

CAUGHT BETWEEN THE EASTERN EUROPE EMPIRES:  
THE CASE OF THE ALLEGED *NETOT* ROMS<sup>1</sup>

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In the seminal study of Marushiakova and Popov (2013) on the “Gypsy” groups in Eastern Europe it is hinted that the issue of the ethnic groups, and precisely that of their appellations (ethnonyms and/or professionyms), their unclear, nay, hazy demarcation, are specific to a greater degree to the Southeastern Europe and adjacent areas, and less to the Romani groups in Western Europe who have, largely speaking, Romani endonyms (*Manuš, Sinti, Kaale*, etc), which delimitate them more accurately. In Romanian quarters, the different ethno-socio-professional Romani categories are described for the first time in the first Romanian Constitution (1832), chapter “Improvement of the status of the Gypsies”, article 94. Among the 6 categories described, mention is made of the alleged *Netots* ‘stupid’, who were the real nomads of that time, were not practicing any specific skill, and were held responsible for all transgressions. The current article is an historical and linguistic investigation of this alleged ethno-professional category, demonstrating that the “Netot” issue is a connivance conceived by the Russian administration and the local politicians in order to solve the “problem” of the errant groups, in the context of the plague outbreak in 1831–1832, by creating a political reason to dispatch them to the defeated Ottoman Empire. The article provides sources and open questions instead of giving answers.

*Key words:* *Netot* Roms, “German Gypsies”, Romanian Roms, Barbu Constantinescu, Romani folk stories and songs, Ursari (dialect)

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## 0. INTRODUCTION

The history of the *Netots* was issued out of a tale and remained at an imaginary level<sup>2</sup> of the historical discourse, based on the resumption of clichés from one research work to another. The adverse consequences of this unsystematic research are visible now, when one is burdened with ignorance on the *Netots'* past. We should state from the outset that there are no written records about the *Netots'* migration to and from Romanian territories. Nevertheless, in the Romanian archives, there is information dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries about the *Netots'* coexistence with the majority population, in the context of regional realities.

During these centuries, Eastern Europe was subject to the Russian-Turkish wars and to the national liberation movements in the Balkans. Romania was represented by three politically separated provinces, Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia, each with the specificity imposed by the suzerain empires, Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian, respectively. Transylvania was integrated in the Habsburg Empire and was subject, from 1718, to its legislative and administrative systems; Wallachia and Moldavia, located in extra Carpathian regions, were simultaneously under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Protectorate, as a result of the "Küçük Kaynarca treaty of peace" signed in 1777 (Apostol, 1999: 2). Although they availed of autonomy in regard to the domestic policy, nevertheless the legislative initiatives bearing major administrative, economic or social impacts, as well as the lines of foreign policy could be adopted only with the endorsement of the suzerain or the protectorate.

## 1. THE ROMANI COEXISTENCE WITH THE MAJORITY POPULATION IN ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES

The *Netots'* past represents only a part of the Roms' history in Romania, and does not refer to a community or an ethnic group of people with radically different customs and traditions. Due to their nomadic living, somewhat isolated from the rest of the Roms, the *Netots* were those who kept more archaic Romani traditions and customs, noticeable in their language and folk songs as it will be further shown.

There are no written records about the beginnings of the Roms' migration to the Romanian territories. In Wallachia, the Roms are first mentioned in 1385, in an official record issued by Prince Dan I that reinforced a donation of 40 Romani dwellings which was made earlier by Prince Vladislav I (probably between 1375–1377)<sup>3</sup> to Vodița

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2 The nowadays state of art about the history of the *Netots* is not different from the narratives of foreign travellers in second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. To quote as an illustration, from the editor of the first English translation of Romanian popular poetry: "There was also, I learn, at one time a distinct race of the Zingari settled in Romania. They called themselves Netoti, and wandered about the forests, little better than petty robbers. They had their chiefs, however, and paid a regular tribute to the Government. They adored the sun and the stars, believing in a faith which they are said to have brought from India. In 1831 they were forcibly baptised, and became slaves to the Boyards. The rest of the Zingari formerly lived a roving life, and were spread over the country, divided into Vatachii, or companies." (Murray, 1854: xxv-xxiv).

3 And not between 1371–1377, as currently presumed (Achim, 1998: 21). Clarification is provided by a document issued by ruler Vladislav in 1374, which reconfirms the previous donations made to Vodița monastery. This is a very important document which mentions among other issues the way of choosing the abbot of the monastery. However, this important document does not mention the Roms in the donation. The Roms are but mentioned in a document issued in the next year, 1375. This entitles us to

monastery.<sup>4</sup> It follows that slaves were the property of the Crown, and that they were not sold, but donated. So, in the Romanian provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia, in the beginning, only royal ownership over the slaves was known, whereas monastic and boyars' ownership appeared only through donations; there wasn't a slave trade nor sale markets. With time, sales of slaves appeared, especially among the private owners; but sales were made through direct transactions, and mostly, only when the owner fell into a precarious financial situation.

In Western Europe, beyond the Austrian territories, the presence of the Roms is officially recorded between 1416–1419, in the terms of wanderings. Contemporary with such wanderings, the institution of slavery still occurred in medieval Europe, although it had a predominantly domestic character and was in a state of dissolution, especially after the abolition of the slave trade (Verlinden, 1955 *passim*). The Western intransigence towards the Romani migration was concretized through the creation of an actual institutional fence. The Roms were not accepted in the Western society and were subject to expulsion, deportation or condemnation till the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Cleber, 1962).

Therefore, Western Europe does not have the experience of living together with the Roms, to the extent that some historians, notwithstanding criticism, have asserted that Western Europe does not have the insights for the history of this people (de Vaux de Foletier, 1970). The origins of the Romani coexistence with the majority population are traceable only in Central and South-Eastern Europe. From this perspective, the specificity of the Romanian history, in a state of interaction with Central Europe through the Habsburg Empire, but also with the Eastern European regions, through the two empires, Ottoman and Russian, allows one to achieve a comprehensive image of the entire continent. It can be seen both through the effects generated by the enlightened despotism reforms introduced by Maria Teresa (1740–1780) and Joseph II (1780–1790) in Transylvania, as well as by the impacts of the social modernisation of Wallachia and Moldavia, a process initiated mainly by the Russian government by promulgating the Constitution of the two Principalities, in 1832.

The coexistence of the Romanians and the Roms knew all the characteristics of the national spirit, especially specific tolerance, and did not meet with adversity *ab initio*.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. THE ENACTMENT OF THE STATUS OF THE ROMS

In Europe, the first legislative regulations on the Roms' status were issued in the Habsburg Empire. The synthesis of all previous legal regulations regarding the situation of the Roms from the Habsburg Empire is *Hauptregulatio*, promulgated on October 9, 1783 by Joseph II (Schwicker, 1883: 56–58). The Act had 59 articles that imposed very clear and restrictive rules: the Roms were forbidden: to dwell in tents, to practice nomadism and begging, to change their names; it became mandatory: the adoption of

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set 1375 as *terminus post quem* for the presence of the Roms in Wallachia. It is worth saying that all these documents I refer to are published in the same volume (DRH B I), at few pages from one to another. Nevertheless, the record *per se* is not significant for an exact date of the Romani arrival in Wallachia, but the date is not far from the actual facts.

4 *Documenta Romaniae Historica*, DRH, B, vol. 1, 1966: 19-21.

5 The following working hypothesis is not sustainable and is undocumented: "Due to their behaviours, their way of life and their organization in groups, Gypsies were seen as enemies and enslaved." (Achim, 1998: 65).

the language and clothing style of the inhabitants from the villages wherein the Roms settled, the house numbering, the schooling of their children under the priest's guidance; the conversation in Romani and eating carrion was punishable by 24 club strokes; the land owners were obliged to provide the Roms with land for the construction of their dwellings and for a garden.

