




Slavery in Southeastern Europe

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INTRODUCTION

There were two areas in Southeastern Europe where slavery was present continuously from the Middle Ages until the nineteenth century: the Ottoman Empire on the one hand, where slavery existed from its foundation in the thirteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century, and on the other hand Wallachia and Moldavia, the two Romanian principalities. These two territories had slaves from their establishment at the beginning and in the middle of the fourteenth century, respectively, until 1856, when the last category of slaves was emancipated. There were significant differences between slavery in the Ottoman Empire and the Romanian principalities, but some common elements relating to the essence of the institution existed as well. Slavery evolved independently in the two spaces even though the political and economic relations between them were close. Between the middle of the sixteenth century and 1877, the Romanian principalities were under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Porte, but their social organization did not change as a result of this dependency.

Slavery in the Ottoman Empire was an extremely complex phenomenon given that very different forms of strong dependency coexisted there—a result of social, political, and legal legacies from the earlier Islamic states, the Turkish world, and the Byzantine Empire along with the social transformations that the

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Ottoman Empire itself and its provinces on three continents had experienced. Many practices in Ottoman society can be viewed as falling into the category of “slavery,” prompting some historians to speak not of “slavery” but instead of “slaveries” in the Ottoman Empire: domestic slaves, agricultural slaves, the *kul* system, eunuchs, *devşirme* (the child tribute), galley slaves, and many other forms of slavery coexisted through the centuries up to and including the age of emancipation. At all times, however, the most numerous were the domestic slaves.¹

In the Romanian principalities—despite the highly varied landscape of the slave population that included dozens of groups differing significantly in terms of their occupations, habitats, ways of life, relations with the authorities and the free population, degrees of integration into the majority society, as well as in terms of their language, ethnic origin, and religion—the legal status of slaves was the same for all, and the countries’ laws were very clear in this respect. Compared to the Ottoman Empire, we can say that there was only one form of slavery in the Romanian principalities. This does not mean, however, that the “Gypsy issue”—as the policy of the Wallachian and Moldavian authorities towards slaves was termed at the time of emancipation—was not a highly complicated one.

In a way, the systems of slavery in the Ottoman Empire and in the Romanian principalities intersected during the decades of the mid-nineteenth century, when the important historical process of abolition occurred in both regions. Here we find common elements as well as differences relating not only to the previous history of slavery but also to the different political and cultural situations in the two regions.

The restriction of slavery in the Ottoman Empire began during the period of reforms known as *Tanzimat* (1839–1876) and continued beyond it, with the last related measures taken by the Young Turks in the early twentieth century. Legal slavery was ultimately ended by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the Turkish Republic. This occurred under considerable pressure from the European powers—especially England—and in the absence of a genuine anti-slavery campaign within Turkey, which explains the difficulties and the sinuous course of the process. External pressure was applied especially with regard to the suppression of slave trading into the Ottoman Empire. The most important events in the process of abolition were the *Firman* of Sultan Mahmud II freeing white slaves (1830), the disestablishment of the Istanbul slave market (1847), the suppression of the slave trade in the Persian Gulf (1847), the prohibition of the Circassian and Georgian slave trade (1854–1855), the prohibition of the black slave trade (1857), and the Anglo-Ottoman convention for the suppression of the slave trade (1880).²

In Wallachia and Moldavia, the abolition of slavery was achieved through a complex legislative process beginning in 1831 and ending in 1856, which successively led to the emancipation of the different categories of slaves. The modernizing current in the two principalities after 1830, with the political class

and Western-educated intellectuals seeking to renew the countries and dissociate them from the Ottoman world, was decisive in this context. Regarding the abolishment of slavery, the Romanian elites acted somewhat synchronously with the countries of Western Europe, whose example they followed. The abolitionist movement and public discussion on enslavement and emancipation during the 1840s and 1850s contributed to the passing of anti-slavery laws.

There was thus a certain temporal overlap between the Romanian principalities and the Ottoman Empire. In both regions, the process of abolishing slavery began in the 1830s, but it proceeded somewhat more resolutely in the Romanian principalities, ending as early as 1856 there while extending until the beginning of the twentieth century in the Ottoman Empire.

This chapter will provide an overview of slavery in Southeastern Europe (especially the Romanian principalities) on the eve of emancipation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Specifically, it will examine the changes to the institution occurring during this period, the nature of slave labor, and the final exit from slavery in the period from 1831 to 1856. While the study of Ottoman slavery in the nineteenth century benefits from a rich bibliography, the history of enslavement in the Romanian principalities during the era of emancipation is a little-known chapter of the global phenomenon of slavery.³

SLAVERY IN THE ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES: BASIC CHARACTERIZATION AND ENTRY INTO SLAVERY

Slavery was present in the Romanian principalities from the fourteenth century, when Wallachia and Moldavia were founded at the beginning and in the middle of the century respectively, until the middle of the nineteenth century, when slavery was abolished as part of a set of social and institutional reforms and slaves were legally emancipated and integrated—at least formally—into the rural and urban population of the country.⁴

Slaves constituted a social class, the lowest tier among the subjugated classes. All aspects of slavery (legal situation, relations between master and slave, slaves' obligations, slave administration, etc.) were regulated by customary law, respectively by legal codes beginning in the seventeenth century. Enslaved individuals lacked personal freedom as did serfs (called *rumâni* in Wallachia and *vecini* in Moldavia), but unlike the latter, slaves did not possess legal personality. The legal situation changed to a certain extent in the early nineteenth century when, under the influence of the Enlightenment, a reconsideration of the status of the slave took place. A slave was now considered a human being when it came to relations with others besides his or her master; in relation to the master, however, the slave remained an object.

