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## Identity Projects and Processes in the Romanian Space, 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

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# The French Influence over Abolitionism in the Romanian Principalities

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*Motto:*

“We appeared in the clamor of new ideas; our parents’ eyes and thoughts were pointed towards the East, our eyes are pointed to the West.” Alecu Russo

“**T**HE ROMANIAN people casts aside the inhumanity and the shame of holding slaves and declares the freedom of Gypsies owned by private individuals. Those who have until now borne the shameful sin of having slaves are forgiven by the Romanian people, and the country, as a good mother, from its treasury shall compensate all who claim to have suffered damages from this Christian deed.”<sup>1</sup> This was the paragraph from the *Proclamation of Islaz* through which Wallachian revolutionaries emphasized the importance of a fundamental reform: the emancipation of Gypsy slaves. The emancipation of Gypsies was the first social reform achieved in the 19th century in the Romanian principalities, which took place in several stages over a quarter of a century (1831–1856).<sup>2</sup> After the release of state-owned slaves (1843 in Wallachia, 1844 in Moldavia) and the monastery slaves (1844 in Moldavia and 1847 in Wallachia) it seemed that in the “European spring” of 1848 the reform could be finalized. The revolutionary government of Wallachia, under the impulse of the legislation regarding the release of slaves in the French colonies, adopted in the same period, also agreed upon the emancipation of the boyars’ slaves. The repression of the revolution led to the abrogation of the revolutionary decree of 26 June 1848, and slavery would still last until December 1855 in Moldavia and February 1856

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in Wallachia. In the present article we plan to study the French influence upon abolitionist thinking in the principalities, making reference to the means of penetration of these ideas: articles from the publications of that period, foreign visitors, direct contacts with the abolitionist movement in the capital of France by way of the Romanian leaders who were studying there, the writings dedicated to the institution of slavery by personalities directly familiar with Romanian realities or the publications of scholars who studied the Gypsies in the Romanian principalities.

In the last quarter of the 18th century, the abolitionist movement saw great achievements in the USA, Great Britain and France. Famous thinkers wrote and stood against slavery, either from Christian perspectives (the Christian sect of the Quakers considered that the importation and purchase of slaves were against the laws of Christian morale) or from illuminist ones, especially with the French,<sup>3</sup> who condemned slavery from a humanist perspective, without bringing solutions for its abolition. Starting with the last two decades of the 18th century, the abolitionist movement focused on the slave trade. The efforts of various cultural and political societies were concretized at the beginning of the 19th century, when step by step, states declared this trade to be illegal: Denmark in 1803, Russia in 1805,<sup>4</sup> in the USA and Great Britain in 1807, and in 1815, during the 100 days, Napoleon abolished it in France, a fact emphasized by Louis XVIII in 1817.<sup>5</sup> The European powers signed common statements against the slave trade, like the one in 1815 between France, Great Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, and they also signed bilateral treaties, introducing harsh punishments against those practicing this trade. The governmental initiatives were stimulated by the *Apostolic Letter* of Pope Gregory XVI dated December 1839, through which slave trade was prohibited.<sup>6</sup> By the second half of the 19th century, slavery had been abolished in most of the Latin American countries (as a result of the national revolutions from the beginning of the 19th century), in the British colonies (in 1838, after a long reform process), in the French colonies (after a slaves' insurrection which resulted in wars of national liberation, such as the one in Santo Domingo, and following the 1848 revolution). But slavery was also present in the Romanian Principalities, in the United States of America (it would be abolished during the Civil War), in Cuba (the abolition of slavery would take place in 1868–1886), in Brazil (1871–1888).<sup>7</sup>

In France, the emancipation of slaves was debated beginning with the Great Revolution, at the end of the 18th century, and the abolition legislation followed a tortuous path. In their writings, Enlightenment thinkers condemned the institution of slavery, but they made no mention of the bondage of black people in the colonies. Voltaire himself had an ambiguous attitude. In *L'esprit des moeurs* he denounced slavery, at the same time stating that the Blacks were inferior.<sup>8</sup> Only during the 1789 Revolution the idea of a gradual emancipation of slaves in the

