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Precarious Identity, Tenacious Stereotype:
The Making of Romani Alterity in Late- and Post-Ottoman Turkey

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Abstract

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This dissertation is a study of the generative power of categories and the state practices based upon them. The case of the Roma in the late Ottoman and early Republican contexts illustrates the productive role of definition and repetition in turning contingent, historical social categories into ahistorical “truths” that are assumed to be always-already there. The dissertation explores the construction of difference in late- and post-Ottoman Turkey by focusing on the making of Romani alterity in its separate but overlapping religious, ethnic, and racial registers—an alterity produced by legislation, implemented by administration, negotiated by the Roma, and represented in the press and in literary form to be consumed and reproduced by the non-Roma. Moreover, this study views the Roma as agents, historical actors among a plurality of late-Ottoman and early Republican actors. It does so by prioritizing their direct interactions with the state, insofar as the sources

permit, in order to show how they negotiated the terms of their membership in society in spite of the latter's often active resistance and exclusionary policies.

Conceived as an ambiguous socio-fiscal category in the early modern period, Romani alterity and the state's preoccupation with it became more pronounced in the nineteenth century as the centralizing Ottoman state began employing such modern demographic technologies as censuses and identity documents. In turn, the Roma negotiated their belonging to the larger Muslim community through the use of the long-standing tradition of petitioning. Spatial and mobility practices were just as generative of an increasingly distinct Romani identity. The late nineteenth century saw the reification of a "nomadic Gypsy culture" concurrently with its subordination to hegemonic sedentarism, often framed as a "civilizing mission." It was during the early decades of the Turkish Republic that the Roma, and particularly those that were assumed to be nomadic, were targeted in legislation, further inscribing Romani alterity within the ethnic program of the nation-building period. As the Turkish state engaged in demographic engineering, the Roma were once again intent on professing and performing their belonging through petitions, even as legislation and its practice rendered them more visible and vulnerable to the state's intervention. The reification of Romani "difference" through inscription in official documents was further reinforced by its intellectualization in literary and lexical texts. The repeated dissemination of resilient stereotypes about the Roma in popular publications collectively constructed a distorted image of the Roma in conversation with each other. These cultural idioms of alterity, themselves a product of the social imaginary of their time, had a reproductive function in not only influencing further circulation, but also informing the consciousness of the legislators, and added an authoritative discursive layer to the construction of an increasingly ethnicized and racialized, and unmistakably subordinated Romani identity.

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Introduction

In 2013, the historian Francisco Bethencourt published his comprehensive study of the global history of racisms and concluded that racism existed before the advent of racial theories and that it has “historically been motivated by political projects.”¹ Yet, for Bethencourt, one group stands out as beyond the political domain:

The only possible exception concerns the exclusion of Romanies (or Gypsies), since persecution of this nomadic minority expressed fears from settled communities against other ways of life. What was at stake here, however, was the monopoly of resources against a minority that wanted to retain its independence even as it moved across borders without integrating a specific economic, social, and political order. Gypsies converted to Christianity, but they were generally seen as outsiders.²

In this dissertation, I shall show that—at least in the case of the late Ottoman and early Republican Turkish periods—racism directed against “Gypsies” was far from apolitical. In the former, the Roma figured prominently as the object of an Ottoman “civilizing mission” that manifested itself as a policy of hegemonic sedentarization, as was also the case with nomadic Arabs and Kurds; in the latter, on the other hand, they constituted a foil to the Turkish nation as conceived by the nationalist leadership, a role that they continued to play well into the twentieth century. In other words, the Roma were ethnicized and racialized contingently in specific moments of late Ottoman and early Republican history, in response to particular political needs.

¹ Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 1, 365.

² *Ibid.*, 365.

More specifically, this dissertation is a study of the generative power of categories and the state practices based upon them. The case of the Roma in the late Ottoman and early Republican contexts illustrates the productive role of definition and repetition in turning contingent, historical social categories into ahistorical “truths” that are assumed to be always-already there. The dissertation explores the construction of difference in late- and post-Ottoman Turkey by focusing on the making of Romani alterity in its separate but overlapping religious, ethnic, and racial registers—an alterity produced by legislation, implemented by administration, negotiated by the Roma, and represented in the press and in literary form to be consumed by the non-Roma as the intended audience. A somewhat ambiguous social (based on perceived morality and religious observance) and fiscal (primarily based on taxation) category in the early modern period, the totalizing and essentializing discourse on and treatment of “the Gypsies” resulted in their increasing ethnicization and racialization in late Ottoman and early Republican documents—notably censuses, legislation, and even fiction—particularly vis-à-vis the gradual emergence of “the Turk” as the normative, dominant ethnic group.

As noted by Angus Bancroft, “The changing categorical significance and social meaning of the term ‘Gypsy’ illustrates how identity and difference have to be repeatedly reconstructed.”³ And likewise, the repeated reconstruction of identity and difference with regard to the Roma illustrates the term’s changing categorical significance and social meaning. Throughout the nineteenth century and particularly its second half, the reification of Romani “difference” through inscription in official documents and, by the turn of the century, its intellectualization in literary and lexical texts resulted in the production, rather than merely the reflection, of a distinct “Gypsy” identity.

³ Angus Bancroft, *Roma and Gypsy-Travellers in Europe: Modernity, Race, Space and Exclusion* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 35.

In a number of historical works, the Roma have been considered the passive objects of state prejudice and discrimination. This dissertation views them as agents, historical actors among a plurality of late-Ottoman and early Republican actors. It does so by prioritizing their direct interactions with the state, insofar as the sources permit, in order to show how they negotiated the terms of their membership in society in spite of the latter's often active resistance and exclusionary attitudes. To that end, the present study centers the petitions the Roma have sent to the Ottoman and Turkish governments in the absence of any other written documents left by them, while at the same time taking into consideration the limitations of these nevertheless mediated sources. Its limitations notwithstanding, this approach has made it possible to account for the Romani agency in the construction of Romani identity. The Roma's petitions to the government requesting redress in such issues as labeling, taxation, segregation, and resettlement may profitably be viewed as a performance of belonging in society at large. Indeed, belonging is an ongoing process, especially one that is performed, as noted by Marco Antonsich who writes:

Every politics of belonging involves two opposite sides: the side that claims belonging and the side that has the power of 'granting' belonging. This means, that a process of negotiation—as well as rejection, violation, and transgression—is always in place, either at the individual or at the collective scale or both.

Moreover, "the role of political institutions is not sufficient, if the rest of the society fails to 'grant' this recognition."⁴ Consequently this dissertation also attempts to reckon with non-state actors in the production and reproduction of the increasingly othered category of "the Gypsy."

But this category was neither as simple nor as monolithic as both the state and society tended to presume. In their interactions with the government, the Roma sometimes self-identified

⁴ Marco Antonsich, "Searching for Belonging – An Analytical Framework," *Geography Compass* 4, no. 6 (2010): 652, 650.

as “Gypsies” while at times objecting to that label. They often tried to present themselves as mainstream, stressing their loyalty to the government, noting that they served in the military and were faithful Muslims, while at the same time expressing an awareness of their unique status vis-à-vis the polity. Nevertheless, they often found themselves facing insurmountable obstacles, and their otherness only increased as “Turkishness” was added to Islam as yet another measure of belonging. It was certainly not a foregone conclusion that the Roma would become—and remain, to this day—a differentiated, marginalized, and stigmatized group. This can only be understood as the product of a historical process, whose elements this dissertation explores. The invention of “the Gypsy” was the outcome of an aggregation of practices and discourses that evolved over time at the intersection of contingency and global conjuncture.

A Note on the Naming of the Roma

The twelfth-century Byzantine canonist Theodore Balsamon referred to a certain people as *Athinganoi*. Identified with the “Gypsies” (*Atsinganoi*) in recent decades, rather than the ninth-century heretical sect of the same name,⁵ this group was said to be “active as bearkeepers, snake charmers, and, in general, as animal trainers; also as acrobats and jugglers.”⁶ However, since their animal performances were not limited to entertainment but also involved claims of divinity and soothsaying, “those who drag[ged] a bear or similar animal after themselves for the enjoyment and the damage of simple-minded people and who tell the future, fate, horoscope, and whatever else may be the multitude of words of this erroneous trumpery” were to be condemned to a six-year

⁵ Karin White, “Metal-workers, Agriculturists, Acrobats, Military-people and Fortune-tellers: Roma (Gypsies) in and around the Byzantine Empire,” *Golden Horn: Journal of Byzantium* 7, no. 2 (Winter 1999–2000), accessed March 4, 2011, <http://www.isidore-of-seville.com/goudenhoorn/72karin.html>. I am thankful to Adrian Marsh for informing me of this article.

⁶ George C. Soulis, “The Gypsies in the Byzantine Empire and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 15 (1961): 146–147, 163.

excommunication.⁷ The common folk, on the other hand, were urged by Patriarch Athanasius I of Constantinople (1230–1310) not to associate with the *Atsinganoi* or let them in their houses.⁸ Such measures were taken because, according to the Byzantinist historian Frank Trombley, “The survival of pagan cult practices among Christians alarmed imperial and ecclesiastical authorities [for] the empire still had a highly visible, but not very large pagan population.”⁹ While there are additional hypotheses,¹⁰ to this day the most plausible explanation for the origins of the words *Tsigane/Tzigane/Zigeuner* in European languages and *Çingene* (Gypsy) in Turkish remains this association with the Byzantine term.

However, in both Ottoman and modern Turkish, the word *Kipti* (Coptic) has also been used alongside *Çingene*, *Kipti* being more prominent in nineteenth-century Ottoman imperial documents. Having no relation to the contemporary people by the same name inhabiting Egypt and the Sudan and belonging to the Coptic Orthodox Church, *Kipti* rather seems to have originated from the fifteenth-century “Egyptian” label that the Roma either took on or were given upon their arrival in western Europe. In 1483, Bernhard von Breydenbach of Mainz (ca. 1440–97) wrote that he encountered “many hovels outside the town, about three hundred in number, in which dwell certain poor folk like the Ethiopians, black and ungainly,” and that they were called Saracens in the German lands. “[F]alsely claim[ing] to have come from Egypt,” they were later believed to

⁷ Marie Theres Fögen, “Balsamon on Magic: From Roman Secular Law to Byzantine Canon Law,” in *Byzantine Magic*, ed. Henry Maguire (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), 100. I am thankful to Adrian Marsh for informing me of this article.

⁸ Soulis, “Gypsies,” 147.

⁹ Frank R. Trombley, “The Council in Trullo (691–692): A Study of the Canons Relating to Paganism, Heresy, and the Invasions,” *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 9, no. 1 (1978): 4.

¹⁰ Hüseyin Yıldız, “Türkçede Çingeneler İçin Kullanılan Kelimeler ve Bunların Etimolojileri,” *Dil Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1, no. 1 (Autumn 2007): 62–70.

hail from the Italian town of Gyppe, near Modon.¹¹ As a result, the misnomer took the form of ‘Gypsy’ in English and *Kıpti* in Turkish, perpetuating the notion of links to Egypt.¹²

In Republican Turkey, another term has been added to this already convoluted labeling of the Roma. This was the explicitly racial expression *esmer vatandaş* (swarthy citizen), which is thought to have been introduced during the period when Adnan Menderes was Prime Minister (1950–60).¹³ In the absence of social critique, and perhaps even held out at the time as an accommodating alternative to the pejorative meanings associated with the word “Gypsy,” this highly problematic phrase remained a widely used exonym for the Roma in Turkey well into the 1990s.¹⁴ Nonetheless, despite a relatively heightened awareness (or rather, a preoccupation with political correctness), the expression still shows up now and again in such official documents as the correspondences of local administrations¹⁵ and police reports¹⁶. The term *Roman* (Roma), on the other hand, began to be used in the Turkish language mainly in the 1980s, only after the first World Romani Congress of 1971 in England, where the use of the word Roma was agreed upon by European Romani representatives.

The study of the origins of the peoples who came to be known as Roma has a similarly convoluted past. The previously accepted and much reiterated understanding of the migration routes and divisions of the Roma from India to Europe has been that “[o]n reaching northern Mesopotamia and the eastern boundary of the Byzantine Empire towards the end of the tenth and

¹¹ Soulis, “Gypsies,” 154.

¹² Yıldız, “Çingeneler İçin Kullanılan Kelimeler,” 73.

¹³ Ali Arayıcı, *Çingeneler: Avrupa'nın Vatansızları* (İstanbul: Kalkedon Yayınları, 2008), 244.

¹⁴ For instance, the caption of a picture of a dancing bear being transported on a horse cart published in a daily (“Meçhule Doğru...” *Hürriyet*, November 1, 1993) reads: “Even if they change countries, the ‘swarthy citizens’ do not change their habits. As in Turkey, many gypsies [sic] in Bulgaria earn their keep by making bears dance.”

¹⁵ “‘Esmer Vatandaşlar’a Tazminat Hakkı!”, *Zaman*, April 13, 2010.

¹⁶ Adnan Keskin, “Esmer Vatandaş Olduğu Anlaşıldı,” *Taraf*, March 14, 2013.

the beginning of the eleventh centuries, the Gypsies split into three major migration groups – the (...) Dom (who took the southern route or stayed in the Middle East), (...) the Lom (who took the northern route) and the Rom (who took the western route).”¹⁷ However, this theory has long been contested based on linguistic peculiarities and differences between the languages of these groups.¹⁸ More importantly, it is essentializing and disregards the complex and relational processes of institutional categorization and inscription, societal labeling, and group self-identification. This dissertation does not set out to discover the “true Gypsy” in late- and post-Ottoman Turkish history. It acknowledges that the use of both umbrella terms, “Gypsy” and Roma, are problematic insofar as the diverse peoples that historically were and presently are subsumed under these appellations are concerned. Instead, it involves itself with the changing categorical significance of the groups identified as “Gypsy” and argues for the generative power of categories, labeling, and social negotiation.

Throughout the dissertation, I use both “Gypsy” and “Roma,” but under distinct circumstances: I reproduce the designation “Gypsy” when referencing historical sources that use the Turkish equivalents (*Çingene, Kıpti*) of this term. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the term “Gypsy” has come to denote more than merely the name of an ethnoreligious or ethnolinguistic community. Over the centuries, in Turkey as well as in other parts of the world, it has acquired a ubiquitous body of stereotypes and imagery, at once romanticized and despised. Though this may well be a controversial compromise, when speaking for myself I still use the ethnonym Roma and the adjective Romani.

¹⁷ Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire: A Contribution to the History of the Balkans* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001), 12–13.

¹⁸ Ian Hancock, *We are the Romani People / Ame sam e Rromane džene* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2002), 1–16.

Historiographical Context and Contribution to Literature

The beginnings of modern-day Romani Studies can be traced back to linguistic studies of the Romani language in eighteenth-century Germany, and particularly to Johann Christian Christoph Rüdiger's (1751–1822) 1782 work *Von der Sprache und Herkunft der Zigeuner aus Indien* (On the Language and Indian Origin of the Gypsies), in which he built a thesis upon a prior hypothesis about the Indian origins of the “Gypsies.” Following Rüdiger's footsteps and largely plagiarizing from his contemporaries, Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann (1756–1804) published his *Historischer Versuch über die Zigeuner* (*Dissertation on the Gipseys*) in 1783, followed shortly thereafter by its English and French translations and thus becoming quite popular.¹⁹ In the nineteenth-century Ottoman context, Alexandre Paspati (d. 1891), an İstanbul-born Greek physician, published the only comprehensive study of the language of Ottoman Roma in 1870.²⁰ The formalization of the field came with the founding of the Gypsy Lore Society in England, in 1888. In fact, Paspati published a short article in the journal's inaugural issue in July 1888.²¹ The Society has been organizing annual meetings since 1979 and publishing the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* since its inception; this journal was renamed *Romani Studies* in 2000. It is noteworthy that these earlier linguistic studies were invariably accompanied by commonplace depictions and cultural stereotypes, which then were plagiarized and reproduced in other publications. Today, this growing field, albeit rife with polarization and strongly-worded disputes, sees proliferating research, new scholars and scholars-in-training joining the conversation, and new journals being

¹⁹ Yaron Matras, “Johann Rüdiger and the Study of Romani in 18th Century Germany,” *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* Fifth Series, no. 9 (1999): 89.

²⁰ Alexandre G. Paspati, *Études sur les Tchinghianés ou Bohémiens de l'empire Ottoman* (Constantinople: Imprimerie Antoine Koroméla, 1870).

²¹ Paspati, “Turkish Gypsies,” *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* 1, no. 1 (Jul. 1888): 3–5.

introduced,²² challenging the Gypsy Lore Society's long-standing influence in defining its direction.

For a long time, however, the most common framework within which the Roma— who, as an oral society, have not left their own written testimonies other than mediated accounts²³—have been studied and represented in scholarship has been one of marginality and deviance. The marginality and deviance paradigm was coupled with the preoccupation with attempting to delineate what qualities rendered the Roma outsiders in the societies of which they were a part, while depicting these societies as “hosts” and the Roma as “passersby” and “misfits.” In other words, earlier works within the field of what came to be known as Romani Studies have been focused on identifying Romani moral, behavioral, occupational, and spatial peculiarities that might explain the stigmatization and persecution they have faced. However, this emphasis on marginality and deviance obscures the very process of marginalization and, rather, whether intentionally or inadvertently, ends up placing the explanatory burden on the so-called “marginal.” In his introduction to *Outside In: On the Margins of the Middle East*, Eugene Rogan provides a working definition of “the marginal” as “those who did not fit within the parameters of accepted social norms,” and “marginality” as “the individual's non-conformity to legal or social norms.”²⁴ This common understanding and framing of marginality reduces it to a matter of willful ignorance or

²² For instance, Transnational Press London has been publishing the *Journal Gypsy Studies* since 2017. *Critical Romani Studies* is being published by the Central European University since 2018. In 2020, Trakya University in Turkey began publishing the *Journal of Roma Language and Culture Research Institute*.

²³ Yaron Matras, “Writing Romani: The Pragmatics of Codification in a Stateless Language,” *Applied Linguistics* 20, no. 4 (1999): 482–502; Donald Kenrick, “Towards a Typology of Unwritten Languages,” in *Language, Blacks and Gypsies: Languages without a Written Tradition and Their Role in Education*, ed. Thomas Acton and Morgan Dalphinis (London: Whiting & Birch, 2000), 24–31; Ian Hancock, “Standardisation and Ethnic Defence in Emergent Non-Literate Societies: The Gypsy and Caribbean Cases,” in *Language, Blacks and Gypsies*, 9–23.

²⁴ Eugene Rogan, “Introduction,” in *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East*, ed. Eugene Rogan (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 1–3.

defiance on the part of “the marginal,” without taking into account the fact that changing legal and social norms continually transform society, producing varying rhetoric and political, economic, and social structures that push certain groups into the margins. Moreover, the notion of marginality aids in conceiving groups as isolated entities, relegating them to pockets of history as if largely untouched by broader historical contingencies and shifts. The historiography of the Roma is replete with such framing and this, in fact, ends up further marginalizing them in history. Instead, this dissertation focuses on normative legal, institutional, spatial, and social structures and vocabularies that have played a role in marginalizing the Roma and generating an increasingly distinct Romani identity for newly established structures to invoke.

Apart from a 2000 Ministry of Culture and Tourism publication that set out to define “Gypsies” with references to their cranial shape, pelvic width, and fear of darkness,²⁵ and has since been taken first to Turkish courts and then to the European Court of Human Rights,²⁶ İsmail Altınöz’s 2013 Turkish Historical Society publication “Gypsies in Ottoman Society” remains the single broad overview of the “Gypsies” in the Ottoman Empire, exploring their standing in such respects as legislation, taxation, military service, and professional traditions. Yet it lacks historical contextualization and fails to go beyond descriptive statements. Indeed, surveys of European “Gypsies” have been a hallmark of the field of Romani Studies.²⁷ For Leo Lucassen and Wim

²⁵ Ali Rafet Özkan, *Türkiye Çingeneri* (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2000).

²⁶ The case against the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has been rejected on the disregarding grounds that “no individual or community has been implicated with the accused articles in the book.” (Mustafa Aksu, “Başbakan Bu Toplumsal Sorunu Çözer İnşallah,” accessed July 20, 2012, <http://www.cingeneyiz.org/myy.html>. In the Gypsy activist Mustafa Aksu’s appeal to the European Court of Human Rights, the book has also been found to have no discriminatory elements (“AİHM, ‘Türkiye Çingeneri’ ni Ayrımcı Bulmadı,” *Milliyet*, July 27, 2010).

²⁷ See, for instance, David M. Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002 [1995]); Zoltan Barany, *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality, and Ethnopolitics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Malden, MA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell

Willems, “[t]his dominating approach is not only top down, it also fails to differentiate according to time and place so that the impression is conveyed that the ‘fate’ of the Gypsies was universal and only marginally influenced by specific historical context. This generalization is often justified by assuming that human society is by nature sedentary and will always conflict with itinerant and nomadic groups.”²⁸ This generalization also involves assuming that all Roma were nomadic. Altınöz, too, assumes that nomadism has been one of the defining characteristics of the Ottoman Roma. This dissertation, on the other hand, problematizes this assumption and strives to illustrate how it was socially constructed in the late- and post-Ottoman context.

Altınöz concludes his book by noting that “[i]n the Ottoman Empire, Gypsies have never been oppressed by the state,” effectively legitimizing—or at least whitewashing—such Ottoman practices as discriminatory taxation and collective stigmatization of the presumed “lifestyle” and religious indifference of the Roma.²⁹ Emphasis on “Ottoman tolerance” relative to contemporary European polities has been a common framework in “Gypsy” monographs that allude to the Ottoman case within their study of the wider Eurasian context. Zoltan Barany, for instance, has described discrimination against the Roma in the Ottoman Empire as “far less rampant,”³⁰ while Angus Fraser has noted that Ottoman legislation concerning the Roma was far from being “systematically repressive” when compared to Europe.³¹ It is true that neither the Ottoman Empire nor the Republic of Turkey engaged in the likes of the mass “Gypsy hunts” that were periodically

Publishing, 2003 [1992]); David Mayall, *Gypsy Identities 1500–2000: From Egyptians and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

²⁸ Leo Lucassen and Wim Willems, “The Weakness of Well-Ordered Societies: Gypsies in Western Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and India, 1400–1914,” *Review: Fernand Braudel Center* 26, no. 3 (2003): 283.

²⁹ İsmail Altınöz, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Çingeneleer* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2013), 302.

³⁰ Barany, *East European Gypsies*, 10.

³¹ Fraser, *Gypsies*, 172.

undertaken in Enlightenment Europe³² nor in their mass deportation and extermination as took place in Nazi Germany. For most of its post-1453 history, the multi-confessional Ottoman Empire was organized around the “principle of recognized difference,” as Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper have compellingly named it.³³ Indeed, “[t]he hallmark of Ottoman empire was not spreading a homogeneous culture among local elites but putting diversity to work for the polity,”³⁴ strategically following a pluralist mode of governance in order to keep the multitude of peoples loyal to the sultan and his court. Neither did it have a homogeneous culture to spread, since “Ottoman rule was neither founded upon a generally accepted understanding of Ottoman identity, nor was this system conducive to the cultivation of a uniform sense of belonging among the subjects of the empire.”³⁵ While this hierarchical social structuring meant that Muslims and non-Muslims were ruled and regulated following a differentiation in such areas as taxation,³⁶ military

³² David Cressy, *Gypsies: An English History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), 26–29.

³³ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press), 142. The so-called *millet* system has come to be regarded anachronistic in the manner with which it has been often utilized to explain the emergence of national identities in the nineteenth century. For discussions on *millets*, see, for instance, Benjamin Braude, “Foundation Myths of the Millet System,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society, Volume I: The Central Lands*, eds. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982), 69–88; Kemal Karpat, “Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 141–69; M. Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek* (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2007 [2004]).

³⁴ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires*, 133.

³⁵ Reşat Kasaba, “Dreams of Empires, Dreams of Nations,” in *Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*, eds. Joseph W. Esherick, Hasan Kayalı, and Eric Van Young (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 204.

³⁶ For the changing nineteenth-century Ottoman tax system, see Stanford J. Shaw, “The Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Tax Reforms and Revenue System,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6, no. 4 (Oct. 1975): 421–59.

service,³⁷ and even attire guided by Sunni Islamic law,³⁸ in discourse and practice, this principle also “play[ed] against the religious intolerance of other empires.”³⁹

It is crucial, however, to unpack what this relative tolerance has entailed. Reminiscent of what Renato Rosaldo called “imperialist nostalgia,”⁴⁰ the routine recourse to the notion of tolerance has obscured the identity-forming nature of Ottoman imperial governance following the vast expansion of territories in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the confrontation with the task of ruling diverse populations. In *Regulating Aversion*, Wendy Brown noted that “tolerance as a political discourse (...) involves not simply the withholding of speech or action in response to contingent individual dislikes or violations of taste but the enactment of social, political, religious, and cultural norms; certain practices of licensing and regulation; the marking of subjects of tolerance as inferior, deviant, or marginal vis-à-vis those practicing tolerance; and a justification for sometimes dire or even deadly action when the limits of tolerance are considered breached.”⁴¹ It was in such limits that in the early modern Ottoman Empire the Roma were merely tolerated, while their counterparts in European empires were subjected to mass expulsions and exterminations. Moreover, “Tolerance of this sort does not simply address identity but abets in its

³⁷ For the changing nineteenth-century Ottoman military, see Erik Jan Zürcher, “The Ottoman Conscription System, 1844–1914,” *International Review of Social History* 43, no. 3 (Dec. 1998): 437–49; and Virginia H. Aksan, “Ottoman Military and Social Transformations, 1826–28: Engagement and Resistance in a Moment of Global Imperialism,” in *Empires and Autonomy: Moments in the History of Globalization*, eds. Stephen M. Streeter, John C. Weaver, and William D. Coleman (Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press, 2009), 61–78.

³⁸ See, for instance, İrvin Cemil Schick, “Some Islamic Determinants of Dress and Personal Appearance in Southwest Asia,” *Khil’at* 3 (2007–2009 [2011]): 25–53.

³⁹ Burbank and Cooper, *Empires*, 142.

⁴⁰ Rosaldo characterizes imperialist nostalgia as “the process of yearning for what one has destroyed as a form of mystification” in *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 71.

⁴¹ Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 13–14.

production; it also abets in the conflation of culture with ethnicity or race and the conflation of belief or consciousness with phenotype. And it naturalizes as it depoliticizes these processes to render identity itself an object of tolerance.”⁴² Indeed, it is the contention of the present study that from being a moralistically-defined ambiguous socio-fiscal group in the early modern period, through gradual ethnicization thanks to the demographic technologies of the reforming Empire in the nineteenth century, to an irreversible and malignant racialization in the early Turkish Republic, the making of Romani identity in late- and post-Ottoman Turkey was not only a result of normative “political tolerance,” but is also illustrative of the critical inflection points and the complexity of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century modes of governance.

In the context of European history, more situated accounts published in recent years have been welcome additions to the literature on Romani history and have distinguished themselves with their grounded historical approach.⁴³ Among them, Ilse About’s work on the nineteenth- and twentieth century French practices of identification and categorization towards the Roma has been particularly illuminating for this dissertation.⁴⁴ In the Ottoman and Turkish context, a handful of studies stand out in their situatedness. Studying eighteenth-century Salonican court records, Eyal Ginio has been the first to elaborate on the issue of confessional in-betweenness reserved for the Ottoman “Gypsies,” explicating the precarious identification of the Roma by the state.⁴⁵ Drawing on sixteenth-century Üsküdar court records, Faika Çelik embraces a more dialogic approach,

⁴² *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴³ See, for instance, Becky Taylor, *Another Darkness, Another Dawn: A History of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014); Cressy, *Gypsies*.

⁴⁴ Ilse About, “Underclass Gypsies: An Historical Approach on Categorization and Exclusion in France in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” in *The Gypsy ‘Menace’: Populism and the New Anti-Gypsy Politics*, ed. Michael Stewart (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 95–114.

⁴⁵ Eyal Ginio, “Neither Muslims nor Zimmis: The Gypsies (Roma) in the Ottoman State,” *Romani Studies* Fifth Series 14, no. 2 (2004).

demonstrating that “the legal, social and economic status of Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century is much more complicated than what can merely be characterized as marginalization or toleration. The interaction of the Gypsies, both with the state and with the Ottoman society at large, was *simultaneously* both hostile and symbiotic.”⁴⁶ Engaging with the variegated practices of the Ottoman state and the interaction of the Roma with the rest of society, these studies have paved the way for a better understanding of the ambivalent relationship between the Roma and the Ottoman government before the nineteenth century. The present study, in turn, builds on this recognition of the early modern ambivalence and shows how the institutional and ideological transformations in the nineteenth century provided the Ottoman state with tools and vocabulary in the service of delineating an increasingly distinguished Romani identity.

In addition to adding to the historical research on the Ottoman and Turkish Roma and reinstating them as historical actors performing their belonging and negotiating their place within the transition from empire to nation-state, this dissertation also aims to contribute to the scholarship on late Ottoman and early Turkish Republican identity formation. The emergence and evolution of Turkish nationalism and the violent making of Turkish nationhood in the transition period from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic are far from understudied. Under the influence of modernization theory, earlier dominant narratives had traditionally espoused a teleological approach to the late Ottoman Empire, viewing it merely as the harbinger of the Turkish nation-

⁴⁶ Faika Çelik, “‘Community in Motion’: Gypsies in Ottoman Imperial State Policy, Public Morality and at the Sharia Court of Üsküdar (1530s-1585s [sic]),” PhD diss., McGill University, 2013. —Original emphasis. Also see Çelik, “Representing the Margins: The Many Faces of the ‘Gypsy’ in Early Modern Ottoman Discourse,” in *Disliking Others: Loathing, Hostility, and Distrust in Premodern Ottoman Lands*, eds. Hakan T. Karateke, H. Erdem Çıpa, and Helga Anetshofer (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018), 215–43.

state and portraying the disintegration of the Empire as a historical inevitability.⁴⁷ Moreover, the late Ottoman period was identified with a series of competing ideologies and policies that followed and replaced one another while often interpreting ideological changes exogenously, specifying the triggers chiefly as the 1912–1913 Balkan Wars, rising Balkan nationalisms, and the loss of Ottoman Balkan territories.⁴⁸ Reading the period through a narrow understanding of the ideological succession of Ottomanism–Islamism–Turkism, in turn, resulted in anachronistic attributions, unilateral explanations, and the blurring of the latent ambiguities and contradictions of the period.

