

Tsiganologie: The expert view of the “Gypsy question” in France¹

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ABSTRACT: This article explores *tsiganologie*, a form of expert knowledge about the Tsiganes (Gypsies) that developed in France after the Second World War. To do so, I take as a case study the Études Tsiganes Association, founded in Paris in 1949, which became the centre of production and dissemination of such knowledge in France. It is argued that *tsiganologie* can be understood as a *territoire savant* and that the academics and amateurs who shaped it constituted an epistemic community with the authority to establish the scientific, social, cultural and political meaning of *Tsigane* issues. The discourse of the *tsiganologues* is examined, revealing how much of it they owed to nineteenth-century thought and showing how they moulded their strategies to the intellectual context of the 1950s and 1960s. Section I provides an overview of the background to this expert knowledge from the end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth; section II focuses on the foundation of Études Tsiganes and its intellectual activity during the first two decades of its existence, and sec-

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tion III, on its rivalry with the Romani movement (which arose in the early 1960s) and the way that it affected *tsiganologie*.

KEYWORDS: *tsiganologie*, Romani Studies, epistemology, racism, colonialism.

LA «gitanologia»: una visió experta
de la qüestió gitana a França

RESUM: Aquest article explora la «gitanologia», una forma de coneixement expert sobre els gitanos (*gipsies*) que es va desenvolupar a França després de la Segona Guerra Mundial. Per a fer-ho, prenc com a exemple la fundació d'Études Tsiganes Association, creada a París en 1949, que es va convertir en el centre de producció i difusió d'aquest coneixement a França. Argumenta que la *gitanologia* es pot entendre com a un *territoire savant* i que els acadèmics i aficionats que la van formar constituïen una comunitat epistèmica amb l'autoritat per establir el significat científic, social, cultural i polític de les qüestions de gitanos. El discurs dels *gitanòlegs* s'examina remarcant-ne les vinculacions amb el pensament del segle XIX i mostrant com modelaven les seves estratègies al context intel·lectual dels anys 1950 i 1960. La secció I proporciona una visió general del rerefons d'aquest coneixement d'experts des de finals del segle XVIII fins a mitjans del XX; la secció II se centra en la fundació d'Études Tsiganes i la seva activitat intel·lectual durant les dues primeres dècades de la seva existència, i la secció III, en la seva rivalitat amb el moviment romaní (que va sorgir a principis de la dècada de 1960) i la forma en què va afectar la *gitanologia*.

PARAULES CLAU: gitanologia, Estudis Romanís; epistemologia, racisme, colonialisme.

Tsiganologie is a curious discipline in ethnography. Its proponents form a sort of closed international society, made in the image of the men they study.

Luc de Heusch²

When the Belgian filmmaker and anthropologist, Luc de Heusch, set out to review one of the most recent works published in France on the *Tsiganes* in 1965, he could not, or perhaps would not, hide his scepticism. The book he was writing about was entitled *Les Tsiganes dans l'Ancienne France* (*The Tsiganes in Old France*) by François Vaux de Foletier, a former archivist who had been a *tsiganologue* since the 1950s.³ Although he claimed to admire the documentary work of Vaux de Foletier, Luc de Heusch seemed irritated by the improbable classification of *tsiganologie* as a discipline or as the product of a particular national academic school, which is why he decided to start his review with a tentative, thought-provoking definition, probably to stimulate the erudite readers of the *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*. While not entirely accurate, his definition intuitively captured some of the key features of *tsiganologie*: its historical relation-

2 “La tsiganologie est une curieuse discipline au sein de l’ethnographie. Ses tenants forment une espèce de société internationale fermée, à l’image des hommes qu’ils étudient.” Luc DE HEUSCH, “De Vaux de Foletier (François). *Les Tsiganes dans l’Ancienne France*”, *Revue belge de philologie et d’histoire*, 43 fasc. 3, 1965, p. 1093.

3 Throughout the text, terms such as “Tsigane” (with this spelling or that of “Tzigané”), “Gypsy”, “Gitan”, “Zigeuner”, “Cikán”, “Bohémien”, “Romanichel” or “Nomade” are used, which are the exonyms historically imposed on Romani communities (“Roma” is the self-designation agreed upon at the World Romani Congress in 1971). This article reproduces these terms as historical representations since they are the ones that appear in the sources. As some French Roma define themselves as “Tsigane”, the third section of the article will retain this term to refer also to specific individuals within this community. Note that although the terms *tsiganologie* and *tsiganologue* have been anglicized as “Tsiganology” and “tsiganologist” by authors such as David Mayall, the original French terms will be retained in this text.

ship with ethnography, the fact that it flourished in “closed societies” and its international scope.

But *tsiganologie* went much further than even Luc de Heusch foresaw, as I intend to show in this article. To do so, I have chosen as a case study the Études Tsiganes Association, founded in Paris in 1949. My purpose is to analyse *tsiganologie* as a form of expert knowledge whose origins can be found in the beginnings of modernity, and which reached its peak in France during the decades after the Second World War under the auspices of Études Tsiganes. From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, expert knowledge about the Tsiganes developed in dialogue with the new modern disciplines, such as ethnography and folklore, from which *tsiganologie* not only inherited its principles and methods, but also a rather paternalist outlook, which some of its representatives retained until the last third of the twentieth century. As this expert knowledge was produced by an intellectual elite, the arguments put forward by the *tsiganologues* came to carry considerable public weight and authority. Their conclusions influenced policy formulation, as well as scholarly and popular cultural representations of Tsiganes that Jan Selling succinctly refers to as the “conceptual Gypsy”.⁴ The impact of this expert knowledge therefore was felt well beyond the “closed circle” in which it was generated and directly affected the lives of Roma communities, whose lives were very much affected by the premises set by the so-called “Gypsy experts”. As a result, since the birth of Romani Studies in the 1970s until the present day, one of its main lines of work has been to investigate and dismantle the historical genealogy

4 Jan SELLING, “The Conceptual Gypsy: Reconsidering the Swedish Case and the General”, in Jan SELLING et al., eds., *Antiziganism What's in a Word? Proceedings from the Uppsala International Conference on the Discrimination, Marginalization and Persecution of Roma*, Cambridge, 2015, pp. 120-131.

of these stereotypes,⁵ a collective task to which the present article seeks to contribute.

A monographic study of that “curious discipline”, as Luc de Heusch put it, also makes sense in view of the conspicuous absence of studies on this particular subject area, a gap that comes as some surprise considering how many reflections and observations have been prompted by gypsylorism, the knowledge that inspired *tsiganologie*.⁶ The track record of the institution from which gypsylorism emerged in 1888, the Gypsy Lore Society, has been a controversial one because of the explicit racism of its theories and the refusal of some of its members to acknowledge that there might be anything wrong with that.⁷ Over and above this controversy, I believe that interest in the scholarly tradition of gypsylorism should be extended to the French case, so that the critical eye with which the Gypsy Lore Society’s past has been reviewed can serve as a guide to a historiographical analysis of *tsiganologie* and its flagship association, *Études Tsiganes*.

The task of tackling expert thinking such as that of the French *tsiganologues* is not without its theoretical dilemmas, as Ludivine Bantigny reflected:

5 This was how it was expressed in pioneering studies such as those of Thomas A. ACTON, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change: The Development of Ethnic Ideology and Pressure Politics Among British Gypsies from Victorian Reformism to Romany Nationalism*, London, 1974; Jean-Pierre LIEGEOIS, *Mutation Tsigane. La révolution bohémienne*, Bruxelles, 1976 ; or Judith OKELY, *The Traveller-Gypsies*, Cambridge, 1983; Leo LUCASSEN, Wim H. WILLEMS and Anne Marie COTTAR, *Gypsies and other Itinerant Groups: A Socio-Historical Approach*, London, 1998.

6 A review in David MAYALL, *Gypsy Identities 1500-2000: From Egipcians and Moon-men to the Ethnic Romany*, London and New York, 2005, pp. 24-56.

7 Thomas A. ACTON has been the leading critic of the Gypsy Lore Society’s racism since the publication of his *Gypsy Politics and Social Change* in the 1970s. A summary of the controversy can be found in Jan SELLING, “Assessing the Historical Irresponsibility of the Gypsy Lore Society in Light of Romani Subaltern Challenges”, *Critical Romani Studies*, 1, 1/2018, pp. 44-61.