The legislative initiative of the neighbouring empire<sup>6</sup> certainly influenced the political class of Wallachia and Moldavia, where the Russian occupation, during 1828–1834, as a part of their legislative reform, prioritized the adoption of the Constitution, legislation common to both Romanian Provinces and designed with the explicit aim of modernizing the Romanian society.

This first Romanian Constitution, rendered in Romanian and French, and entitled “Organic Regulation”, represented a *de facto* recognition of the common history of the two Provinces, and created the prerequisites of the political union of the two Provinces in 1859.<sup>7</sup> The model for the Romanian and Russian law-makers was furnished by the French Constitution, *La charte constitutionnelle du 4 Juin 1814*, issued by King Louis XVIII (Negulescu, Alexianu, 1914: XXXIII). Nonetheless, the French monarchical system of aristocratic pattern could not be applied to the *Organic Regulation*, due to the absence of the bourgeoisie in Wallachia and Moldavia. Here, the Lord and the members of the parliament belonged to the same social category, that of the aristocracy. In this way, the first Romanian Constitution ushered in an important stage of modernity, by implementing the principle of separation of the State powers: the Lord and the government represented the executive power, the Public Assembly represented the legislative power, and the judiciary system represented the justice, and was protected by the principle of the tenure authority. For the Trade Law a special legal code was not drawn up but the French *Register of Commerce* was used instead.

The peculiarity of the Romanian Constitution compared to other European Constitutions lies in the existence of a special chapter dedicated to the Roms called “Improvement of the status of the Gypsies”, written at the personal initiative of the Russian Military Governor Pavel Dimitrievich Kiseleff:<sup>8</sup>

March 21, 1831, Bucharest, today, Saturday, 9 a.m.: In the courtroom of the Public Assembly, where His Excellency Mr. Vice-president set with 44 members. [...] His Excellency Mr. Vice-president, by command of His Excellency the High Commissary

6 Shortly after the completion of this article, I came upon the learned article of Vladimir Shaidurov (2017). In the beginning, he summarizes the legislative initiative concerning the Roms in the Russian Empire, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He is thus quoting from a compendium of legislation carried by the Sankt Petersburg Academy, authored by I. Danilovich: “the Russian legislation will forever leave a mark in the history because it never oppressed the Roma by persecution, but from the very beginning it was committed to making them useful citizens of the state” (Danilovich, 1826: 184).

7 *Organic Regulation*, art. 37; All the references in the article to this are from the edition of Negulescu, Alexianu (1914). Vide Negulescu, Alexianu, 1914, vol. I: 130. Vide Annexe 1.

8 Beside bettering the conditions of the Roms and the Jews, among other ideas prompted by Kiseleff in the *Organic Regulation* were: the personal income tax replacing the taxation for the owned cattle, mutual consents between landlords and the peasant cultivators, the census of the population every seven years (first in 1831, second in 1838). In a personal correspondence to Count Zakrevskii, March 1830, Kiseleff said about one such commission appointed to draft the Constitution before being approved in Sankt Petersburg (December 1830), that is working hard, “although with desires to preserve harmful privileges of the boyars, against whom I act as executor of the Tsar's will and like a Christian” (Sbornik Imperatorskogo Russkogo Istoricheskogo Obshchestva, according to Lewis-Krueger, 1940: 45).

President, proposed to the Extraordinary Public Assembly, in regard to the Gypsies that are referred to in the Chapter 3, “Finance”, in the last paragraph of art. 94, to prepare a “Commission” responsible for both, investigating the present state of art of this category of people and their occupations, and also to find from this time on the means to improve their lives, in order to get settled and to start tilling the earth. Immediately afterwards, four members of this Committee were appointed: Mr. chancellor Scarlat Mihailescu,<sup>9</sup> treasurer Alexander Nenciulescu<sup>10</sup>; and the great dignitaries Filip Lenj<sup>11</sup> and Constantin Brăiloiu.<sup>12</sup> (*Analele Parlamentare*, I, vol.I, 1890: 9-10).

Remarkable is the concern for improving the conditions of the Roms. After several months of work carried by the Constituent Assembly, the Governor Pavel D. Kiseleff personally stepped in and asked to prioritize the draft of the Chapter concerning the regulations on the Roms. Shortly afterwards, on April 11, 1831, the chapter entitled “Improvement of the status of the Gypsies” was submitted for approval.<sup>13</sup> In this way, the Romanian Constitution becomes the only constitution in that time Europe, which includes a chapter on affirmative actions for the Roms, and describes for the first time the different ethno-socio-professional Romani categories (Ro. *tagmă*< Greek *τάγμα* ‘socio-professional category’)<sup>14</sup> (21): 1. the *Lingurari* ‘spoon-makers’, 2. the *Aurari* ‘goldsmith’, 3. the *Ursari* ‘bear tamers’, 4. the *Zavragi*, 5. the *Laeti*, 6. the *Netots*.<sup>15</sup>

The description of the different ethno-socio-professional categories of the Roms and the measures to improve their lives according to the specificities of each category, is a positive aspect as compared to the Habsburg Empire legal system, where all actions are identical for all Romani categories, regardless of their traditions and socio-professional differences.

The description of the Roms’ categories as outlined in this Act will be taken *tale quale* in the studies addressing this people, without mentioning the source document. The best-known case is represented by the first systematic work on the Romanian Roms, published in Berlin by Mihail Kogălniceanu (Kogalnitchan, 1837: 12–13).

9 Scarlat Mihailescu is known for the fact that in 1832, as a Chancellor, signed together with other Romanian landlords a letter of gratitude to the Sultan to the effect that he restored the autochthon reign in Wallachia.

10 He was appointed treasurer in the very same year, 1832, replacing thus one rich boyar Alexandru Villara. Accessed on: <http://cautare-b.arhivelenationale.ro/cautare-b/detail.aspx?ID=347472>.

11 Filip Lenj (1779-1853), governor, great treasurer and chancellor of justice, is harshly presented by Hagi-Moscu (1995): “A fake genealogy. He is the illegitimate son of a Frenchman, Jean Baptiste Linchou, Alexander Ypsilanti’s private secretary and instructor for the Ruler’s children, born with a Gypsy slave of the Boyar Dumitrache Hriscoscolegu Buzoianu”. In one of his houses, known today as Lens/Vernescu Mansion in Bucharest, the Russian army headquarters was established, and it is here where, in March 17, 1854, the young officer and the great writer Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy lodged.

12 Constantin Brăiloiu (1809-1889), studied at the Faculty of Letters and Law in Geneva and Paris. In 1834 he was prosecutor, and in 1837 university professor of criminal law, Minister of Justice from 1861 to 1862, the Capital’s mayor in 1873; in 1831, member in the “Drafting Commission for the Regulation for improving the status of the Gypsies”, and in 1849 he was appointed by Barbu Stirbey, the Ruler of Wallachia, member in the “Commission for the promulgation of the Act of the Emancipation of the Gypsies”.

13 “The Report No. 19, drawn in March 31 by the Public Assembly for the sake of the Gypsies [...] being well approved and unanimously voted, was signed by His Excellency Mr. Vice-president.” (*Analele Parlamentare*, 1, vol, 1, 1890: 36).

14 Vide Annexe 2.

15 *Organic Regulation*, art. 94; vide Negulescu, Alexianu, 1914, vol. I: 109-112.

### 3. THE ALLEGED ARRIVAL OF THE *NETOTS* IN ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES

These [*Netots*, author's note] came here from the Germanic lands and gathered in groups of over 50 families. Although they belong to the *Ursari* [bear tamers, author's note], due to their outrageous behaviours they are called *Netots*, because they do not practice any craft or occupation, and, men and women alike, are prone to reproachable actions, namely stealing goods and money from the villages, robbing road travellers, and often killing them; basically, they have no law. Dirty, eating rotten food, wearing dirty rags, they are like pest, and of little use to the community and the state. They should be banished from the Principality and should be sent to where they came from. (*Organic Regulation*, art. 94, 6)

Apparently surprising, after almost two centuries since their mention in the first Romanian Constitution (1832), today the origin of the alleged *Netots* is still unknown. The *Organic Regulation* states that they came from Transylvania "about 40 years ago", that is around the years 1780–1790, following the discriminatory reforms adopted by Joseph II. The argument would be plausible as it is underlined by an ingenious coincidence between the date of the promulgation of the law called *Hauptregulatio* by the Emperor Joseph II in 1783, and the year mentioned in the *Organic Regulation*.

