

EVOLUTION OF THE DĂMĂROAIA DISTRICT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MILLENNIUM INVOLVEMENT AND DETERMINATION OF THE ROMMANY POPULATION

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Abstract

Gipsies, originating from north-west India and north-east Pakistan, arrived on the territory of the Romanian Principalities around the year 1240. Some of them became slaves on squire estates, monastic and royal estates, whereas others lived as wandering gipsies. Recently, in 2001, it was decided that in Romania they should be called Romani instead of gipsies (which shouldn't be mistaken for Romanian). According to the latest census, gipsies represent 3.2% of Romania's population.

An analysis of their life style and traditions makes it obvious that their traditional crafts were associated to building activities.

The paper will present the ideals, aspirations and possibilities of this community, which amounted, in that which concerns the building of homes for themselves, to the erection of "gipsy palaces". The "message" that these buildings convey is revealed by analysing them from an architectural point of view.

To narrow down the analysis regarding the relation between the real estate development and the Romani community, the paper will focus on the Dămăroaia district of Bucharest.

Keywords: *gipsy, traditional crafts, tradition, life style, building, homes, "palaces".*

Definitions, origins and a brief history of gipsy tribes in Europe

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the ethnonym "gipsy" is defined as: "*member of a wandering race (called by themselves Romani) of Hindu origin with dark skin and hair, living by basket-making, horse-dealing, fortune telling etc.*"

Gipsies, originating from north-western India and north-eastern Pakistan, pertained to the Ksatriya caste of Rajputs. In 1192 the allied forces of the Rajput princes were defeated in the Battle of Tararori, north-west of Delhi.¹ Following the defeat suffered at the hands of Mohamed Ghur, the northern-Indian warrior clan Rajput (the Ksatriya caste) took their families and left towards the Arab and Turk countries, and later on towards Europe.²

In Byzantium, gipsies were known as a sect embracing isolationism and speaking a language similar to other Indian languages such as Hindi.³

The great historian Nicolae Iorga⁴ firmly believed that gipsies had arrived to Walachia at the same time as the Mongol invasion of 1241-1242. There is no exact record of when the first gipsies arrived to present-day Romania. Jonathan Fox⁵ researched the issue and found that they probably arrived during

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the 11th century. Another researcher, Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu, found a document signed by Mircea the Elder, suggesting that gypsies had actually arrived one century prior to that date.⁶

After arriving in the Romanian Principalities, some gypsies embraced a wandering life style, whereas others became slaves.

The 19th century brought debates on abolishing slavery, not only in Romania but throughout Europe. The first declaration of slavery abolishment was issued in 1848. Moldova and Walachia had already issued declarations of liberation, in 1855 and 1856, but they hadn't produced the desired effect. The middle of the 19th century saw the unification of the Romanian Principalities, specifically the former states of Moldavia and in 1864, Ioan Cuza, as ruler of both Romanian provinces, decreed the definitive abolishment of slavery for gypsies.

According to the account of George Potra,⁷ Doctor of Letters, the enslaved gypsies pertained to the following categories: *slaves of royal estates*, *slaves of monastic estates* and *slaves of squire estates*.

Gypsies of monastic and squire estates were bound to the land and to the will of their masters, and they were further divided into *house gypsies* (grounds gypsies) – blacksmiths, farriers, locksmiths, carpenters, stonemasons, shoemakers, tailors, furriers, bakers, fiddlers, and *field gypsies* – ploughmen, gardeners, foresters. These gypsies were acquired from royal gifts, wills, war spoils, selling and exchanges between individuals.

Before the Revolution of 1821 the slaves of royal estates had the following occupations: gold washers – who picked the gold from river sands, goldsmiths (also called Walachia gold washers) – who extracted gold from rocks, spoon makers – who crafted wooden dishes and various household items, blacksmiths – who crafted iron items and were famous for the quality and accuracy they displayed, bear leaders – who trained bears.

