Soviet Union, reflecting the same attitude towards settlement measures.

The former nomad Gypsies themselves, who still remember these events, have a much more nuanced and unbiased attitude. As a whole, in the Balkans and in the former USSR a positive opinion about the measures for sedentarisation definitely predominates among nomadic Gypsies.

The reason for such positive opinions can be found in the circumstance that in that time (in the 1950s) in the Balkans and in the USSR a serious crisis of the nomadic way of life arose. In view of the new social developments, the old nomadic lifestyle, which was closely connected to a natural rural economy, had exhausted its potential in the new economic reality. The nomadic Gypsies felt a need for radically new economic strategies. They themselves started to search for possibilities for a sedentary (or semi-sedentary) way of life and for new strategies of economic realization. This was where the active participation of the state made a timely appearance (Marushiakova and Popov 2003a: 303–4). The state did not initiate anything, it only helped the social and economic development of the Gypsy community to a significant extent. In fact, the 1956 decree did not put an end to the Gypsy nomadic way of life. Some Gypsies continued to be nomads well into the 1960's, but they were able to discover and enjoy the benefits of the settled way of life and modify their nomadic traditions accordingly.

The situation in the former USSR, however, was more complicated than in other places because the country had not overcome the post-war devastation (that is why the migrations after the war sharply increased and were oriented towards the big cities and not towards the poor country regions). According to the regulations connected to the mandatory sedentarisation of the nomadic Gypsies (the majority of Gypsies), the responsibility for their sedentarisation fell to the country kolkhozes, which should supply them with accommodations and jobs. Destroyed by the war, the kolkhozes saw this task as an additional burden, so the local authorities actively assisted the Gypsies who wanted to leave their territory. The Gypsies managed to adapt relatively quickly to the new situation. They left the kolkhozes in masses and settled in the cities, where living conditions were much better for them. In this situation they quickly found their economic niches and new spaces for economic activities. Gradually they settled practically throughout the whole USSR. Within a few decades the Gypsies drastically increased their wealth and towards the end of the Soviet period their standard of living was significantly higher than that of the average Soviet citizen.

During their settlement in wide territories of the former USSR the Kišinovcurja, like many other Gypsy groups there, lost their traditional folk-

lore almost entirely and adopted the musical and dancing forms of the Ruska Roma. Only a few examples of the traditional folklore of the Kišinovcurja are preserved, of which we will present one, recorded from the same informants. According to their explanation, the performances in the past were with no musical, but only with rhythmical accompaniment (clapping hands, rapping with two spoons, etc.).

Dari, dari, tranda nida, dari da, dali da, na, la

‘aj ljav, Bergano, amende	And I take, Bergano, with us
‘aj xaljav gono phabende.	and I ate a bag of apples.

Oi diner, dari, dari, tranda nida, dari da, dali da, na, la

Ni čorav, ni drabarav,	I do not steal, I do not fortune-tell
loli rokja phiravav,	In red dress I walk,
loli rokja phiravav.	In red dress I walk.

Loli rokja kilimbar,	Red dress [like] amber
kâ bešâl mangâ šukar,	I look nice,
kâ bešâl mangâ šukar.	I look nice.

Oi diner, dari, dari, tranda nida, dari da, dali da, na, la

Xaj amende le šaje,	And here the girls,
kaj bešân pi Dunârja,	Who live by the Danube
lengâ stagja curkaicka,	Heir hat is tsurkainian <sup>36</sup>
den le dab kapitajicka.	Hit it in capitanian <sup>37</sup>

Oi diner, dari, dari, tranda nida, dari da, dali da, na, la

Šjude phabaj andi bar,	Throw the apple in the garden
an mangâ o gad šukar,	Bring me the nice shirt
šjude phabaj andi čik,	Throw the apple to the mud
pala mande na maj dik(h).	And do not look my back
T’aven baxtale!	Greetings! <sup>38</sup>

