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2024 ANNUAL MEETING OF

The Gypsy Lore Society

AND CONFERENCE ON ROMANI
STUDIES

**2024 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE GYPSY LORE SOCIETY AND
CONFERENCE ON ROMANI STUDIES**

25-27 September
2024 Sofia

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
ORGANISERS.....	4
KEYNOTE SPEECH.....	5
ABSTRACTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL PAPERS.....	6
PANELS.....	48

INTRODUCTION

The Gypsy Lore Society is an international association of scholars, specialists, and experts, founded in Great Britain in 1888. Its annual conferences are among the most significant scholarly events devoted to Romani Studies worldwide. Each year the event takes place in a different country. This book contains abstracts of papers presented at the Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society and Conference on Romani Studies (25-27 September 2024). The conference is being held in Sofia (Bulgaria) for the first time since such important annual events have been organised on behalf of the Gypsy Lore Society.

The Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society 2024 and Conference on Romani Studies is held by the Balkan Ethnology Department, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

The Ethnographic Institute with a Museum was established in 1949 when the Institute of People's Studies (1947) was merged with the National Ethnographic Museum (1906). The Institute (now named Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) conducts research, educational and applied activities in the fields of ethnology, folkloristics, cultural and social anthropology, ethnomusicology, ethnochoreology, art studies, and museology. Research is carried out in a Balkan, European, and global context.

The organisers invite contributions on various aspects of Romani Studies and encourage participants from various disciplines, including history, ethnology, anthropology, sociology, political science, linguistics, international studies, security studies, area studies, economics, geography, literature, and other fields of humanities and social sciences. Both theoretical studies and empirical contributions, including good fieldwork presentations, are welcome. Panels and individual paper proposals undergo a peer-review process by the Academic Committee.

The working languages of the conference are English and Romani.

ACADEMIC COMMITTEE

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components: ethno-cultural and political. Ethno-culture is often viewed as “the core of a nation and national identity”, which includes language, mentality, history, culture, and religion. This presentation analyzes why there are such differences between Gypsies living in the same region and what these differences are. The author conducted sociological surveys and compared the traditional and modern self-awareness of Gypsies.

Martin Kovats, co-author of *Rethinking Roma* (Palgrave 2018), special advisor on the first EU Roma Framework, coordinator of articles on Roma politics/policy for the Foundation for Progressive European Studies, UK
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Title: The Political Construction of ‘the Roma’ – Population Estimates

Abstract: This paper develops the argument that the politicisation of Roma identity has constructed ‘the Roma’ as a discrete political object, which requires the quantification of Roma and their policy related circumstances and needs. The paper examines one aspect of this process – how Roma population estimates have been reached for political purposes. It compares the expert estimates published by the Council of Europe, census data and estimates derived from national Roma mapping research projects and discusses the methodological, legal and ethical distinctions between volunteered and externally attributed Roma identity. The analysis shows a privileging of larger estimates based on disregarding how subjects identify themselves and that, reflecting institutional policy interests, Roma has become a racialised marker of the poor and spatially marginalised.

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Title: Conflicting Interests in Language Management for Romani Speaking Children Entering Czech Primary School

Abstract: Czechia is a country where the idea of linking the state with ethnicity and language is deeply rooted despite traditional heterogeneity. The autochthonous minorities of this country of ten million include 250,000 Roma. Our ethnographic research has focused on the moment Romani speaking children enter Czech primary school. The research is based on interviews with Romani parents, kindergarten and school teachers, and psychologists from pedagogical consultant centers who assess the educational abilities of children before enrolment in five localities where Romani is used as a language of socialization. It shows that Roma parents attach importance to the Romani language as a sign of belonging and a major source of resilience against the majority that marginalizes them, but have naturalized the idea that it is the parents, rather than the school, who are responsible for the children’s knowledge of Czech. While the state provides increased Czech language support to the children of Ukrainian war refugees, Mongolian workers and other “state minorities”, and has undertaken international commitments to promote the use of traditional minority languages as well, Roma parents usually stop speaking Romani to their children, being worried that the school is not ready to work with children who speak other languages. The paper shows that this multi-level conflict

of interest is sometimes managed when a wider Roma community is involved.

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Title: Indigenous Methodologies in Romani Studies: State and Perspective of Research at the Crossroads of Social Sciences and Humanities

Abstract: The presentation will address the issue of indigenous methodologies, which is part of a broader reflection on the emancipatory paradigm of qualitative research oriented towards local, culturally diverse communities. The speaker will present the sources and characteristics of indigenous methodologies, pointing to their specific manifestations within the framework of research projects in the field of Roma studies. In a practical context, these reflections can serve as inspiration for culturally sensitive (concerning cultural minorities or excluded communities) idiographic research projects, enriching not only the researcher's workshop, but also contributing to increasing the field of conscious methodological choices of representatives of social sciences and humanities.

