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East Central European Roma History from a Comparative Perspective

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East Central European Roma History from a Comparative Perspective

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Introduction

I was very grateful to be invited to write an introduction for this special edition journal dealing with the history of the Roma. I am a trained historian who became a sociologist and then became a political scientist but as a critical scholar an appreciation of the value of history never left me.

Through a study of history, we can identify patterns of behaviour, the way and manner, in which those patterns evolve or occasionally abruptly end are valuable not just in understanding the present but also changing it.

The Roma have often been described as a litmus test of society's civility and sadly for the Roma society has tended to fail in that test. As a nomadic and marginalised community, the Roma started a migratory journey from India entering not only into Europe but also the Middle East. They left no records of their story and history; we are unclear precisely who these Roma were and why they felt a need to migrate. Of course, the Romani language has been an important source of information indicating points of time in their travels through linguistic analysis but there are still many gaps and unanswered questions.

Many have come to know the Roma through the eyes and records of their oppressors, shortly after their arrival in Europe in the Middle Ages a spate of laws was introduced seeking to proscribe and sedentarise the Roma. A monocultural Europe was clearly hostile to difference and fearful of those not tied to the land and under the direct control of elites. Later bouts of persecution and assimilation reflected the rise of the nation state and a desire for control but also projections of national or political identity that deemed the Roma as outsiders at odds with new identities and in need of change, hence the assimilation drives of Hapsburg rule and communism. Tragically the Nazis and their supporters were to take such thinking to the extremes in policies of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Sadly, the traces of such patterns of historic behaviour are evident in the present. The promotion of insular and nostalgic forms of identity and exclusion as promoted by forms of political authoritarianism that vilifies the vulnerable and marginal, makes the Roma justifiably apprehensive about the present and future. History can and does repeat itself and sadly society does not have a propensity, it seems, to learn from past mistakes; this needs to change and that is why this special edition has value.

János Bársony, a tireless worker for the cultural and historical promotion and memory of the Roma encourages us to reflect on how the Roma, through a pride in their identity, create a means of resistance and resilience.

György Majtényi encourages historians to reflect on the internal and external pressures they may be placed under in a depiction of Roma history but how through reflexivity and integrity the historian might get closer to the truth and in the process deconstruct and challenge centuries of misinformation and the centuries old and deep-rooted demonisation of the Roma long evident in the European mindset.

Burak Akın explores the situation of the Roma under Ottoman rule, underscoring the largely untapped potential of relevant archival sources. His historiographical analysis shows how Ottoman records can offer fresh insights into the intricate socio-economic and legal frameworks that governed Roma lives across six centuries of imperial rule, ultimately challenging and reshaping our understanding of their history in this era. Zsuzsanna Mikó explores the experiences of migrant Roma groups in socialist Hungary during the 1950s, examining recent interpretations of state socialist Roma policies, emphasising the persistent marginalization of Roma communities despite official rhetoric promoting integration. The authorities constructed the image of Roma lifestyle and criminality, blending ethnic and social prejudices. Attila Márfi discusses *Roma Colonies in Pécs in the State Socialist Era, 1950–1990*, providing further insights of statist assimilation which actually accentuated marginalization.

Diana Aburas' paper highlights the educational exclusion of Roma communities, and shows how their limited access to higher education reinforces broader social inequalities. After providing a historical overview, this study also focuses on the recent situation and argues that Roma participation in academia is vital for fostering social justice, inclusion, and equal opportunity.

Overall, it is commendable that the inaugural English issue of the historical journal *East Central European Historical Studies* is devoted to the study of East Central European Roma history. The volume's articles and reviews uniformly concentrate on this subject, while the *Workshop* section features Éva Antal's analysis of Mary Wollstonecraft's perspectives on the French Revolution. Wollstonecraft's works, as those of a seminal figure in feminist thought, offer critical insights that contribute significantly to broadening our understanding of history through diverse minority perspectives. History needs to change and atone itself for its role in the past of contributing to Roma exclusion either by ignoring the Roma or deeming them a minor footnote or by bolstering exclusionary and nationalist thinking. In the process historians can not only help the Roma in understanding who they are through understanding their past but also help the non-Roma to question and challenge notions of who they are, notions which have tended to rely on forms of 'othering' and scapegoating. The dark moments of history must not be allowed to repeat themselves.

Andrew Ryder

Essays

East Central European Historical Studies 3, no. 1 (2025): 9–14

The Survival and the Identity of Ethnic Roma

János Bársony

Vital matters concerning the survival and the identity of ethnic Roma people have been reinforced in the Roma communities in the last 50–60 years. The relationships of linguistic, tribal, local and religious Roma communities to their environment, state organisations, international, regional organisations and organisations of broader circles have become issues requiring inner consensus.

Similarly to most people of the "third world", we are witnessing a late national development in case of the Roma, too. The difference from the average situation is that this development is not linked to any specific geographical area and no such claims have emerged either.

What is more, we cannot even see what level the direction of the development—in different countries or spanning the borders—reaches, or where the processes of self-definition and integration, and the mechanism of assimilation results will lead in the future, as this development is strongly affected by internal and external factors as well.

The struggle for the emancipation of the Roma communities appears not only on self-organisational but also on ideological levels these days.

Different events promoting the forming of communal identity (e.g. standardization of the language) of ethnic Roma people are going on at different levels now. These events are also designed to evaluate political, cultural, historical and communication processes and to set values.

Naturally, we could witness similar events in the case of other nations in Europe about 2–400 years ago, and in Africa and Asia nowadays.

In Europe the specification and planning of Roma identity and collective self-identity primarily raises cultural, scientific and communication tasks determined by political and ideological goals. In other places religious and mythological devices have greater importance.

On the other hand, we should not forget that these processes are going on under strong internal and external pressure based on conscious and spontaneous powers. One of their forms is the violent pressure of assimilation, which considers Roma people valueless and to be ceased. It questions the right of their language and culture to exist, stigmatises them as stolen and deviant, what is more: denies their values and usefulness.

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One of the elements of external ideological pressure to cease the Roma as an ethnic group is the destruction of the community self-esteem and shaping of self-hatred. It tries to deny their historical values and their useful presence or tries to project so called present prestige correlations in the past which are unacceptable, and make it impossible for the Roma to be taken as equal partners in present and past historical processes. And this way the Platonic philosophy could be justified in a negative and pejorative way: 'Everything is identical with itself and its history'.

According to our humanist convictions, we must protect Roma people form these external pressures as long as these pressures and vulnerable communities (according to their self-definition) exist. We must do this even if we cannot see the final stages and limits of the identity planning processes. We have to do this because the communities are formed by people who are offended in their human dignity, who are humiliated and considered inferior only because they belong to the Roma community. And of course, we have to do it for ourselves and the sake of our children because this ideology creates further tensions and violence between Roma and non-Roma people in the future.

By the exposure, systematization and interpretation of primary and secondary historical sources modern historical science tries to introduce the determining facts and processes of the past reality from various vertical and horizontal aspects. It sets up different scientific hypotheses, proves and tries to form scientific 'general agreements' based on theorems, and through the denial or supplementing of these theorems it tries to analyse and introduce the processes of the reality or alleged reality in a deeper, more nuanced and richer way.

There is no general scientific agreement about the important parts of the Roma history and processes, actually the first hypotheses haven't been formed yet either, not even at European, national or smaller community levels.

Some fields of historical science (e.g. national histories) are very sensitive when it comes to ideological interests or partiality, as the mythologies presented as scientific facts of their and past historical misconceptions turning into ideological dogmas belong to the identity of these national communities too. Usually those scientists who foster and promote their nation's historical myths are the most impatient when it comes to similar phenomena in case of their neighbour's. But in the case of Roma national and ethnic history it is very easy to appear as a 'purifier' demanding the exclusiveness of scientific and exact claims.

We are not really in possession of primary sources concerning the history of European Romas, as there were no historians or priests among these people, furthermore, their environment was not interested in their inner matters.

Consequently, the information about them reflects the opinion of states, priests and other intellectuals from that period. These data that could be the source of more thorough information about the history of Roma (let's say from 4–500 years ago) are

mostly unprocessed or these features (church documents, treasury or chamber reports etc.) were neglected while processing them. In spite of these facts, the related sciences and the secondary historical documents, if analysed properly, could give us extremely useful information about the lifestyle of Roma people, about their livelihood and their relationship to their environment if the researchers were not only interested in the texts but also in their real content and system of connections.

When dealing with Roma historical sources, one can be surprised by the number of anti-Roma laws and regulations. The number exceeds all expectations. Based on this fact, it would not be unwise to conclude that the Roma people lived in unfavorable conditions. In fact, due to the limited capability of the 16th and 17th-century-governments to carry out its regulations, it was not all that bad.

It can be easily proved by the fact that the "sinto" and "manus" languages managed to survive in an area characterised by long-term and stabile co-existence and division of labour between German, French, Dutch and Roma communities. Obviously, it was more typical in the margin than in the central areas. The Roma people successfully satisfied local economical demands and created business connections though not necessarily in the form of well-established economical units and not completely legally.

Considering the responsibility of the Roma people in the birth of the restrictive measures many forget about the historical environment, the age of Reformation and religious wars. The concept of "us" was merely limited to belonging to a certain religious community. Other sources of identity were having the same feudal master or the civic rights of a city. Those not within any of the above circles were exposed to persecution, distrust and the stigma of that of a stranger.

On the other hand, besides real-life experiences, guilds' fears of undesired business competition also contributed to the negative attitude against the Roma people.

With the above conditions given, the mere subsistence of the Roma people can be regarded as a great achievement. I believe there is a lot to learn, even today, from this attitude.

What are the elements of it?

First, language skills. Having a good command of languages enables them to handle conflicts better.

Second, marketable professional skills. These ranged from entertaining skills and metal work to traditional curing.

Third, empathy and psychological skills, with which they could make contact with other people more easily.

Fourth, the flexibility and the readiness of the Roma culture to adapt to new situations.

Fifth, their sense for business and—and because of this—their extended travels, their vast experiences of various countries in Europe. How did it help them to survive?

Well, upon encountering a new community, the Roma people always looked for the unsatisfied needs and tried to provide an appropriate service.

Roma people living in the Hungarian Kingdom had been enjoying certain privileges and autonomy for generations when the first anti-Roma laws appeared in Western Europe. This autonomy contained the following authorizations:

- tax autonomy: The Roma only had to pay direct tax to the sovereign. The annual amount of it was determined (1 Forint in two instalments). They were not obliged to pay tax to neither any landlords, nor any feudal counties.
- The Roma tax was collected by the appointed noble "Vajda"-in-chief.
- change of place autonomy: The Roma were free to change their place for the sake of better business opportunities. They were granted a free pass from the sovereign to assure their privilege.
- legislation autonomy: On one hand the Roma were allowed to settle their internal legal disputes according to the Roma customs or the "Vajda" could administer justice.
- On the other hand, in cases of a Roma vs. non-Roma legal dispute, the parties could turn for justice to the representative of the sovereign, to the noble "Vajda"-in-chief.

The central power guaranteed the realization of the above autonomy and protected the Roma from the 16th to the 18th century. The free pass of King Sigismund (1387–1437) is just one of the proofs for this kind of treatment.

Although certain researchers have questioned the authenticity of the pass, considering the passes of the later monarchs of Hungary (King Ulászló, King Mathias, Queen Isabella or even Ferenc Rákóczi II. from the beginning of the 18th century) the validity of the pass is beyond question.

Obviously following the Turkish attacks against Hungary and the disintegration of the country into three parts (the western part run by the Habsburgs, the central part by the Turks and Transylvania by the Hungarian Crown) the autonomy system of the Roma was not any more feasible.

It is interesting that in Transylvania, a territory where the Hungarian legal system and statehood subsisted, certain Roma groups managed to keep their autonomy as long as until 1848.

Of course, in case of lacking sufficient number of peasants, following the fading of the central power, famines, epidemics or the Tatar attacks, noble landlords were eager to restrict the Roma autonomy, not with great success, though. It is also true that many Roma people left the Roma community and settled down as feudal peasants.

In some extreme cases Roma individuals, mostly running away from slavery from the trans-Carpathian territories, were given to landlords as gifts. Obviously these events triggered the assimilation of the Roma people.

Question: what is the reason of this special treatment of the Roma in the Hungarian Kingdom while in most Western-European countries they were badly suppressed?

The autonomy appeared earlier in Hungary than the persecution of the Roma in Western-Europe. In addition, the contemporary cultural environment was not too closed, xenophobic and hostile against the Roma.

The Roma people became Christians in the Byzantine Empire. In the beginning it was regarded as the most important element of the community identity, consequently the Roma were held as part of the society. They accepted the authority of the monarch of the country they were momentarily roaming in. Their professional skills were highly respected. (The Roma people could make cannons, rifles, swords and other military equipment. They were skillful enough to repair fortresses and provide all sorts of services for the feudal armies. These skills proved indispensable for the Hungarian monarchs constantly at war with the Ottoman Empire.)

In Western Europe, on the other hand, the above demands of the army were already satisfied by the guilds. Therefore, Roma were considered as business competition and were seldom welcome.

The fear from the Ottoman invasion and the Reformation movement generated mistrust against the strangers, which later turned into xenophobia. There was a desperate need for strong state and church control. The Catholic Church was particularly distrustful with the Roma people who had come from the East, did not have tight roots in the society or belong to any institutionalised church.

The exploration of the New World in the meantime, with vast numbers of pagan people to be converted, changed the openness of Christianity. The new identity of European humanity restricted its members to European Christians. Just at the very last moment the Roma people did not make it to be a member of it.

Through the example of a part of the European and Romany history I have tried to demonstrate that the main events of history have caused different fates at the same period of time in groups with a very similar composition—some of these groups had a privileged situation whereas others suffered persecution.

Adaptation and survival were effective on both grounds, in most cases with the help of gained cultural experiences. The growth of social relations based upon the mechanical industry and the totalitarian states resulted in closing down these cultural experiences and undervaluing them and made the Roma people defenseless in these times.

At the same time due to the depth of previous traditions and experiences, the values are still available, with the help of which assertive, up to date and competitive knowledge, and cooperative integrative ideology, a current self-consciousness and identity can be built up.

The Roma children are usually educated in "gadjo" schools, which are non-Romany education institutions. These schools, however, are not sensitive to the needs of the

Romany students' identities, to the self-respect of their communities and thus the self-respect of the individuals. This has already led to serious conflicts. The Romany family and community have sensed this as an aggression against their existence and again their values—and did so not without reason.

They considered school as a foreigner that wants to make Romany children turn against their parents, so they resisted or simply found it a bad aptitude; they were indifferent to the things that happened around the school. Meanwhile, the real opportunities of integration are only available through the school system. So, the approach of the schools and of the education needs to be changed. The school is not only that of the 'Gadjo's, the non-Roma people, but is also the Roma peoples'.

The Roma values should be integrated into education, their community identity and self-esteem should be protected there as well. In order to achieve this goal, they should be provided with information about the values of their communities, the morals of their good history, so that they have a way to appreciate themselves and their communities. Through this, they will learn to appreciate other's values as well, which should be of course mutual.

The responsibility of historians and scientists cannot be overemphasised in this matter. Romany cultural values have to be written down, demonstrated and have to be made available for the school system. The example of the Roma heroes should be stated starting from the 'dzsat' warriors, through the Scottish Billi Marschal and the Hungarian Balázs Lippai ('hajdúcaptain', one of the officers of the Bocskai Uprising in 1604–1605), Ferenc Horváth (colonel Ferenc Horváth, the captain and officer of the Thököly Uprising in 1678–1685) and so on.

The historical significance of Romany handicraft should be emphasised (canons were presumably brought into Europe with the help of Roma people). All Roma children should learn about these values and of the many others that helped their community subsist through many thousands of years.

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New Perspectives in East Central European Historiography on Roma History

György Majtényi

In addition to historiographical traditions that claim objectivity and factual neutrality, there is a parallel approach that views the historian not as a passive chronicler, but as an active participant in shaping historical meaning—a narrator who constructs stories and communicates values. Every scholarly work, in this view, is a distinct intellectual creation, and the notion of a wholly neutral observer is a fiction. It is therefore essential that historians articulate their perspectives and aims from the very outset of their research. The historian's task extends far beyond the mere reconstruction of events. Their work plays a crucial role in shaping collective memory and public understandings of the past, including the complex relationships between majority and minority populations. This interpretive responsibility surpasses the task of deciphering internal logics or identifying individual and collective motivations. As Hayden White's meta-historical framework suggests, historiography is governed by its own narrative conventions and rhetorical strategies. Historical texts can—and should—be examined not only for their content, but also for their form, structure, and ideological implications.

All historical interpretation involves a degree of creativity and subjectivity. A reflective historian engages with sources analytically and imaginatively, with an acute awareness of their own position in the production of historical knowledge. Equally important is the recognition that sources themselves are not neutral vessels of information, but narrative constructions shaped by the ideological and argumentative frameworks of their time. They too warrant critical, contextualised reading. Such sensitivity becomes especially vital when addressing histories of marginalised groups. In the case of Roma communities in East Central Europe, historical inquiry is not only an academic pursuit, but also an ethical and human rights engagement. This essay explores the specific challenges faced by scholars working in this field today, and the responsibilities they bear in representing historically silenced voices.

For a long time, Roma communities were defined by external actors in the public sphere, primarily the non-Roma majority or the state. Consequently, it is crucial

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for historians to contextualise former definitions of Romani identity based on the perceptions of the majority as reflected in historical sources. Not only the sources created by contemporary authorities, but also the historical works based on these sources often reflect the viewpoints of state power and the majority, which, in turn, perpetuate stereotypes and negate the minority perspective. Not only historical works, but even critical sociological research in the East Central European region did not rely on Roma perspectives, neglecting self-identification. Empirical sociology used outsider definitions—regarding as Roma those individuals perceived as such by the majority population—in order to facilitate representative studies, as the public declaration of Roma identity was often impeded by prejudices. Sociological investigations have frequently linked Roma identity indirectly with poverty, marginalization, and even social exclusion. From this perspective, it also followed that the separation of the Roma community was determined not primarily by internal cohesion, but by the exclusionary behaviour of the majority society, which sustained the minority group's disadvantaged social position.

One pivotal question in Roma historiography is defining the researcher's position. The historian must not only reflect on her sources or the works of others but also on her own research position. A reflexive-critical approach—i.e., the awareness of external constructions—is essential for interpreting sources. A fundamental issue in Romani studies is the role of Roma researchers in shaping the historical narrative concerning Roma communities. A democratic historical discourse cannot be conceived without the inclusion of internal perspectives and interpretations. There are many perspectives on researching Roma history, but non-Roma researchers must approach sources that often depict the minority's situation from a majority perspective with particular sensitivity. This involves a critical reflection on their own standpoint, avoiding the pretense of 'neutrality,' and taking seriously the epistemological contributions of Roma academic and non-academic authors. This is reflected in the slogan of critical Roma research: "Nothing about us without us." It is important to present all dimensions of Roma history, including the social contexts that have shaped the lives of Roma communities across different countries and societies. Non-Roma historians can also play a significant role in the historical writing on Roma—for example, by holding up a mirror to majority societies and revealing the historical roots and mechanisms of prejudice and exclusion.

The question of activist research often arises in Romani studies. Although academic researchers traditionally distinguish between the supposedly objective scientific observer and the committed activist, this boundary is far from clear-cut: both are part of the same discourse. Academic historians often distance themselves from activist researchers, questioning their methods and results. (However, East Central European historians also direct such criticisms at one another. Academic researchers from different nation-states

often clash over interpretations of the shared regional past, each framing it through the lens of their own national perspective. This highlights that relativism is not exclusive to activist scholarship but can also characterise academic interpretations.) Indeed, activist researchers have played a vital role in advancing the study of marginalised groups—also in the case of Roma history. A key contribution of activist scholarship lies in its ability to question and revise dominant historical narratives that reflect the prevailing perspectives of state institutions. Membership in national academic institutions does not, by itself, confer epistemological superiority—nor does academic rank guarantee impartiality or comprehensiveness. More broadly, it is essential to ensure that members of marginalised communities have the opportunity to participate in the exploration and representation of their own histories. The democratization of access to historical sources—through initiatives such as community-based research and the creation of open-access digital archives—enables Roma communities to actively engage in the production of historical knowledge.

In general, it is an important goal to ensure that members of minority communities can participate in uncovering their own past and in shaping the historical narratives about it. The democratization of access to historical sources, such as through community-based research or the creation of freely accessible digital archival databases, provides an opportunity for Roma people to research and interpret their own histories. A democratic approach to Roma history thus not only serves to uncover the past but also strengthens minority identity and promotes broader goals of social justice.

In East Central European historiography, Roma communities continue to be represented predominantly through state and political narratives. A primary reason for this lies in the nature of the archival sources, which are mostly preserved in state repositories and tend to depict Roma as marginalised, needy populations. Archival documents—such as police and court records—typically portray Roma life in situations of conflict, and predominantly from the vantage point of majority society. Recent scholarship has sought to critically reinterpret these materials and to construct alternative narratives that centre the perspectives of Roma communities themselves. Such counter-histories, drawing on Foucauldian discourse theory, aim not only to recover the silenced memories of oppressed groups but also to challenge the hegemonic power structures that have historically shaped knowledge production. This approach enables morally grounded reflections on both past and present social injustices, as well as a critical revision of the discourses surrounding them.

One of the dominant interpretive frameworks applied to Roma history in the region is the modernization paradigm. This theory tends to frame social development as a process orchestrated by the state—historically absorbing Roma communities into the nation-state project by defining and constraining their social roles. Within this framework, however, Roma are often positioned as representatives of archaic or

premodern modes of existence, and their relationship to modernization is typically characterised as ambivalent or contradictory. From the perspective of minority communities, both the self-ascribed altruism and the presumed beneficence of state interventions warrant critical scrutiny. The theory of "multiple modernities" challenges the unilinear, teleological narratives that have long dominated East Central European historiography. It posits that distinct historical phenomena may coexist across diverse temporalities, rather than being subsumed under a single, progressive developmental trajectory. This interpretive shift calls for a reconsideration of the state's role in modernization, as well as a critical re-examination of "backwardness" as an interpretive framework. Viewed from this perspective, the coerced or violent "modernization" of marginalised groups may be understood as a form of internal colonization within nation-states—an expansion of state power over minority populations.

Consequently, recent Roma historiography endeavors not only to reconstruct historical realities but also to engage in a creative, community-centred project aimed at reinforcing collective identity. One of the foremost objectives of historiography on this subject in the region is to move beyond earlier nationalist and anti-egalitarian narratives of nation-states and to generate alternative historical accounts. Importantly, such accounts must increasingly grapple with transnational dynamics. While efforts to foster unity among Roma communities have deep historical roots, they became particularly pronounced following the First World Roma Congress in 1971. Early Roma nation-building projects in the 1970s and 1980s often centred on the creation and mobilization of national symbols, the standardization of language, and the construction of collective memory—strategies that echoed the symbolic repertoires of nation-state nationalisms in their struggles for recognition. In recent decades, however, these movements have diverged from this tradition, increasingly adopting a human rights-based framework and aligning themselves with European institutions such as the European Union, the Council of Europe, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

The formation of Roma minority and national identities, however, is not solely an endogenous process. State institutions, as well as international and transnational organisations, play a pivotal role in shaping these identities. In the post–Cold War period, the Roma emerged as the largest national minority within an increasingly unified Europe. Since then, international organisations that recognise Roma groups living in different countries as part of the same national minority, acknowledge this demographic significance, and extend collective rights to Roma communities have assumed an increasingly influential role in shaping both Roma policies and identity discourses. This raises an important question: What is the role of transnational space in the formation of Roma identities, representations, and historical narratives today? One key objective of the transnational Roma movement is the creation of spaces for national

collective memory—particularly through the commemoration of the Porajmos and the establishment of shared memorial sites. At the same time, as previously noted, Roma history cannot be adequately conceptualised in isolation from other histories. In the case of the Porajmos, for example, it is essential to frame it not only as a collective national tragedy for Roma communities, but also as a universal European tragedy. Responsibility did not lie solely with the crimes of the Nazi German regime against the Roma; these atrocities were perpetrated by Europeans against Europeans—by non-Roma Hungarians against Roma Hungarians, non-Roma Slovaks against Roma Slovaks, non-Roma Czechs against Roma Czechs, and so on. Representing this history from multiple perspectives is crucial not only for majority societies but also for acknowledging the complex, multifaceted identities that characterise European Roma.

Since the 1970s, numerous historical works have presented Roma history from an internal Romani perspective as a diaspora narrative—framed as a unified story of dispersion from a presumed common homeland, India. These accounts often share structural similarities with modern Jewish historiography, with the notable difference that the Roma lack a nation-state. The perspective offered in such works is one of mutual discovery and identity consolidation. However, in the case of the Roma, this process of nation-building—often referred to as transnational nationalism—unfolds not through the institutions of a nation-state, but rather within a diffuse, transnational European space, mediated by loosely connected networks and organisations. Unlike traditional nation-state frameworks, international human rights regimes provide relatively open institutional contexts with limited coercive power. Yet, they offer inclusive ideological platforms for diverse Roma communities. These regimes foster a form of unity and shared collective identity that is not rooted in state authority, but in interpersonal relationships and localised, community-based affiliations.

In East Central Europe, the revision of historiographical traditions shaped by nation-state structures and majority perspectives poses a significant challenge for scholars of Roma history. Simultaneously, the adoption of a transnational perspective introduces additional complexities, particularly in terms of adequately representing the internal diversity of Roma communities. One of the most urgent tasks of contemporary historiography on Roma history is the construction of narratives that can simultaneously convey a sense of collective belonging while acknowledging intra-group heterogeneity. This objective may be advanced also through a micro-historical approach that foregrounds individual, local, national, and regional narratives as both sources and articulations of a shared Roma identity. Such an approach counters the tendency to reinterpret these accounts solely through globally institutionalised frameworks of transnational knowledge production and standardised historical representation. Ultimately, the integration of a transnational perspective in Roma historiography necessitates a sustained and careful negotiation between unity and diversity. It is only

through such narrative pluralism that historiography can authentically capture the lived experiences and voices of Roma communities—transcending earlier externally imposed identities and the exclusionary, nation-state-centred historical frameworks of the past.