These latent ambiguities, on the other hand, were picked up by subsequent scholars and their publications in the last decades.⁴⁹ Concerned with contextualizing the ideological debates and practices in their own time frame, these recent works problematize the conditions from which Turkish nationalism emerged, seek to situate ideological terminology, and engage in a questioning

⁴⁷ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1961); Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 volumes (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976–1977); Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (n.p.: HarperCollins Academic, 1991).

⁴⁸ Kemal H. Karpat, *An Inquiry into the Social Foundations of Nationalism in the Ottoman State: From Social Estates to Classes, From Millets to Nations*, Research Monograph No. 39 (n.p.: Princeton University Press, 1973); Karpat, “Historical Continuity and Identity Change or How to Be Modern Muslim, Ottoman, and Turk,” in *Ottoman Past and Today’s Turkey*, ed. Kemal H. Karpat (Leiden, Boston and Köln: Brill, 2000), 1–28.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve “Türkleştirme” Politikaları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000); Mesut Yeğen, *Müstakbel Türk’ten Sözde Vatandaşa: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2012 [2006]); Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks’ Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012); Kent Schull, “Conceptualizing Difference during the Second Constitutional Period: New Sources, Old Challenges,” in *Religion, Ethnicity and Contested Nationhood in the Former Ottoman Space*, ed. Jørgen Nielsen (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 63–87; Lerna Ekmekçioğlu, “Republic of Paradox: The League of Nations Minority Protection Regime and the New Turkey’s Step-Citizens,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 3 (2014): 657–79; Bedross Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014).

of traditional periodization. Whereas earlier research had portrayed virtually uniform and ubiquitous policies and practices arrested in a given periodization, more recent studies are increasingly engaged with a “conceptual archaeology” of the expanding imperial repertoire, exploring the variegated ideological tools that shaped late Ottoman governance.

An early revisionist study of the late Ottoman Empire was Erik Jan Zürcher’s 1984 *The Unionist Factor*, in which he shed light on the continuities between the Young Turk period, the “national struggle” period following World War I, and the first years of the Turkish Republic by tracing the members of the Committee of Union and Progress and their activities into the Republican era. His attention to the notion of legacy provided the opportunity to envision a clear rupture from the official Turkish discourse that traditionally portrayed the Turkish Republic as a clean break from its Ottoman past. Depicting the Turkish national movement as nevertheless a split from the Ottoman imperial context, Zürcher dated its beginnings back to 1905, the years preceding the CUP rule.⁵⁰ While enacting momentous institutional transformations in imperial governance, the *Tanzimat* reforms were ultimately unavailing in establishing equal citizenship throughout the Empire and in responding to the growing grievances of mainly non-Muslim and non-Turkish ethno-religious groups. However, “the Hamidian policies made possible the growth of a larger opposition movement by broadening the scope of the new educational institutions and by improving communications.”⁵¹ In the early years of its power, the main preoccupation of the Young Turk opposition movement, Zürcher argued, was saving the disintegrating empire rather

⁵⁰ Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Rôle of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905–1926* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984). He continued building on the notion of legacy in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010) that brought together his published and unpublished articles, offering a rethinking and new periodization of the nation-building period.

⁵¹ Zürcher, *Unionist Factor*, 11.

than promoting and practicing a strictly Turkish nationalist ideology. He expressed the view that “they were ardent Ottoman nationalists.”⁵²

In “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908–1938,” Zürcher remained doubtful of the claim that “the nationalism of the Young Turks was truly ‘Turkish,’”⁵³ stressing the implicit Muslim—but not necessarily Islamic—character of the CUP and early Republican rule. For Zürcher, “The Unionists were motivated by a peculiar brand of Ottoman Muslim nationalism” and “The Unionists’ ideology was nationalist in the sense that they demanded the establishment of a state of their own. (...) But the nation for which they demanded this political home was that of the Ottoman Muslims—not that of all of the Ottomans, not only that of the Turks and certainly not that of the Muslims of the world,”⁵⁴ thereby lending primacy to the Muslim Ottomanist vein over the Islamist or Turkist ones. Moreover, he articulated this process as the “ethnicization of religion” by pointing out that “the movement was political and not religious, but the nationalism program is on an ethnicity whose membership is determined largely by religious affiliation.”⁵⁵

Erik Jan Zürcher’s principal frame of reference was the nation-in-the-making. In other words, his was a revision of the periodization of nation building, which extended it back to the rise of the CUP. Şükrü Hanioglu’s contribution to the field, on the other hand, was his situated re-evaluation of the ideological debates among the ranks of the Young Turks. Hanioglu’s *The Young*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵³ Erik Jan Zürcher, “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908–1938,” in *Ottoman Past and Today’s Turkey*, ed. Kemal H. Karpat (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2000), 156.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* This conceptualization has later been elaborated by Howard Eissenstat, “Modernization, Imperial Nationalism, and the Ethnicization of Confessional Identity in the Late Ottoman Empire,” in *Nationalizing Empires*, eds. Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2015), 429–59.

Turks in Opposition and Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908 both offered an analysis of the varied implications of the 1908 Revolution, and a close reading of the pre-1908 Young Turk activities and propaganda rooted in positivism, social Darwinism, and elitism, in an attempt to make sense of this complex organization whose endeavors have been delineated more or less as consolidated and easily identifiable in earlier scholarship.⁵⁶ In his later works, Hanioglu continued to explore the non-linear and ambiguous trajectory of the CUP's ideas and ideologies of governance. "Turkism and the Young Turks, 1889-1908" focused on the contextualization of Turkism and presented the notable argument that it "rose to prominence much earlier than is usually assumed, while Ottomanism persisted much later than is commonly held."⁵⁷ Emphasizing both external and internal factors in the diversification of late Ottoman official ideologies, including the impact of popular race theories spreading at the time, Hanioglu's work was a clear response to long-standing understandings such as Kemal Karpat's insistence on the relatively late and sudden development of Turkish nationalism as a strictly post-Balkan Wars phenomenon or Feroz Ahmad's conviction that "the vocabulary of nationalism scarcely existed in the Turkish or the Arabic or the Kurdish language of [the pre-1908] period."⁵⁸

For Hanioglu, the CUP's brand of Ottomanism was "a thinly veiled excuse for Turkish domination"—an Ottomanist outlook with a Turkist agenda, as was also recognized by the Committee members of non-Turkish descent.⁵⁹ Furthermore, he pointed to the "increasing employment of Turkish symbols by the imperial centre," such as the decision to rename the official

⁵⁶ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁵⁷ Hanioglu, "Turkism and the Young Turks, 1889-1908," in *Turkey Beyond Nationalism: Towards Post-Nationalist Identities*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 19.

⁵⁸ Feroz Ahmad, review of *The Young Turks in Opposition*, by M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 5 (1996): 1589.

⁵⁹ Hanioglu, "Turkism," 14.

CUP organ “Ottoman” as “Turk” in 1902, before the thin veil was removed following the 1908 revolution when the CUP began openly confronting its non-Turkish members and “sought both to centralise the empire and to impose a heavily Turkish version of Ottomanism on non-Turkish communities.”⁶⁰ As for the Committee’s ostensible appeal to pan-Islamism, in Hanioglu’s analysis, this was merely a token of the organization’s broader anti-imperialist position, not of Islam.⁶¹

In the context of the complex dynamics of late Ottoman governance, scrutinizing demographic policies followed by the Committee of Union and Progress government may better serve to demonstrate the ideological debates that were the focus of many of the works discussed up to this point. Moreover, analyzing the different courses of action the CUP followed towards the Empire’s diverse communities helps reveal, more pointedly, how blurred the boundaries were between Ottomanism as a civic ideology, Islamism as a religious ideology, and Turkism as a nationalist ideology. Indeed, the last two decades witnessed a proliferation in scholarship of the CUP government’s demographic policies and programs during the Second Constitutional Period, albeit drawing diverging conclusions as to the ideological implications of these policies. One of these studies is Fuat Dündar’s “The Settlement Policy of the Committee of Union and Progress 1913-1918,” in which he argues that “by means of a small secret group within the organization, the Committee pursued a policy aiming at the Turkification of the entire state mechanism, the Islamization and Turkification of Asia Minor’s demography and the Turkification of the economy.”⁶² Exploring the CUP’s demographic policies towards Muslims as well as non-Muslims

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 8, 19.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶² Fuat Dündar, “The Settlement Policy of the Committee of Union and Progress 1913-1918,” in *Turkey Beyond Nationalism: Towards Post-Nationalist Identities*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 37. His broader works include *İttihat ve Terakki’nin Müslümanları İskân Politikası (1913-1918)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001); and *Modern*

by means of the establishment of a special Directorate for the Resettlement of Tribes and Refugees, Dündar maps out the prevailing directionality of the forced migration of peoples, and concludes that the Committee followed a selective displacement and resettlement program geared towards the assimilation of non-Muslims as well as the destruction of the traditional structures of non-Turkish Muslim communities.⁶³ In turn, for Dündar, this program forged “an ethnic and religious composition of Anatolia which lent itself well to the construction of the new nation-state.”⁶⁴

In his “Contextualizing ‘Turkification,’” on the other hand, Erol Ülker questions “the extent to which the nationality policies of the Young Turks can be perceived as a nation-building project, and (...) whether it is reasonable to apply the term ‘Turkification’ to these policies.”⁶⁵ Building on Erik Jan Zürcher’s redefinition of the nation-building period, the CUP’s growing bent for Turkish nationalism as demonstrated in Şükrü Hanioglu’s research, and Fuat Dündar’s work on the CUP’s demographic policies, Ülker contends that the term “Turkification” is conflated with other imperial policies such as centralization. He argues that the meaning of the term is overextended, whereas it should be reserved for the nation-building project alone, confined to the “extent a set of policies designated as ‘Turkification’ was put into the service of nationalism,” aiming at constructing “a national core.”⁶⁶ For Ülker, in the first half of its decade-long rule, the Committee was rather engaged with a re-interpretation of Ottomanism, adopting a façade of

Türkiye'nin Şifresi: İttihat ve Terakki'nin Etnisite Mühendisliği (1913-1918) (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008).

⁶³ “In line with the Committee’s policy, the directions the displacements took were *grosso-modo* as follows: the Kurds were moved from east to west across Anatolia; the Arabs were moved from south to north across Syria and Anatolia; the Bosnians and Albanians were moved from west to east across Anatolia; the Circassians were moved from south to north across Syria and Anatolia, etc.”: *Ibid.*, 41.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁶⁵ Erol Ülker, “Contextualising ‘Turkification’: Nation-Building in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918,” *Nations and Nationalism* 11, no. 4 (2005): 613.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 615.

“Ottoman patriotism” with an impetus towards unity. In other words, the CUP was more concerned with solving the problem of “inclusion” (assimilation) rather than “exclusion” (dissimilation) in this first period. Ülker contextualizes the CUP’s education and settlement policies towards Ottoman populations, chiefly those in the peripheries such as the nomadic Kurds and Arabs, as a “civilizing mission” rather than a campaign for Turkification. Yet in this period, the ascendance of Turkish nationalism and the promotion of Turkishness as the “dominant nationality” were already well underway.⁶⁷

In the second half of CUP rule, however, Ülker demonstrates how Turkification policies began to be implemented through geographic and demographic nationalization practices targeting specific regions and peoples “in order to fortify Anatolia’s Turkish and Muslim composition,” the first of which was the population exchange with Bulgaria in 1913. A precursor to the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey was also proposed by the CUP administration and accepted by the Greek government in 1914, but it could not be carried out as the Empire entered World War I shortly thereafter.⁶⁸ In addition to population exchange and the forced migration and resettlement of Muslim communities, ethnic cleansing and the genocide of Armenians, Assyrians, and Greeks finally became the CUP’s tools of Turkification. Yet, Ülker draws attention to the fact that these policies were by no means consistent throughout the Empire: whereas the CUP government followed an exponentially violent ethnic program in Anatolia, at the same time it adopted decentralization, appealed to the language of Islamic unity, and donned a strategic Islamism in the Arab provinces.⁶⁹ Ülker’s contribution to the literature on the late Ottoman Empire thus lies in his clarification of how the Ottoman administration approached

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 616–21.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 625.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 623.

different ethno-religious groups differentially, and how variegated their policies were, with concurrent decisions towards both assimilation and dissimulation. The present study is not only informed by these entanglements, but also aspires to add to it since the Roma do not fit into the traditional understanding of Ottoman religious—and later Turkish ethnic—categories.

Over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the state's increasing legal and institutional engagement with the Roma has expanded the imperial repertoire of governing difference. Among the significant inflection points of this transition from Empire to nation is the Turkish government's close encounter with racial "sciences" in the 1920s and 30s. In its belated introduction to Turkish historiography, this subject was powerfully addressed by Nazan Maksudyan in 2005 in an article and a monograph arguing for an undeniable racist current in Turkish nationalist thinking,⁷⁰ and was immediately met with forceful and patronizing objections.⁷¹ Similar to the objections raised against Maksudyan's work, Howard Eissenstat's exploration of the relation between race and nation in the Turkish context, too, concluded that "the main thrust of racial discourse within official Turkish nationalism was always directed toward inclusion rather than exclusion," and that early Republican elites espoused not an all-encompassing racial ideology, but metaphors of race that were meant to serve in the unification of Turkishness.⁷² Eissenstat's analysis, however, disregarded the relational aspect of racial constructs, namely that racial differentiation invariably implies a hegemonic hierarchy, no matter how subsuming the

⁷⁰ Nazan Maksudyan, "The *Turkish Review of Anthropology* and the Racist Face of Turkish Nationalism," *Cultural Dynamics* 17, no. 3 (2005): 291–322; and *Türklüğü Ölçmek: Bilimkurgusal Antropoloji ve Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Irkçı Çehresi 1925-1939* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2005).

⁷¹ See Ayhan Aktar, "Kemalistlerin Irkçılığı Meselesi," *Radikal Kitap*, July 15, 2005; Nazan Maksudyan, "Ayhan Aktar'a Cevap," *Radikal Kitap*, July 29, 2005; Aktar, "Tek Parti Döneminde 'Irkçılık' Meselesi..." *Virgöl*, no. 87 (Sep. 2005): 73–79.

⁷² Howard Eissenstat, "Metaphors of Race and Discourse of Nation: Racial Theory and State Nationalism in the First Decades of the Turkish Republic," in *Race and Nation: Ethnic Systems in the Modern World*, ed. Paul Spickard (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 253.

dominant “race” officially commits itself to being. More recently, in 2016, Murat Ergin’s *Is the Turk a White Man?*” expanded on the breadth and reach of Turkish racist thought and research that took place in the first decades of the Republic.⁷³ The present study hopes to contribute to this conversation by exemplifying racial narratives, idioms, and conceptions concerning the Roma, and illustrating their salience in early Republican nationalist thinking. Finally, this dissertation owes its conceptual framework and approach to the works and thinking of Rogers Brubaker and builds on his enduring emphasis on processes over definitions. Brubaker wrote in his 2004 *Ethnicity without Groups* that:

Ethnicity, race, and nation should be conceptualized not as substances or things or entities or organisms or collective individuals—as the imagery of discrete, concrete, tangible, bounded, and enduring “groups” encourages us to do—but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful, and disaggregated terms. This means thinking of ethnicity, race, and nation not in terms of substantial groups or entities but in terms of practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects, and contingent events. It means thinking of ethnicization, racialization, and nationalization as political, social, cultural, and psychological processes. And it means taking as a basic analytical category not the “group” as an entity but groupness as a contextually fluctuating conceptual variable.⁷⁴

This study walks along and through the ambiguities—and anxieties—of late- and post-Ottoman religious implications, ethnic signifiers, and racial allusions that are all articulated with each other in the making of Romani alterity. By doing so, it seeks to contribute to the ongoing elucidation of

⁷³ Murat Ergin, *Is the Turk a White Man?* *Race and Modernity in the Making of Turkish Identity* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018 [2016]).

⁷⁴ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA and London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2004), 11. Also see Brubaker, *Grounds for Difference* (Cambridge, MA and London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2015); and *Trans: Gender and Race in an Age of Unsettled Identities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

the late imperial and early Republican repertoire of governance, as much as it does to the understanding of the making of the Turkish nation.

The present dissertation builds upon my previous work at the master's level in which I conducted an ethnography with Romani bear leaders in Turkey and argued that the abrupt abolition of bear dancing in the early 1990s had more to do with ethnicization of cruelty to animals and with "purifying" the streets from the Roma than establishing animal protection in the country.⁷⁵ In the course of that research, I became aware of the paucity of historical analyses that would allow me to situate their identity as a community and their relations with the state. This study is intended to fill that void. It also draws upon my past publications on the representation of Romani women in literature and on the immigration crisis between Turkey and Bulgaria in the early 1950s.⁷⁶ Additionally, a part of Chapter 1 was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association in 2019.⁷⁷

Dissertation Outline

Chapter 1 first traces early modern Ottoman notions of an elusive Romani alterity as outlined by laws and imperial decrees from the fifteenth century to the eighteenth. Early modern taxation of the Roma differed from those levied on their Muslim and non-Muslim counterparts, effectively

⁷⁵ Pelin Tünaydın, "Rescuing the Bears, Silencing the Bear Leaders: Bear Dancing in Historical Context and its Abolition in Turkey," master's thesis, Sabancı University, 2014; "Pawing through the History of Bear Dancing in Europe," *Frühneuzeit-Info*, no. 24 (Oct. 2013): 51–60; "Tencereleri Kaynar, Ayıları Oynar İken: 1990'ların Başında Türkiye'de Kaldırılışına Dek Ayı Oynatıcılığı," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 227 (Nov. 2012): 64–70; "Rescuing the Bears, Silencing the Bear Leaders: The Abolition of Bear Dancing in Turkey in the Early 1990s," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society, İstanbul, September 2012.

⁷⁶ Tünaydın, "Gara Gara Gargalar, Gapı Gapı Yorgalar: Irkçılık ile Cinselleştirme Kıskaçında Çingene/Roman Kadın İmgesi," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 237 (Oct. 2013): 40–46; "Irkçılık ile Antikomünizm Arasında 1950-1951 Bulgaristan Göçü ve Romanlar," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 260 (Aug. 2015): 84–92.

⁷⁷ Tünaydın, "Precarious Belonging: Ottoman Roma at the End of Empire," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, New Orleans, November 16, 2019.

inscribing and ruling the Roma as a markedly different but ambiguous socio-fiscal unit. Nineteenth-century reforms, on the other hand, brought about a far-reaching institutional reorganization of the Empire, during which the pains of making the Roma “legible” became more pronounced. In this period, the centralizing Ottoman state equipped itself with such modern demographic technologies as identity documents and censuses, and though contradictory at times, these practices amounted to the normative demographic categorization of the state, inscribing the Roma as an increasingly separate yet categorically precarious identity. In the face of such discriminatory labeling and counting, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Roma negotiated their belonging to the larger Muslim community through the use of the long-standing tradition of petitioning.

Chapter 2 examines the restructuring of the Ottoman relationship with mobility, which involved the reconsideration of sedentarization, immigration, and domestic resettlement and witnessed attempts to strictly regulate the movement of subject-citizens. The late nineteenth century saw the reification of a “nomadic Gypsy culture” concurrently with its stigmatization and subordination to hegemonic sedentarism, often framed as a “civilizing mission.” As the surveillance and regulation power and will of the centralizing state intensified, the Roma increasingly found themselves the subjects of scrutiny and intervention in both domestic and international mobility. Yet, it was during the early decades of the Turkish Republic that the Roma, and particularly those that were assumed to be nomadic, were targeted in such legislation as the Resettlement Law of 1934, further inscribing Romani alterity within the ethnic program of the nation-building period. As the Turkish state engaged in demographic engineering, the Roma, now as immigrants and population exchangees, were once again intent on professing and performing

their belonging through petitions, even as legislation and its practice rendered them more visible and vulnerable to the state's intervention.

Chapter 3 exposes the resilient stereotypes about the Roma in popular "Gypsy lore" treatises, works of literature, and dictionaries, and reveals how their dissemination collectively constructed a distorted image of the Roma in conversation with each other. In turn, these cultural idioms of alterity, themselves a product of the social imaginary of their time, had a reproductive function in not only influencing further circulation and reinforcement of stereotypes, but also authorizing the racialization of the Roma thanks to their incessant chromatism. The publication of works such as Ahmed Midhat's late nineteenth-century novella, Şemseddin Sâmî's dictionary and encyclopedia, and Osman Cemal Kaygılı's 1930s novel, coupled with early Republican racial "scientific" endeavors, expanded on the earlier centuries' more ambivalent moralistic references to the Roma and added an authoritative discursive layer to the construction of an increasingly ethnicized and racialized, and unmistakably subordinated Romani identity.

Chapter 1

Identity that Counts: Labeling and Enumerating the Roma

Less than a year after the July 1908 Young Turk Revolution which restored the 1876 Constitution with further limitations on the sultan's power and reinstated the Parliament, the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies received a telegram. It was dated March 28, 1909, and was signed by numerous inhabitants of the Şabaniye quarter of the Praviçe borough of the Drama district of the Salonica province. Salonica would cease to be an Ottoman domain and be annexed to Greece in 1913. In the early years of the twentieth century, Salonica (modern-day Thessaloniki) was one of the most prominent centers of Young Turk activity.⁷⁸ This telegram was as much the culmination and one of the most unhindered expressions of persisting grievances of Ottoman Roma against the state, as it was emblematic of the inherent tensions and contradictions of the transforming system of imperial governance and, in particular, of Ottomanism in the Second Constitutional Era (1908–20).

The signatories of the petition identified themselves as Muslims who were distraught at the fact that they had been ascribed the designation of “Gypsy”—a term they took to mean descendants of the “heretic” Pharaoh's tribe originating in Egypt, and one that they regarded as erroneous. The telegram read:

⁷⁸ See Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*.

Since we, your humble servants, belong by origin and through the generations to the manifest religion of Islam and are charged with obeying the obligations and requirements and practices of Islam (...) while our people, too, bear those military and other obligations born by all Muslims in the Ottoman land, we repeatedly requested from the previous government not to be referred to by an incorrect name, but that legitimate request of ours was not granted. Your aforementioned servants belong to the Islamic elements, and while, had we been adherents to another religion and requested admission to Islam, our request would have immediately been granted, the fact that our several prior just requests have not been put into practice are of the inappropriate actions of the government of the Ancien Régime (...).⁷⁹

The petitioners went on to implore the Parliament to remove both “Gypsy” designations in use at the time (*Kıpti ve Çingene lafzı*) from official records as well as from colloquial speech “in this legitimate era and felicitous constitutional period during which we are bestowed the honor of the gloriousness of justice and equality.”⁸⁰ In the wake of the Hamidian era (1876–1909), they were ostensibly encouraged by the emancipatory promises of the early years (1908–12) of the Second Constitutional Era, much like many other Ottoman communities had been in this fleeting early twentieth-century moment with roots in the political developments and social debates of much of the nineteenth century.⁸¹

The second half of the nineteenth century was marked by legal interventions into the established rules of membership in Ottoman society that sought to render the ideology of Ottomanism official and functional. In 1869, the Ottoman Nationality Law (*Tabiiyet-i Osmaniye Kanunnamesi*) was ratified: it deemed anyone with Ottoman parents, or at least an Ottoman father,

⁷⁹ *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi*, Volume 4, Term 1, Assembly Year 1, Session 86 (23 May 1325 RH / June 5, 1909), 122.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ See Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution*.

a citizen of the Empire.⁸² Expanding on the *Tanzimat* edicts of 1839 and 1856,⁸³ the Constitution of 1876 stipulated that all Ottoman nationals (*Devlet-i Osmaniye tabiiyetinde bulunan efradın cümlesi*) were to be called Ottomans regardless of their religious and sectarian affiliation, further cementing the notion of nationality.⁸⁴ Most significantly, the reorganization period of the nineteenth century involved gradual reforms to the traditional structure of taxation based on Islamic law, which had been the foundation upon which the hierarchies of Ottoman society had been constructed.⁸⁵ Taxation had not only constituted the demarcation between tax-paying subjects and the ruling elite who tax exemption, but for centuries had also been the backbone of the relationship between the Empire and its diverse tax-paying subjects through the differential treatment of Muslims vis-à-vis non-Muslims. Through these reforms, the meaning of being “an Ottoman” was reformulated.

Yet, constitutional and other legislative advances that were meant to guarantee the equal treatment of all Ottomans did not translate into a redressing of the prejudice against the Roma, which deepened in the nineteenth century. Ottoman Roma had been subjected to special laws addressing their taxation; tax collectors often did not discriminate between Muslim and Christian Roma, thus levying a higher amount from Muslim-identifying ones; and the Roma of the empire were labeled as ‘Gypsy’ in their identity documents. The 1909 petition of a group of Salonican Roma was but one instance of seeking justice in the face of evolving official practices that amounted to the ethnicization of Romani identity and the institutionalization of Romani alterity.

⁸² A. Ebru Akcasu, “Migrants to Citizens: An Evaluation of the Expansionist Features of Hamidian Ottomanism, 1876–1909,” *Die Welt des Islams* 56 (2016): 390.

⁸³ Suna Kili and Şeref Gözübüyük, eds., *Sened-i İttifak’tan Günümüze Türk Anayasa Metinleri* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006 [1985]), 11–14 and 15–21.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸⁵ Shaw, “Ottoman Tax Reforms.”

As will be discussed in this chapter, the reinstated Ottoman assembly of the early twentieth century not only failed to address the issue of removing markers of difference as their Romani supplicants had wished, but instead, furthered it through a parliamentary discussion that revealed the ethnic and racial anxieties of this tumultuous period at the end of the Empire.

“Half Nation”: Romani Alterity in the Making

In the Ottoman Empire, while all Muslim subjects were, in principle, considered equal with respect to Islamic law, in practice, some Muslims were more equal than others. A popular saying dating back to an unspecified Ottoman period goes, “There are seventy-two and a half nations in Turkey,” that “half nation” (*buçuk millet*) denoting the Roma. The pejorative “half nation” designation epitomizes the ethnoreligious in-between status assigned to the Romani population of the empire. Indeed, Muslim Romani communities have come to be a specially-treated sub-community of Muslims of the empire, whose “existence was buttressed by a long list of regulations and taxation acts that, while clearly discriminating against them, nevertheless made them a legitimate part of Ottoman society and a steady source of state revenues. The place given to Gypsies, however, was unmistakably inferior.”⁸⁶ For instance, this ascribed inferiority can be observed in a restriction imposed in the sixteenth century on the Roma’s choice of mount. “[T]he horse being preferred over the donkey as a more honorable mount,” Leslie Peirce notes, “forbidding non-Muslims to ride horses was one of the measures periodically enforced by Muslim authorities when they wanted to remind Christians and Jews of their legally inferior status.”⁸⁷ Remarkably, in 1585 such a measure was inflicted upon the “Gypsies of İstanbul and Rumelia.” They were reported to the

⁸⁶ Ginio, “Neither Muslims nor Zimmis,” 141.

⁸⁷ Leslie Peirce, “The Material World: Ideologies and Ordinary Things,” in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, eds. Virginia H. Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge, UK, and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 216.

imperial court to be “committing malice and atrocities” and the court’s response was to prohibit them from mounting horses and raising mares, while allowing them to ride donkeys and ox-carts when necessary.⁸⁸ The absence of any reference to religious affiliation in this imperial order meant that, in this instance, the Ottoman state had expanded its control and differentiation efforts ordinarily reserved for Christian and Jewish subjects to an entire group they identified as “Gypsies,” regardless of their religious persuasion.

As Ottoman territories expanded into Eastern Europe in the fifteenth century, the annexed territories brought an increasing number of communities under Ottoman rule. Among those communities were the Roma who are believed to have migrated through Anatolia to the outskirts of Europe and beyond during Byzantine times.⁸⁹ The state’s desire to establish control over its Romani subjects, a desire legitimized at times through references to their high levels of mobility and compounded by unfavorable perceptions about their morality and religiosity, dates back to the fifteenth century, starting with the Decree on the Number of Sheep Belonging to Rumelian Turks (*Rumeli Etrâkinün Koyun Adedi*) issued during the reign of Mehmed II (r. 1444–46, 1451–81). This decree specified the amount of poll-tax to be collected from each and every Roma regardless of their religious persuasion, but with the exemption of blacksmiths employed to work on the construction of fortresses. Most significantly, Muslim Roma were forbidden to associate or reside with non-Muslim Roma on pain of incarceration.⁹⁰

Around the turn of the sixteenth century, the Roma of Rumelia, who consisted of both regular subjects and those performing auxiliary services in the military, were organized into a

⁸⁸ Ahmet Refik Altınay, *Onuncu Asr-ı Hicrîde İstanbul Hayatı*, ed. Abdullah Uysal (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2000 [1917]), 252–53.

⁸⁹ Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies*, 1–2.

⁹⁰ Ahmed Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukukî Tahlilleri* vol. 1 (İstanbul: FEY Vakfı Yayınları, 1990), 397–400.

“Gypsy sub-province” (*Çingâne Sancağı* or *Livâ-yı Çingâne*)⁹¹ which was not a geographical construct but rather a socio-fiscal unit. The formation of this administrative segment meant that the Ottoman government aspired to establish stricter and more centralized surveillance over their mobility patterns and tax payments. The existence of such a sub-province, which survived well into the late 1500s⁹² is evidenced by the first Ottoman law solely targeting the Roma, promulgated in 1497: the Law of the Poll-Tax of the Gypsies (*Kânun-ı Cizye-i Çingâneha*), which stipulated the taxation of non-Muslim Roma in further detail than had the mid-fifteenth-century decree.⁹³

Forty years later, in 1530, another law targeting the Roma was issued: the “Law of the Gypsies of the Province of Rumelia” (*Kânunnâme-i Kıbtîyân-ı Vilâyet-i Rumeli*) reiterated the previous prohibition of Muslim Roma from commingling with their non-Muslim counterparts, once again imposing incarceration and higher tax payments on those who did. Moreover, the Law of the Gypsies of Rumelia specified a two-tiered taxation for Muslim and non-Muslim Roma. Yet the trifling difference (22 and 25 aspers, respectively) evokes the notion that in the case of the Roma, once again, an unwillingness—or inability—to apply the basic social differentiation principle of the empire, which was religious affiliation. Much like their early modern European counterparts who were subjected to anti-Gypsy persecution due to their supposedly “questionable Christianity” and “objectionable way of life,”⁹⁴ the Muslim Roma’s adherence to Islam was seemingly undervalued in the Ottoman Empire. So much so that Peter Sugar remarked, in the context of early seventeenth-century Sofia, that “while Gypsies were considered such low people

⁹¹ Faika Çelik, “Exploring Marginality in the Ottoman Empire: Gypsies or People of Malice (Ehl-i Fesad) as Viewed by the Ottomans,” EUI Working Paper RSCAS No. 2004/39: 6.

