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## HEINRICH VON WLISLOCKI IN THE MEMORIES OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES

## Rezumat

Heinrich von Wlislöcki  
în memoriile contemporanilor săi

În articolul de față, Heinrich von Wlislöcki este reprezentat în memoriile contemporanilor săi ca unul dintre primii romologi ai secolului al XIX-lea în Europa. Doctor în filosofie, folclorist, istoric literar, lingvist și profesor, el a câștigat o popularitate largă în cercurile științifice. Plecând cu tabăra țiganilor transilvăneni pentru a aduna materiale de câmp nemijlocit în mediul lor, el era unul dintre aceia pe care colegii l-au numit un „prieten al țiganilor” și un mare romantic. Ca urmare, a publicat aproximativ 80 de lucrări în reviste științifice renumite din Europa, precum și în „Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society”, fiind membru al colegiului de redacție al acestuia. Contemporanul lui George Henry Borrow (1803–1881), Alexander Gheorghe Paspati (1814–1891), Charles Godfrey Leland (1824–1903), Francis Hinde Grum (1851–1902), Anton Herrmann (1851–1926), Hans Ferdinand Helmolt (1865–1929), Heinrich von Wlislöcki (1856–1907) a fost unul dintre puținii folcloriști și cunoscători ai vieții și culturii romilor din secolul al XIX-lea, care s-au imersat complet în viața romilor, stăpânind în practică o nouă metodă etnologică de observație directă. A fost o perioadă eroică de studiere a folclorului în Europa, când oamenii de știință au creat un domeniu de cercetare (folcloristica) de la zero. 110 ani trecuți de la moartea lui Heinrich von Wlislöcki nu l-au șters din memoria istoriei, ba chiar invers – cercetătorii-folcloriști și azi se referă încă la lucrările sale, incluzându-le în circulația științifică.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Heinrich von Wlislöcki, unul dintre primii romologi ai secolului al XIX-lea în Europa, metodă etnologică de observație directă, 110 ani de la moarte.

## Резюме

Генрих фон Влислоцкий  
в воспоминаниях современников

В статье представлена личность Генриха фон Влислоцкого в воспоминаниях современников как одного из первых в Европе цыганологов XIX в. Доктор философии, фольклорист, историк литературы, лингвист и педагог, он получил широкую известность в научных кругах. Отправившись странствовать с табором трансильванских цыган с целью сбора полевого материала непосредственно в их среде, он был одним из тех, кого коллеги называли «другом цыган» и большим романтиком. В результате им было опубликовано около 80 работ в известных научных журналах Европы, а также в «Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society», печатном органе общества, членом которого он был. Современник Джорджа Генри Борроу (1803–1881),

Александра Георге Паспати (1814–1891), Чарльза Годфри Леланда (1824–1903), Фрэнсиса Хиндеса Грума (1851–1902), Антона Херрманна (1851–1926), Ганса Фердинанда Гельмольта (1865–1929), Генрих фон Влислоцкий (1856–1907) был одним из немногих фольклористов и знатоков цыганской жизни и культуры XIX в., которые полностью погрузились в жизнь цыган, осваивая фактически впервые этнографический метод включенного наблюдения в их среде. Это был героический период изучения фольклора в Европе, когда ученые создавали новое поле фольклорных исследований с нуля. Пройденные 110 лет со дня смерти Генриха фон Влислоцкого не стерли его имя из исторической памяти, исследователи-фольклористы до сих пор обращаются к его произведениям, включая их в научный оборот.

**Ключевые слова:** Генрих фон Влислоцкий, первый цыганолог в Европе XIX в., метод непосредственного наблюдения, 110 лет со дня смерти.