In the Romanian principalities, enslaved persons constituted a relatively large population group. The censuses of 1859 in Wallachia and Moldavia recorded approximately 250,000 “emancipated” former slaves, accounting for around seven percent of the total population.⁵

Slaves from the Romanian principalities also stood out in that, from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century, most of them were ethnic Roma—a population originally from India that arrived in the territory of present-day Romania from the Balkan Peninsula beginning in the second half of the fourteenth century. There was by no means complete overlap between slaves and Roma, however, as not all Roma were slaves and not all slaves were Roma.

Until the sixteenth century, there were also Tatar slaves—chronologically the first slaves in the principalities—alongside the Roma slaves. The Tatar slaves were soon far outnumbered by Roma slaves, however, and the word *țigan* (“Gypsy”) thus began to develop into a generic term for *rob* (“slave”) from the seventeenth century onwards. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including during the age of emancipation, the two words were used synonymously. Even in the administrative language of the principalities, *țigan* primarily had a social-juridical meaning as a reference to “slave,” carrying ethnic meaning only secondarily.⁶

Some groups of slaves were actually ethnic Romanians who had willingly or unwillingly acquired the slave status under specific circumstances of social history when it was more advantageous from a financial point of view to be enslaved than to be a serf or corvée peasant. The status these peasants acquired was of course inherited by their descendants. There were also people of other ethnicities who became *țigani*. The relation between ethnicity and social status is a complex problem, but it can safely be said that even under the mentioned conditions, the vast majority of persons referred to as *țigani* (in the sense of “slaves”) were in fact members of the ethnic minority of the Roma.

Slaves held in the Romanian lands can be classified into three categories: princely slaves, called “state slaves” in the nineteenth century; monastery slaves (owned by monasteries and other religious and social establishments, for example, hospitals); and slaves owned by boyars, also known as “private slaves” in the nineteenth century.

The status of enslavement was acquired by birth, but there were other ways of becoming a slave as well, for example, marriage or enslavement to repay debt.

As in previous times, some free individuals joined the group of slaves in the nineteenth century, so that we can speak of entrances into slavery during this period as well. This occurred either by marriage (a free man marrying a slave also became a slave), at least until the cessation of this phenomenon—the last legislative measure in this context is dated 1839—or as part of a tax evasion practice through which, with the help of corrupt Treasury officials, certain boyars and monasteries were able to have peasants working on their estates placed on the list of slaves. These individuals no longer had to pay taxes, since slaves had obligations only to their masters and were exempt from public fiscal duties. Some peasants also preferred to have the status of slave, because of the tax exemption.

By law, nomadic Roma from neighboring countries—the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Empire (specifically the regions of Transylvania and Bukovina),

and the Russian Empire (specifically Bessarabia)—arriving in Wallachia and Moldavia and settling there permanently became slaves of the state. They provided a statement confirming that they willingly accepted this condition. Until the laws of 1843 and 1844 that freed the state slaves, the authorities managing them (the Prison Authority in Wallachia and the Authority for State Slaves in Moldavia) registered a (small) number of foreign Roma joining the category of state slaves every year. They generally moved to the Romanian principalities for economic opportunities.

Most of the foreign persons joining the group of state slaves during this period were so-called “Turkish Gypsies” (*țigani turciți*)—that is, Muslim Roma from the Ottoman Empire who crossed the Danube in several waves after 1800. The largest group among them was the *Spoitori* (tinsmiths), who moved to Wallachia around 1830. Because the Wallachian authorities considered them economically valuable, they were allowed to practice their Muslim faith—an exception to the law generally banning this religion in the country. The *Spoitori* practiced their craft itinerantly, meaning they moved from village to village and were therefore considered “nomads.”

At the same time, there were exits from slavery, meaning that individual slaves or enslaved families became free through manumission or ransom. The emancipation laws of 1843–1856 along with several other measures taken by the Wallachian and Moldavian authorities eventually freed specific categories of slaves altogether.

It should also not be overlooked that in the first half of the nineteenth century, a considerable number of slaves from the Romanian principalities migrated to other countries. They left the principalities’ territories due to travel restrictions and/or because they refused to accept the condition of corvée peasantry offered by the emancipation laws.