Studies

East Central European Historical Studies 3, no. 1 (2025): 23–34

Scholarship on Ottoman Gypsies/Roma: A Historiographical Review[1]

Burak Akin

Abstract

The Ottoman Empire, governing a diverse multi-ethnic realm for over six centuries, left a substantial archival legacy that enables a deeper, more nuanced exploration of Roma history beyond externally produced accounts. This study conducts a historiographical review of Turkish-language scholarship on Ottoman Roma, emphasising the diverse archival sources—such as tax registers, court records, and kanunnames—and methodological approaches employed by researchers. It highlights how earlier works offered general overviews, whereas later studies like Altınöz's 2013 monograph integrate systematic primary-source analysis, particularly of Ottoman defter entries. By mapping the trajectory from marginal mentions to in-depth archival monographs and doctoral dissertations, the review illustrates both scholarly progress and persistent gaps in coverage, especially regarding chronological cohesion and Roma self-representation. The findings underline the transformative potential of Ottoman archival research in revealing the social, economic, and legal dimensions of Roma life under imperial governance. Ultimately, the study advocates for further comparative and interdisciplinary investigations that foreground marginalised voices and critically engage with source limitations.

Keywords: Ottoman archives, Roma historiography, primary sources, tax registers, archival monographs, Turkish-language scholarship

[1] This paper is a revised version of a study originally written in Hungarian, titled "*Törökországi kutatások az Oszmán Birodalom cigányságáról*."

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The Ottoman Empire, which ruled over diverse regions for more than six centuries and included peoples of various religions and cultures, left behind a wealth of archival material. Given that most of our knowledge of Roma comes from sources produced by external communities and authorities, examining different types of historical sources over a broad time frame offers a more balanced and objective basis for research. From this perspective, Ottoman archival materials provide valuable insights into the history of the Roma. This study aims to provide a general review of research conducted in Türkiye on the Ottoman Gypsies[2], focusing on the variety of sources and methods used by researchers.

First, I introduce the earliest publications on Ottoman Gypsies, followed by three works published as books. Then, I shift the focus to researchers whose primary area of study is the Gypsies of the Ottoman Empire, including doctoral dissertations and other works. Finally, I briefly mention the works of scholars who, in addition to their main research areas, have also published on the Roma.

Historical research related to the Ottoman Gypsies[3] began to attract scholars' attention in Türkiye relatively late, starting in the early 2000s. Prior to this, Tayyip Gökbilgin and Enver Şerifgil each published a study on the subject; however, these works did not go beyond providing general information, nor did the authors pursue further research on the topic. The focus of Gökbilgin's work, which is an encyclopedia article, mainly covers the Gypsies of Rumelia, their taxation and organisation after explaining their origin and first appearance in official documents. In addition to these, he also makes brief comments on the Gypsies of Anatolia and their connections and relations to certain groups of the region; he concludes his writing by describing the customs and occupations of the Gypsies in a general sense.[4] Şerifgil's study, similar to Gökbilgin's, centres around the Gypsies of Rumelia but focuses solely on the 16th century.[5] While his work filled an important gap in the field and paved the way for further research, it also contains biases and stereotypes, given that it was published in 1981.

The first comprehensive work in Turkish is associated with İsmail Altınöz and was published in 2013;[6] it is based on his doctoral thesis from 2005.[7] In the introduction,

[2] Editorial note: The term *Gypsy* is used in this journal issue primarily in historical, legal, or ethnographic contexts, reflecting the terminology of the periods under discussion. Due to its negative connotations—often rooted in long-standing prejudice and stereotyping—the term is widely regarded as problematic. The authors have made a deliberate effort to use the term *Roma* wherever appropriate, in keeping with scholarly conventions and the self-identification efforts of Romani individuals and communities.

[3] Throughout the study, I use Gypsy and Roma interchangeably to reflect the terminology used in the sources and existing scholarship.

[4] Gökbilgin 1977: 420–426.

[5] Şerifgil 1981: 117–144.

[6] Altınöz 2013.

[7] Altınöz 2005. For other publications of İsmail Altınöz on Ottoman Gypsies, see Altınöz 1995: 22–29; Altınöz 2010: 116–128; Altınöz 2011: 91–106; Altınöz 2015a: 80–85; Altınöz 2015b: 5702–5706; Altınöz 2015c: 21–32; Altınöz 2020: 291–294.

the scholar refers to his earlier work from 1995 as the first contemporary scientific study on the Ottoman Gypsies.[8] He adds that some earlier research in Turkish was aimed at a general audience and primarily focused on popular topics. Furthermore, he highlights that the studies outside of Turkish scholarship mostly relied on secondary rather than primary sources, limiting the depth of insights they could provide.[9] In fact, before Altınöz, no research had been conducted using archival materials that covered the early Ottoman period through to the empire's dissolution in such detail. Moreover, no similarly detailed volume has been published up to the present day. For this reason, I would like to give this work greater attention in my current study. First, I will briefly outline the content of the work and then closely examine it by adopting a more critical approach.

İsmail Altınöz's research draws extensively on archival sources, with the tax registers being among the most frequently used. These registers provide information about the number of Roma living in the empire, their places of residence, names, religion, occupations, and the taxes they paid, which Altınöz analysed extensively in his work. The book is divided into four chapters. In the first chapter, following the introduction, he provides etymological explanations and traces the origins of the Romani people, then lists legends about their migrations. The researcher presents the social role of the Roma in an interesting way through proverbs and sayings from different cultures. These are particularly important as they show how the Roma are embedded in the collective memory of the people with whom they interacted.[10]

In the second chapter, the researcher narrows the focus to the Ottoman Gypsies. He emphasises that the empire essentially did not differentiate its subjects based on ethnicity but instead applied religious divisions. However, Muslim Gypsies were treated differently from the rest of the Muslim subjects: Gypsies, regardless of whether they were Muslim or not, had to pay the head tax (*jizya*). According to a *kanunname* (legal regulation) from the era of Süleyman I, Muslim Gypsies paid 22 akçes, while non-Muslim Gypsies paid 25 akçes, unlike the rest of the Muslim population, who had no head tax obligations.[11] As stated by the author, there could be two reasons for this: one is that the officials questioned whether the Gypsies were sincere in their faith.[12] He explains the other in the fourth chapter: due to their nomadic lifestyle, the continuous collection of taxes was uncertain; thus, higher tax burdens were imposed on them from the outset.[13] Following this topic, Altınöz explores the places where the Gypsies

[8] Altınöz 1995: 22–29.
[9] Altınöz 2013: 14.
[10] Further reading on this topic, see Yıldız 2007: 61–82; Ergüt 2021: 85–94.
[11] For the English translation of this *kanunname*, see: Çelik 2004: 15–16.
[12] Altınöz 2013: 77.
[13] Altınöz 2013: 236. For more information, discussions, and alternative approaches to the Gypsy head tax policy, see Marushiakova–Popov 2001: 28–30; Ginio 2004: 117–144; Çelik 2018: 227–230; Kasumović 2020: 95–144; Dingeç 2021: 35–56.

lived and travelled, pointing out that, according to detailed tax registers, significantly fewer Roma resided in Anatolia compared to Rumelia. He also mentions an ethnic group called the *Abdal*, whose communities led a nomadic lifestyle similar to that of the Roma. The author calls attention to the fact that contemporary locals and later researchers also counted this ethnic group as Roma, which he considers incorrect.[14]

Through archival materials, we also gain insight into complaints filed by local residents against the Gypsies, as well as the punishments imposed on them as a result. Altınöz lists several examples in which a disruptive group was expelled from the area, or, if the severity of the crime warranted it, the offender was sent to serve as a galley slave. The chapter also touches on *kanunnames* concerning the Gypsies.[15] We learn that the first *kanunname* was enacted during the reign of Mehmed II, which addressed the tax obligations of Gypsy subjects. Another important topic of the chapter concerns the Çingene Sanjak, with its administrative centre in Kırkkilise[16] in Rumelia. This sanjak served as the administrative centre for the entire Roma population of Rumelia and Istanbul. Altınöz claims that this was designated in 1520 during the rule of Suleiman I.[17] Furthermore, the author highlights that the *kanunnames* concerning the Gypsies restricted their areas of travel, prohibited marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims, and imposed punitive taxes in cases where a Muslim Gypsy mingled with non-Muslim groups.[18]

The third chapter examines the population and taxation of settled Gypsies; more specifically, it focuses on the Gypsies who settled in Istanbul, particularly in the Üsküdar town, as analysed through records from the Üsküdar Sharia court. The chapter includes a dialogue taken from Evliya Çelebi's travelogue, which is significant as it provides a glimpse into a Gypsy individual's perspective on power. After the accession of Sultan Mehmed IV to the throne, he wished to appoint one of his favoured circus wrestlers and jugglers, a Gypsy subject named Ahmet Kuli, as a Janissary agha. Ahmet Kuli declined this prestigious offer, replying, "*My sultan, we are a circus company, and since the time of the pharaohs, there have been no viziers or Janissary aghas among our ancestors. Such thoughts only come to a pharaoh who senses the end is near.*" Following this, he requested permission from the sultan to make a

[14] Altınöz 2013: 87–93.
[15] Altınöz 2013: 105–109.
[16] Modern day Kırklareli.
[17] Altınöz 2013: 116. However, Emine Dingeç points out that there is no clear evidence regarding the exact date of this sanjak's establishment, with the earliest indirect reference appearing during the reign of Bayezid II (1481–1512). Dingeç 2009: 35.
[18] Altınöz 2013: 130–137.

pilgrimage to Mecca.[19] The chapter concludes with the number of Roma recorded in the first census of 1831: 29,530 in Rumelia and 7,143 in Anatolia.[20]

In the final, fourth chapter, the scholar sheds light on the socio-economic situation of the Ottoman Gypsies. He begins by describing the tax burdens imposed on the Roma, as well as their occupations and roles within Ottoman entertainment culture. The work reveals that the Ottoman Empire did not persecute the Roma who wandered within its territory; instead, it sought to regulate their lives through *kanunnames* and aimed to integrate their communities into society by mandating settlement.[21]

İsmail Altınöz's book fills an important gap in the field. Although some critiques exist, only one review by Tuğrul Özcan has been published to date.[22] Özcan's review primarily offers descriptive commentary rather than critical analysis, with his main critique noting the absence of maps illustrating areas with high Roma populations and their distribution. In my current study, I intend to take the opportunity to analyse the book in greater depth and offer a new review that approaches it from a different perspective than Özcan's. I would like to emphasise that this research holds a unique position due to its extensive use of archival materials and the substantial amount of statistical information it provides. In this regard, my critiques do not pertain to the value of the study itself. Nevertheless, the author does not take into account that such a complex topic cannot be adequately explored solely from a historical perspective. The book covers an overly broad time span, utilising documents from the entire duration of the Ottoman Empire, but does not organise these chronologically. Although society changed significantly over the centuries under study, the book combines sources from different centuries within the same analysis. The work mainly focuses on the economic situation of the Gypsies in the 16th and 17th centuries, drawing on primary sources for this period; however, for sections concerning the 18th, 19th, and the first quarter of the 20th century, it relies mostly on secondary sources.

As previously mentioned, the scholar examines archival sources in detail and provides useful statistical data. In contrast, he takes a less critical approach to secondary sources containing qualitative information on social, cultural, and linguistic aspects and does not analyse them thoroughly. The evaluation of these topics is left to the reader's judgment. Another methodological deficiency of the work is that it presents the Ottoman Roma only from a one-sided perspective, primarily through the documents of officials and non-Roma subjects who filed complaints against them. The voices of the Roma themselves appear only in a few instances. This representation could have been broadened if the author had adopted a more critical approach and applied source criticism.

[19] Altınöz 2013: 182.
[20] Altınöz 2013: 224.
[21] Altınöz 2013: 301–307.
[22] Özcan 2014: 803–805.

In the same year, 2013, Sinan Şanlıer's book on the Ottoman Gypsies was also published.[23] This work presents the position of the Roma within the empire in the context of legal regulations. Following a brief introduction, the book details a total of eight *kanunnames* aimed at regulating the lives of the Gypsy population. The first of these, as mentioned earlier, was issued during the reign of Sultan Mehmed II,[24] and the last came into effect in 1870. Alongside photographs and transcriptions of the manuscripts, the author includes simplified Turkish versions and interpretations to reach a broader audience.

The other source edition, dated 2015, belongs to İbrahim Sezgin[25] and is the first publication of the Institute of Roman Language and Culture Studies, established in 2014 at Trakya University, the first and only institute of its kind in Turkish universities.[26] Sezgin presents 83 documents organised chronologically rather than thematically; the earliest manuscript dates from 1495, and the latest from 1911. The book includes photographs and transcriptions of the documents. However, apart from the brief introductory section and summaries, it offers no commentary on the documents or the situation of Ottoman Gypsies. Therefore, readers are expected to have knowledge of Ottoman Turkish and experience in reading different types of manuscripts.

In the following section, the focus will be on scholars whose research centres on the Ottoman Gypsies, including those with significant publications in the field. I would like to emphasise that my main aim is to briefly introduce the foundations of their work, rather than to provide a detailed examination or comparisons with other studies in the field.

Emine Dingeç, whose 2004 doctoral dissertation[27] focused on the role of the Çingene Sanjak in centralising the administration of all Roma in Rumelia and Istanbul, has conducted several studies in this field. Another focus of her research is the Çingene Müsellem Sanjak, to which Muslim Gypsies settled in Rumelian towns belonged, providing various supply services within different units of the army. These services, for example, included shipbuilding, mining, blacksmithing, transporting food supplies, and repairing fortresses. In her other works, the scholar examines different aspects of the Ottoman Gypsies, including their migration, socio-economic status, and the empire's policy toward them.[28]

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[23] Şanlıer 2013.

[24] Although this *kanun* is undated, researchers agree that it was enacted under Mehmed II's rule. For more information, see Akgündüz 1990: 397.

[25] Sezgin 2015.

[26] Institute of Roman Language and Culture Studies (Roman Dili ve Kültürü Araştırmaları Enstitüsü). (n.d.). Retrieved June 20, 2025, from https://rae-en.trakya.edu.tr/

[27] Dingeç 2004.

[28] Dingeç 2007: 211–229; Dingeç 2009: 33–46; Dingeç 2015: 547–554; Dingeç 2016a: 68–76; Dingeç 2016b: 1211–1223; Dingeç 2017a: 89–95; Dingeç 2017:137–154; Dingeç 2019: 587–604; Dingeç 2020: 155–166; Dingeç 2021a: 95–108; Dingeç 2021b: 35–56.

The Sharia court records are among the most important and reliable sources for understanding various layers of Ottoman society.[29] Faika Çelik's 2013 doctoral dissertation focuses on cases involving Gypsies found in the Üsküdar Sharia court records between 1530 and 1585.[30] In her studies on Ottoman Gypsies, Çelik addresses various questions across different periods and perspectives of Ottoman history, from the early fifteenth century onward.[31]

Similar to the works of the researchers mentioned above, Hasan Ali Cengiz publishes on the Gypsies of the 16th and 17th centuries, focusing particularly on those in Rumelia. His studies primarily use tax registers to examine the demographic and socio-economic conditions of the Ottoman Gypsies in specific Rumelian settlements.[32] Another key source for exploring the socio-economic conditions of the Gypsies is the *temettuat* registers, which form the foundation of Muhammed Tağ's research on the 19th century.[33]

Egemen Yılgür's research contributes to understanding the situation of the Roma in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, offering valuable insights into shifting perceptions of the Roma, identity formations within their communities, changes in tax policies, their evolving role in the military, and the implications for their Muslim identity.[34]

Ömer Ulusoy is also among the scholars publishing on the 19th-century Roma. In his initial study, he explores the situation of Muslim Roma in the Balkans, particularly in Bulgaria, and their relationship with the Ottoman Empire and its policies.[35] In the subsequent work, Ulusoy focuses on Roma identity in the Ottoman Empire, analysing the image of the Roma through Ahmet Mithat Efendi's 1887 literary novel *Çingene* (Gypsy), the "Gypsy" entry in Şemseddin Sami's 1891 encyclopedia *Kāmûsü'l-a'lâm*, and a report on the living conditions and situation of the Roma, written in 1891 by Sadi Efendi, a teacher in Siroz (Serres).[36]

In this study, I reviewed the major works on Ottoman Gypsies written by scholars in Türkiye. Rather than listing all publications in the field, my goal was to select studies that used different sources and covered different topics. I focused primarily

[29] A total of one hundred *sicils* from the Istanbul Sharia court records were digitised and transcribed. These records are now accessible to readers and researchers through an online database titled İstanbul Kadı Sicilleri. (n.d.). Retrieved June 20, 2025, from https://kadisicilleri.istanbul/

[30] Çelik 2013.

[31] Çelik 2003: 161–182; Çelik 2004: 1–21; Çelik 2007: 173–199; Çelik 2013: 577–597; Çelik 2018a: 215–243; Çelik 2018b: 249–266; Çelik 2020: 189–219.

[32] Cengiz 2022a: 1–21; Cengiz 2022b: 21–34; Cengiz 2023: 206–224.

[33] Tağ 2017a: 285–293; Tağ 2017b: 523–529; Tağ 2018: 303–319; Tağ 2021: 173–190.

[34] Yılgür 2018: 264–302. For Yılgür's other work on Gypsy groups in the 18th-century Rumelia, see Yılgür 2021: 93–119.

[35] Ulusoy 2012: 126–144.

[36] Ulusoy 2013: 245–256. Regarding the transcription of Sadi Efendi's report, see Uçar 2009: 128–141. For further discussion on this report, see Çelik 2013: 577–597; Dingeç 2021: 95–108.

on studies written in Turkish language, as these are often inaccessible to non-Turkish readers. This was also a reason for giving particular attention to the book by İsmail Altınöz, considering that it is not widely heard of outside of Türkiye. As mentioned at the beginning, research on the Roma began notably late, and to date, only a single monograph attempting to cover the Roma throughout the entire history of the Ottoman Empire has been produced. While this work has methodological deficiencies, it fills an important gap. Most researchers rely on sources from the 16th and 17th centuries, with relatively few publications addressing later periods. The majority of studies focus on the Gypsies of Rumelia and Istanbul, with a significant lack of research on Gypsy groups in other parts of the empire.

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The Situation of Migrant Roma Groups in State Socialist Hungary in the 1950s

Zsuzsanna Mikó

Abstract

This study explores the situation of migrant Roma groups in socialist Hungary during the 1950s, with a focus on a major criminal case that culminated in 1961. It examines recent interpretations of state socialist Roma policies, emphasising the persistent marginalization of Roma communities despite official rhetoric promoting integration. Drawing on court documents, the paper analyses how the authorities constructed the image of Roma lifestyle and criminality, often blending ethnic and social prejudices. Through micro-historical investigation, the study presents the everyday life, social relations, and hardships of a large Roma family, as seen through the lens of the authorities' discriminatory practices. The research highlights the value and limitations of judicial sources in reconstructing Roma history, revealing both the oppressive structures of the state and the fragmented voices of Roma individuals during the period.

Keywords: Roma history, socialist Hungary, state policy, court documents, criminalization, assimilation, discrimination, microhistory

Recent interpretations of the state socialist Roma policy

In recent years, several comprehensive studies on the Roma policy of the state socialist period have been published.[1] One of the central questions of these analyses has been the extent to which the 1961 Party Resolution brought about a change in the approach to power. One approach is Erna Sághy's situation analysis. In her opinion, the most important principle of the resolution was the definition of the social status

[1] Majtényi–Majtényi 2016; Varsa 2017; Sághy 2008.

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of the Roma. The resolution considered the solution to the 'Roma question' to be that the Roma could not be treated as a nationality, as this would preserve the social segregation of the Roma. The resolution also analysed society's attitude towards the Roma, stating as a fact the prejudices that existed in society. The decision also addresses the tense relationship between the Roma and the authorities. Sághy cites the Prosecutor General's Circular No. 104/1962 on the prosecution's action against adverse racial discrimination against Hungarian citizens of Roma origin. A particular virtue of the analysis is that it presents the decision of the Czechoslovak Communist Party as a precursor to the Hungarian Party decision. The Czechoslovak solution was assimilation and assimilation by violent means.[2] In 1958 a law was passed regulating the resettlement of migrants.

It is clear from Eszter Varsa's analysis that the situation of the Roma did not improve during the period of the socialist state, despite the slogans. They tried to 're-educate' the members of the community on the basis of the stereotypes of ' work-shy' and 'lazy', even using the tools of eugenics. In Eszter Varsa's interpretation, the 1961 party resolution represented this prejudiced vision translated into the language of socialist ideology.

Balázs Majtényi and György Majtényi were the most comprehensive in presenting the state socialist policy perspective. In their opinion, state socialist ideology clearly aimed at building a homogeneous nation-state. This was also what was sought in the case of the Roma, and the party leadership therefore clearly rejected the idea of the Roma as a nationality group. The solution was seen in the integration of the Roma into large-scale industry and in resettlement. Forcing Roma into wage labour did not mean their assimilation, but rather their exclusion from the workplace reinforced their community identity. The authors point out that physical violence was also common during the Kádár era. The use of coercion by the authorities, especially the police, was a method of coercion, and a prejudiced view was also introduced into the investigative methodology.

The source value of court documents

The political intentions and direction can therefore be discerned from the party files, while the analysis of court documents provides an opportunity to illustrate the approach adopted by the authorities in their proceedings. A difficult question, and one which is not reflected in the case files, is how the political direction of the party influenced the court decisions.

[2] Donert 2017; Sokolova 2008.

The court documents, in addition to revealing the perspective of power, also provide a picture of the outside attitude with which the majority society treated the Roma. In relation to the Roma defendants, the authorities appear to have gathered information beyond the legal requirements of the procedure, in effect 'snooping' on Roma culture and personal relationships. The documents produced by the authorities showed the power perspective of the majority society. The judicial process was based solely on the data collected by the police, and there is no evidence that the judicial process took into account any aspect other than the police process. And in the case of the police, there is material on how people of Roma origin were treated.[3]

However, the court documents also provide an opportunity to hear the voice of the Roma community. In the case file, which contains more than 10,000 pages, we can also hear the voice of the Roma. The administration also recorded their narratives, and while the court ignored this in most cases, it is of paramount importance for the historian in exploring the Roma politics of the period.

In my research, I am looking at how court documents can be used to describe the life of the Roma community. How information gathered for the purpose of the proceedings can be used through source criticism to illustrate the Roma politics of the period.

The analysis of the documentary material processed in my study gives me the opportunity to use it as a case study to present the situation of a large Roma family living in Hungary in the late 1950s. The aim of the micro-historical processing is to describe of the lifestyle and personal relationships of the individuals. Documents of the time use the term gypsy, which at the time not only denoted ethnicity but was also used as a social category. In my study, I use the term Roma throughout.

The trial at first instance

The story I will present in my paper is based on court documents, which, in addition to the court verdicts, also provide data on the way of life of the Roma community of the period.

On 9 June 1961, after a 91-day trial, the Kecskemét County Court handed down a very severe verdict against 29 defendants in a case that was regarded by the authorities as a series of crimes going back several years. Fardi Bakró I and Tamás II Rostás were sentenced to death, Péter Pecó Sztojka, György Tigris Rostás, Rudolf István Bajka Rostás, Lajos Laci Rostás and Lajos Rostás I. Fardiné Rostás Mura, sentenced to life imprisonment.[4] The number of defendants increased steadily throughout the

[3] Horváth 1955: 254–264.

[4] Lajos Rostás and his associates. BCA [Budapest City Archives = BCA], XXV. 4. a. 2809/1962.

proceedings, from nine at the beginning to 29 at the time of the judgment, for a series of offences considered by the authorities to be criminal offences.[5]

In its reasoning for the judgment, the court stressed that all but four of the defendants were of Roma nationality, and in describing the personal circumstances of the defendants, it noted that the Romas were a single kinship.

On the morning of 20 January 1960, a widow, living alone, was found with her head split open with a shovel. The victim, Gyuláné Csorba's widowed husband, was a Roma musician of national fame who had travelled abroad. The court found that the motive for the murder was money, as the widow had a high pension, for which she had sued and was paid a higher amount retroactively after winning the case. The size of the sum was the subject of fabulous rumours in the farm community. The court also wondered what the Roma caravan would have needed the large sum for. Id. Fardi Rostás and his family planned to buy a plot of land near Mogyoród and build a hut and a Roma house on it. The price of the land was 5000 forints, of which they could pay 2700 forints. For comparison, the average monthly income at that time was 1575 HUF. So the family had to save quite a lot for this project. The remaining amount was committed to be paid in February or March. There was no written contract, only a receipt for the money and a verbal agreement that if the remaining money was not paid, the money paid would be forfeited.