### *Contemporary situation*

The processes of internal consolidation of the community of the former Laeši are not over, and nowadays more or less separated subgroup divisions exist. The group living in today’s Russia and eastern Ukraine (mainly in the Harkov and Doneck regions) distinguished themselves as Kišinovcurja, some-

36. According to the explanations, this is a hat, which is common for some Caucasian people.

37. A special dance step.

38. For other versions of this song, see Marušiakova and Popov (2003a: 128–129).

times with the additional specification Donskie Kišinjovci (the Kišinjovcurja from the river Don), and they avoid contact with the groups living in Southern Moldavia (mainly in and around Kishinev, as well as in Komrat, Kagul, Chadar-lunga and others) and South-Western Ukraine (mainly in the Odessa region, including Bessarabia–Odessa, Ismail, Ozernoe, Kiliya, Belgorod-Dnestrovskii, Tatar-bunari, Nikolaev and others), as well as with the new migrants in Dnepropetrovsk and Kiev, whom they accept as ‘ours’, but call them scornfully Bryzdjaja and consider them as backward, poor and not observing the old group traditions strongly enough. The latter, alongside older appellations (mainly Katunarja or Bryzdjaja for one part of them) often describe themselves as Kišinjovcurja, and underline their kinship with the communities living in Russia (who are regarded as more prestigious and wealthier).

Relatively distant from this process remain the Čukunarja in northern Moldavia, who also accept this alliance, but still separate themselves from the other related communities (i.e. to some extent they are consolidating themselves a separate group). However the other communities of Katunarja and Bryzdjaja have an opposite attitude. They aspire to show their relations with the Čukunarja because of their wealth and fame.

Except for the regional subgroup divisions, the family and kinship ones (most often called, in Russian, *pokolenie* and more rarely *vica*) are still remembered. As *pokoleniya* of the Donskie Kišinjovci, for instance, are given: Bobkešte, Boulešte, Vekerešte, Genuarja, Grigorešte, Kalandžiešte, Kozakešte, Koršindešte, Kostešte, Milionešte, Munzulešte, Sofronešte, Strelokešte, Fiodorešte, Xarulešte, Turkulešte, Xocomanešte, and Jakubešte (Bessonov, Demeter, and Kutenkov 2000: 84).

On the whole the main tendency for this still non-homogeneous community (formerly the Laeši) is towards consolidation in a distinct group (Kišinjovcurja), although the processes are still not complete, and it is possible that some groups (especially the Čukunarja) will take their own path of development.

It is interesting to note that some of the Kišinjovcurja in Bessarabia, who during the past few years have had the opportunity to travel more (including in foreign countries), even start to call themselves Keldarara (because of the prestige of the related group in the hierarchy of the Gypsy communities and the proximity of the dialects used). This, however, is an exception, and (at least now) cannot be regarded as a tendency that might yield any outcomes in the near future. As a matter of fact we should say that the group of

Kelderara in the former Soviet Union distinguishes clearly the Kišinjovcurja from other Gypsy groups and categorically refuses any relationship with them. The attitude towards other groups of Laeši from other countries (e.g. we witnessed this reaction from Bulgarian Kaldaraša, Rumanian Čori and Hungarian Olah) is just the opposite: they consider the Kišinjovcurja as part of their own community, with whom they lost contacts in the past.

## 2.2. *Kitajcurja/Kitajake Rom*

The second community we wish to present here are the Kitajcurja/Kitajake Rom, who sometimes also describe themselves with their Russified name Kitaicki Rom or Šanxajcy. Nowadays they live in the city of Odessa, in the Ukraine.