Obviously there is a history of expertise, but on closer examination just what kind of history are we looking at? It [the history of expertise] certainly lies at the crossroads of several sub-fields, such as the history of the sciences and [related] controversies, the history of ideas and of important thinkers, the history of public action and state power, or even the history of professions and their acceptability.⁸

Taking advantage of this intersection of historiographical trends, I shall use certain concepts that cut across them, particularly that of *territoire savant*, understood as a more flexible field of knowledge than that of “discipline”. *Territoires savants* can be institutionalized and hence dogmatic in their assumptions or they can continue to grow in the interstices of other disciplines and give rise to a plurality of positions within them. The groups that constitute these spaces of knowledge tend, like academic circles, to be small, but unlike the latter, *territoires savants* are generally made up of amateurs and technicians, such as archivists, in addition to qualified academics.⁹ The notion of *territoire savant* is complemented here by that of “epistemic community”, which serves to underline the importance of authority in these circles of experts. This authority translates into the almost automatic legitimization of their postulates, rigid control of the circulation of knowledge that they or others produce, and the

8 “L’expertise a donc évidemment une histoire, mais quelle histoire fait-on lorsqu’on s’y attelle? Elle se situe assurément au croisement de plusieurs sous-champs, tels que l’histoire des sciences et des controverses, l’histoire intellectuelle et des intellectuels, l’histoire de l’action publique et du pouvoir étatique ou encore l’histoire des métiers et de leur recevabilité.” Ludivine BANTIGNY, “Usages, mésusages et contre-usages de l’expertise. Une perspective historique”, *Histoire@Politique*, 14, 2/2011, p. 3.

9 Ioana POPA, Joseph MORSEL and Isabelle BACKOUCHE, “Terrains érudits, territoires savants”, *Genèses*, 110, 1/2018, pp. 3-1; Donald R. KELLEY, “Le problème du savoir et le concept de discipline”, in Jean BOUTIER, Jean-Claude PASSERON and Jacques REVEL, eds., *Qu’est-ce qu’une discipline?*, Paris, 2006, pp. 97-115.

direct impact of their work as experts on national or international policy development.¹⁰

This article explains the reasons why *tsiganologie*, as practised by Études Tsiganes since the mid-twentieth century, was a *territoire savant*, whose experts worked as an epistemic community with the authority to establish the scientific, social, cultural and political meaning of the concept of “Tsigane”. To do this, the first section of this article looks at the background to this expert knowledge and provides a brief overview of the way that scholarly knowledge started to form an interdisciplinary corpus of assumptions about the Tsiganes in France from the end of the eighteenth century. It was this scholarly tradition that the Études Tsiganes association sought to perpetuate from 1949. Nevertheless, the second section shows that this effort was heavily influenced by the social context and intellectual climate after the Second World War, which forced the first generation of *tsiganologues* (active between 1955 and 1970 approximately) to rework their expert knowledge and give it social projection, seeking legitimacy among the Tsiganes. However, as explained in the third and last part of the article, this community of *savants* was challenged very early on by the Romani movement, which had been active in France since the end of the 1950s. As a result of this dispute, *tsiganologie* started to shift its positions, a change that would end up being crucial for its survival until the present day.

¹⁰ Peter M. HAAS, “Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination”, *International Organization*, 46, 1/1992, pp. 1-36. My article is indebted to the pioneering application of the notion of epistemic communities to Romani Studies in Mihai SURDU, *Those who Count. Expert Practices of Roma Classification*, Budapest / New York, 2016, pp. 13-22.

I

It was no coincidence that the publication in 1783 of *Die Zigeuner: Ein historischer Versuch über die Lebensart und Verfassung* (*The Gypsies: A historical essay on their way of life and constitution*) by Heinrich M.G. Grellmann, appeared at the same time as the emergence of concepts such as *Ethnographie*, *Ethnologie*, *Völkerkunde* (*ethnology*) and *Volkskunde* (*ethnology*), first coined in German countries between 1771 and 1787 “as part of the Enlightenment endeavour to create some order in the growing body of data on peoples, nations or *Völker* in the world of that era”.¹¹ This “science of the peoples” was committed to recording all the original manifestations of the different nations and also to identifying those elements that were exogenous to them, which was what Grellmann believed he was doing in *Die Zigeuner*, a “comprehensive” history based on a primitive ethnographic method that argued that all the Gypsy filiations of Europe (Bohémien, Gitanos, Cyganis, Egyptians, and so on) shared a common oriental origin.¹²

Having crossed the threshold of the nineteenth century, Grellmann’s argument began to be echoed in such works as those of the Frenchman Paul Bataillard, who recorded his debt to Grellmann in his *De l’apparition et de la dispersion des Bohémiens en Europe* (*History*) (*On the appearance and diaspora of the Bohemians in Europe* (*History*)), which was published in 1844. Nevertheless, the context in which Bataillard disseminated his research was significantly different from Grellmann’s. By the middle of the nineteenth century, in France,

11 Han F. VERMEULEN, “Origins and institutionalization of ethnography and ethnology in Europe and the USA”, in Han F. VERMEULEN and ARTURO ÁLVAREZ ROLDÁN, eds., *Fieldwork and Footnotes. Studies in the History of European Anthropology*, London / New York, 1995, pp. 39-59.

12 For Grellmann’s work, see Wim H. WILLEMS, *In search of the True Gypsy. From Enlightenment to Final Solution*, London / Portland, 1997, pp. 22-92.

as well as in England and the United States, there was already a profusion of learned societies that brought together specialists and amateurs interested in new disciplines such as ethnology and anthropology.¹³ Membership of these scholarly circles – Bataillard was a member of the Société d’anthropologie de Paris (Anthropological Society of Paris) – enabled the early scholars of the *Bohémiens* to spread their knowledge and would lead them, at the same time, to bring it into line with racial theories, thus triggering the search for the differential characteristics of this “race”. In his study, Bataillard acknowledged a further reference: *The Zingali*, which had been published only three years earlier by George Borrow, the most reputable of the British amateurs in the study of the Gypsies and the one whose work best synthesized the romantic yearning for exoticism and nineteenth-century racial scientism.¹⁴

The careers of Grellmann, Bataillard and, especially, Borrow eventually paved the way to the creation of their own store of knowledge in the form of “gypsylore”, followed by its institutionalization in the foundation of the Gypsy Lore Society (hereafter GLS) in 1888 in Liverpool. This society provided a forum for ethnologists, anthropologists and linguists, as well as folklorists, the latter representing the new discipline of folklorism, which was on the rise in the last third of the nineteenth century. As Ken Lee correctly pointed out, the creation of the GLS represented an achievement compara-

13 Robert Fox, “The savant confronts his peers: scientific societies in France, 1815-1914”, in Robert Fox and George WEISZ, eds., *The Organization of Science and Technology in France 1808-1914*, Cambridge, 1980, pp. 241-282; Martin S. STAUM, *Labeling People: French Scholars on Society, Race, and Empire, 1815-1848*, Quebec, 2003, pp. 10-13. For Bataillard’s work, see Ilse ABOUT, “La société des Manouches de Paris au XIX^e siècle. Autour de quelques explorations ethnographiques de Paul Bataillard”, *Ethnologie française*, 172, 4/2018, pp. 673-686.