However, if we were dealing with "just" a murder-for-profit case, we could probably just outline a "simple" court case. In this case, however, it is a much more complex case, as the authorities have spent time and money investigating the 1950s lifestyle of a caravan of Romas. From October 1959 until the time of the murder, the court's reasoning followed the daily life of the Roma caravan led by Fardi Rostás almost day by day. The life of the large Roma family is, of course, seen through the eyes of the authorities, which in many cases gives a tendentious picture, since when reading the documents, one can almost feel the complete incomprehension and horror of the authorities at the events of everyday life. The fact that only written documents can be processed, and that a considerable number of tape recordings are not yet available due to a lack of technical facilities, is also hampering the work of the historian. This distorts the picture, since the records of the interrogations of the accused show that almost all of them were either illiterate or, at least judging by the way they signed

[5] In the case of Fardi Bakró Rostás, in addition to murder, theft committed as a repeat offender, crimes against youth, including one case of corrupting a minor, intellectual public misappropriation for illicit gain, public nuisance by exposing himself and his family to moral turpitude, a crime against the public utility by felling trees, a crime against public property by stealing wood and a crime of leaving an accident victim in a hit-and-run. In the case of Tamás Rostás, in addition to murder, he was sentenced for 3 counts of robbery, forcible sexual intercourse, theft, tree felling, theft and destruction of identity cards and public nuisance.

their names, had little idea of the meaning of what was being recorded. The audio tapes may thus also testify to the credibility of the minutes recorded in police and prosecutors' offices.

The court also made findings about the Roma caravan's lifestyle that were not relevant to the subject matter of the proceedings. In its opinion, the defendants could be divided into three groups. The first group consisted of those who had consistently engaged in vagrancy, absconding and a criminal lifestyle. In the second group were those who oscillated between a settled and working lifestyle and between a wandering and criminal lifestyle. Finally, the third group included the most vulnerable, deceived non-criminals.

As an example of the first group of lifestyles, the court cited the main defendant, Fardi Rostás and his family, who, according to the authorities, had led a roving lifestyle throughout his life with his wife and sons. Between 1954 and 1956, Mr Fardi Rostás had a rudimentary house in Dunaegyháza, but he only stayed there during the cold winter months. He had registered homes in various municipalities, where he built a hut dug into the ground on land owned by the municipality or a tent made of foliage or stalks that could not be heated in winter. Fardi also had several carts and horses, and the horses were well looked after. He frequently bought and sold horses. What was most striking to the court about their lifestyle was that the defendants were used to sleeping on bare ground in the cold winter. The snow was piled up, straw was spread on the ground, and blankets and duvets were laid over them. They carried large quantities of underwear, which they did not wash but threw away at the campsite. The children did not go to school and the women of the family earned money by begging.

Some of the second group of defendants had served their compulsory military service and also worked seasonal jobs on a state farm. In this, he followed the example of his parents, who were Romas who led a partly settled lifestyle, working in the fields and tilling earth. Other defendants had a better family background, as their father owned a small house and a few acres of land. Although the house with a kitchen and a room was home to 20–30 people, it still allowed the accused to work as a labourer for a construction company and a crop-traffic company. The accused tried to settle down with his wife's family, but the Roma caravan proved to be more powerful. "It is a habit of Romas on the move that when an individual in their circle or kinship changes to a normal working life, they ignore this, go to him, invade his home en masse and try to involve him in committing crimes,"[6] the court president concluded.

The third group was made up of those who "assisted" the Roma caravan's roving lifestyle. This included the defendant, whose farm was used to camp near the Roma caravan even before 1945. He also bought the stolen goods. Of course, he also had

[6] Lajos Rostás and his associates. BCA, XXV. 4. a. 2809/1962.

an official source of livelihood, in the terminology of the time he was a middle class, and during the court proceedings he was already a member of the farmer's cooperative.

The court tried to map out the typical lifestyle of the caravan. One of the typical acts was theft of wood, which, in his opinion, was part of the caravan's way of life, which involved camping in the open air and starting fires. According to the court, in December 1959 and January 1960 the members of the caravan stole at least 50 hundredweight of wood. The defendants defended themselves by saying that they only obtained the wood by gammosis (putting a weight on the end of a long string and throwing it onto a tree branch so that the weight would twist over the branch and pull it down).

The other typical act was begging. It was a rule of the caravan way of life that women who were taken in had to beg. They would take an apron, sewn from several shawls, suitable for making batyas, and go to nearby farms and villages. They begged under the pretext of flood damage. To make it look official, they took a book with a red cover and wrote the donations in it. Two Roma women usually collected the food needed to sustain the whole caravan. The evening before the murder was described particularly vividly by the court, one of the women got a yellow hen, which they cooked and made paprika fries with. According to the graphic description, the hen was placed in the large pocket on the bottom of the skirt, which was worn in several layers, in accordance with Roma custom, and the Roma woman hid the item in such a way as to give the appearance of pregnancy.

However, the role of the woman in the life of the caravan was best summed up by the Supreme Court of Appeal.

"On the other hand, because among the Romas, a good "wife" is one who can be used for many things, such as stealing, pick-pocketing, fortune-telling, begging, fraud, in order to keep their partners in good health and to provide them with as much money as possible. This leads to the conclusion that Romas change their partners frequently, and this is particularly evident in the case of Tamás Rostás, who, according to his testimony, is only 29 years old but has already had more than 30 partners. The fact that he changed his partners in such large numbers suggests that they met the above requirements to a lesser or to no extent, or that he took another partner in the hope that she would be better able to meet the above requirements."[7]

Juveniles and children were also often forced to beg, often barefoot in the winter.

In particular, the court followed in detail the period from early November to 20 December 1959, which it treated as a distant precursor to the murder. During this period, the Roma caravan travelled along the Danube–Tisza, covering about 10 km a day. The long trek was not uneventful. The details of the description were intended to

[7] Lajos Rostás and his associates. BCA, XXV. 4. a. 2809/1962.

show that the accused were leading a life of persistent crime, with no hope of recovery. The most horrific incident occurred in mid-November, when a member of the caravan gave birth to a child in the open air near the village of Gyál. But they continued to wander, despite the child falling ill. They were examined by a doctor, who prescribed medicine, but they continued wandering and the child died on 24 December (they did not take it to a doctor again). The dead child was buried on the night of 24 to 25 December, after having been carried for a day. They made a small depression in a hole in a tree and buried the child there. In relation to the death of the infant, the defence's position was that the defendants had not committed a crime because their conduct should be judged in the light of their own habits. According to the court, the defendants lived in a civilised society and knew the requirements of social coexistence. The ill-treatment of the children was the result of a vagabond lifestyle. According to the court, the main defendants deliberately sought to portray their criminal lifestyle as a way of life for the people, and to explain the authorities' action against vagrancy and crime as racism.

Similarly, the accident of an adult woman was not addressed. She was taken to the county hospital where she was fitted with a plaster cast and later ordered back for surgery, but she did not comply. The caravan sought to show irresponsibility by detailing the description of an accident in the judgment. The reasoning was that one of the members of the caravan was driving a light carriage (caisson) in poor condition, in which young foals about one year old were confined. The horses did not have a proper bridle, but only a halter made of rope without a bridle, which could not be used to control the horses. Fardi Rostás drove in the front of the road with his farm cart, followed by the caesar. He tried to overtake a motorbike from behind, the horses spooked, cut in front of the motorbike, the motorbike overturned into a ditch and the people on it were seriously injured. The caravan, however, continued on without helping the injured. The defendants defended themselves by claiming that the motorcyclists were drunk and that the police beat them on the spot. Subsequent court proceedings proved that the driver of the motorbike was the manager of a nearby distillery and had previously consumed brandy.

There was also a marriage in the farmhouse of Kiskunhalas between Lajos Rostás and Mária Jakab. In order to reveal the personal circumstances, the court detailed that this event brought to the surface a latent conflict because the parents were opposed to the marriage. The daughter was from a working Roma family, while the son came from a family of beggars and delinquents.

In its reasoning, the court pointed out that the first and second accused had repeatedly insinuated that they were being targeted for murder because they were of Roma origin, and that the crime was therefore the result of persecution against the Roma ethnic group. "The leading persons in this crime have developed and attained

the highest level of criminal determination, prudence and perseverance, determination, surprisingly keen criminality despite their otherwise low cultural standards and short temper, as demonstrated in the defendants' criminal acts and trial conduct,"[8] the court said in a summary assessment of the defendants' defence. The court said its view was also supported by the fact that the county court, despite its best efforts, failed to clarify the defendants' personal circumstances accurately. The reason given for this was that the defendants considered crime as their only way of life and were geared up to fight the authorities, seeking to mislead them in every way. They also had to go through a lengthy evidentiary procedure to clarify personal details, and denied any father-son or brother relationship. They also kept their past secret, which could not be clarified in its own historical sequence. Another circumstance made it difficult to establish the exact circumstances, which the court described as being "linked to the peculiarities of higher nervous function." "Some facts were remembered with excellence, with a level of detail and acuity far exceeding that of the culture man, but in the field of abstract concepts their capacity for thought and perception was extremely deficient. Recording events in the order of calendar years was a problem."[9] All this was established by the presiding judge without the involvement of a psychological expert.

The court dealt separately with the fact that the defendants claimed that they had been assaulted at the police station. The court, however, found this to be unfounded, arguing that the defendants were very often taken for on-the-spot checks in the presence of official witnesses, and that they looked healthy and were in good spirits, according to the official witnesses. One of the defendants stated that he had broken four stakes in his chest and was taken to the hospital, but the medical examination revealed only a bone swelling of old origin. Another defendant said that he had a facial laceration, was taken to hospital, but only a stone was cut open. There was also a much more serious accusation that police officers at the Kecskemét police station had had sex with a Roma woman, and Tamás Rostás said that the police had blamed her for the murder because she had shouted it out. The court found that this could not be true, because the Roma woman in question was not even detained at the police station. The abuses alleged by the defendants were not investigated on their merits. On the basis of the documents in the case file, the police simply accepted the allegation that everything the defendants claimed did not happen that way. The allegations of abuse of authority were made repeatedly and by several of the accused, yet no one from the police force was prosecuted. The appeal proceedings also clearly stated that the right of defence was seriously violated during the first instance proceedings.

[8] Lajos Rostás and his associates. BCA, XXV. 4. a. Criminal case files of the Metropolitan Court. 2809/1962.

[9] Lajos Rostás and his associates: BCA, XXV. 4. a. Criminal case files of the Metropolitan Court. 2809/1962.

The court weighed everything and decided to impose the most severe sentence, as in its opinion the defendants were criminal in all respects and did not show any signs of shock. There is no hope of them changing their ways, so the most severe sentence is inevitable. The same applies to the need to prevent and deter criminal elements who are ready to commit any act of depravity. The prosecutor, however, did not even consider this severity enough, as he asked for the death penalty to be imposed on five more defendants.

Result of the appeal

However, the defendants' appeal brought about a significant change, as in February 1962 the Supreme Court overturned the verdict and ordered a new trial. The County Court found such serious defects in the proceedings that it appointed the Metropolitan Court to conduct the new trial. The most serious errors were found in the conduct of the trial and the minutes. In its judgment, the county court failed to question the defendants in connection with each of the charges and failed to give them the opportunity to present their defences in connection with each of them. The trial transcript is very detailed, but there are many irrelevant details which make it difficult to read. The judgement is also often incomprehensible, but the more serious problem is that the court, in its judgement, lists the evidence but does not indicate on which evidence it based its judgement. In order to protect the defendants, the Supreme Court found that their rights of defence had been seriously infringed because they had been defended by different lawyers on each day of the trial, which lasted six months, and they were probably not familiar with the whole trial file. It is also likely that the mandatory defence was only formal. This procedure was not challenged by the court and no action was taken to change it. The reasoning regarding the offence on which the death penalty was based was found to be particularly problematic by the Supreme Court. In the case of murder, it was considered that it was unclear which of the accused had raised the idea of robbing the elderly woman, and how it could be inferred that they knew that an old woman with a lot of money lived in Dunavecse. He found it unrealistic and did not see any evidence that the accused had agreed on a precise date, time and place to meet a month in advance. The court only inferred back. They did not clarify the defendants' statement that they were near Bugyi (60–70 km from Dunavecse) between 16 and 20 January. It was not clarified where they were before and after the murder, what route they took to the scene and how they left. One year after the incident, police witnesses were questioned about whether they had seen the accused in Bugyi village. Several times the court ordered investigations and evidence, but the decision was taken by the president of the council, not the court. In fact,

the president prejudiced the inquiry by taking a position on the relevant issues. The witnesses also gave differing testimonies about the weather conditions, so it needs to be clarified to what extent this corresponds to what the Meteorological Institute wrote. It is necessary to find out how long it took the Romas to cover the distance between Bugyi and Dunavecse with their carriages and horses in winter on frozen ground. The court based the facts of the murder and robbery on the defendants' confessions at the inquest, and there was no additional evidence. There are circumstances that are inconsistent with normal life experience and logic that the court did not resolve. There is no justification for the first defendant's financial distress in purchasing the property. Therefore, it is unlikely that he mobilised the whole caravan in order to make money. They searched the premises for the money without being very upset and left several valuable items behind. They arrived at the scene of the crime from a very long distance, not knowing whether the woman would be alone and whether they would be able to carry out the act. The circumstances surrounding the crime must be clarified.

On 11 October 1963, the Metropolitan Court of Justice handed down its judgment acquitting the defendants, who had previously been sentenced to death and life imprisonment, of the crime of murder committed with premeditation and with particular cruelty for profit. The defendants were found guilty only of lesser offences, the most serious sentence being eight years' imprisonment.

During the trial, sensationalist articles appeared in both the local and national press from September 1960. The press was horrified to write about the murder in their articles, and the news of the death sentence in the first instance was reported in several places. However, I have not been able to find any report on the acquittal of the retrial. In addition to the description of the events, one of the articles, written by Irénée Peruy, was educational and entitled *The case of Fardi Rostás and its lessons.*[10] The political article, which emphasised the legality of the court proceedings, said that the punishment for Romas who had converted to a working lifestyle was much lighter. "The county court's verdict made an exemplary distinction between the most vicious criminals, on the one hand, and the Romas, on the other, who were prone to crime because of their centuries-old lifestyle and social status, but who had already made friends with the working life of a civilised man, and those who had converted to a life of work. This separating task, the education of the Romas to a working, honest way of life, is the task of our whole society and it is certain that the weed, which is growing again and again, will sooner or later be suppressed by the noble plant: the rise of the Romas to a cultured level of life."

The article in *Rendőrségi Szemle* (Police Review), written by Police Major Bertalan Mág and Police Lieutenant Zoltán Garamvölgyi, was exclusively for a professional

[10] *Petőfi Népe.* July 6, 1961.

audience.[11] The article described the circumstances of the incident in detail, including police photos of the crime scene. It analysed the investigation. The personality and living conditions of the victim were mentioned as a starting point. He considered the first version to be that the murderer was one of the victim's or her husband's enemies, while the second version was that it could have been a sexually motivated act. The third version, which quickly became clear, was a murder for financial gain. The police followed this lead by trying to check known offenders in the area, but, as the authors critically note, the inadequacy of law enforcement work and records meant that this was not successful for a long time. It was only after several months that the Romas roaming the area came into the picture. Suspicions were raised in earnest when people living in the area said that a member of the group had told them about the murder on the day after it took place. The police started the interrogation with the "rookie criminals", used the information they had from them to find the others and gave a detailed account of the events during the interrogation. The article clarifies that the investigative work was based on the confessions. According to the authors, the police found the perpetrators beyond any doubt. For them, the case was clear for almost a year before the court verdict.

The court proceedings analysed above illustrate the stereotypes of the authorities involved in the administration of justice in Hungary in the late 1950s. The court's judgment almost echoes the viewpoint of the political leadership, as expressed by Lajos Czinege: "the majority of the Roma live essentially on the periphery of society, or often live on the margins. Most of them do not work regularly, some of them are engaged in traditional Roma occupations..."[12] According to the political leadership, the solution to the problem was to break up the archaic way of life of the Roma and put them into forced labour. For a long time in the 1950s, the party had no official policy on the Roma and no unified public position. The MDP's leading bodies finally took up the issue of the Roma in 1956, after receiving submissions from both the Ministry of National Education and the National Police Headquarters. The Party's competent department edited the proposals into a single submission, in which the notion of 'Roma criminality', stereotypes about the Roma community and the idea of dispersal recurred again and again. Typically, the document described the situation of the Roma in general terms: 'The majority of the Roma live on the periphery of society, and often live on the margins.'[13] In June 1961, for the first time, the party's supreme leadership formulated a unified position on the situation of the Roma population. For the first time, a decision of the Political

[11] Mág–Garamvölgyi 1960: 831–842.

[12] Proposal to the Political Committee for the Settlement of the Gypsy Question in Hungary. HNA [HNA =Hungarian National Archives], M-KS-276. f [f = fond]. 91. 85, p.u [p.u = preservation unit].

[13] Submission by the Administrative Department of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Working People's Party to the Political Committee regarding the Settlement of the Gypsy Question in Hungary. Budapest, April 9, 1956. HNA, M-KS 276. f. 91/85. p.u.

Committee of the MSZMP indicated the need to move beyond the simple stereotype of 'Roma crime' and to make the 'Roma question' a social policy issue.[14]

Fate of women

The documents testify to the situation of Roma women in the community. They show that their position as women was not as subordinate as the descriptions on the pages of the Aspects of Power, or at least not radically different from when they lived in the so-called socialist society. This is also reflected in the fact that many people who were not previously members of the community joined the travelling group by their own choice. These narratives also show that the Traveller communities were in dynamic contact with Roma groups considered 'downtrodden' by the authorities, and even with mainstream society, with whom they shared a sense of exclusion and with whom they had almost daily contact. This calls into question the contemporary discourse that presented them as representatives of the world before socialist modernity.

Gizella Patai came to the caravan from a settled family with an acceptable lifestyle according to the norms of the authorities, and was later prosecuted simply because the authorities condemned the lifestyle of the caravan members on the basis of their own criteria. Her words reveal that she was an abandoned wife, a single woman trying to find a new companion, and that she joined the community through her new partner. This is how she told the trial about her decision:

"Neither my brother, nor my father, nor my mother have ever been punished and if Thomas hadn't married me and taken me wandering, I wouldn't have been in this situation either.

I only got together with Tamás because my Roma husband István Kolompár left me and married someone else, and I was bitter about it, and that's when Tamás approached me and was able to win me over.

When Tamás married me, there was no question of wandering around with him, because when he married István Radics, he and I stayed with Tamás for 3 weeks.

My mother asked me not to go anywhere with Tamás, but I was a young girl and reckless and disobeyed my parents, who only gave me good advice. My father and brother were not at home when I left with Tamás, but were working honestly on the state farm in Solti."[15]

Her own account reflects the fact that, although he recounted his story at the trial in order to get a lighter sentence, she also recounted it from the point of view of power

[14] Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. HNA, M-KS-288. f. 5/1961/233. p. u.
[15] Lajos Rostás and his associates. BCA, XXV. 4. a. 2809/1962.

(that the caravan's itinerant lifestyle was reprehensible, but that the work done in the state economy was valuable). At the same time, however, she makes it clear that in his own personal life, the decision to join the travelling community was based on emotion. Presumably, she saw life for her new companion and the caravan differently when she joined the community than did the representatives of the communist authorities.

Ilona Jakab was accused of stealing small objects. She had left her own community and tried to find a livelihood in the majority society. She took a job as a housewife with a man and received small objects as gifts. The man's wife later accused him of theft. The illiterate woman's words were recorded at the police station, so we can learn about the events of her life from her point of view.

"I come from a gypsy family. My parents were casual workers. My father has been working at the Solti State Farm for about 3 years. I understand that he is currently a night watchman. Before liberation they had no property. In 1959 my father purchased half an acre of vineyard property. During his lifetime he was generally engaged in tilling earth.

I have also been involved in tile work. I also used to do seasonal work on the state farm in Solti. I have 6 brothers and sisters. The eldest is 29 years old and works in the forestry farm in Jana. The youngest is 1 year old. I currently have 3 brothers and sisters living in my parents' household. The others are partly married and partly unmarried. They are usually engaged in casual work.

I married Peter Sztojka for the first time in 1954, when I was 13 years old. In the meantime I had divorced him and was living with a Roma called Anti. More recently, I have gone back to Sztojka and I am still living with him.

As a result of my marriage, I never had children.

I didn't go to school, so I am completely illiterate.

In 1958 I worked as an agricultural labourer on the Solti State Farm. It was during this time that I met a man called Márton Burgulya, who was working as an animal supervisor on the Solti State Farm.

On one occasion in the summer of 1958, Márton Burgulya asked me if I would like to go to her house for 3 months to do the housework. At the same time, he told me that his wife had been taken to the hospital in Freestadt, so that he was unable to do housework and look after his children. I discussed this with my father, who worked there, and he agreed that I should go to Márton Burgulya. After that I went and worked for him, cleaning, looking after the children, cooking, washing, etc. In general, I did what I usually did around the house."[16]

[16] Lajos Rostás and his associates. BCA, XXV. 4. a. Criminal case files of the Metropolitan Court. 2809/1962.

Her story shows that there were those who joined the caravan because in reality socialist society did not offer a livelihood, an existence to Roma, especially Roma women, and they faced prejudice and exclusion in their everyday lives as Roma and as women.

Conclusion

The Party Resolution set out specific tasks for the authorities in relation to the uplift of the Roma. The courts were not among those targeted by the political authorities, but it is possible that it had an impact on the conduct of the Supreme Court's appeal proceedings.

As for the source value of the court documents, I see them as providing important data for the historian, but it is important to be aware of the contradictions and gaps in the documents. Litigation in the state socialist period is characterised by fact-finding in accordance with socialist ideology in relation to a particular act. The verdict in the case of the accused was significantly influenced by the extent to which the personality of the accused corresponded to these expectations. If you were of working-class peasant origin, which was a fundamental value in the system, you were treated more leniently. With regard to members of the Roma community, the authorities did not really find such a "value". The information gathered on their way of life confirmed to the authorities that the efforts made after 1945 to force the members of the community into a settled and working life were ineffective. For the authorities, the traditional forms of livelihood that provided a livelihood for members of the Roma community did not fit the socialist ideal. It is also clear that the vulnerability and powerlessness of the Roma in the official process was particularly evident during the investigation. This bias is clearly reflected in the cases presented and in the press and journals of the period.

Court documents containing personal narratives not only provide insights into the lives of Roma people as a minority social group, but also into the everyday realities of coexistence with the majority society. Contrary to the stereotypes often conveyed by sources produced by state authorities at the time, Roma testimonies make it clear that, in many cases, Roma individuals integrated into the life of small communities without conflict. The case study also demonstrates that Roma women developed their own life strategies despite their vulnerable position. Some assumed roles within the Roma community to earn a livelihood, while others found their place in local society by working for majority families. Ethnographic sources may be used alongside court and party records, but they offer insights into specific groups and cases and cannot serve as a basis for generalisation.

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Roma Colonies in Pécs in the State Socialist Era, 1950–1990

Attila Márfi

Abstract

This study examines the evolution of Roma colonies in Pécs, Hungary, during the state socialist period (1950–1990). It situates these developments within broader historical attempts to address the "Roma question" through resettlement, employment initiatives, and forced assimilation policies. Drawing on archival and oral sources, the research traces the establishment, transformation, and liquidation of Roma settlements, highlighting the persistent instability caused by state interventions and internal migration patterns. It reveals how official policies often exacerbated marginalization and contributed to deteriorating living conditions. Through a micro-historical approach, the study provides insight into the everyday lives of Roma communities, the nature of their housing, employment opportunities, and the contradictory responses of local authorities to their presence. The findings underscore the challenges of reconstructing Roma history from fragmentary and often biased sources.

Keywords: Roma history, socialist Hungary, Pécs, Roma settlements, forced assimilation, state policy, marginalization, microhistory

Attempts to deal with the fate of the Roma in Hungary have been made in previous centuries and eras. These attempts are indicated by censuses, resettlement, employment and scattered sources on the way of life, but we must admit, most of the documents relating to the Roma are to be found in the records of the judicial and legal authorities of the time. A slightly more complex picture of the Roma emerges from the 20th century, as it is from this period that we can see the resettlement and employment of larger groups, and closely related to this, the attempts to solve the problems of the persistent

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presence of the Roma, the so-called "Roma question". While in the first half of the 20th century the sources that were available on this issue were also sporadic or of limited value, in the second half of the century, during the socialist era, an increasing number of documents concerning the Roma were produced[1]. All these can be seen in the form of provisions, resolutions and proposals concerning the Roma, which were intensified during the socialist era in various phases and contradictory forms attempting to resolve this so-called Roma question. The state Roma policy of the period can be interpreted as a policy of forced and violent assimilation policy against Roma communities in general.[2]

The central question of this research is how the living conditions of those in Roma settlements evolved under the communist regime as a result of state policies. I examine this issue from a micro-historical perspective, primarily drawing on archival sources, with a focus on the example of Pécs.

Conditions of establishment

It is for this reason that we can say that this period saw the most measures and almost radical changes in the fate and way of life of the Roma. These changes can be divided into phases of varying intensity over the four decades of the state socialist era. I will therefore describe the provisions and measures of this period and their practical implementation in relation to the settlements inhabited by the Roma and their scattered settlements.[3] This is a difficult task due to the lack of sources or, if there are some, often they have contradictory data and reports. This fact is not only due to the superficial and often approximate reports and measures, especially at the beginning of this period. The almost constant and sudden change in the population of the Roma colonies at the end of the period makes it difficult to obtain a more accurate picture. This is mainly due to the continuous influx of new settlers and the migration between inhabited settlements. Therefore, even the most thorough sociological surveys were only valid for the period of data collection at the time and could become estimates subject to permanent changes. Nevertheless, we already have source material which, despite its inaccuracies, can be used to provide an outline of the Roma colonies in Pécs. But I must emphasise that these data are subject to change in the light of new information and research.