In this context, the construction of their self-perception recorded in Romani folk stories and songs, according to which they came from Austria-Hungary<sup>16</sup>, is interesting:

The whole village to laugh / That you're put to shame / **As the soiled *Netot* / From the German country** [highlighted by author]. (§ 36, *Ursari*<sup>17</sup> song, Gheorghe Lăcătușu from Ghighiu, near Ploiești)

I didn't eat and didn't drink / I cried out from hunger / The great lady / *Bulibasha's* daughter / She made me to be without food / So I'm hungry today / I lay my hand on the dog / And I'll hit your head / Get it from here, don't be mad / **For I'm a German chap / Get out from here, you *Netot*** [highlighted by author]! / For I'll hit you behind your ear. / (§ 160, *Netot* Song, collected from Martin Tilea, *Netot*, German Gypsy).

I didn't eat anything today / Apart from a little cake / Not salty, nor baked / Give me some little fish / To salt my heart / To give you one golden coin / Stolen from the merchant / The merchant is from Braila / He caught us and he hit us / And in the pit he put us / From there he got us out / And he let us go home. / (§ 161, *Netot* Song, collected from Tuțea Nedea, German Gypsy found in Ploiesti). (Rotaru, 2016: 330, 454, 455)

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<sup>16</sup> Rotaru, 2016: § 27, 36, 160, 161, 163, 222. Vide among others Barbu Constantinescu's information about one respondent, "Mihai Anton, at work in the village Filastake, County Ilfov. The *Netots* hail from the Austro-Hungarian Empire." (Rotaru, 2016: 321).

<sup>17</sup> the *Organic Regulation* speaks clearly about the association of the *Netots* with *Ursari* as shown above.

Their perception by the majority population was, similarly, that of “nomad (in the sense of itinerant) Gypsies”, as recorded in an ethno-linguistic *Questionnaire*<sup>18</sup> conducted in 1878 through village teachers and priests:

§ 15. How are *Țigani* regarded by the people? The Jews and *Țigani* [are regarded] with the worst eyes, because they are treacherous and thieves, but only those nomadic *Țigani*, such as *Laeti*, *Ursari* and *Netots* (Muscel, Pl. Podgoria) (BAR Mss. Rom. 3438, vol. II: Muscel).

The *Paparuda*<sup>19</sup> is performed by the wives of the itinerant *Țigani*, those *Netots* with tents [...] (Brăila, Pl. Bălți, Com. Ceacărul); (BAR Mss. Rom. 3418, vol. I: Brăila).

3.1. The *Organic Regulation* stipulation on the *Netots* is not supported by documents. There is no written evidence about any *Netot* migration from the Habsburg Empire to Wallachia or about the fact that the *Netots* do not understand Romanian language, as they would presumably speak German or Hungarian. In the event of such realities, it is impossible to imagine their absence in the contemporary documents. On the contrary, numerous documents referring to the *Netots*, issued by state authorities, have been preserved, and none relates this potential state of art. In all these instances, the representatives of the Romanian authorities never complained about the impossibility to have a dialogue with the *Netots*. Likewise, it would have been impossible that in just 40 years, the whole *Netot* community forgot German language and spoke only Romanian.

3.2. An undeniable argument to refute the hypothesis of their arrival from the German lands is a clear reference in a document issued prior to 1780s (the alleged period of the *Netots* arrival in the Romanian Principalities). In an act of delimitation of Boanga estate, Dâmbovița County (which was donated in 1731 to the Metropolitan Seat of Ungro-Vlachia), conducted in February 20, 1750, the toponym “*Netots Meadow*” is mentioned.<sup>20</sup> The “*Netots Meadow*” toponym mentioned in 1750, proves beyond doubt the *Netots*’ presence in Wallachia at least 30 – 40 years before their mention in the

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18 In August 1877 the polymath B. P. Hașdeu, (v. Hașdeu, 1877 and 1878) launched a questionnaire through village teachers and priests of Wallachia and Moldavia, in order to gather the customs and laws of the Romanian people. It has 400 questions, some with direct reference to the Roms: Are there *Țigani* living in your village? How are they regarded by people? What are their nicknames? Are there any marriages between *Țigani* and Romanians, and how are they regarded? What are the *Țigani*’ occupations? Do *Țigani* work individually or in guilds?; and more general questions, which applies to Roms also: What do you mean by “foreigner”? Whom do you consider a Christian? etc. There are 39 responses of this questionnaire, hailing from 17 counties of Wallachia and Moldavia. They are available in 4 manuscripts, cca. 1200 pages. The manuscripts (apart from answers of one county) are not published, or digitized and are in a quite advanced state of degradation. This questionnaire was somehow used by ethnologists until ‘80s, and more constantly by the linguists. However, the information about the Roms was not examined so far. I have examined all instances referring to the Roms in the 1878 Questionnaire (cca. 1200 pages) and edited the respective portions of the texts which will be soon published.

19 An ancient agricultural ritual performed in Southeastern Europe, in which young women wearing merely weeds around the waist were enacting a scenario for bringing rain, dancing and having water poured over them by the housewives. In time, the role of *Paparuda* came to be assigned to girls from (vagrant) Romani communities.

20 ANIC, fond Mitropolia Țării românești, Pachet XLVII, dos. 6, f. 3. Vide Annexe 3.

*Organic Regulation*, as a toponym passes in the collective memory with the lapse of at least one generation. Whereas in genealogy a generation is considered to be a 33-years period, it follows that by 1710–1720 *Netots* existed in Wallachia.

3.3. Another argument against the alleged arrival of the *Netots* from the Habsburg Empire is their appellation,<sup>21</sup> which is derived from the Romanian adjective *netot* < *ne+tot* ‘stupid’ (lit. ‘not whole’). This type of derivation is specific to 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Romanian. The appellation *Netot* is idiosyncratic and untranslatable to a language spoken around Romanian Principalities, that is Turkish, Russian, Hungarian or German.

We may thus assume that they were since long Romanised and that they were present in Wallachia at least one century before the promulgation of the *Organic Regulation*. They might have belonged to that *Ursari* ‘bear tamers’ group, as it is specified in the law text, and refused basic rules of coexistence, did not learn any craft and were thus rejected by their own community. All the ethno-socio-professional categories described by the law text are settled, with the exception of the *Ursari*, *Netots*, and precisely 150 families from the *Laeti* group who “are unstable and wandering with tents, being prone to theft”.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, with the legal provision of the article 94, paragraph 6) from the Constitution, the “*Netot*” was created as a category to embrace the unsocial elements from other Romani communities, such as *Ursari* and *Laeti*.

3.3.1. In support of this conclusion we have the answers to the ethnological and mythological *Questionnaire*, sent by the Romanian polymath B. P. Haşdeu in 1878 to school teachers and priests in the villages, as mentioned above. The *Netots* are there recorded as a special category of Roms, itinerants like *Ursari* or like *Laeti/Laesi*, but equally shunned by the Roms and Romanians alike, for the reasons already mentioned above.

3.3.2. In the folklore collection of Barbu Constantinescu there are five songs termed as *Netot* songs, and two “German Gypsy” songs precisely, which do not display grammatical features which would particularised them from the other texts. However, they display certain similarities with the *Laiesi* songs; but the *Laiesi* “dialect” as represented in the collection is not a uniform entity.<sup>23</sup> Based on nowadays synchronic data collection, Granqvist (2018) arrives at the conclusion that the language in the *Netot* songs is Northern Vlax Romani, and specifically Kalderash, whereas *Ursari* is a Balkan dialect.