⁹² Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri* vol. 8 (İstanbul: FEY Vakfı Yayınları, 1994), 651–52.

⁹³ Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri* vol. 2 (İstanbul: FEY Vakfı Yayınları, 1990), 383–86.

⁹⁴ Shulamith Shahar, “Religious Minorities, Vagabonds and Gypsies in Early Modern Europe,” in *The Roma: A Minority in Europe: Historical, Political and Social Perspectives*, eds. Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2007), 9.

that even Muslims could be taxed illegally, their religion was still worth a 70 *akçe* tax discount” in contrast to that of Christian Roma (180 and 250 aspers, respectively).⁹⁵

However, it is important to note that early modern Ottoman court records exhibit cases where Muslim Roma sought relief from this incoherent and unjust practice. Discriminating tax collection, as imposed on Romani subjects, was a frequent matter of contention that led the Roma to take up their grievances with local judges, and even the imperial court. Moreover, the palace seems to have responded favorably to some petitions from the Muslim-identifying Roma. For instance, a group residing in the Üsküplü quarter of İstanbul appealed to the sultan in 1618, stating that they were offended by tax collectors who tried to levy from them the poll- and land-tax designated for non-Muslims (*harâc* and *ispençe*). The palace’s response to this petition was accommodating:

[G]iven that the aforementioned are believers and members of the community of Muslims, and given that they mingle with Muslims and perform the five daily prayers and recite the glorious Qur’an, as do their sons, and given that they do not mingle with other Gypsies and they pay the household tax (*avarız*) and other taxes together with the inhabitants of the neighborhood wherein they live and have committed no fault; therefore do not permit anyone to offend or frighten the aforementioned, and do not request *harâc* and *ispençe*, and do not give them reason to complain again.⁹⁶

Such occasional decrees, however, did not become established practice and did not always set a precedence for future tax collectors and local administrators. Thus, the Roma did have reason to

⁹⁵ Peter F. Sugar, *Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1996 [1977]), 103.

⁹⁶ Yılmaz Karaca et al., eds., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri: İstanbul Mahkemesi 3 Numaralı Sicil (H. 1027 / M. 1618)* (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010), 487–88.

complain again, which they continued to do through petitions.⁹⁷ In other words, individual decrees issued to address the grievances of particular petitioners did not become established guidelines for future local officials in their treatment of the Roma.

At other times, it was other Ottoman communities that rendered ‘Romani alterity’ visible and brought the issue before the attention of the imperial court. The reasons were usually cohabitation and contestation over space. A decree sent to the judge of İstanbul in 1761, for instance, addressed a complaint by the Muslim residents of the Hoca Ali neighborhood in Eğrikapı that, they said, was being increasingly taken over by the migrant Roma from the countryside, who were purchasing and inhabiting houses previously owned by Muslims. In addition, Hoca Ali residents complained about the noise made by the animals that the Roma kept for performances, and claimed that the twigs they collected for making brooms constituted a fire hazard. In conclusion, the Roma were ordered to strictly remain within their own quarters.⁹⁸ A few weeks later, a follow-up decree was issued, with the addendum that those who did not abide would be expelled from the neighborhood and sent back to their previous locations by the authorities.⁹⁹ Significantly, the religious affiliation of the Roma was not mentioned in the decrees, while the residents of the neighborhood in question were clearly specified as Muslim, underscoring the exclusion of the Roma from the larger Muslim society, and thus rendering this incident to an instance of not inter- but intra-communal strife. It was through these practices that the Roma, in

⁹⁷ See, for instance, Yılmaz Karaca et al., eds., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri: İstanbul Mahkemesi 12 Numaralı Sicil (H. 1073 / M. 1663-1664)* (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010), 817–18; Hüseyin Kılıç et al., eds., *İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri: Bâb Mahkemesi 54 Numaralı Sicil (H. 1102 / M. 1691)* (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2011), 435–36; and Tülün Değirmenci, “Sözleri Dinlensin, Tasviri İzlensin: Tulû’î’nin Paşanâme’si ve 17. Yüzyıldan Eşkîya Hikâyeleri,” *Kebikeç* 33 (2012): 135–40.

⁹⁸ Ahmet Kal’a et al., eds., *İstanbul Ahkâm Defterleri: İstanbul’da Sosyal Hayat 2 (1755-1765)* (İstanbul: İstanbul Araştırmaları Merkezi, 1998), 238–39.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 273–75.

Eyal Ginio's words, "were pushed into a twilight zone between the two [confessional categories, Islam and Christianity], and subsequently formed a group of their own."¹⁰⁰

Indeed, the Muslim Roma's adherence to Islam—or any other faith, for that matter—in the Ottoman Empire was met with considerable suspicion by both Ottoman officials and society at large, "to the extent that they were characterized by the surrounding society as pagans who only pretended to profess a religion."¹⁰¹ In the seventeenth century, the Ottoman traveler Evliyâ Çelebi (1611–82) attested to this impression in his "Book of Travels" by citing the practices of "Rumelian Gypsies" who were said to have been deported from Komotini to İstanbul by Mehmed II:

The Rumelian Gypsies celebrated Easter with the Christians, the Festival of Sacrifice with the Muslims, and Passover with the Jews. They did not accept any one religion, and therefore our imams refused to conduct funeral services for them but gave them a special cemetery outside [Eğrikapu]. It is because they are such renegades that they were ordered to pay an additional tax for non-Muslims (*harâc*). That is why a double *harâc* is exacted from the Gypsies. In fact, according to Sultan Mehmed's census stipulation (*tahrîr*), *harâc* is even exacted from the dead souls of the Gypsies, until live ones are found to replace them.¹⁰²

The in-betweenness-turned-difference of the Ottoman Roma is further demonstrated in a late nineteenth-century incident that transpired in Rumelia: in 1888, Alexandre Paspatis wrote of a fatality that had occurred among the bear-leading Roma of Değirmenköy (in present-day İstanbul) in 1866. The question of where Mustafa, the deceased Romani bear leader, would be buried proved

¹⁰⁰ Ginio, "Neither Muslims nor Zimmis," 119.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁰² Evliyâ Çelebi b. Derviş Mehmed Zillî, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi: 1-6. Kitaplar*, vol. 2, edited by Seyit Ali Kahraman, Yücel Dağlı, Robert Dankoff, Zekeriya Kurşun, and İbrahim Sezgin (İstanbul: YKY, 2011), 8/37. The English translation of this passage is taken from Victor A. Friedman and Robert Dankoff, "The Earliest Known Text in Balkan (Rumelian) Romani: A Passage from Evliya Çelebi's *Seyâhat-nâme*," *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* Fifth Series 1, no. 1 (Feb. 1991): 4.

complicated, and illustrates the fact that the Ottoman Roma were ostracized by both Muslim and non-Muslim communities:

His companions went to the Greek priest in the village to have him buried, but the priest, knowing that up to that day he had been called Mustapha, was unwilling to bury him. His companions had alleged that his name was Theodore. Finally the Turks, finding no vestige of circumcision, gave him up as a Christian, and he was buried according to the rites of the Christian Church.¹⁰³

Most importantly, the fact that Paspatis readily reached the conclusion that this incident was a “striking example of [the Roma’s] indifference to religion” in his article published in the very first issue of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* shows, once again, not only the salience and persistence of such notions about the lack of religious conformity on the part of the Roma, but also that these notions were disseminated to reinforce public perceptions, if not to actually create them.¹⁰⁴

The aforementioned early modern practices were, in fact, precursors to the ethnicization of Romani identity. By the nineteenth century, the institutionalization of Romani alterity in the Ottoman context was on its way to becoming well-established. By deprecating the Roma’s alleged nonconformity to religious norms and, more specifically, by regarding Christian Roma as separate from other Christian subjects and Muslim Roma as separate from other Muslim subjects of the Empire, local and provincial officials were thus subverting the dominant organization of Ottoman imperial subjects, namely by confessional demarcation, that had been enforced by a complex system of taxation for centuries. In the face of this persistent exclusionary treatment, petitioning was the Roma’s most powerful tool for having their grievances addressed.

¹⁰³ Paspatis, “Turkish Gypsies,” 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Humble Servants Seeking Justice

Petitioning the highest imperial authorities as a way to redress grievances was a long-established Ottoman legal institution at the disposal of the ordinary subjects of the Empire, firmly embedded in the cultivated understanding of patrimonial rule.¹⁰⁵ Initially, imperial edicts issued in response to incidents reported from across the Ottoman realm to the Imperial Court were included in *mühimme* (lit. things of import) registers first established in 1544. Subsequently, petitioning was institutionalized with the creation of distinct registers of complaint (*şikâyet defteri*) in 1649, maintained separately until 1813.¹⁰⁶ Even though petitioning was available to the ruling class (*askeri*) and tax-paying subjects (*reaya*)—literate and illiterate, men and women, Muslims and non-Muslims alike—its particular significance and political salience for the latter groups, and especially the further disenfranchized among them, cannot be overstated.¹⁰⁷

Since the “Protection of the *reaya* constituted the basic obligation for the Sultan, as the *reaya* paid the taxes without which the state would have collapsed,” responding to petitions sent by all Ottoman subjects and ameliorating the wrongful decisions of local courts and the abuses of local officials or corrupt tax collectors, as well as resolving land disputes, interpersonal or

¹⁰⁵ Halil İnalçık, “Şikâyet Hakkı: ‘Arz-ı Hâl ve ‘Arz-ı Mahzarlar,” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* VII–VIII (1988): 50. For the patrimonial quality of sultanic authority and its interplay with bureaucratization, see Karen Barkey, “The Ottoman Empire (1299–1923): The Bureaucratization of Patrimonial Authority,” in *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History: From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, eds. Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 102–26. For the broader bureaucratization of Ottoman rule, see Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789–1922* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).

¹⁰⁶ Heather L. Ferguson, *The Proper Order of Things: Language, Power, and Law in Ottoman Administrative Discourses* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 14 fn 46.

¹⁰⁷ A recent work of note that makes particular use of women’s petitions, for instance, is Elif Mahir Metinsoy, *Ottoman Women During World War I: Everyday Experiences, Politics, and Conflict* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

intercommunal conflicts were an integral part of that obligation.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, along with other records produced and processed within the domains, petitions helped “generate the very categories and principles of organization on which an Ottoman understanding of statecraft and sovereign authority came to rest.”¹⁰⁹ By appealing to the patrimonial compassion and mercy of the ruler, subjects of the Empire were reaffirming the Imperial Court’s claim to being the preeminent distributor of justice. Thus, petitions did not merely “guarantee a link between the ruler and the ruled.”¹¹⁰ Nor were they only “weapons of the weak,” to adopt James Scott’s term for everyday forms of rural resistance.¹¹¹ They were also ““weapons of the powerful,”” enabling the sultan to oversee the lives of his subjects and the workings of state officialdom, and to allot justice when needed as part of the fulfillment of patrimonial legitimacy. Therefore, the long-standing institution of petitioning served multiple purposes at once: legitimizing the imperial order, legitimizing the ruler’s authority and power, as well as legitimizing the tax-paying subject’s right to political action in this particular form, within an order that otherwise reserved that right for only the ruling elite.¹¹²

In 1909, however, the sultan as “the magnanimous dispenser of justice” was not the authority to which the Salonican petitioners were appealing.¹¹³ Despite myriad institutional

¹⁰⁸ Suraiya Faroqhi, *Coping with the State: Political Conflict and Crime in the Ottoman Empire 1550-1720* (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 1995), 40.

¹⁰⁹ Ferguson, *Proper Order of Things*, 13.

¹¹⁰ Michael Ursinus, *Grievance Administration (Şikayet) in an Ottoman Province: The Kaymakam of Rumelia’s ‘Record Book of Complaints’ of 1781–1783* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 3.

¹¹¹ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).

¹¹² Faroqhi, *Coping with the State*, 13–14; Ferguson, *Proper Order of Things*, 12–14; Henry Clements, “Documenting Community in the Late Ottoman Empire,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 51 (2019): 425–428.

¹¹³ Hakan T. Karateke, “Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate: A Framework for Historical Analysis,” in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, eds. Hakan T. Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 39.

transformations brought about by the *Tanzimat* era, the practice of petitioning prevailed until the end of the Empire and well into the Turkish Republic.¹¹⁴ In fact, the introduction of the telegraph in the mid-1850s as a remarkably inexpensive and exceptionally efficient method of communication (the method these Salonican petitioners employed as well) made it easier for the disenfranchised to partake in this practice and make their complaints heard.¹¹⁵ Notably, the 1876 Constitution that promised equal rights to all Ottoman subject-citizens regardless of religious and sectarian distinctions also ensured the survival of the institution of petitioning by codifying it in its Article 14 and clearly articulating the right to petition the Parliament.¹¹⁶ Following the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, the 1909 and 1914 amendments to the Constitution left this article untouched, validating its continued salience.¹¹⁷ It was this right the petitioners from the Salonica province exercised in 1909, whether knowingly or not.

While surely not nearly as elaborate as the forms of address found in petitions presented to the sultan or the grand vizier either by directly reaching the Imperial Court,¹¹⁸ by referring to themselves as “humble servants” (*âcizleri*), the petitioners were relying on an older notion of patrimonial justice distribution to seek redress for their grievance, thereby expressing their subjectivity within the framework of humble subjecthood to authority. At the same time, by making references to the new constitutional era and evoking the language of justice and unity, they were claiming rightful representation as an equal member of the Ottoman—Muslim—community,

¹¹⁴ Yiğit Akin, “Reconsidering State, Party, and Society in Early Republican Turkey: Politics of Petitioning,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 39, no. 3 (Aug. 2007): 435–57.

¹¹⁵ Yuval Ben-Bassat, *Petitioning the Sultan: Protests and Justice in Late Ottoman Palestine 1865–1908* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 34–35.

¹¹⁶ Kili and Gözübüyük, *Türk Anayasa Metinleri*, 37.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ For instance, cf. Gülden Sarıyıldız, *Sokak Yazıcıları: Osmanlılarda Arzuhaller ve Arzuhalçiler* (İstanbul: Derlem Yayınları, 2010), 161, 165.

using a vocabulary of dutiful piety. Therefore, the petition presented at the beginning of this chapter must be read as an attempt to form a newfound relationship with the emergent governing body after previous attempts by other Romani individuals and groups had failed, with the hope that it would ameliorate the wrongdoings of the previous regime, contest the long-standing prejudicial classification practices directed at them, and ensure the acknowledgement of their belonging in the larger Muslim community of the Empire. In the last instance, in their appeal to the Chamber of Deputies of the recently reinstated Ottoman Parliament, this anonymous group of petitioners were speaking on behalf of the broader Ottoman Romani community while making demands for their own small-scaled collectivity.¹¹⁹

In the practice of petitioning, the mostly illiterate subjects of the Empire (and one might assume our petitioning Roma were among them) sought the services of specially-licensed petition scribes to convey their grievances to authorities.¹²⁰ Not only did these scribes follow certain formulations in their composition, but they must also have been informed by their own perceptions about the complainants, in addition to bringing in their knowledge of how to frame certain issues so that they would be received well. Thus, one should not presume that the scribes were merely recording what they were told by illiterate supplicants. With such layers of mediation in place, one would be remiss to take the words in the 1909 petition (or any other petition, for that matter) as the ‘voice’ of the Roma. However, it would be even more incorrect to dismiss it as an isolated demand that emerged solely in the context of the Second Constitutional Era. As the aforementioned cases from previous periods demonstrate, Muslim-identifying Romani subjects of the Empire had

¹¹⁹ The petition text is only found in the Ottoman parliamentary minutes as read out loud to deputies, therefore we do not know the names and number of the signatories.

¹²⁰ Sarıyıldız, *Sokak Yazıcıları*, 101–2.

long been attempting to establish their rightful inclusion in the Ottoman community at large, and in the Muslim Ottoman community in particular.

Who is an Ottoman? Who are the Roma?

During the June 5, 1909 session of the Chamber of Deputies, the plea of the Salonican petitioners was selected to be read and addressed.¹²¹ After the telegram was read out loud at the Parliament, a few deputies took the floor to immediately declare their unfaltering support for the elimination of the *Kıptî* designation and proposed that “Gypsies” be registered as either Muslim or Christian according to their faith. However, Taşlıca (present-day Pljevlja) deputy Major Ali Vasfi Bey vehemently opposed this proposal:

This word Gypsy must under no circumstances be abolished. They were born Gypsies, what can we do about it? Among the military, the Gypsies are not allowed to rise above the rank of corporal. If the word Gypsy is abolished, over time it will disappear. Their name will change, but their morals will not. Consequently it is wrong to include a people that is not accepted by any army, by any one of the European armies, among other elements. (...) If that name is abolished, they will mix in with the rest of the soldiery. (...) There was a Gypsy among my soldiers (...) and I may be excused for using this word, for I can call another soldier “my child” or “my brother” but unfortunately not them.

In response to his fierce opposition, another deputy warned Ali Vasfi Bey that his opinions were in discord with the Constitution. Even though the Taşlıca deputy insisted that the army’s “spiritual power, morals, and virtues” should be considered before the Constitution, the debate soon moved on to different foci, those of “Gypsy morality” and education:

Even if we suppose that they are of Gypsy origin, if they wish for their name to be changed out of a zeal for Islam, to reject their wishes is not permissible whether from the point of

¹²¹ Not all petitions were taken to the chamber; some were discarded by the petition council on the grounds that they were too detailed or not written in Turkish. *Ibid.*, 96.

view of patriotism or of religious law. The theory advanced by our esteemed member of Parliament and military friend concerning their immorality is most incorrect. For such immorality, as is well known to all, is not born of their mothers alongside themselves but derives from the ill breeding of their mothers and fathers. Given that they accept the name of Islam, that they came to be Muslims, if they are indeed committed to their claims of belonging to Islam, then their morals must be improved by establishing formal schools and by other educational measures. They must also be accepted into the army and registered as Muslims, while ways of rehabilitating them are sought.¹²²

İstanbul deputy Mustafa Âsım Efendi, on the other hand, approached the matter from an ethno-racial angle. Arguing that “From a tribal standpoint, these men are called *Çingene* and that is the appropriate term for them,” he continued on to suggest that the government had replaced the word *Çingene* with *Kiptî* as a euphemism, since the “‘Coptic’ tribe is originally a respectable people.” For Mustafa Âsım Efendi “some tribes are known for good morals and virtues.” Yet in the last instance, he agreed with the Bursa deputy that education should take precedence over disposition and within generations render the Gypsies “beneficial,” as long as they “truly become members of one of the officially recognized sects in the lands currently ruled by the Sublime State, and are educated according to the principles of that sect.”¹²³

These ideas, in fact, were fully in line with the civilizational notions espoused by the previous regime that the Young Turk movement had toppled. Remarkably, the discriminating practices of local administrators towards Ottoman Roma were scrutinized in a memorandum submitted to Abdülhamid II on February 4, 1891. It was written by Sadi Bey, the Ottoman and Persian language instructor at the Siroz (present-day Serres) Preparatory and Civil Service School. A perfect example of the Hamidian rule’s bent for governmentality and data collection, the report

¹²² *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi* (1909), 123.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 124.

stated that “Gypsy is an ill-omened word that, when pronounced, conjures the abominable acts of an [evil] people.” Qualifying them as “a tribe of ignoramuses” who are “envious of the blessings dogs receive,” but nevertheless, still deserving of mercy in the name of Islam and humanity, Sadi Bey went on to lament the fact that the Roma had been left to their own resources and discriminated against:

Although the Gypsies became Muslims when they pledged their lives to the glorious power of the everlasting and eternal Ottoman state, they are still inscribed in census records as “Gypsies” and are subject to distinct procedures!...

If the requisite care had been taken for their—specifically religious—education, Sadi Bey continued, “they themselves would have long forgotten that they are Gypsies.”¹²⁴

Sadi Bey’s report culminated in a sentimental encouragement for the government to “rehabilitate” the Roma so as to reduce crime and transform them into useful citizens. He wrote: “Given that the Gypsies, whose humanity one does not doubt, are Muslims, would anyone with a conscience acquiesce to their being dispossessed in both this world and the next?”¹²⁵ A noteworthy imperial attempt at breaking down prejudices and discriminatory actions of local administrators following this memorandum was to rename some of the neighborhoods previously—and notoriously—known as “Gypsy quarter”s (*Kıpti mahallesi*).¹²⁶ However, and conversely, the Hamidian government in some cases also undertook either the settlement of Romani immigrants

¹²⁴ BOA Y.MTV.47.180 (24 Cemaziyelahir 1308 [February 4, 1891]).

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ See, for instance, BOA DH.MKT.2287.54 (18 Şaban 1317 [December 22, 1899]); BOA DH.MKT.2374.114 (19 Rebiülevvel 1318 [July 17, 1900]); BOA ŞD.2129.13 (19 Şevval 1318 [February 9, 1901]); BOA ŞD.1579.4 (19 Cemaziyelevvel 1318 [September 14, 1900]); BOA BEO.1668.125073 (13 Safer 1319 [June 1, 1901]); BOA DH.MKT.628.64 (7 Şevval 1320 [January 7, 1903]); BOA BEO.1998.149819 (14 Zilkade 1320 [February 12, 1903]); BOA ŞD.1586.15 (1 Rebiülahir 1321 [June 27, 1903]); BOA BEO.2136.160138 (15 Cemaziyelevvel 1321 [August 9, 1903]).

from the Balkans into newly constituted separate quarters, or the further segregation of existing Muslim Romani communities into their own districts.¹²⁷ In the final decades of the Empire, the government not only lacked the willingness to make a concerted effort to ameliorate the physical segregation and stigmatization of the Roma, but furthermore it contributed to them by establishing new “Gypsy quarters,” even if they were not called as such anymore.

Towards the end the of the 1909 parliamentary debate on the Romani petition, some deputies had misgivings about the optimism held by others (“I am certain that even if we wished to change their name, other *Kıptî* will not renounce their Gypsiness,”), and proposed that the Chamber refer this intricate “matter of ethnicity (*kavmiyet*)” to the attention of the Office of the Shaikh al-Islam.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, the debate was capped off with a zealous speech delivered by İpek (Kosovo) deputy Hafız İbrahim Efendi, whose approach was endorsed and celebrated by the Chief of Chamber, Ahmed Rıza, by virtue of its congruence with both humanitarianism and constitutional law:

We look at human beings, whether from the standpoint of their organization or their persons, [and see that] there is discord among the tribes of peoples. (...) All the people qualified as Ottoman without regard to any nation or element, the totality of the people qualified as such, are equal under the law. From the standpoint of the law, no Ottoman is different from any other. (...) They say “we, too, are qualified as Ottoman, and we too are subject to these laws. And since we have been known by this name which is wretched and of ill repute among everyone, we beg you to abolish this name.” I beg this in the name of Ottomanness. We cannot accept any name that will offend any people and we must abolish

¹²⁷ See, for instance, BOA İ.DH.1299.1 (2 Rebiülahir 1310 [October 24, 1892]); BOA İ.DH.1363.29 (25 Zilhicce 1316 [May 6, 1899]); BOA BEO.1306.97923 (29 Zilhicce 1316 [May 10, 1899]); BOA DH.TMIK.S.62.63 (4 Rebiülevvel 1324 [April 28, 1906]); BOA DH.MKT.1141.72 (26 Zilhicce 1324 [February 10, 1907]); BOA İ.DH.1457.52 (27 Recep 1325 [September 5, 1907]); BOA ŞD.2056.2 (29 Ramazan 1325 [November 5, 1907]); BOA TFR.I.KV.172.17152 (16 Recep 1325 [August 25, 1907]).

¹²⁸ *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi* (1909), 124.

it. (...) We shall not qualify people based on race (*ırk*) or [religious] element (*unsur*). We shall qualify them based on their humanity and their service to the motherland. If one serves well our army and our motherland, but his ancestor was this or that, who cares? (...) We shall not place any identifying mark upon any class (*sınıf*), we shall just say “Ottoman.”

The result was the Chamber’s decision to refer this matter to the Office of the Grand Vizier.¹²⁹ The Ottoman deputies’ responses to the 1909 petition of the Salonican Roma is of particular significance in representing the shades of Ottomanism that were under negotiation before their abandonment in favor of Turkism, especially following the 1913 coup d’état which consolidated all power in the hands of the CUP.

The closing speech of this particular parliamentary debate appears to be a triumph of Ottomanism, as “the idea that all of the different ethnic and religious communities of the Empire would coalesce into one Ottoman citizenry and remain loyal to the Ottoman dynasty if only Muslims and non-Muslims were granted full equality before the law and parliamentary representation.”¹³⁰ Indeed, in an article he published in the *Times* in 1895, Chief of Chamber Ahmed Rıza had declared to the English-speaking West that “We ask for reforms, not only for this or that province but for the Empire as a whole, not in favour of any one nationality, but in favour of all Ottomans, Jews, Christians, and Mahometans. We desire to advance in the path of civilization, but above all we do not wish to advance save by strengthening the Ottoman element, while respecting the general conditions of Ottoman life.”¹³¹ However, the debate sparked by the 1909 petition of the Salonican Roma revealed the inherent contradictions in the ideology and practice of Ottomanism in particular, and in late Ottoman governance in general: “The reformers

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 124–25.

¹³⁰ Zürcher, “Young Turks,” 153.

¹³¹ Quoted in Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, 78.

sought to cultivate an Ottoman identity irrespective of religious difference, but the only way they could conceive of the heterogeneous population that had to be homogenized was on the basis of membership in a religious community.”¹³² After all, even in the Constitution, the newly formulated Ottoman identity was subsumed under a Muslim identity by declaring Islam the official religion of the state.¹³³ The petitioners—and possibly their scribe—were reflecting this in their depiction of dutiful piety, even amidst the uprooting of the old regime. Neither within this debate, nor in the imperial decree and the ministerial correspondences spanning a period of more than a decade was there a consensus among Ottoman authorities regarding how to classify and label the Muslim Roma. Moreover, the Ministry of the Interior ruled in 1909 that the requests for the removal of the “Muslim Gypsy” designation conformed to the articles of the Constitution and such designations would be removed from Ottoman identity documents.¹³⁴

Unfortunately, this ruling did not bring an end to the confusion among local administrators, nor did it have a lasting influence: in 1914, the Ministry of the Interior would once again be asked whether or not the “Gypsy” designation should be added to the identity documents of the Roma.¹³⁵ As the CUP consolidated more power during the final decade of the Empire and moved the needle further towards Turkish nationalism, the ministry’s response demonstrated a departure from what had promisingly seemed like a lasting redress in 1909: removing the “Gypsy” designation from the identity documents of the Roma, and in effect, withdrawing the visibility of the Roma, was no longer acceptable in 1914. The reversal decision was made on behalf of the residents of a Muslim Romani quarter in Erzincan.¹³⁶ Later in 1919, this decision was reiterated in the case of the

¹³² Clements, “Documenting Community,” 438.

¹³³ Kili and Gözübüyük, *Türk Anayasa Metinleri*, 37.

¹³⁴ BOA DH.MKT.2718.80 (2 Muharrem 1327 [January 24, 1909]).

¹³⁵ BOA DH.SN.THR.51.26 (29 Cemaziyelevvel 1332 [April 25, 1914]).

¹³⁶ BOA DH.İD.63.39 (2 Cemaziyelahir 1332 [April 28, 1914]).

statistical registers of the town of Mudurnu wherein Muslim Roma had initially been included among the rest of the Muslim population, resulting in the request for the revision of an entire register.¹³⁷

The Toll of Census-Taking

The matter of marking Muslim-identifying Roma with the designation “Gypsy” (*Kıptî*) in identity documents and thus not only deeming them separate from the rest of the empire’s Muslim subjects but also, and more importantly, rendering them easily identifiable to the Ottoman bureaucracy was never *resolved* in the way the petitioning Roma had wished it to be. Nevertheless, it did *dissolve* along with the dissolution of the empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, which adopted the inscription of only religious affiliation—and not of any ethnolinguistic designation—in identity documents.

In addition to issuing identity documents to the subject-citizens of the Empire, census-taking was another apparatus of modernized and centralized governance that the Ottoman state introduced during the nineteenth century. However, how the population of the Empire was classified in surveys and recorded in registers had less to do with self-identifications and the internal boundaries of the Ottoman society and more with the projection of an official vision of society, while at the same time displaying the reach of the centralizing state. Indeed, by collecting population data, the state was not merely aiming to render society “legible” as it existed,¹³⁸ through the act of documenting population figures according to ethnoreligious categories, the state was playing a central and active role in the reification and institutionalization of these very categories.

¹³⁷ BOA DH.SN.THR.83.74 (22 Recep 1337 [April 23, 1919]).

¹³⁸ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 2.

By virtue of the “inventive capacities of the category,”¹³⁹ censuses and population registers in the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic were at once demonstrative *and* constitutive, effectively and significantly shaping internal boundary-making processes, if not monopolizing them.

In 1887 Samuel S. Cox, who served as the United States Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Ottoman Empire between August 1885 and September 1886, recounted in his memoirs the conversations he had had with Sultan Abdülhamid II the year before: “[I]n reply to [the sultan’s] curiosity as to the miraculous growth of our own land in population and resources,” Cox told him that “the only way in which he could possibly understand our advancement would be to take the salient points out of our Census reports, and especially the Tenth Census (1880), have them suitably translated, and apply them to his own land. He would thus see what an advertisement a good census would be of the vast resources of his own empire.”¹⁴⁰ Samuel Cox then proceeded to have the 1880 U.S. census reports, the census law, instructions, and blanks delivered to the palace, “So that probably Turkey may, if peace prevail, have a census of her own.”¹⁴¹ In fact, the Ottoman Empire had attempted to conduct several censuses by 1887. Cox’s emphasis on the census being a display of advancement was, as a matter of fact, a shared notion found in an April 21, 1881 report on the 1881–82 census by the Council of State:

It is a duty to mention before everything else that the interest of a government in compilation of a systematic population statistics does not stem solely from military considerations. To know the exact numbers of its own population is a great achievement in matters of order and regularity for a government interested in law, property safeguards,

¹³⁹ Evelyn S. Ruppert, “Category,” in *Inventive Methods: The Happening of the Social*, eds. Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 36.