First of all, I must draw attention to several important facts: among others, the formation, location, role and permanent changes of colonies. It is important to note that

[1] Márfi 1998b.
[2] Majtényi–Majtényi 2016; Varsa 2021.
[3] Füzes–Márfi (ed.) 2003. The study are based primarily on the sources published in this edition, but information from other council bodies (district and county council bodies), referral sources and oral sources also helped in the data collection.

there are several types of Roma settlements, including large colonies of up to 2–300 people, smaller settlements of less than 50–60 people, and occasionally changing smaller groups, even stand-alone buildings and huts. In Pécs, we can find examples of all these types of settlements, and in the period in question, more than 20 such settlements or groups were recorded.[4] But this approximate number is only for the period as a whole, because, as I mentioned, the number of Roma and their settlements is constantly changing. In other words, the migrating Roma moved more and more within a well-defined area, but they practised this limited and specific migration almost continuously. Paradoxically, this was particularly the case in the 1970s and 1980s, when the Roma settlement liquidations were well under way. As only part of the Roma population of the eliminated colonies could be accommodated, new settlements were constantly being created, not on the outskirts of the city districts as before, but in the middle of the districts, including the city centre.[5] The development of Roma colonies in Pécs can be observed well in the 20th century. Their settlement, i.e. the settling factor, can be examined primarily in relation to employment and the provision of jobs. In the first part of the last century, forestry, coal mining and other industries were the main sources of employment for Roma settled in the area around the city. Thus, colonies were built mainly in District 1, close to logging sites in the surrounding forests and in the neighbourhood of the mining operations. Later, from the 1950s onwards, the mining companies were the main employers and also the main factors in settling down. The location and size of the Roma settlements changed accordingly. For this reason, before describing the places inhabited by Roma that developed and changed from the 1950s onwards, I consider it important to talk about the larger colonies between the two World Wars, despite the few surviving sources, mainly based on the accounts of oral sources and referential sources.

Colonies in the first half of the 20th century

Probably one of the oldest colonies, living mainly from logging, was the Roma settlement on Remete Meadow, with its dug-out huts with pitched roofs.[6] It became depopulated in the 1940s, and its inhabitants moved to nearby Patacs, the Mecsekszentkút area and Kismélyvögy. These small colonies, with the exception of Kismélyvölgy, were still

[4] Füzes–Márfi (ed.) 2003: 12–174.

[5] HNA BCA [HNA BCA = Hungarian National Archives – Baranya County Archives], XXXV. 9, CP [CP = Council of Pécs as a city with county rights] 1984, Minutes of the meetings of the CP EC [Executive Committee] 1975/2, Minutes of the meetings of the CP EC 1976/4, Minutes of the meetings of the CP EC 1979.

[6] Based on oral communications from the late Györkő Vilmos Tömösközi and Camilo Reuter. I was also fortunate enough to see the photographs of Tömösközi taken in the 1930s. The small photographs depicted the former Roma settlement of Remete Meadow and its inhabitants.

mentioned in the last third of the period under discussion. The largest Roma colony was undoubtedly built in the flat area of József Háza (near István-akna), directly next to the forester's house, sometime in the 1930s under the patronage of the forester Endre Magas. There must have been about 40–50 mud-huts, with an estimated 300 Roma inhabitants. People living here were employed in forestry, the men did woodcutting and woodworking, while women and children were engaged in gathering, occasional market or door-to-door sales. The colony was depopulated after the departure of the forester Endre Magas in the mid-1940s, as the new forester no longer favoured the Roma settlers.[7] The people then moved to the nearby Lantos Valley (near the former Ferenc-akna) in the south, on the border of Mecsekszabolcs, and to the Majális Square colony near Szabolcsbányatelep and György-telep near György-akna. This migration probably ended by the early 1950s. The colony of 20–25 mud-huts in the flat area between the Zsolnay Well and the Rigó Well near the Kozáry Hunting Lodge, supported by the forester Vajda, also dates from this period.[8] Later, these Roma followed the line of the valley and established a new community of mud-huts on the opposite side of the Stadtwald or Nagybányaréti Valley, to the south. In the period between the two World Wars, the aforementioned György-telep colony, was established with about 15 mud-huts and the Lantosvölgy colony with a slightly larger number of huts and inhabitants. Roma men living in both settlements were employed in the surrounding mines. So were the inhabitants of the settlement on Majális Square, which is often mentioned in sources. This colony was established right next to the Komlói Road in the 1940s, and it continued to expand.

On the nearby Árpádtető, next to the central buildings of the forestry company, was the most sophisticated Roma colony of the period. About 20–25 brick houses were given to the Roma who were directly employed by the forestry company, after the renovation of the former servants' quarters. We should also mention the smallest Roma colony, which was located on the border of Istenáldásvölgy, west of Pécsbányatelep, with about 8–10 mud-huts, but in two different locations. The forestry company provided employment for the people living here, as the nearby mines, unlike the other mining companies, were rigidly opposed to the employment of workers of Roma origin. This colony, was closed down in the mid-1970s at the same time as the liquidated mining colonies in Istenáldásvölgy, due to the expansion of opencast coal production. It should also be noted that the Roma settlements of the inter-war period were quite mixed. Not that the mud-huts built in the later decades were any more aesthetically

[7] Based on oral information provided by Mrs Vendel Márffy, widow. Here I thank my mother for being able to recall her memories of the Roma living close to them on the outskirts of the former mining colony, even after sixty years, and for mentioning the activities of my grandfather, Mihály Balázsi, a former mine foreman, and the Social Service of the village of Mecsekszabolcs, who helped the Roma.
[8] Same as above.

pleasing, but the Roma who settled here lived in shacks built with many different methods. The number of mud-brick shacks was smaller, and instead they lived in huts with wooden frames, wickerwork, plastered walls and no foundations. It is probable that these colonies also had huts with wooden frame and mud walls. They also used the above-mentioned dug-out huts with a wooden pitched roof, a more primitive form of dugout huts, and the pitched roof itself:[9] The roofs with wooden frames and wicker filling were plastered with mud inside and out and had windows, chimney openings and doors cut into them. Also, occasionally, they lived in tents and tin huts. Animals were also kept in simple structures, mostly made of planks or sticks. In the larger colonies there was a separate common latrine-like "toilet", but most of the time they just had a larger pit dug not far from the colony. Water, especially in the case of forest colonies, was obtained from the stream, and although they had draw-wells, they were not cleaned and were very often a source of infection and not of drinking water. In most colonies of this period, communal fireplaces and free-standing baking ovens with wicker frame plastered with mud were in a central position.[10]

Colonies and Roma settlements of the 1950s

Most of the settlements described here had been depopulated by the 1950s, with residents joining existing colonies or creating new communities, some of which have already been mentioned. The number of settlements or residential areas inhabited by Roma in the period under discussion is much higher and more populated. The first significant mention of the Pécs colonies is a police report from 1953. This document is noteworthy because it does not talk about the Roma issue and Roma policy at the current ideological, or more precisely demagogical, level of the time. The word 'Gypsy' itself is avoided, they use synonyms like penniless, the social strata, Traveller People.[11] However, it gives an unvarnished, almost naturalistic picture of the Roma themselves, whatever they are called, and of everyday life in the colonies, briefly giving a sense of what it meant to be a Roma in the period, and to live with the Roma in the 1950s, the years of socialist social development. From the source:

"...especially in the city of Pécs, we can meet 6–8 such temporary settlements, e.g.: Üszögi *Kóbortelep, Füzesdülő, Pécs* Állami *Gazdaság, Mecsekszabolcs etc. These settlements, being located near the road, greatly affect the beauty of our city, as the small, filthy huts are set up close to the city's factories and normal construction sites. In general, these*

[9] Tarján 1984: 82–92.
[10] Based on the oral report of Árpád Márfi.
[11] Márfi 1998a: 86–87.

temporary settlements are populous with considerable labour force, but they do not take advantage of the employment opportunities, on the contrary they support themselves and their families by vagrancy, begging, stealing, and carrying away animal carcasses. This is also disadvantageous because their (large) families are also taught to beg, evade work and steal. The behaviour of these people is also dangerous because they disturb public peace to a great extent, because while the working class is still working in factories, fields, etc., building socialism in our country, these people are sneaking in and stealing, breaking and entering, etc., and plundering the personal and material assets of honest workers as well as of the socialist sectors."[12]

The police report on four Roma settlements in Pécs explains in more detail the negative phenomena mentioned above. The Pécs-Üszögpuszta so-called temporary settlement had the most problems, because the more peaceful and diligent tub-maker Roma who had been living there for several years were joined by stray Kolompár Roma, whose leisurely and frivolous lifestyle spread to the other settlers. The author of the report proposed to settle the employable part of the 18 Roma families living here on the land of the Hetvehely State Farm, while the lumpen elements would be interned, using one of the tried and tested methods of the time. The county-level source considers the Roma settlements around Pécs to be the most dangerous for society due to their unwillingness to work and constant theft issues. There is a marked contrast between the inter-war period and the 1950s in terms of the Roma way of life, their circumstances and opportunities. The main reason for this is that, in the new social order, the Roma were slowly displaced from their traditional areas of livelihood and employment. And they were also excluded from the system of economic and social benefits or opportunities that affected most of the country's social strata, even if at the lowest level. Thus, the Roma inevitably became the most marginalised and the most miserable group of people in the 1950s. These serious problems were highlighted even in this police report, which outlined relatively humane solutions,[13] in addition to internment, but the substantive measures remained at the level of crime prevention and segregation.

[12] HNA BCA, XXXV. 36. 1.15. Party Archives, Hungarian Working People's Party, Baranya county central leadership documents, 1953. p. u. [p.u. = preservation unit] 125.

[13] Ibid. The police officer in charge of preparing the report made the following suggestions:
"1. In order to integrate them fully into social life, and to enable them to integrate, I consider it most important to penetrate into their educational sphere. The most suitable people for this purpose are those comrades and honest workers who can speak their language and have been raised by the people's democracy in various fields, e.g.: soldier, police officer, council worker, member of the cooperative, factory worker, etc. These workers could, with proper support, penetrate deeper into them and explain them their wrongdoings, then they would give up a life of vagrancy and become useful members of society in building socialism, as many of them are already doing so in great numbers.
2. In order to improve their social situation, to get rid of their shacks on the outskirts of populated areas, we must also provide them with human housing in the first place. In the areas of cities, towns, villages, wastelands, farms, etc., where employment opportunities should be provided for them. They must be educated

The first substantive resolutions, solutions and proposals

In the second half of the fifties, the increasingly serious nature of the Roma way of life prompted new measures. The first of these was the establishment of the so-called Roma Subcommittee in December 1959,[14] whose operation, or lack of operation, can be described as a "council farce", according to the epic remark of one of its members, archivist Márton Vörös[15]. Through his criticism and more detailed work programme, he himself became the chairman of the renewed Roma Committee, which was made up primarily of doctors, lawyers, teachers and administrative specialists.[16] The committee carried out detailed, fact-finding surveys and case studies in the colonies around the city. In September 1961, the chairman himself reported on some of his experiences to the city council leadership, not without a few good-sounding twists, as this quote may prove:

"The basic problem of our Gypsy question is that we have inherited small social communities which today, in the age of space rockets, have retained their medieval character, at least in the form of their settlements, or it is fair to say, in the condition of the four-thousand-year-old Vučedol culture of Nagyárpád. We should not be fooled by the fact that in some Gypsy villages they have bottled milk with bread rolls, or that young people wear nylon shirts. In even starker contrast, these welcomed phenomena highlight the fact that, for example, in the forest settlement enclosed on Majális Square, nearly 120 Gypsies

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and provided with appropriate medical treatment, schooling (nursery, school, day-care) and cultural facilities. We must make them realise that they will only be able to secure their social opportunities if they themselves do their share of productive work.

3. If, despite all the benefits and job opportunities, some individuals or groups continue to support themselves by stealing and consuming animal carcasses, I propose that the most severe action be taken against them and that this be made known to the rest of the population. I also propose that any person who cannot prove that they are engaged in agricultural work or other employment that involves the use of horse power should have their horse licence revoked. I propose to extend this not only to vagrant persons but also to other persons.

4. In the field of work, I propose to provide such persons with a regular work record and to provide them with jobs (factory, mine, cooperative, state farm, etc.). In the field of education and employment, I propose also to provide for the gifted children of each family, they shall be taken to higher schools and given a high-level training, so that through this we may penetrate to their roots and raise them to all fields of civilization. With such opportunities we shall be able to make them despise those who do not work, stray and steal.

5. If, even under such opportunities and conditions, a person or group is straying, subsisting by theft and other acts, they shall be ordered by the police authorities to reside in a place and be supervised by the police, in the event that they do not comply with the rules of this supervision, the most severe measures shall be applied. Pécs, 15 April 1953.

[14] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting minutes, 1959/3.

[15] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Secretariat 91/1961. Quoted from the letter of reply written by Márton Vörös to the VB Secretariat: *"As can be seen from the investigative study prepared for the Secretariat of the Government, among the comments is the question of the Roma Committee, which was set up in the spring and which has not been convened once since its ambitious establishment, has not met once, and has thus degenerated into a mere parody of the council."*

[16] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Secretariat 91/1961. (91–2/1961.)

live in mud-huts, 8–10 people live in a 3x4-metre-area without a single toilet, and that the father is sexually involved with his 12-year-old daughter. Or, for example, in another place there is a person infected with germs endangering the environment. In one of the Gypsy houses, next to the new, modern István-akna, the children even do their number two inside the room and in the kitchen. During the on-site inspections, we were able to enter the flats with an acrobatic balancing act to avoid damaging our shoes. These difficulties rightly awakened in us a duality of human disgust and compassion and a glowing sense of the urgent need for action in a city where, in Europe's most modern 9-storey clinics, the dreamlike reality of 20th century hygiene proclaims the genius of Hungarian science and the progress of social responsibility. I have recently pointed out the danger of this issue in the light of the fact that in Mecsekszabolcs, in the immediate vicinity of the newly erected modern factory buildings, almost at the foot of the building, there is this Gypsy colony on Majális Square."[17]

The committee managed to draw attention to the impossible situation, and in addition to this brisk report, demographic and sociological surveys of the Roma colonies in Pécs were also included. According to these, District I had the highest number of Roma residents, with 539 people in total, living on Zsigmond-telep on Majális Square, Stadtwald and Istenáldásvölgy settlements and in some other locations. No colony was mentioned in District II at that time, and only three families out of 28 lived in shacks, with a total of 111 persons. In District III of the city, there was also no coherent colony, and 6 of the 16 Roma families living there were living in shacks, with a total of 72 persons. Based on these figures, there were four major Roma colonies in Pécs at the time, and based on these and the data of the scattered smaller and larger communities, the city had 722 Roma inhabitants, with 356 children, 194 women and 174 men.[18]

Following the statement and the report, a comprehensive so-called "long-term plan" was drawn up in March 1962 with a resolution of the Executive Committee of the City Council. The most delicate issue was the housing question, the solution of the housing situation, because the majority of the Roma in Pécs, 76 families, i.e. nearly 600 people lived in huts or Roma settlements. Besides the liquidation of the colonies, the larger companies, such as the two mining companies, saw the way out in the form of housing allocations. At the same time, resolutions were taken to improve the social, health and educational situation and to create employment opportunities.[19] If all these had been implemented, after a few years there would have been no more talk of Roma

[17] Minutes of the meetings of the HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, 1961/2.

[18] Documents from the History of the Roma in Pécs 1959–1990. Op. cit.: 58. HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting minutes, 1962/1.

[19] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC Meeting minutes, 1962/2., EC instruction under No 55/1962, Minutes of the meetings of the CP EC. 1962/3. EC instruction under No 54/1962.

settlements and colonies. However, this very comprehensive and very detailed plan of a long-term solution remained only a draft. There was almost no change in the living conditions of the Roma colonies until the last phase of the 1960s. A report of September 1965 describes the unchanged living conditions of the Roma population in the colonies:[20] The most characteristic details from this report:

"The social policy groups regularly check the Gypsy settlements in the city of Pécs. According to their findings, the aforementioned distribution of the Gypsy population and the fact that 80% of the Gypsy population lives in District I can be explained by the fact that most of the Gypsy workers are employed by the Mecsek Coal Mining Trust and the State Forestry Company. Thus, the Gypsies working there settled close to their workplaces. (...) Very few families live in decent housing conditions. The huts they have put together themselves lack even the most basic furniture. The majority of women are still dressed in traditional Gypsy costumes, and the children are almost always poorly clothed (...) They do not part with their elderly relatives, who are supported until their death, even if in poor conditions. (...) Three years ago, the Department of Culture established a Gypsy school in István-akna, where they wanted to use special methods to provide education. However, the school had to close after a year of operation due to the low number of students. The work to eradicate illiteracy has not been successful. Only half of the courses organised for this purpose have been completed due to lack of participation (...) There are a good number of dangerous criminals among the adult and juvenile members of Gypsy families living in certain districts of the city, many of whom are under police supervision, but action has had to be taken against several persons, for whom the means of expulsion from the city has been resorted to. (...) It is the theft of crops from social property which requires more attention, and in this area, especially in the case of Gypsies with horses, the necessary measures are constantly being taken. (...) There has been a significant increase in prostitution, i.e. immoral behaviour, among Gypsy women, and in the behaviour of both women and men in public places of entertainment, which in many cases culminates in a fight causing a public scandal.[21]

This report already indicates an increase in the Roma population. In addition to the colonies in District I, new Roma settlements have also been reported in the other two districts, despite the propaganda of eradication and housing development. The Roma population continued to grow and by the end of the period it was changing considerably. This is not necessarily due to natural population growth but the continuous influx of new settlers. In the region, the Roma were aware of the activities of the Roma Committee, i.e. the city was supporting the Roma, and they wanted to benefit from

[20] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting minutes, 1965/3.

[21] Ibid. Report of the Construction and Transport Department VII of the City Council of Pécs, dated 6 September 1965, for the meeting of the City Council of Pécs of 10 September 1965.

these advantages.[22] By the mid-1960s, new colonies had been established in the other districts of the city from previously scattered or island-like blocks: in District II, the residents of three streets, Pipacs, Fűzfa and György Streets, formed a colony of about 25 families.[23] The settlers lived in huts built in the courtyards of their houses. The area was partially served by water and electricity, but no sewerage was installed. Also, in the same district, a new colony was established in the Megyeri Kertvárosi settlement[24] with 8 Roma families, albeit with the help of housing allocated by the council. In District III, a new colony was established in Füzes Lane with 18 families. The area of 6 huts in Kismélyvölgy was also registered, as well as Szentkúti Forest and Patacs, each inhabited by one family. In parallel with these developments, the population of the colonies in District I, already mentioned several times, continued to increase. Zsigmond-telep[25] was the most populous, but also the worst, because its inhabitants were located on the mound of mud between István-akna and Béke-akna, where the huts, which were not stable, were constantly sinking and deteriorating, and they had only one common well and one toilet.[26] In the other settlements, one or two small

[22] Márfi 1999.

[23] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting minutes, 1965/3. The report notes the following about the new colony:
"Settlement in Pipacs-Fűzfa-György Street: the majority live in houses built on the basis of building permits. However, some of them live in the courtyards or in huts built for the houses. The area is partly served by public utilities, water and electricity, but no sewerage. Several houses have no toilets. The plots are partly purchased from private owners and partly through the OTP bank. In about 15 cases they were received as a grant. There are about 20–25 families living on the plot, most of them engaged in transport activities. 3-4 horses are kept, but only one is registered. Their monthly income is well above the average income level. They build a relatively large number of unauthorised buildings, mainly outbuildings used as stables. The area is destined to liquidation, the building ban was imposed by the Department of Construction and Transport by Resolution No 19.498/1965 VII of 16 August 1965."

[24] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting minutes, 1965/3. The following brief description of the inhabitants of the settlement was published: *"Megyeri, Kertvárosi colony. The area does not form a coherent unit, about 7–8 Roma families live here. They live partly in dwellings built with planning permission and partly in unauthorised buildings. Most of them are engaged in transport."*

[25] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC Meetings minutes, 1965/3, City Council of Pécs, Building and Transport Department VII, 6 September 1965, report under the title "Assessment of the Roma issue in the city of Pécs in implementation of Resolution 161/1965". The report indicated the number of people living in Zsigmond-telep as 300.

[26] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting minutes, 1965/3. Excerpt: *"300 people live in 37 huts. The adult males, with the exception of 4, are mine workers. The other four work for various companies. The colony is built on an old waste heap. There is one toilet for 300 people and water is drawn from one well with a bucket on a rope. The well would need further development and at least 2–3 toilets should definitely be built. The inhabitants of the colony live in huts made of different materials. Ground movement causes the huts to sink and crack. The existing toilet is not used. The site is untidy, dirty and in recent months there have been 2 cases of dysentery among the residents."*

brick houses were built, and some of the newer buildings on the Majális Square,[27] György-telep and Nagybányaréti[28] colonies were partially electrified and provided with public toilets. But three new colonies were also beginning to take shape at the Kisgyőr Street Iskolatelep near Pécsszabolcs, at István-akna and at the Buzaberki Lane in Vasas.

Colony liquidations, the beginning of a new way of life and related problems

These developments have led the council leadership to accelerate the ideas of the so-called "long term plan", above all the colony liquidations. In September 1967, they contacted the city administration of Salgótarján, where the colonies of about 1,200 Roma had been liquidated.[29] They drew the attention of Pécs Council to the fact that the liquidation of the settlements and the subsequent construction work had created numerous health, communal, commercial and cultural problems, and therefore they recommended thorough preparation and detailed sociological surveys. The basic data of these surveys are known, i.e. the number of Roma in 89 mud-huts is estimated at 800,[30] but these figures were already changing during the surveys.[31] Finally, in the

[27] Ibid. The report gave the following picture of the Roma colony on Majális Square: *"Majális Square (along the Komlói Road, Pécs) is a suburban settlement. There are 18 families with about 135 persons living on the settlement, mostly in mud huts and wooden shacks. There is no toilet or waste container. Water is supplied from the tap in György-akna. The area is otherwise largely kept clean, with electricity connected to one or two buildings. Most of the men living on the site work in the mine. Preliminary measures have been taken by the District I Council's construction team to clear this site. In the upper settlement of Pécs-Szabolcs, in the area east of the school, in the emerging single-family zone, a site is available suitable for the construction of 6 twin houses, that is 12 plots of about 290 square meters. These plots were sold through OTP bank at a price of 10 HUF/3,6 square meters, subject to a prohibition of alienation and a building obligation."*

[28] Ibid. The report notes the following about this colony:
"The settlement of the Nagybányaréti Valley Erdőalja District. The settlement is inhabited by 13 families of about 53 persons, living partly in huts and partly in small houses built in the village, some of which have electricity. They are employed at the mine. There is piped water and three toilets on the site. The site is scheduled for liquidation under Government Resolution No. 1964/2014."

[29] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Secretariat 654/1967. Information of the Secretary of the Executive Committee of Salgótarján City Council dated 5 September 1967 under the title "Situation of Roma settlements and possibilities of their liquidation".

[30] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Secretariat, 80-4/1969. On the difficulties of liquidating the Roma settlements, the source points out that *"At the present rate, it would take several decades to liquidate the settlements, if the population growth in the meantime is disregarded. The pace of Roma settlement eradication has therefore fallen significantly behind the original projections. It was already foreseeable in 1967 that the task could not be completed within the framework of the 15-year housing development programme. Government Resolution 2047/1967 (VIII.8.) facilitated the borrowing of loans. Further facilitation is needed because many people cannot afford the 10% pre-savings. This is also justified by the significant increase in construction costs."*

[31] Füzes–Márfi (ed.) 2003: 169; HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Secretariat 80-4/1969.

spring of 1969, the liquidation of Roma settlements in the city's districts began:[32] on Majális Square, Zsigmond-telep, Füzes Lane and Pipacs Street. Since the colony on Majális Square was located directly next to the road to Komló, it was the first colony to be demolished, both from an aesthetic and an urban planning point of view. It is little known that the majority of the Roma who were evicted were not given new houses or residential areas, but were relocated to the nearby, already overcrowded Zsigmond-telep and György-telep.[33]

The liquidation process was not smooth because some residents, especially the older ones, refused to leave the colony. Therefore, in the early 1970s, the council apparatus almost constantly asked the police for help[34], but they were also helpless because they had no authority to carry out forced evictions. Even so, there was a police presence in settlements such as the Üszögpuszta colony, which was considered a hotbed of Roma crime.[35] So, persuasion and personal example remained, but most people left the settlements anyway because they could not bear the slow depopulation of the colonies, which had always been noisy and full of life.

There were also many other problems with the construction of new homes and new buildings at the same time as the liquidations. The government resolution of July 1969 granted Pécs a preferential credit line for the construction of only 35 new dwellings for

[32] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Secretariat, 420-2/1968. (80-4/1969).

[33] Füzes–Márfi (ed.) 2003: 20; HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting minutes, 1984. At the council meeting of 18 June 1984, one of the council members spoke specifically about György-telep, in which he also outlined the conditions prevailing in the colony:

"György-telep has 230 Gypsy families (I should note that this is obviously a typo, because 230 Gypsy families would exceed 1,000 people in the context of the time, so the councillor probably said 230). The teacher has a lot of problems with the violation of the compulsory school attendance law. More effective measures are needed to protect children at risk. More attention should be paid to public safety in the area."

[34] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting Minutes, 1972/3. Meeting of EC on 31 October 1972.

[35] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meetings, report and proposal of the Pécs City Police Headquarters entitled "The situation of public order and public security in the city of Pécs, in the light of the resolution of the Executive Committee of the MSZMP Pécs City Party of 14 September 1971". Extract from the report:

"In terms of the rise in the number of offenders and their assessment, it must be noted that the crime rate and participation rate of the Roma population has been on the rise in recent years. As far as the city of Pécs is concerned, the most infected area is the composition and the participation and activity in crime of the inhabitants of the Pécs-Üszög Puszta Gypsy settlement. The situation is even worse if we look at the behaviour and living conditions of the young people and children living there. It is disturbing that Gypsy children and minors beg violently on the streets of the town, if they do not receive the requested amount of money or other material, they use rude and unacceptable language or, many times, they commit occasional theft. These behaviours occur mainly in markets, railway stations, shops or in the street.