14 MAYALL, *Gypsy Identities 1500-2000*, pp. 180-186; María SIERRA, “Historia gitana: enfrentarse a la maldición de George Borrow”, *Ayer*, 109, 2018, pp. 351-365.

ble only to the appearance of Grellmann a century earlier, since the Gypsylogists were responsible for constructing an expert knowledge base that would determine the methods of researching Romani communities for a century. Their approach continued to be driven by the same obsession to prove the oriental origins of the “Gypsy race”, which was sustained by the constant developments in anthropological and philological theories, as well as by the distinctive Romantic predilection for the exotic.¹⁵ Hence, far from considering themselves unfeeling followers of scientism, the Gypsylogists aspired to replicate Borrow’s model, whose allegedly friendly and empathetic relationship with the Gypsies they admired. It was at this intersection of role models that the figure that every Gypsylogist aspired to be identified with emerged: the Romany Rye (later also written “Rai”), a lover of the Gypsies who acquired his knowledge from living with them, and also had the ostensibly scientific temperament of the ethnologist *setting out* to analyse at first hand this otherness that constituted the object of study.¹⁶

From its inception until after the Second World War, the GLS was the production centre of expert knowledge about Gypsies in Western Europe. While a group of British-style *savants* did not emerge in France during this period, the influence of gypsylogism was felt in societies devoted to the study of folklore and popular traditions. The first issues of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* (JGLS) welcomed all “movements” that the gypsylogists considered similar to theirs, such as the Société des Traditions Populaires (Society for Popular Traditions), founded in 1885 by Paul Sébillot, or journals like the *Revue des Traditions Populaires* (*Review of Popular Traditions*), *Mélu sine* and *La Tradition*, with which the GLS was in close

15 Ken LEE, “Orientalism and Gypsylogism”, *Social Analysis*, 44, 2/2000, pp. 129-149.

16 MAYALL, *Gypsy Identities 1500-2000*, pp. 188-204.

contact.¹⁷ The truth is that the members of these French circles were already aware that there were still many aspects of the *Bohémien*s (sometimes also called *Romanichels*) that the French *savants* knew little about. As Sébillot himself said in 1888, "this race [...], to our knowledge at least, has hardly been studied in France so far from the point of view of folklore, except in the general histories of the accursed races".¹⁸ Folklorism was thus added to the kaleidoscope of disciplines in which French scholars tried to imitate gypsyism, although they failed, even so, to reach the standard set by the British, as Sébillot lamented in 1907, when he declared that, since Bataillard's death and his own contributions in the 1880s, hardly any progress had been made in this field.¹⁹

While it is certainly true that scholarly works were published at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the following one, such as Decourdemanche's *Grammaire du Tchingane: Ou Langue des Bohémiens Errants* (*Grammar of Tchingane: or the Language of the Wandering Bohemians*) and others intended for the general reader, such as Constant Améro's *Bohémien*s, *Tsiganes et Gypsies*, the trend in France during the years leading up to the First World War was more or less as Sébillot had described it decades earlier

17 *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, series 1- volume 1, January 1888-June 1889. The full titles of the last two publications cited are: *Mélusine: recueil de mythologie, littérature populaire, traditions et usages* [*Mélusine: compendium of mythology, popular literature, traditions and customs*] and *La Tradition: Revue Générale Des Contes, Légendes, Chants, Usages, Traditions Et Arts Populaires, Folklore, Traditionnisme, Histoire Des Religions, Littérature* [*Tradition: General Journal of Tales, Legends, Songs, Customs, Traditions and Popular Arts, Folklore, Traditions, History of Religions, Literature*].

18 "Cette race que, à notre connaissance du moins, n'a guère été étudiée en France jusqu'ici, au point de vue du Folklore, si ce n'est dans les histoires générales des races maudites." Paul SEBILLOT, "Notes sur les bohémiens", *Revue des traditions populaires Société des traditions populaires*, 3^e année, vol. III, 12, December 1888, p. 649.

19 Paul SEBILLOT, "Les sociétés de Traditions populaires", *Revue des traditions populaires Société des traditions populaires*, 22^e année, vol. XXII, 8-9, August-September 1907.

when he referred to the predominance of “general histories of the accursed races”.²⁰ In circles such as the Société d’Anthropologie (Anthropological Society), founded in 1859 by Paul Broca, the fascination with the racial aspect of the Tsiganes had only grown after the objectivist method and language of anthropometry began to flourish and be applied to both craniology and psychometry.²¹ With regard to the use of anthropometry in research on Tsigane skulls, studies such as those by Eugène Pittard (who already wrote for the *JGLS*) and Abel Hovelacque’s *Sept Crânes Tsiganes* (*Seven Tsigane Skulls*) circulated widely in France, and served to reinforce the theory of the oriental origin and inferiority of this race, which was more than generally accepted at the time.²² What is more, in the end-of-century context, the development of the new measurement methods was conducive to a keen interest being taken in their virtues by agents who did not belong to the expert groups.

Alphonse Bertillon played a major role in this latter process. He was a well-known public figure, who moved in the erudite circles of anthropology and statistics in Paris, and also worked for the French police as an investigator in the identification service of the Paris Prefecture of Police. This latter gave him the opportunity to introduce judicial anthropometry and, in the 1880s, to implement the first method of recording physical descriptions scientifically in order to

20 Jean Adolphe DECOURDEMANCHE, *Grammaire du Tchingane ou langue des Bohémiens errants*, Paris, Paul Geuthner, 1907; *Bohémiens, Tsiganes et Gypsies* de Constant Amero, Paris, Frimin-Didot, 1895.

21 Claude BLANCKAERT, “L’anthropométrie: langage, normes techniques, controverses”, *Asdiwal*, 5 (2010), pp. 109-130; Leonardo PIASERE, “Crania cingarica”. La construcción antropológica del cuerpo gitano (1780-1930”, *Historia social*, 93, 2019, pp. 103-122.

22 Articles by Eugène PITTARD included “L’indice céphalique chez les Tziganes de la péninsule des Balkans – Influence de la taille sur l’indice céphalique (1261 individus de deux sexes)”, *Bulletin de la société de Anthropologie*, Lyon, 1904; Abel HOVELACQUE, *Sept Cranes Tsiganes* (*extrait de la Revue d’Anthropologie*, 1874), Paris, C. Reinwald et C^{ie} Libraires Éditeurs, 1874.

establish the identity of defendants.²³ At the end of the nineteenth century, *Bertillonage*, as it was called, marked one of the high points of what Noiriel referred to as the “identity revolution”, since it constituted a refinement of the techniques available to the policing system for identifying the population.²⁴ In the context of the Third Republic, however, political instrumentalization of anthropological knowledge was best exemplified by the law of 16 July 1912, since it forced the entire population labelled as “nomadic” (a new administrative category that included the Tsiganes) to carry anthropometric identity cards that would make it easier to control and criminally process them.²⁵

The new legislation, which was specified in a number of provisions over the next two decades, had a considerable influence on the majority population’s social perception of the French Tsiganes, who were increasingly identified with criminal activity and vandalism.²⁶ This coincided with the publication of studies in new scientific specialities, such as pathological psychology, which were aimed at confirming the supposed differential nature of the Tsiganes using nineteenth-century methods, such as physical anthropology. The “*Étude de 344 Romanichels*” (*Study of the 344 Romanichels*) by the physician

23 Ilse ABOUT, “Classer le corps : l’anthropométrie judiciaire et ses alternatives, 1880-1930”, in Ayse CEYHAN and Pierre PIAZZA, eds., *L’identification biométrique: Champs, acteurs, enjeux et controverses*, Paris, 2011, pp. 39-61.

24 Martine KALUSZYNSKI, “Citoyenneté et identité en République. L’identification au cœur des politiques de “mise en ordre”. Retour sur Bertillon et l’anthropométrie judiciaire (1880-1970)”, in Denis-Constant MARTIN, ed., *L’identité en jeux. Pouvoirs, identifications, mobilisations*, Paris, 2010, pp. 137-155.

25 The 1912 law has been the subject of numerous studies, most notably the one by Emmanuel FILHOL, *Le contrôle des Tsiganes en France (1912-1969)*, Paris, 2013, pp. 59-73.

26 Ilse ABOUT, “Underclass Gypsies: An Historical Approach on Categorization and Exclusion in France in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries”, in Michael STEWART, ed., *The Gypsy Menace: Populism and the New Anti-Gypsy Politics*, London, 2012, pp. 95-114, at 106-109.

Léon Mac-Auliffe, founder in 1923 of the Société de morphologie humaine (Society of Human Morphology), was one of the best examples of this new line of research.²⁷

The promulgation of the 1912 law also had repercussions in other disciplines. According to Filhol, there was unanimous and almost uncritical support for the new law among French jurists, as well as a growing interest in highlighting its place in the context of French legal history and analysing its impact in the first years of its application. This was evident in doctoral theses such as those of Henri Arzac and Henri Soule-Limendoux, both pioneers in the study of the background and consequences of the implementation of the 1912 law and prime examples of the enthusiasm with which the jurists welcomed the measure.²⁸ Furthermore, and to conclude, the praxis of the law was also studied by those directly responsible for its application, who published works clarifying the legislative corpus and administrative protocols for the surveillance of “individuals with nomadic lives”, as Colonel Pierre-Gaston Vohl described them in his essay.²⁹

The surveillance system for Romani groups, initiated in 1912 and refined in the following decades, paved the way for the prohibition of movement and internment measures adopted during the Second World War.³⁰ Despite the suffering inflicted in the intern-

27 Auguste Armand MARIE and Léon MAC-AULIFFE, “Étude de 344 Romanichels”, *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Sciences de Paris*, July 1920 p. 49.