CHANGES IN THE INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY FROM THE MID-EIGHTEENTH TO THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURIES: POLICIES REGARDING SLAVES

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there were several changes to the institution of slavery in the Romanian principalities. The status of slaves had originally been regulated entirely by custom, but the seventeenth century had seen the passing of several collections of laws detailing the status. Beginning in the eighteenth century, a number of changes to the institution of slavery were introduced—initially for fiscal reasons, and then under the influence of the Enlightenment towards the late 1700s. These changes concerned marriage by slaves (several regulations between the mid-eighteenth and the mid-nineteenth century) and the slave status itself (early nineteenth century).⁷

The first regulations affecting the lives of *țigani* concerned the area of slave marriage. Matrimony between slaves was strictly regulated. In Moldavia, the

“Settlement of the Country of Moldavia” issued by Prince Constantin Mavroordat in 1743 forbade the separation of marriages between slaves belonging to different masters. For such situations, compensatory exchanges between the owners respectively the sale and purchase of affected slaves at a price established by a judge were stipulated. In 1766, the separation of children and their severance from their parents were forbidden (charter by Prince Grigore Ghica). These regulations, along with several others, were included in the *Sobornicescul hrisov* (Ecumenical Charter) of 1785, the law that governed marriage between slaves in Moldavia until the abolition of slavery. Similar legislation existed in Wallachia.

The most numerous and complicated regulations—and the ones subject to the most political back and forth depending on the interests of the political class and the resistance of the slaveholders—concerned marriages between a free husband and a slave. Legislation efforts in this area were complex and tedious, but a significant change was eventually made to the custom previously applied for centuries.

In Moldavia, the aforementioned 1743 “Settlement” by Constantin Mavroordat established that Moldavian men and women who married a slave could no longer be turned into slaves themselves. Instead, they continued to maintain their pre-marital status while their wife or husband remained a slave. Children born to such couples were considered free as well. This represented a reversal of the customary rule stating that a free husband marrying a slave assumed his wife’s social status, as did any children born from the union. However, the lawmakers backed down under pressure from the protesting slaveholders, and the new law was amended several times. The *Sobornicescul hrisov* of 1785 completely prohibited marriages between free and enslaved persons and declared such marriages invalid; children born into them were considered *țigani*. This effectively meant a return to the “old custom” and an abrogation of the previous reform. These provisions remained in force until 1844, when Article 15 Section Z of the *Sobornicescul hrisov* referring to marriages between slaves and free individuals was amended: It was now forbidden to dissolve a marriage between a slave and a free person. In such cases, the respective slave became free and was obligated to redeem himself or herself, paying the master for his or her personal freedom. Slaves unable to pay the required amount were to be lent money from the Church’s charity fund. Children resulting from such marriages were automatically free. The ban on new marriages between Moldavians and slaves was thus maintained, but existing marriages were not dissolved. An initial amendment to the *Sobornicescul hrisov* had been made in 1839, abolishing the proscription against *țigani* who had been freed by their masters marrying Romanians.

In Wallachia, too, in the middle of the eighteenth century, the custom that made it possible to enslave Romanians was abolished. While Romanians falling into the legal category of *țigani* by evading the law or through abuse by certain authorities remained a relatively common phenomenon in Moldavia during the nineteenth century, there were only a few such cases in Wallachia.

The most important novelty in the legislation on slavery was the partial modification of the slave status enacted in the *Codul Calimach* (Calimach Code), which entered into force in Moldavia in 1817. In this collection of laws—considered the most modern legislation in the Romanian principalities up to that time and exhibiting influences of the Enlightenment and natural law—slaves are acknowledged as persons with regard to their relations to others besides their master: While a slave remained an object in relation to his or her master, he or she obtained the status and rights of a person vis-à-vis others.

This new view of slaves, which was also adopted by Wallachia, governed the legislation regarding *țigani* in the Romanian principalities during the age of emancipation. This is important because, once possessing the status of a person, a slave was under the protection of law—meaning slaves could defend their rights in court against anyone other than their owner and were allowed to conclude contracts, make statements, do business, buy and sell property, and so on.

The Organic Regulations, a kind of constitution adopted in two versions by the Extraordinary Public Assemblies of the two principalities in 1831 during their occupation by the Russian military, entered into force on July 1, 1831, in Wallachia and on January 1, 1832, in Moldavia.⁸ They did not alter the status of slaves in any way, instead prolonging the institution of slavery as regulated by the laws of the two countries. While the documents included several provisions regarding state slaves, they did not deal with slaves owned by monasteries and boyars, where the state could not interfere.

In the age of the Organic Regulations, the authorities intervened in master-slave relations in unprecedented fashion. Although the assemblies had not dared to legislate with regard to monastery slaves and privately owned slaves in the initial law document, they eventually issued rules concerning these two categories as well.

The Organic Regulations paved the way for the social and institutional modernization of the Romanian principalities. Beginning in 1831, despite being ruled by a conservative regime led by the great boyars, the Romanian society evolved in the direction of Western modernization, breaking many ties with the Ottoman world under whose influence it had stood for several centuries. The document determined the fundamental coordinates of the policy towards slaves: regulation of taxation by imposing the same taxes on slaves as on free people, indicating a policy of gradually bringing slaves closer to the status of free persons, and sedentarization of *țigani* who still led a nomadic life, tying them to agricultural occupation and betokening the intention to integrate them into Romanian society.