(...) The danger to public order and public safety of the Pécs-Üszög Gypsy settlement is also demonstrated by the fact that during raids and other checks, most police action is required by the activities of criminal Gypsies who live there and come from other areas. Persons living in the settlement give these criminals accommodation, they can stay both individually and in groups, and they come not only from the district of Pécs but from other districts of the county."

1970. This number was reduced to thirty, but the biggest problem was that only those Roma families who had been employed for at least two years[36] were eligible for the so-called "C" type construction and purchase loan. 70% of the Roma who were able to work met these conditions,[37] but despite the 30,000 HUF per flat granted by the council, most of them were not financially able to undertake the construction. Also, since the 1970s, there was a lot of financial misuse concerning the constructions. It was common that the high amount of money was wasted, and when no further loans or aid were granted, the building materials that had been given to them as aid were sold.[38] But those, and there were many of them, who took on the construction of the new house reliably, also had to face a great deal of problems.

In addition to the financial difficulties, they had to face the growing prejudice on both sides, Hungarian and Roma. Thus, integration and the creation of a home came with many difficulties. In the second half of the 1970s, as the housing construction campaign was causing many problems, housing allocations were used to alleviate the problems of resettlement during the slow colony liquidation. This was achieved half-heartedly because the Roma had a very low share in the new housing estates, Újmecsekalja and Kertváros.[39] They were therefore mainly allocated flats in the terraced or block houses of former mining colonies in District I. From the second half of the 1970s, this process intensified and Roma settlements began to appear among others in Fehérhegy, Meszestelep, Hősök Square in Pécsszabolcs as well as Fejlődés, Felszabadulás and Szabó István Streets.[40]

In the last phase of the state socialist era

By the mid-1970s, the Roma population had increased nearly fivefold with the continuous influx of new settlers, with 3,500 people making up 2% of the city's population. By the end of the 1970s, their number had reached nearly 5,000.[41] However, as before, the increased Roma population was far from homogeneous, due to their tribal and linguistic differences, and there were differences in their habits and living conditions as well. The integration and interaction of new Roma settlers coming from several places in the region and local Roma was also influenced by the differences in

[36] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Secretariat, 80/1969 (80-4/1969); HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Secretariat 80-2/1969 (80-4/1969).
[37] Füzes–Márfi (ed.) 2003: 114. HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting minutes, 1979/2.
[38] Füzes–Márfi (ed.) 2003: 28–29. HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting minutes, 1984.
[39] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting minutes, 1976/4. Extract of the contents of the meeting held on 30 December 1976.
[40] Füzes–Márfi (ed.) 2003: 105–106; HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting minutes, 1979.
[41] Füzes–Márfi (ed.) 2003: 105. HNL BCL, XXXV. 9, CP EC meeting minutes 1979.

their communities. During this period, the old, the new and the in-between can be observed in terms of housing conditions and lifestyles of Roma communities. The old colonies, consisting mainly of mud-huts, such as the Zsigmond and Majális Square ones, Nagybányarét and Istenáldásvölgyi settlements, had already been liquidated. Only the colony of Üszögpuszta and the Buzaberki Lane can be included here.[42] Council sources divided the colonies with a changed appearance, which were under continuous liquidation, into three categories: 1. Suburban settlements, including the colonies of Buzaberki, Kisgyőri and Üszögi[43], with a total of 280 people. 2. The number of temporary colonies established in the inner area was much higher, with a total of 400 inhabitants. These were Vasas I. Bányatelep, Felszabadulás, Fejlődés, Szabó István, Pipacs, Fűzfa Streets, the area behind Megyeri Street, Füzes Lane and the end of Kismélyvölgyi Road. 3. Finally, the Tóvári settlement in Kővágószőlős was also included in this category from the immediate vicinity of the city.[44] Most of the other nearly 3,000 Roma inhabitants settled in the residential areas already mentioned and in Budai Külváros, but Roma families were also moved to the then Kossuth Lajos Street. The sources mention sporadic residential communities such as Bokor Street, the area around the Tüskés Lane and the Kapedli Inn. There are far fewer Roma families who were able to acquire housing outside the traditional or then established Roma-inhabited areas, in other words, living in a non-Roma community, in the same area or neighbourhood as the rest of the city. Also, there were examples of some older residents leaving their new homes and building a mud-hut on the site of the demolished former colony where they then lived until their death. By the mid-1980s, it became quite common for people to sell the flats they had been given and move back to their original place or to relatives. And, of course, they came back with new housing needs.[45]

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[42] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting minutes, 1979. The report of several pages describes the Buzaberki Lane in this way: *"The best results were achieved at the Vasas II. Buzaberki site. The population of the colony has decreased by 60 % in the last year. This is the colony furthest away from the residential area, from which most people voluntarily take the initiative to leave."*

[43] HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meeting minutes, 1979. The following brief reports on the two settlements are given below: *"The settlement of Kisgyőr is close to the city (1 km northeast of Heroes' Square), part of it is consolidated, with brick houses, connected to the electricity network, partially supplied with water, so that the minimum living conditions are given. The situation is similar in the settlement on the road to Nagykozár. It is inhabited by a small number of Gypsies, but most of them do not have a permanent job, so there are even more obstacles to helping them."*

[44] Füzes–Márfi (ed.) 2003: 105–106; HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC, Meetings minutes, 1979.

[45] Minutes of the meetings of the City Council HNA BCA, XXXV. 9, CP EC 1984. Submission of the Deputy Chairman of the City Council of Pécs under the title "The situation of the Roma population in Pécs and its surroundings".

Conclusions

By the end of the state socialist era, the aforementioned places roughly outlined the main areas of Roma settlements. It can be said that these nearly four decades brought about vital changes in the way of life of the Roma in Pécs. Metaphorically speaking, this path led from mud-huts to emergency housing, to multi-storey and detached houses, to comfortable dwellings. It provided opportunities, despite its limitations and contradictions, but the sudden and radical changes were only effective up to a certain level and only in certain areas, and in many cases the Roma who had been living in poverty for a long time were unable to make use of these opportunities and often misused them. But, of course, it is impossible to generalise, because at the same time, this era gave many people a new meaning and quality of life or at least the possibility of one. However, the history of Roma settlements demonstrates that historical marginalization, social exclusion, and economic inequalities remained the key factors shaping the living conditions of Roma communities during the socialist era. The broader historical context influenced the socio-economic realities experienced by Roma communities at the micro level, resulting in limited access to education, employment, and adequate housing during the communist period. Discriminatory state policies and systemic barriers that restricted social mobility further reinforced the vicious cycle of poverty and exclusion in Roma settlements.

I was able to work on the sources and proposals for solutions from the point of view of the administration, that is, the authorities. It is not known, or at least not mentioned here, how the Roma themselves experienced these changes, expulsions, and liquidations. It is now quite well known that many of the values of the Roma people, their culture, community and traditional Roma occupations disappeared for ever at this time. I myself would consider this article more complete if the former mud-hut residents could speak about their living conditions then and now, about the prejudices that still affect them today and about their experiences of being Roma.

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Cultural Shock, Trauma, and the Resilience of Roma Academics in Higher Education

Diana Aburas

Abstract

In recent years, a growing phenomenon has emerged, minorities worldwide are voicing their long-silenced narratives. These narratives include systemic racism, colonial legacies, and cultural erasure which will be explored in more detail later. This research aims to amplify the voices of an under-researched minority that faces significant marginalization in higher education and across broader society. Roma communities form Europe's largest ethnic minority, are estimated to be between 10-12 million. However, they are also one of the most marginalised groups and face similar challenges in all countries, including: racism; poverty; precarious housing; underemployment, and poor health. One important facet of marginalization is educational exclusion including segregation and low attainment; it is estimated that less than one percent graduate from a higher education institute. This suggests there are approximately 100.000 Roma students in higher education in Europe. However, gaps in ethnic monitoring make it difficult to give precise numbers and some would argue the estimate of 100,000 could be an overestimate. An inability to access higher education accentuates Roma exclusion and the ability to attain prominent decision-making positions that might have a significant impact on Roma communities. Roma's participation in higher education is essential for social justice, economic growth, cultural diversity, and the development of a more equal and inclusive society where everyone has a fair chance to succeed.

Keywords: Cultural Shock, Cultural Trauma, Resilience, Roma Academics, Coping Mechanisms

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Introduction

Roma academic integration into European higher education offers an intriguing but little-studied nexus of institutional, social, and cultural factors. With an emphasis on their difficulties, potential identity crises, and the strategies for building resilience in navigating academia, this paper explores the complex realities of Roma academics. The prevalence of culture shock, identity conflict, and perceptions of "Anti-Gypsyism" in academic settings, as well as the influence of institutional policies like affirmative action on their development, are key concerns in this investigation.

The research also looks into how Roma academics view and interact with affirmative action, as well as whether these practices increase resilience or make pre-existing issues worse.

It also looks at the two pressures they encounter: the possibility of alienation from their own communities as a result of pursuing higher education, and racism or exclusion within academic institutions. By examining these intricate relationships, the study hopes to shed light on the coping methods and tactics used by Roma scholars to survive and prosper in these disputed environments, in addition to the structural obstacles. The paper aims to add to larger discussions on inclusion, equity, and the role of resilience in forming marginalised identities in academia by using this perspective.

Context

According to estimates from the Council of Europe, the Roma population in Europe ranges between 10-12 million, with approximately six million residing in the European Union (EU). Unfortunately, this population continues to be affected by poverty and social exclusion. European institutions have pledged their commitment to promoting Roma inclusion by implementing reporting mechanisms and funding to support this process. However, policymakers lack reliable statistics on the target population, which hinders the development of effective indicators for improvement.[1] One reason for this is the lack of a clear definition for the target group in policy documents.

A major landmark in the recent history of the Roma was in 1971 when the first World Romani Congress was organised.[2] From this point onward, the emphasis on a shared origin and the Indian homeland began to play a more prominent role in shaping Roma collective identity and national consciousness.[3] This event was a catalyst

[1] Matras–Leggio (ed.) 2017.
[2] Acton 1974.
[3] Guszmann 2017, 2019, 2020; Majtényi–Majtényi 2020.

to campaigns and advocacy for Roma rights. Today efforts are underway to enhance the socio-economic conditions and human rights of the Roma population. Across the globe, several organisations, governments, and activists are working towards reducing discrimination and ensuring access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities for Roma individuals. Furthermore, cultural initiatives aim to preserve and celebrate Roma heritage.[4]

In recent years, the Roma community has continued to strive for recognition, inclusion, and equal treatment. Public awareness campaigns, policy changes, and increased representation in decision-making processes are some of the steps taken to address the historical injustices and ongoing challenges faced by this community. As part of this process of resistance, Critical Romani Studies and Activism has emerged, seeking not only empowerment and recognition but also redistribution/fundamental socio-economic and structural change while encouraging intersectional alliances.[5] Critical Romani Studies has given a major impetus to new insights into the experiences of Roma in higher education, this point will be developed later in the discussion.

Roma in higher education

Education is an essential component of any thriving society contributing to development, identity, acting as a democratic check and balance and agent for inclusion. Education empowers us with the necessary skills to think critically, work efficiently, and make informed decisions. It strengthens our cultural capital and increases our likelihood of success. [6]

According to Liégeois, education can enhance personal autonomy for the Roma people. It equips them with tools to adapt to a changing environment and defend themselves against assimilation. Education provides an avenue for the Roma to break free from the passive cycle of welfare and engage in cultural and political development.[7] However, it is crucial to note that institutional racism has been a common experience for Roma communities, leading to segregation, exclusion, and distrust of education. Education has been viewed as a tool of assimilation, perpetuating institutional racism.

Systemic or institutional racism refers to discriminatory practices organised within political or social institutions. It intentionally or unintentionally discriminates against a particular group of people, restricting their rights. It is based on the cultural beliefs of a dominant group that views their behaviour as the standard to which all other

[4] Rostas 2019.
[5] Ryder–Taba–Trehan 2014.
[6] Bourdieu 1986.
[7] Liégeois 1998.

cultural practices should conform. Institutional racism systematically benefits certain ethnic or cultural groups while marginalising and disadvantaging others. Identifying and fighting institutional racism is challenging, especially when it is perpetrated by non-racist institutions and governments. When institutional racism exists in multiple social contexts, it reinforces the disadvantages already experienced by certain members of a community.[8]

Research has shown that obtaining more years of education is correlated with higher earnings in the workforce. Therefore, education is often considered a pathway to advancing one's career and breaking the cycle of poverty.[9]

Out of the ten to twelve million Roma people believed to live in Europe, it is estimated barely one percent pursue higher education.[10] The Roma population has comparable social, political, and economic issues across the continent while being distributed throughout Europe and beyond. The low achievement, attendance, and access of Roma people in the educational system is one of the main concerns.

Discrimination and marginalization

According to Ciaian and Kancs, anti-Roma discrimination has been deeply ingrained over centuries of oppressive policies and discriminatory attitudes from the dominant population. This discrimination continues to play a pivotal role in reinforcing the division between Roma and non-Roma, perpetuating two separate and segregated groups within society. Unfortunately, the prevalence of anti-Roma discrimination limits the mainstream population's willingness to accept the Roma community.[11]

Schooling is a particularly good example of the segregation and marginalization of Roma children. Some Roma parents are reluctant to send their children to mainstream schools because of the hostile attitudes of non-Roma children (also often of teachers) toward Roma children; these attitudes are widely observed in schools in Europe.[12] This hostile behaviour increases the social costs of Roma children acquiring formal education, as they may face emotional and/or physical abuse when attending a mainstream school. Such a hostile environment reinforces the demarcation between Roma and non-Roma, thus reducing the chances of completing school and so lowering the probability of finding employment.[13]

[8] Blum 2020.
[9] Müskens–Hanft 2009.
[10] Bracic 2020.
[11] Ciaian–Kancs 2016.
[12] Kertesi–Kézdi 2011.
[13] Matras 2015.

In traditional Roma culture, the customary practice is to provide education to children from within the family and the Roma community. Sending their children to non-Roma schools is often avoided by very traditional Roma parents due to concerns about potential cultural clashes such as assimilation or bullying. Of particular importance to traditional communities is the period of puberty, during which children become subject to *Marimé*. This entails a need to avoid certain activities, such as sexual education of children. As a result, some parents withdraw their children from school during this period.[14] However, recent studies suggest that through effective home/school liaison and curricular flexibility traditional Roma communities can and do effectively participate in mainstream education.

Furthermore, in some communities, exclusion and bonding social capital have led to strict boundary maintenance, creating an elevated level of mistrust towards outsiders, including academics.[15] While only a small but notable number of Roma have achieved status within academia and produced "insider" accounts, this trend is increasing in recent times.

In East Central European (ECE) countries with substantial Roma populations, inequalities between Roma and non-Roma are stark and often begin early in life. Some of these inequalities stem from hard-wired family circumstances, such as growing up in a household at the bottom of the income distribution or having parents with little education.

Roma people are at a substantial risk of human rights violations in the European Union, according to reliable statistical data from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) since 2008. FRA surveys conducted in 2008, 2011, 2016, and 2019 show limited progress in improving the situation for Roma people despite the best efforts of the EU and its member states. These surveys reveal that anti-Gypsyism is still a problem, and many Roma people still struggle to enjoy fundamental rights such as employment, education, healthcare, and housing.

FRA conducted another survey in 2021, focusing on Roma people in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Macedonia, and Serbia. This survey included interviews with over 8,400 Roma people and collected information on more than 20,000 people living in their households. The survey provides unique data and information that is not available in European general population surveys, which do not break down based on ethnic origin. The results of this survey reveal a familiar picture of exclusion, deprivation, discrimination, and racism.

[14] Sway 1984.
[15] Rostas–Ryder 2012.

There has been little to no improvement in education, as more than 70 percent of young Roma people continue to drop out of school. Only 27 percent of 20–24-year-olds have completed upper secondary education, and 71 percent of 18–24-year-olds leave school early.

More than half (52 percent) of 6–15-year-old Roma children in compulsory school are enrolled in schools with segregation (44 percent in 2016). Segregation is most common (65 percent) in Slovakia and Bulgaria (64 percent). Discrimination when in contact with school authorities (7 percent in 2016, 11 percent in 2021) increased across the surveyed EU countries. In 2016, one in five (27 percent) Roma children reported experiencing hate-motivated bullied/harassed behaviour while in school.[16]

The survey draws attention to the ongoing prejudice, deprivation, and exclusion that Roma people experience, especially in the field of education. It points out that there hasn't been much progress in Roma youth education, with many not finishing secondary school and a sizable percentage of young Roma continuing to drop out of school. The pervasive segregation in schools, where Roma children are frequently kept isolated from their classmates in learning environments, exacerbates this lack of academic advancement. The section also emphasises the startlingly high rate of bullying and hate-motivated harassment, as well as the rise in recorded cases of prejudice when Roma youngsters engage with school officials.

Moreover, the survey emphasises how crucial education is to mending social injustices and eliminating the poverty cycle. It highlights the need for inclusive policy and high-quality education to give Roma children the chance to improve their social and economic circumstances. Despite these obstacles, the evidence indicates that structural problems such as school segregation and prejudice persist, underscoring the necessity of more concerted efforts to establish a fair learning environment for Roma communities.

Anti-Gypsyism as a form of discrimination

Anti-Gypsyism is the specific form of racism that is directed against Roma, Sinti, Travellers, and other people who are seen as 'Gypsies' in popular culture. Anti-Gypsyism is often used in a narrow sense to indicate anti-Roma attitudes or the expression of negative stereotypes in the public sphere or hate speech. However, anti-Gypsyism gives rise to a much wider spectrum of discriminatory expressions and practices, including many implicit or hidden manifestations. Anti-Gypsyism is not only about what is being

[16] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. *Roma Inclusion 2020-2021: Survey Findings*. Vienna: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2021.

said but also about what is being done and what is not being done. To recognise its full impact, a more precise understanding is crucial.[17] More so, anti–Gypsyism also becomes a broader discriminatory spectrum that also recognises the hidden agendas about the Roma. Given this, it is claimed that the institutions that are supposed to protect the rights of the Roma often fail to do so because of anti-Gypsyism, since anti-Gypsyism too, is rooted deep within these institutions and power structures of European societies.

Anti-Gypsyism/anti-Roma discrimination has existed for centuries. It was an essential element in the persecution and annihilation policies against Roma as perpetrated by Nazi Germany, and those fascist and extreme nationalist partners and other collaborators who participated in these crimes.

The Romani academic Ethel Brooks stated that the experience of Roma included: "*Racism, forced evictions, racially motivated attacks, police abuse, segregation, inhuman and degrading treatment, housing discrimination, expulsions and marginalization, educational segregation, and the denial of access to schools, of unfair detention, hate speech, and hate crimes among other forms of violence (and the need to combat) structural forms of anti-Romani racism at all levels. This anti-Romani sentiment is rooted in a mainstream lack of understanding of the history and culture of this ethnic group and constructed narratives of 'otherness'".*[18]

Today, this community is systematically scapegoated, instrumentalised, and deprived of any economic, political, or cultural power. 26 percent of Roma reported having suffered from discrimination in Eastern and Southern European Union member states as opposed to 45 percent in Western countries. This difference should not be understood as less discrimination in this part of Europe, but rather as the greater awareness of rights in the West or the more public acceptance of discrimination in Eastern Europe.[19] It shows the internalization process of the hatred rhetoric against the Roma people.

Anti-Gypsyism has deep historical roots in our societies. The strenuous relationship between majority populations and those stigmatised as 'Gypsies' can be described as part of a common heritage, which underscores its persistence and occurrence across different countries, in Europe and beyond. The emergence of anti-Gypsyism is not to be confused with the migration of Romani people 's ancestors into certain regions. Rather, it flows from processes of social construction and projection that are prevalent elements of the development of European 'civilization'. Against this constant factor, the ideological justifications of the unequal treatment of Roma and other groups,

[17] Van Baar 2014.
[18] Brooks 2012: 1–11.
[19] Makszimov 2020.

and the practices of discrimination and persecution of them, have been shaped and reshaped over and over and should be understood against the backdrop of historical developments and events.

From the eighteenth century, academic interest in Roma communities grew apace. However, academia has at times been more of a foe than friend, adopting hierarchical research approaches but also forms of scientific, racial, and cultural racism, which gave credence and support to policies of genocide and assimilation.

From Gypsylorism to Romani Studies

During the late 18th century in Europe, orientalism emerged, leading to the development of Gypsylorism. Heinrich Grellman, a German writer, published 'Die Zigeuner' (The Gypsies) in 1783, which marked a significant shift in the perception of Romanies. According to Lee, this paper was the first European scholarly work in which 'the Gypsy' was considered a discursive subject for systematic study based on rational scientific principles of that time. Despite further marginalization and objectification of the Roma by Grellman, his writing stands out from other 18th-century European writers as it marked a clear departure from the vagrancy discourse of the late 18th century to the new discourse of "racialization".

Similar to Jewish Studies, African American Studies, Women's Studies, and other group-centred interdisciplinary fields of study, contemporary Romani Studies focuses on the social, economic, cultural, and political lives of the various Roma communities across the globe, as well as their interactions with 'mainstream societies'.

Unlike Jewish studies (one of whose origins can be traced back to the study of Judeo-Christian scriptures within Yeshiva), African-American or Women's Studies (both of which emerged in the context of emancipation struggles led by activists from their respective communities), the study of Romani in the UK and elsewhere in Europe was based on specific orientalist ideas about Gypsies/Roma, developed by intellectuals outside of the Romani community[20]. Consequently, the studies of Romani have been disconnected from the emancipation struggles of the Romani peoples, despite the efforts of a few scholars to bring their scholarship and politics together.[21]

Romani studies differ from other disciplines in two significant ways. Firstly, attempts have been made to synthesise knowledge and provide critical trajectories, the field's historical origins are rooted in the study of Gypsylorism, a form of orientalism that specifically pertains to the study of Romani people and culture. Orientalism,

[20] Acton 1998.
[21] Hancock 2000.

according to Said[22], refers to the "*system of concepts, presumptions, and discursive practices that were employed in the production, interpretation, and evaluation of knowledge about non-European peoples*". Said further argued that the classification and organisation of knowledge about the oriental world is a means of asserting power.

Non-Roma individuals have always been in charge of classifying and studying Roma knowledge since Roma voices are absent from the field. This situation remains prevalent today, as evidenced by the scarcity of Roma scholars at professional body meetings such as the Gypsy Lore Society. Much like the studies of the "other" that occurred in Europe more than a century ago, non-Roma scholars still primarily conduct contemporary Roma studies.

The exclusion of Roma perspectives in research projects conducted in their own communities remains a persistent issue in academic and policy circles. Despite the establishment of several institutional structures by the European Union and the Council of Europe to promote cooperation among researchers, policy makers, and stakeholders in the field of Roma studies, there is still a prevalent tendency to view Roma researchers and scholars as 'objects' and exclude them from full collaboration. This practice is considered by some scholars to be another form of infantilization of the Roma, as critical Roma scholars and their perspectives are excluded from the dialogue. Furthermore, this exclusion has led to a positivist approach to studying the Roma by privileged white academics who tend to be hostile to the critical thinking of the new Romani Studies.

The European Academic Network on Roma (EANRS), established in 2011, aimed to address this ongoing issue. However, it was criticised for not providing a fixed representation of self-identified Roma on the scientific committee elected by the EANRS. Activists and emerging Roma scholars also criticised the Network, claiming that non-Roma scholars were hostile to them, and that institutional racism existed. This criticism created significant tensions between established academics and younger critical/Romani scholars and was a catalyst to the development of Critical Romani Studies.[23]

The exclusion of Roma perspectives is due to assorted reasons, including the disillusionment of some scholars who have contributed to their own marginalization by refusing to participate in mainstream debates that they see as hijacked by non-Roma. This trend is concerning, and it is being challenged by a new generation of independent researchers who have started to write about these controversial dynamics of power in an open way.

The research I am conducting will assess the legacy of this tension and in what forms it may exist today. It will delve into the multifaceted reasons behind the

[22] Said 2003.
[23] Beck–Ivasiuc (ed.) 2018.

exclusion of Roma perspectives and critically evaluate the effectiveness of the institutional structures established to address this issue. Ultimately, the research aims to provide insights into how to achieve more equitable and inclusive practices in Roma studies.

Development of Critical Race Theory

Critical Romani Studies is an emerging field of academic research that focuses on the impact of racism on the Romani community and their identity. Scholars in this field draw from a range of disciplines, including post-colonial studies, intersectionality, feminist criticism, and Critical Race Theory to analyse and illuminate the structural discrimination and inequalities experienced by the Romani people.

Critical Race Theory provides a framework for understanding the complex interplay between race and power within social and institutional structures. It describes how power is a structural concept shaped by society's ideologies and beliefs, which is dependent on context, space, status, and race. It also examines the persistent inequalities present in various contexts, including those related to race, culture, gender, social class, and education.[24] The Critical Race Theory in Higher Education aims to address the institutional and structural forms of racism, discrimination, and prejudice that exist and hinder the academic achievement of Roma. By emphasising the role of institutions in perpetuating inequalities in opportunities and outcomes, Critical Race Theory provides an up-to-date analysis and discourse on the educational performance of Roma in higher education.