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21 The reference about the *Netots* from the *Organic Regulation* is taken subsequently, without indicating the source, and without verifying the information, by all Romanian reviewers, writers, linguists and historians. Lazar Şăineanu 1896: 383: “*Netots* (m.n.pl.) nomadic Hungarian Gypsy class, dishevelled and uncombed, stealing and eating carrion”. Some of the quoted sources of Şăineanu for this dictionary entry are: Ion Ghica – “*Netots*, homeless and casteless people, nomads who wandered bareheaded in flocks”, and Petre Ispirescu – “Skinny and harassed as the *Netots*”; and later, in 1939 (*sub voce*), August Scriban – “*Netot*, -oată, adj., from ne-tot ‘not whole’, i.e. ‘incomplete’, ‘non-human’. A nomadic Hungarian Gypsy class who stole and ate carrion, who were banished from Transylvania by order of Emperor Joseph II and who were enslaved in our countries in the 1800s.”

22 *Organic Regulation* Vide Annexe 2, paragraph 5.

23 Mikhail Oslon (The Institute of Slavic Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences), personal communication, December 28, 2017. About the identification of the *Netots* with the the *Laiesi*, see also a very interesting observation in one standard study (Fraser, 1992: 133): “Some *Lăieşi* were able to escape and form communities in the Carpathians; under the name of *Netotsi* they acquired a sinister reputation.”



It might also be the case that the *Netots* did not sing in their own language or, as it shows in some cases, the respondents were not *Netots* themselves. However, undeniable is that these songs were perceived by 1878, when they were collected, as belonging to the *Netots*. They are more archaic in content and in vocabulary (Rotaru, 2016).<sup>24</sup> The preservation in their “dialect” of many archaisms allows us to admit that their separation from the *Ursari* or *Laeti*, if at all, might have happened long before the envisaged period for their “arrival”, most likely in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

3.4. The reference to the *Netots* as a distinct Romani ethnic category in the 1832 Constitution, as against the absence of a document referring to their migration from Austro-Hungary to Wallachia in the years 1710–1720 or later, is conspicuous.

3.4.1. The precise reference to the *Netots*’ expulsion in the *Organic Regulation* is a nonsensical legislative text, in the chapter dedicated to improving the situation of the Roms. Moreover, the *Organic Regulation* acts as a Constitution and in no way can prescribe a punishment, which is only the function of the Criminal Code. Obviously, that cannot be due to a legislative error. Barbu Stirbey, the General Secretary of the National Assembly, is the first Romanian Doctor of Law from the University of Paris. Constantin Brăiloiu, before being nominated as a member in the Commission for drafting this section, just returned from Paris wherein he completed his PhD in Law.

3.4.2. There is another contradiction between the text of the *Organic Regulation*, which states that the *Netots* came from Hungary and the actual historical events which will be further narrated in chapter 4. In documents issued by the local administration,<sup>25</sup> the expulsion of the *Netots* to the Ottoman Empire, as an indication to the place “where they came from”, is precisely recorded.

These inconsistencies in the text of the Constitution discloses that drafting the paragraph about the *Netots* is a connivance agreed between the Russian Military Governor of Wallachia and Moldavia, General Kiseleff, and the representatives of the Romanian political class of the National Assembly, especially the group around Barbu Stirbey (the ruler responsible for the Emancipation), in order to create a reason for the expulsion of the *Netots* from the Romanian Principalities. As to the place of expulsion, none really believed that the Austro-Hungarian Empire would be the destination. In

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<sup>24</sup> Rotaru (2016: 295, footnote 2109; 296, footnote 2112 and 2113)

<sup>25</sup> The sources underlying the present study are so far unused, and belong to the National Historical Archives, Bucharest. A publication exists (Manole, 2006: 101–109), which reflects the author’s research in the archives, unfortunately limited only to file no.15 from the Department for Prisons Fund, which is duly recorded in the catalogue. In fact, for this subject, there is a comprehensive file in the same archives, about the Romanian Government’s attempt to transfer the *Netot* Roms in the land of the nowadays Bulgaria, file no. 490 from the Ministry of Internal Affairs Fund, which is not quoted so far in any scientific study. This file covers most of the documents from the file no. 15 from the Department for Prisons Fund (researched by Manole), as this department was part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Naturally, the file no. 15 includes only the Ministry’s correspondence with its department, and does not include correspondence with county and canton leaders, and local administration under the Ministry. It is this correspondence which I have exploited, in addition to that already researched, available in file no. 15. In addition, this file no.15 is only partially researched by Manole, which is why it does not reflect the totality of the facts reflected in the documents contained in the file. Incomplete research of documents relating to historical facts ultimately compromises historical truth and validity.

reality, the Romanian politicians and the slave owners wished to obtain a benefit by removing from the country an alleged permanent danger to the public order, in a very favourable historical circumstance, in which Turkey was defeated and, due to its tacit consent with Russia, could not oppose to the expulsion of the *Netots* into its territories.

#### 4. MONITORING THE *NETOTS*

The promulgation of the *Organic Regulation* and consequently the creation of the premises for the expulsion ushered in a very close monitoring of the *Netots*. Their deeds were investigated and prosecuted with celerity in the whole country, in order to produce evidence supporting their swift expulsion. The abuse sometimes identified in the authorities' office was amplified by the vicissitudes which the country faced. To the difficulties inherent to any military occupation, the vandalism specific to the uncertainties of the post-war period, natural calamities were added: the plague outbreak in the summer of 1829; earthquake and floods in 1829; the extreme winter of 1829–30; drought and locust invasion in 1830; the cholera outbreak in the summer of 1831; the Romanian government abuses in the name of the foreign administration; the insecurity of the roads due to looting gangs and to large groups of *Netots*.

All these adversities imposed extremely resolute actions, in the implementation of which the direct supervision of the Governor Pavel D. Kiseleff is clearly seen.

Although disowned by their own community, the *Netots* plundered and robbed often in association with Roms from other categories. In Romanați County it is recorded that the *zapciu* 'policeman and tax collector' responsible for the Roms belonging to the State, was protecting the *Netots*. On June 4, 1831, the local authority informed the Interior Ministry, that in Recea village, the *Netots* robbed two houses.<sup>26</sup> The Police investigation was able to discover the stolen things and the *zapciu* was removed.<sup>27</sup> One may come across similar situations in the counties of Dâmbovița, Muscel, Argeș, Ilfov and Olt. In Marginea village, Olt County, the *zapciu* of the rural canton is beaten off by the *Netots*, while travellers passing along the Olt River are robbed by the *Netots* jointly with the villagers from Vișoara village.<sup>28</sup>

An alarming warning on the risk of cholera spreading was transmitted by the Administrative Council of Wallachia Committee Quarantines, the institution responsible for preventive measures. One of the dangers was coming from the damaged headquarters of the Committee Quarantines in Drajna and Teisani villages, Teleajen Canton, following attacks by means of clubs of over 1,150 *Netots*, hailing from Moldavia (Buzău and Focșani, v. Annexe 7). The events were signalled by the tax collector Alecu Filipescu, the Chief of these Quarantines.<sup>29</sup> The reply of the Interior Ministry is surprisingly fast and proposes the expulsion of the *Netots* "in accordance to the *Organic*

26 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, inv. 309, dos. 490/1831, f.30. Vide Annexe 4.

27 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Ispravnicia Romanați către Marea Vornicie, 28 iulie 1831, f.21. Vide Annexe 5.

28 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Ispravnicia Romanați către Marea Vornicie, 28 iulie 1831, f.44. Vide Annexe 6.

29 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Ispravnicia Romanați către Marea Vornicie, 28 iulie 1831, f.30. Vide Annexe 7.