¹⁴⁰ Samuel S. Cox, *Diversions of a Diplomat in Turkey* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1887), 37.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 44.

financial stability, and municipal order and security. The European States attach great and continuous care to the collection and distribution of information on the population. It is imperative, urgent, and essential for us to accomplish this important task in a perfect fashion.¹⁴²

In the nineteenth century, for the Ottoman government, the significance of census-taking had exceeded its earlier purpose of surveying eligible males for the military and determining tax revenue sources: it had become a necessity for and a marker of modern (westernized and rationalized) governance—one that the Empire ought to adopt too.

Until the nineteenth century, population data in the Ottoman Empire were partially recorded in local registers (*tahrir*), without a single central institution overseeing and directing collection methods and systematically compiling results. Moreover, the main focus of these registers was to survey cultivated lands for fiscal purposes, and not necessarily to count each and every person in the empire.¹⁴³ The first Ottoman attempt at conducting a census in 1826–28 remained unfinished due to the 1828–29 Russian war.¹⁴⁴ In its stead, the 1831 census came to be largely accepted as the first Ottoman census, its incompleteness and shortcomings notwithstanding: only men were counted, and more importantly, census takers were given only broad instructions and left to their own devices when it came to which categories they employed.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Translated by and quoted in Kemal Karpat, “Ottoman Population Records and the Census of 1881/82–1893,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9, no. 3 (Oct. 1978): 242.

¹⁴³ Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 9. For more information on *tahrirs*, see Mehmet Güneş, “Osmanlı Dönemi Nüfus Sayımları ve Bu Sayımları İçeren Kayıtların Tahlili / Censuses in the Ottoman Period and Analysis of These Censuses,” *Akademik Bakış* 8, no. 15 (Winter 2014): 222–26. For a discussion of the limitations of *tahrirs* and the opportunities afforded by non-conventional historical sources, see Suraiya N. Faroqhi, “Ottoman Population,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume 2: The Ottoman Empire as a World Power, 1453–1603*, eds. Suraiya N. Faroqhi and Kate Fleet, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 356–403.

¹⁴⁴ Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda İlk Nüfus Sayımı 1831* (Ankara: T.C. Başvekâlet İstatistik Umum Müdürlüğü, 1943), 8.

¹⁴⁵ Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 20.

Undertaken during the reign of Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839), in the wake of the abolition of the Janissary Corps, and in the years leading up to the beginning of the *Tanzimat* period, the motivation for the 1831 census was to better assess the tax collection and military service opportunities that the Ottoman population could provide before embarking on comprehensive reforms.

A Census Ministry was established in 1831 to retain and compile figures and calculate the final results.¹⁴⁶ While census-takers all followed the main confessional demarcation between Muslims and non-Muslims, remaining categories appear to have been left to the discretion of each census official. The results, therefore, displayed variations from village to village and from province to province, in that sometimes only Muslim and non-Muslim totals were given, at other times details about non-Muslim confessions, age groups, and wealth were also provided. For instance, the total figures provided for Tatarpazarı (present-day Pazardzhik) and its environs by a certain census official named Bedreddin Efendi included the number of Muslims, non-Muslims, and “Gypsies,” as well as *sekan*, foreign nationals, and refugees.¹⁴⁷ Despite variations, however, the overall picture is starkly clear: in a census that produced population figures for only a handful of confessional denominations with no clear guidelines, many census officials made a point of recording the number of “Gypsies” (*Kıpti*) separately from their Muslim or non-Muslim counterparts, regardless of whether they identified as Muslims or Christians.¹⁴⁸ By doing so, they rendered the Roma identifiable and visible when such a demarcation for many other ethno-religious groups was seemingly uncalled for.

¹⁴⁶ Karal, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda İlk Nüfus Sayımı*, 12.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 27–208, *passim*.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Ottoman government continued to collect population statistics. Another comprehensive census attempt took place in 1844, five years after the proclamation of the 1839 Edict of Gülhane. However, this census was partial and was never officially published; to this day, it is only known through the figures provided by such individuals as the French historian Jean-Henri-Abdolonyme Ubicini (1818–84). In Ubicini’s compilation, the categories are a mixture of ethno-religious ones and include “Gypsies” as a whole, without any religious demarcation unlike the earlier census and the ones that followed this one. Therefore, Ubicini’s categories do not seem to be representative of the repeatedly-demonstrated will of Ottoman officials to separate the Roma, and in particular the non-Muslim Roma, from the rest of the population. According to Ubicini’s numbers, “Gypsies” made up 214,000 of the 15.5 million total Ottoman population.¹⁴⁹

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the motivations behind Ottoman censuses became more and more distinct, going beyond the general desire to acquire figures for tax and military service eligibility. As the purposes behind population counts became more specific, so did the categories of peoples who were counted. The first statistics yearbook of the Ottoman Empire was compiled in 1897–98. Out of the twelve categories denoting different communities, one was reserved for non-Muslim “Gypsies” (*Kıpti-i gayr-i Müslim*), who comprised 0.1 percent of the 19 million-strong population.¹⁵⁰ The first Ottoman census that lived up to the aspired standards of the

¹⁴⁹ Cem Behar, ed., *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun ve Türkiye'nin Nüfusu 1500 – 1927 / The Population of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1996), 28–29. The whole list of population categories as listed by Ubicini are Ottoman, Greek, Armenian, Jewish, Slavic, Romanian, Albanian, Tatar, Arab, Syriac and Chaldean, Druze, Kurdish, Turkoman, and Gypsy.

¹⁵⁰ Tefik Güran, ed., *Osmanlı Devleti'nin İlk İstatistik Yıllığı 1897 / The First Statistical Yearbook of the Ottoman Empire* (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 1997), 21. The other eleven categories were Muslim, Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, Latin, Maronite, Chaldean, and Syriac.

time, on the other hand, was conducted in 1881, and had a more specific purpose compared to others of its kind: to be able to issue identity cards to all Ottomans. In the 1881 census, some of the ethnoreligious categories were further specified and once again included non-Muslim Roma.¹⁵¹

In the 1906 census, seven more categories were added to the fold: now the Ottoman government wished to keep tabs not only on Muslims, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Bulgarians, Protestants, Maronites, Latins, Syriacs, Chaldeans, and foreign nationals, but also on Cossacks, Wallachians, Greek Catholics, Armenian Catholics, Jacobites, Samaritans, and Yezidis. In addition, this time the category of Roma was named solely “Gypsies” even though the implication was that this figure would be of non-Muslim Roma.¹⁵² In the final statistics registers of the Ottoman Empire recorded in 1914 and 1916 based on extrapolations from the 1906 census, the number of categories once again increased, but “Gypsies” were once again represented as a lump sum as if all of them were non-Muslims.¹⁵³ Throughout the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth, as population classifications grew ever more specific under the increasingly centralized state and the categorization of Ottoman populace took on increasingly ethnicized overtones, what remained constant was the determination of the Ottoman government to distinguish either just the non-Muslim Roma or the entire Romani people from the rest of the population in censuses and population registers.

In the nineteenth century, Ottoman officials based their classification of the empire’s population on proliferating religious categories progressively taking the shape of ambivalent

¹⁵¹ Dündar, *Modern Türkiye’nin Şifresi*, 90. In this census the population categories were Muslim, Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, Latin, Monophysite, non-Muslim Gypsy, and foreign nationals.

¹⁵² Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, 162–69.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 170–89; Yavuz Haykır and Yavuz Selim Çeloğlu, *1916 Yılı Osmanlı Nüfus İstatistik Cetveli: “1332 Senesi İstatistik Cetveli” (Değerlendirme-Transkripsiyon-Asıl Metin)* (İstanbul: Hiperyayın, 2017).

ethnoreligious units. From 1913 until the end of the Empire, however, “As the CUP itself became increasingly penetrated by Turkist ideas, the difference between ‘Ottoman’ and ‘Turkish’ became increasingly blurred.”¹⁵⁴ It was after the CUP’s 1913 coup and the consolidation of immense power in the hands of this single party, and particularly its Turkish nationalist core, that the Ottoman government also started gathering confidential data to ascertain the ethnic composition of Muslims in Anatolia.¹⁵⁵ While in the first period of their rule following the 1908 Young Turk Revolution the CUP had been more concerned with solving the problem of inclusion (assimilation), the post-1913 CUP era was tainted by a preoccupation with exclusion. This final chapter of the Ottoman Empire was characterized by state-sponsored violence ranging from mandatory resettlement to genocide, and Turkification policies were implemented through displacement practices targeting specific regions and peoples to weaken Anatolia’s non-Turkish and non-Muslim composition.¹⁵⁶ It was no wonder, then, that in the final years of the Empire, population registers and census records became increasingly keen on identifying more and more specific segments of Ottoman society.

On the other hand, in the Turkish nation-state’s early censuses, the aim was loud and clear from the beginning: in 1926, Prime Minister İsmet İnönü declared that “in order to determine its racial, religious, and sectarian distribution” (*ırk ve menşe-i din ve mezhep nokta-i nazarından suret-i tevziini anlamak için*), it was necessary to “count the entire population in each location according to origin.”¹⁵⁷ To be able to do that, censuses in the early decades of the Turkish Republic asked citizens their first and second languages, revealing the fact that ethnolinguistic nationalism

¹⁵⁴ Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 166.

¹⁵⁵ Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is a Turk?* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 66.

¹⁵⁶ Ülker, “Contextualising ‘Turkification’,” 613–36.

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in Fuat Dündar, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar* (İstanbul: Doz Yayınları, 1999), 36.

dictated how the new state desired to envision society in censuses. Hence, the religious make-up of society, as well as the religious implications of eligibility for membership in the Turkish nation, were downplayed in the census. For the inclusion of mother tongue in population data, Statistical Institute official F. Nöymark (Fritz Neumark) provided further insight into the mindset of the early Republican government:

For countries that are not homogeneous from the perspectives of race (*ırk*) and nationality (*milliyet*), it is especially important to identify the composition of the population in terms of language and religion. Furthermore, it is of utmost importance to ascertain the regions inhabited by those segments of the population that speak a language other than the official language and those that adhere to a religion other than the national religion.”¹⁵⁸

The Republic’s first census was conducted in 1927. Interestingly, the Romani language (*Kiptice*) was listed among spoken languages only in the 1935 and 1945 censuses.¹⁵⁹ From the 1950 census onwards, it was eliminated from the long list of mother tongues¹⁶⁰ and remained as such until 1985 when language was last inquired in standardized censuses.¹⁶¹

Identity Signified

Throughout the centuries, by not definitively putting an end to the ongoing confusion about where to situate them in society, the Ottoman state played an active role in preserving the lingering precarity of the Roma. As “fluidity was fast becoming a liability” in the nineteenth century,¹⁶² “The representation of ‘the state’ as a coherent, unified entity,” was “produced through everyday

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 37, 99.

¹⁶⁰ *22 Ekim 1950 Genel Nüfus Sayımı / Census of Population 22 Octobre 1950* (İstanbul: T.C. Başbakanlık İstatistik Genel Müdürlüğü, 1961), 142–45.

¹⁶¹ Dündar, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar*, 21.

¹⁶² Reşat Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire: Ottoman Nomads, Migrants and Refugees* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2009), 52.

practices of bureaucratic state apparatuses (e.g., taking censuses, conducting cadastral surveys, conscripting soldiers, issuing passports, mapping land, printing money, passing laws, etc.) as well as through the discursive/symbolic performance of state bureaucracy.”¹⁶³ The matter of whether or not to retain the “Gypsy” designation in identity documents, and to systematically count the Roma separately in censuses, were strong indications of the centralizing state’s desire and power to use demographic technologies of classification and identification to their full extent. First nineteenth-century Ottoman officials and then the early Republican government displayed cumulative, if at times contradictory, efforts in the evolving production of Romani alterity through practices of labeling and counting. The late and post-Ottoman treatment of the Roma was far from entirely consistent. Nevertheless, a persistent preoccupation with this segment of society and repeated questioning of *how* they belonged to the empire and later the nation were generative of an increasingly ethnicized and effectively marginalized Romani identity. This question of belonging would further, and more concretely, be taken on in the state’s transforming—and transformative—imposition on Romani mobility and settlement, as the next chapter will demonstrate.

Most important of all, the Roma themselves were heavily involved in this process. The Roma made use of the political tools at their disposal, if often only liminally, due to the absence of their own political organizations and publications. After all, “the petition to the ruler (...) no matter how respectfully worded was implicitly a sign of autonomous collective action from below,”¹⁶⁴ in which the Roma negotiated with the government their status, place, and rights as subjects and/or citizens within the evolving vocabularies and loci of state legitimacy.

¹⁶³ Akin, “Reconsidering State,” 436.

¹⁶⁴ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 63.

Chapter 2

Perils of Mobility

The late-nineteenth-century Ottoman Parliament made social differentiation and marginalization more visible even as they were striving to embrace and enact Ottomanism as an antidote to difference and as the key to imperial unity. Spatial and mobility structures and practices also generate social differentiation and marginalization. As David Sibley has argued, marginalization “is associated not only with characterisations of the group but also with images of particular places, the landscapes of exclusion which express the marginal status of the outsider group.”¹⁶⁵ Indeed, spatial segregation, changing norms and socioeconomic pressures about mobility, the places in which some groups choose or are compelled to live are not only a result of social differentiation but also productive and reproductive of it. Hence, discourse and praxis about place constitute both the mediation and the expression of social hierarchies and power relations.

Just as the labeling and counting of the Roma was generative of an increasingly distinct Romani alterity, so were the spatial and mobility practices directed at them. As late- and post-Ottoman governments raced to redefine the transforming landscape they ruled over, they were concurrently reimagining and reconfiguring the society that inhabited it. Mobility and restrictions

¹⁶⁵ David Sibley, “Outsiders in Society and Space,” in *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography*, eds. Kay Anderson and Fay Gale (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire; [New York]: Halsted Press, 1992), 107.

to it, ranging from forced sedentarization and displacement to compulsory population exchange and repatriation, became pivotal in paring down the once-diverse population.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed a departure from earlier times not only in terms of demographic apparatuses, as discussed in the preceding chapter, but also spatial organization. In addition to being marked as “other” in identity documents and population surveys, the Roma were also identified by their physical place in society and changing patterns of mobility. And indeed, “Unlike earlier population movements, (...) the migrations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were based almost exclusively on some aspect of the identity of the people involved.”¹⁶⁶ Identification of peoples of the Ottoman Empire and later the Turkish Republic went hand in hand with identification of place. The state’s legislative and administrative actions concerning the movements of peoples were constitutive not only of an increasingly ethnonationalist ideology, but also of essentialized identities, including that of the Roma.

Hegemonic Sedentarism and Domestic Resettlement

In 2016, *Daily Sabah*, the Turkish newspaper *Sabah*’s English-language edition for expats in Turkey, published an article by the Turkish law professor Ekrem Buğra Ekinci entitled “The Roma: A Life of Eternal Travel.” There, Ekinci claimed that “The nomadic but colorful world of the Roma has always remained intriguing.” Even as he admitted that “Most of them have adopted a sedentary life, and those who did not became motorized,” the final emphasis of his article was still that “they have not changed their unconstrained and carefree life philosophy.”¹⁶⁷ This trope of the

¹⁶⁶ Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire*, 125.

¹⁶⁷ Ekrem Buğra Ekinci, “The Roma: A Life of Eternal Travel,” *Daily Sabah*, March 25, 2016, <https://www.dailysabah.com/columns/ekrem-bugra-ekinci/2016/03/25/the-roma-a-life-of-constant-travel>. For the subsequently published Turkish version of the article, see “Yer Döşek, Yıldızlar Yorgan: Çingeneler,” *Türkiye*, October 3, 2016, <https://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/kose-yazilari/prof-dr-ekrem-bugra-ekinci/yer-dosek-yildizlar-yorgan-593508>.

Roma as “eternal nomads” at heart who cannot possibly be divorced from their supposed “true nature” even when they have long adopted novel professions and modes of living is such a pervasive image today that it succeeds in feigning an eternal presence. In response to such common representations of the Roma, Gypsy author Cemil Akmaca prefaced his 2015 novel as follows:

[D]uring this 3000-year adventure that has been continuing in various scales, the Roma have virtually never been asked whether they like migration. (...) The Roma have usually not moved from place to place of their own volition. They have not migrated but been exiled. Or (...) they have been displaced with a “go wherever you will” attitude. Their voluntary transient passages have only been due to seeking a suitable place or to expulsions.¹⁶⁸

In a similar vein, the British Romani linguist Ian Hancock felt compelled to write the following lines in his 2002 book published to serve as a guide to teachers, social workers, and others who interact with the Roma:

Travelling is a part of our history. Our ancestors trekked for thousands of miles from India to Europe and out into the world, so there is certainly some truth to the stereotype of the “travelling gypsy.” But a distinction must be made between travelling on a journey, with a purpose, and travelling because local laws in an area forbid one to stop and therefore leave no choice. (...) Remember that there is no “genetic” disposition to travel; it is solely the result of circumstances.¹⁶⁹

Yet, in both academia and popular culture, in Turkey as elsewhere, “the dominant concept has been that ‘Gypsy’ is an expression of a lifestyle,”¹⁷⁰ reviled by most, romanticized by others. For

¹⁶⁸ Cemil Akmaca, *Çeribaşı Rüstem Ağa: Erzurum’dan İstanbul’a Bir Göç Hikâyesi* (İstanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2015), 9–10.

¹⁶⁹ Ian Hancock, *We Are the Romani People / Ames am e Rromane džene* (Hatfield, UK: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2012 [2002]), 101.

¹⁷⁰ Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, “Migrations West to East in the Times of the Ottoman Empire: The Example of a Gypsy/Roma Group in Modern Iran,” *Anthropology of the Middle East* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 97.

instance, in an otherwise illuminating discussion of diasporas and homeland myths, William Safran would write the following on the “Gypsies” and their diaspora identity:

The Gypsies are a truly dispersed and homeless people; their political powerlessness has rendered them subject to persecution and—under Nazi rule—to genocide. (...) But their situation is not quite comparable to that of other diasporas: to a certain extent, their homelessness is a characteristic of their nomadic culture and the result of their refusal to be sedentarized.¹⁷¹

In reality, however, neither have the Roma always all been leading nomadic lives, nor has the Ottoman government’s attitude towards pastoral and commercial nomadic Roma been unwaveringly unfavorable. Over the centuries, Ottoman and post-Ottoman views on the sedentarization of the Roma displays an evolution first from an economic phenomenon into a security issue, then from a civilizational shortcoming into a cultural stereotype.

In a scintillating 2010 talk in which he called for theorising “both nomadism and migration, and the complex relation between them, as rational economic phenomena rather than an irrational cultural pathology,” Thomas Acton outlined the definition of nomadism as “the recurrent exploitation of spatially and temporally discontinuous economic opportunities.”¹⁷² During the majority of its history, the Ottoman Empire, in fact, viewed and treated nomadic modes of living and livelihood, be it pastoral or commercial, as an economic reality and strength to be acknowledged and protected instead of a weakness and anomaly to be altered and quashed. In other words, early modern Ottoman administration not only realized the economic opportunities and advantages brought by peripatetic endeavors, but also actively sought to support and protect

¹⁷¹ William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 86–87.

¹⁷² Thomas Acton, “Theorising Mobility: Migration, Nomadism, and the Social Reconstruction of Ethnicity,” paper presented at Romani Mobilities in Europe: Multidisciplinary Perspectives, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, January 14–15, 2010.

them.¹⁷³ More importantly, the early modern period was also a time in which such an economic phenomenon continued to be viable and even advantageous in contrast to the territorialism and burgeoning nationalism of the modern era.

Estimated to make up around 27 percent of the Ottoman population in the 1520s, the nomadic and semi-nomadic people of the Empire were for the most part located in western Anatolia.¹⁷⁴ An early example of an imperial ruling restricting the mobility of travelling “Gypsies” dates back to 1578. Issued by Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–95), the decree was sent to the bey of the Bolu district and the qadis of Çarşamba and Devrek. It ordered that the “Gypsies” collectively travelling and harming villages shall be prohibited from travelling. Importantly, however, the decree did not stipulate permanent sedentarization and instead was concerned with providing immediate relief to villagers without punishing or altering the lives and livelihoods of said travelling community.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, settlement activities in the earlier centuries of the empire were carried out “without necessarily requiring [nomadic communities] to abandon nomadism,”¹⁷⁶ and the Ottoman government did not begin to deploy hegemonic sedentarism against nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, to a great extent, the changing global order impacted the internal and external boundary-making processes in the Ottoman Empire. Transformative developments concerning borders and identities began in Europe with the Reformation and with lengthy, destructive continental wars that the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia sought to resolve by establishing the sovereignty of states within their own borders,

¹⁷³ For a discussion of the symbiotic relationship between nomadic and sedentary populations of the broader medieval Afro-Eurasian context, see Anatoly M. Khazanov, “Nomads in the History of the Sedentary World,” in *Nomads in the Sedentary World*, eds. Anatoly M. Khazanov and André Wink (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), 1–23.

¹⁷⁴ Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire*, 18.

¹⁷⁵ BOA A. {DVNSMHM.d.33.720 (26 Zilhicce 985 [March 6, 1578]).

¹⁷⁶ Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire*, 29.

however fluid and permeable they still were. These delineations became more and more pronounced in the continent as European empires increasingly engaged in an unimaginably ruinous colonial competition overseas. Undeniably, “it had become clear to the Ottomans that in the newly emerging circumstances of early modern Europe, flexible borders and imprecise identities no longer served them well.”¹⁷⁷

While the Ottoman Empire was not programmatically regulating the domestic and international movement of subjects or foreign nationals in its earlier centuries, nineteenth-century centralization efforts brought about the introduction of travel documents known as *mürur tezkeresi* (lit. license of passage) issued by the central government to be officially obtained and presented during passage. Although the issuing of travel papers dates back to the fifteenth century in the Ottoman Empire, those earlier documents were only intended to equip the travellers (often pilgrims, traders, foreign country representatives) with the protection of the state rather than exercising control or restrictions over their mobility.¹⁷⁸ In revamped form, “the *mürur tezkeresi*, the document that would underpin Ottoman efforts at controlling domestic mobility throughout much of the empire’s final century, was first issued in 1810s in an effort to control the number of impoverished peasants flooding the imperial capital in search of work.”¹⁷⁹ Shortly after the Edict of Gülhane that commenced the Tanzimat period, in 1841, the Regulation for the Prohibition of Passage (*Men-i Mürur Nizamnamesi*) was issued, detailing procedures for obtaining this internal passport and the conditions under which domestic or international travel would be regulated.¹⁸⁰ In

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁷⁸ Nalan Turna, *19. Yüzyıldan 20. Yüzyıla Osmanlı Topraklarında Seyahat, Göç ve Asayiş Belgeleri: Mürûr Tezkereleri* (İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2013), 13–14.

¹⁷⁹ David Gutman, “Travel Documents, Mobility Control, and the Ottoman State in the Age of Global Migration, 1880–1915,” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 3, no. 2 (2016): 350.

¹⁸⁰ Christoph Herzog, “Migration and the State: On Ottoman Regulations Concerning Migration since the Age of Mahmud II,” in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of*

line with the era's requirements for modern states and as part of the state's "monopolization of the legitimate means of movement," as Torpey put it,¹⁸¹ the Ottoman government would now surveil and illegalize mobility that had not been scrutinized in such a manner before: "By requiring all subjects moving within the borders of the empire to possess a *mürur tezkeresi*, the central state could now more clearly delineate between forms of mobility it saw as legitimate (i.e., trade, labor, and pilgrimage) and those it saw as illegitimate (i.e., banditry, smuggling, and vagrancy)."¹⁸²

Throughout the nineteenth century, such scrutiny was extended not only to transient traveling, but also to limiting the movements of and forcibly settling itinerant communities who had previously been left largely unhindered. In fact, prior to the nineteenth century during which empire-wide censuses were first conducted and institutional infrastructure for demographic surveillance was first established under an increasingly centralizing administration, the Ottoman government did not—and could not—undertake a comprehensive sedentarization program that would target all nomadic communities, let alone follow up on ensuring its success.¹⁸³ Going hand in hand with the introduction of travel regulations, it was not until the Tanzimat period that programmatic sedentarization attempts directed at the peripatetic Romani communities started to become a permanent fixture of Ottoman decrees. Previously, nomadic peoples in the Ottoman Empire were exempted from most of the tax duties that were otherwise levied upon settled peasants. In the nineteenth century, as tax collection needs intensified due to long and costly wars

Urban Modernity, eds. Ulrike Freitag, Malke Fuhrmann, Nora Lafi, and Florian Riedler (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 120–21.

¹⁸¹ John Torpey, "Coming and Going: On the State Monopolization of the Legitimate 'Means of Movement'," *Sociological Theory* 16, no. 3 (Nov. 1998): 239–59.

¹⁸² Gutman, "Travel Documents," 351.

¹⁸³ Nevertheless, the Ottoman government regularly had to issue reminders to local administrations, insisting on the fact that travel regulations had to be duly followed: see, for instance, BOA C.DH.1.7 (29 Zilhicce 1254 [March 15, 1839]); BOA A.}MKT.UM.479.8 (18 Zilhicce 1277 [June 27, 1861]); and BOA A.}MKT.UM.551.79 (6 Şevval 1278 [April 6, 1862]).

and the dizzying transformation of the global economic order, the Ottoman government began to turn increasingly to settling nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples in order to be able to extract higher and regular taxes, and incentivize the cultivation of such cash crops as cotton and tobacco among the newly-sedentarized populations.¹⁸⁴

In 1845, a comprehensive decree was issued for the sedentarization of the Roma in Rumeli and Anatolia. “As nomadic Gypsies do not stay in a given location, their kind having the habit of always and consistently traveling about and considering thievery and other disorderly acts as their art and profession,” the decree emphasized, sedentarizing them would ensure public order and safety. Moreover, by settling and registering them, the state could render them more productive and collect imposed taxes.¹⁸⁵ Over the course of the nineteenth century, such decrees would need to be repeatedly issued, and at times, local administrators would request the reiteration of sedentarization orders. For instance, in 1867, the governor of the Tuna Province appealed to the government, stating that a part of the “Gypsy community” in the province was “roaming like wild animals,” living in “a state of nomadism and deprivation,” and that the peasants were complaining about their animals and possessions being stolen, since “they have all been accustomed to stealing and all manner of disgrace since an early age.” Those that had been sedentarized, the governor elaborated, were “in the business of artisanship and agriculture” and in this way had “set out on the path of civilization and humanity.” Appealing to the civilizational undertones of Ottoman

¹⁸⁴ Kasaba, *A Moveable Empire*, 27, 117.

¹⁸⁵ BOA C.DH.61.3032 (29 Safer 1261 [March 9, 1845]).

governance of the time,¹⁸⁶ the governor was thereby asking for the government's order to ban their itinerancy.¹⁸⁷

In the second half of the nineteenth century, similar yet more regionally-focused sedentarization decrees followed, all of them justifying the decision through fiscal and military gains for the empire, as well as in terms of curbing local population's complaints and establishing public peace. In 1869, the Imperial Council ordered, among other things, that the Roma in Edirne be granted land in order to foster in them the practice of agriculture, so that their thievery could be prevented.¹⁸⁸ In 1870, the Imperial Council decreed that in Filibe (present-day Plovdiv), the Roma's nomadic living be prohibited and that they be settled in suitable neighborhoods.¹⁸⁹ In 1890, the Ministry of the Interior sent an order to Ankara stating that some Roma in certain boroughs were discovered not to have been recorded in the population registry. These itinerant Roma would be proposed a place of residence and they would need to be registered in whichever borough they chose as their Winter residence.¹⁹⁰ At this time, such sedentarization orders were still cloaked in the guise of the patrimonial state's civilizing mission toward the Roma. Nevertheless, hegemonic sedentarization was in full throttle. As Scottish scholar William Mitchell Ramsay (1851–1939) noted in his 1916 *The Intermixture of Races in Asia Minor*, “In the spasmodic attempts made by individual Sultans to reorganize the Empire, the nomads presented themselves as a difficulty that must be eliminated before organization could be achieved. It was part of the policy of Abd ul Hamid [sic] carrying out more effectively the tendencies which were inevitably

¹⁸⁶ For the Ottoman elite attitude towards the itinerant communities of Touareg in Libya, the Bedouin in Yemen and the Hijaz, and the Arabs, see Selim Deringil, “‘They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery’: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (April 2003): 311–42.

¹⁸⁷ BOA MVL.1074.60 (9 Recep 1284 [November 6, 1867]).

¹⁸⁸ BOA DH.MKT.1309.53 (14 Rebiülevvel 1286 [June 24, 1869]).

¹⁸⁹ BOA ŞD.1905.30 (20 Safer 1287 [May 28, 1870]).

¹⁹⁰ BOA DH.MKT.1748.102 (20 Zilhicce 1307 [August 7, 1890]).

produced by the centralizing tendencies began by Mahmud II about 1815, to bring about the uniformity of the Muslim population.”¹⁹¹

On the eve of the twentieth century, however, the civilizational pretension that had seemed to prioritize “rehabilitation” over collective punishment or banishment throughout much of the nineteenth century waned and was replaced with stern language demanding coercive approaches. For instance, in 1899, it was decided on behalf of the tent-dwelling Roma in the Sivas Province that “in order to make them into owners of land and real estate, they should be settled and thereby ushered into the domain of civilization by means of force if necessary, without seeking their agreement and consent.”¹⁹² Similarly, in 1905, in response to an inquiry about what measures would need to be taken to sedentarize the Roma, the governor of Salonica informed the Imperial Council that it would be best to forcibly relieve the itinerant Roma of their tents and mounts, provide them with agricultural tools, and employ them in farms with the agreement of farm owners, so that they would be forced to lead sedentary lives.¹⁹³ Additionally, during the first decade of the twentieth century, the close surveillance and control of the Roma and their mobility would also increasingly come under the purview of the Ministry of Police,¹⁹⁴ so much so that in 1907 the entry of the Roma into the capital was prohibited due to the idea that they were the cause of the smallpox epidemic in Üsküdar.¹⁹⁵ In the final years of the Empire, especially after the 1913 turn under CUP

¹⁹¹ Quoted in Deringil, “‘Nomadism and Savagery’,” 339.