The Regulations were immediately followed by two further documents adopted by the Extraordinary Public Assemblies in 1831: the *Regulation for the Improvement of the Conditions of State Gypsies* in Wallachia and the *Regulation for the Settlement of Gypsies* in Moldavia. They expressed the respective authorities' view of the "Gypsy problem." The Wallachian act was published

independently while the Moldavian one became an annex to the principality's Organic Regulation. In a way, these two documents represent the political program with regard to slaves pursued by the regime of the Organic Regulations in the early 1830s.

The key goal was the sedentarization of slaves of Romani origin. Cornerstones of this settlement policy included the abolishment of nomadism by settling the *țigani* in villages and houses and accustoming them to work the land. Appropriate paths of action were envisaged for each slave category, since the sedentarization policy was not limited to state slaves: The regulations called on monasteries and boyars to take similar measures with regard to the nomadic *țigani* under their possession. The intention of the authorities was to turn slaves into taxpayers and transfer them to an occupational status similar to that of the vast majority of the population. At that point, there was no doubt about the imminent abolition of slavery.

The greatest concern, the most intense legislative and administrative efforts, and the largest share of employed resources related to the sedentarization of "Gypsies" still pursuing a way of life that the Organic Regulations and the authorities referred to as "vagrancy." The permanent settling of nomadic groups was the most important social transformation experienced by the *țigani* during the age of emancipation.

Mobility meant frequent movement from one place to another in order to perform the economic activity that ensured their existence. This itinerancy was actually a type of economy in itself—hence the labeling of these people as "nomads" beginning around 1830 even though they were far from the profile of proper nomads. Very few *țigani* were nomads in today's sense of the word; one such group in 1830s Wallachia was the *Netoți*.

The policy of settling "nomadic" slaves was pursued with considerable consistency by the Wallachian and Moldavian authorities, as evidenced by a series of regulations, laws, decrees, and orders aimed at restricting the movement of *țigani* and encouraging their settlement on estates. Legislation as well as various administrative, economic, police, and other measures aimed at preventing nomadism and settling the still nomadic "Gypsies" were enacted. Such measures included accustoming them to agricultural work, "civilizing" them, and so forth.

Obviously, from the very beginning, the elimination of nomadism and promotion of permanent settlement was not conceived as being strictly related to a specific type of habitat; instead, they related to the country's (respectively individual villages') economic needs. At the same time, the authorities linked the issue of sedentarization to the topic of integrating the *țigani* into Romanian rural society. The corresponding legislation explicitly addressed this aspect as well, and ethnic assimilation of Roma was also discussed.

In fact, during the entire age of emancipation, the policy of sedentarization was a mix of measures designed to encourage estate owners to settle slaves on their estates and use them in agriculture, along with constraints placed on the mobility of *țigani*.

There were numerous obstacles to the sedentarization efforts, including the establishment of large settlements of people with the same craft, preventing them from finding enough customers in the vicinity. It was often said at the time that sedentarization killed the “Gypsy” crafts.

The laws for settling the nomadic *țigani*, as well the six laws regarding the actual abolishment of slavery passed between 1843 and 1856, effectively offered slaves only a single alternative: to assume the status of corvée peasant. However, the uncertain status of corvée peasants, who were at risk of exploitation and essentially at the mercy of the owner of the estate they worked on, did nothing to stimulate the now emancipated slaves to respond to the authorities’ requests. The governmental programs aimed at the sedentarization of *țigani* in the 1830s and 1840s were seriously hampered by the corvée system, since some itinerant “Gypsies” refused to settle in villages, fearing they might become corvée peasants.

Nevertheless, most *țigani* with itinerant occupations did settle in villages and houses as a result of the sedentarization measures. While around half of the approximately 200,000 slaves in the Romanian principalities had been living a “nomadic” life around 1830, by 1900 there remained only around 30,000 nomadic and semi-nomadic “Gypsies.” However, some of them settled only during the era of the Organic Regulations and returned to their former itinerancy later.

CHANGES IN SLAVE LABOR: EXTRACTION OF LABOR IN THE FINAL PERIOD OF SLAVERY

For centuries, slaves in the Romanian principalities had a distinct economic specificity engendered by their occupations as well as by the fact that many of them worked itinerantly. They traveled from village to village with their goods and crafts, stopping for a few days in each location to sell wares and fill the orders of the locals.⁹

This characteristic of the slave economy in the Romanian countries was the result of a large influx of Roma with their nomadic way of life into the slave category during the Middle Ages. The occupations and territorial mobility practiced by slaves of Roma origin responded to the needs of the Romanian villages until the first half of the nineteenth century when, in a new demographic and economic context, a “sedentarization” of some of the crafts practiced by this group occurred.