## Summary

Heinrich von Wlislöcki  
in the memories of his contemporaries

The article presents Heinrich von Wlislöcki – a folklorist, literary historian, linguist and educator, widely known in the scientific circles of Europe of the late XIX century, as one of the first XIX century European researcher of the gypsies – in the memories of his contemporaries. He was a Doctor of Philosophy, one of those whom his colleagues called a “friend of the Gypsies”, he went to wander with the camp of Transylvanian gypsies to collect field material directly in their midst. As a result, about 80 papers were published in selected publications, as well as in well-known scientific journals in Europe. Most often, his publications could be seen in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, of which he was a member. Being a contemporary of George Henry Borrow (1803–1881), Alexander Gheorghe Paspati (1814–1891), Charles Godfrey Leland (1824–1903), Francis Hinde Grum (1851–1902), Anton Herrmann (1851–1926), Hans Ferdinand Helmolt (1865–1929), Heinrich von Wlislöcki (1856–1907) was one of the few folklorists and connoisseurs of Gypsy life and culture of the XIX century. The latter completely immersed themselves in the life of the Gypsy, mastering for the first time the ethnographic method of included observation. It was a heroic period of studying folklore in Europe, when dedicated scientists created a folkloric field of research from the scratch. 110 years passed since the death of Heinrich von Wlislöcki but this did not erase his name from the historical memory, folklorist researchers still refer to his works, including them in scientific circulation.

**Key words:** Heinrich von Wlislöcki, the first European researcher of the gypsy, 110 years since his death, the method of included observation.



This year, 2017, 110 years have passed since the death of Heinrich von Wlislöcki. He was a famous Transylvanian (Romanian) researcher, a folklorist, a linguist, a historian of literature, and a teacher, well known among the European scholars of the XIX century. The most important here is that he was one of the first who studied Roma (Gypsy) people.

The Sweden encyclopedia "Nordisk familjebok" was the first to mention Heinrich von Wlislöcki in 1921.

According to the information of "Nordisk familjebok", Heinrich Adalbert von Wlislöcki was an ethnographer, linguist and a specialist in Gypsy studies. He was born on July 9, 1856 in Kronshadt (nowadays Brasov) in Transylvania, in a Polish-Saxon family, which was in kinship with an ancient princely clan. His father was a tax collector (an officer under the emperor), and his mother was of Transylvanian Saxon origin.

Hans Ferdinand Helmolt was well acquainted with Heinrich von Wlislöcki. After his death, he published an article, "A Friend of Gypsies", in the "Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society". In the article, he wrote: "The German seed that was thus sown in the lad's mind bore plentiful fruit subsequently, when he began to study the struggle of races and languages within the Teutonic boundaries. It is a comforting fact that the losses, we sustain by German families which became Slavonic, are counter-balanced – not numerically perhaps, but in significance – in terms of acquisitions; that is to say, the German nation as such loses a few members of little value, whereas it gains some of the great men of foreign races. Wlislöcki may be considered one of these peaceful acquisition" [4, p. 193].

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Having graduated from the "School of Johannes Honterus" (the famous Evangelical college) in Kronshadt (Brasov), and not having any financial support, he became a student of "Franz Josef Klausenberg" University in 1875. As Hans Ferdinand Helmolt noted, it had been founded three years before the second most important Hungarian university [4, p. 194].

Wlislöcki himself chose Professors Hugo Meltzl (German Philology and Literature) and Samuel Brassai (Sanskrit) as scientific advisers. They advised him to start the study of the Gypsies of Transylvania; no one was interested in this topic at that time. Nevertheless, at the university where he studied until 1879, and where the foundations of his future researches in humanities were established, he had paid more attention to German Philology and Literature, and, of course, to Sanskrit.

Hans F. Helmolt recalled that "His excessive shyness and modesty [during the study of Wlislöcki at the university – S. P.] attracted the attention and interest of both teachers and fellow-students at the University. Retiring to a window-niche in the corridor, he used to wait for the professor whose lecture he was about to attend, and enter the hall immediately after him, and he never joined in the conversation of the other students. This reserve, which made him in the course of time the subject of a cycle of legends, was by no means affected, but was an innate disposition, which, in consequence of insufficient physical development, was unfortunately destined to increase to a mental disease. It was only when, in the course of discussions on Old-German, Middle-High-German, or Anglo-Saxon, an important question arose, that he broke his usual silence; and, in most instances, the professor agreed with him" [4, p. 194].

Hard times began for Wlislöcki after the death of his father. He was short of money and had to work for a penny as a private tutor in rich families.

Nevertheless, in 1879 he took the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and was awarded a prize for his dissertation on "Hapax legomena in Atlamál" (we dare to assume that "Greenland Speech of Atli" from the "Elder Edda" was the subject of this research of H. von Wlislöcki). Later, through the support of his teachers Hugo Meltzl and Samuel Brassai, he published this work in the very prestigious journal "Acta comparationis Litterarum universarum".