French colonies appeared, being supported by the members of *Amis des Noirs* Society, presided by Jacques Pierre Brissot,<sup>9</sup> also supported by Honoré de Mirabeau. The Paris society was influenced by *London Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, set up in 1787. The two societies stood for the stoppage of slave trade, as a first step towards the gradual disappearance of slavery. The revolutionary decree for the abolition of slavery in the French colonies from 1794 was revoked in 1802, and in the period of the French consulate and empire the only anti-slavery voice was the one of Superior Henri Grégoire, who in 1808 wrote *De la littérature des negres*. In the third and fourth decades, the French abolitionist movement would coagulate around various societies. The first *Société de la morale chrétienne* was founded in 1821 and included famous political and cultural personalities: duke François Alexandre Frédéric de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, baron Marie Joseph Degérando, Auguste de Staël, Victor de Broglie, Benjamin Constant, Charles de Rémusat, François Guizot, Hippolyte Carnot, Charles de Montalambert, Casimir Périer, Adolphe Thiers, the duke of Orleans, the future king Louis-Philippe. One of the nine committees of the society had as its purpose the abolition of slave trade and the preparation of the slaves for release by way of instruction and ethics.<sup>10</sup> In 1834, the *Société française pour l'abolition de l'esclavage* was founded, and its program condemned slavery as a breach of Christian principles. The slaves' gradual release by means of legislation was intended. The new generation from Paris differed from the anti-slavery British societies because of its elite character and support of a gradual and not immediate liberation of the slaves. Its members came from the *Société de la morale chrétienne*, which was also joined by Odillon Barot, Isaac Crémieux, Lazare Carnot, Alphonse Lamartine, Charles Alexis de Tocqueville etc.<sup>11</sup> In the decade before the revolutions of 1848, the abolitionist movement in the capital of France became radicalized, especially since in 1838 the slaves in the British colonies had been all released. In 1844, the publication *L'Abolitioniste français* appeared, and the parliamentary arena, where the commission led by the Duke of Broglie activated—essentially in support of a gradual emancipation—was abandoned. The French abolitionist movement focused on gaining the public opinion through the media and petitions signed by people of different social backgrounds. It is important that some of the initiators of these petitions are Alphonse de Lamartine, Jules Michelet, Edgar Quinet, and Ledru Rollin. Consequently, on 3 September 1846, a petition against slavery signed by 300 persons, among whom Jules Michelet, François Aragon, was presented in Parliament.<sup>12</sup>

In the decades before the 1848 Revolution, contacts with the French abolitionism intensified, the media in the Romanian space being one of the means of penetration for the slave emancipation ideas. The *Société française pour l'abolition de l'esclavage*, founded in 1834, coordinated the abolitionist movement in Paris. It was an elite group, who did not dare speak to the population, and

preferred a program for preparing slaves in view of their release, advocating measures of slavery amelioration and of gradual emancipation.<sup>13</sup> In the *Gazeta de Transilvania* of 23 March 1842, Lamartine's speech to the abolitionist assembly was presented.<sup>14</sup> He launched a call to the unification of all who wanted the emancipation of the Blacks. The process had to be developed in time: "What do we want? We do not wish to have a revolution, but only to stay away from a revolution. We wish to gradually, slowly, confer human rights to the Blacks. We do not threaten the colonists' work and property. To the slaves we say: do not try to gain freedom, but excise public sense."<sup>15</sup> Also, the *Gazeta* wrote in 1846 about the implementation of the Mackau law in the French colonies, an initiative that turned the state into an intermediary for the relationships between the colonists and the slaves, through the possibility of regulating working hours, marriages, religious education, etc. It was announced that the release of slaves upon payment of compensation had begun in Martinique. The compensation was paid both by the state and by the Blacks.<sup>16</sup> At any rate, after 1844, the French abolitionist movement experienced a revival. The idea of gradual emancipation was abandoned in favor of the slave's immediate release, a fact that would be possible during the 1848 Revolution.

Along with the media, foreign travelers represented a means by which the abolitionist movement in the Principalities was influenced by a double relation: Western travelers would spread information in Europe about the existence of this anachronistic institution, and through their unmediated contact with the leaders in the principalities, they would inform the latter about the evolution of abolitionist ideas. Impressed by the existence of slavery, they wrote about it and presented, according to their individual level and personal position on the matter, different aspects of Gypsy life, in most cases emphasizing its picturesque and exotic character.<sup>17</sup> In prestigious publications from the capital of France and not only, articles about slavery in the Principalities were published, some of them emphasizing the necessity of their emancipation. In 1840, Eduard Thouvenel drew told his contemporaries that "When so many voices rise in favor of the cause of the Blacks, no one thinks about stopping the plague that grows without obstacles in a country only a few days away from France,"<sup>18</sup> and Adolphe Joanne informed in his writings about the emancipation of state and monastic Gypsies, indicating that "in Wallachia, the free Gypsies are prospering and multiplying... It's only boyars who still have slaves and, if I were to believe some confidences made to me, it's going to be no more than a month or two until they are set free."<sup>19</sup> These words were written in 1846, three years after the liberation of state slaves in Wallachia, and it anticipated on the moment of temporary emancipation of boyar-owned slaves during the 1848 revolution.