During the period of emancipation from the 1830s to the 1850s, and especially in its early years, there was a large number of enslaved or emancipated *țigani* practicing crafts. Itinerant Roma essentially monopolized certain crafts in the rural areas of Wallachia and Moldavia. Regardless of whether they were state, monastery, or boyar slaves, there were many craftsmen among the *țigani*: ironsmiths, blacksmiths, coppersmiths, tinsmiths, etc. These professions, which were regularly practiced itinerantly, were important for the rural economy.

However, the number of people practicing trades in this fashion declined in the decades in question not only due to overall developments in the economy and competition from industrial goods but also owing to the rigid sedentarization policy, which did not take the specificity of different Roma groups into account. People who had formerly earned a living by practicing a craft were forced to engage in agriculture, which they were not good at and had no interest in. The result was that many of them gave up their crafts in part or entirely and turned to other activities.

The occupational structure of the (former) slave population thus changed significantly during the age of emancipation. Some older professions shrunk or disappeared completely: *Aurari* (gold washers), for example, who collected gold from river sand, gradually vanished in the first decades of the nineteenth century due to the depletion of gold resources.

One category that was maintained was that of domestic slaves working as servants, cooks, tailors, coachmen, and the like in the houses, mansions, courts, and other localities where their masters resided. Many monasteries also continued to employ slaves in their households. Slave owners tended to reduce their numbers of domestic slaves during the period of emancipation, however, as hiring paid servants often cost less than sustaining slave families. They preferred to use slaves for work on their estates or to collect *dajdia* (taxes) from *țigani* traveling the country plying various trades.

There were also several new occupations in which slaves were used in large numbers in the first half of the nineteenth century. They included brick production, labor on construction sites as unskilled workers, logging work in forests, and seasonal labor on large estates. In particular, many slaves were employed in public construction works like roads, churches, schools, and other public buildings.

But the most significant transformation that took place in the slave economy was the involvement of a massive number of *țigani* in agricultural activities. This was primarily due to the mass settlements during the 1830s–1850s resulting from the consistent enforcement of sedentarization policies for three decades. Itinerant slaves were settled—sometimes by force—on estates that needed additional manpower. The aim was not to make the Roma agricultural workers or day laborers, although there were such proposals as well, but rather to transform them into farmers like the *corvée* peasants. In other words, they had to have a small farm with tools, animals, and so on, working the plot of land they received from the estate owner autonomously in the same regime of obligations as the *corvée* peasants and performing all the requisite agricultural work during the entire farming cycle. Following their sedentarization, the slaves thus became *de facto* *corvée* peasants—and the emancipation from slavery that occurred later assigned that status to them *de jure* as well.

This outcome was not achieved everywhere, however, as there was strong resistance from Roma forced to abandon occupations that were often more lucrative than plowing. Many of them stubbornly refused the status of *corvée* peasantry and preferred to do other work, including seasonal agricultural labor

on estates. But even in the 1830s, the vast majority of slaves in the Romanian principalities worked on estates in one form or another, and this percentage would increase further over the following decades.

A precise numerical ratio between different professional categories of slaves is difficult to establish, since no statistics of the *țigani* in the country by profession were kept at the time. In a statistic published in 1849 by Nicolae Suțu, a scholar and politician involved in the government's emancipation project, we find the following numbers for the distribution of the *țigani* population (current and emancipated slaves) by economic branches in Moldavia, listing a total of 12198 families: (1) farmers—6518 families (3018 monastery and private/3500 state); (2) craftsmen and merchants—2603 families (2000 monastery and private/663 state); (3) “employees and other classes”—3017 families (monastery and private).¹⁰ The third category includes *țigani* (slaves or emancipated) working for wages (servants, day laborers, etc.) as well as other groups. Beyond the inaccuracies of this statistic, which underestimates the number of *țigani* and uses several rounded figures, it is to be noted that out of the total of registered persons, 53 percent were farmers, 22 percent were craftsmen and traders, and 25 percent worked for a salary or subsisted by other activities. The share of craftsmen had certainly been higher in 1830, as the subsequent developments had reduced the number of *țigani* practicing itinerant crafts while increasing the number engaged in agriculture.

The exploitation of slave labor in the Romanian principalities featured two components throughout all periods: (1) the tax that slaves paid to their master, which resulted from their subaltern status and (2) the obligations slaves had towards the owner of the estate on which they stayed and earned their living, who could be their own master or another person. Like serfs and corvée peasants, slaves also had to pay for their right to use the agricultural land and live in a village situated on an estate.

In the case of state slaves, the main form of exploitation was the tax they paid to the state, called *bir* respectively *capitația* (capitation, head tax) after the introduction of the Organic Regulations in 1831–1832. Likewise pursuant to the Organic Regulations, state slaves working in guilds within towns paid *patenta* (trade tax), as did the free craftsmen. The capitation amounted to 30 lei, as it did for free individuals, with the exception of the *Aurari* in Wallachia, who paid 50 lei. Ten percent of this sum (3 lei respectively 5 lei) was added on top to cover the expenses incurred in collecting the tax. The *patenta* differed depending on the craft and the situation of the respective guild. The Organic Regulations thus raised the taxes for state slaves to the same level as those for free people, which explains why they protested these new tax obligations. The level of capitation for state slaves was not considered excessive at the time; one leu was the lowest pay for a day's work by an unskilled worker, free or enslaved. But there were nevertheless slave families who could hardly afford to pay the tax.