However, the most numerous and most important category was that of wandering craftsmen. These were groups of gypsies who wandered within a given territory and stopped here and there to offer their services to either rural community or squire households. The craft was taught within the community, with the elder members training the younger ones. The range of crafts they covered included: blacksmithing, cauldron-making or copper-working, tinning (of cauldrons or brass dishes), brick making, carpentry, comb-making, broom-making, etc. A craft that was widely embraced by gypsies during the Medieval Age was blacksmithing. Blacksmith gypsies were among the first to settled down and become part of the majority community. Another category of gypsies whose products were indispensable to Romanian villages, and who stayed close to rural communities to this day, is that of cauldron-making gypsies. In fact, they were the ones who best preserved the elements specific to the culture and customs of this ethnic group, as well as the wandering life style. The men crafted cauldrons, pots, pans, copper and brass jewellery and religious items, whereas the women crafted various brushes out of horsehair. The brick-makers formed semi-nomad communities, and some of them have survived to present day.

Out of all European countries, Romania has the highest population of gypsies. During the XIV-XVI centuries, when the first European migration of gypsies took place, the Romanian Principalities were very attractive for these people. Gypsies were craftsmen and, due to the products they offered, they were valuable to the rural economy. The economic backwardness that was an attribute of the Romanian Principalities explains why gypsies chose to settle in this area in higher numbers than in other countries, where crafts were strictly regulated and could only be practiced within specific guilds, which also imposed certain quality standards. The gypsies who did settle in Western countries were not craftsmen but played a rather insignificant role in communities, and they dealt with circus activities, fortune telling and music.

The word "*Romani*" was introduced in Romania during the 1930's, by some intellectuals who were promoting a more modern society, in all of its aspects. Using the word "*Romani*" was meant to indicate a separation from a past in which gipsies had been associated to lack of education, dishonesty, slavery, etc. The Romanian media of the 1930's used both words. The word "*Romani*", therefore, is, historically, somewhat older.

In 2001, Petre Roman, Minister for Foreign Affairs, signs Memorandum no. D2/1094/29.02.2000 in which, based on every population's right to self-identification, it is recommended that all official Romanian documents must use the word "*Romani*" instead of "*gipsy*".

The Romani of Romania (alternatively spelled *Romani*, generally known as *gipsies*) are one of the most numerous minority ethnic groups of Romania. According to the 2002 census, there were 535,140 Romani in Romania, amounting to 2.5% of the total population, which ranks them second in terms of most numerous minority ethnic group, outnumbered only by Hungarians.

The official count of the Romani population, as per the censuses, (the estimated number is usually significantly higher):

- 1930 242,656 (1.7%)⁸
- 1956 104,216(0.60%)⁹
- 1966 64,197(0.37%)¹⁰
- 1977 227,398(1.05%)¹¹
- 1992 409,723 (1.76%)¹²
- 2002 535,250 (2.5%)¹³
- 2011 619,000 (3.2%), according to the interim data provided for the census of 2011

After 1945, but especially during the "*Ceașescu epoch*", the number of gipsies registered a significant increase. During the Communist regime the shame associated to the name of "*gipsy*", which indicated inferiority, disappeared for whoever wished to register officially as "*Romanian*". Therefore many gipsies claimed they were Romanians and gained access to living conditions significantly better than those from before the dictatorship had been instated; they were allowed to live in buildings that had been nationalized, for a small rent, and the gipsy mothers were deemed "*heroic*" if they gave birth to more than four children. Nevertheless, gipsies and Romanians did not mix, even though the conditions were favourable for that, therefore they remained an easily identifiable community, and their ghettos, their precarious living standards, their traditions from long ago, have survived to present day. In the very centre of Bucharest many buildings that had been nationalized under the Communist regime were rented out to gipsy families. In time, they spoiled both the buildings and the neighbourhood.