The specialist literature mentions many translations from French regarding the public spirit in the principalities.<sup>20</sup> Alongside the translations from the roman-

tic literature of those years, worthy of notice is the book written by a representative of liberal Catholicism, Félicité de Lamennais, entitled *Paroles d'un croyant* and originally published in 1848, later translated by Dionisie Romano, bishop of Buzău.<sup>21</sup>

“We appeared in the clamor of new ideas; our parents’ eyes and thoughts were pointed towards the east, our eyes are pointed to the West” said Alecu Russo, who skillfully synthesized the tendency of the new generations to look for solutions to modernize institutional structures in the Western experience. The number of those who studied in the French capital would progressively grow. Among the first beneficiaries of state bursaries, first in Pisa and later in Paris, we find priest Eufrosin Poteca, who replaced Gheorghe Lazăr in teaching geography and wrote philosophy textbooks in Romanian.<sup>22</sup> In his letters to the members of the Bucharest Schools Committee we notice his passion for learning, but also the influence of contemporary ideology upon his ideas. On 15 September 1824 he wrote a long letter stating the need for specific reforms in the principalities: instruction of the clergy, as “priests are the people’s salt and light,” proportional taxes, paid by everyone, and, last but not least, the abolition of slavery—“you really want to be Christians? Release the Christian slaves you hold, because since you are Christians, it is not appropriate that you should have slaves...because we are all one in Jesus Christ our God.”<sup>23</sup> It is important to mention that in the speech held on the Lord’s Resurrection Day, in 1827, Eufrosin Poteca said: “God’s word became a slave, to take all people out of slavery.”<sup>24</sup> A future member of the commission set up in Wallachia, in 1848, for the emancipation of Gypsy slaves, Petrache Poenaru, also knew the French schools after thorough studies in the Viennese educational institutions.<sup>25</sup> Apart from the beneficiaries of state bursaries, the great boyar families sent their sons to study in Paris. Among them there were also the future princes of Wallachia, involved in the slavery abolition legislation, Gheorghe Bibescu and Barbu Știrbei. They were joined by Alexandru Leuș, Nicolae Băleanu, Dimitrache Goleșcu, Costache Filipescu, Jean Vlădoianu and Constantin Brăiloiu. Some of them proved to be sensitive to the anti-slavery measures taken by the French government. Thus, on 10 November 1828, Constantin Brăiloiu wrote to his father about the creation of a commission meant to ransom and secure the release of the Greek slaves in Egypt. This show of generosity from the part of France and of its king gained them the respect of civilized Europe.<sup>26</sup> In his turn, Petre Mavrogheni, one of the supporters of Moldavian emancipation laws, was also studying in the capital of France.<sup>27</sup>

An expert in the French ideological movement was Teodor Diamant, an admirer of utopian socialism, of the projects promoted by Charles Fourier. In the appeal written in Paris, meant to raise funds for a phalanster at Condé sur Vesgres, he referred to the sensitization of French government members, the duke of Broglie, Guizot and de Staël, who “ten years ago set up the Society for the abolition of

Black slaves trade and slavery, or the Christian moral Society.”<sup>28</sup> Upon his return to the principalities, Diamant tried to make his Fourierist ideas known, resorting to the media. He was involved in organising the phalanster at Scăieni, where 27 slaves of boyar Emanoil Bălăceanu were received, and he wrote a memoir to the Administrative Council of the Principality of Moldavia in 1841, in which he presented a solution referring to vagrant Gypsies: the creation of agricultural and industrial colonies.<sup>29</sup> One of the people close to Teodor Diamant, who closely knew Fourier’s doctrine, was Ion Ghica, also present in the capital of France in the late 1830s. He would nostalgically evoke those Paris years, when the friendship between Wallachian and Moldavian students was strengthened in passionate discussions regarding politics in the principalities, especially the action taken by the liberal boyar Ion Câmpineanu.<sup>30</sup> In his turn, Nicolae Kretzulescu remembered the “instructive debates and the considerable interest of the eminent statesmen of that period, famous orators like Cousin, Villemain, Molé, Guizot, Thiers, Odilon Barrot, Lamartine, Broglie, Montalambert.”<sup>31</sup> We should not forget that the first scientific writing dedicated to the problem of the Gypsies in the principalities, written by Mihail Kogălniceanu, was published in French, a fact that allowed it to enjoy a larger circulation in the scientific circles of that time.<sup>32</sup>

As far as Ioan Câmpineanu is concerned—about whom his close collaborator, Felix Colson, wrote that “in a country governed according to the Turkish model, he was the first to rise, both as a member of parliament and as an ordinary man, against the actions taken and the numerous abuses”—the hours spent with his pedagogue Laurencon would exert a lasting influence. In 1831, he participated in the translation of the French commercial code, which was to be introduced in Wallachia.<sup>33</sup> Colson, a secretary at the French consulate, was a lucid observer of Romanian society, to which he dedicated a few studies published in Paris and in which he analyzed the status of the Gypsy slaves and offered solutions: their emancipation by ransom.<sup>34</sup> It was not by accident that Ion Câmpineanu was the first boyar to release his slaves, providing them with freedom certificates, on two conditions: that they did not marry other slaves, so that they would not revert to slavery, and that they would continue to be called “Câmpineanu’s,” so that they would not be caught by executors.<sup>35</sup>