¹⁹² BOA DH.MKT.2205.64 (10 Muharrem 1317 [May 21, 1899]).

¹⁹³ BOA ŞD.2052.12 (10 Şaban 1323 [October 10, 1905]).

¹⁹⁴ See, for instance, BOA ZB.615.69 (27 Şaban 1323 [October 27, 1905]); BOA ZB.55.53 (10 Haziran 1322 [June 23, 1906]); BOA ZB.616.167 (8 Şubat 1324 [February 21, 1909]); BOA ZB.617.30 (13 Şubat 1324 [February 26, 1909]).

¹⁹⁵ BOA ZB.594.144 (28 Kanunuevvel 1322 [January 10, 1907]). Perhaps not so coincidentally, 1907 was also the year an International Sanitary Convention was signed between the United States, Germany, France, and seventeen other countries (the Ottoman Empire was not a party to the convention), agreeing on “the measures calculated to safeguard the public health against the invasion and propagation of plague and cholera.” Article 41 of the convention read: “The governments reserve the right to take special measures in regard to certain categories of persons,

rule, closer scrutiny of nomadism gained momentum, resulting in a Ministry of the Interior inquiry for finding out how many itinerant Roma existed in the Ottoman lands.¹⁹⁶ While the new regime had bestowed freedom of domestic and international mobility to all Ottoman subject-citizens in 1908, by 1912 the CUP retreated from these steps and required all Ottomans to show identity documents when boarding steamers at Ottoman ports.¹⁹⁷

After the establishment of the Turkish Republic, attempts were made to resolve lingering Ottoman ambiguities, identification requirements and surveillance of mobility became more strict, and the Roma became unwavering targets of the state. The Republic's first Resettlement Law, dated July 1, 1926, stipulated that "Those who are not bound to Turkish culture, contagious syphilitics, leprosy individuals and their families, those convicted of murder excluding political and military felonies, anarchists, spies, Gypsies, and those that have been deported shall not be accepted."¹⁹⁸ Unlike the early modern and, to a great extent, nineteenth-century Ottoman practices, this article treated all Roma—sedentary and nomadic, Muslim and non-Muslim—as one, lumping together a community for whom such differences had hitherto mattered in earlier ambiguous policies and governance. This law was, in fact, a legacy of the totalizing approach of the late CUP regime to the Roma, and more particularly, the 1918 draft Law on Tribes and Immigrants, which had proposed that prostitutes, gamblers, beggars, anarchists, spies, and Gypsies should not be admitted as immigrants.¹⁹⁹ The 1926 Resettlement Law also included the article that specified

notably *gypsies*, vagabonds, emigrants, and persons traveling or crossing the frontier in troops."—
—Emphasis added. Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, With the Annual
Message of the President Transmitted to Congress December 3, 1907, Part I, Document 338,
accessed May 6, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1907p1/d338>.

¹⁹⁶ BOA DH.SN.THR.44.26 (8 Şaban 1331 [July 13, 1913]).

¹⁹⁷ Gutman, 363, 365.

¹⁹⁸ *Resmî Ceride*, no. 429 (July 1, 1926), 943.

¹⁹⁹ Fuat Dündar, *İttihak ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları İskân Politikası (1913-1918)* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011 [2001]), 129.

“Gypsies who are Turkish citizens shall be settled in appropriate locations, while foreign national Gypsies shall be expelled.”²⁰⁰ As the articles of the law were being debated in the Turkish Grand National Assembly on May 30, 1926, Burdur representative Hüseyin Baki Bey took the floor, questioning the extent to which recently nationalized Roma belonged to the Turkish nation:

Sir, I know of Gypsies who were foreign nationals up until six months ago. They assumed Turkish nationality, they were registered, they settled here and there. However, they continue in their ways of malice. Let us give them a time period. At which point will they be accepted as Turkish nationals? For they are evildoers who disturb the peace. They also rob houses during harvest, when peasants are not home.²⁰¹

The Minister of the Interior and Tekirdağ representative Cemil Bey responded to this objection by saying that “this article already establishes the sedentarization of Gypsies wandering here and there. Then there are those wandering who are foreign nationals, their settlement is not desired. Those will surely be expelled. Once settlement of Gypsies is achieved, this will no doubt cease to be an issue.”²⁰² While Hüseyin Baki Bey was not convinced of the “Turkishness” of the Roma, the article was nevertheless passed.

The 1926 Resettlement Law was replaced in 1934 with a more comprehensive one, building on “what had been legislated earlier by various official regulations, making the assimilative mentality of the state exceptionally clear and direct.”²⁰³ The 1934 Resettlement Law’s objective was expressed as putting forward “a demographic policy directed towards defending, reinforcing, and homogenizing our national fabric, using the tools of the state to productively

²⁰⁰ *Resmî Ceride* (1926), 943.

²⁰¹ *T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi*, Volume 2, Session 110 (May 30, 1926), 650.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ Erol Ülker, “Assimilation, Security and Geographical Nationalization in Interwar Turkey: The Settlement Law of 1934,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, Thematic Issue N°7, Demographic Engineering – Part I (2008), <http://www.ejts.org/document2123.html>.

operate upon those popular masses whose adaptation to our national culture and contemporary civilization is particularly desirable; and developing the Turkish element both quantitatively and qualitatively.”²⁰⁴ For the legislative body, “the Republic of Turkey ha[d] adopted as a most lofty, most precious, and greatest goal the realization of that relief which the artificial Ottoman assemblage did not, be it for a single day, grant the Turk,”²⁰⁵ and demographic reimagining and ethnonationalist reengineering of the population expressly differed from the approaches adopted by the Empire. However, preoccupation with the Roma as a distinct group that needed to be separated remained the same. According to the new law, “Those who are not bound to Turkish culture, anarchists, spies, nomadic Gypsies, and those that have been deported” were not to be allowed into Turkey as immigrants.²⁰⁶ During legislative deliberations, it was initially proposed that no Roma shall be welcomed into Turkey. The commission working on the legislation justified the change as follows:

There are Muslim Gypsies living in the Balkans, and particularly in Bulgaria. They speak no language other than Turkish. And as the Bulgarians do not want to grant political rights to the Gypsies, they have given that name to many who are not themselves Gypsies, in order to deprive them of their political rights. Known as Gypsies in Bulgaria, these industrious people have made great advances in animal husbandry, agriculture, and agricultural sciences. Despite having endured countless torments, they have still not abandoned their Turkishness, of which they are proud. It has been considered more beneficial to take in those among them who are sedentary, and reject only those who are itinerant.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ “I/335 Numaralı İskân Kanunu Lâyihası ve İskân Muvakkat Encümeni Mazbatası,” (May 2, 1932), in *T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi*, Volume 23, Term IV, Assembly Year 3, Session 65 (June 7, 1934).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰⁶ *Resmî Gazete*, no. 2733 (June 21, 1934), 4003.

²⁰⁷ “I/335 Numaralı İskân Kanunu Lâyihası” (1932).

In other words, from the Turkish government's point of view, those labeled "Gypsies" in Bulgaria may instead have been Turks, or at least Turkish-speaking peoples belonging to Turkish culture. In order to fulfill the state's intention to increase the density of ethnic Turks, their arrival was considered welcome, as long as they were sedentary and productive. Nomadic Roma, on the other hand, whether or not they were bound to Turkish culture, were not deemed eligible for inclusion in the nation. Furthermore, with Article 9 of the law, itinerant Roma who were already Turkish citizens would be dispersed into towns and villages among ethnic Turks, in order to be assimilated.²⁰⁸ The Resettlement Law was ultimately "a tool for the construction of the 'new Turk'."²⁰⁹

Unlike its earlier 1926 version, with the 1934 Resettlement Law the Turkish government distinguished between not only nationality, language, and worthiness of assimilation, but also sedentarism. Yet, only a year later, Article 9 of the law was amended to allow for the deportation of all "foreign national Gypsies,"²¹⁰ not only nomadic ones. Similarly, the 1938 Law on the Residence and Travels of Foreign Nationals in Turkey reiterated that "stateless and foreign national Gypsies" would be deported.²¹¹ When the law was amended in July 1950, this article was preserved as is.²¹² Moreover, in 1948, when the Council of Ministers issued a program for the resettlement of immigrants and nomadic "Gypsies," it was further emphasized that Turkish national itinerant Roma ought to be settled, but under no circumstances were they to be settled en masse by forming separate villages. They were to be distributed among Turkish-majority villages according to their crafts, so that they would constitute no more than five households in any given

²⁰⁸ *Resmî Gazete* (1934), 4004.

²⁰⁹ Kemal Kirişçi, "Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship and Immigration Practices," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 36, no. 3 (Jul. 2000): 4.

²¹⁰ *Resmî Gazete*, no. 3162 (November 21, 1935), 5791.

²¹¹ *Resmî Gazete*, no. 3961 (July 16, 1938), 10299.

²¹² *Resmî Gazete*, no. 7564 (July 24, 1950), 18817.

location. Furthermore, their resettlement locations could not be close to each other.²¹³ As late as 1993, when a draft law proposed changing the articles of the 1934 Resettlement Law that targeted the Roma, the government led by Süleyman Demirel rejected the proposal, arguing that such changes would “generate public opinion regarding the admission of Gypsies from other nations as immigrants into our country and create migration pressure at our borders.”²¹⁴ The Roma-specific sections of the law were only finally removed in 2006.²¹⁵

For the late Ottoman Empire during the Second Constitutional Period, and the Turkish nation-state, “The continued existence of nomads and vagrants was a key symbol of the unfinished project of modernity and the evidence of the survival of unwanted elements from the pre-modern.”²¹⁶ The Turkish Republic had the last word on nomadic Roma, demonstrating a stark departure from earlier Ottoman practices of forming and maintaining segregated “Gypsy quarters,” and more often than not, complying with the complaints and further segregation requests of non-Romani Ottomans.²¹⁷ The social and economic value attached to nomadism in the early modern period had yielded, starting in the late 1800s, to mobility being regarded as elusive, disorderly, and ultimately dangerous. Through legislation that singled them out and lumped them together, the Roma, sedentary and itinerant alike, were rendered more distinct, more distinguishable, and

²¹³ BCA 30-18-1-2.115-91-5 (February 5, 1948).

²¹⁴ Mustafa Aksu, *Türkiye’de Çingene Olmak* (İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2003), 115.

²¹⁵ *Resmî Gazete*, no. 26301 (September 26, 2006), 1584–600.

²¹⁶ Robbie McVeigh, “Theorising Sedentarism: The Roots of Anti-Nomadism,” in *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity*, ed. Thomas Acton (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1999 [1997]), 18.

²¹⁷ See, for instance, BOA BEO.398.29810 (2 Zilkade 1311 [May 7, 1894]); BOA DH.MKT.424.52 (19 Rebiülevvel 1313 [September 9, 1895]); BOA DH.MKT.1289.7 (6 Şaban 1326 [September 3, 1908]). Also see Faika Çelik, “Neighbourhoods’ Surveillance of Margins: Negotiating Limits of Social Exclusion in Early Modern Istanbul (1530s–1590s),” in *Cultures and Practices of Coexistence from the Thirteenth Through the Seventeenth Centuries*, eds. Marco Folin and Antonio Musarra (New York: Routledge, 2020), 131–42.

increasingly ethnicized in the eyes of the late CUP and Turkish governments—a unit that was not ethnically Turkish, but one that perhaps could be Turkified.

Population Exchange

In addition to domestic legislation, such as the Resettlement Law, that sought to reorganize the ethnic distribution of the post-Ottoman population and contributed to the reimagination of the citizenry under the banner of Turkishness, another turning point in population engineering was the 1923 compulsory population exchange between Turkey and Greece. A child of the League of Nations which was founded in 1920 in the wake of World War I, the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange was part of the conventions agreed upon in Lausanne in 1923 between Turkish representatives and the Allied powers. A major preoccupation in Lausanne was the status of ethnoreligious minorities, rehashing “the pattern of a centuries-old struggle between a rising Europe, claiming the patronage of its coreligionists inside Ottoman borders, and an Ottoman state, crafting myriad strategies to protect its sovereignty and keep Europe at bay.”²¹⁸

The logic of the Treaty of Lausanne, signed on July 24, 1923, was presented as “a rational means of improving international peace.”²¹⁹ Yet, undeniably grounded in ethnocentrism, it celebrated ethnic cleansing.²²⁰ It stipulated that until 1925, “Turkish nationals of over eighteen years of age who are natives of a territory detached from Turkey under the present Treaty, and who on its coming into force are habitually resident abroad, may opt for the nationality of the territory of which they are natives, (...) subject to the consent of the Government exercising

²¹⁸ Ekmekçioğlu, “Republic of Paradox,” 658.

²¹⁹ Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: From the End of Byzantium to the Present Day* (London: Phoenix Press, 2001), 120.

²²⁰ It is worth noting that the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange was only one of several instances of turn-of-the-century ethnic cleansing and genocide, including those of Armenians, Assyrians, and Pontic Greeks.

authority therein.” However, there was a crucial condition that enveloped this stipulation: such individuals could choose to adopt the nationality of the territory in which they already resided “if they belong[ed] by race to the majority of the population of that territory.”²²¹ What the governments of Greece and Turkey conceived of as “race” in the case of compulsory population exchange resided in the murky waters of ethnoreligious identification from above. The result was the mass transfer of about 400,000 Muslims from Greece to Turkey and about 1,200,000 Greek Orthodox Christians from Turkey to Greece.²²² For those forcibly sent from Turkey to Greece, the notion of linguistic identity was disregarded; therefore, such communities as the Karamanlidika, Turkish-speaking Greek Orthodox natives of Anatolia, also became subject to this violent uprooting. Even though the initial agreement was for these “Cappadocian Christians” to be exempted, in the end a less variegated and more totalizing approach was embraced and they, too, were forcibly displaced. On the other hand, for those dislocated from Greece and transferred to Turkey, being Muslim was the sole marker of eligibility. With the aim of achieving ethnoreligious majority in their respective territories, it appeared that “neither Turkey nor Greece wanted to do away altogether with the old logic which connected Orthodox Christianity and Greekness on the one hand, and Turkey and Islam on the other.”²²³ In the last instance, “Turkey wanted to receive them, Greece wanted rid of them; nothing else was of any consequence.”²²⁴

This did not mean, however, that Turkish officials did not distinguish between Muslims of different ethnolinguistic backgrounds. While their numbers are not—and perhaps may never be—known precisely, scant exchangee memoirs and oral histories, as well as a considerable amount of

²²¹ “Treaty of Peace with Turkey Signed at Lausanne, July 24, 1923,” accessed June 12, 2021, https://wwi.lib.byu.edu/index.php/Treaty_of_Lausanne.

²²² Bruce Clark, *Twice a Stranger: The Mass Expulsions that Forged Modern Greece and Turkey* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), xii.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 104.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 161.

official records meticulously specifying their identity, show that Roma were among those dislocated from Greece and settled in the emerging Turkish Republic during the compulsory population exchange.²²⁵ One of the best-known memoirs that shed light on the exchange experience is that of Reşat Dürri Tesal (1911–?) who later established the Foundation for Lausanne Exchangees (*Lozan Mübadilleri Vakfı*). In his memoirs Tesal attested to the composition of the communities forcibly settled in Turkey, which included the Roma:

There was a sizeable Gypsy population in Volos [Kuluz in the Ottoman Empire]. These were individuals who had become both Islamicized and Turkicized during the Ottoman period. They resided all together on the outskirts of Eskiler and performed metal casting, tin smithing, and similar jobs. They spoke Turkish quite well, albeit with an accent, and displayed full allegiance to us. But we would go to their quarters only to have our fezzes pressed. They, on the other hand, would join us frequently, nor would they hesitate to visit with our father and seek his advice. Since they were Muslims and since the population exchange treaty signed in Lausanne used the term Muslims in Greece instead of the phrase Turks in Greece, these Gypsies were conveyed to Turkey alongside us. Truth be told, if there were Muslims of other races and nations in Greece, it would have followed that we, as exchangees, would have embraced them too.²²⁶

In November 1923, the Turkish government passed the Exchange, Reconstruction, and Resettlement Law no. 368, granting authority to the newly established Ministry of Exchange, Reconstruction, and Resettlement that would soon be dissolved and attached to the Ministry of the Interior. The law stipulated that the exchangees/immigrants would be financially supported for a

²²⁵ Alper Yağlıdere (*İzmir Romanları: Yaşam - Kültür - Alışkanlıklar* [İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2011], 130–31) argues that among those Roma residing in present-day İzmir who indicate having immigrated, 50.6 percent had come from Salonica. Also see Suat Kolukırık, “Geçmiş Aynasında Lozan Çingeneleri: Göç, Hatıra ve Deneyimler,” *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyolojik Araştırmalar E-Dergisi* (May 20, 2006), accessed August 7, 2011, <http://www.sdergi.hacettepe.edu.tr/suatk.pdf>; and Gönül İlhan, *Bizim Mahalle Tenekeli Mahalle* (İstanbul: Heyamola Yayınları, 2011), 27, 50.

²²⁶ Reşat D. Tesal, *Selânik'ten İstanbul'a: Bir Ömrün Hikâyesi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1998), 27–28.

maximum two months, and that the ministry would also be authorized to transfer and resettle exchangees that had been settled since 1910–11 to suitable regions within two years, according to their status and occupations.²²⁷

The government meticulously surveilled the movement and resettlement locations of exchangees by detailed reports and decisions. These resettlement requests and reports included Romani exchangees as well, and it was telling that their identity was incessantly specified as “Gypsy immigrants.” For example, in 1925, the governor of Gümüşhane sent a report, informing the Ministry of the Interior about the whereabouts of a group of basket-weaving Romani exchangees. It was the governor’s conviction that they were “Gypsies by essence, by generation, by custom, by spirit,” that their sole occupation was basket weaving, and that they could not hold any agricultural or manufacturing job no matter how much the city of Gümüşhane tried. According to the governor, it would be better for these Roma to be relocated to a big city with commercial and economic activities, one that would allow them to engage in peddling. All forty households had moved to Trabzon.²²⁸

Such resettlement reports and requests continued, even though not all were approved. Again in 1925, permission was requested by the governor of Gümüşhane to dispatch twenty-five Roma from Trabzon to İzmit. The decision of the Directorate of Immigrants was for the exchangees to be remain settled in Trabzon instead. In the meantime, on behalf of this group of Romani exchangees from Tırhalı and Yenişehir (in present-day Thessaly), a certain Talib had already petitioned the Ministry of the Interior, indicating that because of their dire conditions they were asking to be shown places to settle in their current location.²²⁹ In 1926, the governor of

²²⁷ *Resmî Ceride*, no. 43 (November 18, 1923), 1–2.

²²⁸ BCA 272-0-0-12.45-73-7 (June 18, 1925).

²²⁹ BCA 272-0-0-14.77-36-6 (August 23, 1925).

Malatya asked the Ministry of the Interior if twenty-six households of Romani exchangees could be returned to Adana from Malatya, because they were unyielding to being “productive” through agriculture and manufacturing. The governor’s request was denied.²³⁰ At times the government put in an effort to resolve the resettlement of a single individual. That was the case for a certain Kâmil, from among the Roma of Drama, who was initially settled in Bursa but had left for Kırklareli to pursue commercial activities. Because he was a single man, his continued residence in Kırklareli was allowed by the Directorate of Resettlement.²³¹ Such resettlement decisions signified the Turkish government’s intent on scrutinizing and surveilling the distribution of the exchangees in order to control the ethnic, religious, and linguistic composition of the budding nation-state. The early Turkish Republic picked up from where the post-1913 CUP regime left off and furthered the program of achieving the demographic and spatial dominance of Turkishness.²³²

Indeed, it was the will of the state that prevailed over the reality, needs, and wishes of the dislocated masses. In 1924, the Turkish government received a petition written on behalf of a group of fifty tobacco-growing Roma. Instead of being transferred to Tokat, they were asking to be allowed to settle (along with the rest of their townspeople from Greece) in Samsun, to whose economic and climatic conditions they believed they could adapt better:

We are among immigrants from Kavala and approximately nine hundred of us have arrived at Samsun by covering all expenses. For whatever reason, the resettlement zone wants to separate us fifty households and send us to Tokat, while settling many of our wealthy fellow townmen in Samsun. We are simple people who served on the battlefields for years, not shirking all manner of sacrifice for the sake of our homeland, and suffered privation and poverty in that pursuit. We have rejoined our motherland only in the hope of receiving justice and rallying under the Mohameddan flag. Our circumstances do not allow us to

²³⁰ BCA 272-0-0-12.47-88-20 (February 18, 1926).

²³¹ BCA 272-0-0-14.78-42-20 (February 25, 1926).

²³² Çığaptay, *Islam, Secularism, and Nationalism*, 14–16.

undertake even an hour's journey from Samsun, much less to Tokat. If our flaw is that we are poor, only the importance of Samsun's location and commerce, coupled with our determination to work hard, can compensate for our poverty. Furthermore, being country and city folk, and tobacco growers, we would not be able to adapt to the climate there. Our request to be treated like our equals is rejected because we belong to the Gypsy (*Kıpti*) community. The republic expects justice and equality from the law. In either case, we implore that our resettlement in Samsun be decreed.²³³

Appealing to both Muslimhood and the expected rule of law under the Republic, and reminding authorities that they have been dutiful subject-citizens since Ottoman times, this group of Roma was emphasizing their belonging to the broader immigrant community rather than the narrow confines of Romani identity to which the state was restricting them. However, their request to remain in Samsun was denied.²³⁴ So was, for instance, the early 1925 plea of Behlül, son of Celil, and Cemal, son of Murat, to be resettled from Ordu to Zonguldak or Samsun.²³⁵

One interesting exception to this pattern comes from 1924, the same year the Turkish government received the petition from the Roma of Kavala discussed above. In this instance, a group of thirty-one Romani households made a plea to be sent to Çatalca or Edirne in the Thrace region in response to the government's decision to settle them in Samsun:²³⁶

Our petition follows: we are thirty-one families from among the Gypsy community who have emigrated from Drama. Unlike other Muslim immigrants, we do not earn our living in agriculture; we live in our tents and, as is well known to all residents of Drama, we support ourselves through the animal trade. Therefore, this petition to the effect that we be allowed to settle preferably in Çatalca or Edirne, at the condition that we assume all

²³³ BCA 272-0-0-11.17-73-18 (January 25, 1924). Also see Nurşen Gürboğa, "Turkey," in *Roma Voices in History: A Sourcebook*, eds. Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021), 265–66.

²³⁴ BCA 272-0-0-11.17-74-22 (January 31, 1924).

²³⁵ BCA 272-0-0-12.44-68-16 (March 31, 1925).

²³⁶ BCA 272-0-0-11.17-74-25 (January 31, 1924).

expenses involved, is hereby conveyed by telegram to your exalted office. We remain in anticipation of your kind response.²³⁷

Unlike other responses to similar petitions about changing designated resettlement locations, in this case the Romani community's request was accepted and they were settled in Edirne as they wished.²³⁸ Nurşen Gürboğa argues that this must have been due to the fact that the aforementioned Roma of Drama were not attempting to downplay their Romani identity and that their candor was rewarded by the government with a favorable outcome, whereas in the earlier case of the Roma of Kavala, their "sameness was denied."²³⁹ However, the reasoning behind it may have had less to do with the unreserved expression of being tent-dwelling Roma and more with spatial and occupational calculations that went into early Republican resettlement policies. It might have made more sense to state officials to settle these particular Romani households in the Thrace region where they would more easily find pastures to raise and trade animals, and where they could perhaps be more 'useful' for the nation, instead of the sending them to the city of Samsun along the coast of Black Sea, known for its tobacco cultivation. Though not yet codified at the time of this petition, it was also the government's intention to disperse foreign nationals, and especially the Roma, among Turkish villages, as the previously discussed Resettlement Laws demonstrated. Therefore, I would argue that instead of constituting strong evidence for the benevolence of the state or the particular state officials who handled the petitions, these contradictory cases provide further insight into the government's specific calculations behind location designations in terms of ethnic density and occupational benefit for the country at large.

²³⁷ BCA 272-0-0-11.17-76-12 (February 11, 1924). Also see Gürboğa, "Turkey," 264–65.

²³⁸ BCA 272-0-0-11.17-76-12.

²³⁹ Gürboğa, "Turkey," 269.

In 1925, ostensibly in response to the high number of relocation petitions that the state was receiving, an additional law was introduced to specify and enforce an obligation for exchangees, refugees, and settled tribes to remain in their state-designated locations for a minimum of five years.²⁴⁰ It seems that this obligation was imposed to the letter from the introduction of the law onwards. Towards the end of 1926, the Ministry of the Interior received a petition passed on from the governorship of Antalya. The petitioners, Ali and Receb, were two Salonican exchangees, as they identified themselves. They had arrived from Salonica with their families first to İstanbul, and then were transferred to Antalya to be settled there. However, even though they were provided with houses to live in, these were “nothing more than ruins.” Because they were not given anything else, they had previously appealed to the governorship to be granted a plot of land or a shop from among abandoned properties (*emval-i metruke*), but their request was denied. For their daily subsistence, they had been selling their various belongings to make ends meet, which did not suffice. They had reached out to the governorship once again, this time to ask for permission to move to İzmir where they had propertied relatives they could join, and on whose land they believed they could work and earn daily wages. But this request of theirs was also denied, due to the five-year residence obligation imposed on exchangees. With this 1926 petition, they were once again asking to be permitted to leave Antalya.²⁴¹

In response, instead of allowing Ali, Receb, and their households to leave for another city that would afford them more opportunities for earning their livelihood, the Ministry of the Interior requested that the petitioners be provided with a shop in Antalya suitable to their vocation. In other words, in order not to briefly relinquish control over the paths of mobility and immobility, and of settlement and resettlement, the Turkish government instead opted for offering the two Romani

²⁴⁰ *Resmî Ceride*, no. 241 (December 10, 1925), 1.

²⁴¹ BCA 272-0-0-12.49-99-23 (September 19, 1926).

households the material assistance that not all exchangees were able to receive due to lack of resources. More interestingly, while the petitioners had not identified themselves as Roma in their letter, the governorship of Antalya identified and made a record of them as such. This shows a keen awareness on the part of local government officials about the ethnoreligious composition of the regions under their administration, not to mention the propensity to attach a label to the Roma—a legacy of late Ottoman rule, now displayed in more intensified manner under the ethno-nationalist Turkish Republic.²⁴² However, such a visibility of minority identities was not agreeable for all segments of the government.

On February 7, 1927, a judicial commission report was put to vote in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. The report informed members of Parliament that a certain Romani in Alanya by the name of Zekeriya, also known as Bayram, from among the immigrants of the Caucasus, had been wrongfully given a longer sentence than was lawful under his conviction for homicide. At the time of the crime he had not yet turned eighteen, and therefore it was proposed and decided that his sentence should be reduced by half, to one year and three months. What was supposed to be a quite ordinary approval of judicial correction became an opportunity for one representative to express his political convictions. Zonguldak representative Tunalı Hilmi Bey (1871–1928), a pan-Turkist who was previously a leading figure in the Young Turk organization and also a member of the last Ottoman Chamber of Deputies, took the floor to comment on the case. He began his speech by saying:

What you call “miscarriage of justice” I call “failure at the hands of justice.” Unless political errors are rectified, more instances of such failures will occur. Politically speaking, are there only Turks in this country? Or are there Jews, Gypsies, Armenians?

²⁴² BCA 272-0-0-12.49-99-23.

For Tunalı Hilmi Bey, the political error was that all of the people living within the Turkish nation were still not uniformly identified as Turks. He resumed his remarks with a comparison regarding Turkey's immigration policies:

I have spent many a year in Switzerland. While Gypsies have been cast out of the 22.5 cantons of Switzerland, they have not been turned away in any Turkish city. Turks possess such a power of representation that they have [welcomed and] settled even Gypsies, the least favored and most complained about people in the world. Edirne and all the rest, in fact each town is a testament to this.

At that point, other members of the parliament objected to these remarks by making noises and saying no, as recorded in the parliamentary proceeding minutes. Tunalı Hilmi Bey continued:

If by saying no you are rejecting Gypsies, then you shall expel them from the country. But, friends, there is a Gypsy quarter in any town you go to. Friends, I implore you, these should be Turkish quarters.²⁴³

What Tunalı Hilmi Bey, and other pan-Turkists like him, desired was to conceive of and observe no one else but Turks—and Turkified ethnoreligious groups—in the Republic of Turkey. Yet, state officials continued to give the Roma a separate label in age-old fashion, thereby reinforcing their alterity and concurrently ethnicizing their identity.

The preoccupation with enforcing the five-year residence obligation for the exchangees of the compulsory Greco-Turkish Population Exchange lasted well into the 1930s, since the arrival and resettlement of exchangees continued until 1928. For instance, in early 1933, seventy-two “Gypsy and foreign-national families” whose original resettlement locations had been İstanbul and Adapazarı and who arrived at Kütahya via İzmir were returned back to their designated cities.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ *T.B.M.M. Zabıt Ceridesi*, Term II, Assembly Year IV, Session 33 (February 7, 1927), 16.

²⁴⁴ BCA 272-0-0-12.63-190-1 (January 24, 1933).

At other times, reminders about the residence obligation were sent out, as domestic resettlement officials exhibited confusion. Again in 1933, the governor of Mersin queried the Ministry of the Interior about 146 Romani individuals. They had initially been assigned to Mersin, but, according to the governor, they had not waited to be officially settled there and had instead left for İzmir at their own expense. They were then sent back to Mersin because they were “idly wandering about and disturbing the peace.” Now the governor wanted to learn how to proceed with their resettlement as their cases were never officially processed. Seven of them had also petitioned the governor, asking to be settled in Mersin. In response, the Minister of the Interior first requested that a village be formed to home them. But this initial decision was later crossed out and an amendment was added in manuscript: it would not be proper to settle the entire Romani group in a single village and they would need to be dispersed among Turkish villages.²⁴⁵

It was of utmost importance to the Turkish government not only to populate areas of depopulation and destruction with a Muslim/Turkish majority, but also to ensure that the exchangees became useful and productive—cultivating the soil, raising animals, and manufacturing goods for the emergent nation-state. As a result of the mandatory 1923 Greco-Turkish Population Exchange, ethnic homogeneity increased in both countries. For instance, “Greek Macedonia, in which Greeks had been less than half the population before 1914, thereby became nearly ninety per cent Greek. Jewish Salonika became Greek Thessaloniki with the resettlement of thousands of refugees from Asia Minor.”²⁴⁶ Decades after the exchange, in 2008, the Turkish Minister of National Defense would celebrate the success of ethnic cleansing by

²⁴⁵ BCA 272-0-0-12.63-190-5 (March 7, 1933).