28 Henri ARSAC, “La loi du 16 juillet 1912 sur l'exercice des professions ambulantes et la réglementation de la circulation des nomades : ses causes, ses précédents, sa portée et son application pratique” (PhD thesis, Lyon, 1933); Henri SOULE-LIMENDOUX, “Ambulants, forains et nomades” (PhD thesis, Toulouse, 1935).

29 Pierre-Gaston VOHL, *Police des Ambulants Forains et nomades et de profession connexes* (Paris, Charles-Lavauzelles & C^{ie} Éditeurs militaires, 1937).

30 ABOUT, “Underclass Gypsies”, p. III.

ment camps, the government did not consider it advisable to modify the 1912 law when France was liberated.³¹ It was only at the end of the decade, in 1948, that the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Nomadic Peoples was formed to bring together a committee of experts to assess the circumstances of these "populations". In the same year, its leaders sent a circular to the Seine prefecture pointing out the urgent need for a "more sympathetic policy" to put an end to the "repression and prohibition" suffered by the nomads.³² Apart from this declaration of intent, the few meetings the Commission held over the next two decades did not result in any specific proposals, which served only to demonstrate the obsolescence of the inter-ministerial body, which was dissolved as early as 1968.³³ In its first year of life, however, the Commission did promote a project that was to be more successful than the Commission itself and would in fact outlive it: the creation of a parallel association that would document the past and present of the Tsigane population and thus provide the Commission with information. The Association des Études Tsiganes was founded with this purpose in mind in Paris in 1949.

31 The persecution of the Tsiganes in France during the Second World War in Emmanuel FILHOL and Marie-Christine HUBERT, *Les Tsiganes en France, un sort à part 1939-1946*, Paris, 2009; and Denis Peschanski, *Les Tsiganes en France, 1939-1946*, Paris, 1994.

32 Circulaire de novembre 1948, Direction Générale de la Sûreté Nationale, Objet : population d'origine nomade, Archives Nationales Françaises, Santé; Direction population, migrations (1948-1981). [Circular of November 1948. General Directorate of National Security. Subject: Population of nomadic origin, French National Archives, Health; Population and Migrations directorate (1948-1981)].

33 María SIERRA, "Creating Romanestan: A Place to be a Gypsy in Post-Nazi Europe", *European History Quarterly* 49, 2/2019, pp. 272-292, at p. 279.

II

“Before naming these great researchers and humanists, let us first of all pay tribute to the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*”.³⁴ This was the opening line of one of the first articles published in *Études Tsiganes* (the eponymous official journal of the Association) dedicated to relating the origins of “world” knowledge about the Gypsies, to which the publication intended to make a contribution. After 1955, the Association that had been founded at the end of the 1940s under the auspices of the inter-ministerial commission, started to emerge as an organization with much greater reach than had been anticipated in its initial auxiliary function. From the outset, its reference point was the GLS. There was nothing in France that was quite like the British society, which was also virtually unique in Western Europe, with the exception of the group that formed around the Swiss journal *Der Zigeunerfreund (The Gypsy Friend)*.³⁵ In France, on the other hand, expert knowledge about the Tsiganes had accumulated in the form of a scattered set of studies, each conducted according to the criteria of different disciplines and sub-disciplines, and largely from a racist standpoint. *Études Tsiganes* was set up in order to bring together these two reference models: the institutionalization of knowledge of the GLS and the French scholarly tradition going back over the previous century and a half, although its agenda included, in addition, a commitment to improving the social situation of the Tsiganes. As the first editorial of its journal stated, the aims of the Association were to

34 “Avant de nommer ces grands chercheurs et humanistes, rendons d’abord hommage au *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*.” Francis LANG, “Livres de base sur les tsiganes”, *Études Tsiganes* (henceforth *ÉT*), 3-4, 1955, p. 10.

35 ACTON, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, p. 293.

[...] make Tsigane issues better known among the general public, to stimulate interest and curiosity about them [the issues], to dispel unjust prejudices, generally stemming from ignorance, and finally to create a sympathetic current of thought that [would] allow the Tsiganes to take their place, openly and with dignity, in the human community.³⁶

Those called upon to carry out this philanthropic task came from a variety of backgrounds. In the early years, the president of the Association was Pierre Meile, a linguist and professor at the National School of Oriental Languages, who was later replaced by Jean-Louis Delvolve, at the time a lawyer at the Paris Court of Appeal, and then by Louis Péré-Lahaille-Darré, inspector general for Health and the Population. During these first decades, the vice-presidency was held by Pierre Join-Lambert, state councillor and president of the aforementioned Interministerial Commission for Nomadic Peoples. Accompanying them as members of the Association were two men of the Church. The first was Jean Fleury, whose activity in aid of Jews and nomads during the war had led him to chair the Social Works Committee for the organizations of the Resistance and then, after the conflict, to be appointed chaplain to the Gypsies and Tsiganes in 1948; the second was André Barthélémy, who took over the chaplaincy from Fleury in the mid-1950s. Two archivists, Francis Lang and François Vaux de Foletier, were also part of *Études Tsiganes*, as well as the Tsigane writer, Matéo Maximoff – which suggested an unprecedented willingness to take into account the views of the Roma community – and several senior officials from Parisian social services. Finally, its honorary committee included names such as

36 “...faire mieux connaître, dans le grand public, les questions tsiganes, éveiller l’intérêt et la curiosité autour d’elles, dissiper les préjugés injustes, nés généralement de l’ignorance, et finalement créer un courant de sympathie qui permette aux Tsiganes de prendre leur place, au grand jour et dignement, dans la communauté humaine.” “Présentation”, *ÉT*, I, 1955, p. 2.

Paul Rivet and Jacques Soustelle, founder and former deputy director respectively of the Musée de l'Homme, and George-Henri Rivière, curator of the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires.

The varied backgrounds of the members of Études Tsiganes, which included politicians, academics and amateur researchers, made the Association an up-to-date version of the *sociétés savantes*, that is, a circle of experts whose scholarly output would have a major impact on national politics. Join-Lambert played a leading role in this, acting as a bridge between the Association and national politics, seeking support from other ministers and state councillors for initiatives of all kinds, such as when Études Tsiganes promoted the creation of the Comité National d'Information et d'Action Sociales pour les Gens du Voyage et les Populations d'Origines Nomade (National Committee for Social Information and Action for Travellers and Populations of Nomadic Origin) (CNIN) in 1960. The remit of this body was to encourage the formation of private associations in France for the social assistance of Travellers and to serve as a link between these associations and the state, while Études Tsiganes devoted itself to its “invaluable role in scientific information”.³⁷ In reality, the CNIN would be no more than an instrument of political and social action that took responsibility for promoting those measures that were in line with the ideas and approaches of Études Tsiganes and, indeed, there was a constant exchange of members between the Association and the CNIN: the initial board of directors of the latter was made up of members of Études Tsiganes, and Join-

37 “Les Études Tsiganes ont un rôle d'information scientifique irremplaçable, mais elles ne sont pas à même de soutenir comme il le faudrait les actions sociales entreprises” [The Études Tsiganes have an invaluable role in scientific information but are not in a position to provide the same level of support for the social actions undertaken], in the words of Marie-Louise Tournier (one of the promoters of the CNIN), according to Join-Lambert, *ÉT*, 2, 1965, p. 11.

Lambert, who was already vice-president of Études Tsiganes, also went on to become vice-president of the CNIN.³⁸

Join-Lambert's activity did not stop there, but also included the express support of politicians and intellectuals, such as André Malraux, whose chief of staff at the Ministry of Culture at the time was another member of Études Tsiganes, André Holleaux.³⁹ In the letter that Malraux addressed to the president, Pierre Meile, in 1964, which was reproduced in full in the Association's journal, the then minister claimed to have learned of the activity of Études Tsiganes through Georges-Henri Rivière and emphasized the usefulness of the link between the circle of *tsiganologues* and the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires.⁴⁰ That relationship would in fact be strengthened during the 1960s, since Études Tsiganes held its monthly meetings in the museum and also established its documentation centre there.⁴¹

As a result of this dense network of insitutional relations, a *territoire savant* was gradually taking shape in Études Tsiganes, which its promoters called *tsiganologie*. The term had already been used in Austria-Hungary, Germany and Romania at the beginning of the nineteenth century to describe the studies of the *Zigeuner* that followed the scholarly tradition of Grellmann, although it had occasionally been cited also by French authors, such as Paul Bataillard, with reference to the specialized linguistics of the Eastern European

38 Pierre JOIN-LAMBERT, "Congrès des Études Tsiganes sur les Questions Sociales. 5 et 6 Mai 1960", *ÉT*, 2, 1960, p. 11. The vice-presidency of Join-Lambert in Pierre Join-Lambert, "Chronique du CNIN", *ÉT*, 4, 1967, p. 41.