*"Gipsies, apparently immune to progress, live in a never ending today, a perpetual heroic today, even though they only recognise the slow pulse of eternity and are content to live at the edge of history. They are continuously on the move, like the rocking of twigs or running waters. Their social structure is always fluid, and still possesses internal vitality. The inner cohesion and solidarity of the gipsy community is ensured by the strong family ties that stand as its basic, constant cells."*¹⁴

Recently, social mutations have forced gipsies, to a large extent, to abandon their traditional crafts. Still, their community is remains easily identifiable due to the customs and traditions they preserve.

Delia Grigore, anthropologist and lecturer professor at the University of Bucharest, offers an analysis of the wandering strain in the Romani culture and assimilates it to "*a freely chosen cultural model, developed naturally from a traditional fund of world interpretation, of resolving communication with*

society and of relating to the people's own spiritual self."¹⁵ The nomadic tradition may be related to elements of the psychological structure displayed by this people, limited, naturally, and being, at the same time, a result of historical exclusion and marginalization.

"From tents, a symbol of nomadism, to palaces, a peak of immobility, the road has been surprisingly short,"¹⁶ remarks Delia Grigore.

Nomadism, not accepted and rejected by society, is also denied by Romani through the building of the gipsy palace, which stands as a commitment to life in one place.

Gipsies, as envisioned by Delia Grigore, "have invested their ancestral spirit in something foreign, have copied the living model of the dominant culture, have lost themselves in the vernacular habitat; furthermore, they have taken it to new lengths in an attempt to counter the allegations of them being nomads, the stigma of being nomads, out of their desire to prove that they are sedentary even to a larger extent than the otherness that got them excluded."¹⁷

The desire to show off, to attain an enviable status – *dikhlo* – indicates an inferiority complex. In this context, the palace helps create a favourable image and remove the stigma.

Mariana Celac, architect, critic and essayist, takes the same psychoanalytic approach to the relationship between nomadism and immobility. "It was only much later that I realised that the form of expression that the Romani community had chosen, architecture, is specifically the one missing from their historically nomad past."¹⁸ From that point on, she becomes interested in "gipsy palaces" "not just as architectural records, but as well as social records, able to bring witness to the aspirations of a marginal community". Among the reasons that determined her to pore over this phenomenon and study it were "the drastic epithets and unanimous rejection against these palaces, under the motivation that they display outrageous bad taste, which must be banned, suppressed, ended."¹⁹ Mariana Celac displays a moral counter-reaction, of solidarity towards the repressed ethnic minority. The study of "gipsy palaces" reflects the older interest "with regards to the faces of everyday architecture, the fate of small, marginal initiatives."²⁰

Whenever the architecture of the Romani community is brought up for discussion, there is no question of an urban tissue displaying certain characteristics of their architecture, or certain traditional architectural elements crystallized over time, because they simply do not exist. Gipsies didn't erect their own buildings, meant to define them, until very recently, during the last fifteen years. Without a past, without a history of the "gipsy palace", they found inspiration in buildings that symbolize grandeur and luxury, such as the People's House and the palaces in Indian movies.

With regards to gipsy palaces, Mariana Celac claimed the following: "It is a newly acquired identity and dignity, and the messenger of this new dignity is the new architectural form."²¹ "It is a very uninhibited phenomenon, post-modern in its essence, an assemblage of elements from all imaginable sources: from bus windows to trefoil and the chapters of Cabinet Two of the People's House; from the roofs of the Crețulescu Palace on Știrbei Vodă Street to the door of the Plumbuita monastery; from a fake Roman front to wrought iron ornaments."

Dămăroaia, construction of the district, characteristics, inhabitants, community

The Dămăroaia district has a recent history of change and development, due mostly to the intervention of the Romani community. Dămăroaia was an estate belonging to a gentlewoman, Maria

Damaris, wife of the High Steward Damaris. This district, located in the northern part of Bucharest, was first mentioned in official documents after 1918; the estate was used to grant properties to First World War veterans. It turned into a workers' district, with houses built for the workers employed at the Romanian Railroads Company and inhabited mostly by Romanians; at the time gypsies represented a very small percentage of the district's population.