²⁴⁶ Mazower, *The Balkans*, 113–14.

rhetorically asking “If the Rum had remained on the Aegean coasts, could there be the same nation-state?”²⁴⁷

What the particular case of the population exchange shows is that the government did not have a consistent policy towards the Roma in terms of international mobility. But the Turkish state did label them in every piece of documentation, whether they self-identified or were identified as such by the officials. It is significant that, once again, the Roma did not refrain from voicing their grievances to the government in the course of the resettlement of exchangees, on occasion appealing numerous times until their requests were heard. However, it is even more significant that during the early Turkish Republic the institution of petitioning and its power had eroded relative to Ottoman times: the new state was no longer acting under the pretension of a patrimonial purveyor of justice but was rather a data collector for a more precise social engineering project. Through parliamentary debates and countless individual executive decisions, and particularly during the population exchange with Greece, the Roma became more visible, identifiable, traceable, and ultimately, vulnerable. While the late Ottoman and early Republican governments did not act consistently on the issue of Romani immigration and resettlement until the 1934 Resettlement Law came into effect, any ambivalence in this regard had been eradicated by 1950.

The 1950–51 Exodus from Bulgaria

In 1878, the Ottoman government had proposed what would have become a precursor to the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange, to take place between the Ottoman Empire and the Bulgarian

²⁴⁷ Aytek Soner Alban, “But the Memory Remains: History, Memory and the 1923 Greco-Turkish Population Exchange,” *The Historical Review / La Revue Historique* IX (2012): 217. For the present-day civilizationalist incarnation of the exchange, see Aslı Iğsız, “Rethinking the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange in the Civilizationist Present,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 40 (2022): 271–98.

Kingdom. This late-nineteenth-century proposal was rejected.²⁴⁸ In 1913, this previously proposed population exchange became a reality, resulting in the forced relocation of 48,570 Muslims from the Bulgarian territory and 46,764 Bulgarians from the Ottoman Empire's Thrace region.²⁴⁹ But throughout the twentieth century, population transfers and mass expulsions/departures would become a painful everyday reality for the peoples of Eastern Europe. The Roma were among those who, at times, fled Bulgaria in the early twentieth century, often justifying their arrival in Turkey with the oppression they had experienced at the hands of Bulgarian authorities.²⁵⁰

Apart from the earlier population movements during the Balkan Wars and the early years of the Turkish Republic, mass migration from Bulgaria to Turkey occurred in three distinct waves in 1950–51, 1969, and 1989.²⁵¹ During the 1950–51 exodus, over 150,000 individuals arrived in Turkey.²⁵² Significantly, the migration wave in the early 1950s transpired within the context of the Cold War, as anti-communist propaganda was gaining currency in the Turkish Republic, while the Turkish government officially aligned itself with the “First World.” Following the 1944 coup and the 1946 referendum, the Kingdom of Bulgaria had been succeeded by the People's Republic of Bulgaria. The new regime issued a diplomatic note on August 10, 1950, stating that the number of Turks who desired to emigrate to Turkey exceeded 250,000. Indeed, in response to the pressures on the ethnic and linguistic minorities of Bulgaria, the Turkish minority had begun to petition

²⁴⁸ Mazower, *The Balkans*, 117.

²⁴⁹ Ülker, “Contextualising ‘Turkification’,” 625.

²⁵⁰ See, for instance, BOA A.}MTZ.(04).157.99 (23 Rebiülahir 1325 [June 5, 1907]); BOA A.}MTZ.(04).159.56 (21 Cemaziyelahir 1325 [August 1, 1907]); BOA A.}MTZ.(04).159.94 (6 Recep 1325 [August 15, 1907]).

²⁵¹ For Turkey-Bulgaria relations in the interwar period, see Dilek Barlas and Yonca Köksal, “Turkey's Foreign Policy towards Bulgaria and the Turkish Minority,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 14, no. 2 (2014): 175–93.

²⁵² Bilâl N. Şimşir, *Bulgaristan Türkleri* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2012 [1986]), 246.

Turkish authorities in 1947–48, while the Bulgarian government had started to facilitate the issuing of passports to Turks.²⁵³

However, Bulgaria claimed that the Turkish government was exploiting these petitions to spread propaganda and was making it difficult for Turkish authorities to issue visas. The Bulgarian government “protest[ed] the animosity the Turkish government was trying to foster among the Turkish minority in Bulgaria and the Turkish nation” and with that diplomatic note, imposed the arrival of 250,000 Bulgarian Turks to Turkey within a three-month period.²⁵⁴ This intensive and abrupt imposition was considered an act of deportation by the Turkish government, who accused Bulgaria of violating international laws and principles of humanity.²⁵⁵ On the other hand, the Bulgarian note was grounding itself on the Residence Agreement signed between Turkey and Bulgaria in 1925. According to this agreement, neither state would impede the voluntary migration of the Turks of Bulgaria and the Bulgarians of Turkey.²⁵⁶ What followed was about a dozen written and verbal notes, one more contentious than the other, until Bulgaria halted the migration on November 30, 1951. More importantly, the Turkish government closed its borders with Bulgaria twice during this period, on the grounds that the Bulgarian immigrants included individuals without visas or with counterfeit visas. For Turkish authorities, the other objectionable aspect of the immigrants was that among them were Romani persons, whose numbers in Bulgaria was estimated to be around 150,000 in 1949.²⁵⁷

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 232–36.

²⁵⁴ Quoted from *Ulus* (August 24, 1950) in Ulvi Özgür, “Bulgaristan Türkleri’nin 1950 – 1951 Yıllarında Türkiye’ye Göçleri” (MA thesis, İstanbul University, 2007), 44–45.

²⁵⁵ *T.B.M.M. Tutanak Dergisi*, Volume 2, Term IX, Assembly Year 1, Session 1 (November 1, 1950), 13.

²⁵⁶ *Resmî Cerîde*, no. 403 (June 20, 1926), 924.

²⁵⁷ Huey Louis Kostanick, *Turkish Resettlement of Bulgarian Turks, 1950-1953* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 79.

Shortly after the first Bulgarian note, before the border crisis had even begun, the Democrat Party's Ankara representative Mümtaz Faik Fenik published an op-ed in the daily *Zafer*, articulating his stance on the developments:

By these actions, Bulgaria is in complete violation of the Declaration of Human Rights, as well as oppressing the Turks. On this subject, three points come to mind: 1) Either Bulgaria has resorted to these deportations in order to eliminate the Turks, which would be pure racism and a manifestation of Hitlerite racism within the communist system; 2) The act betrays a desire to exact vengeance upon the Turks, as well as a political manoeuvre; 3) Or the intention is to infiltrate the country with a large number of communists among these 250 thousand Bulgarian Turks, and innocent Turks are being severely oppressed in the process.²⁵⁸

Within a month of the beginning of the migration, on September 12, 1950, the daily *Milliyet* reported that "Several days ago, the Bulgarian government attempted to send a group of Gypsies without visas." This group, and the subsequent ones that lacked visas, were sent back to Bulgaria. The Governor of Edirne, Emin Akıncı, declared that "It is highly possible that malicious elements might enter our country along with refugees. A lot [of responsibility] falls on our citizens against these [elements]. Our citizens should be vigilant,"²⁵⁹ virtually mobilizing the public against suspected persons at the Bulgarian border. At the same time, the daily *Cumhuriyet* was warning the public that "The possibility that certain agents are deployed among the migrants is always a consideration," and that "more than 700 Gypsies" had arrived at Edirne from Bulgaria, but that

²⁵⁸ Mümtaz Faik Fenik, "Bulgaristandaki Türklerin Tehciri," *Zafer*, August 12, 1950.

²⁵⁹ "Tehcir Talebinden Sonra Bulgaristan Hudutta Hâdiseler Çıkıyor," *Milliyet*, September 12, 1950.

they were “held 300 meters away from the main migrant housing.”²⁶⁰ By the end of September 1950, the number of Roma at the border was reported—quite hyperbolically—as 1100.²⁶¹

On September 22, 1950, Bulgaria issues a second note, insisting on Turkey’s acceptance of all migrants. According to the aforementioned Ankara representative Mümtaz Faik Fenik, Bulgaria was intending to infiltrate communist agents into the country, and “to send a bunch of unproductive Gypsies to Turkey and make them our problem.”²⁶² According to a Bulgarian source, the Bulgarian government had been registering the Roma, along with Tatars, as “Turks” since 1950.²⁶³ Along the same lines as Fenik, Bursa representative Selim Ragıp Emeç spoke to the Turkish government’s conviction that “among the purely Turkish element that wishes to leave Bulgaria, are certain communist elements that the Bulgarians wish to insert into our country by taking advantage of the situation. (...) We have acted properly by turning back Gypsies and other undetermined people, who are without any doubt in the service of the Russian Bolsheviks and have come to our country in order to spread mayhem.”²⁶⁴ It was also stated that “Faced with our government’s determined stance before the Gypsy problem, the Bulgarians have amassed thousands of Gypsies at the Turco-Bulgarian frontier, near Kapikule,” and that their true goal is to “infiltrate our country with these specially placed Gypsies, each one of whom is a Bulgarian agent, among the general stream of migrants.”²⁶⁵ In the eyes of the Turkish government representatives, the Roma were the embodiment of the Bulgarian adversary.

²⁶⁰ “Bulgaristan’dan Göçmen Akını Devam Ediyor,” *Cumhuriyet*, September 13, 1950.

²⁶¹ “Göçmen Akını Hızlandı,” *Milliyet*, September 28, 1950.

²⁶² Mümtaz Faik Fenik, “Bulgarların Yeni Bir Küstahlığı,” *Zafer*, September 24, 1950.

²⁶³ Anastasia Pashova, “Циганите мюсюлмани – неудобното за комунистическия режим в България малцинство” [Muslim Gypsies: An Inconvenience for the Communist Regime’s Minority Policy in Bulgaria], in „Възродителният процес“ памет и заличаване [“Revival Process”: Memory and Erasure] (Berlin: Ekta3, 2019), 117–40. I am thankful to Orlin Sabev for referring me to this publication.

²⁶⁴ Selim Ragıp Emeç’s article in *Son Posta* quoted in *Zafer*, September 25, 1950.

²⁶⁵ “Bulgaristandan Göç Akını Devam Ediyor,” *Milliyet*, September 27, 1950.

On October 7, 1950, after discovering that the incoming group of migrants included 97 more Roma, the Turkish government made the decision to close the border,²⁶⁶ granting Bulgaria time until November 10 to take back the Romani group.²⁶⁷ The border closure provided such members of Parliament as the historian İsmail Hami Danişmend a pretext to affirm their ideologies. Danişmend criticized early Republican immigration policies by writing that “We opened our doors assuming the Balkans was a silo of Turks and randomly took in everyone thinking they were the ‘Children of Conquerors’.” Arguing that Turkey should welcome Turkmens from the Middle East rather than immigrants from Europe, he added: “when the Bulgarian government began to release Gypsy herds inside our borders as if they are Turks, we finally somewhat came to our senses.”²⁶⁸ The border closure was also carefully observed internationally, notably by the United States Department of State. George Wadsworth II (1893–1958), U.S. ambassador to Turkey, reported back to Washington that a Bulgarian note warned “if frontier is not immed[iately] reopened, it is only Turkish Govt which will bear responsibility for ‘the grave consequences’ which the unilateral acts of Turkish auths will have causes [sic].” The ambassador’s note also relayed that the Turkish government “asserts Bulgarian auth[oritie]s have frequently tried to incl[ude] among Turk immigrants persons not of Turkish origin, particularly gypsies, furnished with false visas and that it is on these grounds that Turkey has again been obliged close frontier.”²⁶⁹

After a two-month-long border closure, towards the end of 1950, the Turkish and Bulgarian governments reached an agreement for its reopening, which stipulated that Bulgaria would take

²⁶⁶ “Vizesiz Gönderilen Göçmenler Geri Alınıncaya Kadar Hükûmet, Türk-Bulgar Hududunu Dün Kapattı,” *Yeni İstanbul*, October 8, 1950.

²⁶⁷ “Bulgar Notasındaki Mühlet Bugün Bitiyor: Hükûmetimiz Hududu Açmamak Kararında...” *Milliyet*, November 10, 1950.

²⁶⁸ İsmail Hami Danişmend, “Evlâd-ı Fatihan Riyaseti,” *Milliyet*, October 26, 1950.

²⁶⁹ *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951, The Near East and Africa, Volume V, Document 664.82/11–1951*, accessed May 6, 2021, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1951v05/d675>.

back 360 individuals who had been “discovered to be Gypsies.”²⁷⁰ Pundits were quick to celebrate the repatriation of the Roma, using explicitly racist imagery and language:

Cries of “Long live Bulgaria!” were heard within Turkish borders, and these cries were met with approval. Those who shouted were Bulgarian Gypsies. Our relations soured with the Bulgarians, who had been searching for an excuse to rid their country of the Gypsies and, taking advantage of the caravans of immigrants, incorporated them and thus sent them to us. We shut down the border. There were unpleasant events. The Bulgarians misbehaved. Indeed, as they were accustomed to hearing the squeaking boots of the Muscovites in their own country, they thought they could depend on their uncle and stand up to us. Finally they agreed to take back the Gypsies, who did not do them honor. Thus the problem was resolved. Thus it was that those pains in the neck shouted "Long live Bulgaria" as they were being deported. They thought they would anger us. Let them not worry about it, let them go back to entertaining the Bulgarians and the Russians with their bagpipes. We were not angry but happy. Thank God there is a place called Bulgaria. Without it, what would we have done with such ignoble people? Had we thrown them into the sea, the sharks would have refused to eat them; had we gifted them to African cannibals, they too would have rejected them. Yes, they would have been a source of grief for us, walking around with countless bastards of unknown parentage and disgusting us. May God grant them to the Bulgarians, that is all we can say. Let them sell grates and fire irons in the streets of Sofia, and sieves in the villages, play hampir in public squares, tell Russian soldiers' fortunes and belly dance before them. And that is what they deserve. May those ingrates not draw any benefit from the bread and cheese given them as travel provisions. If the term “degenerate” is not applied to them, to whom would it be applied?²⁷¹

In other words, not only the Bulgarian government, but the Roma themselves were to be blamed. For this pundit, the events that led up to the first border closure was “unpleasant.” But what was

²⁷⁰ “Türk - Bulgar Hududu Açıldı,” *Milliyet*, December 3, 1950.

²⁷¹ Pençe, “Yaşasın Bulgaristan Öyle mi?” *Milliyet*, December 6, 1950.

utterly unacceptable was the allegation that the returning Roma were celebrating Bulgaria—after having been detained at the border and segregated from the rest of the immigrants.

The following year, on November 8, 1951, on account of the arrival of 126 Romani individuals who were allegedly discovered with counterfeit visas, and after Turkey’s demand for their repatriation was met with a refusal, the Turco-Bulgarian border was closed once again “in order to prevent the influx of persons who pass themselves off as immigrants and who are sent contrary to the existing agreement, and to have those who have already arrived repatriated.”²⁷² As far as the Turkish dailies reported, the Greco-Bulgarian border had also been closed by the Greek government for the same reason.²⁷³ In retaliation, the Bulgarian government halted the migration completely on November 30, 1951.²⁷⁴ The Turco-Bulgarian border remained closed until a protocol was signed and the 132 Romani individuals confined at the border town of Edirne—whose number had increased from 126 by births—were repatriated on February 20, 1953. The conditions under which they had spent sixteen months in a guesthouse in Edirne is unknown.²⁷⁵ And until after Bulgaria and Turkey signed a “close relatives migration” agreement in 1968, Bulgarian Turks could not continue to immigrate to Turkey.²⁷⁶ Even during the mass migration of 1989 that was “euphemistically called a ‘grand excursion’” by the Bulgarian government,²⁷⁷ Roma were again rejected by Turkish immigration officials in spite of the fact that they had relatives in Turkey.²⁷⁸

²⁷² “Bulgaristan Hududunun Kapatılması,” *Milliyet*, November 10, 1951.

²⁷³ “Türkiye - Bulgar Hududu Kapatıldı,” *Milliyet*, November 9, 1951.

²⁷⁴ Şimşir, *Bulgaristan Türkleri*, 245.

²⁷⁵ “Türk-Bulgar Hududu Dün Tekrar Açıldı,” *Milliyet*, February 21, 1953.

²⁷⁶ *Resmî Gazete*, no. 13210 (May 30, 1969).

²⁷⁷ Ali Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 18.

²⁷⁸ Aksu, *Çingene Olmak*, 113.

The 1950–51 exodus from Bulgaria to Turkey sheds light on the Turkish government’s attitude towards the Roma at the beginning of the multi-party regime. In the course of this diplomatic and humanitarian crisis, the 1934 Resettlement Law’s articles that singled out and targeted the Roma were deployed to their full extent. But more significantly, it was anti-communist and anti-Tsiganist rhetoric that dominated political and public discourse, rather than the existing discriminatory legislation. US-ally Turkey’s aggression against Sovietized Bulgaria found its blunt and catastrophic expression in hatred against the Roma, labeling them as “suspicious Gypsies”.²⁷⁹ The Roma had a centuries-long history of having been condemned, deported, and even executed in Europe under the suspicion of being spies.²⁸⁰ In the sixteenth century, after surrendering significant territories to the Ottomans, the Kingdom of Hungary had labeled the Roma as “Turkish spies.”²⁸¹ And a Bulgarian publication depicting the April Uprising of 1876 had contended that “the powerful government of the sultan had formed a gang of barefoot Gypsy women for purposes of espionage and sent them out into Bulgarian villages.”²⁸² In 1950–51, this long-standing trope was imported into Turkey and articulated to the exclusionist legal framework of the nation-state, with its anxieties rooted in issues of religion, language, and race. In the context of the increasingly racist public discourse against the Roma, what the 1950–51 events clarified was that the immigrant Roma had become *persona non grata* at all costs, regardless of their religious adherence to Islam and linguistic affiliation with the Turkish language.²⁸³

²⁷⁹ “Göçmen Mevzuunda Dışişleri Bakanının Beyanâtı: Türk Aslından Olmıyanlar Yurdumuza Giremeyecek,” *Yeni İstanbul*, October 9, 1950.

²⁸⁰ Soulis, “The Gypsies in the Byzantine Empire,” 154; Fraser, *The Gypsies*, 75, 85, 89.

²⁸¹ Crowe, *A History of the Gypsies*, xi, 34.

²⁸² Leman Ergenç, *Bulgar Yayınlarında Türkler* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1989), 64.

²⁸³ It is important to note that “Christian Orthodox Gagauz Turks and Shi’a Azeris, in spite of the explicit reference to Turkish descent, appear to have been denied the possibility to migrate to Turkey, while non-Turkish ethnicities such as for example [*sic*] Albanians, Bosnians and Pomaks

Identity Spatialized

Christoph Herzog eloquently affirms that “Modern states, not least with the help of documents, have created a reality of citizenship that control movement by identifying the individual that is not imagined but much more real because it is backed up by a pervasive apparatus of infrastructural power. Thus, the question of controlling movement is closely linked to the question of identifying the individual.”²⁸⁴ Indeed, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the late Ottoman and early Turkish Republican governments displayed an expanding capacity and will for employing legislative and administrative tools in order to surveil, regulate, and delegitimize unwanted mobilities they deemed incongruent with the envisioned population.

First, nomadism and its place in the modern world came into question. While itinerancy was preserved and even protected in the early modern Ottoman Empire, with occasional yet temporary interventions in order to establish immediate public security and peace, it started becoming first the subject of an Ottoman civilizing mission and later a liability in the eyes of the state as internal and external dynamics increasingly prioritized the ascent of sedentarism. This trend gained further momentum particularly under the CUP government, finally emerging as a fundamental precondition of eligibility to belong to the Turkish nation-state: what was once a beneficial economic aspect of Ottoman society had grown into a despised nuisance that had no place in the Turkish nation. Peripatetic living was “seen as a potential challenge to the territorial ‘rationality’ nationalisms were constructing.”²⁸⁵ Throughout the early 1900s, by way of legislation

from the Balkans have been able to migrate and settle in Turkey.” Kirisci, “Dissegregating Turkish Citizenship,” 6.

²⁸⁴ Herzog, “Migration and the State,” 117.

²⁸⁵ Nora Lafi, “The Ottoman Urban Governance of Migrations and the Stakes of Modernity,” in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, eds. Ulrike Freitag, Malke Fuhrmann, Nora Lafi, and Florian Riedler (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 16.

and political discourse, the word “Gypsy” and the people it signified became commensurate with nomadism, and it in turn was equated with vagrancy, so much so that this notion was embedded even in police regulations. The 1941 “Regulations regarding Police Discipline, the Role of the Police in Ceremonies and Communities, and the Organization and Responsibilities of the Police” stipulated that one of the common duties of police commanders included taking necessary action against “gypsies [*sic*] who do not have true occupations (*esashı meslek*).”²⁸⁶ This duty was renewed in the 1968 edition of the regulations booklet²⁸⁷ and remained in force until its elimination in 2006.²⁸⁸

Immigration, and particularly the compulsory Greco-Turkish Population Exchange, helped the Turkish government’s project of homogenizing and reshaping the makeup of society. While the Roma were not exempted from the exchange, they were decisively marked as different from the rest of the Muslim exchangees. The consequent resettlement laws and practices further instilled the idea of the Roma as distinct. Even though they were dispersed within Turkish-dominant settlements for assimilation purposes, the ethnic boundary-making project of the Turkish Republic undeniably characterized them as different. Finally, the ambivalence surrounding the categorization of the Roma and their place in society found a decisive resolution during the mass migration of Bulgarian Turks in early 1950s. Contrasting with earlier practices and evoking age-old stereotypes, in the eyes of the Turkish government it was now plainly undesirable for the migrating Roma to be included in the composition of Turkish society. Mobility was a medium

²⁸⁶ *Polisin Disiplinine; Merasim ve Topluluklardaki Rolüne ve Polis Karakollar Teşkilâtı ile Vazifelerine Dair Talimatname* (Ankara: Yeni Cezaevi Matbaası, 1941), 68.

²⁸⁷ *Polisin Disiplinine, Merasim ve Topluluklardaki Rolüne ve Polis Karakollar Teşkilâtı ile Vazifelerine Dair Talimatname* (n.p.: Polis Enstitüsü ve Koleji Müdürlüğü Matbaası, 1968), 44.

²⁸⁸ European Roma Rights Centre, *Turkey: Country Profile, 2011-2012*, accessed July 17, 2013, http://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/turkey-country-profile-2011-2012.pdf.

through which contested definitions of place and belonging were negotiated, as a result of which Romani identity was ethnicized in the face of the meticulously delineated identity of “the Turk.”

Chapter 3

Gypsy Myths, Romani Lives

Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing: it distorts;
myth is neither a lie nor a confession; it is an inflection.

Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*²⁸⁹

Gypsies lead their lives with virtually the same philosophy of life in many parts of the world, and their most distinct characteristics can be summarized as being free and independent, not heeding the future, and enjoying the day.²⁹⁰

Such was the description provided in the “Gypsies” entry of the 1994 “Encyclopedia of İstanbul” by a reputable publisher of historical scholarship. In the late twentieth century, depictions of this kind were long-established and commonplace, and they too easily escaped scrutiny or criticism. The preceding chapters demonstrated how Romani identity was marked as different over centuries in late- and post-Ottoman confessional, fiscal, juridical, and spatial domains, and how they were negotiated by the Roma themselves. In turn, this chapter traces the discursive sources of Romani alterity and strives to demonstrate how the non-Roma gaze and pen collectively constructed “Gypsy myths” that underpinned the previously discussed state policies and practices. Not only did these continually transmitted and recapitulated depictions create a discursive realm of reproduction in the Saidian sense, more importantly they reinforced public opinion and legitimation, and were tantamount to promoting complicity in their tenacity.

²⁸⁹ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994), 129.

²⁹⁰ Melih Duygulu, “Çingeneler,” in *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi, Cilt 2* (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 1994), 514.

In portrayal after portrayal, the word “Gypsy” was reduced to much less than the sum of its parts—the diverse groups of people it signified. In treatises, travel writing, and works of literature, the “Gypsies” were transformed into a metonym, reduced to a distorted essence, turned into an abstraction. Their commonality was that the authors of these publications demonstrated a certain brand of apathy as if they were writing about a people who had long ago perished, who were not able to bear witness to what is being written about them, who would not experience the hateful consequences of their utterance. In these publications, the Roma were rendered highly visible and vulnerable, yet they were presumed absent.

The increasingly globalized conversation centered on the Roma over different contexts and time periods amounted to a “regime of truth” in the Foucauldian sense, marking Romani lives as distinctive and Romani bodies as culturally and racially subordinate. And as Stuart Hall put it, “each regime of truth *makes difference function discursively*. Indeed, by making difference intelligible in this way, each regime marks out human differences within culture in a way that corresponds exactly to how difference is understood to function in nature, that is, ‘naturally,’ such that the differences represented in the discourse of race are put beyond the capacity of culture and history to rework or reconstruct them.”²⁹¹ In the words of self-proclaimed experts, authoritative travellers, and influential authors, difference became truth.

Traveling History, Popularized Imagery

In his “Book of Travels,” the seventeenth-century Ottoman traveler Evliyâ Çelebi included depictions of the appearances of “Gypsies” in imperial processions²⁹² and even provided some

²⁹¹ Stuart Hall, *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*, ed. Kobena Mercer (Cambridge, MA and London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2017), 57.—Original emphasis.

²⁹² Evliyâ Çelebi, *Evliyâ Çelebi Seyahatnâmesi*, vol. 1, 280.

samples from “the peculiar language of the Gypsies of Rum.”²⁹³ He also related their mythologized origin story, building on the biblical narrative of Egyptian provenance that circulated in Europe at the time:

The Gypsies in this region and throughout the Ottoman domains originated in Egypt, when Moses battled with Pharaoh on the shore of the Red Sea near the Sinai desert (...). Moses put a curse on the people of Pharaoh who were not present at that battle. As a result of the curse they could not remain in Egypt but were scattered abroad, condemned to wander from clime to clime and from town to town, hungry and homeless, dwelling in the mountains and the valleys, and raiding and thieving.²⁹⁴

For Evliyâ Çelebi, “the Gypsies (...), because of Moses’s curse, live in contemptible and squalid circumstances (...). (...) Truly they are tyrannical, good-for-nothing, thieving, irreligious people – they pretend to be Muslims but are not even infidels!”²⁹⁵ In the same century, the İstanbul-born poet and historian Eremya Çelebi Kömürçiyân (1637–95) wrote in his “History of İstanbul” that “Gypsies” would often play a part in “upsetting public morals and safety” and that “the women of their race (...) were sinners and the men procurers.”²⁹⁶ Ottoman narratives would be complemented by proliferating European travelers’ accounts throughout these centuries. In 1693, in *A Collection of Curious Travels and Voyages*, the well-traveled English naturalist John Ray (1627–1705) correlated the European and Ottoman landscapes by commenting that “there are thousands of Gypsies or Zinganies in Turkey, who live the same idle, nasty kind of life they do in Christiandom, and pretend to the same art of telling fortunes, and are looked upon as the off-

²⁹³ Friedman and Dankoff, “The Earliest Known Text,” 4.

²⁹⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 4–5.

²⁹⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 5.

²⁹⁶ Eremya Çelebi Kömürçiyân, *İstanbul Tarihi: XVII. Asırda İstanbul*, trans. and annot. Hrand D. Andreasyan, ed. and annot. Kevork Pamukçiyân (İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık, 1988 [1661–84/89?]), 3–4.

scouring of mankind.”²⁹⁷ As Dror Ze’evi illustrated in *Producing Desire*, “The travelogue, it is claimed, became the first and foremost means of otherization, creating European self-images in contrast to those of an invented or deliberately distorted image of the East.”²⁹⁸ Travel literature became a fertile ground for the self-validation of the ‘Gypsy’ imagery, increasingly including racial descriptions as well. For instance, a certain Captain Schad, traveling through the Balkans in 1740–41, noted:

In Hasalar we met the first loose women in the Ottoman Empire. They were two frivolous women of the tribe of the wretched nation that in France they usually call “Egyptiens”. They were waiting for us (...) most beautifully dressed and darker than any Muslim women that live in these parts.²⁹⁹

These tropes of the Roma’s endless itinerancy and abject existence survived for centuries, and still live on today, even if in more refined, subdued, and congruently insidious forms.

During the Enlightenment, with the ascent of “scientific” racism, such narratives would don a scientific cloak and assume heightened legitimacy. Earlier centuries’ European depictions were no more ambivalent in their contempt, but in the late eighteenth century they were reformulated and marketed as immutable racial traits, particularly in the much popularized publication of German historian Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann (1756–1804).³⁰⁰ Grellmann published his *Historischer Versuch über die Zigeuner* in 1783. The English translation, *Dissertation on the Gipseys*, came out in 1787, followed immediately by the French in 1788.

²⁹⁷ Quoted in Cressy, *Gypsies*, 5.

²⁹⁸ Dror Ze’evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2006), 150.

²⁹⁹ Marushiakova and Popov, *Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire*, 46.

³⁰⁰ Acton, “Theorising Mobility.”

Setting forth a book that was largely plagiarized from previous publications,³⁰¹ “For more than two hundred years, people have been anxious to discover who these guests were, that, under the name of Gipseys, came, unknown and uninvited, into Europe, in the fifteenth century, and have chosen to remain ever since,” wrote Grellmann.³⁰² In turn, due to an irrefutable contrast, the European response was justified in his eyes:

Let us reflect how different they are from Europeans: the one is white, the other black;—this clothes himself, the other goes half naked;—this shudders at the thought of eating carrion, the other regales on it as a dainty. Moreover these people are famed, and were even from their first appearance in Europe, for being plunderers, thieves, and incendiaries: the European, in consequence, not merely dislikes, but hates them.³⁰³

They were not simply alien to Europe, but visibly, frighteningly, racially alien:

the dark brown, or olive coloured, skin of the Gipseys, with their white teeth appearing between their red lips, may be a disgusting sight to an European, unaccustomed to such objects. Let us only ask, [a]s children, have we not, at some time or other, run affrighted from a Gipseys? The case will be entirely altered, if we divest ourselves of the idea that a black skin is disagreeable.³⁰⁴

As with Evliyâ Çelebi a century before him, for Grellmann, too, “No Gipseys has an idea of submission to any fixed profession of faith: it is as easy for him to change his religion at every

³⁰¹ Yaron Matras, “Scholarship and the Politics of Romani Identity: Strategic and Conceptual Issues,” in *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 212.