A special role in the training of the future Romanian leaders was held by the French boarding schools in Iași and Bucearest. In the capital of Moldavia, Vasile Alecsandri and later Mihail Kogălniceanu were to attend the boarding school of Victor Cuenim, and in Wallachia a special role in the education of the young generation was to be played by the boarding school of J. A. Vaillant, a philo-Romanian also appointed manager of the boarding school at Sfântul Sava. Vaillant’s involvement in the revolutionary movements prior to 1848 and his writings on Romanian culture and civilization,<sup>36</sup> joined by the objective attempt to under-

stand the institution of slavery, the Gypsies' origin and location in the north-Danube area, turned the French teacher into an enthusiastic advocate of the generous abolitionist ideas. Alongside Dimitrie Filipescu, another graduate of the French schools, he led the revolutionary movement of 1840, and in the *Profesiunea de credință* (Statement of faith) the emancipation of slaves was mentioned as necessary from an economic point of view: "it would be easy to get rid of this social leprosy, allowing the Gypsies to be ransomed. He who feels how much freedom is worth is worthy of it."<sup>37</sup>

The national "youth party," looking for solutions and means of reconstruction and regeneration, was educated in the French capital, amid an increasingly radical debate on slavery. The French abolitionist movement sought to gain public support, through the media and through petitions signed by people from various walks of life. The initiators of these petitions were Alphonse de Lamartine, Jules Michelet, Edgar Quinet, Ledru Rollin, personalities who in those years had numerous contacts with the Romanians grouped around the Society of Romanian Students, set up in the capital of France in 1845. The first contacts between Dimitrie Brătianu, Nicolae Bălcescu, C. A. Rosetti and Paul Bataillard, one of the most prolific researchers of the Gypsies' of the 19th century, also date from this period.<sup>38</sup> Dimitrie Brătianu wrote in the same period to Charles Montalambert, a personality with abolitionist views, and informed him about the emancipation of monastery slaves on 20 March 1847:

*Car j'ai à vous apprendre une nouvelle destinée sans doute à faire la joie de toutes les âmes chrétiennes: l'affranchissement de la majeure partie des bohémiens de la Valachie... de vous transmettre en même temps les pièces relatives à cette émancipation que je viens de recevoir de Bucarest... L'affranchissement des esclaves bohémiens appartenant aux convents vient d'être décrétée législativement. Cette même loi contient les dispositions qui tendent à amener l'affranchissement successif des esclaves appartenant aux particulières.*<sup>39</sup>

In 1847, Nicolae Suțu<sup>40</sup> became a member and chairman of the *Africa Institute*, and one year later Vasile Alecsandri and Mihail Kogălniceanu were received as members of *Société Orientale de France*.<sup>41</sup> We must not forget the involvement of the future revolutionary leaders in the Masonic groups from the capital of France, especially considering that the abolitionist societies in Paris also consisted of members of those groups.<sup>42</sup>

The immediate emancipation of slaves was a desideratum proclaimed in the writings of British (Thomas Clarkson, James Ramsay), American (William Lloyd Garrison, Frederik Douglas), or French (Victor Schoelcher) abolitionists. The latter, in his writings *Abolition de l'esclavage* (1840) and *Des colonies françaises. Abolition immédiate de l'esclavage* (1842), stressed the economic benefits of the

slaves' emancipation and was also involved in the petitionary campaign from France. In August 1847 he managed to gather 11,000 signatures. He wrote that caution "urges us towards abolitionism in order to prevent bloody riots"; he asserted, among other things, that slavery was not profitable, that "a person's ownership of another person is a crime." He gave the example of "barbarian princes," the bey of Tunis, who had outlawed slavery, and of the measures taken by Abdul Medjid, who had closed the slave market of Constantinople.<sup>43</sup> The Romanian students in the capital of France directly knew the abolitionist spirit and were caught in the reformist movement that gradually engulfed countries of different faiths and civilizations. "The social reformation based on the holy principles of righteousness and equality must be the object of all our endeavors," Nicolae Bălcescu asserted in his New Year speech of 1847, in the presence of the Romanian students in Paris.<sup>44</sup> In front of the same assembly Dimitrie Brătianu testified that he believed that "today, in all parts of the world, people are running, searching for one another, communicating, working together on behalf of freedom... when we see the bey of Tunis decreeing the freedom of slaves,"<sup>45</sup> nothing could stop the Romanian nation from acting. As we already know, the principles that were to be written in the revolutionary programs from 1848 in the Romanian Principalities had long been debated in the meetings of the country leaders, in Romania or in Paris. Undoubtedly those things regarding the emancipation of slaves were influenced by events in the capital of France. On 25 February 1848, Ledru Rollin was the first who, within the provisional government, raised the problem of slavery and suggested its immediate abolition. The proposal was supported by Arago, Lamartine, and Louis Blanc. On 4 March, the provisional government proclaimed the abolition of slavery and the creation of a commission chaired by Victor Schoelcher.<sup>46</sup> Its mission was to prepare the slaves' immediate emancipation. In those days, at the head office of the *Romanian Students' Society*, the Romanian Revolution program was being drawn up:

*Immediately after the revolution in Vienna, Bălcescu called a meeting in Paris. All Moldavian-Wallachians, except for the Brătianus, gathered in the evening of 20 March. There, in the first meeting, they decided to set up a movement; then a program was made according to the proclamation subsequently issued, in June.<sup>47</sup>*

Those who "drank the milk of freedom in France," as Alexandru G. Golescu poetically put it, included in the programs of the Romanian revolution the principle of the slaves' emancipation by way of compensation. In the *Proclamation from Islaz* they wrote:

*The Romanian people casts aside the inhumanity and the shame of holding slaves and declares the freedom of Gypsies owned by private individuals... and the country, as a good mother, from its treasury shall compensate all who claim to have suffered damages from this Christian deed.*<sup>48</sup>

It is a certainty that the revolutionaries from the principalities knew the development of revolutionary events in the capitals of Europe. Only a few days after the creation, on behalf of the French government, of the commission for the emancipation of slaves, the *Curierul românesc* of 11 March 1848 announced: “The provisional government of France decrees that no land under French domination is allowed to hold slaves and a commission was appointed in order to draw up as soon as possible an emancipation act for all colonies of the republic.”<sup>49</sup> The Paris commission, after exacting meetings devoted to a multitude of aspects concerning the role of the liberated slaves in the economy of the colonies, the relations between the former slaves and their former masters, the integration of the liberated slaves on the paid work market, their right to education and property etc., decreed on 27 April 1848, that “slavery shall be totally abolished in all French colonies and possessions, two months after the promulgation of the present decree ... All physical punishment and slave trade are forbidden from the promulgation of the decree.” It is also mentioned that in the future, no French citizens, whatever their location, were allowed to buy, sell or directly or indirectly participate in the slave trade. The release was performed by compensating the owners, the national assembly having to regulate the quotas to be awarded to the colonies. The emancipation decree appeared in the same day as 14 other decrees, regulating the economic and social affairs of the colonies, and their relations with the metropolis. In June 1848 they set up the commission for the settlement of slave owners’ compensations.<sup>50</sup>

We mentioned these episodes of slaves’ emancipation by the revolutionary authorities of France in order to emphasize their influence upon the emancipation process in Wallachia. On 22 June 1848, while in Buzău, Nicolae Bălcescu wrote to Al. G. Golescu: “Do not be late in taking out the proclamation for the Gypsies.”<sup>51</sup> Only four days later, the provisional government proclaimed the release of the slaves: “the times of slavery have passed and Gypsies are our brothers today.” From the content of the statement we notice that the Gypsies became free starting with 10 July, in order for “all Gypsies to serve in their masters’ houses, as they have until now.”<sup>52</sup> If in France those who decided to make the emancipation within two months from the passing of the decree had in view the completion of agricultural works in the colonies in that summer, the same reasons drove the revolutionaries in Bucharest, who were thinking about the various works the Gypsies were fulfilling in the boyars’ households. In

both decrees, physical abuse and the inhuman treatment on the slaves were immediately abolished. Moreover, boyars in Wallachia were threatened by the loss of the right to compensation, “if they are not humanly treated.” Like in France, the release was achieved by compensation. In order to apply the decree, the government set up a commission made of Cezar Bolliac, Iosafat Snagoveanu, Petrache Poenaru, P. P. Peret being the secretary.<sup>53</sup> Also, the Porte had been notified about the intention of the “liberal party” to introduce the reforms demanded by the spirit of the century. In the memoir sent to the commissioner of the Sublime Porte, Talaat Effendi, on 5/17 June, the abolition of slavery was mentioned among other reforms.<sup>54</sup>

After the revolution of 1848–1849, with the final release of slaves in the French colonies, in the press of the principalities one would mainly find echoes of the American abolitionist movement, and the main abolitionist activities would move to the capital of Moldavia. The post-revolutionary years also saw the publication of studies dedicated to the problem of Gypsies in the principalities, signed by philo-Romanians like Paul Bataillard, J. A. Vaillant, Elias Regnault, Alfred Possonier, etc. Paul Bataillard, based on information taken from his Wallachian friends, wrote the *Nouvelle recherches sur l'apparition des bohémiens en Europe*,<sup>55</sup> where he proved that the Gypsies were present as slaves in Wallachia and Moldavia even in the 14th century. Vaillant, familiar with the Romanian realities, was the author of the work *Les Rômes. Histoire vraie des vrais bohémiens*, published in 1857, but fragments of it were published as early as 1854 in *L'Illustration*.<sup>56</sup> The author's first meeting with the Gypsy slaves was in the house of a boyar lady from Wallachia, who had sought refuge in Sibiu in 1829 because of the plague and of the Russian troops. During a long journey in the principalities, Vaillant was witness to the cruelties the slaves were subject to, and in his book one can find 18 articles from the Organic Regulation of Moldavia, which regulated the status of state-owned slaves.<sup>57</sup> Inhuman examples, like the sale of slaves by Prince Știrbei,<sup>58</sup> are presented in parallel with the activity of enlightened boyars. If Constantin Suțu created an orchestra of Gypsy slaves that rivaled the professional ones, Ion Câmpineanu was the first boyar who emancipated his slaves.<sup>59</sup> Reference is made to the Moldavian laws emancipation of 1844 and to the temporary emancipation of slaves during the 1848 revolution, in order to emphasize the intensification of abolitionist feelings of the young generation.<sup>60</sup> The teacher of French from Bucharest, Alfred Poissonier, wrote in 1854 a brochure about the status of Gypsy slaves in the principalities.<sup>61</sup> Confident in the spirit of justice of the Romanian people, descended from the Romans, Poissonier stated in the end of his writing that he was in favor of generous, humanitarian, but gradual measures, without generating sudden changes. Such a measure was the state's ransom of the slaves belonging to private individuals, which resulted in the release