The monastery and boyar slaves owed nothing to the state; instead, they had obligations to their masters. The individuals in these two categories who

earned their living working in the country paid their owner a sum of money called *dajdia*. Domestic slaves who lived in their master's house, mansion, or court, as well as those who worked in monasteries, hospitals, and the like did not pay this tax, for they were always at the disposal of their master. Their only obligation to the master was their work.

In the period of the Organic Regulations, more and more slave owners—boyars as well as monasteries—were preoccupied with making as much profit as possible from their slaves. They used the *Țigani* on their estates as agricultural workers or craftsmen, in workshops and factories, or they rented them out to other boyars or tenants for use on their estates, respectively to entrepreneurs who needed workers for construction sites. In this way, slave owners were able to make more profit than they could from *dajdia*.

The level of *dajdia* varied greatly from one master to another, whether boyar or monastery. There were situations in which masters demanded very large payments, which were then collected by resorting to violence or the appropriation of their slaves' animals and property. This naturally provoked protests from affected slaves, who appealed to the authorities. In reaction to such protests in Wallachia in 1840, the state intervened and limited the *dajdia* to be paid by monastery slaves to the capitation paid by free people: 30 lei per year, to which the customary collection tithe (3 lei) was added. Future leases had to take this law into account.

The state did not intervene on behalf of the private slaves, however. This may explain why numerous owners abused their power by demanding and collecting excessive *dajdia* from their slaves, especially in the 1850s. Evanghelie Zappa (Greek name: Evangelos Zappas), one of the richest businessmen in Wallachia and owner of almost 500 slaves, collected a *dajdia* of 10 ducats (314 lei) per person from two of them in the 1850s—an exorbitant amount and perhaps the largest *dajdia* paid by a slave at the time. Ten ducats were the usual price at which a slave was traded, as well as the amount for which the state-redeemed slaves put up for sale. The two slaves in question were fiddlers living in Bucharest and certainly earned significant amounts of money with their performances, but they nevertheless found it difficult to pay the demanded sum, as they complained in a petition to the Wallachian Treasury in February 1855.¹¹

As in the case of the *corvée* peasants, the harshest exploitation of slaves was affected by estate owners and tenants. The obligations to the estate owner were regulated by law, with the most important of them being *claca* (*corvée*), a quantity of work that each peasant (and each slave working under a similar regime), had to perform for the estate owner as payment for the right to live in a village on the estate and cultivate a plot of land. On many estates, the *claca* regulations were not observed, with owners forcing their peasants and slaves to work more than 12 days a year in Wallachia respectively 24 days in Moldavia as stipulated by the Organic Regulations.

The most severe situation of this kind seems to have occurred on the Sutești estate in the county of Brăila in Wallachia, which was owned by Costache

Suțu, another major landowner and slaveholder. He did not collect *dajdia* from his slaves but instead used them on his estates, which produced large quantities of grain for export. Suțu and his tenant at Suțești subjected the *țigani* to ruthless exploitation, which came to light after the publication of the emancipation law in February 1856. The investigation revealed the existence of written agreements between the boyar and the slaves by which the latter were in fact deceived. According to these agreements, each slave had to work 153 days for the boyar in 1853 and 1854 and only 80 days in 1855. However, few slaves were able to provide this much work, and most of them thus accumulated arrears, which were converted into money owed. On account of the days not worked in 1853, 1854, and 1855, the slaves had total debts of 7076 lei and 37 para—a very large amount. The situation in Suțești may constitute the worst instance of exploitation of slaves on a private estate in Wallachia during the age of emancipation.¹²

Nevertheless, the exploitation of slaves in the Romanian principalities during the nineteenth century should not be exaggerated. The revenue generated by a slave (whether employed at the boyar's residence or wandering the country) for their master was generally small, and the income produced by slaves working the land on estates was usually lower than that generated by corvée peasants. Slaves were not always profitable from an economic point of view, which was reflected in their generally low selling price.