39 André HOLLEAUX, *Malraux ministre au jour le jour. Souvenirs d'André Holleaux*, Paris, 2014.

40 "Lettre du Ministre des Affaires culturelles", *ÉT*, 1-2, 1964, pp. 33-34.

41 Their committee meetings ("*permanences*") were held in the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires until early 1968, when they moved to premises shared with the CNIN in Rue d'Hautpoul, "Vie de l'Association", *ÉT*, 1-2, 1965, pp. 63-69.

“Bohémiens”.⁴² After the Second World War, *Études Tsiganes* recuperated the concept of *tsiganologie* as the equivalent of British gypsiorism, warning (as the GLS would have done) that *tsiganologie* referred to the study not only of “Tsigane” populations, but also of those others who identified themselves as Gitan or Rom based on filiation.⁴³ As had been the case with the GLS in the nineteenth century, the aim of the community of experts that made up *Études Tsiganes* was to collaborate in the development of *tsiganologie* as a *territoire savant* and also – and primarily – to establish itself as its epistemological centre, at least as far as the French-speaking world was concerned. Its journal, *Études Tsiganes* (ÉT), which was originally published three or four times a year, was an essential part of this project, since it enabled the Association to build up its own corpus of the research undertaken by partners and contributors, and at the same time to systematically locate, analyse, and filter everything published and said about the Tsiganes.

The work of this first generation of post-war *tsiganologues* was divided between the intellectual task of recovering and nurturing the scholarly tradition of the previous century and their commitment, strongly influenced by the contemporary debate on the concept of race, to eradicating legal and social discrimination against the Tsiganes. After the Second World War, UNESCO had issued a statement calling race a “social myth”, and a number of leading social scientists and humanists had also impugned it. During the 1950s, the concept of ethnicity emerged in its place, marking the transition from an essentialist view of human difference based on race to a new

42 Joachim S. HOHMANN, *Handbuch zur Tsiganologie*, Frankfurt/Main, 1996, p. 11; Paul BATAILLARD, *Derniers travaux relatifs aux Bohémiens dans l'Europe orientale*, Paris, Librairie A. Frank, 1872, p. 57.

43 Matéo MAXIMOFF, “Principaux groupes tsiqanes en France, *ÉT*, 1, 1955, pp. 3-6; Pierre JOIN-LAMBERT, “Conférences [Philippe Mironneau], *ÉT*, 1-2, 1966, 76-77.

paradigm based on ethnicity that opened up the possibility of explaining difference by giving primacy (not exclusivity) to social and cultural factors.⁴⁴

This new explanatory model obviously had varying degrees of acceptance within the scientific community itself, ranging from those who continued to support an essentialist explanation of the phenomenon, to those who, even in the 1960s and 1970s, were firmly committed to the study of culture to explain forms of social organization.⁴⁵ Outside strictly anthropological circles, positions also varied between absolute essentialism and acceptance of cultural factors. As Biaudet pointed out, British gypsylorism incorporated both the concept of ethnicity – without abandoning that of race – and a few cultural assumptions, but fundamentally continued to display a “biological racism and latent essentialism” based on a belief in the common origin of all Roma populations.⁴⁶ Thomas Acton went beyond this critique in his studies carried out in the 1970s, and also more recently, and showed that “scientific racism” survived in the GLS long after 1945.⁴⁷

The fact that *Études Tsiganes* was created after the Second World War was advantageous for the Association inasmuch as it was not burdened by a racist scholarly tradition bearing the same name (as was the case with the GLS) nor inevitably subject to the intellectual inertia of the past. Even so, in trying to recover the legacy of the French and British *savants*, *tsiganologie* also adopted some of the ex-

44 John HUTCHINSON and Anthony D. SMITH, *Ethnicity*, Oxford/New York, 1996.

45 Hans VERMEULEN and Cora GOVERS, “From Political Mobilization to the Politics of Consciousness”, in Cora GOVERS and Hans VERMEULEN, eds., *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness*, New York, 1997, pp. 1-30.

46 Marion BIAUDET, “Ethnicité romany et nomadisme au Royaume-Uni depuis 1945. Constructionnisme vs. essentialisme”, *ÉT*, 39-40, 3 2009, pp. 186-197.

47 Thomas A. ACTON, “Scientific racism, popular racism and the discourse of the Gypsy Lore Society”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39, 7 2016, pp. 1187-1204.

oticizing clichés of the previous century and a half. One of these was the emphasis on the Indian origin of the Tsigane populations, a theory supported by its first president, Pierre Meile, who published several linguistic studies in the Association's journal that would be frequently quoted and complemented by the works of other *tsiganologues*, including those of the linguist, Vania De Gila-Kochanowski.⁴⁸ References to the "Tsigane race" were equally common, yet even those who defended the term most vigorously went out of their way to provide lengthy justifications as to how it should be used, indicating their awareness of the seriousness and implications of the expression. Examples of this were the speeches and writings of Philippe Mironneau, who sought to sever the link between the concept of race – valid as a specific category of analysis when applied to anthropological studies such as those of Eugène Pittard, whom he admired (and whose legacy he attempted to bring up to date) – from that of racism, an expression that only described the "doctrine" of the "defence of the supremacy of one race over other races", a clear allusion to Nazi eugenics.⁴⁹

48 Pierre Meile's most influential text was "Observation sur la langue Tsiganes", *ÉT*, 1, 1955, pp. 11-14. For Vania de Gila, see, for example, his lecture at one of the association meetings "Vie de l'Association", *ÉT*, 1-2 (1965), pp. 65-66. Other prominent members of *Études Tsiganes* who published studies along the lines of Meile's were Philippe Lemaire de Marne, research associate at the Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires; Francis Lang, one of the association's most active *tsiganologues*, and Philippe Mironneau, in charge of the *Études Tsigane* documentation centre at the museum. The emphasis on the Indian origin of the Gypsies was one of the core elements of the exoticizing discourse since Grellmann. See MAYALL, *Gypsy Identities 1500-2000*, WILLEMS, *In search of the true Gypsy. From enlightenment to final solution*, London, 1997.

49 Philippe MIRONNEAU, "Le Professeur Eugène Pittard", *ÉT*, 3, 1962, pp. 5-9; Pierre JOIN-LAMBERT, "Conférences", *ÉT*, 1-2 (1966) pp. 76-77. The "whitening" of Eugène Pittard's racial theories was actually an element shared with the GLS, which put considerably more effort into it given that Pittard had been president of the GLS between 1933 and 1936, ACTON, "Scientific racism", pp. 1192-1193.

The move away from biological racism did not prevent some *tsiganologues* from keeping a rather colonialist paradigm of social hierarchy alive. Increasingly supported by sociological studies by both academics and social workers, members of the Association argued that certain features of the Tsiganes – particularly their nomadism – could and should be modified. A case in point was the study “The role of sedentarization in the adaptation of Roma”. Although its author was not a member of the Association, the editors of *Études Tsiganes* considered that its conclusions made this study worthy of devoting a full issue of the journal to it. “Tsigane and nomad are not synonymous”, said the author, which the reviewer enthusiastically highlighted in bold letters in a separate paragraph. The nomadism of the Tsigane “tribes” was the result of their “civilizational backwardness”, typical of a “people” that had not yet left the “infantile” stage and so refused to face the “challenges” that sedentary life posed. Hence, it was imperative to acquire more detailed knowledge of the “psychology” of the Tsiganes in order to help them “mature” and ensure that sedentarization, which was already taking place in some groups, did not lead to “civilizing confrontations” with the “gadje”. To this end, the measures to be taken by “friends” of the Tsiganes included making areas available where they could park and providing education based on the “positive values” of their own culture.⁵⁰ This was probably the most extreme testimony to the paternalism that pervaded *tsiganologie* in the sixties, but the underlying interpretation was shared by a significant number of the *savants* associated with *Études Tsiganes*. Shortly after this text was published, Join-Lambert reported on a census carried out by *Études Tsiganes* among “groups of nomadic origins” as a result of which he concluded that “the vast majority of Tsiganes are sedentary”.⁵¹

50 “Le rôle de la sédentarisation dans l’adaptation des Tsiganes”, *ÉT*, I, 1961, pp. 1-30.