After the revolution of 1989 the district was populated by Pentecostal Romani, organized into teams of skilled labourers, originating from a rural area, the Fântânele commune, located about 100 km off Bucharest.

Dămăroaia, present-day evolutions.

Around the year 2000, many people migrated from the heart of Bucharest towards the outskirts, specifically towards the Dămăroaia district in this case, looking to purchase land where they could build a home. One of the main reasons that made this district attractive was the easy access and relatively short distance to the heart of Bucharest. The price of land in general was going through a continuous increase at that time, and the price of lands in the heart of Bucharest was becoming unaffordable. The Dămăroaia district was well equipped for living, as it had a school, a kindergarten, a small hospital, drugstores and stores.

Even though access from and to the centre of Bucharest was easy, inside the district itself the roads were made of dirt and the area had a modest aspect and an almost rural atmosphere. As the gypsies in that area are mostly Pentecostal, their behaviour and appearance differs from that of other members of their community, who generally stand out due to their specific traditions. They are not noisy and dress austerely. They do display a sense of community, just like other Romani, who spend their time together.

Emergence and development of the real estate market in Bucharest, role of the Romani and their involvement in the building activity

Gypsies, in particular those embracing the Pentecostal religion, worked in teams of skilled labourers and began building villas even before the 2000's. One of the favourable conditions to that aim was the tradition of their ethnic group to pass down from one generation to the next such crafts as blacksmith, brick maker, carpenter, laying sheet-metal roofs, making and installing troughs and stovepipes.

The villas built for selling are different both in terms of appearance and functionality from the villas designed to be used as their own homes. The villas designed for selling have a modern, commercial appearance and do not include the elements specific to the "palaces" inhabited by rich gypsies.

By building villas that looked good enough to sell and offering them at a lower price than the villas in the heart of Bucharest, due to the lower cost of the land (about one quarter of the price of central lands), the Romani were able to stimulate purchases, which led to the apparition of the first Romanian buyers, around the 2000's. These first buyers purchased homes in a district that was just beginning to develop, hoping that the investments would be continued so that, in the end, the district would change its appearance, as was, in fact, the case.

The first homes built by teams of Romani skilled labourers did stimulate the development of this district, thus marking the start of real estate development.

At the same time as these first new villas appeared, works began to pave the roads with asphalt and to develop utilities networks, gas supply and sewerage systems, which the area lacked. Thus, the area became an attractive target for investors. The Romani continued their building activity, the number of villas increased in time, and in recent years they even built blocks of flats, of no more than four floors. Other investors also showed up, meanwhile, so that today the district has an elegant appearance.

Anthropological characteristics, motivations, cultural influences reflected in the final construction

The Romani stand out not so much in terms of their language (as they can also speak Romanian), religion or customs, but mostly in terms of their life style – homes, dress and means for making a living.

Their lives usually bear the mark of chronic poverty, which makes them reject modernization processes.

The gipsies' behaviour is based on their pride of being what they are and ignoring history and society.

Over the past 15 years, the rich gipsies have built homes as if to counter the perception of poverty existing until then.

In Dămăroaia District, the houses built by Romani people for sale do not directly display what is specific to the houses meant to be inhabited by them, but they do reflect certain language elements and features.

When dealing with houses designed for their own use, we refer to the so-called "*palaces*", which are easily identifiable. These homes convey a different message from those for sale; they aim at reflecting the status of the Romani within their community, but are also meant to be displayed to passers-by. These constructions express grandeur and they take pride in them, they use them to impress. The aim is to go for monumental, to express rhythm and scenography effects.

The "*palaces*" don't take into account the architectural style of the other constructions, defying aesthetic rules and creating their own specific style. Their architectural style, just like their mentality, displays the freedom of expression and lack of restraints allowing the rich members of this community to just play around with stylistic elements.