EXIT FROM SLAVERY: ABOLITION OF SLAVERY IN THE ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES, 1831–1856

In the period from 1831 to 1856, the final and definitive abolition of slavery occurred in the Romanian principalities. It was the result of a long and protracted legislative process and required a huge administrative effort, with around 250,000 people changing their status. The abolitionist movement initiated by Romanian intellectuals who had studied in the West played an important role in preparing the reform: They introduced the issue of abrogating slavery in public discourse, created a current of opinion in favor of abolition—including in some conservative circles, especially after 1848—and directly or indirectly influenced the emancipation-related legislation.¹³

The abolition of slavery in the two countries was a complex process not least because multiple different categories of slaves existed. For this reason, the abolishment was enacted through a series of three laws in each principality, each of which ensured the emancipation of a particular category of *țigani*, between 1843 and 1856: state slaves were freed in Wallachia in 1843 and in Moldavia in 1844; monastery slaves in Moldavia in 1844 and in Wallachia in 1847; and privately owned slaves on 10/22 December 1855 in Moldavia and on 8/20 February 1856 in Wallachia.¹⁴

There was also a further act of liberation in Wallachia in 1848: During the revolution in the principality, the provisional government issued a decree freeing private slaves on 26 June 1848, and a Commission for the Liberation

of Slaves was established to implement it. The defeat of the revolution by the Ottoman army in September 1848 put an end to this transformation, however, and the *țigani* were returned to slavery.¹⁵

The liberation of state slaves was comparatively easy and occurred without any resistance. The state did not lose anything, since the slaves transferred to the category of free people remained taxpayers. Nor did the Orthodox Church oppose the laws for the emancipation of slaves belonging to monasteries. There were only specific requests from some monasteries that demanded (and obtained) compensation without which they could not perform their public services. The elimination of private slaves was more difficult to achieve due to the opposition of slave owners who considered their *țigani* private property. When the abolitionists renounced their radical position demanding that the emancipation of private slaves was to occur without any compensation, as had been the case during the revolution in 1848, and accepted the principle of compensation at market price for the losses suffered by slave owners, a consensus on the complete abolishment of slavery was reached among the ruling class. The notion of the need to liberate slaves was embraced by almost all of Romanian society including slave owners, who acquiesced to the measure under the condition of financial compensation. The laws of 1855 and 1856 provided generous compensations to slave owners, to be paid in stages or in bonds.

The final abolition of slavery was a matter of time in this period, and the right moment came in the context of the Crimean War, when the Romanian principalities and their project of unification into a single nation state came to the attention of Europe. It was no surprise when, in December 1855 and February 1856 respectively and under favorable international circumstances, with the European powers expecting proof of the Romanians' orientation towards the West, the political factors in Iași and Bucharest—that is, the Moldavian and Wallachian rulers and assemblies—decided to completely abolish slavery in the two principalities.

Despite borrowing to some degree from the philanthropic tradition of the Orthodox Church early on in the 1820s, Romanian abolitionism was essentially a phenomenon of acculturation: The model it followed was that of French abolitionism. The emergence of this cultural and ideological phenomenon and the activity of the abolitionists show that the Romanian society was ready for a discussion on the important topic of slavery and that the policies regarding slaves developed in the Romanian principalities after 1831, beginning with the sedentarization of “nomadic” slaves and ending with the final law of emancipation in 1856, were generated in an intellectual and administrative environment open to foreign news and attentive to slavery-related developments in other spaces.

The vast majority of slaves in the Romanian principalities obtained their personal freedom based on the six emancipation laws mentioned above. However, the liberation of individuals and groups from slavery also occurred in both principalities by way of government programs for the redemption of

slaves put up for sale by private owners. In Wallachia, the legal framework for redeeming privately owned slaves was established in Articles 12 and 13 of the *Act for the Correction of the Organization of State Gypsies* (1832), and the first redemptions were performed in 1833. In Moldavia, the mechanism was only introduced in 1844 together with the laws for the emancipation of monastery slaves. In Wallachia, the necessary funds were provided by using part of the capitation tithe collected from the state slaves. In Moldavia, the taxes collected from the monastery slaves emancipated in 1844 were placed in a special fund designated for redemptions.¹⁶

Redemptions under the 1832 Wallachian law were difficult, however. The number of slaves purchased by the state was small, as it was conditioned by the sum in the ransom fund and the number of announced sales. In the years from 1833 to 1845, 989 individuals and 10 families were redeemed, amounting to a total of around 1034 persons if the average family is considered to have 4.5 people. In 1846 and 1847, no redemptions were made. In 1848 (the year of the revolution), 2219 slaves were redeemed, and later around 1000 a year.¹⁷ In Moldavia, too, redemptions were relatively few.

There were also situations in which private individuals redeemed slaves for one reason or another by buying them from the owner and giving them their freedom. Some rural communities redeemed slaves who lived and practiced a craft in the community, respectively *țigani* craftsmen they wished to permanently settle in their village, with money collected from the peasants (“ransomed by the villagers” or “redeemed by the village” in the period documents). Some slaves were able to redeem themselves (“redeemed by himself” or “emancipated by himself”), paying their master the required price and thus obtaining freedom for themselves and their families.¹⁸ The state encouraged such transactions.

Finally, the phenomenon of voluntary manumission by slave owners also existed. Both ransom and manumission meant little in terms of their total numbers, however.

The emancipation laws enacted between 1843 and 1856 along with the several thousand individual liberations by ransom and manumission from 1831 to 1856 transformed the slaves in the Romanian principalities into free people. Their legal emancipation placed them in the social category in the middle of which they already lived, or were intended to live, by the effects of the emancipation law. If not the fundamental laws, then at least the secondary legislation dealt to some extent with the future of the emancipated, but in general, the material aspects of emancipation were left to the owners of estates.