### *History and formation of the group*

The history of the Kitajcurja can be understood better in the context of the big Gypsy migrations in the last decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, part of which are the Kelderara resettling in Russia and the former USSR. The arrival of the first Kelderara within the borders of the Russian Empire was before 1863, when they were described near Warsaw (Russian territory at the time) (Ficowski 1985: 79). The mass arrival of Kelderara in Russia, however, took place a few decades later, for instance the famous clan of Demeter entered Russia at the end of the nineteenth century from Hungary, passing through Galicia and the Polish lands (the usual route for most of the Kelderara) (Demeter-Charskaya 1997: 8). With their arrival in Russia, the Kelderara were strongly mobile and spread across wide territories, reaching even the Transcaucasus. Large numbers of them left Russia in the beginning of the twentieth century and settled in western Europe, the USA and South America (Fraser 1992a: 235–6).

The October revolution and the following civil war placed the Kelderara and related groups (Lovara and Mačvaja) in a new situation. Some of them managed to leave Russia in different ways, migrating to the west. Others settled mainly in Moscow, or travelling through the country, remained and started to adapt to the new Soviet realities. And by the end of the 1920s some Kelderara and Lovara families managed to leave the USSR and head east, to China.

These events are preserved relatively well in the oral history of their community. Here we will present the story of Valja Minesko (with the Gypsy name Njunja), born in 1927 in the city of Harbin, China, recorded in the

summer of 2002 in Odessa.<sup>39</sup>

Sar ame aviljam ando Kitaj? Ame ando Kitaj samas na barvale zurales, no kâ amare manuš restoranurja sas, kâ murro dad, kâ murro kak, kâ murro sokro . . . Sas amare restoranurja, amende sas amaro *ansambli*, amare muzikaturja. Ando *samyj Šanxaj my prožili dvacat' let*. Do biš bârš ame othe bešasas. Ando gjes keras buki, arjat buki kâras. Amari kumpania sâ, murro dad, murro kak, murro manuš kaj xaisajljo ando, kothe, ando Šanxaj, mârro sokro xaisajljo ando Šanxaj. Mineske familia—mârro papo, kaver papo, xaisajlo ando Šanxaj.

Kadja amende kumpania pi duj familii sâ, Mineske 'aj Staneske . . . Sas but manuš, duj šela žene, akana câgo manuš, akana khanč—sa ternimata ašili. A phure manuš—*eto*, me maj phuri, kakaja sa ternimata aj *molodež* ašili, mârri dvojurodno phen mandar maj câni, *na desjat'—dvenacat' let molože* . . .

Sar traisaras? Sas mištoj. Trin kumpania sas ando Šanxaj—Lovarja, Kâlderaša aj Petrovi. Savore gonisarde. Petrovi sâ sar Kâlderaša, vica romai. *Kočevali*. Traden barvale i kasave barvalimos či dikhlem.

Ando Šanxaj khelena po baros, kurkâ khelena, khelen, giljaben pe svako gjes *po pivnuški, po xarčevki*. Kuč sas amende ande Kitaj. But xaisajlen. *Neizvestno* kaj.

Aviljam ande Rusija athe *v sorok vos'mom godu*. But bokh cârdjam, či manrro, či khanč, bikinjasa pamende dârzi te xasa, bikinjam o sumnakaj, bikinjam sa pamende ande Sverdlovska . . . *Perenesli, ne daj gospod' nikomu*.

Aviljam, kana o Stalino kerdja repatriancia. O Stalin kerdjas: 'Sovetskij poddanyj,' —ame *sovetskij poddanyj* samas—'sovetskij poddanyj, kon kamel te avel *na rodinu*. Amare manuš phure kamle kâ irin pe *rodina*. Razphendja tu phure manuš, trobul te žas. Gele kâ *konsulštvo*. Line o *viza*, line kova.

Aviljam, me aj mârro rrom ko *konsulu*. Amende—galbi, sumnakaj pi vast, urjavde. 'aj phenel o *konsulo*:

'*Vy jedete v Rossiju. Kuda vy jedete, na golod, na xolod? A vy jedete. Vy takie odetyje, krasivyje, vy artisty, vy muzikanty, čto vas tjanet v Rosiju?*'

'*My xotim na rodinu jexat*'.