of quite an important number of slaves before the emancipation laws of 1855–1856. In his *Histoire politique et sociale des Principautés Danubiennes*, Elias Regnault wrote a special chapter regarding the Gypsies in the principalities. From the diary of Adolphe Billecocq,<sup>62</sup> we know that most information was supplied to Regnault by the former French consul in the principalities, and the source of inspiration for the chapter regarding the slaves was Vaillant himself. After discussing the slaves' status, Regnault wrote:

*Moldavian-Wallachians are asking Europe to recognize their rights. They are undoubtedly right. But in order to deserve their freedom, in their turn they must give it to the people born on the same land... and who have the right to ransom for all the abuses of the masters they served.*<sup>63</sup>

**I**N CONCLUSION we can state that the abolitionist movement in the principalities was influenced, especially in the decades before the 1848 Revolution, by the French abolitionist trend, which reached the Romanian cultural space by different means. Defining for the ideas of emancipation was the direct contact of the Romanian cultural and political leaders, who had been trained in the French educational institutions and met personalities of the French academic and scientific world, establishing connections that would mark their public and private actions. The emancipation programs concerning the slaves in the principalities followed the same route as those in Great Britain and France, so that by 1848 the gradual solutions became dominant, completed with frequent legal and economic provisions. During the 1848 revolution, the revolutionary government in Wallachia was marked by the French experience, its members having come into contact with famous representatives of the abolitionist trend during the studies in Paris.

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## Notes

1. "Proclamația de la Islaz," in *1848 la Români. O istorie în date și mărturii*, ed. Cornelia Bodea, vol. 1 (Bucharest, 1982), 536–537.
2. From the rich literature dedicated to this subject we mention: Mihail Kogălniceanu, *Desrobirea țiganilor, ștergerea privilegiilor boierești, emanciparea țiganilor* (Bucharest, 1891); Octav Gh. Lecca, *Istoria țiganilor* (Caransabeș, 1898), 80–85; Marcel Emerit, "Sur la condition des esclaves dans l'ancienne Roumanie," *Revue Historique de Sud-Est Européen* 7 (1930) 7–9: 129–133; George Potra, *Contribuțiuni la istoricul țiganilor din România* (Bucharest, 1939), 107–121; Viorel Achim, *Țiganii în istoria României* (Bucharest, 1998), 90–98; id., "The Gypsies in the Romanian Principalities: The Emancipation Laws, 1831–1856," *Historical Yearbook* 1 (2004): 109–120; Venera Achim, "Dezrobirea țiganilor – prima reformă socială în Principatele Române în epoca modernă," in *Schimbare și devenire în istoria României*, eds. Ioan Bolovan