51 Pierre JOIN-LAMBERT, “Indications Statistiques”, *ÉT*, I-2, 1962, p. 34.

The success of the process of sedentarization of the Tsiganes would depend, however, on them being able to live alongside non-Tsiganes in peace and harmony. The Association spared no effort in confronting accusations that criminalized Tsigane communities by branding them as “violent” and “thieving”. In response to such complaints, *tsiganologues*, such as Jacqueline Landousy-Charlemagne and the Tsigane lawyer, Jovan Jovanovic, used their expert knowledge to argue that the only possible source of confrontation derived from the civilizational backwardness of the Tsigane communities, not from any innate wickedness, and for that very reason, both the public authorities and private organizations should join forces to educate first and “integrate” later.⁵² The CNIN stepped in to take charge of this mission. In November 1965, all the nomadic families who had settled on some waste ground in Noisy-le-Grand (Paris) were expelled because of an offence committed by a single individual. The CNIN reacted strongly against the injustice that this represented and invited the public authorities to act, offering the following reflection:

It will only be possible to avoid tragedies such as the one in Noisy if all French people – and the state and the public authorities that represent them – understand that people of sedentary and nomadic origin come from two different types of civilization; that the latter cannot be blamed for behaviour that is peculiar to them and that the help they need to integrate into French society should be defined in accordance with that behaviour. This need is all the more compelling since the vast majority of people of nomadic origin are French people who can

52 Jovan JOVANOVIĆ, “La criminalité des Tsiganes: griefs et réalité”, *ÉT*, 4, 1967, pp. 12-15. See also the conclusions of the conference organized between Études Tsiganes and la Société internationale de criminologie in Jacqueline LANDOUSY-CHARLEMAGNE, “Colloque sur la criminalité des Tsiganes”, *ÉT*, 1-2, 1969, pp. 17-21; and “Un article inadmissible”, *ÉT*, 4, 1964, pp. 21-22.

legitimately lay claim to the same understanding as foreigners, for whom particularly effective institutions have quite rightly been established.⁵³

This quotation picked up what became the core of the argument of both the *Études Tsiganes* and the CNIN for decades and would eventually be employed also by some French Tsiganes in the 1970s, namely, that in order to defend the rights of the Tsiganes, it was essential to appeal to their membership of the national community and to use that as a springboard from which to claim that they should be assisted, as French citizens, in their process of “evolution” (another recurring expression in the CNIN and *Études Tsiganes*); in other words, to help them acquire the habits and customs of advanced civilization, the majority. It was a sad irony that the argument put forward should be to the detriment of other immigrant groups that were the beneficiaries of institutional “care and concern”, just at the time when rates of racist aggression against immigrants from the former French colonies were higher than at any time in the century.⁵⁴ In any case, the French nationality of the Tsiganes

53 “Il ne sera possible d’éviter des drames comme celui de Noisy que si tous les Français – et l’État et les collectivités publiques qui les incarnent – comprennent bien que les personnes d’origine sédentaire et personnes d’origine nomade relèvent de deux types différents de civilisation, que l’on ne saurait faire grief à ces dernières d’un comportement particulier et que l’aide dont elles ont besoin pour s’intégrer dans la société française doit être définie en fonction de ce comportement. Cette nécessité est d’autant plus impérieuse que les personnes d’origine nomade sont, dans une grande majorité, des Français qui peuvent légitimement prétendre à la même compréhension que les étrangers pour lesquels de institutions particulièrement efficaces ont été à bon droit établies.” “Chronique du CNIN. Réflexion sur une expulsion”, *ÉT*, 4, 1965, p. 27.

54 Neil MACMASTER, *Colonial Migrants and Racism: Algerians in France, 1900-1962*, London, 1997, pp. 250-252. Gérard NOIRIEL, *Immigration, antisémitisme et racisme en France*, Paris, 2007, p. 518. The Tsiganes and Algerians were frequently compared, and while their shared lot was often highlighted on account of the deprivation of their “bidonvilles” (shanty towns), it was also noted that the Tsiganes were jealous of the Algerians because the social

was a key strategy in the strong defence made by the *tsiganologues* in favour of the abolition of anthropometric cards, the extension and formalization of parking areas, and inclusion of the Tsiganes in the French educational system.

These demands by the CNIN and Études Tsiganes became rights once the Law of 3 January 1969 was passed. This law replaced anthropometric cards with “circulation documents” for French people without a fixed domicile or residence. Although this represented an obvious relaxation of norms in comparison with the 1912 law, the new measure also kept the “Gens du voyage” (itinerant people) outside the scope of common law and allowed the state to continue to control their movements. Moreover, as Ilsen About pointed out, this control was carried out with the explicit objective of “fostering integration into society or sedentarization, which more and more Gypsies long for nowadays”. To this effect, every person “in circulation” was obliged to be attached to a particular commune (a “commune de rattachement”).⁵⁵ Despite these ambiguities, the passing of the law was celebrated by the *tsiganologues*, who were quick to point out that this legislative change would not have been possible without the 1948 Commission chaired by Join-Lambert, the better understanding of the “psychology of the Tsigane” that Études Tsiganes had fostered, and the efforts of the CNIN to mediate between the Tsiganes and the public authorities. Both associations had played an essential role in “attracting the attention” of parliamentarians to the necessary repeal of the anthropometric card, as stated in the reports of the senate, and as Join-Lambert himself reported in his chronicle for the

welfare organizations allegedly showed more concern for them. See, for example, “Bref séjour chez des Yéniches et des manouches sédentarisés”, *ÉT*, 4, 1965, p. 7.

⁵⁵ ABOUT, “Underclass gypsies”, 113.

Association’s journal.⁵⁶ For the *tsiganologues*, the suppression in 1968 of the inter-ministerial commission — whose “mission” was considered to have been accomplished with the ratification of the law — “increased the responsibilities” of the two associations of *tsiganologues* in the scientific and social field.⁵⁷ By the turn of the new decade, Études Tsiganes had established itself in France as the most powerful group on the “Tsigane question” in terms of intellectual production and political projection. Its prestige, however, was not exempt from criticism and scepticism.

III

In March 1970, *Droit et liberté (Rights and Freedom)*, the journal of the Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l’amitié entre les peuples (Movement against racism and for friendship between peoples) (MRAP), published an article entitled “Les Gitans, ces parias” (Those pariahs, the Gypsies). Its author, Leuléa Rouda, who signed it as *Secrétaire Général du Comité International Tzigane* (General Secretary of the International Tsigane Committee) (CIT), attacked the 1969 law, saying that its provisions were “unfortunately, far from meeting the expectations of the Tziganes”, which was a reference to the efforts that organizations such as MRAP and CIT had been making since 1949 and 1967 respectively to combat “legal discrimination” and “humiliations” towards the Tziganes. According to Leuléa Rouda, the measures of the 1969 law did not go far enough, and, in addi-

56 Pierre JOIN-LAMBERT, “Vote du Project de loi relatif à l’exercice des activités ambulantes et au régime applicable aux personnes circulant en France sans domicile ni résidence fixe”, *ÉT*, 4, 1968, pp. 27-38.