How did we arrive in China? In China we weren't very rich, but our people had restaurants, my father, my uncle, my father in law . . . There were our restaurants; there were our ensembles with them, our musicians. In Shanghai we lived 20 years. For 20 years we lived there. In the daytime, in the evening, we worked. In our Kumpania we were my father, my uncle, my husband, who died there in Shanghai, my father in law died there, in Shanghai. Mineske family – my grandfather, other grandfather, died in Shanghai.

Our kumpania was from two families, Mineske and Staneske . . . We were many, two hundred people, now there are few people, nothing only the youngsters. And

39. Not only does the text reveal an important part of the history of the group, but it is also an example of the dialect used, characterized by codeswitching between Romanes and Russian.

the old people—well, I am the oldest, the others are all young, the youngsters left, my cousin is younger than me, 10 to 12 years younger.

How did we live? It was good. We were three Kumpanies in Shanghai-Lovara, Kelderasha and Petrovi. They were all banished. Petrovi are like Kelderasha, Gypsy vitsa. They travelled. They lived rich, and such richness I have not seen.

In Shanghai we danced in bars, on Sunday we danced, danced and sang every day in bars, in inns. It was wealthy in China. Many perished, it is not known where.

We arrived in Russia, here in 1948. We were starving, there was no bread, no nothing, and we were selling our rags for food, we sold the gold, we sold everything in Sverdlovsk . . . We lived through, God do not let this happen to anybody

We came back when Stalin made repatriation. Stalin said: 'The Soviet subjects'—and we were Soviet subjects—'who want, will come back to their country.' Our old people wanted to go back to our country. When the old people order, you must go. They went to the councillor, took visa, took this.

We went me and my husband to the councillor. We—with golden coins, gold on the hands, well dressed. And the councillor said:

'You are going to Russia. Where do you go, to hunger and cold? And you are going. You are so [well] dressed, beautiful, you are artists, you are musicians, what is attracting you in Russia?'

'We want to go to our homeland.'

Based on this story, as well as on other recorded oral stories from other people in the community, the picture of the historical fate of Kitajcurja can be reconstructed relatively fully. Their kumpania left for China in 1927. Kumpania is a term used often among Keldarara and other related groups in many places around the world and usually means a group of some related extended families, who travel and work together. In this case their kumpania included two extended families, Mineske and Staneske, about 200 persons. Petrovi were one of the bigger families in the Staneske clan, with the tendency to separate and form its own kumpania.

The kumpania left for China as musicians. According to their explanations, in 1927 and 1928, after the end of the NEP (New Economic Policy of the Soviet state), the possibilities for earning their living shrank and many Gypsy families left for foreign counties, mainly to Western Europe (at that time the passport regime of the USSR had been relatively more liberal, than in later years). Their kumpania travelled through Russia, and in the cities, where they found work (as cauldron makers or as musicians in the restaurants), and they lived in rented houses. The last place where they lived before leaving for China was Moscow. They remember this because there they arranged their permission to leave. Their kumpania had been relatively poor,

they had many children, and they did not have enough money to arrange their documents for everybody and to travel west, which was more expensive, so they headed east, which was cheaper.

At first they stayed for short a time in Harbin, where at that time there lived a big colony of the Russian 'White emigration', who nostalgically loved Russian Gypsy music and dancing. Later they settled permanently in Shanghai, which in the 1920s and 1930s was a cosmopolitan city, with a special status, where many Europeans lived, as well as Americans and many Russian emigrants.

The Gypsies from the kumpania of the Mineske and Staneske families earned their living in Shanghai mainly as musicians and dancers in the places of public entertainment. After a while they managed to gather enough money and open their own little restaurants. They were also engaged in trade, reselling gold and currency and the women told fortunes. Alongside this population there were also Lovara in Shanghai at that time. They arrived at approximately the same time from Leningrad (St Petersburg), and were from the famous clan of Guranešti.