- and Sorina Paula Bolovan (Cluj-Napoca, 2008), 241–249; id., “Bonds Issued in 1856–1858 in Moldavia and Wallachia in Compensation to Former Slave Owners,” *Transylvanian Review* 19, 1 (Spring 2010): 121–131.
3. Dale van Kley, ed., *The French Idea of Freedom. The Old regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789* (Stanford University Press, 1994); Daniel Piquet, *L’émancipation des Noirs dans la Révolution française (1789–1795)* (Paris, 2002); Nelly Schmidt, *L’abolition de l’esclavage, cinq siècles de combats (XVI–XX)* (Paris, 2005); Lawrence C. Jennings, *French Anti-Slavery. The Movement for the Abolition of Slavery in France (1802–1848)* (Cambridge, 2000).
  4. See Liubov Kurtznova-D’Herlignan, *The Tsar’s Abolitionists* (Leiden, Boston, 2010).
  5. Nelly Schmidt, *L’abolition de l’esclavage*, 118; Fabienne Federini, *L’abolition de l’esclavage de 1848. Une lecture de Victor Schoelcher* (Paris, 1998), 37.
  6. “Lettre apostolique du pape Grégoire XVI, Roma, 3 décembre 1839,” in Nelly Schmidt, *Abolitionniste de l’esclavage et réformateurs des colonies 1820–1851. Analyse et documents* (Paris, 2000), 816–818.
  7. Emiliano Gil Blanco, “La politique espagnole en matière d’abolition de l’esclavage au XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle,” in *Les abolitions de l’esclavage 1793, 1794, 1848 de L. F. Sonthoux à Victor Scholcher*, Actes du colloque international tenu à l’Université de Paris VIII, les 3, 4, 5 février 1994 (Vincennes, 1995), 332–333.
  8. Piquet, 27.
  9. *Ibid.*, 48.
  10. Jennings, 13–15.
  11. *Ibid.*, 53–54.
  12. *Ibid.*, 239.
  13. *Ibid.*, 53–54.
  14. About Lamartine see also *Icoana Lumii* of 16 and 25 February 1846.
  15. *Gazeta de Transilvania*, 23 March 1842, 45–46.
  16. *Ibid.*, 4 November 1846, 356.
  17. Venera Achim, “Voyageurs étrangers de la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Relations sur les Tzigans des Principautés Roumaines,” in *Vers l’Orient européen: Voyages et images. Pays roumains, Bulgarie, Grèce, Constantinople*, ed. Lidia Cotea (Bucharest, 2009), 179–196.
  18. Eduard Antoine Thouvenel, *La Hongrie et la Valachie (Souvenirs de voyage et notices historiques)*, fragment from *Călători străini despre Țările Române în secolul al XIX-lea*, vol. 3, ed. Daniela Bușă (Bucharest, 2006), 824.
  19. Adolphe Laurent Joanne, see the relation of his travel in *Călători străini*, vol. 5, ed. Daniela Bușă (Bucharest, 2009), 33–34.
  20. Pompiliu Eliade, *Histoire de l’esprit public en Roumanie en dix-neuvième siècles*, vol. 1, *L’occupation turque et les princes indigènes (1821–1828)* (Paris, 1905); id., *La Roumanie au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, vol. 2, *Les trois présidents plénipotentiaires (1828–1834)* (Paris, 1914); id., *Influența franceză asupra spiritului public în România. Originile* (Bucharest, 1982); Nicolae Isar, *Publiciști francezi și cauza română 1834–1859* (Bucharest, 1991); id., *Istoria modernă a românilor. Imaginea societății românești în Franța* (Bucharest, 1992) etc.
  21. Dionisie Romano’s manuscript can be found in the National Library of Romania (NLR), special collections, Kogălniceanu coll., file 540.
  22. Alongside Eufrosin Poteca we find Constantin Moroio, the future jurist, Ioan Pandeli, a gifted mathematician who had a tragic end, and Simion Marcovici. These students went first to Pisa and then to Paris, see Eliade, *Histoire de l’esprit public*, vol. 1, 224–225.
  23. See *ibid.*, 236–237; Ion Bianu, “Întâii bursieri români în străinătate. Scrisori ale lui Eufrosin Poteca 1822–1825,” *Revista Nouă* (Iași) 1, 11 (November 1888): 429. It is remarkable that Eufrosin Poteca heard the courses of French astronomer François Aragon, known for his abolitionists’ ideas. Aragon suggested, during the 1848 French revolution, the creation