The "*palaces*" are extravagant. The finishing elements display unjustifiable luxury, aimed solely at reflecting richness.

The elements attached to these constructions define them and transform them into buildings that differ from the common urban tissue, make them stand out and are generally failed copies of classic ornamental elements such as railing posts, chapters, archways, jambs, gables and domes.

These stylistic elements are taken out of different eras and styles, so that they are joined into a mixture that lacks stylistic unity.

However, the imitations of such classic elements cannot always reflect the appropriate materials, just like reproductions are, sometimes, but a pale copy of the original models; this is visible, for instance, in the case of spires coated in cheap sheet-metal, railing posts or floor tiles made of poor quality

materials. Even if the individual doesn't always have significant financial means, the aim is always to show off wealth, even if in a fake manner, by using cheap materials. As a rule, shiny materials are preferred. The traits of improvisation and innovation have their roots in the Romani's nomadism.

Architect Cătălin Berescu said: *"I believe this type of architecture is rather an expression of dreams and desires than one that stands on riches, as large, as we imagine them to be. It is also a style that somewhat allows them to mock official architecture – it displays complete freedom in interpreting it."*²²

The Romani do not take into account the architect's opinions, they don't follow the design or they ask the architect to design the construction according to their wishes. The style of their "palaces" is not accepted from an architectural point of view, as it is considered kitsch. If we are to look at it from a different angle, these "palaces" are part of vernacular architecture, which doesn't comply with the tradition of cultured architecture but it rather takes shape out of a community; therefore, it is only natural to avoid judging it by criteria pertaining to our work as architects.

Typologies

Given the fact that these houses ("palaces") are easily recognisable, it is obvious they share a common typology.

The members of this community, lacking their own tradition and history in building their homes, are given the chance to start building for the first time after the 1990's. This is why the Romani want to stand out, to express them, to mark their existence, and they end up exaggerating.

The typology results from the arbitrary mixture of very different elements, of different origins, from Oriental to classical elements, architectural design specific to McDonald's or the People's House. Symmetry is often used.

The houses built for sale in the Dămăroaia district are easy to recognise due to the jambs of the windows, marked by a different colour from that of the façades, the presence of corner jambs, of the slightly protruding surfaces against the façade and painted in a different colour. The houses designed to be sold do have curved elements, specific to "palaces", but they are not overstated. Such curved elements are visible at windows or at the ends of cantilevers. Marking corners and pillars in another colour gives a rhythmical character to the façade. The wrought iron railings used on balconies, as well as the ones used for surrounding the property, are elaborately worked.

Volumetry

In general, the volumes appear symmetrically.

Some parts of the roof are raised to increased height, which leads to an overlapping of cornices and to the pagoda-like appearance.

The roof has numerous dormers.

The ridges are furnished with ornaments.

Sometimes the design incorporates terraces that surround the constructions and appear as successive façades.

In the Dămăroaia district the constructions erected by the Romani display a mixture of protruding and recessed planes, as well as a play of colours used for marking out certain elements – jambs, pillars, gables, balconies. The volumes are not played up in an exaggerated manner; there aren't many shape combinations, possibly because in this district the main aim of the Romani is to build houses for sale, so building "*palaces*" was not their main priority. Nevertheless, the "*palaces*" are easily noticed as they stand apart from the villas for sale.

Architectural appearance of the façades

The surfaces of the façades of gipsy palaces are furnished with excessive ornaments. The wall is broken down into segments by colours. The façades are made of stratified elements, architectural elements applied on the supporting brickwork. Often, this stratification creates an impression of depth that softens the feeling of bulkiness. The façades are furnished with curved elements and arches.

Certain elements of the façade and certain decorations are multiplied.

The arch shape used is an element taken from the Neo-Romanian architectural style created by architect Ion Mincu. It is the same school or architecture that gives the double tie-columns (triple tie-columns on corner structures) used for balconies and terraces, though in the case of these palaces they are no longer carved of wood. Two significantly thinner tie-columns are used to replace a column, which softens the bulkiness.