The marriages of the young had been strictly within the kumpania. According to stories, because their girls were beautiful and able, foreign Gypsies often wanted them. Mixed marriages, however, (even with other Gypsies) were regarded as unacceptable. Only two cases of mixed marriages are remembered—one girl, Lyuba, married a Gypsy from the Mačvaja and left with her new family to Brazil, and another girl married a Russian emigrant and broke the connections with the kumpania. In the collective memory of the community the time spent in Shanghai is a good memory, though there were difficult moments. The hardest period were the the years of the Japanese occupation, when were under many restrictions, some were arrested and detained for a short time and blackmailed by the occupiers, and their homes were searched.

The whole kumpania returned to the Soviet Union in 1948. Then the USSR and the newly created Chinese Republic signed an agreement on the repatriation of the emigrants, former Russian citizens, from Chinese territory. After their return they first lived in Sverdlovsk. Then in the conditions of post-war devastation, life was very hard. They lived in great misery and starved. The post-war chaos and the devastated economy offered little or no work possibilities at all. In order to survive they sold everything they could, including much of their gold and their clothes. The kumpania held together. They often changed their place of living, and travelled around many cities in the

USSR. They reached Central Asia, where they lived for a long time in the city of Ashgabat (Turkmenistan) and at last in 1953 after a short stay in Nikolaev (Ukraine), they settled permanently in Odessa.

### *Contemporary situation*

With their arrival in Odessa men from the kumpania found work in the local meat factory, mainly maintaining the copper vessels for production. They received factory dormitories, and after that lots in order to build houses in the periphery of the city. Odessa at that time was a relatively rich port, with more work and market opportunities (mainly illegal), and the kumpania gradually got used to the new situation. Men again started to play as musicians in restaurants and to trade on the 'black market' with currency, gold and everyday goods, and women worked as fortune-tellers. The life of the kumpania stabilized and since then no family left Odessa, where they still live today. Some of the families continue to live compactly in an Odessa suburb, others are spread throughout the city, but maintain constant connections and their life is closed to a great extent within the perimeters of the community (except their social and economic activities).

With the settling of the Kitajcurja in Odessa, they entered a new situation and established contacts with other Gypsy groups. Many Gypsies live in Odessa, from different groups, among others some families of the Kelderara, and Krimurja, Kišinovcurja, Vlaxija, lesser Lovara, Ruska roma, and Servi. The relations with the other Gypsy groups became to a certain extent clear from the texts which we will present here, recorded from the same informant and her relative Berta Minesko (with the Gypsy name of Bella), born in 1966 in Odessa.

Ame *tože* sar Kâlderaš sam, šib amende sâ pašâ. Amari kumpania phenen Kitajci, Kitajcurja, Kitajicki Rom. Sa e Russija, da e kon, žanen amaren Kitajake Rom.

Ame či das borja kâ Kâlderaša, *i my ne beriom*. Amari Kâldaraš sâ *sil'no naxal'nye*, *sil'no* melale, *sil'no* kasave, amende naj manuš kasave, aj *my ne takie l'udi*, amende naj manuš kasave. Amende sas, ljasas amaro *dal'no rodstveniki*, *tak*, ljasas basurja. Te lelas la, khandininas, *nu grjazno* xan. *Vot*, amare či len, aj či len. *Naši ščitajut*, maj bini Rusajka ljas sar kasave *takaja* Romnja. Amari kumpania k' avrja kumpanjasa či žan, či mangel. Amari kumpania sâ jek.

Kâlderaš sâ maj paš *k nam* le šibake. Peter Demeter andi Moscow sâ amaro njamo. Ištvan ani Moscow—phuro sas, phuro Ištvan murri dake kak sas . . .

Maj dur si Krimurja, Lovarja, Vlaxija. *Raznyje* nacia, andi nacia si *raznyje* manuša, amen či družinasaras lenca. Arakhas le: 't'aven baxtale, t'aven baxtalé, *i vsjo*. . . .

We are like Kalderaš, our languages are close. Our kumpania is called Kitajci, Kitajcurja, Kitajicki Rom [Chinese Gypsies]. All Russia, no matter where know our Kitajake Rom.