The fates of the former slaves varied: Some became *corvée* peasants and eventually, through the land reform of 1864, small landowners; others settled in villages and continued to practice crafts; some became craftsmen in towns, with a few from this group later asserting themselves as entrepreneurs; a minority returned to itinerancy and earned their living by traveling from village to village plying crafts or mobile trade; others remained entirely in the nomadic lifestyle. In many villages, former slaves unable to adapt to agriculture formed

a new type of poor with marginal occupations. Naturally, not all emancipated *țigani* achieved an improvement of their economic and social status over their previous life as slaves.

CONCLUSION

Slavery in the Romanian principalities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a very complex institution. The dynamics it experienced from the 1830s to the 1850s were related to the economic, social, and other transformations Wallachia and Moldavia underwent at the time, as well as to interventions by the state, which after 1831 constantly sought to restrict slavery and liberate the different categories of slaves from their status in turn. The territorial dynamics of slavery in its final stage of existence determined by the policy of sedentarization were accompanied by an extraordinary professional mobility of this population. The reduction of the share of crafts practiced by “Gypsy” slaves and the transition of many of them to agricultural work meant a major change in the slave economy. There has been an extraordinary economic diversification, with groups, much more numerous, that have lost their crafts and thus have become de-professionalized and impoverished. However, the predominant evolution was in the direction of losing the economic and social specificity and the integration of (former) slaves in the country’s population, this being the goal pursued by the policy of sedentarization, but also by the laws of emancipation.

If in previous centuries slavery in the Romanian principalities evolved somewhat independently of what was happening in the rest of the world, the last stage of the existence of slavery in the Romanian principalities exhibited a certain synchronicity with developments in other slavery systems. The pressure that abolitionists and governments in Wallachia and Moldavia, as in the West, exerted on slavery was likely to highlight the common elements of this global phenomenon.

NOTES

1. On the full spectrum of Ottoman enslavement, see Ehud R. Toledano, “The Concept of Slavery in Ottoman and Other Muslim Societies: Dichotomy or Continuum?” in *Slave Elites in the Middle East and Africa: A Comparative Study*, ed. Miura Toru and John Edward Philips (London: Kegan Paul International, 2000), 159–76.
2. See Michael Ferguson and Ehud R. Toledano, “Ottoman Slavery and Abolition in the Nineteenth-Century,” in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, vol. 4, ed. David Eltis, Stanley L. Engerman, David Richardson and Seymour Drescher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 197–225.
3. On slavery in the Ottoman Empire, see the chapter by Hayri Özkoray in this handbook.

4. On slavery in the Romanian principalities, see in particular Viorel Achim, *The Roma in Romanian History* (Budapest, New York: Central European University Press, 2004), 27–69, 87–127.
5. Venera Achim, “Statistica țiganilor în Principatele Române în perioada 1830–1860,” *Revista Istorică* 16, no. 3–4 (2005): 97–122, here 118.
6. See Achim, *The Roma*, 27–28, 34–35.
7. On changes to the institution of slavery, see Achim, *The Roma*, 39–42, 103–112.
8. The two Organic Regulations have been republished in *Regulamentele Organice ale Valahiei și Moldovei*, vol. 1, *Textele puse în aplicare la 1 Iulie 1831 în Valahia și la 1 Ianuarie 1832 în Moldova*, ed. Paul Negulescu, George Alexianu (Bucharest, 1944).
9. Some information on the slave economy in the Romanian principalities in Achim, *The Roma*, 45–58, 88–93.
10. Nicolas Soutzo, *Notions statistiques sur la Moldavie* (Jassy, 1849), 64–65.
11. Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (hereafter: ANIC), fond Vistieria Țării Românești, dosar 51/1854, f. 263, Nicolae Șerban and Petre Șerban, slaves of Evanghelie Zappa, to the Minister of Finance, February 1855.
12. ANIC, fond Ministerul de Interne—Direcțiunea Rurală-Comunală, dosar 28/1856, f. 89–90.
13. On the process of emancipation from slavery, see Achim, *The Roma*, 95–112; Viorel Achim, “The Gypsies in the Romanian Principalities: The Emancipation Laws, 1831–1856,” *Historical Yearbook* 1 (2004): 109–120.
14. See Achim, *The Roma*, 108–111.
15. Achim, *The Roma*, 109–110.
16. Achim, *The Roma*, 105–106, 108–109.
17. Statistics on redemptions of slaves in Venera Achim, *Țiganii din principatele române în epoca dezrobirii (1830–1860): Aspecte economice și statistice*, PhD dissertation, Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, 2005, 57.
18. Several examples of redemption in Venera Achim, “The Policy of Settling Gypsy Blacksmiths in the Wallachian Villages, 1831–1848,” in *Identity Projects and Processes in the Romanian Space, 19th–20th Centuries*, ed. Viorel Achim (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Academy, Center for Transylvanian Studies, 2010), 37–49.

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