57 “Vie de l’Association. 8 Mars 1969: Assemblée générale de 1968 et séance d’information” *ÉT*, 1-2, 1969, p. 35.

tion, the government was “manoeuvring to delay their implementation” (statements that seemed to be somewhat inconsistent with each other).⁵⁸

The next issue of *Droit et liberté* published Join-Lambert’s response and Leuléa Rouda’s reply to the latter. The former, who was visibly offended, attributed Rouda’s comments to his ignorance of the work undertaken since the end of the war by the inter-ministerial commission that he chaired, as well as of Études Tsiganes, the CNIN and remarkable individuals such as Father Fleury. Join-Lambert also accused Rouda of errors in his interpretation of certain points of the law, but condescendingly allowed that certain aspects of it needed to be made more specific or developed further, and ended by stressing the importance of public opinion adopting a positive attitude in support of the legislative changes.⁵⁹ In his response, Leuléa Rouda chose to cast doubt on the determination of French politicians to tackle the problems of the Tsiganes, and to contrast their inefficiency in the matter with the way the British government had not only passed the Caravan Sites Act of 1968, but had shown itself to be a paragon of “true dialogue with the Gitanes”.⁶⁰ The limits of the arguments of each of them were evident, both in the legislative advances that Rouda kept quiet about and in the deficiencies of the 1969 law that Join-Lambert did not want to go into. Beyond that, the dialectical dispute was a symptom of the difference of interests and approach between the Romani movement – one of

58 Leuléa ROUDA, “Les Gitans, ces parias”, *Droit et Liberté*, 290, March 1970, p. 9.

59 Pierre JOIN-LAMBERT, “Les Gitans sont-ils des parias?”, *Droit et Liberté*, 294, July-August 1970, p. 12.

60 Leuléa ROUDA, “M. Leuléa Rouda: La responsabilité du gouvernement est entière”, *Droit et Liberté*, 294, July-August 1970, p. 13. For relations between the British government and the British Gypsy Council, see Carolina GARCÍA SANZ, “Gypsy Eroding Liberty is Gorgio Eroding Liberty’: Making Europe more Equal from The Anglo-Saxon Romani Rights Movement”, *European History Quarterly*, 55, 4/2022, in press.

whose most prominent figures was Leuléa Rouda – and *tsiganologie* as the expert knowledge and buttress of the French establishment, whose best-known representative until then had been Join-Lambert.

The discord, however, went back a long way. *Études Tsiganes* had been closely following the activities of Ionel Rotaru since 1959, the year when Rotaru, a Romanian refugee, was crowned “The Supreme Chief of Tsiganes” under the name of Vaida Voevod III.⁶¹ The expectation generated by the public life of Rotaru seemed to trouble the *tsiganologues*, who initially tried to downplay his importance by saying, “Rotaru is one of the many Tsigane sovereigns with whom the French Republican press often entertains its readers”.⁶² Vaida Voevod III was certainly not the only active Tsigane “king” or “chief” at the time, but he was the first since World War II who had set out to lead a transnational ethnic organization to represent the Tsiganes before national governments and the United Nations. His demands and complaints covered a wide spectrum, ranging from those aimed at the French context (abolition of the 1912 law and more parking areas for the Tsiganes) to others that were much more ambitious, such as those submitted to Germany to obtain compensation for survivors of the Holocaust, the issue of special passports for the free international mobility of the Tsiganes, and the creation of a state of their own, Romanestan. To this end, in 1962, Rotaru officially registered an association, of which he was the leader, the Communauté Mondiale Gitane (World Gypsy Community) (CMG), whose organ of dissemination was the journal *La Voix Mondiale Tzigane* (*World*

61 The first news of Rotaru’s history in “La vie littéraire et artistique” and “Sujets Divers”, *ÉT*, 2-3, 1959, pp. 8-9 and 12.

62 “Rotaru est un de ces nombreux souverains tsiganes dont la presse de la France républicaine entretient souvent ses lecteurs.” The quote in “La presse - Juillet 1959 – Juillet 1969. Notes de lecture”, *ÉT*, 2, 1960, p. 18.

Tsigane Voice), active between 1962 and 1968, and edited by Vanko Rouda (Leuléa Rouda's brother).⁶³

Études Tsiganes, which had created the CNIN in 1961 in order to establish itself as an instrument for social action and thus cover all angles of the “Gypsy question” (scholarly research and its dissemination, plus welfare work and political mediation), was unable to hide its concern, especially when the aims of the CMG began to be realized not only in physical form (the schools for Tsiganes in Montreuil for example), but also in the increasingly well-organized criticism of the paternalism of associations like Études Tsiganes that spoke on behalf of all Tsiganes, “say[ing] they were taking care of our evolution”, as Anton Santiago claimed reproachfully.⁶⁴ At the same time as the French Ministry of the Interior was closely monitoring Rotaru's “suspicious” activities, the *savants* of *tsiganologie* decided to use this to discredit him publicly.⁶⁵ The idea of Romanestan became the target of their attacks:

He [Rotaru] has announced his intention to take steps towards the creation of a state, Romanestan, and to bring the matter to the attention of the United Nations. This announcement has caused considerable disquiet among many Tsiganes: [those who are] French want to remain French; [those who are] foreigners or stateless want to become

63 The history of the “Romani Chiefs” and Rotaru in LIEGEOIS, *Mutation Tsigane*; Ilona KLÍMOVÁ-ALEXANDER, “Development and Institutionalization of Romani Representation and Administration. Part 3a: From National Organizations to International Umbrellas (1945-1970) – Romani Mobilization at the National Level”, *Nationalities Papers* 34, 5 2006, pp. 599-621; SIERRA, “Creating Romanestan”.

64 The quote in Anton SANTIAGO, *La Voix Mondiale Tzigane*, 20, 1965, p. 15. In the same vein, Juan FERNÁNDEZ, *La Voix Mondiale Tzigane*, 29, 1968, p. 12. In its journal, Études Tsiganes promptly reported all the criticisms made of them by *La Voix Mondiale Tzigane* or the leaders of the WCL.

65 The monitoring of Rotaru by the French intelligence services in SIERRA “Creating Romanestan”, pp. 275-276.

French; they fear they will be forced to leave our country. This disquiet has resulted in protests by Gitan groups and a press release to the Catholic National Chaplaincy press. It seems that in view of the concern and protests, steps for the creation of Romanestan are being postponed ... *sine die*.⁶⁶

As a physical proposition, the Romanestan project was certainly impractical: Rotaru himself envisaged several possible sites (from Somalia to Lyon) without any of his plans for a Tsigane state coming to fruition. Nevertheless, as María Sierra pointed out, the value of Romanestan, like the passports enabling Tsiganes to cross borders freely, lay not in its practical implementation, but in its symbolic potential. The idea of a common state where all persecuted Tsiganes could take refuge from the abuses they suffered served as an umbrella identity that would help strengthen the ties of a transnational ethnic community.⁶⁷ The *tsiganologues*, however, were unable to see this, blinded as they were by their discomfort when they saw the way that the universalist and ethnic demands of Rotaru's CMG not only embarrassed the French government at the UN, but also, and above all, attacked the two pillars on which their own authority had rested since 1949: firstly, the expert definition of the “Tsigane” concept that they had been developing, which was based largely on an inherited colonial tradition and barely took the experience of the subjects in

66 “Il [Rotaru] a annoncé son intention d'entreprendre des démarches pour la création d'un État, le Romanestan, et de saisir à cet effet les Nations Unies. Cette annonce a suscité une grande émotion chez nombre de tsiganes : français, ils veulent le demeurer ; étrangers ou apatrides, ils veulent devenir français ; ils redoutent d'être obligés de quitter notre pays. Cette émotion s'est traduite par une protestation de groupes gitans et un communiqué à la presse de l'Aumônerie nationale catholique. Il semble que devant émotion et ces protestations, les démarches pour la création du Romanestan soient renvoyées aux calendes... grecques.” “Nouvelles diverses”, *ÉT*, 3-4, 1961, p. 32.

67 SIERRA, “Creating Romanestan”, pp. 280-287.

question into account, and secondly, and mainly, their argument that the Tsiganes should have their rights recognized as French citizens. For the *tsiganologues*, national identity guaranteed the Tsiganes admittance to a higher stage of civilization and they could not even begin to imagine that any of them would prefer to renounce nationality in favour of the pipedream of Romanestan.