To convey grandeur and power, gipsy palaces are set on a high plinth course accessible through a staircase flanked by eagles or lions. The windows are decorated with rich jambs. The property is surrounded by a wrought-iron rail elaborately worked.

Vitruvian principles and building norms

The architectural attributes established by Vitruvius as sources of architectural significance – beauty, solidity, usefulness, appear neither in the study of gipsy palaces nor in that of the houses built by them for sale. Building norms are also applied only partially.

With regards to the usefulness of gipsy palaces, there is a visible paradox: when the owners run out of funds to keep them warm in winter time, they leave them empty and move out into the old houses, left standing, which had existed at first on that land. The functional aspect is generally affected in a negative way by the lack of bathrooms, which are sometimes built in the courtyard to avoid the risk of unpleasant smells near the inhabited rooms; it is an idea borrowed from peasant houses, in which the toilet is set as far away as possible, at the end of the courtyard. The rooms are grouped around a festive area. The "*palaces*" are, to a large extent, representative rather than functional.

The aesthetic appearance of the gipsy "*palaces*", when assessed in keeping with the rules that architects work by falls within the category of kitsch; however, as these palaces do not pertain to cultivated architecture, they cannot be judged according to our criteria.

These "*palaces*", while imposing in size, are not safe in case of an earthquake, a fault caused by the desire to cut corners on material expenses. In 1998 Ilie Voinescu, a construction engineer, a private company expert, is requested to verify the resistance of a gipsy palace in Bucharest, as it has begun

cracking even though it is only one year old. The specialist brings his equipment and checks the building. He concludes that the three-storied palace is about to collapse, as its supporting structure is discontinuous, the walls are very thin, the reinforcing steel used in the panels is far rarer than the norms, and the foundation is only 70 cm deep.

Curiosity stirs, Mr. Voinescu suggests to several other gypsies to have the solidity of their homes verified.

According to the data collected by Ilie Voinescu, the gipsy palaces with tens of spires in the survey area are similar to card castles. Any seismic movement measuring more than 6 degrees Richter would turn them to dust.

The fact that these constructions are frail is also acknowledged by the specialists of the "Ion Mincu" Architecture Institute. *"More often than not, nothing is even remotely as solid as it looks with these constructions. The materials used are very cheap and the quality of the execution is modest. Everything is done quickly and based on improvisation. When you see those vaguely floating palaces, supported by impossibly thin columns, you realise it's a way to fake the significance of that building"*²³, said Mr. Cătălin Berescu, architect.

The leaders of the Romani community put the blame mainly on the constructors: *"A compromise between the ignorant, illiterate, but greedy gipsy, who asks for something stupid as he finds fit, and the constructor who takes his money and fulfils his wish, is reached. Yes, the situation is serious throughout the country. The only solution I see is a centralized decision, which should apply everywhere. Higher fines should be imposed for failing to meet construction standards; this is no laughing matter, the lives of so many people are at stake. We'll end up reliving the events of 1977, with lots of buildings collapsing because of stupidity or greed. To the best of my knowledge, a couple of architects are shot then for failing to do their jobs properly, leading, in turn, to people dying"*, believes Mădălin Voicu, honorary president of the Romani Party.