It is worth mentioning here that Samuel Brassai (1797 (1800) – 1897) was a famous linguist and teacher; he was known as the "last erudite of Transylvania". He suggested some new methods in teaching and he was the first who started to teach in Hungarian in Cluj (instead of the generally accepted Latin).

To understand better the environment of Wlislöcki and the way of forming his romantic views, let

us pay attention to the fact that his university mentor was a revolutionary by conviction, and participated in the revolution of 1848. After a certain period spent in Hungary, in 1859 Brassai was assigned as director of the Ardelean Museum in Cluj. Since 1872, Brassai had been studying a number of scientific fields; that is why he was named the “Hungarian Lomonosov”. Since 1837 he was a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and since 1887 became an honorary member of the Academy.

Besides, Brassai was an excellent translator. He translated from ancient Greek into Russian the “Elements” of Euclid, as well as a number of other texts.

We pay so much attention to the biography of Samuel Brassai as he played an outstanding role in the personality and scientific formation of Wlislocki. It was Brassai who made the young researcher very interested in scientific work. The influence of Brassai induced Wlislocki to write some time later a number of fundamental works in linguistics also.

“At that time, – notes Hans F. Helmolt in his article, – the *Acta comparationis litterarum universarum*, edited by Meltzl and Brassai, began to appear. Besides papers on classical languages, it contained essays on many other idioms, and soon became the central organ of philologists. It opened for Wlislocki a wide field of literary activity, and he began, at the investigation of Meltzl, to occupy himself with the dialect of the Gypsies and their songs, a study, which resulted in contributions of great importance to the sciences of language and folklore. It was not only from books that he studied the nature of that race, so mysterious as to its origin and future, but also to a great extent by sharing its life. Let us try to realize what it means when a scholar of great attainments leaves his own home and natural associations to live the life of a vagrant and investigate a race of man which is universally despised” [4, p. 194].

Indeed a number of sources, including Wlislocki himself who told this story in the preface to one of his books, as well as the memoirs of Hans F. Helmolt, confirm that upon receipt of the degree Wlislocki spent almost a year (about ten months, in 1883) wandering with a camp of Transylvanian Gypsies in some regions of Hungary and Transylvania.

The contemporaries of Wlislocki told that he joined a Gypsy camp, and even for some time married a Gypsy woman. Two years after Wlislocki’s death one of the contemporaries wrote in the “Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society”: “Wlislocki, whose intimate relations with one or more divorced Gypsy women should have made him a competent authority, asserts that among the wandering Gypsies of the Balkans there exists a secret tribunal – *onanlaslo* – which ‘tips the black spot’, in the shape of a circular piece of wood with a peg driven through it, to the husband or wife who have sinned. The uncolored

wood circle summons the man, and the wood painted in red summons the woman. But in the case of men it is never used for infidelity, only for theft, murder or treachery among the Gypsy. Among women, it is used for infidelity, even if the husband has brought no charge and had no suspicion. The woman who finds the circle in her tent must go at night to the nearest stream on the east where she meets a man wearing a mask of a beast’s skin. He leads her to a lonely spot where two other mysterious watchers sit by a fire; and they pronounce her banishment, temporary or eternal. But her crime is never known save to the vojvode. Neither of the parties, separated in such a way, is permitted to contract another marriage – except an informal temporary union – so long as both are alive; and it is from the ranks of these unmarried and unmarriageable women that the dancing girls, who have brought a bad name on the Gypsy women of the East, are largely recruited. But after the death of either of the two, the other may marry legally, provided that he or she is not temporarily married, or has separated regularly from any temporary alliance they may have formed. Hence a mysterious summons to, when Wlislocki had settled down and married a ‘white’ wife, received a mysterious summons from his temporary ‘brown’ wife, Rosa Saric to meet her and her campers at night and bear witness that they had separated by agreement” [7, p. 356].