*Regulation*".<sup>30</sup> Extremely fast for that time, as early as September 1831, all counties of Wallachia acknowledged the receipt of the address from the Military Governor Pavel D. Kiseleff "with regard to the *Netots* who have to be banished from the Principality and sent to **where they came from** [highlighted by author]".<sup>31</sup> Or they hailed from Moldavia, as seen above, and not from Transylvania.

## 5. THE EXPULSION OF THE *NETOTS*

The inclusion in the Constitution of a punitive measure such as the *Netots'* expulsion from Wallachia is in contradiction with the spirit and purpose of the fundamental law of a state which cannot act as a Criminal Code, as already said. This paragraph is underlined by political and economic reasons, and by the determined need to resolve as quickly as possible an issue which was financially burdensome, through the expensive apparatus necessary to prevent and control the transgressions done by the *Netots*, and which was likewise, totally devoid of economic interest, for the *Netots* were eluding paying their capitation.

The priority and celerity given to the investigation of the transgressions committed by the *Netots* throughout the year 1831, immediately after the entry into force of the *Organic Regulation* leads us to the same conclusion. On July 4, 1831, the Interior Ministry sent an order to all county Prefects to catch the *Netots* with the help of the villagers, in case the Police squad was outnumbered, and to send them under escort to the prison of the Interior Ministry.<sup>32</sup>

After several months of exceptional efforts carried out by the Romanian officials (speaking for the fact that the action was directly supervised by the Governor Kiseleff), on December 8, 1831, the expulsion of the *Netots* to the Ottoman Empire was done at the border check point called Izlaz. Surprisingly fast, in only two days, on December 10, 1831, the administrator of Izlaz estate, one Petre Apostol, filled in a denunciation against the *cinovnic* 'the representative of the Department of Prisons', who led the convoy of the expelled *Netots*. The denouncer reported that an envoy of the Pasha of Nikopol arrived in Izlaz to announce that Pasha intended to return the *Netots* because they were naked and could not stand the cold winter. The *Netots* testified that they had been robbed of their belongings precisely by the Department of Prisons representative who was in charge of taking them over the border. The Pasha stated that he will inform the Russian Military Governor of Wallachia and Moldavia about that Romanian civil state officer, who was depicted as a real thief.<sup>33</sup> In the end of his delation, whereby Petre Apostol described the savage dangers which the *Netots* might cause if returned by the Pasha, there is a description underlining their public perception:

God save us from the return of these Gypsies back to our country, who not only will rob the villages and will damage them so badly, that there won't be any sanitation in the quarantine, but they won't be caught again in spite of huge efforts and lots of army.

30 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor, 30 august 1831, f.52: 30 august 1831. Vide Annexe 8.

31 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, inv. 309, dos. 490/1831, septembrie 1831, Vornicia Temnițelor, f. 59, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75.

32 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, inv. 309, dos. 490/1831, f.84. Vide Annexe 9.

33 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor, 8 decembrie 183, f.95. Vide Annexe 10.

The administrator Petre Apostol's testimony is supported by another, Constantin Floroiu.<sup>34</sup> In December 19, the Interior Ministry begins the investigation against the Department of Prisons' representative who accompanied the convoy of the *Netots* across the Danube, to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>35</sup>

## 6. THE RETURN OF THE *NETOTS*

The hasty arrival of the envoy of Pasha of Nikopol and the swift delation made by Petre Apostol, the administrator of Izlaz estate, who was quite possibly involved in the border smuggling, only two days after the actual crossing of the Danube by the *Netots*, reveals a conspiracy against this unpopular measure. The intention of expelling the *Netots* from the Principalities across the Danube, and not into the Austro-Hungarian Empire ("where they came from"), was known many months in advance by the local authorities from the south of Danube. There was, thus, sufficient time to prepare certain procedures for annihilating the plan. Pasha of Nikopol didn't have the naivety to believe in the *Netots*' history as mystified in the *Organic Regulation*, according to which, having arrived in the last 40 years from the Habsburg Empire, they would be deported to the country where they came from. The perception of the reality boosted him to adopt firm actions: consequently, on December 16, 1831, the *Netots* were already transferred to the left bank of Danube, in Wallachia.

The high dignitary Cămărășescu, responsible for the Army headquarters of Izlaz, responded to the Prefect of Romanați County that he safeguarded the *Netots* by settling them on an island on the Danube. There, he regularly supplied them with food consisting of merely corn, transferred by boat. Since they were naked, and were "left merely with their souls", Pasha did not accept them: "because they are naked, and, as I was told by Pasha's envoy, since we robbed them and crossed them over the Danube, he said that he does not need such people".<sup>36</sup>

The catastrophic failure, in just seven days, of a connivance established at the highest level, probably between the Governor Kiseleff and the most influential Romanian politicians, constructed with firm actions in over seven months, could not be a mere coincidence. Certainly, the causes of failure are underlined by the local corruption on both sides of the Danube. There is a series of inaccuracies in the actions of the Russian and Romanian authorities which demonstrates the power of corruption and the fragility of the State institutions, still infiltrated by agents of Turkish influence, and unable to defend their own employees: the lack of reaction of the Russian and Romanian authorities who did not analyse the facts and did not assume any responsibility regarding the *Netots*, the interruption of the investigation against the *Netots*' robberies demanded by the Interior Ministry, even though the objects found on them could provide enough evidence; and the delay in the investigation against the official of the Department of Prisons. The conclusion of the two bodies of investigation has clearly established: "The *Netots*' snitching was a cunningly invented story against the *cinovnic* ('official') which was worked out of the hate they had against him for the harshness which he showed towards them, under such circumstances".<sup>37</sup>

34 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor, 12 decembrie 1831, f.96. Vide Annexe 11.

35 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 12 decembrie 183, f. 94. Vide Annexe 12.

36 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 12 decembrie 183, f.112-112v. Vide Annexe 12.

37 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 20 februarie 1832, f. 147. Vide Annexe 13.

## 7. CHANGE IN THE STATUS OF THE *NETOTS*

Within eight to ten months, the *Netots* passed through two extremely harsh moments of their existence, their crossing over the Danube and their crossing back to Wallachia in the middle of winter, when they were kept in custody on an island on the Danube, with no food and clothes. Although the investigation carried against them in the same case in which the official from the Interior Ministry was investigated, was discontinued, this was not understood as a sign of kindness and did not cause any change in their behaviour. The resumption of their transgressions happened immediately after they left the Danube island going in a convoy to Craiova city. The administrator of Deveselu estate, Petre Popescu, complained that the *Netots* returning from the Ottoman Empire stopped overnight in the outskirts of Deveselu village, an occasion to cut more than 400 trees in order to make a fire, and lit several hay barns.<sup>38</sup>

The *Netots* reached Craiova and from there headed to Bucharest under the custody of the Department of Prisons. The number of guards was insufficient and not infrequently, groups of *Netots* managed to escape surveillance and reportedly plundered villages in their way. In Colibași village, Muscel County, a band of *Netots* robbed six houses. “The yeomen of the village quickly solved the case and the culprits were handed over to the vice-prefect”.<sup>39</sup> Probably detached from the convoy and hiding in the woods of Romanați County, another band of *Netots* robbed, in March 27, 1832, several houses in Greci village. They took everything they found, but they were seen in a neighbouring village where they were trying to sell the stolen items. The yeomen interfered but were numerically inferior and the *Netots*, with clubs in hands, drove them away. The yeomen came back together with the *vataf* ‘Gypsies’ chief’ and searched their wagons but couldn’t find anything, as the things had been hidden in “unknown locations”.<sup>40</sup>

Under these circumstances, the Government of Wallachia adopted the Decisions 1) to include the *Netots* to the “State Gypsies” category and thus entrusted them to the responsibility of the Department of Prisons of the Interior Ministry, and 2) also, to assign them to different owners who were in return freed of any taxes for their work, with the obligation to teach them agriculture and to teach their children any craft or agriculture.<sup>41</sup>

The Government measures were quite successful and many *Netots* were assigned to different owners. However, there were many challenges of this new experiment. After four months, on September 30, 1832, the Department of Prisons sought help of the Interior Ministry to catch the *Netots* fleeing from their masters<sup>42</sup> and returned with the same request on October 13, 1832.<sup>43</sup> The Administration of Bolintin Canton, Dâmbovița County, recorded an incident in Slobozia village, wherein 10–12 *Netot sălaş* ‘a unit similar to an extended family’ stopped and robbed two houses. The villagers wanted to catch them, but in the altercation, the *Netots* hit them with their own children, so the villagers gave up and let them flee and they eventually entered Vlașca County.<sup>44</sup>

38 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 13 ianuarie 1832, f. 133. Vide Annexe 14.