Perspectives developed from a different point of view than the critical assessment of the architecture of the "palace"

Mr. Cătălin Berescu, architect and professor at the "Ion Mincu" Architecture and Town-Planning University of Bucharest believes that the Romani architecture, while working with vocabulary elements from areas of infinite variety, recomposes such elements following its own grammar rule, which, naturally, can only be described within certain limits: *"It is an absolutely baffling mixture, at first sight, but the way these "ingredients" are executed is very easily identifiable. Romani architecture is a scholarly mixture (in which the scholar isn't even aware of how scholarly it is) of popular, strictly local elements, which are interpreted and rhythmically multiplied."*²⁴

In reply to the architects' dismissal of these palaces as lacking style and taste, Mr. Mircea Miclea, psychologist, believes it's aberrant to impose our construction style as the ultimate universal standard that everything else should be measured against: *"our gypsies are not inferior to us: they imitate just like us, except that we imitate villas from Greece or Italy and they imitate houses from India; there is no difference in the process, only in the source of inspiration, so we are by no means superior, we all end up imitating. Besides, we have an obvious dose of hypocrisy: if the Germans had built houses with spires and sheet-metal roofs, we would have found them beautiful, because the Germans know their trade. We*

transfer the positive or negative stereotype that we entertain with regards to a certain ethnic group to how they build and this causes the stupid superiority that we assume when we look at these gipsy constructions. If we want them to become integrated it's aberrant to restrict their expression of this integration just because it's different from ours."

Mr. Manea Nicolae Dan, architect, also explains the origin of Romani architecture from another perspective than the one us, architects, use in general: *"Gipsy palaces, the ones with as many spires as possible, with several rows of overlapping eaves, those displaying aggressive colour combinations, appear to most of us as embarrassingly large, grotesque, weird and different from what we are used to seeing. However, if we look back to the history of this minority and look at the architecture specific to the lands from where they migrated to Europe, we will be surprised to find a great similarity with the pagodas of China or Mongolia or with the arabesques and colours of Indian buildings. These palaces are, beyond their questionable appearance, a present-day expression of a very old tradition genetically imprinted in the mind frame of this minority. In a country in which the Romanians failed to impose a national architectural style (the last spark of Romanian architecture was the Neo-Romanian style of the beginning of XX century), an ethnic minority is instinctively able to produce a specific traditional architectural style that is in accordance with its history."*²⁵

Conclusions

The Romani minority has moved through various difficulties over time, and it is only relatively recently that enslaved Romani are set free. Gipsies are skilled in various crafts, passed down from one generation to the next; they are blacksmiths, cauldron-makers, brick-makers, chimney sweepers, spoon-makers, goldsmiths, farriers, locksmiths, carpenters, stonemasons, shoemakers, tailors, furriers, bakers, and fiddlers. Some of these crafts help gipsies become involved in construction activities.

Throughout history the Romani community is marginalized, excluded and marked by poverty. This precarious situation continues to present day, with the exception of rich gipsies.

The last 15 years have witnessed the emergence, for the first time, of the so-called "*palaces*", homes of rich gipsies. To counter the image of poor people, shunned by society, their "*palaces*" are extravagant and impressive. The "*palaces*" are laden with ornaments. As the Romani community members do not have their own history in terms of construction activities, these "*palaces*" are inspired from Indian movies, as well as from monumental, luxurious buildings such as the People's House.

The development of the Dămăroaia district is stimulated by the Romani community, as they build massively, in particular, houses designed for sale, with a modern appearance and including only to a small extent, difficult to recognize, elements specific to the architectural style of their "*palaces*".

Pictures

Villas built for sale:



Image 1: two villas, Izbiceni Street, Dămăroaia district.



Image 2: villa, Izbiceni Street, Dămăroaia district.



*Image 3: block of flats, Jiului Street, Dămăroaia district,
"Palaces" designed for their own use.*



Image 3: detail of villa entrance, Natașiei Street, Dămăroaia district.



Image 5: villa, Natașiei Street, Dămăroaia district.



Image 6: villa, Izbiceni Street, Dămăroaia district.

Illustration List

1. Two villas built by the Romani for sale, Izbiceni Street, Dămăroaia district, source: author's own photo archive.
2. Villa, built by the Romani for sale, Izbiceni Street, Dămăroaia district, source: author's own photo archive.
3. Block of flats, built by Romani for sale, Jiului Street, Dămăroaia district, source: author's own photo archive.
4. Detail of villa entrance, built by the Romani for their own use, Natației Street, Dămăroaia district, source: author's own photo archive.
5. Villa, built by the Romani for their own use, Natației Street, Dămăroaia district, source: author's own photo archive.
6. Villa, built by the Romani for their own use, Izbiceni Street, Dămăroaia district, source: author's own photo archive.