We do not give brides to Kelderaš, and we do not take [from them]. Our Kelderaš are very bold, very dirty, very such, our people are not such, we are not such people. It happened like this here, one far relative married, so, he took a Muslim wife. If they had accepted her, they would stink, e, [they] eat dirt. Here, ours do not take, do not take. Ours think that it is better to take a Russian woman, than such Gypsies. Our kumpania, does not go to other kumpania, does not want. Our kumpania is one.

Kalderaš are the closest ones to us in means of language. Petr Demeter from Moscow is from our clan. Istvan from Moscow—he was old, the old Istvan was my mother's uncle . . .<sup>40</sup>

The farthest are Krimurja, Lovarja, Vlaxija. Different nations, in [all of the] nations there are different people; we are not friends [with them]. When we meet we salute, and that's all . . .

It becomes clear from these texts and also from other conversations with the representatives of this community that among the Kitajcurja the transition from the kumpania of Kelderara to a separate group has been completed. This process, which started during their stay in China, finally ended in Odesa. They already have their own name (Kitajake Rom or Kitajcurja), they have their own *kris* ('Gypsy Court', i.e. internal self-government), they do not allow (and more importantly, do not want) matrimonial contacts with other Gypsy groups. The described relationships towards the 'other' Gypsies are typical for well-functioning Gypsy groups and are entirely in the spirit of the Gypsy tradition. By the way, the Kitajcurja are not an exception in respect of marriage; today in the entire ex-Soviet space the separate Gypsy groups preserve their group endogamy.

Of particular interest are the markers according to which the Kitajcurja distinguish (and characterize) other Gypsy groups. The next text is an eloquent illustration of this:

Amari kumpania žanel so si ciganija, *konečno*, Kelderarja žanen, Lovarja žanen. Ruska Roma tože gadja, den дума naj gadja sar ame, vot maj-čisto šib amari—vot kadala e Šanaxajski rrom kaj si . . . S *Kišinjavci*, *Katunarja u nas nikakie otnošenija*. *Ne verte im, oni ne Rom ciganjako, eto ne Rom ciganjako. Vot s Lovarami, s Krymami, možem družit', nu zdrastvuj, praščaj, no s etimi, možno projti mimo i ne pozdorovat'sja.*

40. This about Stefan (Istvan) Demeter, grandfather of famous Kalderara kin in the USSR. For more details see Demeter and Demeter (1981:10); Demeter-Charskaya (1997: 7–31).

Our Kumpania knows what *čiganija* is, of course, it knows Kelderara, Lovara. Ruska Roma also, they do not speak like us, here our language is the cleanest, here, it is like this where there are Šanxajski rom . . . With Kišiniovcı, Katunarja, we have no relations. Do not believe them, they are not Rom *čiganjako*, it is no Rom *čiganjako*. Now, with Lovara, with the Krimurja we may be friends, to salute each other, but with these, you can pass them by and not say hello.

Apparently, as one main marker (besides the dialect), determining the attitude of the Kitajcurja towards the other Gypsies, the term *čiganija* is given. It is a complex term, synthesizing all the positive which characterizes the Gypsies according to themselves, the quintessence of 'The Gypsy/Roma', equivalent to the notions *romanija*, *romanipe* or *romanimos*, encountered among other Gypsy groups (Mirga 1987: 243–55). The notion *čiganija* as well as the self-appellation *Rom čiganjako* (literally 'Gypsy Roma', meaning 'real Roma'), is widely spread among Kelderara in Russia (Demeter and Demeter 1981: 165) and closely related groups, speaking North-Vlax dialects of Romanes, living in the territories of Bulgaria, Romania, Republic of Moldavia and in the south-west of the Ukraine.