39 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 26 martie 1832, f. 184. Vide Annexe 15.

40 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 26 martie 1832, f. 201. Vide Annexe 16.

41 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 22 aprilie 1832, f. 319–319v.

42 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 30 septembrie 1832, f. 248.

43 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 13 octombrie 1832, f. 254.

44 ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 21 octombrie 1832, f. 255. Annexe 17.

## 8. THE EMANCIPATION OF THE *NETOTS*

Barbu Stirbey, the Parliament Secretary, who adopted the *Organic Regulation*, the closest collaborator, by force of his position, to Kiseleff, the Military Governor of Wallachia and Moldavia, when he eventually became Prince of Wallachia (1849-1856) did not forget all the measures taken to improve the lives of the Roms, and sought to complete the entire programme issuing the decree of the emancipation of the “State Gypsies”, in 1856. There were two other categories of Roms, according to their owners, namely “Monastery Gypsies” and “Boyars’ Gypsies”, the latter being the last one to be redeemed by the State and emancipated.

As the *Netots* were since 1832 “State Gypsies”, as shown above, they became the first emancipated Roms.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

The *Netots* were certainly a category of Roms present in Romanian Principalities at least one century before the promulgation of the first Constitution (*Organic Regulation*, 1832) wherein their first description is recorded. They were named with an idiosyncratic Romanian word, untranslatable into a language spoken around, Turkish, Russian, Hungarian or German. They may<sup>45</sup> have belonged to the bear tamer group (*Ursari*) and refused basic rules of living together, did not learn any skill and were thus rejected by their own community.

Drafting the paragraph about the *Netots* in the *Organic Regulation* represented connivance between the Russian Military Governor of Wallachia and Moldavia, General Kiseleff, and representatives of the Romanian political class, who intended to regulate the Gypsies issue and remove an unadaptable category from the country. Their origin from the Habsburg Empire and the stipulation of their dispatch to “the place from where they came” was a construction provided in the Constitution with the aim of misleading the defeated Ottoman Empire of the real intention of the Russian and Romanian authorities, that of sending these itinerant and thus uncontrollable people across the Danube.

Based on so far unknown official documents from 1831-1832 from the Central National Historical Archives in Bucharest, we have reconstructed one of the decisive episodes from the *Netots*’ history, before and immediately following the promulgation of the Constitution. These documents prove that the *Netots* were subjected to close monitoring of the Interior Ministry authorities for seven months, and that they were investigated and prosecuted with maximum celerity, with the aim of producing evidence supporting their hasty expulsion. The documents prove that the local administration knew about the connivance and acted accordingly, gathering the *Netots* and crossing them over the Danube, to the Ottoman Empire. Through the local corruption on both sides of the Danube, the Pasha of Nikopol was informed about this plan, and artfully forestalled it. The scapegoat was a *cinovnic* ‘official’ of the Interior

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45 The *caveat* is that the linguistic arguments explained under 3.3.2 partially contradicts this identification, because *Ursari* is not a Northern Vlax dialect. Yet, we might not rule out completely this identification based on a few language samples collected from respondents who were not *Netots* themselves or/and did not sing in their own language, if at all, as already said.

Ministry who was entrusted to cross the *Netots* over the border, accused through the *Netots*' false testimonies of having their belongings and even clothes stolen. This was the pretext for which the Pasha of Nikopol could oppose the representative of the Russian Empire and send back the *Netots*, who were allegedly robbed by a corrupted officer. The bare *Netots* were kept for some weeks on a Danube island, until the representative of the Russian Empire acknowledged being defeated by the representative of the Ottoman Empire regarding the issue of the so alleged Gypsies hailing from the Habsburg Empire, being thus caught between the policies of the two Eastern European Empires.

Soon, the National Assembly of Wallachia adopted protective measures for the *Netots*, changing their status and including them in the category of "State Gypsies" and distributing them among different owners. The official documents further attest that these inclusions proved inefficient, that the *Netots* continued fleeing from their landlords and resumed their itinerant way of living. Paradoxically, although shunned by their own ethnic groups and regarded as unadaptable, they were the first emancipated Roms.

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## ANNEXES

### HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS

1. *Regulamentul Organic*, 1944, art. 371, p. 130: “The beginnings, the religion, the similar customs and language of the inhabitants of these two Principalities [i.e. Wallachia and Moldavia, author’s note]: There are many elements showing their close union, which until now have been withheld, and were procrastinated, and which, only after favourable circumstances and followed by proper conditions and useful consequences arising from the union of these two peoples, they cannot be subjected to any doubt; the premises are thus set in the *Regulation* through the creation of similar administrative institutions in both countries.”
2. *Analele Parlamentare*, anul 1, vol. 1, București, 1890, p. 109–112: “The *Regulation* is drafted for improving the status of the State Gypsies by the Commission appointed precisely for this ordinance. To Hon. Public Assembly, in full accordance with the art. 94, drafted with the purpose of restraining their wanderings and making them to work the earth. The Hon. Public Assembly summoned us to deliberate on the issue and indicate what is necessary for their implementation. Thus, assembling in one place and carefully pondering on their status, we humbly indicate what should be done for each respective Gypsy category (*tagma*, lit. ‘guild’), namely:
  - 1) **The *Lingurari* Gypsies ‘spoon-makers’**. They live on wood work, namely crafting tubs, spindles, spoons, etc., and some of them on crafting fences and clubs. They live in steadfast huts and houses near the woods. They are under the care of a *vataf* appointed by their Canton Officer. It is mandatory that they should not move from their locations. There are Gypsies living at the outskirts of the villages, up to 40 to 50 families. They should be under the maintenance of their caretaker appointed from among the most faithful and prone to rule them as per the superiors’ regulations, namely to prevent them from wandering and make them toil the earth, and to collect the duly imposed taxes; he [i.e. the *vataf*, author’s note] should be responsible for them in front of the *zapciu* ‘policeman and tax collector’. In the case that there are more than 50 families, two *vataf*-s should be appointed or as many as required by the families’ number. These Gypsies have the obligation to work the *claca* ‘tax consisting in work days’ for the landlords, like the other inhabitants, including the tax for cultivating the earth and using the pasturage. The landlord has the obligation to give them lands for ploughing, grassland and cattle pasture according to the contracts; they will supply their needs for the wood required for their craft, through agreements and bargain with the forests owners. But for the fire logs needed for warming and cooking, the owner will obey the regulations imposed for the other inhabitants of the Principality.
  - 2) **The *Aurari* Gypsies ‘goldsmiths’**. A part of them lives on gold sale, representing the surplus collected by them from nature, apart from the three drachm which are due to the State. Others are *Lingurari* ‘spoon-makers’, and another two parts live on brick making, ditch and pound digging, etc. Similarly to the above mentioned *Lingurari*, they have stable dwellings, hence, the provisions referred to under no. 1 above should be applied also to them.
  - 3) **The *Ursari* Gypsies ‘bear tamers’**. They live on displaying bears through cities and selling brooms, crafting wax and other small smithery works (such as scale weights, needles, saws, drills, etc.). They live in unstable tents. Their caretaker should gather them from wherever they are scattered and settle them in stable dwellings in decent locations, near villages and woods, gathering them in due proportion with the estate, so that the landlord may give them necessary lands for ploughing, grassland and cattle pasturage, and to hand them over to the care of one *vataf*, as has been provided under no. 1 above; they [i.e. the *vataf*-s, author’s note] should report to the landlords of the estate on which they live the fulfilment of their duties, and in return, the landlords should guarantee their rights (*folosurite*, lit. ‘necessities’), as it was said above. Because this Gypsy category is not familiar with the working the land, all provisions should be taken to guide them and monitor them in working the earth.
  - 4) **The *Zavrăgi* Gypsies**. The *Zavrăgi* Gypsies, around 300 families, belong to *Ursari* group,