- of a special committee for the emancipation of the slaves, headed by Victor Scholcher. See Eliade, *Histoire de l'esprit public*, vol. 1, the footnote on p. 237 and the letter to F. Arago from 8 September 1824, in Bianu, 429–430.
24. Eufrosin Poteca, *Predici și cuvântări*, ed. Veniamin Micle (Mănăstirea Bistrița, 1993), 23. About Poteca's activity in 1846–1851, see also Ion Vârtosu, "Pagini din autobiografia lui Eufrosin Poteca," *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 55 (1937) 7–10: 498–514; Isar, *De la ortodoxie la redeșteptare național: viața și opera lui Eufrosin Poteca 1787–1858* (Bucharest, 2008) etc.
  25. See Eliade, *Histoire de l'esprit public*, 240–243; idem, *La Roumanie au XIXe siècle*, vol. 2, 253–255; N. Georgescu Tistu, *Biografia lui Petru Poenaru*, in Romanian Academy Library (RAL), Petru Poenaru archive, I varia I, manuscript.
  26. Eliade, *Histoire de l'esprit public*, 258.
  27. Victor Slăvescu, "Viața și opera lui Petre Mavrogheni," *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, ser. III, t. XXI (1939), mem. 19, 570.
  28. See Teodor Diamant, "Către prietenii libertății, dreptății și ordinii," in id., *Scrisori economice*, ed. Gr. Mladenatz (Bucharest, 1958), 89.
  29. Ibid., 115–121.
  30. Ion Ghica, "David Urquard," in id., *Scrisori*, ed. P. V. Haneș, vol. 3 (Bucharest, 1944), 113–114; see also Dan Berindei, "Revoluția de la 1848 în Franța și tinerii români aflați la Paris," *Revista Istorică Română* 15 (1945) 2: 175.
  31. Berindei, 176.
  32. Mihail Kogălniceanu, *Esquisse sur l'histoire, les moeurs et la langue des cigans connus en France sous le nom de bohémiens suivie d'un recueil de sept cents mots cigans* (Berlin, 1837).
  33. Alexandru Lapedatu, *Ion Cămpineanu (1798–1863). Cuvântare rostită în Sala Dalles din București la 9 decembrie 1936, în ciclul de conferințe al Universității Libere "Figuri revoluționare din trecutul românesc"* (Bucharest, s.a.), 10.
  34. Felix Colson, *De l'état présent et de l'avenir des Principautés de Moldavie et de Valachie* (Paris, 1839), 149.
  35. Lapedatu, 12.
  36. Isar, *Istoria modernă a românilor*, 87–90.
  37. Dimitrie Filipescu, "Profesiune de credință," in *1848 la Români*, vol. 1, 170.
  38. Olimpiu Boitoș, *Paul Bataillard și revoluția română dela 1848* (Paris, 1930), 15–16; Bataillard said that he and Rosetti met during the period when they worked together at *Les Écoles*, a publication founded by the republicans and headed by Louis Blanc. See the Bataillard's notes from NLR, special collections, Brătianu coll., file 466.
  39. NLR, special collections, Brătianu coll., file 284, f. 3–3v.
  40. Prince Nicolae Sutz'u's lists of functions, NLR, special collections, Saint-Georges coll., file LXI/2, f. 74.
  41. Marin Bucur, "Vasile Alecsandri și Mihail Kogălniceanu membrii la Société Orientale de France," *Revista de Istorie Literară* 18 (1969) 4: 695.
  42. Among the members of the *Société française pour l'abolition de l'esclavage* there were also 10 Freemasons: Isaac Crémieux, François Isambert, Georges Lafayette, Emmanuel Las Casas, Victor Schoelcher, etc. See Jennings, 57–58.
  43. Ibid., 236–240.
  44. Nicolae Bălcescu, "Privire asupra stării de față, asupra trecutului și viitorului patriei noastre," in *1848 la Români*, vol. 1, 318.
  45. Dimitrie Brătianu, "Cuvânt improvizat la Societatea Studenților Români de la Paris," *ibid.*, 333.
  46. Oruno D. Lara, *La colonisation est un crime. De la destruction du système esclavagiste à la reconstruction coloniale* (Paris, 2005), 14–18.
  47. Ion Ghica, "Note scrise sub dictarea lui Nicolae Bălcescu asupra evenimentelor care au precedat revoluția din 1848," in *1848 la Români*, vol. 1, 348.

48. Ibid., 536–537.
49. *Curierul românesc*, 11 March 1848, 45.
50. Lara, 26.
51. Letter of Nicolae Bălcescu to Alexandru G. Golescu, 22 June 1848, Buzău, in N. Bălcescu, *Opere*, ed. Gh. Zane, vol. 4, *Corespondență* (Bucharest, 1964), 90.
52. “Proclamația no. 118 a Guvernului provizoriu al Țării Românești,” of 26 June 1848, in *Anul 1848 în Principatele Române*, vol. 2 (Bucharest, 1902), 105–106.
53. See Corneliu Tamaș, *Istoria țigănilor din Țara Românească 1241–1856. 600 de ani de atestare documentară* (Bucharest, 2001), 269.
54. *1848 la Români*, vol. 1, 527.
55. Published in Paris in 1849, see Olimpiu Boitoș, *Paul Bataillard et la Révolution roumaine de 1848. Contribution à l’histoire des relations franco-roumaines* (Paris, 1930).
56. See nos. 590, 593, 596, 601, and 605.
57. J. A. Vaillant, *Les Rômes. Histoire vraie des vrais bohémiens* (Paris, 1857), 321–326.
58. Ibid., 334.
59. Ibid., 333.
60. Ibid., 348–353.
61. Alfred Poissonier, *Notice historique sur les Tsiganes ou esclaves zingares de Valachie* (Bucharest, 1854). The next year the brochure will appear in Paris with the title *Les esclaves tsiganes dans les Principautés Danubiennes*.
62. Adolphe Billecocq, *Journal*, RAL, A. 2555, manuscript.
63. Elias Regnault, *Histoire politique et sociale des Principautés Danubiennes* (Paris, 1855), 345.

### **Abstract**

#### The French Influence over Abolitionism in the Romanian Principalities

The abolitionist movement in Wallachia and Moldavia started in the third decade of the 19th century, at a time when measures against the slave trade were being enacted in Europe, and Great Britain and France were seeing heated debates regarding slavery in the colonies. The ideas of French abolitionism penetrated in the Romanian principalities through the press, through the direct contact with foreign travelers, and, last but not least, through the connections established between the Romanian youths who studied in the capital of France and the cultural and political personalities involved in the slave emancipation movement, some of them known for their philo-Romanian feelings. The decree for the emancipation of the slaves adopted in June 1848 in Wallachia was drawn up by the revolutionary government under the clear influence of events in Paris.

### **Keywords**

slavery, abolitionism, emancipation, Gypsies, French influence