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Endnotes

¹ Delphi (or Delfi) is a city of Ancient Greece.

² "Romi. Rüdiger Vossen: Zigeuner. Roma, Sinti, Gitanos, Gypsies. Zwischen". Accessed on May 4, 2012. <http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romi>. Rüdiger Vossen: *Zigeuner. Roma, Sinti, Gitanos, Gypsies. Zwischen*

³ Native speakers of Hindi dialects make 41% of India's population. India's Constitution indicates Hindi as one of the two official languages, with English being the second.

⁴ Nicolae Iorga, born Nicu N. Iorga, lived between January-17th-1871 and November-27th -1940. Born in Romania, he was a historian, literary critic, scholar, playwright, encyclopaedist, memorialist, minister, and Member of Parliament, prime-minister, university professor and academic. He played an important part in Romanian culture during the first decades of XX century.

⁵ Jonathan Fox is an associate professor at the Department of Political Studies at the Bar-Ilan University of Ramat Gan, Israel.

⁶ "The Rommany of Romania. Resource Centre for Ethno-Cultural Diversity". Accessed on May 4, 2012.

http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romii_din_Romania .

⁷ Alumnus of the Faculty of History within the Bucharest University, he also completed post-graduate studies in Political Studies (1980) and Journalism (1987).

⁸ As per the results of the research conducted in 1998 by the Institute for the Research of Life Standards

⁹ As per the results of the research conducted in 1998 by the Institute for the Research of Life Standards

¹⁰ As per the results of the research conducted in 1998 by the Institute for the Research of Life Standards

¹¹ As per the results of the research conducted in 1998 by the Institute for the Research of Life Standards

¹² As per the results of the research conducted in 1998 by the Institute for the Research of Life Standards

¹³ As per the results of the research conducted in 1998 by the Institute for the Research of Life Standards

¹⁴ Yoors, Yan. *The Gypsies*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967

¹⁵ Grigore, Delia. *Curs de antropologie si folclor rrom / Introducere in studiul elementelor de cultura tradițională ale identității rrome contemporane*. Bucharest: Editura Credis, 2001.

¹⁶ Grigore, Delia. "Palatele fostilor nomazi - modele de reprezentare sociala post-sedentarizare". *Revista 22* (July 14, 2006).

¹⁷ Grigore, Delia. "Palatele fostilor nomazi - modele de reprezentare sociala post-sedentarizare". *Revista 22* (July 14, 2006).

¹⁸ Celac, Mariana. "Palatele cu turle". *Observatorul Cultural 609*(February 27, 2012).

¹⁹ Celac, Mariana. "Palatele cu turle". *Observatorul Cultural 609*(February 27, 2012).

²⁰ Celac, Mariana. "Palatele cu turle". *Observatorul Cultural 609*(February 27, 2012).

²¹ Celac, Mariana. "Palatele cu turle". *Observatorul Cultural 609*(February 27, 2012).

²² Berescu, Catalin Berescu. "Palatul tiganesc: obiect de studiu sau subiect de executie publica?". Accessed January 17, 2012. www.divers.ro

²³ "The Tectonic Plates of Eastern Europe Have Begun Moving". Accessed January 19, 2012.

<http://proiectpresa.blogspot.com/2012/01/placile-tectonice-din-estul-europei-au.html>.

²⁴ Berescu, Catalin Berescu. "Palatul tiganesc: obiect de studiu sau subiect de executie publica?". Accessed January 17, 2012. www.divers.ro

²⁵ Manea, Nicolae Dan. "Pasivitate înseamnă complicitate". *Climate Literare 47* (October, 2001).