³⁰² H.M.G. Grellmann, *Dissertation on the Gipseys: Representing Their Manner of Life, Family Economy, Occupations and Trades, Marriages and Education, Sickness, Death, and Burial, Religion, Language, Sciences and Arts, with an Historical Enquiry Concerning Their Origin and First Appearance in Europe*, [trans. M. Raper] (London: Printed by William Ballintine, 1807 [1787]), x.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, viii.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 10–11.

new village, as for another person to shift his coat.”³⁰⁵ And just like Evliyâ Çelebi, Grellmann could not pass up on mentioning taxation practices in the Ottoman Empire:

The Turks are so fully convinced of the little sincerity the Gipseys entertain in regard to religions, that although a Jew, by becoming a Mahometan, is freed from the payment of the charadsh [*haraç*], the Gipseys are not, at least in the neighborhood of Constantinople. They are compelled to pay this polltax even though their ancestors, for centuries back, had been Mahometans.³⁰⁶

Vindicating the widely-implemented sixteenth-century European expulsion practices,³⁰⁷ Grellmann wrote that “it appears how universally the opinion was adopted, that banishing the Gipseys was the only method to be secure from their malignity.” However, for him it was unfortunate that the Ottoman Empire had not yet caught up with such European practices, since “Even if every civilised nation had driven out the Gipseys at the same time, Europe could not have been entirely cleared of them, so long as they preserved an asylum in Turkey.”³⁰⁸

Grellmann’s depictions in the *Dissertation* would serve as a model for the travelogues and works of “Gypsy lore” after him. Throughout the nineteenth century, the dissemination of identical depictions accelerated. For instance, in his *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia*, the British consul William Wilkinson (d. 1836), for whom the Ottoman Empire

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 81.

³⁰⁷ “As well as being subject to numerous local bans, Gypsies were expelled from the Holy Roman Empire in 1498, 1500, 1544, and 1551, different Swiss cantons between 1471 and 1530, Spain in 1499 (...), Portugal in 1526, 1538, and 1577, Navarre in 1538, France in 1539, different Italian states, including the Papal States, between 1493 and 1553, Denmark in 1536 (...), Poland in 1537, Sweden in the 1540s, Scotland and Bohemia in 1541 and 1549, and Moravia in 1558. In England there was also a succession of acts promulgated against Gypsies from the 1530s to 1550s and fifteen separate acts of deportation can be identified.” Francisco Bethencourt, *Racisms: From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 155–56.

³⁰⁸ Grellmann, *Dissertation*, 96–97.

“offer[ed] an inexhaustible subject for investigation, and an endless excitement to curiosity,”³⁰⁹
wrote:

That class of the human species comprehended under the general appellation of gypsies (...) appear little superior to the brute creation. (...) They are remarkable, as every where else, by their brown complexion (...). The propensity to stealing seems inherent in them, but they do not become thieves with the view of enriching themselves; their thefts never extend beyond trifles.³¹⁰

Narrative after narrative, “Gypsy” bodies were marked as different from and, more importantly, inferior to white Europeans.³¹¹ Allegations of cannibalism emerged in seventeenth-century Spain and eighteenth-century Hungary, resulting in torture and executions.³¹² Stereotypical imagery and such myths as the “child-snatching Gypsy” found their way even into children’s literature,³¹³ instilling fear in an early age and ensuring that the following generation would be fully equipped with the tools needed to perpetuate the reproduction of stereotypes in literature and travel writing. Dreadful tropes traveled fast. For instance, the British Lady Fanny Janet Blunt (c. 1840–1926), the wife of the British consul to Salonica who received an Order of Virtue (*Şefkat Nişanı*) from Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1886, described the “Gypsies” in *The People of Turkey* as follows:

³⁰⁹ William Wilkinson, *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia: With Various Political Observations Relating to Them* (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820), iv.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 168–69.

³¹¹ See, for instance, Deborah Epstein Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807–1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Elizabeth Carter Hanrahan, “Taming the Gypsy: How French Romantics Recaptured a Past,” PhD diss., Harvard University, 2014.

³¹² Fraser, *Gypsies*, 162, 195–96; Stephan Steiner, “Man-Eating Roma: The Anatomy of a Bloody Week,” paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society, Graz, Austria, September 1–3, 2011.

³¹³ Jodie Matthews, “Back Where They Belong: Gypsies, Kidnapping and Assimilation in Victorian Children’s Literature,” *Romani Studies* Fifth Series 20, no. 2 (2010): 137–59.

The whole tribe is a curious mixture of the human and the animal: it is endowed with the scent of a dog, the cunning of the monkey, and the form and vices, but none of the virtues apparently, of mankind.³¹⁴

The Literary Stamp of Stigma

It was in this era that the first Ottoman literary work on the “Gypsies” was produced. Ahmed Midhat Efendi’s (1844–1912) novella “Gypsy” (*Çingene*) was serialized in twenty-two issues of his own daily *Tercüman-ı Hakikat* in May–July 1887. The novella tells the story of a rich but virtuous young man, Şems Hikmet Bey, “who would not turn pleasure into danger.”³¹⁵ He meets a most beautiful sixteen-year-old “Gypsy” girl by the name of Ziba, a singer and dancer, in Kâğıthane, at the time a well-known excursion ground (known to Europeans as the “Sweet Waters of Europe”). Ziba is described by the narrator not only in moralistic terms, using such words as “impudicity” (*edepsizlik*)³¹⁶ and “fawningness” (*yılışıklık*)³¹⁷ but also in explicitly racial ones:

Eyes are black. Complexion is dark (*esmer*), but not like the darkness seen in other Gypsies! If this girl was whiter than white, that whiteness could not suit her as much as this darkness.³¹⁸

Chromatism, as well as the conceptualization of race in the Ottoman Empire in particular, and in the Middle East in general, were not absent by Ahmed Midhat’s time, most prominently in reference to enslaved persons of African origin. For instance, it was common Ottoman practice for Black Africans to be “invariably and colloquially termed ‘Arabs’ [while] ethnic Arabs were ‘white

³¹⁴ [Fanny Janet Blunt], *The People of Turkey: Twenty Years’ Residence among Bulgarians, Greeks, Albanians, Turks, and Armenians. By a Consul’s Daughter and Wife*, Volume 1, ed. Stanley Lane Pool (London: John Murray, 1878), 168.

³¹⁵ Ahme[d] Mi[d]hat Efendi, *Çingene*, ed. S. Emrah Arlıhan (İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 2009 [1888/89]), 8.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 54.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

Arabs,” the latter term denoting freeborn Muslims with whiteness undeniably equated with an ascendant status.³¹⁹ In the Khedivate of Egypt, census registers included detailed complexion identifiers. In 1868, the Population Registry included detailed descriptions in which “The lighter colors, white, blond (*ashqar*) and wheatlike (*qambi*) were ascribed only to Egyptians and the darkest color, black [*aswad* or *sawda*], only to ‘Sudanese.’ Individuals in both groups were described as red and brown.”³²⁰ Themselves not considered white by the Europeans, Ottomans had long created and inscribed their own people of color, including not only Africans and Arabs, but also the Roma.

In Ahmed Midhat’s novella, the dominant stigmatization of racialized Roma does not prevent Şems Hikmet Bey from falling in love with Ziba. In order to keep her close, he first proposes to take her in as a servant. One of Ziba’s friends reacts to this with the utmost internalization of entrenched stigmas, saying: “How could a Gypsy girl make a servant? (...) You know, they say that supposedly whatever the Gypsy hand touches becomes filthy!” Şems Hikmet reassures her: “Nonsense! Isn’t Gypsy human too?”³²¹ Ahmed Midhat has his Romani characters speak to the time-honored trivialization of Romani adherence to religion. One says “We say we are [Muslim] but they still call us Gypsy. They say we are not Muslims. Apparently Gypsy is one thing, Muslim is another. As a matter of fact, some of our men marry Muslim girls by hiding that they are Gypsies, then when it is heard they are Gypsies, all hell breaks loose.” To these remarks,

³¹⁹ Y. Hakan Erdem, “Magic, Theft, and Arson: The Life and Death of an Enslaved African Woman in Ottoman İzmit,” in *Race and Slavery in the Middle East: Histories of Trans-Saharan Africans in Nineteenth-Century Egypt, Sudan, and the Ottoman Mediterranean*, eds. Terence Walz and Kenneth M. Cuno (Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010), 140–41.

³²⁰ Kenneth M. Cuno, “African Slaves in Nineteenth-Century Rural Egypt: A Preliminary Assessment,” in *Race and Slavery in the Middle East*, 86.

³²¹ Ahme[d] Mi[d]hat Efendi, *Çingene*, 24–25.

too, Şems Hikmet's response is that "This is all a result of ignorance."³²² Yet he knows well that it is an ambitious endeavor to overcome these social barriers. And through his character's search for a resolution, Ahmed Midhat appears to have been keen on addressing all kinds of "popular wisdom" and "scientific knowledge" about the Roma that had accumulated in the Ottoman and European consciousnesses alike.

Indeed, in his novella, Ahmed Midhat includes a discussion of the origins of the Roma as well. Following in the footsteps of the Gypsy lorist Alexandre Paspati, who in his 1860–63 article had found "accounts of the progress of the Gypsies from India through Persia" very plausible,³²³ Ahmed Midhat has Şems Hikmet inquire his Indian tutor Selimcan about this. To Şems Hikmet's question about whether "Gypsies, whom everyone despises in our land," are of Indian origin, Selimcan's response is a resounding "There cannot be anything truer in this world."³²⁴ Şems Hikmet even brings up the controversy around this theory which has since then been contested even more. Yet, in the last instance, Selimcan bases his conviction on an essentialized presentation of shared physical features and linguistic proximity:

Not only is the fact that these men are Indian evident in their faces, their language is still the Indian language. Since their arrival in these regions is early and since, accordingly, they have mixed with other races, this mingling has caused a deep-seated change in both their features and languages, but they still have been able to preserve enough of their essence so they are clearly recognizable as Indians.³²⁵

The nineteenth-century Ottoman reader also witnessed Ahmed Midhat's characters engage in a discussion of the reasons behind dominant views of the "Gypsies," all in the service of providing

³²² *Ibid.*, 25.

³²³ A.G. Paspati, "Memoir on the Language of the Gypsies, as Now Used in the Turkish Empire," trans. C. Hamlin, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 7 (1860–63): 154.

³²⁴ Ahme[d] Mi[d]hat Efendi, *Çingene*, 27.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*

the validation Şems Hikmet desperately needs for his feelings for a “mere Gypsy girl,” before he can set out to turn Ziba into a civilizing mission. Hence, Şems Hikmet’s debate with Selimcan ventures into the realm of nature vs. culture, with Selimcan fervently arguing for the nature side of the argument.

“Why, if the essence of Gypsies are Indian, are they disparaged and despised by every nation?” asks Şems Hikmet. Selimcan’s initial response is that “It must certainly be because they lack education and civilization.”³²⁶ But Şems Hikmet, with the intention of steering the conversation into a place where he could justify his affection for Ziba, questions this: “In any case, are they not humans, too?” Selimcan reveals his idea of humanity and civilization:

Good, but human is the name of the creature whose civil values are perfect. The wild man cannot be called a human, neither can we give the name of “human” to the people whose degree is between wildness and civilization.³²⁷

Such words from Selimcan gives Şems Hikmet the opportunity to hone in on his ultimate purpose: “For the ignoble condition of wretched Gypsies, not they but we should be held responsible. All these years, thousands of souls have been living like desert savages in our capital and its environs. Shouldn’t we have educated them properly pursuant to Islam?”³²⁸ Back in 1783, Grellmann, too, had similarly commented that “Men may be formed to any thing. Had proper means been used for their civilisation, it is highly probable the event would have proved that they were not incapable of becoming better.”³²⁹

More importantly, this was also the exact point made in the report of Sadi Bey that was delivered to Sultan Abdülhamid II in 1891, four years after the serialization of Ahmed Midhat’s

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

³²⁹ Grellmann, *Dissertation*, 98.

novella. As discussed in Chapter 1, Sadi Bey had concluded his report by saying that if the “Gypsies” were to be educated, “they themselves would have long forgotten that they are Gypsies.”³³⁰ Not only is the timing of the report noteworthy, but also the fact that Ahmed Midhat was a known Abdülhamid II supporter, writing in favor of the Hamidian regime at the time.³³¹ The publication of Ahmed Midhat’s novella, then, might plausibly have had an effect on the delivery of this report by Sadi Bey, which in turn had the result of heightening the Ottoman government’s attention and civilizing mission towards its Romani population. It is further telling that in 1893, upon hearing of the British plans to stage in London a “live panorama depicting the delights of Istanbul,” Sultan Abdülhamid II personally objected to “certain gypsy and Jewish women [being] displayed as the so-called specimens of Oriental peoples.” For the Hamidian regime, “all such display [was] demeaning and uncalled for.”³³² As the Ottoman Empire was embarking on a domestic civilizing mission, any representation of its peoples as wanting in civilization was to be kept far from the European gaze.

Despite the fact that the tutor Selimcan finds Şems Hikmet’s mission impossible to achieve, the latter nevertheless sets out to prove him and everyone else around him wrong by embarking on an education journey to civilize Ziba and “make her abandon her Gypsiness,”³³³ all in preparation for eventual matrimony. He even reframes his love in the undeniable terms of this civilizing mission:

³³⁰ BOA Y.MTV.47.180a.

³³¹ Nüket Esen and Erol Köroğlu, “Önsöz: Ahmed Mithat Efendi’yi Hatırlamak, Okumak, Anlamak,” in *Merhaba Ey Muharrir! Ahmet Mithat Üzerine Eleştirel Yazılar*, eds. Nüket Esen and Erol Köroğlu (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2006), 3.

³³² Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 151.

³³³ Ahme[d] Mi[d]hat Efendi, *Çingene*, 48.

My unbecoming fate got me embroiled in trouble by making me enamoured with a Gypsy. But this is such a love that it is not in pursuit of pleasure! If only it were for pleasure! For how difficult could it be to bed a Gypsy girl? Yet my love is the yearning for educating and training this girl. I want to inoculate a wild tree, then harvest the fruit I have grown with my own hands, and thus attain my heart's desire.³³⁴

Recasting his emotions as a selfless “white man’s burden,” Şems Hikmet “hires” Ziba and has her relocate in the waterfront mansion of a well-known matchmaking lady by the name of Düriye Hanım, where she would receive etiquette and music lessons.³³⁵ As Ziba spends a year under the care of Düriye Hanım, the “displays of Gypsiness [that] had Şems Hikmet Bey on the verge of vomiting and ashamed of what he was engaged in”³³⁶ fade away. By the end of the year, “her Gypsy-like manners had entirely disappeared” and those around Şems Hikmet would praise him by saying “Your Gypsy has become a countess!”³³⁷ The civilizing mission is thus complete, so successfully, in fact, that even Ziba’s dark skin turns into a “lovely wheat-like complexion” as she undergoes the civilization process, simultaneously undergoing a racial transformation.³³⁸ Even physical markers of racial boundaries could be alleviated through education in Ahmed Midhat’s imagination.

Nevertheless, all this transformation does not suffice for Şems Hikmet’s mother and brother-in-law to allow him to marry Ziba. The most forceful objections to the young man’s matrimonial intentions are voiced by his brother-in-law, Rakım Efendi, who argues that: “True civility must reside in a person’s essence. A civility that comes from nature and has been given a thousand names such as high character, nobility, glory, genteelness, can surely not be found in a

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 67, 69.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

Gypsy. Just as everything has primitive and developed versions, the primitive version of humanity is the Gypsies.”³³⁹ He goes on to give a tirade on race and its visible immutability:

Humans come in breeds. You cannot claim that a Black is “of the white race,” can you? Similarly, a wheat-colored Indian can never be compared to a white-skinned Caucasian. Neither can the slanted-eyed Mongolian resemble the round-eyed Tatar. Other than these, such breeds as the Slav, German, Greek, and Spanish are discernible from their faces. If one were to carefully examine an unknown man, it would be immediately distinguishable from his face whether he is an Albanian of Shkodra or an Arab of Syria or a Persian of Tabriz or a Briton of London.³⁴⁰

Harking back to the fourteenth-century scholar Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), he goes on to claim that it is a fact that certain races such as the Zanj “have a quite limited intelligence, and the humidity, aridity, heat, and cold observed in the climates of certain domains have a great effect on the disposition of the peoples inhabiting them.”³⁴¹ Indeed, in his 1377 *The Muqaddimah*, long before the scientific racism of the Enlightenment, Ibn Khaldun had argued the following:

Distinctions between races or nations are in some cases due to a different descent, as in the case of the Arabs, the Israelites, and the Persians. In other cases, they are caused by geographical location and physical marks, as in the case of the Zanj, the Abyssinians, the Slavs, and the Sudanese Negroes. Again, in other cases, they are caused by custom and distinguishing characteristics, as well as by descent, as in the case of the Arabs.³⁴²

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 84–85.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

³⁴² Ibn Khaldûn, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. and intro. Franz Rosenthal, ed. N.J. Dawood (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015 [1967]), 61.

After Ahmed Midhat presents his readers all “sides” of the argument through his characters, he has Rakım Efendi conclude that, in the last instance, “The Gypsy would remain a Gypsy whatever you do to them.”³⁴³ Nature thus becomes victorious over culture.

Following his mother’s and brother-in-law’s objections, Şems Hikmet ends up never declaring his love to Ziba and attempts suicide. Though he is saved, he never returns to his old self, and after spending twenty-four days bedridden, he dies. But his civilizational project lives on, with Ziba leading a “virtuous” life despite her origins and Şems Hikmet’s mother taking her in as a daughter.³⁴⁴ Most importantly, the narrator-author interjects that “In fact, in our opinion, it is more proper to find Rakım Efendi's views to be justified.” For Ahmed Midhat, Şems Hikmet “is born before his time.” In a thousand years, the narrator-author envisions that “the consciousness of humankind will have completely fallen into its right place and all humanity, with each of its individuals, will be citizens of a single civilization; and culture will have become globalized so that there will be no difference in terms of race or civilization. The world will be the humans’ homeland and people will be regarded as of a single civilized race.”³⁴⁵ Thus the novella ends in a timid note: “Gypsies” are human too, and can become worthy of respect provided that they are educated, but the time is not yet ripe for crossing such vast social boundaries. Even though, as an Ottoman author with “a mission to educate the people by means of literature,”³⁴⁶ Ahmed Midhat set out to demonstrate to his readers that it is not humane to discriminate based on race and racial differences, his recourse to stereotypical depictions page after page, and even to having his Romani characters internalize and reiterate them, mirrored and reinforced common perceptions of Ottoman

³⁴³ Ahme[d] Mi[d]hat Efendi, *Çingene*, 87.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

³⁴⁶ Ömer Ulusoy, “An Inquiry into the Ottomans’ Knowledge and Perception of the Gypsies in the late 19th Century,” *OTAM* 34 (Autumn 2013): 250.

society about the Roma. Moreover, it may not only have further inspired Ottoman civilizing attempts, but also the Romani leitmotif in future works of literature in the Turkish language.

Indeed, it is believed that Ahmed Midhat's "Gypsy" motivated Halide Edib (Adivar, 1884–1964) to begin writing "The Gypsy Girl." Halide Edib serialized her unfinished novel between October 1899 and July 1900 in the "Newspaper for Ladies" (*Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*) when she was only fifteen. It has never been transcribed and published in modern Turkish.³⁴⁷ The incomplete novel features a "Gypsy girl" by the name of Zeynep, who is bought from her beggar mother by a wealthy young woman, Güzide, and brought to live in a mansion in İstanbul's neighborhood of Kadıköy where Güzide resides with her aunt and cousin. Güzide wishes to experience whether she can educate this "Gypsy" child, and even though her relatives find this endeavor odd, they do not object to her plan, unlike Şems Hikmet's relatives in Ahmed Midhat's novella.³⁴⁸ When the reader first meets Zeynep in the first installment of the novel, she is described as a child who can leap "with the agility of a monkey" and who tries to feign anguish in her "dirty dark face" in order to arouse pity.³⁴⁹ Repeatedly portrayed as disingenuous and cunning, the "Gypsy girl" becomes the subject of Güzide's version of a civilizing mission—one whose ending has remained unknown. Moreover, Halide Edib "has reversed the gender codes [of Ahmed Midhat's novella] and given the role of the civilizer to a young woman instead."³⁵⁰ Halide Edib's novel attempt not only served to perpetuate the representation of the Roma in a similar light, as a particularized people with an allegedly endemic lack of civility, but also demonstrated the continuing impact of Ahmed Midhat's

³⁴⁷ Fatih Altuğ, "Halide Edib Adivar'ın 'Tarih Dışında' Bırakılan Metinlerini Tarihselleştirmek," in *Sanatın Gölgedeki Kadınları*, eds. Özlem Belkıs and Duygu Karıkaytsın (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2018), 176–77.

³⁴⁸ İmren Gece Özbey, "Halide Edip Adivar'ın İlk Roman Teşebbüsü: *Çingene Kızı*," *Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* 57, no. 57 (2017): 111. Özbey has included the entire transliteration of Halide Edib's unfinished novel.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

³⁵⁰ Altuğ, "Halide Edip Adivar'ın 'Tarih Dışında' Bırakılan Metinlerini Tarihselleştirmek," 180.

novella at the turn of the century. Moreover, this shared and popularized consciousness would be immortalized in the encyclopedias and dictionaries of the period and beyond, amplifying the body of distorted public knowledge about the Roma.

An Ominous Lexicon

They are a people spread out in all of Europe and numerous parts of Western Asia. They do not have a village of their own, let alone a country, a city, or a town. They live everywhere with other communities, and constitute separate neighborhoods in certain cities, towns, and villages.³⁵¹

Thus was the beginning of the “Gypsy” entry in Ottoman translator, author, and journalist Şemseddin Sâmî’s (1850–1904) six-volume encyclopedia *Kamûsü’l A’lâm* published between 1889–98. A proponent of Turkish nationalism as well as the simplification of the Turkish language to expand the reach of the written word, Şemseddin Sâmî imparted his knowledge about important figures, history, geography, peoples, and cultures of both the Ottoman context and the world. After having described the “Gypsies” from the outset as a stateless and effectively homeless people some of whom are itinerant, Şemseddin Sâmî acknowledged that there were different theories about their origins, but in the end claimed that “they have been recognized as Indians due to their language.” However, the era they have left India was questionable for Şemseddin Sâmî, as it was indeed contested among Gypsy lorists at the time. One of the possibilities included the Gypsies’ “having been members of the lowest caste in India, and unable to withstand the insults of other castes, having been obliged to call the Turkish lands home.” He also provided a figure for all “Gypsies” in the world, which he estimated to be four to five million.³⁵² On the subject of religious affiliation, Şemseddin Sâmî handily repeated what had been written before him for centuries in both the

³⁵¹ Şemseddin Sâmî, *Kamûsü’l A’lâm*, Volume 3 (İstanbul: Mihran Matbaası, 1891), 1880.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

Ottoman and European contexts. Immediately following this were claims about their propensity for thieving, almost as justification for the treatment they have been deemed to deserve:

Even though they have adopted the religion of the country of their residence and some are Muslim and others Christian, as a matter of fact they have certain odd beliefs and are not adherents to any religion. Since they have been the object of contempt because of their oddity or have become accustomed to living with insult even in their original homeland, (...) they endure all insults. And in addition to being unconcerned with honor, they are skillful in thievery, and especially animal thievery.³⁵³

Şemseddin Sâmî also included a physical description, as was common among those writing about the “Gypsies” before him:

Typically they are dark-skinned, black-eyed, black-haired, white-toothed, ugly men with weak constitution; however, one may find fair-haired and blue-eyed individuals among them. Although their girls include those that are quite beautiful and attractive, they suddenly become ugly usually after giving birth.³⁵⁴

This portrayal of “Gypsy women” in terms of nothing but extremes had been established as a common trope by Şemseddin Sâmî’s time through repetition. Indeed, in her ethnographic study of the British “Traveler-Gypsies,” Judith Okely noted that “nothing about [the Gypsy woman] is ordinary; if pretty she is made outstandingly beautiful, if old she is considered a crone.”³⁵⁵ For instance, the aforementioned British consul William Wilkinson had written in 1820 that “The women have the same [dark] complexion, with fine and regular features. They are very well shaped before they become mothers; but soon after they begin to have children, and they are generally

³⁵³ *Ibid.*, 1880–81.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1881.

³⁵⁵ Judith Okely, *The Traveller-Gypsies* (Cambridge, New York, and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 202.

very fruitful, their beauty gives way to a disgusting ugliness.”³⁵⁶ On the other hand, the British writer and traveler Julia Pardoe (1806–62), otherwise known for her romantic travel books and novels, had written in her 1837 *The City of the Sultan* about encountering “a party of Bohemian gipsies, (...) about thirty in number.” Among them, she noted, were

half a dozen withered old women, who might have sat for the originals of Macbeth’s witches, they were so “grim and grisly;” but there was one female among them, a dark-eyed, rosy-lipped maiden of sixteen, or thereabouts, who was the perfection of loveliness.³⁵⁷

The previously mentioned Fanny Blunt, too, had recourse in 1878 to opposite extremes in her description of the “Gypsy women”:

When quite young, some of the women are very pretty and much appreciated by the Turkish community as dancing girls, in which calling their utter want of decency and morality makes them adepts. When the gipsy woman is advanced in years she becomes perfectly hideous; her brown skin shrivels up through privation and exposure, her body gets thin and emaciated, and her uncombed elf locks, half concealing her features, give her the appearance of a witch.³⁵⁸

Reiterating this common trope, Şemseddin Sâmî thus recommitted it to public memory as unchanging, ready to be consumed by larger portions of the society thanks to his use of simplified Ottoman Turkish.

Soon after his comprehensive encyclopedia, Şemseddin Sâmî published his two-volume Turkish dictionary in 1900, which also contained entries for “Gypsies.” Not only did he define the “Gypsy” people as nomadic in their entirety, unlike his encyclopedia entry that was more nuanced

³⁵⁶ Wilkinson, *An Account*, 170–71.

³⁵⁷ [Julia] Pardoe, *The City of the Sultan; and Domestic Manners of the Turks, in 1836* (London: Henry Colburn, 1837), 16–17.

³⁵⁸ [Blunt], *The People of Turkey*, 161–62.

in this respect, but more importantly, he also included figurative meanings of the word “gypsy”:
“1. Impudent, indecent. 2. Quite miserly, contemptible.” “Gypsy-like” meant “1. Befitting Gypsies. 2. In a quite impudent fashion, indecently. 3. Highly miserly, with no regard for dignity and honor” for Şemseddin Sâmî. For “gypsiness,” Şemseddin Sâmî’s sample sentence was “His gypsiness is evident from his face.”³⁵⁹ The set of meanings associated with the designation of the Romani people was authoritatively reified for decades to come. Dictionary-writers of the Turkish Republic followed the footsteps of Şemseddin Sâmî. For instance, the 1968 edition of the Redhouse Turkish-English dictionary not only included the figurative meaning of “gypsy” as “mean, miserly fellow” and “gypsiness” as “1. meanness, miserliness. 2. paltriness, shabbiness. 3. vagabondage,” but also listed pejorative idioms derived from deep-seated stereotypes, such as “Gypsy debt: petty debts”, “Gypsy tent: dirty and miserable-looking place”, “Gypsy soup: confusion”, “Gypsy wedding: disorderly gathering”, and “Gypsy brawl: noisy quarrel.”³⁶⁰ Moreover, the “Gypsy” entry of the Turkish dictionaries produced by the Turkish Language Society continued to include these derogatory figurative meanings up until 2001 when they were removed as a result of the tenacious work of the Gypsy activist Mustafa Aksu.³⁶¹

Folk idioms and riddles were also fertile ground for the reproduction of “Gypsy” stereotypes. The 1968 Redhouse dictionary referred to the saying “The Gypsy plays, the Kurd dances” (*Çingene çalar, Kürt oynar*) which was defined as “1. a place where there is complete disorder. 2. persons, one worse than the other,” implicating both peoples.³⁶² In 1973, İlhan Başgöz and Andreas Tietze recorded the riddle “Black crows trot from door to door” (*Gara gara gargalar,*

³⁵⁹ Şemseddin Sâmî, *Kamus-ı Türkî*, ed. Paşa Yavuzarslan (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2010), 214.

³⁶⁰ *Redhouse Yeni Türkçe-İngilizce Sözlük* (İstanbul: Redhouse Yayınevi, 1968, 8th ed.), 256.

³⁶¹ Mustafa Aksu, *Türkiye’de Çingene Olmak* (İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2003), 87.

³⁶² *Redhouse Yeni Türkçe-İngilizce Sözlük*, 256.

gapı gapı yorgalar), whose answer was “Gypsy women” and in which a verb reserved for a particular trot of a horse was conspicuously used.³⁶³ Previously, in 1950, Bahaeddin Ögel had documented a different version of this riddle from the Erzurum region as “Black cats entered one house after another” (*Kara kara kediler, evden eve girdiler*).³⁶⁴ Even though Ögel noted that “The appropriateness of the comparison is not clear,” it is not difficult to make the association between this riddle and the plethora of repeated references to the dark complexion and “nomadic spirit” of the Roma, as well as their presumed habit of thieving.

Denigrating stereotypes about the Roma were continually reproduced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, reinforcing and validating each other in the Saidian sense with each additional utterance and publication. While literary works and travel writing did not appear out of a vacuum but instead fed off of already existing popular tropes, they played an instrumental role in much popularizing, often scandalizing, and in the last instance, further distorting and racializing Romani alterity for the consumption of generations to come. This ongoing conversation between the Ottoman and European contexts on behalf of and at the detriment of the Roma was articulated to the increasingly racist discourse of early Republican Turkish nationalism.