but have different customs. They work in construction. They are prone to theft, unstable, wondering with tents. They regularly practiced smithery, but due to working in construction, they lost that skill. In order to be prevented from stealing, they should be dispersed through villages under the care of the Prefect County, merely five to six families to one village, and settled in houses and huts. They should be also settled and placed under the care of a faithful and trustworthy *vataf*, who will be responsible for four or five adjoining villages, and who will keep a watch so that they will remain settled on the approved locations and behave correctly towards the villagers. On the other hand, he should make them work the land and should prevent them from going away without a written certificate, so that they should not wander through villages without an appointed mission known by him [i.e. by the *vataf*, author's note]. If he will act otherwise and will not pay attention to that, he will be made responsible for all bad consequences done by those families. When the *vataf* will come to know that the families transgressed the rules and do not obey his regulations, he should immediately report to their caretaker who will fine them [lit. give them *chisâm* 'contribution in cash and in nature, due by the serf to the owner instead of the assigned working days', author's note]. They also should report to the landlords of the estate the fulfilment of their duties, and in return, the landlords should guarantee their rights, as it was said under no. 1 above.

5) **The Laeti Gypsy.** They practice blacksmithing and coppersmithing. Because some of them are steadfast people living in houses and huts at the outskirts of villages, their behaviour being safe from unpleasant habits, they should be taken care of as provided under no. 1 above. But others, over 150 families, are unstable and wandering with tents, being prone to theft, hence they should be taken care of as provided under no. 1 above.

6) **The Netots.** They came from the lands of the German Country around 40 years ago, and total over 50 families. These, although belonging to the *Ursari* group, due to their improper behaviours bear the name of "Netot", not having any skill, and doing, men and women alike, many transgressions, such as stealing goods and money from villages, robbing travellers on the roads and many times killing them, and above all, not obeying any rule. They are dirty and polluted in regard to their eating habits and clothes; so, being harmful to society and of very little benefit for the State, they should be thrown out of the Principality and sent to the place from where they came.

The Gypsies from the first five gilds, due to the fact that most of them are away from the path of the Orthodox faith, should be taken care of the Metropolitan Church and dioceses."

3. ANIC, fond Mitropolia Țării Românești, Pachet XLVII, dos. 6, f. 3: "[...] Similarly [is] the second division; and the share of the Holy Archbishopric lies besides the estate of the cavalry commander Ianache, at its border, on the road that is called 'the Twins'. Then we came out into the Elms Meadow, by a swamp where there's a stepping stone between the cavalry commander Ianache [and the estate Boanga], and we drew a line by a large and prominent oak, and we delimited a share of 300 fathoms for the Holy Archbishopric; similarly, we delimited a share of 200 fathoms in the vicinity of the freeholders, from this point over the forest, as far as the 'Netots Meadow', by the burrows, where we painted an oak on its side that is facing the burrows in the vicinity of Andrew, the saffron seller [Ro. *șufăr*?, author's note]."
4. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, inv. 309, dos. 490/1831, f. 5,3: "The Governor of Romanați County to the Interior Ministry, July 4, 1831: 'A band of *Netots*, trespassing Recea village, found two houses whose owners were away, and by force of their inborn proclivity to steal, they broke the doors and took from there whatever valuable thing they found. A citizen saw them and alerted the owners who were returning home. They seized their *zapciu* 'policeman and tax collector', but to no avail.'; f. 3: 'The Police Inspectorate responsible for the Gypsies' *zapciu* of Romanați County took actions to replace this one with another *zapciu* [...] for the evils done by the *Rudari* and the *Netot* Gypsies belonging to the Reign, throughout the county, and for their *zapciu* who supports them.'"

5. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Ispravnicia Romanați către Marea Vornicie, 28 iulie 1831, f. 21: “The Governor of Romanați County to the City Hall: “The evils done by the *Netots* and their *zapciu* in Recea village, where they robbed several houses, were investigated, and we duly inform you that the captain of the police squad was sent to fetch some of their leaders, and that the mission was completed. ‘Having fired’ some of them inside the jail, – he merely brought two persons –, I detained them for 4-5 days, and because they got scared, they gave all the stolen things back up to the last one, and in good condition, and the people were compensated, and the sacrificed lambs were paid back. To the said *zapciu*, claiming that he had an amount of money which he was due to carry to Bucharest, and asking us to give him that back, I ‘visited’ him with a few rods at his feet as a punishment, and I gave him back his petty belongings.”
6. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Ispravnicia Romanați către Marea Vornicie; August 8, 1831: f. 44: “The *zapciu* of Marginea Canton, for the intimation of the Olt County Administration: Following the instructions to safeguard the sanitation in the county, and to walk from village to village, I followed the directives and went to Țigănia village to accomplish the sanitation. So, I reached Țigănia village and proceeded to accomplish the order (*nizam*). Instantly, one Ion Belitu, the Gypsies’ chief (*vătaf*) jumped on me in a great mob (*zurbalâc*) with all his folks. It wasn’t enough that they beat to death the servants and they broke their arms! Then they hit me with clubs, pulled my hair, shouting loudly that they do not want to acknowledge the Hon. Governor nor the report issued by the Quarantine Committee and informed by us to them for the benefit of their health. Resolution: the cashier (*zaraf*), the *zapciu* and the county captain should secretly catch that rebellious chief of the Gypsies, without making any uproar nor to beat him, and to send him to the Administration under escort.”  
f. 45: “The *zapciu* of Oltul de Jos Canton, for the intimation of the Olt County Administration: today, August 11, two groups of *Netots* mobbed the court of the High Steward’s wife (*stolniceasa*) Marghioala, and encamped in Vișoara village, behind the garden of the High Steward Hristache, and not only that they encumbered the travellers on the Olt valley and robbed them, but they also got into the vineyards and cornfields in groups of 15, destroying and setting fire to them. Some women from Marunțiu village, returning back home with some largely pounded grist, were robbed of that grist and of whatever belongings were found on them. Moreover, Panait Sărbul Gheorghe, who lives by the Iminog river, was robbed of the food he had in his house. Again, some residents of Comani village who were carrying bricks for building the holy church, were caught and robbed of whatever possibly could be found on them: winter coats, and for someone, even the shirts and suspenders. Another one, Dumitru, witnessed that he had in his bag 15 pennies, and another boy, one Stanciu, barely escaped alive. And a sheepfold located between Comani and Marunțiu, was completely ransacked, and the cauldrons, the food and the cheese vats were thus stolen. In addition to all these, there might be many more others who bear in silence, not being noticed by us and not being safeguarded by the Administration.”  
f. 48: “In the plum orchard of the High Steward’s wife (*stolniceasa*) Gigartoaia, from Vișoara village, they ruined throughout, picking all the plums from which it could be gathered up to 4-5 barrels of plums. And when she said that they had stolen her plums, they jumped with clubs to kill her, in her own yard.”
7. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, inv. 309, dos. 490/1831, f. 30: “August 3, 1831, Bucharest: To Hon. Administrative Council: I, the tax collector Alecu Filipescu, Chief of the Quarantines (*lazaret*) of Teleajen Canton, South-Saac County, through the report I received from the Quarantines Committee, I inform that on the estate called Drajna of that gentleman [i.e. Alecu Filipescu, n. author], over one thousand Gypsies violently broke in, hailing from Buzau, and the canton chief of the Gypsies went to drive them out, but they jumped with clubs and he couldn’t do anything. Also in this canton, in Teisani village, around 30 ‘tents’ of Gypsies hailing from Focsani and passing through the quarantines by power of their clubs, broke in. The Committee informs the Hon. Administrative Council on all these, and kindly requests order

to be made for the inhabitants who suffer from such Gypsies, who may cause the spreading of cholera through their wanderings; and the Committee kindly asks to be informed about the measures thereon taken.”

8. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, inv. 309, dos. 490/1831, Vornicia Temnițelor, 30 August 1831, f. 52: “August 30, 1831, The Department for Prisons: In regard to the instructions of the Hon. Interior Ministry concerning the Gypsies and the *Netots* who wander about the country in their usual lifestyle, to the population’s unrest and damage. With regard to the State Gypsies, this Ministry is responsible for maintaining as much as possible the due public order and to constantly force those to give up their wrongdoings and to make them settle down as provided in the *Regulation*. Notwithstanding that the greatest part of the *Laeti* Gypsies is the property of the monasteries and landowners, and because these ones likewise distress the inhabitants, consequently, the Hon. Interior Ministry will take the right actions in regard to these private Gypsies as well, in order to prevent them from disturbing the peace of the inhabitants. In regard to the *Netots*, taking into consideration the *Regulation* provision as to their expulsion from the Principality, I consider it necessary not to postpone their evacuation, but, as soon as the prevention measures of the cholera spreading in the country will permit, to get them gathered in one place by force of authority, and, due to the fact that their families aren’t numerous, to escort them across the Danube; all the guards watching the Danube border will be strictly instructed to prevent them from returning to Principality.”
9. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, inv. 309, dos. 490/1831, f. 84: “The Administration of Vâlcea County, to the Interior Ministry: By the instruction of the Hon. Interior Ministry that we received by July 4, we were directed to expel all the *Netots* from the county and to get help from the villagers for their evacuation. In certain places there exist large communities, and in no way could we oppose them, as per instructions, because, it is well known that, when asked to comply to the regulations, they can also commit crimes, as per their bad nature; it is well known that they don’t obey others, least for the officers of the Hon. Department of Prisons.”
10. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor, 8 decembrie 1831, f. 95: “The Administrator of Izlaz estate to the sub-prefect of Balti Canton: on December 8, an official came from Bucharest, escorting a number of *Netot* families and he took them over the Danube through the check point called Izlaz. I asked two infantrymen who were sent back to Bucharest, and I found that the official allowed the Gypsies to rob the villages through which they passed and, having loaded the various looted things in a cart and on 8 horses stolen from those Gypsies, he sent them [i.e. these stolen goods, author’s note] to Bucharest, to his home. And there was another cart with robbed things; and I saw with my own eyes that those Gypsies were robbed and complained that the official had taken their clothes and whatever money they had. Today an envoy (*gavazi*) sent by the Pasha of Nikopol came and asked an officer by whose instruction these naked Gypsies were taken across the Danube; the envoy said that the Pasha ordered to send them back to the left bank of the Danube, and that the Pasha will inform the Hon. Governor of Wallachia and Moldavia about the complaint of the Gypsies against the officer who robbed them of their horses, clothes, and money; due to this reason, the Pasha sends them back in order to show to what extent they have been robbed.”
11. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor, 12 decembrie 1831, f. 96: “December 12, 1831, Constantin Floroiu to the Romanati County Administration: On December 5, an official passed by Schela Rahovei heading towards Izlaz together with a lot of *Netot* families; there were some reports from certain villages that the official in Corabia village beat some people, so that one lays in bed even now, and robbed many things from the inhabitants. The Hon. Administration will further avail of a more detailed report from the Administrator of Izlaz estate, Petru Apostol.”
12. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor, 12 decembrie 1831, f. 94: “December 12, 1831, the Interior Ministry to the Administration of Romanati County, the sub-prefect of Balti Canton and the Administrator of Izlaz estate, in regard to the outcomes of the former

- official's actions in connection to the transfer of the *Netots* from the Principality in Turkey, on which the Hon. Ministry has received a detailed report, and on which the Administration is expected to produce its due report." "December 19, 1831. Resolution: a copy of it [i.e. the Administration's report, author's note] should be sent to the Department of Prisons, to the effect that the official be seized and compelled to give back all the stolen things to the Gypsies and the Gypsies' chiefs, under their signature. The Governor of Romanati County should investigate from where those Gypsies stole the things and to find out the injured persons."
13. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 20 februarie 1832, f. 147: "February 20, 1832, Department of Prisons to the Interior Ministry: Report on the *cinovnic* 'official' who was ordered to cross the *Netots* over to Turkey, who allegedly robbed those *Netots* of their belongings; on which issue they made a complaint as soon as they returned here; the said Department undertook to investigate the circumstances and proceeded to ask the *cinovnic* how could he carry out such a transgression; [...] He took those belongings because they were the property of the villagers from whom they were robbed by those [i.e. *Netots*, author's note] and in support of this, documents signed by the villagers were sent. The Department but could hardly rely on his [i.e. the *cinovnic*'s, author's note] report and the villagers' testimonies, and entrusted the case to the Department's cashier; he [i.e. the *cinovnic*, author's note] went to Craiova<sup>46</sup> and argued that he could get the signatories of the testimonies, and showing proof of the actions therein described, convinced the Administration of Dolj County. Next he was judged by the Department who saw that the *Netots*' snitching was a cunningly invented story against the *cinovnic* which was worked out of the hate they had against him for the harshness which he had shown towards them, under such circumstances. He does not fail to show to the Hon. Department those papers as evidence for investigation."
  14. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 13 ianuarie 1832, f. 133: "January 13, 1832, the Romanati County Administration to the Interior Ministry: Petre Popescu, the administrator of Deveselu estate, came with the complaint that the *cinovnic* of the Department of Prisons who was in trust with the *Netots* turned back from Turkey [...] They [i.e. the *Netots*, author's note], having proceeded towards Craiova, camped in a part of Deveselu village, where there was a forest reserve; they stopped over there and, having found some hay and straw barns belonging to the infringed party, they removed the fences and took as much hay and straw as they needed, and from the saplings they cut around 400 young trees out of which they made fire for warming up over the night, and in the morning, when they wished to leave, they burnt the hay on which they slept. For all this, compensation is required."
  15. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 26 martie 1832, f. 184: "March 26, 1832: A *Netot* band arrived in Muscel County, having robbed six houses in Colibași village [...] The *Netots* have been caught by the captain of the soldiers, and were handed over to the Canton vice-prefect."
  16. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 26 martie 1832, f. 201: "March 26, 1832: A band of *Netots* arrived in Greci village, Romanati County. When people were at work in the field, they broke into the village and breaking into the houses, they stole whatever they found, and went on to other villages to sell them. Afterwards, when the yeomen proceeded to catch them and compensate the people, they fought back and jumped over them, chasing them with clubs in the hands. The yeomen returned and the Gypsies' chief came to them and asked them to fetch the *Netots* and search for the stolen things, but they couldn't find anything on them, because the things were hidden in unknown locations. Wishing to send the chief to the Administration, they [i.e. the *Netots*, author's note] jumped on them with clubs, to kill them."
  17. ANIC, fond Vornicia din Lăuntru, Vornicia Temnițelor. 21 octombrie 1832, f. 255: "October 21, 1832: The vice-prefect of Bolintin Canton, Dambovița County, fills in the complaint that on last Monday, October 17, about 10-12 *Netot* family groups (*sălaș*) emerged in Slobozia village and looted two houses of the inhabitants. And as the villagers wanted to catch them

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<sup>46</sup> Major city of Dolj County further mentioned.

[...] the *Netots* jumped on them hitting them with their own children.”; f. 269: “October 21, 1832: The Administration of Dambovita County announced that the *Netot* Gypsies arrived in Slobozia, broke the blockade by hitting the inhabitants with their own children and fled to Vlaşca County.”

*Translated from original Romanian by the author of this article.*

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