At the beginning of the 21st century in Europe, the academic, cultural, and political discourse shifted from the discourse of assimilation of the Roma people to the discourse of historical justice, political accountability, and Roma rights. In recent years, academic and artistic voices of the Roma diaspora have addressed questions around access to knowledge production, self-representation, voice positionality, and reflexivity.[25]

The study of Critical Romani Studies is essential to creating a more just and equitable society where all individuals, regardless of their ethnicity or race, have equal opportunities and are free from discrimination. By advancing this field of study, scholars can work towards a better understanding of the structural discrimination and inequalities faced by the Romani community, as well as the ways to address and overcome them. This will require continued interdisciplinary collaboration and a

[24] Wiggan–Gadd 2020.
[25] Kóczé 2015: 91–110.

commitment to challenging the underlying assumptions and biases that perpetuate racism and discrimination in our society.[26]

The conflict in Romani Studies between critical and more established scholars is primarily concerned with the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the researched. This conflict reflects the long-standing tensions between scientism, the idea that the researcher should maintain objectivity and distance, and the principles of embodied research. As part of my research, I will assess the positions Roma academics assume in these contestations.

Affirmative actions as an inclusion instrument for the Roma in Europe

The European Union (EU) has identified the Roma as a marginalised ethnic minority group that faces widespread discrimination and socio-economic exclusion. As a condition for membership, the EU has put pressure on prospective member states to address these issues, which has led to the adoption of institutions, legislation and projects aimed at reducing discrimination and socio-economic disparities for the Roma. While some progress has been made, discrimination, poverty, segregation, and exclusion are still major problems for the Roma community. Additionally, the Roma remain under-represented in every country in which they reside. These outcomes reflect the EU's ongoing efforts to promote and protect ethnic minorities in East Central Europe since the 1990s. Despite the EU's support for improved treatment of the Roma, these countries are left with a mixed bag of policies, practices, and norms that both support inclusion and exclusion.

Some countries have also adopted affirmative action measures to help rectify or offset the disadvantages and discriminatory practices long faced by Roma. For example, since 1992, and more broadly since 1998, Romania has had reserved spaces for Roma in both secondary and higher education, supporting the enrolment of over 10,000 students in secondary and vocational education from 2000 to 2006 and over 1,400 students at universities.[27] It also established several affirmative action programs to support Roma teachers.[28] Hungary has incorporated affirmative action into its tertiary education, and provides free textbooks, some social benefits, mentoring and scholarships to Roma students.[29] The Czech Republic has subsidy programs to support primary and secondary

[26] Ryder et al 2014.
[27] Bojinca–Munteanu–Toth 2009.
[28] Fox–Vidra 2013.
[29] Roma Education Fund, "Roma Inclusion in Education," position paper, October 20, 2010, www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/roma_inclusion_in_education_position_paper.pdf.

school education. In 2013, Slovakia adopted an amendment to its anti-discrimination legislation allowing positive discrimination ('temporary equalization measures') with the goal of 'ensuring equal opportunities, in employment, education, health care and housing, thereby addressing social and economic disadvantages that may stem from racial or ethnic origin as well as other factors.[30] All the countries examined here have also taken advantage of external funding to support Roma education, especially the thousands of scholarships provided for Roma university students in ECE through the Roma Education Fund, as well as EU funds. Some critics would argue that such affirmative measures only create forms of tokenism creating a Roma elite and giving the impression things are improving, also it is argued such measures fail to fundamentally challenge the structural and deep cultural drivers of inequality.

The participation of Roma students in universities is gradually rising in Hungary and other European nations as a result of government initiatives. This is important for shifting societal perspectives as well as for individual Roma students. Raising the profile of Roma students in higher education can help dispel myths and show that members of the Roma community can succeed academically. Additionally, having Roma students on campus helps foster a more diversified learning environment that fosters cross-cultural communication and comprehension.

Many Roma students continue to encounter major institutional and cultural obstacles despite the financial assistance and educational opportunities provided by state initiatives. In this situation, the idea of "culture shock" is very pertinent. Roma students frequently originate from under-represented groups and struggle to fit in at university. These challenges can be made worse by low self-esteem, discrimination, and feelings of loneliness. The shift from segregated or underfunded school systems to colleges, where social and intellectual expectations are frequently drastically different, may be difficult for many individuals.

Some argue that affirmative measures alone are not sufficient and need to be supplemented by deep structural change. In the book "Romani communities in a New Social Europe," Ryder, Taba, and Trehan argue that significant changes are necessary to support young people's involvement in transformative change based on the principle of 'nothing about us without us.' They propose a broader concept of social Europe that prioritises equality, dialogue, redistribution, and respectful recognition of all minority perspectives.[31] According to Dunajeva, some Roma members may not complete primary or secondary education due to feeling unwelcome and even bullied in schools, while others identify structural racism in academia.[32]

[30] Lajčáková 2013.
[31] Ryder–Rostas–Taba 2014.
[32] Dunajeva 2017: 56.

Despite these obstacles, various initiatives are emerging to promote the Roma narrative. The Roma right (2/2015): "Nothing about us without us," journal of the European Roma Rights Centre that grew out of a three-day gathering of Roma and pro-Roma activists and thinkers in Budapest in 2014, is one such initiative. The journal contains critical papers written by established and emerging activists and scholars in three sections: Activism and civil society; knowledge production; gender and LGBTQ issues. The founding editors of the journal have diverse personal and academic backgrounds, with each conducting their doctoral studies on topics related to the oppression and emancipation of Roma in diverse disciplines such as art history, media studies, political anthropology, political science, and sociology.[33]

Moreover, higher education may seem like a luxury product when so many Roma members struggle to complete primary or secondary education. By prioritising equality, dialogue, redistribution, and respectful recognition of all minority perspectives, a new social Europe could help underpin greater progress.

The Central European University (CEU) has been involved with the Roma population for a long time and has played a crucial role in the development of Romani Studies. In March 2016, the university announced the 'Roma in European Society' program (RES), which is a €5 million multidisciplinary initiative aimed at improving the situation of the Roma population in all sectors. The program supports graduate education, innovative research, teaching and leadership development, professional training, and community outreach activities.

In 2004, CEU launched its 'Roma Access Program' (RAP) to help Roma students transition from undergraduate to English-speaking graduate programs. The aim of RAP is to promote academic excellence among Roma university graduates, strengthen their Roma identity and pride, and ensure their success in international master's degree programs in English by promoting their academic excellence in core subjects such as "English," "Academic Writing," and "Academic Speaking," as well as a chosen subject from the humanities and social sciences.

Students who participate in this program take part in workshops with Roma and non-Roma activists and academics on topics related to Roma identity and mobilization. They also receive personalised advice on how to find and apply for English language MA programs and scholarships.

CEU's work in the field of Roma Studies has faced resistance under the leadership of students, scholars, and activists. However, their efforts have been successful in the reorganisation of the Roma Studies Summer School with the involvement of Roma directors, faculty, and students. They have also established a journal that defines

[33] van Baar–Kóczé (ed.) 2020.

the field and challenges the continued marginalization of the subject by scholars, politicians, practitioners, and experts.

The interdisciplinary nature of Romani Studies and the political atmosphere of anti-Gypsyism in Europe can be linked to the continued emergence and growth of mostly young female activists who are university-educated. Programs like those at the CEU, equip them with the knowledge to fight for social justice and for economic, legal, and political reforms, as well as wider political change.

Recently, we have witnessed the effect of broader decolonization efforts across North American and European universities in the field of Romani studies. The establishment of a European Roma Institute (ERIAC) for Arts and Culture in 2017 and the rise of social justice groups like Black Lives Matter have played an inspiring role.[34] The launch of an innovative intellectual and technological university for Roma in the form of the 'ERIAC Barvalipe' online Roma University (CEU) in 2020 was a response to the pandemic and the need for new knowledge production.

In addition to CEU's and ERIAC's work, numerous non-governmental organisations around Europe strive to increase Roma's access to and achievement in higher education. These groups offer Roma students who are subjected to systemic injustices academic support, activism, financial aid, and mentorship such as Romaversitas in Hungary, Roma Education Fund (REF), Upre Roma in Romania and Phiren Amenca internationally.

The debate over positive discrimination to benefit Europe's Roma community is important, but limited consideration has been given to Roma perceptions or experiences in academia. As part of my research, I am interested in evaluating the relevance of Critical Romani Studies, as well as the leadership and arguments of the emerging band of Roma scholars.

Cultural shock/cultural trauma and resilience

Culture shock is a complex experience that can occur when someone moves to a new and diverse cultural environment. When we travel or relocate to a new social and cultural setting, we lose the familiar signs, symbols, and customs that help us navigate everyday situations[35]. These cues include things like when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, how to manage tips, how to make purchases, when to accept or decline invitations, and how to interpret statements. They are all part of our culture, just like our language and beliefs. However, when we enter a foreign culture,

[34] Matache 2020.
[35] Thompson 2021.

most or all these cues disappear. This can leave us feeling lost and disoriented, and we may experience feelings of depression and anxiety as we adjust to an unfamiliar way of life.[36]

Not everyone goes through cultural shock the same way. Some people may go through these stages faster or slower than others. This is especially true for those who are highly assimilated and/or come from assimilated ethnic families that have cultural capital. In addition, some people experience cultural shock in a more intense way that develops into cultural trauma. Cultural trauma can have long-term effects on an individual's emotional health and can cause feelings of estrangement, identity crisis and psychological distress.

Resilience refers to the ability of an individual, community, system, or organism to withstand and recover from challenges, adversity, or setbacks. It involves adapting, bouncing back, and maintaining functionality even in the face of difficult circumstances or disruptive events. Resilience is often associated with the capacity to effectively cope with stress, adversity, or trauma and to emerge from such experiences stronger and more capable.[37]

Resilience is not a fixed trait; it can be developed and strengthened over time through self-awareness, learning, and practice. People can cultivate resilience by building their skills in areas such as emotional intelligence, communication, problem-solving, and self-care. Developing resilience can lead to improved mental and emotional well-being, increased capacity to navigate life's difficulties, and a greater ability to thrive in the face of adversity.

The literature in psychology differentiates between two kinds of resilience, "Group Resilience" which is the collective ability of a community, an organisation, or a social group to overcome, recover from, and thrive in the face of significant difficulties or adversity. It refers to the strength, resources, and networks within the community or group that allow its members to manage stress and function. Group resilience is based on shared values, standards, and social relationships that promote cohesion and cooperation in the face of challenge. Examples of factors that contribute to group resilience include strong social networks, effective leadership community cohesion, accessibility of resources and support services. Community resilience emphasises the need for interventions and strategies at community level to build and reinforce resilience among its members. While "Individual Resilience" refers to a person's ability to resist and overcome challenges, trauma, and stressors, often in the context of their own life experiences and personality traits. It focuses on the mental, emotional, behavioural, and physical factors that allow individuals to adjust positively to adversity

[36] Xia 2009.
[37] Festinger 1957.

and maintain their overall well-being. Individual resilience includes optimism, self-reliance, adaptability, problem-solving, and access to support networks and coping strategies.[38] In exploring the experiences of Roma academics and their coping mechanisms, culture shock and resilience are key terms.

Discussion: cultural shock revisited – class marginalization

Research into Roma culture shock in higher education, lack of cultural capital and value of resilience and other coping mechanisms can be justified by similar lines of investigation being applied to other marginalised groups such as low-income students.

Recently, selective undergraduate universities have taken steps to increase their economic diversity by seeking out applicants from underprivileged backgrounds[39], prioritising socioeconomic diversity in admissions.[40] However, prior research indicates that low levels of economic and cultural capital among disadvantaged undergraduates impede their capacity to successfully navigate and integrate into their institutions.[41]

On college campuses, class marginality takes several distinct but connected forms. One effect of socioeconomic marginality is "culture shock," which describes "the strangeness and discomfort marginalised students feel when they matriculate". In order to determine how class marginality hinders undergraduates' assimilation and integration, researchers also look at students' sense of fit[42] sense of isolation or difference, and sense of belonging. Aries and Seider look at how lower-income undergraduates' capital deficits are highlighted by their collegiate environment.[43] They demonstrate how working-class undergraduates at top colleges experience intimidation from and different experiences from working-class first-year students at public schools.

Based on comprehensive interviews conducted with a racially varied group of forty-four working-class college students from two private colleges, a study conducted in the United States examined the social dynamics that working-class students describe having with their wealthier counterparts, especially their buddies. It has been observed that peers from working-class backgrounds exhibit classism. People from lower class origins are treated in a way that devalues, discounts, excludes, and separates them; this is a manifestation of class privilege and power known as classism.[44]

[38] Scott–Kraimer–Heslin 2016.
[39] Rimer 2007.
[40] Karabel 2005.
[41] Torres 2009: 883–90.
[42] Bergerson 2007.
[43] Seider 2005.
[44] Langhout–Rosselli–Feinstein 2007.

Racial marginalization has been the subject of prior research on the Black undergraduate experience.[45] However, most recent studies use class-based or intersectional methods. Such a class-based strategy is supported by Torres, who claims that Black students are being pushed to the outside of campus life by social class disparities, especially at institutions that have historically served wealthy students.

A study by Dr. Anthony Abraham Jack from Boston University emphasises the social and cultural circumstances of class marginalization, in contrast to other research that linked the experiences of lower-class undergraduates with marginalization to their class background. Not all Black undergraduates from lower-class backgrounds feel the strangeness, unfamiliarity, and loneliness that comes with enrolling in selective universities. To paraphrase Sampson and Wilson, the full impact of class marginality was only felt by individuals who moved through and engaged with environments that were "ecologically dissimilar" from the elite college milieu.[46] To further investigate ecological dissimilarity, Jack investigated the relationship between students' pre-college experiences in various ecological niches and their perception of integration and adjustment to college.[47]

I concur that knowledge of socioeconomic class is essential to comprehending the social experiences of Roma academics. However, I contend that class marginality and culture shock are determined by the social and cultural contrasts between an individual's pre-college and post-college lives. This research on Roma academics not only broadens current conceptions of class marginality but also contributes to the understanding of the relative importance of class and culture in collegiate stratification processes. The research can also be said to have an intersectional quality probing the impact of low income, gender and ethnicity on Roma culture shock as it also considers how the Roma community itself might marginalise educated Roma. The literature suggests that some traditional Roma communities view highly educated Roma as assimilated and no longer Roma or living in contravention of Roma traditions.[48]

Conclusion

In conclusion, an examination of the cultural shock and trauma experienced by Roma academics in higher education reveals the significant impact of systemic barriers, cultural dissonance, and social exclusion on their identity formation. This research

[45] Feagin–Hernan–Imani 1996.
[46] Sampson–Wilson 1995.
[47] Jack 2014: 460.
[48] Liégeois 1998: 46; Gheorghe 2013: 77.

underscores the vital role of resilience, both as a personal and collective resource, enabling individuals to effectively confront and navigate these challenges.

Moreover, institutional support through affirmative actions and inclusive policies acts as a crucial mechanism for alleviating discrimination and fostering a genuine sense of belonging. The combination of resilience and robust institutional support not only empowers Roma academics to overcome obstacles but also facilitates the development of a dynamic and empowered identity, transforming them into influential agents of change within their communities and beyond.

By addressing these important themes, the study makes a compelling case for the necessity of equity-driven interventions in academia, providing valuable insights into how higher education can become a transformative space for healing, growth, and identity development for marginalised groups.

The evolution from the term "Victim" to "Resilient" among Roma academics underscores the remarkable strength and resilience that Roma communities exhibit in confronting the challenges they face daily. This shift is not just a semantic change; it is rooted in a deep understanding of the historical and ongoing oppression experienced by Roma. For centuries, Roma individuals have been subjected to discrimination, persecution, and marginalization across Europe and worldwide. Despite these adversities, they have successfully preserved their cultural identity, social cohesion, and fundamental rights.

This narrative transformation moves us beyond victimization, focusing instead on empowerment, resourcefulness, and resilience. By highlighting resilience, we also promote solidarity and support through the powerful sharing of stories that showcase strength. Roma activists are dedicated to building alliances and fostering support among allies and stakeholders, both within the Roma community and beyond. Such collaboration not only mobilises vital resources but also ignites activism and forges partnerships to tackle the systemic barriers that Roma face.

Overall, the emphasis on resilience within the Roma academic community reflects a larger movement toward strength-centred approaches to social change. It showcases the assets, capabilities, and inherent resilience of marginalised communities as crucial drivers of empowerment, justice, and meaningful transformation. This compelling focus challenges existing narratives and inspires a shared commitment to creating a more equitable future for all.

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Mary Wollstonecraft's Enlightened Historical Narrative: Her Rational (Re)view on the French Revolution

Éva Antal

Abstract

In *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* (1790), Mary Wollstonecraft ardently justified the French Revolution, reacting to Edmund Burke's criticism of the event in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). However, having visited France in the 1790s, she rationalised her previous zeal about her radicalism in *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution; and the Effect it has produced in Europe* (1794). In the *View*, history is presented as a coherent narrative of progress, and the event of the revolution, despite its inevitable causes, is criticised in the moral-philosophical framework. Being an Enlightened thinker, Wollstonecraft re-evaluated her previous ideas, examining them on a large scale in the process of (hu)man development towards virtue. In my paper, I will trace the recurrent characteristics of the narrative, focussing on theatricality, immaturity, and the clash of conflicting forces, while presenting the utopian (female) voice of a philosophical historian.

Keywords: Mary Wollstonecraft, French Revolution, Enlightenment history, Philosophical historiography, Historical narrative, Collective progress, Utopian political vision

"*Ah!* ça *ira,* ça *ira,* ça *ira,*
L'égalité partout régnera."
(French Revolutionary street song)

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Wollstonecraft's radicalism

In her essay collection, Virginia Woolf introduces the radicalism of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), who embodies the revolutionary *par excellence*:

> "The Revolution thus was not merely an event that had happened outside her; it was an active agent in her own blood. She had been in revolt all her life—against tyranny, against law, against convention. The reformer's love of humanity, which has so much of hatred in it as well as love, fermented within her. The outbreak of revolution in France expressed some of her deepest theories and convictions, […]."[1]

Woolf refers to the two *Vindications* that were inspired by the French Revolution. In the first one titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Man* (1790), Wollstonecraft hastily reacted to Edmund Burke's criticism of the event in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), in which she passionately defended the Parisian poor and their just revolt.[2] In *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), though she mostly debated Jean-Jacques Rousseau's notions on women's education, she was still under the influence of the revolutionary ideal of "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité".

In 1792, Wollstonecraft travelled to France after the September Massacres when fourteen hundred prisoners were killed by the Parisians; however, she was still optimistic.[3] She stayed in France till 1795 to experience the reign of Terror; and she even had to hide in Le Havre with her American lover, Gilbert Imlay who saved her claiming that she was his wife. She witnessed the death of the King then the Queen and the imprisonment or execution of her Girondist friends—Helen Maria Williams and Thomas Paine escaped, Mme Roland and Olympe de Gouges were guillotined, while Condorcet died in prison.[4] In those circumstances (also being pregnant), Wollstonecraft was working on her lengthy historical book, and as an Enlightened thinker, rationalised her previous zeal about the revolution in *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution; and the Effect it has produced in Europe* (1794). Her being an ardent believer of reason and justice led her to re-evaluate her previous ideas, placing them in a rationalised historical framework at large: focussing on the movement of (hu)man towards virtue in the process of development of manners and education. In the writing of her chronicle, she relied on the French events documented in the contemporaries' reports and letters:

[1] Woolf 1935: 91.
[2] See my recently published article about the philosophical and aestheticised debate, Antal 2024.
[3] Furniss 2002: 64.
[4] Tomalin 2012: 207–209.

Wollstonecraft used the records of the *New Annual Register*, the French journals, *Le Courrier* and *Le Moniteur*, and she also cited J. P. Rabaut Saint-Étienne's history of the French Revolution (*Précis historique de la Révolution Française*, 1792) and Mirabeau's letters (*Lettres du Comte de Mirabeau,* 1789) among others.[5] In addition to the authentic records, she was inspired by Catharine Macaulay (1731–1791), the great historian of her time, as they had a short-lived correspondence in 1790 that ended due to Macaulay's death. They exchanged writings and also expressed their understanding and mutual respect for each others' work.[6] The two women writers shared radical values on strict morality, republicanism, and equal education; they both attacked Edmund Burke's anti-revolutionary letter in 1790. In her historical writings, Wollstonecraft provided utopian ideas about human virtue and virtuous life as a future programme, while Macaulay claimed for the need to live virtuously in the present—she took virtue as "an ethical imperative", and she wrote her scholarly historical survey, *The History of England* (1763–83) from that position.[7]

Wollstonecraft was planning to write several volumes on the French Revolution, and the final version was to consist of five books with a short "Advertisement" and "Preface" attached.[8] In the introduction, she underlines the difficulties of her research, and she claims that she intends to present "theoretical investigations, whilst marking the political effects that naturally flow from the progress of knowledge".[9] Moreover, she promises that she will subdue her emotions while writing about the great events of the French revolution and allow reason to guide and beam "on the grand theatre of political changes".[10] As she observes, the revolution was a rational consequence of the historical events in France, and it was:

> "[...] the natural consequence of intellectual improvement, gradually proceeding to perfection / in the advancement of communities, from a state of barbarism to that of polished society, till now arrived at the point when sincerity of principles seems to be hastening the overthrow of the tremendous empire of

[5] See Bour 2010: 2.

[6] Green 2020: 294–295; Hill 1995. Ironically, their scandalous life episodes also connected them: Wollstonecraft had her first daughter out-of-wedlock and Macaulay, the aged widow (47) infamously got married to William Graham, a surgeon's mate, 26 years younger than her age and also a brother to James Graham, the quack doctor (Macaulay was said to have an affair with him as well), who revolutionised sexuality with his Celestial Bed (Looser 2003: 204; Hill 1995: 188.).

[7] Mandell 2004: 128; Macaulay 2023.

[8] In the paper all the references are to Mary Wollstonecraft's *An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* in the critical edition of 2016 (Wollstonecraft 2016).

[9] Wollstonecraft 2016: 5.

[10] Wollstonecraft 2016: 6.

> superstition and hypocrisy, erected upon the ruins of gothic brutality and ignorance./"[11]

In the historical narrative, she outlines how the European monarchies developed through the centuries, reaching their prime in the time of Enlightenment. This essay will explore Wollstonecraft's contribution to enlightened philosophical history, thus situating the French Revolution in a progression from the infancy of society to the age of (r)evolution.

The enlightened framework of history

As Gary Kelly says, Wollstonecraft's *View* is an "Enlightenment 'philosophical history', describing change in sociological and cultural rather than merely political terms", and it is not without novelistic and sentimental passages.[12] Sapiro, O'Neill, and Furniss (among others) lay special emphasis on the moral view and on the notion of "progress" detailed in the work.[13] In the opening chapter, Wollstonecraft speaks of the slow development of mankind and the understanding of man's motives as a socio-political being, "contemplate[ing on] the infancy of man, his gradual advance towards maturity".[14] She sees a development in history, moving away from the age of barbarism to the flourishing Greek democracy, then to the rise and the fall of the Roman Empire. She highlights the medieval and early modern scientific and geographical discoveries to present man's—"our"—superiority. Her voice is self-confident, and she boldly presents the shared values of the French and American Enlightened thinkers of the age—including her own generation and women writers. Strikingly, her reference to "the infancy of man" and his "maturity" recalls Immanuel Kant's famous opening of his "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'" (1784):

> *"Enlightenment is the human being's [man's] emergence from his self-incurred minority* [*Unmündigkeit*; cf. *immaturity*]. *Minority* is the inability to make use of one's own understanding without direction from another. This minority is *self-incurred* when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. *Sapere aude*!

[11] Wollstonecraft 2016: 7.
[12] Kelly 1992: 153.
[13] Sapiro 1992: 252; O'Neill 2007: 242; Furniss 2002: 68.
[14] Wollstonecraft 2016: 15.

> Have courage to make use of your *own* understanding! is thus the motto of enlightenment." (emphasis in original)[15]

Wollstonecraft uses the word, "infancy", while Kant's *Unmündigkeit* has recently been translated as "minority" (together with *des Menschen* as human being's, that was originally "man's"); however, he uses the word "immaturity" in other versions. Like Kant, Wollstonecraft also believes in the Enlightenment tenet that every (hu)man dares to ask questions in order to exercise their reasoning in the understanding of others and the social world. In the passage just quoted, Bour even finds allusions to "phylogeny and ontogeny" formulated by Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment.[16] It cannot be traced back whether Kant or Smith is cited here, since Wollstonecraft names John Locke and refers to his writings on civil liberty and toleration after the introductory paragraphs.[17] Locke widely discusses the state of the English government and analyses the constitution of the country during the time of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 though his ideas gained popularity later in the English political discourse.[18] Wollstonecraft uses the term revolution for the first time in the text, and she proudly celebrates the English (Lockean) achievements in political science and philosophy. She also asserts that the English legislators should be praised for their ability to introduce a system "to hold the balance", "the equilibrium of the whole": "Nature having made men unequal, by giving stronger bodily and mental powers to one than to another, the end of government ought to be, to destroy this inequality by protecting the weak".[19]

Wollstonecraft seeks to provide the context for the French Revolution. Thus, she contrasts the peaceful period that resulted in England from the "bloodless revolution" with the tyranny and oppression in France. As she describes, there "the bitterness of oppression" and "the serious folly of superstition [...] stared every man of sense in the face".[20] In the name of enlightened reason, Wollstonecraft cites the satirical writings of Voltaire and the social criticism of Rousseau as they highlighted the hypocrisy of the clergy and the harsh social inequality of the exploited and the rich in the French system. She also claims that the two writers "educated" their readers, opening their eyes to the social abuses; similarly, as playwrights did on the stage in French theatres. According to Wollstonecraft, the French economists of the *Encyclopaedia*, Quesnay and Turgot encouraged reforms in the 1760s-70s, but their ideas were dismissed.

[15] Kant 1999: 17.
[16] Bour 2010: 3.
[17] Wollstonecraft 2016: 16.
[18] O'Gorman 2016: 41.
[19] Wollstonecraft 2016: 17.
[20] Wollstonecraft 2016: 18.