The Turkish Ordeal in the Race to Whiteness

In his 1923 “Foundations of Turkism” (*Türkçülüğün Esasları*), Ziya Gökalp, Republican Turkey’s leading ideologue who had entered the Grand National Assembly in 1923 and participated in drafting the 1924 Constitution until his death later the same year,³⁶⁵ declared his rejection of the potency of racism within the Turkist ideology:

³⁶³ İlhan Başgöz and Andreas Tietze, *Bilmece: A Corpus of Turkish Riddles* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1973), 373.

³⁶⁴ Bahaeddin Ögel, “Riddles from Erzurum,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 63, no. 250 ([1950]): 422.

³⁶⁵ Ergin, “*Is the Turk a White Man?*” 82.

According to the racist Turkists, nation and race mean one and the same thing. The term “race”, however, is basically a term used in zoology. Animal species are classified into various types according to their anatomical characteristics. These types are called races. For example, there are different anatomic types of horses called Arab, English, or Hungarian breed. Men also used to be classified into white, black, yellow, and red races. Though it is a crude classification, it is still in use. Anthropology divides the peoples of Europe into three main races on the basis of cranial forms and of the colour of eyes and hair as dolicho-cephalic fair, dolicho-cephalic brunette, and brachy-cephalic. No nation in Europe, however, belongs to only one of these races.³⁶⁶

For Gökalp, nation was “not a racial, ethnic, geographical, political, or voluntary group or association.” Instead, it was “a group composed of men and women who have gone through the same education, who have received the same acquisitions in language, religion, morality, and aesthetics.”³⁶⁷ This understanding of cultural belonging to the Turkish nation was indeed what informed the Turkish government’s official articulation of nation-building and citizenship. Yet from its beginnings, this “benign civic face” had a “second ‘racist-ethnic’ visage”:³⁶⁸ “While Kemalist nationalism manifestly recognized a concept of citizenship based on universal rights of the entire population, the government also promoted research that supported an ethnic-racial version of nationality.”³⁶⁹

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Lausanne conventions made references to “race” when delineating which segments of the population would be included in the forced Greco-Turkish Population Exchange. In response to the territorial disputes arising in the Lausanne deliberations, as early as in 1922, even before the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the Turkish government

³⁶⁶ Ziya Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization: Selected Essays*, trans. and ed. Niyazi Berkes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 134.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 137.

³⁶⁸ Kirişçi, “Disaggregating Turkish Citizenship,” 2.

³⁶⁹ Maksudyan, “The *Turkish Review of Anthropology*,” 291.

hastily issued a publication entitled “The Pontus Question” (*Pontus Meselesi*) in order to preempt Pontic claims to northeastern Anatolia. According to Murat Ergin, “by insisting that the Turkish race was the original inhabitant of the Anatolian territory and by establishing racial links with the Sumerians and Hittites, the book signaled some of the more zealous race theories of the 1930s.”³⁷⁰ The Turkish state’s preoccupation with race was formalized in 1925 with the founding of “The Center for Anthropological Research” (*Türkiye Antropoloji Tetkikat Merkezi*), which published “The Turkish Review of Anthropology” (*Türk Antropoloji Mecmuası*), providing “the earliest examples of race science in the service of constructing Turkish identity.”³⁷¹ Indeed, one year after the establishment of this center and a year before the first official census of the Turkish Republic in 1927, then Prime Minister İsmet İnönü would stress the need to identify “the racial, religious, and sectarian distribution” of the population, as discussed in Chapter 1.³⁷²

At its height in the 1930s, biometric research in Turkey “effectively turned population regulation into a matter of bolstering Turkey’s economic power and international competitiveness.”³⁷³ It was in this decade, in 1934, that the more comprehensive and detailed Resettlement Law was introduced. This law emphasized the need to create a productive nation and stipulated the manner in which non-Turk elements in society would be distributed among Turks to ensure their assimilation. Its vocabulary included not only such designations as “Turkish nationals” (*Türkiye tabiiyetinde bulunanlar*) and “those bound to Turkish culture” (*Türk kültürüne bağlı olanlar*), but also “of Turkish race” (*Türk ırkından olanlar*). In its Article 13 of the 1934 Resettlement Law, Turkish legislators imposed that “It is imperative to settle those not of the Turkish race by scattering them among villages and different neighborhoods in towns and cities in

³⁷⁰ Ergin, “*Is the Turk a White Man?*” 107.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*

³⁷² Quoted in Dündar, *Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar*, 36.

³⁷³ Ergin, “*Is the Turk a White Man?*” 112.

a manner that would not allow them to form clusters.”³⁷⁴ As Ergin noted, “The frequent use of racial categories complemented the cultural nature of Turkishness,”³⁷⁵ deviating from Ziya Gökalp’s brand of Turkism and instead marrying “scientific” racism with the notion of cultural belonging to the nation. Moreover, early Republican Turkish legislators were building on the shared consciousness they grew out of—the consciousness that produced, and was in turn a product of, abundant stereotypes about the Roma. In the 1930s, the direct targeting of the Roma in such legislation as the Resettlement Law was coupled with continuing literary references in the early Republican period, serving to foster the reproduction of Romani alterity.

In 1783, Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann had written that “[the Gypsies] have been reared more according to the dictates of nature, than those of art and tenderness.”³⁷⁶ More than a century later, in a short essay titled “The Gypsy” first published in 1928, the poet Ahmet Hâşim (1884–1933) mused, in no less essentialist terms than Grellmann:

Yesterday was Spring Holiday,³⁷⁷ that is to say the most natural of holidays. I descended on the Kâğıthane Creek, following the green routes that all the city folk poured into as a cheery convoy, in order to forget the anguish of this one day in life, among a field of daisies, poppies, and nightingales. (...) What I set out to seek in Kâğıthane was neither birds nor flowers; with the hunger of only seeing [G]ypsies and listening to the *zurna*, I went to [the place] in between two mountains, which was drowning in the grief of this unending twilight. The [G]ypsy is a beautiful variety of humankind that has remained closest to nature. One could suppose that these country denizens with bronze faces and porcelain

³⁷⁴ *Resmî Gazete*, no. 2733 (June 21, 1934), 4005.

³⁷⁵ Ergin, “*Is the Turk a White Man?*”, 128.

³⁷⁶ Grellmann, *Dissertation*, 14.

³⁷⁷ *Ederlezi* in the Romani language, *Hidirellez* is the celebration of the arrival of spring observed annually on May 5–6 in Turkey, parts of the rest of the Middle East, and parts of the Balkans.

teeth are some green jovial trees that have taken the form of humans. The [G]ypsy is the embodiment of spring.³⁷⁸

Such a romanticized depiction of the Roma as an alienated human kind that is in line more with nature than any other served as a spring board for Osman Cemal Kaygılı's novel "Gypsies." First serialized in 1935 and published in book form in 1939, the novel was awarded the Republican People's Party Novel Prize in 1942.³⁷⁹ It has been praised for "having sociological importance" for its representation of "the Gypsies, the color of İstanbul," reduced to a chromatic euphemism.³⁸⁰ Kaygılı quotes from Ahmet Hâşim's aforementioned essay in his introduction, and then in response to him, clarifies that there are two kinds of "Gypsies" that Ahmet Hâşim has mixed up. For Kaygılı, nomadic and settled "Gypsies" should not be confused with each other, and he sets out to delineate the two in his novel.³⁸¹ He and his narrator virtually assume the role of an old-school anthropologist studying the "natives"—as intrusively and authoritatively.

The novel tells the story of a young, short-tempered, troubled musician by the name of İrfan from a rich family, who becomes obsessed by spending time with the Roma, and particularly, his increasingly involved and turbulent relationships with the "thresher Gypsies" of Topçular and the musician "Gypsies" of Ayvansaray in İstanbul. İrfan insists on "examining the lives of the Gypsies"³⁸² and becomes preoccupied with finding a "very beautiful and original subject."³⁸³ His professed objective is to "compose a musical piece out of these adventures," to write an opera

³⁷⁸ Ahmet Hâşim, *Bize Göre / Gurebâhâne-i Laklakan / Frankfurt Seyahatnamesi*, ed. Mehmet Kaplan (İstanbul: Millî Eğitim Basımevi, 1969), 17–18.

³⁷⁹ Tahsin Yıldırım, "Sunuş," in Osman Cemal Kaygılı, *Çingeneler*, ed. Tahsin Yıldırım (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2019 [1939]), 9.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ Kaygılı, *Çingeneler*, 12.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 49.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 91.

emulating Bizet's *Carmen*.³⁸⁴ To himself and his friends alike, he tries to justify his obsessive involvement with the Roma as a pursuit of "producing musical motifs out of Gypsy lives and melodies."³⁸⁵ Yet, he falls in love with three different Romani women during his "adventures" and becomes entangled in a love triangle that eventually brings about his downfall.

Throughout the novel, İrfan and his friend, the narrator, regularly grow suspicious of the Romani characters under the assumption that they are cunning and mischievous. They are insulted by the questions "how can there be a trustworthy Gypsy?" and "who is the half in seventy-two and a half nations?"³⁸⁶ The timeworn trope that the Roma live from day to day, that "they spend whatever they earn" underscores their interactions and attitudes.³⁸⁷ Even if not as conspicuously as in earlier literary representations, racial references to the Roma seep into Kaygılı's novel as well. While all women in the nomad encampment are described as "very dark," the reader finds a character saying that "all of their faces are the color of coffee grounds."³⁸⁸ In addition to invoking such aforementioned pejorative idioms as "Gypsy brawl" and "Gypsy tent," Kaygılı also uses such phrases as "Gypsy breakfast", "Gypsy omelette", "Gypsy gift," painting these as alien, and ultimately, lesser versions.³⁸⁹

During their interactions in the tent site, the narrator and İrfan pick up some Romanes as well. The narrator interjects to educate the reader: "we call this the Gypsy language but they call it 'Romanes.' They also call themselves Rom..."³⁹⁰ Moreover, Kaygılı even has one of his Romani characters explain that "this word Gypsy has been given to them once upon a time for whatever

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 143–44.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 232.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 118, 119.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 195.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 41, 128.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 37, 63, 65.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 47.

reason and it means impudent and shameless, yet a self-conscious person would never be impudent and shameless.”³⁹¹ Still, throughout the novel and in the title, he uses the word “Gypsy”—and in lower case no less.³⁹² Even though İrfan declares that “I now understand that Gypsies are warm people, as long as they are taught manners...”³⁹³ the reader does not encounter a civilizing mission as one does in Ahmed Midhat’s novella. Instead, Kaygılı seems to present the lives of the Roma as a *tableau vivant*, destined to remain unchanged. In the last instance, the Roma as the objects of İrfan’s fascination, infatuation, and obsession become tokenized, represented as aliens whose sole purpose is to entertain and inspire others. In the example of Osman Cemal Kaygılı’s Republic-era novel “Gypsies,” literary production has, once again, delivered the further Othering complement to the discriminating practices of the state.

On the other hand, in the period that witnessed the publication of “Gypsies” and the passing of the Resettlement Law, such notorious ultra-nationalists as Hüseyin Nihâl Atsız (1905–75) began targeting the Roma in no ambiguous terms. A proud proponent of racism, Atsız provided exemplary glimpses into the racist elites’ view of the Roma in the early Republic. Following his trip to Çanakkale towards the end of 1933, Atsız would write: “How many Jews, how many Gypsies, how many freshwater Greeks (*bozuntu*) are there in the city!..”³⁹⁴ Alongside other ethno-religious constituents of the country, he could not “even conceive of [Gypsies] as citizens. He proposed the banishment of Gypsies to India, or if that is not practical, their forced resettlement in

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁹² Cf. Osman Cemal Kaygılı, *Çingeneler* (Ankara: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1972 [1939]). The word “Gypsy” has been printed in title case in the 2019 edition of the novel.

³⁹³ Kaygılı, *Çingeneler* (2019), 87.

³⁹⁴ [Atilla Dirim], “28 Aralık 1933: İrkçi Nihal Atsız, Trakya Olayları’nın Zeminini Hazırlıyor,” December 27, 2010, accessed July 14, 2013, <http://www.marksist.org/tarihte-bugun/2710-28-aralik-1933-irkci-nihal-atsiz-trakya-olaylarinin-zeminini-hazirliyor->.

Hakkari so that they can be ‘set straight.’”³⁹⁵ For Atsız, “The Gypsies are a wound among us. To Turkify the Gypsies, to admit them into our midst and corrupt the purity of Turkish blood would be tantamount to murder.”³⁹⁶ Moreover, in his plea on May 3, 1944, during the proceedings of what came to be known as the “Racism–Turanism Trial” of 1944–1945, Atsız proclaimed:

Rejecting racism means agreeing to the presence, one day, of a Jewish president at the head of this state, or an Armenian prime minister, or Black army commanders, or Gypsy professors. By rejecting racism, the prosecutor has revealed himself to agree to such a situation. I, however, shall never agree to it.³⁹⁷

In the second half of the 1930s, the racial lexicon also seeped into and became normalized in various Council of Ministers decisions about immigration, naturalization, and deportation. For instance, in 1937, the Council decided in favor of the naturalization of a “Yugoslav national” that was of the “Bosnian race,” since she was “found not to have harmful characteristics.”³⁹⁸ In 1938, a certain Gül “of Turkish race, and a Romanian national,” was granted permission to enter the country to visit her son-in-law in Gebze.³⁹⁹ The same year, a group of six musicians “of Jewish race” who worked at the prominent Tokatlıyan Hotel in İstanbul had their residence permits extended by one and a half months by order of the Council of Ministers.⁴⁰⁰ In 1940, the daughter of a certain Naciye, “a British national and of Turkish race,” was allowed residency in Erzurum to join her mother.⁴⁰¹ Later in the year, a certain Tahir “from Benghazi and of the Arab race,” who

³⁹⁵ Güven Bakırezer, “Nihal Atsız,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasî Düşünce, Cilt 4: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2009 [2002]), 415.

³⁹⁶ Emre Arslan, “Türkiye’de Irkçılık,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasî Düşünce, Cilt 4: Milliyetçilik*, 418–419.

³⁹⁷ “Nihal Atsız’ın Savunması,” accessed July 28, 2013, <http://www.nihal-atsiz.com/yazi/nihal-atsizin-savunmasi-2.html>.

³⁹⁸ BCA 30-18-1-2.80-99-19 (October 12, 1937).

³⁹⁹ BCA 30-18-1-2.83-39-2 (May 5, 1938).

⁴⁰⁰ BCA 30-18-1-2.85-106-15 (December 24, 1938).

⁴⁰¹ BCA 30-18-1-2.93-111-15 (December 4, 1940).

had initially been recorded in the Turkish population registry following his arrival from Italy after he was expelled by the Egyptian government, was found “idling in such cities as Kocaeli, Eskişehir, İzmir, and İstanbul that were of military import.” Since he was considered “liable to committing all kinds of harm” and suspected of being a spy, the Council of Ministers decided that he shall be sent to and resettled in Tokat.⁴⁰² In 1946, a certain Şakir in Adana who was “a Chinese national and of Turkish race” was deported.⁴⁰³ Identifying and describing individuals by their race in Council of Ministers decisions remained common practice well into the 1940s.

Indeed, in the 1930s and 40s, “the significance of whiteness in the search for modernity [had] turned race into an urgent issue.”⁴⁰⁴ In 1938, Afet İnan, a prominent historian and the adopted daughter of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, would declare in resoundingly certain terms that “The Turkish race is white and brachycephalic.”⁴⁰⁵ As “the Turk” continued to be constructed as white, so was “the Gypsy” set up as its antonym in literature and popular writing, with persistent references to complexion. Moreover, during the Second World War, one of the leading authorities in the field of racial biology, the German-educated Sadi Irmak, declared in his 1941 book that “Gypsies were ‘a living example of a murderous race.’”⁴⁰⁶ He not only entered Parliament in 1943, but also served as Minister of Labor in 1945–46 and Prime Minister in 1974–75.⁴⁰⁷ Thus, Turkish racist theories did not remain marginal to Turkish legislation and policies, as has often been argued in order to downplay or blindly deny the racist facet of Turkish nationalism and the concerted, state-sponsored efforts towards the construction of a racial Turkish identity in this period. In the case of the Roma,

⁴⁰² BCA 30-18-1-2.93-115-8 (December 17, 1940).

⁴⁰³ BCA 30-18-1-2.110-24-15 (August 23, 1946).

⁴⁰⁴ Ergin, “*Is the Turk a White Man?*” 100.

⁴⁰⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 99.

⁴⁰⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 116.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 109.

this became undeniably evident in the outright racist mindset of state officials and pundits during the 1950–51 border crisis with Bulgaria, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Identity Publicized

The display of racist disdain with which the legislators and pundits of the early 1950s turned the Roma into scapegoats during the 1950–51 Bulgarian immigration crisis was a product of the centuries-long “Gypsy myth” episteme, served up for the consumption of adults and children alike. Moreover, the popular reproduction of stereotypes and myths did not come to an end in the mid-twentieth century. A late Turkish example in the long history of children’s literature that center on “Gypsy” characters⁴⁰⁸ is Kemalettin Tuğcu’s (1992–96) 1991 children’s book “The Gypsy Girl” (*Çingene Kızı*). More importantly, the same year it was published, “The Gypsy Girl” was recommended by the Ministry of National Education to fourth and fifth graders, as well as middle schoolers.⁴⁰⁹ It follows the struggles of the eponymous “Gypsy girl,” Reyhan, who has trouble coming to terms with her Romani identity. In one instance, Reyhan is bombarded with questions about her identity:

- You don’t acknowledge your Gypsiness but I identified you at first sight from your complexion.
- Am I the only dark-skinned (*esmer*) girl?
- You’re a different kind of brunette.
- (...)
- Give me a break, Mine, she said. Leave me alone!
- Look at you, said the girl. You’re denying your roots (*Kestane kabuğundan çıkmış, kabuğunu beğenmemiş*—lit. the chestnut came out of its shell and now rejects it).

⁴⁰⁸ See, for instance, Jean Kommers, *‘Gypsies’ in Nineteenth-Century Children’s Books: A Comparative Study of Four National Literary Traditions* (Boston: Brill, 2022), <https://brill.com/display/title/63274>.

⁴⁰⁹ *T.C. Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı Tebliğler Dergisi*, no. 54 (September 30, 1991): 459.

– I am. [But t]he Gypsy is human too.⁴¹⁰

Kemalettin Tuğcu’s book ends on the same note as Ahmed Midhat’s 1887 novella and the 1891 report of Sadi Bey to Sultan Abdülhamid II—that “Gypsies are human too.”⁴¹¹ The passing of a whole century had not alleviated the need to rehash this theme.

A more recent example from Turkish literature is the acclaimed, 2008 Orhan Kemal Novel Prize winner “Weeping Mountain Silent River” (*Ağlayan Dağ Susan Nehir*) by Ayşegül Devecioğlu, in which being “Gypsy” is portrayed as synonymous with eternal nomadism. For the narrator, “Gypsies have no homeland”; arrested in an eternal nomadic condition, “Gypsies are wayworn, knowing sedentariness is impossible, they live sedentary life stammeringly.”⁴¹² Having no homeland of their own, Devecioğlu’s narrator supposes, in a hazy romanticism, that “The Gypsies’ homeland is poverty,” and “cheerfulness as well.”⁴¹³ Echoing countless others before her, the author waxes eloquent at the expense of the Roma, only a fraction of whom lead un-settled lives, and due not to an imagined “nomadic spirit” but as a result of sociopolitical and economic structures and asymmetrical opportunities. The novel has received nothing but praise, while it has been ignored that it exploits the “Gypsies” as nothing more than stock figures, represented in the form of one aged stereotype after another under a shiny literary veneer.

Popular publications of the late- and post-Ottoman periods were crucial sources in the production of a distorted Romani identity in the public’s imagination. Each addition to this traveling epistemological universe served to validate a common vocabulary and imaginary that transcended linguistic and territorial borders. This vocabulary and imagery informed not only

⁴¹⁰ Kemalettin Tuğcu, *Çingene Kızı* (İstanbul: Erdem Yayınları, 2012 [1991]), 41.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁴¹² Ayşegül Devecioğlu, *Ağlayan Dağ Susan Nehir* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2012 [2007]), 13.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 13–14.

laypeople, but also the very individuals that formed the government, drafted legislation, and policed the streets. While itself transcending such borders, each contribution to this expanding landscape built palpable and consequential borders around Romani identity, encoding it not only as alien, non-Turkish, and non-white, but also as ineligible to partake in forming the nation and unacceptable for immigration. Abstractions in popular writing had—and still have—real-life consequences for the Roma.

Conclusion

Sixteen days after the devastating February 6, 2023 earthquake that took more than 50,000 lives and left numerous cities in ruins in southeastern Turkey and northern Syria, a callous Twitter post read:

It seems that [G]ypsies have come to Adiyaman from many other places. (I have not used this name as an insult.) These need to be urgently checked, for what purpose did they come during this disaster, what are they trying to do here. They need to be urgently sent back to where they came from. (@0262gundi, February 22, 2023)

Another Twitter user readily jumped to the inevitable conclusion: “For thievery, of course.” (@ismetdagliiii, February 23, 2023)⁴¹⁴ The original tweet, whose likes had already proliferated on social media, was later deleted. Attacks and acts of discrimination and intimidation against the Romani earthquake victims in Adiyaman at temporary campsites and in government food aid lines were soon reported. It had to be explained that they had not suddenly arrived at Adiyaman “from many other places,” but had different license plates because of their seasonal work outside the city.⁴¹⁵ One Romani earthquake victim pleaded:

What are we supposed to do, go to another country? We, too, are citizens of this country. We, too, demand aid from it. But they give it to us accompanied by insults. They treat people [differently] according to their garments. They give hot food to them and stale food

⁴¹⁴ I am thankful to Ayşe Toksöz for sending me a screencap of these tweets.

⁴¹⁵ Metin Yoksu, “Adiyaman’da Depremzede Domlara Karşı Nefret Söylemi,” accessed February 26, 2023, <https://artigercek.com/guncel/adiyamanda-depremezede-domlara-karsi-nefret-soylemi-240489h>.

to me. This discrimination must stop. Everyone is now equal. We are all experiencing the same agony. Whether Kurdish, Turkish, or Alevi, we are all God's servants. They used to laugh at us for living in tents. Now we are all living in tents. They shouldn't laugh at us. There shouldn't be such discrimination. We are willing to go hungry and thirsty! But these insults are so exhausting and hurtful.⁴¹⁶

These latest incidents erupting in the midst of an unimaginable regional disaster are only the last in a long line of offences. For example, in July 2013, disputes arising from the injury suffered by a young woman from the gun fired by a Romani man quickly turned into mass assault towards the Roma, upon which the Bursa Municipality demolished the houses of the Roma in a matter of days, confiscating their horses.⁴¹⁷ The assailants were charged only with damage to property.⁴¹⁸ As the processing of arrestees was in progress, the Romani and non-Romani residents of the neighborhood reached a "peace agreement" on the condition that the Roma would withdraw their legal complaints.⁴¹⁹ On New Year's Eve of 2009, a Romani man was denied tea because of his identity at a coffeehouse in Selendi, Manisa. The coffeehouse owner reportedly said, "I don't serve tea to Gypsies." Following the disputes, the Romani man was severely beaten and hospitalized, as a result of which his father passed away, giving in to his failing heart. In a matter of days, the events transformed into lynching of the Roma, and they were further compelled to move to a neighboring borough.⁴²⁰ In the late 2000s, the grand urban renewal project planned for

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ Nilay Vardar, "Adli Bir Olay Roman Mahallesinde Lince Dönüşüyor," *Bianet*, accessed July 23, 2013, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/148669-adli-bir-olay-roman-mahallesinde-lince-donusuyor>; Vardar, "Romanlar Sürgünden Korkuyor," *Bianet*, accessed July 26, 2013, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/148719-romanlar-surgunden-korkuyor>.

⁴¹⁸ Fatih Karakılıç, "Roman Vatandaşların Arabalarını Ateşe Verdiler," *Zaman*, July 22, 2013.

⁴¹⁹ Nilay Vardar, "Mahalleli 'Barış Anlaşması' İmzaladı, Sıra Yerel Yönetimde," *Bianet*, accessed July 29, 2013, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/148798-mahalleli-baris-anlasmasi-imzaladi-sira-yerel-yonetimde>.

⁴²⁰ "Romanların Gözünden Selendi'deki Linç Olayları," *Radikal*, January 7, 2010.

İstanbul started with the demolition of the historical Sulukule quarter and the effective banishment of the 850 Romani families established there.⁴²¹ In the early 1990s, when the İstanbul Municipality embarked on an urban renewal project, the Romani bear leaders were the first to be cleared off the streets, left dispossessed with their bears abruptly confiscated.⁴²² Similar to the Selendi incidents of 2010, in 1970, Bayramiç, Çanakkale, had witnessed the eruption of communal violence against the Roma, resulting in the effective deportation of the Romani community from the town.⁴²³

Principal Findings

The fact that the Roma so readily become easy targets as a result of pervasive and resilient anti-Roma attitudes is rooted in history. As this dissertation has shown, Romani alterity was encoded in the Ottoman Empire as early as the fifteenth century, albeit ambiguously, notably through the practice of differential taxation. In the nineteenth century, the reorganization of the Empire resulted in wide-ranging institutional changes that made the labeling and enumeration of the Roma possible as it rendered it increasingly urgent. Demographic endeavors of the Empire in this period involved adding a “Gypsy” inscription to the identity documents of the Roma, yet categorical precarity of Romani identity endured, even as the Roma themselves petitioned the state to have the inscription removed. On the other hand, starting with the first comprehensive census of the Empire in the early

⁴²¹ Danielle J. van Dobben, Gonca Tohumcu, and Funda Oral, “Identity and Cultural Heritage in a Dislocated Romani Community in Istanbul, Turkey,” paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society, İstanbul, September 19–22, 2012. Also see Aslı Kıyak İngin and Tolga İslam, “Bir Roman Mahallesinin Yeniden Tanzim Edilmesi,” in *İstanbul: Müstesna Şehrin İstisna Hali*, eds. Ayşe Çavdar and Pelin Tan (İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 2013), 167–75. Sulukule had been subject to demolition in 1966 as well, during which, according to news reports, 2500 Romani inhabitants of the neighborhood were left to dwell in only ten tents: “2500 Sulukule Sâkini 10 Çadırda Yaşıyor,” *Milliyet*, May 1, 1966.

⁴²² Tünaydın, “Rescuing the Bears.”

⁴²³ Gül Özateşler, *Gypsy Stigma and Exclusion in Turkey, 1970: The Social Dynamics of Exclusionary Violence* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

nineteenth century, the Roma were always counted separately from their Muslim and non-Muslim counterparts. In the first decades of the Turkish Republic, on the other hand, ethnoreligious identities were replaced with ethnolinguistic ones in population counts, in which the Romani language was surveyed in two separate censuses.

The nineteenth century also brought about the revamping of the Ottoman relationship with mobility, as observed in hegemonic sedentarization and immigration control. As the Ottoman state became more centralized, so did its capability to surveil and regulate the movements of its subject-citizens. During this period, and particularly under the post-1913 rule of the Committee of Union and Progress, the Roma increasingly became the subject of collective targeting. The early decades of the Turkish Republic witnessed a further delineation of the Roma, notably during the Greco-Turkish Population Exchange and in the 1934 Resettlement Law. In their petitions, the Roma bargained for their physical location, as much as they continued to negotiate their place in society.

On the other hand, persistent reiteration of Romani stereotypes in literary and lexical publications constituted the rhetorical source of the production of Romani alterity. Their authors based these publications on popular perceptions while at the same time reinforcing them. They also formed the discursive ground for the ethnicization and racialization of the Roma in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Contingent on the specific ideologies and policies of each turn in the late- and post-Ottoman Turkey, what was once a categorical ambiguity based on mobility and morality was gradually inscribed first as a civilizational stage, then an ethnolinguistic unit, and acquired a racialized character in the eyes of novelists and government officials alike.

Future Research Directions

A comparison of the place and treatment of Roma in the Ottoman Empire and Republic of Turkey with those of other minorities—non-Muslims, non-Sunni Muslims, and non-Turkish Muslims—is

likely to give a clearer picture of the specificity of the Romani experience. A legacy of the Ottoman Empire is that the notion of “minority” continues to this day to be defined as “non-Muslim,” namely Christians and Jews. Yet, Kurds, Alevis, and other non-Turkish minorities are often denied full equality under the law as, for example, in the case of Kurdish-language education and Alevi places of worship. Having been perceived as occupying an in-between place between Muslim and non-Muslim, and furthermore considered racially “other,” the Roma have suffered all the disadvantages of minority status and none of the advantages, such as non-Muslim community schools.

Another direction to explore is a comparison between the status of the Roma in the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey with other empires and successor states, notably those in Central and Eastern Europe. How, for example, has the ways in which Romani identity has been produced and reproduced in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its successor states in Central Europe and the Balkans differed from those discussed in this dissertation? The Roma were officially recognized as minorities in such countries as Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union. Unlike studies that seek totalizing overviews of the Romani experience across the globe, a search for the specificity of different communities in different polities is likely to shed light on the ways in which different ideologies, regimes, and contingencies have informed and shaped the Romani condition.

The relations and mutual influences between different states as well as between the Romani communities living within the borders of those states are another direction in which research may be pursued. As alluded to in this dissertation in the case of Bulgaria and Turkey, intergovernmental relations are liable profoundly to affect the living conditions of the Roma, and the policies enacted

by neighboring states (such as immigration bans) have, in the past, had dire consequences for Romani communities. This remains an understudied subject that deserves attention.

Finally, while nineteenth- and early twentieth-century studies of “Gypsy lore” have broached the subject of everyday life among the Roma, these works suffer from a number of issues ranging from inadequate methodologies to unquestioned positionalities. A microhistorical approach to the lives of individual Roma—in the style of Carlo Ginzburg or Nathalie Zemon Davis—is likely to provide fascinating insight into those aspects of the Romani experience that official sources tend to overlook.

Like all identities, Romani identity is a process, in which several factors can be discerned. The present dissertation has focused in particular on the role of the bilateral relations between the Roma and the state, and the unilateral attitudes of the population at large towards the Roma. Needless to say, it does not claim to have exhausted the subject. Nonetheless, through the use of petitions, official correspondence, and non-Romani popular literature, this study has attempted to demonstrate that the construction of Romani identity in the late- and post-Ottoman context has been relational, and that the Roma have enjoyed a certain agency which, however, has declined throughout the early Republican period due in part to the government’s increasingly homogenizing policies and discourse.

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