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Title: The Hungarian Gypsy King – The Memory of János Bihari on the Operetta Stage

Abstract: János Bihari (1764–1827), the Gypsy first violinist and songwriter, quickly stood out among the many musicians due to his unique performing skills and personality. Around 1800–1802, he has arrived in Pest and founded his band, which typically consisted of five members: Occasionally, he was invited to aristocratic events and even to the imperial court, and numerous anecdotes remain about the great figures of music history. Moreover, Bihari was one of the first musicians to work as an entertainer in restaurants and coffeehouses. Today, reminiscences of contemporaries, and numerous scholarly works are available about Bihari and his influence. His memory is preserved through statues, a dance ensemble bearing his name, a music school, and even several streets. This presentation focuses on the Hungarian operetta culture and the memory politics of the first half of the 20th century: one of the main programs of the centennial celebration (1927–1928) organized on the occasion of Bihari's death was a piece inspired by his life. In my presentation, I highlight the main points of the centenary, focusing on operetta entitled *Gypsy King* (1927, writers: Dezső Urai, Ernő Kulinyi, composer: Béla Nagypál) and thus the portrayal of Gypsies in Hungarian operettas.

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Title: Dom Community in Azerbaijan (Field Notes)

Abstract: The proposed presentation delves into the unique history and culture of the Dom community in Azerbaijan. It provides a concise overview of the first-hand experiences from two field research trips conducted in 2011 and 2022. The Dom Community in Azerbaijan,

Stewart, M. (Ed.) (2012) *The Gypsy “menace”*. Populism and the new anti-Gypsy politics. London: Hurst & Company.

Tremlett, A., Messing, V. & Kóczé, A. (2017) Romaphobia and the media: mechanisms of power and the politics of representations. In *Identities* 24 (6): 641-649.

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Title: Media Power and Resistance: Roma Media Stigmatization and the Possibility of Counterhegemonic Disidentification

Abstract: Modernity, new technologies and the invention of the mass media provided an optimized version of previous mechanisms of social control, stigmatization and social exclusion of certain groups, such as the Roma, who did not fit the national project. Contemporary media, as key institutions in the capitalist order, function equally as symbolic knowledge producers, social and economic entities, which can be viewed as interconnected roles in wielding ideological, economic and political power. They apply various techniques that serve to legitimize different policies targeting Roma, denigrated as not fitting the neoliberal frame, and provide ideological consensus. Previous media research in the materialist or epistemological traditions focused predominantly on these roles separately, rarely combing the analysis of discursive, institutional or socio-economic factors in negative media representation. The presentation aims to propose an analytical framework for deconstructing media stereotypes and the negative image of the Roma, discussing a possible synergy between Discourse Studies, Critical Media Political Economy, Cultural Political Economy and Critical Media Cultural Studies. This is done with the purpose of connecting the analysis of the “micro-physics” of power in everyday media discourse with macro forms of domination, related to economic interest (Smart, 1983).

First, Laclau and Mouffe’s poststructuralist discourse theory will be discussed, who deconstruct the constant struggles over meaning of different discourses and their attempts to fix a particular view of society and identity that looks natural and convincing (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Next, the critical media political economy approaches will be presented that deal with various aspects of media ownership, production, consumption and control. The synergy of both approaches will be illustrated with examples from a two-year study of the representation of Bulgarian Roma in the online media platforms of two of the most popular Bulgarian newspapers: “24 Hours” and “Telegraph”.

Finally, the possibility of producing counterhegemonic discourse will be explored by focusing on the socio-economic conditions for access to representation and the possibility of structural change through new articulations and disidentification.

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Title: Growth of a Far-right Party in Portugal and Roma People as Targets of Hate and Racism

Abstract: In 2019, the far-right party Chega was created in Portugal. Since its creation, it has grown steadily in terms of voters, particularly by winning over municipalities that were traditionally considered the bastions of communism, where the Portuguese Communist Party gathered the most votes (Madeira et al., 2021). In the last legislative elections, on 10 March 2024, this party managed to elect 50 deputies, making it the third largest political force in Portugal. It is a populist party of the new radical right, nationalist and conservative, whose main aim is to combat the entry of immigrants into Portugal and the fight against Portuguese Gypsies. Although before the existence of this party the Gypsies were the main victims of hate speech and racism in Portugal (Silva, 2022), there has recently been a huge upsurge with the affirmation of the extreme right. They are also confronted with prejudices, stereotyped, essentialist and homogenizing representations (Costa, 1995), even when they are integrated and work and do not depend on Social Security assistance to survive (Magano, 2010; Magano & Mendes, 2021). Antigypsyism is a phenomenon on the rise and there is no penalization for hate speech. Like what happens in other European countries we are witnessing new forms of racism's expression, alongside the traditional ones, (Kyuchukov, 2012), through hate speech on social media (Tremlett et al, 2017), embodied in forms of Antigypsyism and Romaphobia (FRA, 2018; Stewart, 2012).

Most of the discourse on social media points to the Portuguese Roma being blamed for their situation, namely the lack of education and income from work, and they are also accused of damaging the social environment (Magano & D'Oliveira, 2023).

The main aim of this presentation is to question the factors behind the growth of hatred towards Gypsies, especially in the geographical areas where more Gypsies live, especially as this is the 50th anniversary of the implementation of the democratic system that ended the dictatorial system in Portugal. The aim is also to analyze different expressions of anti-Gypsyism in Portuguese society, especially those caused by the environment in which far-right ideas are disseminated in Portuguese society (press, television channels, proposed government programmes and social networks).

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