In this case the interesting thing is that the Kitajcurja maintain that groups like the Lovara and the Ruska Roma use the word *čiganija*, while in fact they do not use this term, but other terms instead. On the other hand, they reject the Kišinjovcı, who do use the term *čiganija*, as well as the self-appellation *Rom čiganjako*. Two groups whose ancestors in the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia were, if not one whole, at least closely connected, and who had been in one slave category (Laeši) in the beginning of the nineteenth century, are nowadays separate. The ancestors of the Kišinjovcı were left separated in the lands annexed to Russia in the east, and the ancestors of the Kitajcurja headed west. The path of their migration went through Hungary, Poland, Russia, China and again Russia, Central Asia and the Ukraine. Both groups met in Odessa about a century and a half later, and here the relations between them are similar to those between 'foreign' (not 'own', related) Gypsies.

The example of the rationalization of the term *čiganija* confirms once more the basic and well-known principle in ethnology that there are no 'objective' markers that characterize a given ethnic community. Separate cultural phenomena become ethno-determinative markers only when they are rationalized and functionalized as such (regardless of whether they are real or imagined). The attitude of the Kitajcurja towards the Kelderara also deserves special attention. Actually the Kitajcurja remember that they were (two to

three generations ago) Kelderara. The relatives who lived in different places in the former USSR are remembered, for instance, the Demeter family mentioned earlier, or the parents of Njunja Kelderara from the subgroup (*nacia*) of the Grekurja. It is also admitted that the Kelderara are the closest to them, that their language (dialect, rather) is the closest one to theirs,<sup>41</sup> and in spite of this the Kitajcurja firmly distinguish themselves from the Kelderara.

It becomes clear from the given materials that the families Minesko and Stanesco have passed in their development from *kumpania* (in Russia before their departure for China) through subgroup (in China) and towards the creation of their own separate group (Kitajcurja) in Odessa. The reasons for such a development must be sought in the history of the group. Their historical fate separates them from the rest of the Kelderara and puts them into completely different conditions. In Shanghai their closeness had been forced by the circumstances. For a small community that insists on its unity, the only possibility to preserve itself in a foreign environment is strict endogamy. From here comes the aspiration to ban matrimonial contacts outside of the community – not allowing them to mix with the ‘others’. In the new conditions in Odessa the Kitajcurja continue to preserve strictly this model of matrimonial behavior. The reason here is maybe because they felt (at least in the beginning) new in this place, and because in the time of their isolation in China they had lost (or at least weakened) their old relationship connections with the other Kelderara. So, the peculiar historical experience of the Kitajcurja now serves to internally consolidate the identity of the group. A similar, though weaker, tendency can be observed among other sub-divisions of Kelderara in the countries of the former USSR. The historical fate of the Kitajcurja appeared to be a significant factor which allows us to speak of a new Gypsy group.

## Conclusion

The examples of the four Gypsy groups in the former USSR described here, confirmed and illustrated the models of the Gypsy group developed on the basis of materials from Gypsies in Central Europe and the Balkans. In fact, the examples substantiate once again that in the presence of two opposite tendencies of development of the Gypsy community there is not and can not be one common universal model and common rules. In any case,

41. Here a complex linguistic analysis is needed to determine if this is the same dialect or if they are already two different dialects or subdialects.

in the final reckoning, the development depends on the specific historical circumstances and contemporary factors. That is why even events that are at first glance similar can lead to different or even to opposite results. In fact, generally speaking, the factor of geographical separation in the case of the Kitajcurja leads to segmentation into a separate group. In the case of the Kišinjovcurja to consolidation into an integral group. The Dajfa/Tajfa are consolidating into one community and parallel with this they are integrating into a 'foreign' ethno-national community, and among the Krimurja there is no final result observed until now, because both tendencies of segmentation and consolidation are in relative equilibrium.

The historical development (in one or another direction, with the domination of segmentation or consolidation, and their continual intertwining) among these communities also shows clearly how these processes flow in the Gypsy community as a whole. Such processes probably characterize this community from the times of their arrival in Europe until today. It can therefore be said with certainty that within several generations the general picture of Gypsies around the world will not be the same.

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