Meanwhile, the American success in political science was watched closely by the Enlightened thinkers, and they agreed upon the unique state of the country, being a newly born nation of brave and industrious people who 'dared to rely on their reason' (in the Kantian way). The American example is presented by Wollstonecraft as a positive example for European nations:

> "[...] she [cf. America] had it in her power to lay the first stones of her government, when reason was venturing to canvass prejudice. Availing herself of the degree of civilization of the world, she has not retained those customs, which were only the expedients of barbarism; or thought that constitutions formed by chance, and continually patched up, were superiour [sic] to the plans of reason, at liberty to profit by experience."[21]

In the period, America often appeared as the land of freedom, and its rebellion against the mother country was accelerated by the English radicals: among others, Thomas Paine whose writing titled *Common Sense* (1776) was said to have an impact on the phrasing of the Declaration of Independence.[22] However, instead of referring to her contemporaries, Wollstonecraft highlights the genuine and natural beginnings of the new society foundation in which all citizens using their common sense work for the benefit of the community. She stresses the Christian law of reciprocity taken from the Bible; namely, "men will *do unto others, what they wish they should do unto them*" (emphasis in original).[23] In her text, the quotation expresses a proto-communist or utopian wish. Moreover, the statement does not only recall the Kantian categorical imperative but it also propagates *virtue* as "the main purpose of every civilization," which connects Wollstonecraft's historical work with Catharine Macaulay's notions.[24]

Before giving her assessment of the French Revolution, Wollstonecraft asserts what should be "the political perfection of the world": in the age of reason, man—and the body-politic—should reach maturity, growing out of the infant state and "the youth approaching manhood should be led by principles".[25] In accordance with the enlightened notion, she accepts that man was born naturally good, and also that to be a grown adult means to take responsibility for one's action. Man's maturity, claims Wollstonecraft, is accompanied with the sense of rationality and self-respect In her enthusiastic passage about the rational development, she has proven to be an Enlightened historian: "Reason has, at last, shown her captivating face, beaming with

[21] Wollstonecraft 2016: 20.
[22] O'Neill 2007: 155.
[23] Wollstonecraft 2016: 21.
[24] Mandell 2004: 127–128.
[25] Wollstonecraft 2016: 21.

benevolence; and it will be impossible for the dark hand of despotism again to obscure it's [sic] radiance, or the lurking dagger of subordinate tyrants to reach her bosom".[26] For Wollstonecraft, the French Revolution should be considered as the revolution of reason, displaying the reasoning faculty of everyman who was capable of grasping the purpose of humanity, summed up in the slogan of "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity". Nevertheless, in the course of history, Wollstonecraft cannot see the call of reason, thinking of wars and massacres; only the softening of manners can be taken as a sign of man's Enlightenment instead of the chivalric sentiments for the gentlemanly conduct described by Burke in his *Reflections*,[27] the benevolent and rational acting for the sake of a community's welfare is emphasised here.

In her historical survey, Wollstonecraft regards the historical antecedents leading to the revolution in France; moreover, she presents the changes of the (patriarchal) rulers' characters in the country. She claims that moving away from the ferocity of the Gauls and the Franks, the gentlemanly "bastard morality" was being formed at the time of Christian crusades against the Turks in the first half of the 16th century during the reign of Francis I; then, in the second half, the first Bourbon king, Henry IV exemplified "manly dignity" and "tenderness of heart" in his fatherly command. With the ministry of Richelieu and Mazarin, the reign of Louis XIV was characterised by favouritism, dissimulation, and the royal taste for frivolity. Wollstonecraft connects the stage of history to the world of theatre, and she analyses how Corneille and Racine as faithful courtiers served and flattered their king in their neoclassical plays.[28] Moreover, she highlights the importance of drama in the forming of the national character of the French, and she regards it as a means of education, as "the schools of vanity".[29] In their analysis, Bour and Furniss also underline that Wollstonecraft, even in her rhetoric, reflected on the "theatricality" and "the artificiality" of French society.[30] Probably, Wollstonecraft borrows Edmund Burke's observation in this passage, as in his *Reflections,* he claims that "theatre is a better school of moral sentiments than churches, where the feelings of humanity are thus outraged", and he presents the spectacular features of Louis XVI's reign.[31] Wollstonecraft presents the theatrical exhibitions of Louis the Great or the Sun King, whose excessive lifestyle was worshipped by his subjects though his immense amount

[26] Wollstonecraft 2016: 22.
[27] Burke 2003: 60.
[28] Wollstonecraft compares Corneille to the English Dryden, the great playwright of Restoration, who was a Poet Laureate commemorating events of the Royal Family, and when Charles II was followed by the Catholic James II, he even converted to Catholicism. The only exception of not being a sycophant to the French court was Molière (Wollstonecraft 2016: 24–25).
[29] Wollstonecraft 2016: 25.
[30] Bour 2010: 6; Furniss 2002: 69-70.
[31] Burke 2003: 69.

of spending brought the country to the verge of ruination. His great-grandson, Louis XVI, inherited some of this legacy mainly in his favoured debauchery and eccentric behaviour, but Louis XVI lacked the popularity of the *grand monarque*. Nevertheless, he loved the English and introduced some "masculine writers", which helped the French "to rouse [their] sleeping manhood".[32] Wollstonecraft herself cannot avoid mentioning to some well-known stereotypes about the differences of the feminine French and the masculine English, probably also borrowed from Burke. As a recurrent motif in the narrative, she frequently points out the stereotypical characteristics of the French, mainly influenced by the eighteenth-century English notions about their frivolity, theatricality, and femininity.[33]

Then, in French history and in chapter II of Wollstonecraft's historical survey, Marie Antoinette enters the stage: "the young and beautiful *dauphine*" from Austria, whose ambition was to become the only mistress and the future queen of Louis XVI, overpowering Mme du Barry, the mistress of the previous King, in fame and influence.[34] Marie Antoinette's extravagance was infamous, and her expensive feasts at the estate of Trianon resulted in heavy taxation; the latter went against the suggestion of the minister of finance, Jacques Necker, who (with his reforms) was dismissed. Wollstonecraft says that the King himself was a man of reason with "a desire to promote useful reformation", but his advisors made the deficit of the country even worse due to their lack of credibility and immorality. Although Necker's follower, the unpopular Calonne suggested "the equalization of taxes" to the assembly of notables, and some found that a new constitution would be the solution, the nobility rejected the efforts. It is rather simple to state that they were not enlightened enough "to listen to the dictates of justice or prudence",[35] and as a result, in 1787, the country reached the state of financial crisis. When Calonne was accused by La Fayette at the assembly of notables, he excused himself, claiming that he had followed the King's orders (actually, the King's pleasures). Calonne, though realised the economic maladies could not break "the circle of corruption" (deeply involved in it); having been disgraced, he fled to England and lived in exile.[36] Brienne succeeded Calonne as controller-general of finance, and he summoned an aristocratic assembly (*cour pléniere*) to register taxes, bypassing the parliament. The French government stumbled out of one blunder into the other; "imbecility now characterised every measure," sums up Wollstonecraft.[37] The ones who criticised the management, for instance, the duke of Orleans, named Philippe Egalité, had to flee while two corrupt ministers were imprisoned,

[32] Wollstonecraft 2016: 28.
[33] Wellington 2001: 41–42.
[34] Wollstonecraft 2016: 29–30.
[35] Wollstonecraft 2016: 32.
[36] Wollstonecraft 2016: 34–35.
[37] Wollstonecraft 2016: 38.

and their effigies were enthusiastically burnt in Paris. The country was drifting into anarchy, and the soldiers sympathised with the struggling poor; the people experienced injustice, and they could not trust state legislature. However, "justice had never been known in France," remarks Wollstonecraft, "retaliation and vengeance had been it's [sic] fatal substitutes".[38]

In August 1788, there was the dawn before the Revolution, and Necker, the once popular financial expert was recalled.[39] Necker could not convince the parliament and the notables that the burdens of the poor should be lightened, relieving their famine; the nobles and the clergy wrapped themselves up in their sacred rights that proved their "winding-sheet" as Wollstonecraft points out prophetically in her Gothic rhetoric.[40] However, smart pamphleteers attacked Necker and urged serious reforms promoted by Sieyes, Condorcet, and Mirabeau, who would be the future members of the National Assembly in 1789. Truly, it could have been the last chance to accomplish a turning point in French history, but the Revolution seemed to be morally and humanely inevitable. In this respect, Bergès and Coffee even call Wollstonecraft's understanding as "a conceptual Revolution"; "a rational and moral" one.[41] Here Wollstonecraft turns out to be a political philosopher, considering the ifs and the what-could-have-been happenings in a rather utopian and uchronian style. Quoting her Enlightened credo:

> "Several acts of ferocious folly have justly brought much obloquy on the grand revolution, which has taken place in France; yet, I feel confident of being able to prove, that the people are essentially good, and that knowledge is rapidly advancing to that degree of perfectibility, when the proud distinctions of sophisticating fools will be eclipsed by the mild rays of philosophy, and man be considered as man—acting with the dignity of an intelligent being."[42]

In this passage, Wollstonecraft emphasises her belief in the fundamental goodness of man and reasserts her belief that the violence of the revolution will subside.

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[38] Wollstonecraft 2016: 40.

[39] Unfortunately, instead of initiating radical reforms, Necker lapsed into moralising and metaphysical speculations, publishing several treatises, and issued only "timid half-way measures" (Wollstonecraft 2016: 42). Mary Wollstonecraft herself translated Necker's moralising book written to children titled *De l'importance des opinions religieuses* (1788) and it came out at Joseph Johnson's in London (*Of the Importance of Religious Opinions, 1788*). There is another link between the two thinkers; namely that Necker was the French feminist, Mme de Staël's father.

[40] Wollstonecraft 2016: 43.

[41] Bergès and Coffee 2022: 138–139.

[42] Wollstonecraft 2016: 46.

The revolution of reason and its reality

Wollstonecraft strongly believed in man's progress and development in the course of European civilization. The term, "civilization," was first introduced in eighteenth-century enlightened histories describing the stages of growth, as Jane Rendall claims.[43] As the French Revolution was a sudden break in the historical continuity, Wollstonecraft decided to provide a lengthy introduction; the siege of the Bastille is first discussed only on page 85 (Book II, Chapter III), that is, the first third of the book, which covers the detailed descriptions of the antecedents.[44] On 17 June 1789, after several futile weeks of waiting for the commons to gather and discuss the state affairs, "the deputies declared themselves as a National Assembly", which happened, according to Wollstonecraft, in accordance with the Rousseauvian radical movement of dismissing the rulers he had described—or prophesied—in his *Social Contract*.[45] The nobles and the clergy still thought that they were untouchable; meanwhile the hostility of the French towards the parasites was inflamed by the revolutionary act of founding the Assembly with elected representatives. They made the first step to reformulate their constitution, as Wollstonecraft recaps: "the French in reality were arrived, through the vices of their government, at that degree of false refinement, which makes every man, in his own eyes, the centre of the world".[46]

In the forthcoming chapters, Wollstonecraft summarises the first phase of the revolution. In their enthusiasm and with the support of the people, the third-estate immediately addressed the urgent necessities: they claimed that all extra taxes (not enacted by the consent of the people's representatives) were illegal, then they examined the deficit and the national debt. The nobles still urged the King to dissolve the state-general while the majority of the clergy joined the Assembly. The latter event was to happen on 20 June, but the building was guarded by soldiers as the King was about to appear (*séance royale*); thus, the newly enlarged Assembly finally gathered at the tennis-court, and later they were joined by the soldiers. It is the episode that Wollstonecraft cannot avoid painting without pathos: "The benedictions that dropped from every tongue, and sparkled in tears of joy from every eye, giving fresh vigour to / the heroism which excited them, produced an overflow of sensibility that kindled into a blaze of patriotism every social feeling".[47] The forthcoming day, the King's speech

[43] Rendall 1997: 156–157.

[44] In my paper, obviously, I have to omit discussing all the events though Wollstonecraft's thorough survey of the minor details—even of debates, speeches, and occurrences—is worth further historico-political analysis (see, for instance, Chapter 1 in Book II, or Chapters 1–3 in Books III and IV).

[45] Wollstonecraft 2016: 61.

[46] Wollstonecraft 2016: 62.

[47] Wollstonecraft 2016: 65.

was not well accepted and when his majesty used the expressions of "I command" and "I will", the Assembly refused to receive orders from any person since they were to represent the whole nation. As Wollstonecraft points out, Mirabeau's brave opposition with his well-known statement that "only the bayonet can oblige us to quit our places" offered the last stroke to the outbreak of the Revolution.[48]

Wollstonecraft focuses on the turbulence in Paris, when the minority of the nobles also listened to their common sense and joined the commons; nevertheless, the royalists still kept their meetings, being unable to react sensibly and accept the changes. As it is remarkably outlined in the *View*:

> "The inveterate pride of the nobles, the rapacity of the clergy, and the prodigality of the court, were, in short, the secret springs of the plot, now almost ripe, aimed at the embryo of freedom through the heart of the national assembly. But Paris, that city which contains so many different characters that vortex, which draws every vice into it's [sic] centre—that repository of all the materials of voluptuous degeneracy—that den of spies and assassins contained likewise a number of enlightened men, and was able to raise a very formidable force, to defend it's [sic] opinions."[49]

While the French soldiers refused to attack the crowd and arrest the deputies, foreign troops were brought to the city to control posts from Paris to Versailles. There was serious scarcity of bread, yet the people enthusiastically gathered at meetings to discuss the happenings, Mirabeau composed great speeches, and even the victorious news from America enkindled the revolutionary spirit. The events leading to the 14 July are mostly described through Mirabeau's eyes, as Wollstonecraft gives lengthy quotations from his letters and speeches.[50]

Wollstonecraft details how on 13 July, the Parisians were arming themselves, also carrying the busts of the newly-dismissed Necker and the Duke of Orleans in the city, and all the theatres were closed down. At the Tuileries, the first shooting occurred; the crowd gathered all kinds of weaponry (shovels, pikes, axes, knives, or stones) —"To arms!" was echoed in Paris, while the courtiers were still partying at Versailles. In this section, Wollstonecraft introduces a sentimental digression, and meditates upon the present silence of the palace in 1792: Versailles has become the emblem of debauchery and profligacy; thus, crying for its loss, she is mourning over the glory of France. In her narrative, wandering in the empty and neglected rooms, Wollstonecraft even imagines

[48] Wollstonecraft 2016: 67.
[49] Wollstonecraft 2016: 76.
[50] Wollstonecraft 2016: 79–82; Kirkley 2022: 152–154.

that she sees her reflections in the mirrors as a thinker, as a historian, and as a female writer.[51] Reaching the actual day of the Revolution in her chronicles, Wollstonecraft also displays the sentimental voice of the moral philosopher (cf. "I weep", "I tremble"), and in her outburst, the unfortunate consequences of the situation of the 1790s can be traced. The falling of despotism and the destruction of the Bastille truly meant the end of an epoch for Wollstonecraft, but the starting of a better onecould only be achieved by a morally founded government and virtuous citizens.[52]

In her account, Wollstonecraft describes how the Parisians, because of their indignant sense of injustice, were becoming more and more furious; carriages were stopped and attacked, and leaders were badly needed. La Salle had become a general, La Fayette, who volunteered as a freedom-fighter in America, "laid before the assembly a proposal for a DECLARATION OF RIGHTS" in the American spirit; however, he used the version that the Marquis de Condorcet had previously presented to the deputies.[53] At Versailles, the King was warned to withdraw the troops, but he rejected it, taking the suggestion as an offence. The court decided to cut off the supplies of flour so that Paris should be without bread for days. Wollstonecraft remarks that the measure occasionally was used to control the crowd and, certainly, the idea of the revolution was horrible to imagine; thus, starving, the people were supposed to blame the new order of things and give up their rebellion. Then rumour spread that the cannons of the Bastille targeted the people and, in spite of the negotiation, some citizens were wounded, and the Parisian attacked the prison. The emblematic start of the French Revolution is detailed by Wollstonecraft based on eye-witnesses' reports, and in her fervour, she starts using the pronoun *we* instead of 'they'.[54] The siege of the Bastille, "the fortress of tyranny"[55] is not only the focal point of the historical work, but it is also the peak moment in French and European history—regardless of the fact that it occurred due to some miscommunication in the tumult, as it is documented:

> "This was certainly a splendid example, to prove, that nothing can resist a people determined to live free; and then it appeared clear, that the freedom of France did not depend on a few men, whatever might be their virtues or abilities, but alone on the will of the nation."[56]

[51] Kirkley 2022: 124.
[52] Wollstonecraft 2016: 84–85.
[53] Wollstonecraft 2016: 90.
[54] Wollstonecraft 2016: 95–97.
[55] Wollstonecraft 2016: 104.
[56] Wollstonecraft 2016: 100.

The hated prison having been taken, the officers were massacred, and the wounded cannoneers were hung on lamp-posts—and Wollstonecraft drops the unifying patriotic "we" from then on.

Educational lessons on equality and fraternity

In the Lockean spirit, Wollstonecraft states that freedom is the natural right of man in a civil society; thus, the French acted justly when they rebelled against "the most ignominious servitude," quoting the dissenter priest, Richard Price's phrase.[57] Although the National Assembly presided by Liancourt acted upon common sense and dignity, the mob, "the hardened children of oppression in all countries is the same; whether in the amphitheatre at Rome, or around the lantern-post in Paris," remarks Wollstonecraft.[58] Instead of "*vive le roi*", "*vive la nation*" was shouted in the streets and though the King also echoed it, accepting the cockade, the suppressed anger and the thirst for vengeance broke out; as a result, cruelties, atrocities, and executions paved the road of 'liberty' to 'equality' hand in hand with the notion of 'fraternity'.

However, as Bergès and Coffee point out quoting Wollstonecraft's statement, if a man in position, "an officer" gains some power and he exercises it, in his pride, he immediately takes himself a little "tyrant"—"a cock on a dunghill".[59] In the practice of the National Assembly, she clearly sees that the deputies act upon "the vile foundation of selfishness":

> "[...] virtue has been the watch-word, patriotism the trumpet, and glory the banner of enterprize; but pay and plunder have been the real motives. [...] By real patriots, I mean men who have studied politics, and whose ideas and opinions on the subject are reduced to principles; men who make that science so much their principal object, as to be willing to give up time, personal safety, and whatever society comprehends in the phrase, *personal interest,* to secure the adoption of their plans of reform, and the diffusion of knowledge."[60]

Although Lally-Tollendal spoke about the union of all deputies in the name of fraternity, the forming of clubs and cliques with individual haughtiness drove the representatives astray in their *consensual* working for the nation. According to Wollstonecraft, in the question of the *royal veto*, the French could have learnt from the English model

[57] Wollstonecraft 2016: 118.
[58] Wollstonecraft 2016: 125.
[59] Bergès and Coffee 2022:136.
[60] Wollstonecraft 2016: 141.

of constitutional monarchy and could have kept Louis XVI (and his dignity) "as a theatrical king".[61] That way, the King could have been saved with "the shadow of monarchy", and the later occurrence of the dismission and execution of a king would not have stirred the other monarchies in Europe with the news. In the analysis of this episode, on the one hand, the female historian underlines her former character typology; namely, the emphasis on French theatricality and the sober rationality of the English. On the other hand, she displays that most incidents were generated by the conflicts of the participants, and however hard she tries to tell a philosophical narrative, it is "above all one of the clash of opposed interests and passions".[62]

Wollstonecraft strictly follows the events recorded in the authentic reports she cites, but occasionally, she returns to her original and recurrent theme: the progress in history and the (possible) improvement of man. In the different periods of human civilization, the refinement of taste and arts can be seen, but the same development cannot always be stated about manners. Moreover, if a new era starts but human weakness with selfishness and liability to corruption prevails, the starting of the new age will be illusionary—optimally, "a civilization [should be] founded on reason and morality," she claims.[63] She refers not only to the horrors of slavery and the cruel treatment of women but she also highlights the improvement of the century in the Enlightened reign of Catherine II in Russia and in Germany where the philosophy of education and critical thinking are taught.[64] In the *View*, in addition to the thread of development in history, Wollstonecraft's other theme is the study of manners and education. As it is pointed out earlier, Wollstonecraft highlights the theatricality of the French character, but she also praises the erudition of the brains of the Revolution (cf. Necker, Mirabeau, La Fayette, Liancourt). The royal couple is described as an average rich man and woman: Wollstonecraft provides rather hideous pictures of the animal-torturing and lavish Louis and of the coquettish and ignorant Marie Antoinette; she claims that their behaviour was due to the lack of proper education.[65] Later Marie Antoinette is presented as a young and beautiful mother at the feast at Versailles when the cockades were trampled upon by the drunken soldiers, and the mob broke into the palace. On the whole, the Queen is associated with the court of feminised Versailles, with all of her vicious, careless and costly practices; thus, "for abolishing her sway, Europe ought to be thankful," Wollstonecraft states.[66]

[61] Wollstonecraft 2016: 160.
[62] Rendall 1997: 166.
[63] Wollstonecraft 2016: 111.
[64] Wollstonecraft 2016: 114–16.
[65] Wollstonecraft 2016: 73–74.
[66] Wollstonecraft 2016: 222.

In Wollstonecraft's history, not only Versailles but also Paris is gendered: *she* has become "the author of the revolution",[67] while the pleasure-seeking and childlike French are referred to as "feminine", and even their capriciousness explains the sudden turns in the events:

> "[...] because there a variety of causes have so *effeminated reason*, that the french [sic] may be considered as *a nation of women*; and made feeble, probably, by the same combination of circumstances, as has rendered these insignificant. More ingenious than profound in their researches; more tender than impassioned in their affections; prompt to act, yet soon weary; they seem to work only to escape from work, and to reflect merely how they shall avoid reflection." (emphases are mine)[68]

Irony cannot be traced here; Wollstonecraft regards the French feminine due to their "self-negating weakness, shallowness, and lack of fortitude with which conservative polemicists of the day characterised women".[69] Earlier, their love of entertainment and the theatre is also explained by the "effeminated" character, and it says more about the treatment of women, being stated by a rationally thinking English—woman.[70] Comparing the French city life to their countryside milieu, the latter is more idyllic and cheerful—similar to the English—with "more simplicity of manners prevailing," and women's modesty seems to be praised by Wollstonecraft:

> "Besides, in France, the women have not those factitious, supercilious manners, common to the english [sic]; and acting more freely, they have more decision of character, and even more generosity. Rousseau has taught them also a scrupulous attention to personal cleanliness, not generally to be seen elsewhere: their coquetry is not only more agreeable, but more natural: and not left a prey to unsatisfied sensations, they were less romantic indeed than the english [sic]; yet many of them possessed delicacy of sentiment."[71]

In this passage, she clearly goes against her previous criticism of Rousseau's treatment of women discussed in her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) where female

[67] Wollstonecraft 2016: 227.
[68] Wollstonecraft 2016: 121.
[69] Wellington 2001: 40.
[70] However, the stereotypical presentation does not underline Wollstonecraft's rationality; she even refers to the effects of the pleasant French climate that makes the people cheerful, negligent and feeble (Wollstonecraft 2016: 122). Bour reads the *View* along this thread, stating that "the French turned sensibility into sensuality" (Bour 2010: 5).
[71] Wollstonecraft 2016: 148.

subjugation and feebleness are endorsed by the French thinker. In the *View*, women are presented as acting upon impulses, either naturally or theatrically. When the deficit of the country is discussed in the Assembly, "the wives and daughters of artisans" (in Roman style) offered their jewellery and "ornaments" to help the country; they made the gesture out of pride or vanity and rather theatrically, and "the lively applauses of the assembly were reiterated with great gallantry".[72]

On the whole, being intimidated by the happenings in 1792-94 she personally witnessed in Paris, Wollstonecraft herself questions the rationality of the French crowd (referred to as "a pack of dogs", the *canaille*[73]). The behaviour of the French women is not too often discussed, and when accounting the siege of the Bastille, the historian is rather silent about the victorious female hordes—"all the unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women," as Burke refers to them in his *Reflections* earlier[74]. Nevertheless, she gives a detailed description of the day when the King and the Queen were attacked at Versailles, and here she clearly cites Burkean references to the marching of the famished 4000 market and street women "with the appearance of furies", being joined by some 500 men, who armed themselves and attacked soldiers in Paris.[75] Singing the street song (see my motto), the female populace—even with men disguised as women—was heading towards Versailles; meanwhile, at the Assembly, La Fayette tried to get the King's consent upon accepting the Declaration of Rights. The starving women simply wanted grain and flour, and the King graciously guaranteed their request, so "the most decent of the women" returned to Paris, while the rest, as Wollstonecraft calls them "the gang of ruffians" (also "vagabonds" and "banditti") broke into the palace, caught and beheaded two guards, and attempted to kill the royal couple.[76]

The Duke of Orleans (Égalité) was said to be behind the turmoil, and his "low intrigue was added also a decided preference of the grossest libertinism, seasoned with vulgarity, highly congenial with the manners of the heroines, who composed the singular army of the females".[77] With the sarcastically used word, "heroines," and with the label, "the vilest of women"[78]—repeating again the well-known Burkean phrase she ardently criticised in her first *Vindication* in 1792—, she recalls Burke's criticism of the French Revolution:

[72] Wollstonecraft 2016: 169.
[73] Wollstonecraft 2016: 196.
[74] Burke 2003: 61.
[75] Wollstonecraft 2016: 197.
[76] Wollstonecraft 2016: 204–205.
[77] Wollstonecraft 2016: 207.
[78] Wollstonecraft 2016: 207.