Hence, the CMG project was perceived as a revolutionary threat, and not only because of the links to communism and spy networks that the French secret services tried, without success, to attribute to Rotaru. It was revolutionary because, as the *savants* and politicians saw it, its aim was to create a new identity and legality *from below* (starting with those involved in it), and therefore “hindered” the reform, supervised *from above* and in the name of the French Tsiganes, that Join-Lambert, together with his circle of *tsiganologues*, was designing:

The activity of the “king” continues to give cause for concern. It is particularly so [concerning], if we consider that there is, in fact, no Tsigane king with true authority, and that the African kingdom is a mirage... This mirage may, however, be of such a kind as to deceive some, and to hinder the solution of the real difficulties encountered by Tsiganes in countries where the vast majority of them, without renouncing their traditions, want to be legal citizens.⁶⁸

Tsigane associationism grew stronger during the sixties. In 1967, a new body emerged from the WCG, the Comité International Tzigane (CIT), led by Vanko Rouda, which would embrace new asso-

68 “L’activité du ‘roi’ ne laisse pas d’être inquiétante. Elle l’est, notamment, si l’on considère qu’il n’y a, en fait, pas de roi Tsigane ayant une véritable autorité, et que le royaume africain est un mirage... Ce mirage peut cependant être de nature à abuser quelques-uns, et à mettre obstacle à la solution des difficultés réelles que rencontrent les Tsiganes dans les pays dont, en très grande majorité et sans abdiquer leurs traditions, ils veulent être les citoyens légaux.” “Informations diverses”, *ÉT*, 1-2, 1967, p. 62.

ciations around the world, some of them with significant mobilizing capacity such as the British Gypsy Council.⁶⁹ This growing success should not lead to the conclusion that its controversies with expert knowledge societies, such as *Études Tsiganes* or the GLS in the United Kingdom, were balanced confrontations. Quite the opposite, the struggle was between unequal forces, although one of those forces brimmed with possibilities for the future, while the other remained anchored in the past. At the beginning of the seventies, therefore, everything changed; after the celebration of the World Romani Congress (WRC) in London in 1971, the impetus of the Romani movement was unquestionable and it could no longer be dismissed, not even discursively. At this point, *Études Tsiganes*'s position began to shift, seeking to adapt to the new times without renouncing its essence as a *territoire savant*. A shift that was consistent with the desire of moving "away from what has been termed an 'ill-defined mish-mash of folklorism (often amateur) and linguistics'" that, according to Mayall, was shared by the generations of Gypsy-lorists of the 1960s and 1970s, who "show a movement towards a more political and sociological orientation, but with the familiar tradition still present".⁷⁰

Études Tsiganes started to distance itself from the GLS at the end of the 1960s (and ceased to report on its journal) and to direct its attention instead to seeking UNESCO recognition as an NGO, which it obtained as early as 1975.⁷¹ At the same time, there was a dramatic increase in the presence of *Tsiganes*, both on the management board and in its activities. The fact that, from the very beginning, the Association had included *Tsiganes* among its membership (such as the linguist, Vania De Gila, and Matéo Maximoff, "the first

69 ACTON, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change*, pp. 155-174.

70 MAYALL, *Gypsy Identities 1500-2000*, p. 26.

71 Henriette DAVID, "Les "Études Tsiganes à l'UNESCO", *ÉT*, 2-3, 1975, pp. 1-2.

Tsigane writer”, an evangelical pastor and a leading figure in the French Tsigane community and the international Romani movement) made it easier to for new Tsiganes to be admitted.⁷² Proof of this was that most of those who came to the Association and held some responsibility in it or in its journal were friends of Maximoff himself.⁷³ One of the results of this was the emergence of an ethnic identity movement from *Études Tsiganes* in the early 1980s that was led by Tsiganes and supported by *tsiganologues*. Their claims for ethnic identity differed from the approach of the Romani movement with its international aspirations in two main ways: first, the new movement would use art and literature as its main instruments, and second, they would claim the term “Tsigane”, rather than the endonym “Romani” (agreed upon at the WRC), as a way of bringing together the dual ethnic and French identity of this group. Thus, they followed the line of argument set out by Maximoff, who had declared as early as 1971 that:

We are Roma, or as they call us, Tsiganes, but 100% French Tsiganes. Our country is France, and we want no other one... We have French nationality, we have the same duties as any sedentary French person. We shed our blood in both world wars to fight the same enemy... A Tsigane nation will be exterminated before it sees the light of day.⁷⁴

⁷² According to the official journal, many “Tsiganes from the Paris region” attended the general assembly of *Études Tsiganes* in 1972. Their attendance, however, did not seem to be enough for the Board of Directors, who called for greater support for the Association from these groups, “Vie de l’Association”, *ÉT*, 2-3, 1972, pp. 12-14.

⁷³ Begoña BARRERA, “‘Nous, les artistes tsiganes’: Intellectual Networks and Cultural Spaces for Ethnic Assertion in France (1949–1989)”, *European History Quarterly*, 55, 4/2022, in press.

⁷⁴ “Nous sommes des Roms, ou comme on nous appelle, des Tsiganes, mais des Tsiganes français à 100 %. Notre pays c’est la France, et nous n’en voulons pas d’un autre... Nous avons la nationalité française, nous avons les mêmes devoirs que n’importe quel Français sédentaire. Nous avons versé notre sang dans les deux guerres mondiales pour combattre le même ennemi... Une nation tsigane sera exterminée avant d’avoir vu le jour.”

In short, whereas the *tsiganologues* had started out by trying to neutralize the earliest manifestations of the Romani movement (the CMG and the CIT), after 1971, Études Tsiganes decided to adopt one of its fundamental principles, namely, that the emancipation of the Tsigane people should be led by those who identified ethnically as such. Nevertheless, in a quite audacious manoeuvre, the *tsiganologues* were also able to turn this change to their advantage by making room for those Tsiganes whose discourse was in line with the Association's in such crucial aspects as French nationality. In any case, the arrival of the Romani movement clearly marked the intellectual course and social action of the *savants* of *tsiganologie* during the sixties and was a determining factor in their transformation at the beginning of the seventies.

IV

It is very likely that that transformation was one of the keys to the survival of Études Tsiganes down to the present day. The fact that Tsiganes joined the Association in the last third of the twentieth century made it easier to enter into dialogue with the transnational Romani movement, or at least with its new theoretical premisses, if not with its leaders. As a result, the new generations of scholars who joined the group of *tsiganologues* from the 1970s onwards opened the door to the epistemological renewal of this circle of experts, taking them further away from the assumptions of colonialism and closer

Matéo Maximoff, "Réflexions sur l'avenir de l'organisation internationale tsigane", *ÉT*, 4, 1971, pp. 10-11.

to Romani Studies, a field in which the journal, *Études Tsiganes*, is currently a reference publication.⁷⁵

Perhaps its status as a reputable publication explains why the history of the Association and its ideas, which should be read and understood as particular products of their time, framed and limited by contemporary notions, have been so little researched. Nevertheless, it is worth doing, because, as this article has tried to show, the first two decades in the life of that Association witnessed the creation of a *territoire savant* whose postulates became the final authority on everything to do with Tsiganes. The community of experts formed around *Études Tsiganes* and the CNIN based its research on the ideas of French scholars, such as Bataillard, Sébillot and Pittard, and took the British Gypsy Lore Society as its model. Nevertheless, these models soon became obsolete in the wake of the scientific controversies on race that accompanied the end of the Second World War, as well as the impact of the new post-colonial world, all of which inevitably brought out a form of social commitment in the *tsiganologues* that was, in some cases, steeped in colonialism, as the early leaders of the Romani movement were quick to point out.

Tsiganologie, like gypsiorism, is one of the precursors of Romani Studies. To deny the history of this expert knowledge does not prevent current research studies from falling into the same errors as in past centuries; on the contrary, it exposes such studies (and those engaged in them) to the dangers of unwittingly reproducing ideas whose origins sometimes cannot be precisely situated, and whose

⁷⁵ The *Études Tsiganes* newsletter continues to be published three times a year. Since 2005, it has been published under the auspices of the Fédération Nationale des Associations Solidaires d'Action avec les Tsiganes et les Gens du Voyage (National Federation of Solidarity Associations for Action with Tsiganes and Travellers), of which the former association is a member. An illustrative example of this renewal is the career of Jean Pierre Liégeois, see a review in the interview "Questions à Jean-Pierre Liégeois", *Études Tsiganes* (nouvelle série), 23/24, 2005, pp. 29-40.

symbolic significance is not well known. In view of this, charting a genealogy of knowledge with a critical eye enables us to refine our own theoretical tools and to be more rigorous in the use of concepts that have been part of the discipline for centuries, but whose meanings are full of historical nuances. Finally, reviewing what were considered objective truths in the past is a pertinent exercise in the societies of today, since it encourages reflection on how many of those truths continue to survive and inform the “common sense” of our majority culture with stereotypes.



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