Looking ahead, it should be noted that Wlislocki collected a number of Transylvanian Gypsy’s tales and legends in 1883, and published them in German on 157 pages (“*Märchen und Sagen der Transsilvanischen Zigeuner*”. Berlin: Nicolai, 1886) [9]. These sixty-three fairy tales, collected by Wlislocki, were significantly different from the collections published in Europe previously. Therefore, this collection attracted an exceptional interest of folklorists, especially because of the unusual plots of the tales. In addition, it is worth mentioning that Wlislocki, in the foreword to the book, had stressed that he tried to double-check every fairy tale.

Hans F. Helmolt described Wlislocki’s journey with the camp in the following words: “Knowing the Gypsy language theoretically, Wlislocki joined these nomads, welcomed nowhere, nowhere allowed to stay long, hated by everybody, and therefore shy, and lived with them for months. In those years, he sacrificed himself on the altar of Science, in the true sense of the word, he overcame the traditional mistrust, and learned, more thoroughly than any philologist before him, the secrets of Gypsy customs and manners which, as a rule, are anxiously and obstinately concealed from aliens. This method of carrying out practical ethnology has been, and is indeed still occasionally used in Africa or Australia, but Wlislocki’s experiment will no doubt remain unique for many a day in connection with that tribe whose very vagran-

cy renders their study peculiarly difficult. Moreover, besides the privations, he had to suffer at an age when others enjoy life, his nomad experiences cost him a precious boon – his eyes, probably seriously affected already by hard study, grew weaker and weaker, until at last he became all but blind” [4, p. 194-195].

Indeed, staying in the camp von Wlislöcki intensively collected folklore, linguistic and ethnographic field material.

“Thus Dr. Heinrich von Wlislöcki joined a troop of vagrant Gypsies – further writes Hans F. Helmolt, – wandered with them from place to place and lived in their tents for eight or ten months, sharing with them wind and rain, heat and cold, hunger and thirst, and even imprisonment for a short period. The women related to the scholar their fairy-tales and legends, the girls sang their songs to him, the old people of the horde initiated him into the charms and incantations they practiced and other mysterious rites. Three or four times he made such excursions, pleasure-trips indeed of a strange kind. But what treasures he brought home! And then began the laborious task of sifting, comparing, and interpreting. A stately series of independent works, and valuable essays in English, German, Hungarian, and French journals, give proof of the rich harvest of Wlislöcki’s study of Gypsy lore” [4, p. 195].

Some time had passed and in 1884 Wlislöcki became a teacher in Rosenau (Râşnov). Later he moved to Mühlbach (Sebeş), where he stayed until 1890. His publications during this period of life had been published predominantly in the well-known scientific journals of Europe.

The author of 80 works in German, Wlislöcki published many articles in such journals as “Ungarischen Revue”, “Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte”, “Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society”, “Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie”, and “Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft”.

As a researcher, Wlislöcki had an excellent reputation. In 1889, Charles Godfrey Leland, who probably knew him better than everyone else, described the subject of H. von Wlislöcki’s studies in the following words: the life and language of the Transylvanian Gypsies that are known to the scientist not by hearsay. He wrote in a review of the book of prof. Anton Herrmann<sup>1</sup> in the prestigious “Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society”: “Gypsy lore is a sister of Folk-lore, and both are daughters of Ethnology. The Austrian Empire, and especially Hungary, abounds far more than any other country in Europe in varied, strange, and attractive races of people, including several branches of the best type of the Romany” [5, p. 105].

Referring to the “Finnish legends” translated by Emmy Shrek, Leland remarked that his translation deserves more attention, as it demonstrated some similarity with the traditions of the Eskimos and the

Red Indians. And then he immediately proceeds to the works of Wlislöcki: “this is followed by a critique of collections of Ruthenian or Hungarian Russian popular songs, and (in two parts) an extremely interesting paper on ‘Magic Formulas and Incantations of the Transylvanian and South Hungarian Gypsies’ by Dr. Heinrich v. Wlislöcki, who is probably more practically familiar with Gypsy life and language in every form than any scholar who ever lived” [5, p. 106].

During this period, Wlislöcki worked harder than ever. His research issues varied within the ethnology of different peoples, sometimes very far from each other: Armenians and Gypsies, Hungarians and Romanians. However, in-depth researches on Roma culture were anyway in the centre of his interests.

Since 1896 and up to the 1898 Wlislöcki worked as a consultant of the specialist in world history, Hans Ferdinand Helmolt. He later wrote about this time: “When, in 1895, I was trying to find collaborators who could write the chapters for the fifth volume of my History of the World on the peoples in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe. Somewhat beyond our ken, I was fortunate enough to obtain Wlislöcki’s promise to write, thus helping nations which are often, or as a rule, neglected and underrated – Bulgarians, Fins, Huns, Hungarians, Rumanians, and others – to receive justice in a real history of the world. He set to work with alacrity. Chapter after chapter was sent to Leipzig. But, before the task was fully achieved, there came a frosty chill over his work. He complained of the weakness of his eyes, which caused him great trouble, and soon a striking peculiarity was observable in his manuscripts: he could no longer write in straight lines; his busy hand was evidently failing, so that his writing inclined more and more towards the right-hand bottom corner of the sheet. But it was not yet altogether exhausted. When, however, in 1898, after sending me the last section but one, he repeatedly inquired what subjects he had still to treat, I was greatly startled: his memory had obviously suffered so much that he could not remember which parts of his work he had finished.

Moreover, all too soon (1899) my apprehensions proved justified: the faithful companion of his life wrote to tell me that her husband suffered from a mental disease. All those who appreciated him and his learning were deeply grieved when they heard that it was incurable, and it was a deliverance from great suffering when, on February 19, 1907, at Bethlen-Szent-Miklos in Hungary, Heinrich von Wlislöcki closed his eyes for ever” [4, p. 196].

As it was noted by the Romanian researcher and translator of Wlislöcki’s works, Sorin Georgescu, the first signs of illness appeared in 1987. Wlislöcki lived his last years in poverty under the care and supervision of his wife, Fani (nee Dorfler). She was a teacher of the Hungarian language in Synmiklaus

(Sânmiclăuș, County Alba); the small town is situated near the balneological complex “Băile Leghia” (ungar. Jegenyefürdő) [3, p. 7-8].

As Horst Teil attested, “He [von Wlislöcki – S. P.] was buried in the Protestant cemetery in Mühlbach (Sebes) in the county of Alba under unknown circumstances, in a family grave crypt... His name is not mentioned on the gravestone”<sup>22</sup>.

By a mystical coincidence, Heinrich von Wlislöcki died simultaneously with the revival of Gypsy Lore Society in Liverpool. It is known that for a period von Wlislöcki was a member of this society (for the first time it appeared in 1888 and existed until 1892).

Many years have passed since the death of Heinrich von Wlislöcki, but folklorists still refer to his works, including them in scientific circulation.

Thus, the publishing house of the Higher Council for Scientific Research in Madrid published in 2008 a book of famous Spanish folklorist Juan Jose Prat Ferrer – “Under the Tree of Eden: The History of Folklore Studies and Their Paradigms” (*Bajo el árbol del paraíso: historia de los estudios sobre el folklore y sus paradigmas*) [2, p. 404-406].

In the section “Gypsies and folkloristics” he notes: “The Culture – or the cultures of the Gypsies have survived almost exclusively in oral form until today, and oral folk art remains to this day one of the main methods of cultural transmission. Gypsies, whose total number is unknown, live in groups, more or less integrated into society, in India, Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, America, Australia and New Zealand. Along with the various occupations of this people, especially the nomadic, in addition to the predictions of fate on the hand, blacksmith’s craft, music, there is also storytelling of fairy tales. In addition to the works of such discoverers as Heinrich von Wlislöcki, Francis Hindes Grum, Alexander G. Paspati, Charles G. Leland, whose research fell at the end of the 19th century, which we already mentioned when we talked about the era of the appearance of outstanding collections of fairy tales, it is necessary in this context to identify the contribution of Conrad Berkovich, who in his work ‘The story of the Gypsies’ (1928) made an attempt to describe and interpret the life of European Gypsies; including the description of the Gypsies of Macedonia, Romania, Hungary, France, Spain, Germany, England, the United States and the Nordic countries” [2, p. 404-405]. In the following sections of the same book, Juan Jose Prat Ferrer repeatedly mentions Wlislöcki.

In another book “History of the traditional fairy tale” (*Historia del cuento tradicional*) Juan Jose Prat Ferrer mentions Wlislöcki’s contribution once again. He draws interesting conclusions that concerns the activity of Wlislöcki directly: “Heinrich von Wlislöcki,

an Austrian, published in 1886 the ‘Märchen und Sagen der transsilvanischen Zigeuner’ (Fairy tales and legends of the Gypsies of Transylvania); also he wrote a tractate on ‘Volks Glaube und religiöser Brauch der Zigeuner’ (People’s Beliefs and Religious Practices of the Gypsies, 1891). In 1899 the English writer Francis Hindes Grum (1851–1902), who had married a Gypsy woman, published ‘Gypsy Folk-Tales in English. The introduction to the book considered the language and history of Gypsies, including some comparative notes on their folklore also. Following the theory of Indianism Groom put forward the hypothesis that thanks to the nomadic Gypsies, to a great extent, the fairy tales originated in India came to Europe through Persia and Armenia. In the Balkans, the Gypsy narrative tradition had a very significant impact that caused the spread of Gypsy fairy tales to the rest of Europe in the early 20th century. According to Grum, Gypsy people created original tales that later spread to Europe, incorporating some elements of the culture of those countries through which they had passed. Despite the tradition of that time Groom barely processed in English those sixty-six texts retold him by some emigrants from Eastern Europe. He kept the obscure passages, the lack of content and the lack of plot, and provided to us the texts very close to the versions told by informants (all of the informants were mentioned by him in the notes). All of the sixty-six fairy tales that Groom included in the collection were written down from Gypsies of England and Wales. The fairy tales in the book are divided according to the origin of the Gypsies who told them: Turkish (4), Romanian (1), Bukovina, the area between Ukraine and Romania (20), Transylvania (4), Slovak, Moravian and Bohemian (4), Polish (6), English (3), Welsh (19), Scottish (4)” [1, p. 376-377].

In 2014 a book of Hendrik Wim Willems “In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution” [6] was published. This book was written on the basis of the dissertation which was done by him in 1995. Currently he is a co-coordinator at the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies at the University of Amsterdam.

In the study mentioned above Wim Williams tries to understand why the Gypsies, despite the disasters they had suffered during the World War Second (hundreds of thousands of them suffered the same terrible fate as Jews and other victims of Nazism), are still treated as the social outcasts. He tries to find out, as far as it is possible, how modern ideas about the Gypsies differ from those that took shape in the distant past; where the stigmatization of Gypsies, or rather of whole Gypsy groups, so firmly embedded in social consciousness, began.

In the preface, the author notes: “Mention of the top ten will suffice here, with specification of the

years in which the most important Gypsy studies of the writers concerned were published. This yields the following hierarchy for consideration: August Pott (1844–45), Heinrich Grellmann (1783), Franz von Miklosich (1872–81), George Borrow (1841, 1843, 1851, 1857, 1874), Charles Leland (1873, 1882, 1891), Michiel de Goeje (1875, 1903), Heinrich von Wlislöcki (1880, 1890–92), Paul Bataillard (1843–49), Alex Paspati (1870), Bath Smart and Henry Crofton (1875)” [6, p. 12].

Further, in the section of Austro-Hungarian folklore, Wim Williams wrote: “In the wake of the Gypsy Lore Society, in the immemorial ethnic crucible of the Donau monarchy at the end of the nineteenth century, a strong interest arose in the cultural traces of the Hungarian Transylvanian Gypsies. Ethnologists like Heinrich von Wlislöcki and Anton Hermann moved among them and were the first to publish the results of their fieldwork” [6, p. 180].

Moreover, Willems dedicates a special chapter, “The followers of George Borrow”, to Wlislöcki. It is worth citing some fragments of the chapter here: “The best-known east European representative of this tendency in Gypsy studies was Heinrich von Wlislöcki (1856–1907). Until recently, he has been regarded as an authority in the areas of story-telling, social organization, and the religious imagery of Gypsies. The growth of legends about him after his death was inspired primarily by the thought that von Wlislöcki’s intimate knowledge of the Gypsies had been accumulated while he travelled about with them for an indeterminate period of between three to 12 years. Moreover, until the 1930s, people were convinced that it was the marriage to a Gypsy that enabled him to get to know the world about which he wrote from the inside. In 1986, Ruch was the first to point out that such an interpretation is untenable and that Von Wlislöcki had only a limited familiarity with central European Gypsies. Ruch was able to make important factual corrections in accepted opinion about the gypsologists life and work after he came across a correspondence consisting of 178 letters and cards in the legacy of Arnold Hermann. This evidence, which spans the period from 1880 to 1896, supports the conclusion that Von Wlislöcki only spent a few months among the Gypsies in the summer of 1883, followed by some weeks in the winter of 1886. Furthermore, in the 1880s the recently graduated student found himself obliged by a lack of funds to write as many small pieces for magazines as possible, many of them consisting of translations of Gypsy fairy tales. His industry resulted in a list of some 80 publications on Gypsies. He and Hermann also at times published under each other’s names, if it was convenient. Von Wlislöcki, son of a tax collector in Kronshtadt (Transylvania) studied German, Philosophy, and Sanskrit at the University of

Klausenburg. Under the influence of the theory of one of his teachers about the Indian origins of the greater part of the themes and motifs in European folk narratives, Von Wlislöcki arrived at the hypothesis that Gypsies, as migratory carriers of culture, had brought these stories from India to the Balkans.

In his work, right to the very end, he continued to accept the premise that the Indian origins were at the root of Gypsy texts, trading, and religious imagery. His study of German was a second important influence; in Klausenburg the rather free translation of folk tales was common practice; one hardly felt bound by the language of the original. Due to the lack of comparative textual editions, it is no longer possible to ascertain the accuracy of Von Wlislöcki’s free interpretations of oral transmissions.

This is no trivial matter when we consider that Von Wlislöcki has been accused of having copied original texts from other (Non-Gypsy) collections. We also know from his letters that he screened and abridged the material collected, anticipating possible objections on the censor’s part or deciding himself that certain texts offended prevailing norms of decency. At the very least, the consequence of this practice is that the reader is offered a body of texts adapted to contemporary taste, as well as reconstructions of the fabric of ideas common to a small group of itinerant tent-dwelling Gypsies in Hungary-Transylvania – without the author’s rendering further account. From the personal letters, an image emerges of a lonesome man, constantly undermined by illnesses, a problem drinker living in poverty because for years he was unsuccessful at finding a teaching position. He struggled to support himself by building birdcages – sold by a Gypsy woman! In 1880, a year after finishing his studies, he published his first volume, containing 40 Gypsy songs, under the romantic title *Haidebluten*, a title remarkably similar to an anthology published seven years previously by Martin Mosckesch. The title aside, Ruch unjustly suggests that Von Wlislöcki was imitating this song collection. From his own work, we can see that he turned to the subject after being alerted to it <...>” [6, p. 182-183].

It’s easy to see that Wim Williams tried to answer the great part of accusations against Heinrich von Wlislöcki that regards the collecting of Gypsy folklore directly in the camp and, next, the providing of the collected materials in their original form to the scientific community.

Our colleagues from Romania, also tried to answer this question paying special attention to the works of H. von Wlislöcki.

Three works of Heinrich von Wlislöcki have been published in Romanian since 1998: “The life and traditions of Transylvanian Gypsies” (Asupra vieții și obiceiurilor țiganilor transilvăneni, 1998), “The nomad people of Roma: images of the life of

the Roma in Transylvania” (Despre poporul nomad al rromilor: imagini din viața rromilor din Transilvania, 2000), “Tales, anecdotes, gypsies’ stories” (Basme, snoave, povești rome, 2002).

Recently, in 2016, the French publishing house “Éditions Corti” published a book by H. Wlislöcki under the title “La Rose et le musicien, contes tziganes” (Rose and musician, Gypsy’s tales). Claude et Corinne Lecouteux, translator and publisher of the book, notes in the annotation: “Heinrich von Wlislöcki (1856–1907) is the first who devoted himself to the study of the Gypsies, he was the first who ventured to accompany the Gypsy camp, wandering from Transylvania to Banat (Hungary), he was one of the first who started to collect these fabulous stories, practicing the ethnographic method of the included [immediate] observation while the gypsy folklore of Transylvania was at the peak of its development. All collected by him, like everything that was collected in this era of the pioneers, include tales and legends, but if you recall the index of fabulous types by Antti Aarne, they rarely correspond to it. The reason is the fact that plots of these fairy tales are so unusual; that’s why they are not included in the international index. The characteristic feature of the tales collected by Wlislöcki is that they are based on beliefs in primitive spirits, in otherworldly life and rituals, supernatural beings form the remnants of Gypsy mythology: personified and astral elements (Sun and Moon), the so-called ‘kings’ playing the main role. Among the fantastic creatures, you can meet mashurdalo, pshuvusha, losholichi, man-dogs, half-people, half-fishes, many-headed people... Wlislöcki also noted a significant feature of the Gypsy soul: the understanding of nature and its changes, as well as their love of nature”.

Further, the publisher notes that “Henry von Wlislöcki collected a fabulous treasure, very original and largely unknown, especially in France, which, if not for Wlislöcki, would have been lost forever” [8].

Concluding our first and small excursion into the history of European folklore’s studying, that kept in the focus a personality called by Hans Ferdinand Helmolt as “a friend of the Gypsies”, Heinrich von Wlislöcki, we hope to return to this topic later. We also hope to complement the issue by some new materials and to touch on some other aspect, which concerns the resonance around the name of Wlislöcki.

The Romanian researcher Marian Zeloaghe in his book “Roma in the culture of the Saxons in the XVIII and XIX centuries” (Romii în cultura săsească în secolele al XVIII-lea și al XIX-lea) identified it as a problem. He designated this problem in a special chapter as “The time of Wlislöcki and the Oriental / Transylvanian positive savagery” [10, p. 120-129].

Despite the controversial attitude of some Russian Romologists to Wlislöcki, based on the available materials published in different languages and

in different sources, we think that the contribution of Heinrich von Wlislöcki<sup>3</sup>, the first European specialist in Gypsy studies, the man who spent some time in the Transylvanian Gypsies’ camp collecting field material, deserves our attention and inclusion in the scientific context

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> See this work for more details: *Ethnological Contributions from Hungary: A Journal of Ethnology for Hungary and adjacent countries*. Edited and published by Prof. Dr. Anton Herrmann. Budapest: 1887, 1888. (Contains a number of articles related to the issue of Gypsy, with Gypsy Melodies).

<sup>2</sup> See this work for more details: Horst Theil. Dr. Heinrich Adalbert von Wlislöcki. In: <http://coolmann53.wordpress.com/2014/05/04/dr-heinrich-von-wlislöcki/> (visited 14.01.2017).

<sup>3</sup> Some works by Wlislöcki in German about the Gypsies of Transylvania: *Haideblüten. Volkslieder der transsilvanischen Zigeuner*. Leipzig: Friedrich, 1880; *Die Sprache der transsilvanischen Zigeuner. Grammatik, Wörterbuch*. Leipzig: Friedrich, 1884; *Märchen und Sagen der Transsilvanischen Zigeuner*. Berlin: Nicolai, 1886; *Vier Märchen der transsilvanischen Zeltzigeuner; Inedita, Gesammelt mit Gegenüberstehender deutscher Übersetzung und Glossar*. Budapest: 1886; *Zauber- und Besprechungs-Formeln der transsilvanischen und südungarischen Zigeuner* (Publicationen der ethnologischen Mitteilungen aus Ungarn). Budapest: Selbstverlag, 1887; *Zur Volkskunde der transsilvanischen Zigeuner* (= Sammlung gemeinverständlicher wissenschaftlicher Vorträge, Neue Folge, 36 = Serie 2), Richter, Hamburg 1887; *Volksdichtungen der siebenbürgischen und südungarischen Zigeuner*. Wien: Graeser, 1890; *Vom wandernden Zigeunervolke. Bilder aus dem Leben der Siebenbürger Zigeuner. Geschichtliches, Ethnologisches, Sprache und Poesie*. Hamburg: Richter, 1890; *Volks Glaube und religiöser Brauch der Zigeuner* (= Darstellungen aus dem Gebiete der nichtchristlichen Religionsgeschichte, 4), Aschendorff: Münster i. W. 1891; *Aus dem inneren Leben der Zigeuner*, Felber, Berlin 1892; *Ausbreitungswege der Sinti und Roma in Europa, mit Angabe der Ersterwähnung*, 1894.

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9. Wlislöcki H. *Märchen und Sagen der Transsilvanischen Zigeuner*. Berlin: Nicolai, 1886.

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