> "The laws had been trampled on by a gang of banditti the most desperate—The altar of humanity had been profaned—The dignity of freedom had been tarnished—The sanctuary of repose, the asylum of care and fatigue, the chaste temple of a woman, I consider the queen only as one, the apartment where she consigns her senses to the bosom of sleep, folded in it's [sic] arms forgetful of the world, was violated with murderous fury—The life of the king was assailed, when he had acceded to all their demands—And, when their plunder was snatched from them, they massacred the guards, who were doing their duty.—Yet these brutes were permitted triumphantly to escape –."[79]

As a result of the vandalism at Versailles, the King and his family were brought to Paris being accompanied by women riding on cannons that were covered with national cockades and followed by carriages filled in wheat and flour. With the assistance of Mirabeau, the Assembly introduced the riot act, preventing the unlawful gatherings of dozen people, that was said to be "an imitation, though not a copy, of the English riot act," remarks Wollstonecraft.[80] Moreover, in a prophetic, concluding description, she presents Paris as a beautiful "prison" with its great boulevards, pleasant parks, lovely palaces, and the neat squares that will be the future blood-stained places of the guillotine.[81]

Conclusion on the politics of freedom

Regarding the similarities between Wollstonecraft's and Macaulay's approach in the writing of their histories, they both agreed upon that the "the duty of the historian" was "to record the truth".[82] As for the differences, Wollstonecraft was more concerned about humanity's moral progress, being exemplified by the French happenings. Quoting her words:

> "And, perhaps, it will appear just to separate the character of the philosopher, who dedicates his exertions to promote the welfare, and perfection of mankind, carrying his views beyond any time he chooses to mark; from that of the politician, whose duty it is to attend to the improvement and interest of the time in which he lives, and not sacrifice any present comfort to a prospect of future

[79] Wollstonecraft 2016: 209.
[80] Wollstonecraft 2016: 218.
[81] Wollstonecraft 2016: 216.
[82] Wollstonecraft 2016: 213.

> perfection or happiness. If this definition be just, the philosopher naturally becomes a passive, the politician an active character."[83]

The detailed discussion of Wollstonecraft's *View* is frequently neglected in monographs on her feminist writings. Truly, it is regarded as her least popular writing although it has its merits as an authentic historical narrative, as a moral philosophical piece, or as "an allegorical history" of Freedom.[84] Furniss also emphasises Wollstonecraft's struggles; the way how, being a radical and a revolutionary, she tries to learn from the lessons of the historical outcomes.[85] She rather concentrates on the character of the French, and she does not thematise the failures of the Revolution: she leaves out that it did not grant civil rights to women and the equal education envisioned by Talleyrand.[86] In her conclusion, she claims that the French were not "properly qualified for the revolution"; it was inevitable due to the long-time feudal subordination of the people, and all the anarchic consequences could be explained by the outbreak of a nation with "infant freedom".[87]

As for the function of the National Assembly, she claims that the people's representatives should be "their voice, in enlightened countries, [and] is always the voice of reason".[88] They should "put the public good over their private interest", and they should exercise their power for the sake of the community (and even over themselves), also standing up for their rational principles in their strict morality—in their virtue.[89] Due to the lack of morally based political culture in France, the working process of the National Assembly was not organised in accordance with rational planning and was not guided by strict conduct. Moreover, the deputies' vanity and the frivolous debates accompanied "by a burlesque affectation of magnanimity" proved rather counter-productive, sums up Wollstonecraft.[90] For the improvement "in the science of government," the French assembly could not follow, for instance, Hume's model of the commonwealth or the English-American examples: they wanted to teach the world of liberty in their revolutionary zeal, being "the vainest men living".[91] However, in the science of politics and finance, the present generation's achievements (and even their mistakes) will be beneficial for the forthcoming one. "The improvements in the science of politics have been still more slow in their advancement than those of

[83] Wollstonecraft 2016: 154.
[84] Favret 2022.
[85] Furniss 2002: 68.
[86] Furniss 2002: 70.
[87] Wollstonecraft 2016: 210.
[88] Wollstonecraft 2016: 210.
[89] Bergès and Coffee 2022: 140.
[90] Wollstonecraft 2016: 210.
[91] Wollstonecraft 2016: 166–167, 172.

philosophy and morals;" says Wollstonecraft and she adds "but the revolution in France has been progressive, [being] a revolution in the minds of men; and only demanded a new system of government to be adapted to that change".[92]

In "her democratic dream",[93] she predicts that the reforming "of the system of education and domestic manners [that] will be a natural consequence of the revolution", and the French "will insensibly rise to a dignity of character far above that of the present race".[94] As Furniss concludes: "The example of the French Revolution has not dampened Wollstonecraft's optimism about the inevitability of gradual human improvement, but it has convinced her that revolution is not the best means of encouraging such improvement"[95]. By the utopian conclusion of her (re)*View*, only the hope of "liberty" remains—*ruling over* the principles of "equality" and "fraternity".

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[92] Wollstonecraft 2016: 183.
[93] O'Neill 2007: 256.
[94] Wollstonecraft 2016: 231.
[95] Furniss 2002: 79.

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Reviews

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Families on the Move: Tracking Romany Lineages, Travels, and Cultural Survival

Jeremy Harte. *Travellers Through Time: A Gypsy History*. London: Reaktion Books, 2023, 320.

Jeremy Harte's *Travellers Through Time: A Gypsy History* provides a detailed examination of the history, culture, and challenges faced by the Romany people. Published by Reaktion Books in 2023, the book traces five centuries of Gypsy history, from their presence in Tudor England to contemporary times. Harte, an experienced British folklorist and the secretary of the Romany and Traveller Family History Society, reflecting his commitment to preserving Romany heritage, undertakes the task of documenting the lives of a historically marginalised group. While acknowledging the limitations of his position as an outsider, he seeks to foreground Romany voices rather than positioning them solely as subjects of academic inquiry. Through an analysis of archival records, oral histories, and personal testimonies, Harte constructs a complex portrait of Gypsy experiences, exploring both their adaptive strategies and the legal and social constraints they have faced.

Harte's engagement with Gypsy history is framed by a question posed to him in a conversation recounted in the prologue. A young Romany man directly asks, "So you're going to write a book about us, then?"(7). This exchange highlights broader concerns about historical representation and the complexities of an outsider documenting a community's past. Rather than overlooking this challenge, Harte explicitly acknowledges his positionality, emphasising that, despite extensive research and immersion, he remains external to Romany lived experience. Instead of attempting to speak for Gypsies, he facilitates their historical narration through careful documentation and an empathetic approach. His objective is to present a historical account in which Gypsies are recognised as active participants in their own history, rather than merely subjects of external interpretation.

The book incorporates an extensive range of primary sources, including legal records, parish registers, newspaper articles, and government documents that have shaped perceptions of Gypsy life. In addition to these institutional sources, Harte

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integrates oral histories and personal narratives, offering a counterbalance to official accounts that frequently depict Gypsies through the lens of criminality or vagrancy. For example, sixteenth-century legislation classified Gypsies as felons subject to expulsion or execution. The Egyptians Act of 1554 made it illegal to self-identify as a Gypsy, reinforcing their status as outsiders within the English legal framework (29). Such policies illustrate how Gypsies were systematically denied legal recognition, compelling them to navigate precarious social and economic conditions.

One notable aspect of the book is its examination of Gypsy representation in literature, journalism, and public discourse. In Tudor England, Gypsies were often portrayed as deceptive wanderers, a trope that persisted into later centuries. By the nineteenth century, newspaper articles alternately depicted them as figures of mystery or as threats to social stability. Some writers of the time like John Clare characterised them as "deceitful generally & have a strong propensity to lying yet they are not such dangerous characters as some in civilized life" (82). Simultaneously, other publications romanticised Gypsy life, portraying them as free-spirited individuals living beyond the constraints of Victorian society.

Harte examines how such portrayals influenced broader societal attitudes. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century newspapers frequently depicted Gypsies as both exotic and criminal. The Derby race meetings serve as a case study of this duality. Journalists attending these events often highlighted Gypsy fortune-telling and distinctive attire while neglecting the economic conditions that necessitated their itinerant lifestyles. At the same time, local authorities sought to remove Gypsies from these gatherings, viewing them as disruptive. This contrast—between romanticised fascination and regulatory hostility—demonstrates the ambivalent position of Gypsies in British society.

In addition to analysing institutional and media representations, Harte incorporates personal narratives that illustrate the lived realities of Gypsies. One account describes Louie Taylor, a Romany woman who, after being subjected to derogatory comments, defiantly lifted her skirt to reveal pristine white petticoats, declaring, "I'm a Gypsy, and I'm not dirty" (209). This moment of resistance reflects the dignity and agency present throughout Gypsy history, challenging widespread prejudices. Another narrative recounts a family's forced eviction from a traditional encampment, highlighting the broader historical pattern of displacement faced by Gypsy communities (211). These vignettes personalise the book's broader historical analysis, illustrating the direct consequences of legal and social marginalization.

Harte also explores the interactions between Gypsy communities and local populations. These relationships were frequently marked by suspicion, as settled populations viewed itinerant lifestyles with apprehension. However, such interactions were not uniformly hostile. In many cases, Gypsies played a vital role in rural

economies, working as metalworkers, horse traders, and entertainers. Events such as fairs and market gatherings facilitated moments of cultural exchange, although these interactions were often shaped by underlying prejudices. Gypsy fortune-tellers, for instance, were a familiar presence at market fairs, attracting both curiosity and skepticism from their clientele.

The book further examines the representation of Gypsies in literature and the arts. In eighteenth-century art, Gypsies were often depicted as an exotic yet familiar part of rural life, with numerous paintings featuring romanticised portrayals of their camps and lifestyle. However, George Morland stood out by offering a more realistic depiction, as he travelled with Gypsies and was criticised for his unidealised portrayals of common life (52). It is also revealed, that most depictions often relied on stereotypes, alternating between admiration and condescension. Similarly, Charles Dickens included Gypsy characters in his novels, frequently casting them as symbols of otherness. While reflective of contemporary attitudes, such portrayals contributed to enduring perceptions of Gypsies as both alluring and marginal.

It is worth adding David Cressy's accurate analysis of Travellers Through Time, which offers a critical engagement with Harte's approach, highlighting the book's strengths in capturing Romany oral history and genealogy but also pointing out its romanticised depiction of Gypsy life. Cressy acknowledges Harte's deep commitment to preserving Gypsy history yet critiques the lack of engagement with contemporary academic scholarship and the book's reliance on older sources. He also raises questions about the portrayal of Gypsies as a distinct and unchanging group, rather than one shaped by broader historical and social transformations.[1]

Throughout *Travellers Through Time*, Harte contends that Gypsy culture is not a static relic of the past but a continually evolving tradition that responds to contemporary challenges. The book explores the effects of urbanization, increasing legal restrictions on nomadism, and shifting public attitudes, illustrating how Gypsy communities have navigated these transformations while maintaining a distinct cultural identity. The final chapters examine present-day struggles, including recent legislation in Britain that imposes stricter regulations on Traveller communities, further constraining their mobility and rights. These discussions underscore the book's broader relevance, situating it within contemporary debates on ethnicity, citizenship, and minority rights.

Gergely Guszmann

[1] Cressy, David 2023: Jeremy Harte. Travellers through Time: A Gypsy History. London: Reaktion Books, 2023. Pp. 320. $30.00 (cloth). *Journal of British Studies* (62.) 4. 1096-1097.

East Central European Historical Studies 3, no. 1 (2025): 121–125

Kelderari Roma in Russia

Domanskii, Evgenii V. *Etnograficheskii Poezis: Tsygane-Keldarary*. Moscow: Filin, 2023, 250.

Interestingly, Russians and the Kelderari Roma are believed to have much more in common than it may seem at first - their songs are based on Russian melodies, and the ritual or cult side can be traced back to rural Russia of the 19th century. In many ways, they mirror the nation among whom they live. Their current perception of reality is shaped by patriarchy, USSR stamps, and mass culture clichés. Having been given the name 'poeziis', the book conveys the true world of the Romani people. The book not only provides a profound overview of the life and values of the Kelderari camping ground but also contains factual photographic material taken personally by the author. These photos are unique in that Yevgeny Domansky has established a trusting 40-year-long relationship with one of the closest Romani groups - Kotlyary. With a background in sociology, psychology, and education, the author has focused on research, culminating in a PhD dissertation on the role of reflection in learning, his recent interests extend to ethnography, particularly the study of the lifestyle of Kalderash Roma. In the book, therefore, occupations, traditions, handicrafts, national clothing, and many more elements of Roma culture are accurately illustrated.

It was the affinity for photography that provided Yevgeny Domansky a first common ground. Back then, in the year 1976, he took a photo of Ruslan, a very handsome Romani boy. Two years later, the first visit to the Romani camping ground, near the village of Apostolovo, where he was working as a teacher at the time, took place. Since then, the researcher has become a close friend of the Kelderari Roma. 'Nowadays, there are many people who want to get to know the life and customs of the Roma – everyone takes pictures of them and writes about them - but back then, in the 80s, only a few were such enthusiasts,' – admits the author.

The first chapter of the book The Kelderari Roma: A Compassionate Perspective pays a lot of attention to the free spirit of the Roma. This spiritual and non-material attitude to life became a reason they did not mind Yevgeny Domansky documenting, or, as they believed, eternalising the life through photos. He was even allowed to

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photograph fortune telling. 'He is one of us', – reacted the Romani women to the photo shoot witnesses' surprise.

In the 80s, the photographs also drew the attention of the police in the city of Nikolaev. They suspected him to be working for foreign agencies, exposing the unsightly reality of the Romani camping ground in the USSR. Some of the film was confiscated after the police raid in 1986.

Not only did Yevgeny Domansky take incredibly valuable photographs, but he also documented the terms that the Kelderari Roma characterise themselves, and other ethnic groups, within the second chapter of the book. One of these terms – 'natsiya' or 'netsiya' – serves to designate the largest internal divisions of the Kelderari ethnic group. The Roma themselves, when characterising another 'netsiya,' first of all noted their attitude toward tradition, then their property characteristics (rich – poor), occupation and its features. The Romani communities could have united members from other territorial Kelderari groups like Grákurá (Greek) or Moldováya (Moldavian). What a united 'netsiya' looks like, in many ways, depends on the leader. For instance, once Istrati Janos, a very strong Romani leader, passed away, the united Roma fell apart.

The next chapter of the book offers insight into another important concept for the Roma is the issue of 'ritual defilement' – 'pekelimos'. The lower part of a married woman's skirt (or any clothing that touches the ground) is considered impure or defiled. The book tells a remarkable story of how a major conflict between two Romani camps (the 'Gagarincy' and 'Ivanovcy') was prevented by the Romani women, who took skirts and threw them at the attackers, causing the men to scatter and soon leave. It proves that the Kelderari Roma are as superstitious as other nations; their traditions are deeply rooted in their cultural and spiritual beliefs. The Kris Romani, or so-called Romani Tribunal, is another one of the most important elements of Romani culture. By providing a historical overview of the term's origin and referencing the caste system in India, the book highlights the main difference: the Kris focuses exclusively on restoring harmony within Romani society, whereas the secular court emphasises punishment or setting a precedent. There are key conditions for the functioning of the Kris. It requires a patriarchal community with high-status individuals present in the camp. Its decisions must be obligatory and accepted by all. The court's rulings should not lead to destructive actions that disrupt community cohesion and harmony. There must be a strong belief in the inevitability of divine punishment. The Kris addresses both familial issues and economic disputes between different Romani groups. Unlike secular courts, it operates without pomp, allowing trials to take place anywhere and at any time. Additionally, supernatural measures, such as imposing a curse of punishment, may be applied.

In the section 'Do the Roma Know God? Faith and Superstitions', the book first explores different aspects of religion. Orthodox icons are believed to be present in

every Romani household. The book also describes how sincerely the Roma pray and how reverently they follow the traditions of child baptism, as well as the celebrations of Easter and Christmas. However, in one of the photographs of the author, a Romani boy is wearing a protective amulet called 'liliyako,' along with a cross necklace. This reflects how the Romani people are both religious and superstitious.

Another question discussed in the book is whether the Kelderari Roma still migrate in the 21st century. In 1956 the decree issued by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on 'The Involvement of the Roma Engaged in Vagrancy in Work' on October 5, 1956, effectively undermined the foundation for the nomadic lifestyle of the Kelderari. Although many Romani people try not to give up the tradition of migrating, many cultural, educational, and financial factors affect the traditional nomadic way of life. The main reason, according to the book, is the better economic situation thanks to the education of those Romani people who settle down. In this part of the book, there is missed criticism towards the violent and coercive actions of the Soviet Union government in the forced assimilation of the Roma.

In the next chapter, 'From Craftsmanship to Production and Into the Unknown…' the Kalderash Roma's attitude toward work evolved in response to changes in the country is examined. Notably, in the 1990s, the communal approach to income distribution faded away, giving way to financial independence. Initially, their traditional income source was the production of large metal vats used in manufacturing — a craft that gave this group its name. They then transitioned to metal bartering and have now moved into constructing summer houses, especially in the Moscow region, where earnings are significantly higher than in the provinces. The construction skills acquired through frequent migrations turned out to be of use. During the off-season, they continue metal work involving engines, pipes, cables, electrical systems, etc.

One of the most intriguing chapters of the book is 'Fortune telling'. Yevgeny Domansky describes 'fortune-telling' as a sort of compromise between two 'contracting parties': one that is 'glad to be deceived' and the other that provides such a service, rightfully demanding compensation. The author notes that Romani women have always been highly skilled in hypnotic practices; however, now, with increasing financial prosperity, the tradition of fortune-telling is fading away.

In the 'Everyday Life and Traditions' chapter, the author describes the dramatic difference between two photos taken ten years apart: while the first photo (1986) focuses on a simply dressed family of eight, the second (1996) depicts a much smaller family, emphasising expensive alcohol and fashionable clothing. The life and values of the Kalderash Roma has been changing in response to economic and social changes in society.

The 'Romani Family Ark' revolves around weddings, marriage and family. The Roma people are known to have early marriages, which they celebrate in grand style, spending an enormous amount of money. The chastity of girls (it is hard to write

a 'woman', because brides are usually 13-15 years old), and how families ensure the virginity of the unmarried are especially emphasised in the book. Sometimes, Gadjo (a person who has no Romanipen, i.e. doesn't belong to the Roma) grooms are encouraged, as they are considered 'new blood'. Amusingly, it was a Belarus person married to a Romani girl who once became 'The record holder for childbirth'. This sphere of life has also been affected by common trends; marriages are weakening, and less and less couples see marriage as lifetime and sacred as it used to be. However, in the academic context, the material of the book could be more critically considered. The poiesis could be written more cautiously, meaning the customs described only appear this way to an outsider.

The next stage of marginalization is the loss of language, and then the dissolution of the ethnicity within other people. In the times of the photo chronicle, the Roma in the camp would laugh at those who used Russian, inserting Russian words into their Romani speech. In today's times, this is the norm.

Unnoticed, the trends of modernity are influencing Romani children and teenagers, changing their usual way of living. Once, from an early age, working youths (mostly fortune-telling and housework for girls and carpentry for boys), now spend more and more time with gadgets – not unrelated to this, their everyday habits and occupational strategies are also undergoing change.

The chapter on children's education in the Kalderash Roma society provides a few remarkable stories on how, with the growing importance of education, there have been projects of The Roma education and integration. Such projects include the Project 'School of Peacemaking and Kindness' (in Gorino, Russia), where Romani students learn together with Russian speakers. The Romani ground camping in the village Tchudovo, Leningradsky region, for instance, organised its own primary school, which is financed by the government. Sadly, there is still a lot of segregation in the education system, and there are few inclusive classes, where the Roma students would share the desk with Russian peers. Another difficulty is early marriages.

The chapter 'Faces and appearances' highlights how massive resettlement of the Keldary Roma contributed to the difference in looks: in the 19th century after the slavery abolition many migrated from the Romanian part of Banat to other European countries, Russia, and America.

Describing the lifestyle of the Keldary Roma, Yevgeny Domansky often emphasises the affinity of the Roma for music. In the chapter about Goga Tomash, a famous Romani poet and composer, his thought-provoking songs appeal to human souls, and how his music touches hearts, is discussed. Further, in the appendix of the book, a large quantity of lyrics are provided by the author. In the globalised world, some of the pieces, amusingly, are a blend of Russian and Romanian culture. To illustrate this areso-called Pushkiniana, romances based on the Pushkin poems.

In his effort to prove the vitality of traditional authenticity, the author proposes an idea of an 'ethnopark,' where anyone interested in exploring the life of the Keldary Roma from the inside would be able to witness how, for example, the Roma court works, or what the households look like. Currently, the ethnopark is merely a project.

The book *Etnograficheskiy poeziis: Tsygane-keldarary* is an invaluable source of the Keldarari Roma life described in retrospect: it observes the development of the values and traditions of the Roma in the USSR and Russia from the late 80s to the present day. Not only can it captivate an ordinary reader, thanks to its poetic, lively language, but also is of interest to researchers - above all, for its photographic and factual content.

Ekaterina Vystoropets

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Romani People in the Context of Urban Belonging in Turkey

Parlıyan, Burak Mert and Hasan Akgün. *Kentsel Aidiyet Bağlamında Romanlar.* Edirne: Paradigma Akademi, 2023, 111.

Kentsel Aidiyet Bağlamında Romanlar (Romani People in the Context of Urban Belonging), co-authored by Hasan Akgün and Burak Mert Parlıyan, offers a critical and comprehensive study of the Roma minority in Turkey, focusing particularly on the intersections between urbanization and identity. The book addresses how urban identity and belonging are shaped and affected by the factors of urban renewal and social integration projects and the challenges faced by marginalised communities like the Roma in this process.

The book is organised into four sections beginning with a theoretical foundation, discussing concepts such as place attachment, marginalization, and identity construction. The first section titled as "Construction of Place Attachment" engages with the theory of place attachment as part of urban sociology in detail and establishes the foundation of the concept of sense of place and the critical role of belonging and place attachment in collective identity. The following chapter provides a brief overview of the historical and current situation of the Roma in Turkey, setting the context for the research methods employed in the study. Third section presents the empirical findings, emphasising the experiences of Roma residents in urban areas. The book is concluded with suggestions and insights, advocating for a deeper consideration of urban belonging in addressing the marginalization of Roma in Turkey's urban landscape.

The second section discusses the historical context of Roma in Turkey, tracing their presence and experiences from the Ottoman period to the present day. The authors provide an overview of the socio-political dynamics shaping the status of Roma in Turkish society, with a particular focus on the effects of urbanization. The chapter emphasises that rapid urban development has both created opportunities and exacerbated challenges for Roma. In the second half of the second section the authors examine the challenges faced by Roma communities in Büyükçekmece in urban conservation projects and their role and contribution in this process. Although

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the examples of economic hardship and social exclusion experienced by Roma provide a general framework, adding specific examples would provide a more concrete and practical way of addressing these issues.

The third section, "Fieldwork and Findings in the Neighbourhoods of Mimar Sinan, Karaağaç and Kumburgaz" examines the Roma's urban experiences. The chapter starts by presenting demographic insights from their research and explains the perceptions and concerns of the participants about urban transformation. The case studies provided from three Turkish neighbourhoods demonstrates both successful and problematic policy interventions. The chapter concludes with a call for more inclusive approaches to policy-making. However, one weakness in this regard is the book falls short of outlining practical steps that policymakers could take to achieve this. For example, while the book calls for improving educational opportunities and stable employment for the Romani community, it does not provide specific mechanisms or policy frameworks to ensure these goals are met.

The data on the Roma community regarding their perceptions is gathered through interviews with the local residents combining qualitative and quantitative research. To gather comprehensive data on the Roma community in Turkey the authors include fieldwork and analysis of public policy documents. The book successfully incorporates case studies from specific neighbourhoods with the concept of the place attachment. The case study findings contribute to an understanding of how urban changes intersect with personal and communal values.

The authors offer a comprehensive analysis of the impacts of urban conservation policies on the Roma community and how these impacts can be managed by bridging theoretical concepts like place attachment with empirical research. Despite their active role in urban preservation and viewing themselves as integral to the urban identity of Büyükçekmece, they face challenges such as displacement, economic hardship, and social discrimination. The book offers a comparative analysis of the three districts of Büyükçekmece and shows the results of successful urban policies and advocates for targeted social policies for the challenges faced by Romani individuals, such as improving educational and employment opportunities, inclusive urban policies to combating spatial and social discrimination. For scholars interested in Roma minority, urban sociology, and Turkish studies, "Kentsel Aidiyet Bağlamında Romanlar" is a valuable book as well as for a broader audience concerned with the dynamics of identity and belonging in contemporary urban settings.

Afide Cansu Şimşek

Contributors to this issue

Aburas, Diana
PhD Student, Doctoral School of Sociology, Eötvös Loránd University

Akın, Burak
PhD, International Coordinator, Directorate for Scientific Affairs and International Relations, University of Miskolc

Antal, Éva
PhD, professor, Institute of English and American Studies, Eszterházy Károly Catholic University

Bársony, János
Dr. jur., Researcher, Romani Instituto

Guszmann, Gergely
PhD, Associate Professor, Institute of Historical Sciences, Eszterházy Károly Catholic University

Majtényi, György
DSc, Research Professor, Institute of Historical Sciences, Eszterházy Károly Catholic University

Márfi, Attila
Senior Archivist (retired), Hungarian National Archives – Baranya County Archives

Mikó, Zsuzsanna
PhD, Senior Archivist, Deputy Director General, Hungarian National Archives

Şimşek, Afide Cansu
PhD Student, Doctoral School of Sociology, Eötvös Loránd University

Ryder, Andrew
PhD, Professor, Director, Institute of Political and International Studies, Eötvös Loránd University

Vystoropets, Ekaterina
International Relations Expert, MA Student, Institute of Historical Sciences, Eszterházy Károly Catholic University

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E-mail: tortenelem@uni-eszterhazy.hu
Website: https://ojs.uni-eszterhazy.hu/

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EGER 1774
ESZTERHÁZY KÁROLY CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY