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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**

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2024 Sofia

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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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.

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Title: An Ethnographic Inquiry into the Efficacy of Governmental Initiatives in Addressing the Socioeconomic Needs and Living Conditions of Ireland's Roma Community

Abstract: The Pavee Point (2018) Roma needs assessment was the first of its kind to take an in-depth look at lives as lived by Roma in Ireland, identifying communities facing high homelessness, inadequate housing, educational disparities, discrimination, limited healthcare access, and persistent challenges in overcoming social exclusion and marginalization, resulting in poorer health outcomes. While this research constitutes the main source of Roma research in Ireland, literature is limited. Brexit has brought forth concerns regarding Roma communities (Colin Clark, 2020) which is also a cause of concern for the Roma population who live in Northern Ireland. Research into the lives and needs of Roma communities in Ireland is crucial for addressing challenges, advancing social justice, promoting inclusion, and building stronger, more inclusive societies. The intricate tapestry of Ireland's social landscape is rich with diverse communities, each contributing to the nation's cultural mosaic. With this in mind, the research study aims to explore the experiences of Roma and Sinti communities in Ireland through an ethnographic approach, focusing on their everyday lives. The study uses casual conversations and purposive sampling to understand minority groups' subjective realities. Thematic analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis are used to interpret participants' perspectives, emphasizing the importance of ethnographic research in understanding minority experiences without appearing patronizing or interrogative. The data collection and analysis methods complement the study's emphasized focus on ensuring community participation. Secondly, as Roma and Sinti communities are often incorrectly referred to as a homogeneous group, the research hopes to identify and record the various subgroups present. The research design is also inspired by Okely (2012), referencing anthropologists she interviewed, "They were open to what confronted them rather than following some formulaic agenda, the people whom they encountered helped shape the way" (p.153). Pavee Point's needs assessment identifies themes including housing, education, employment and discrimination. So far, these themes were also generated in our research. New additions have also been identified which include but are not limited to, identity and belonging, transnational relationships, media, social change, and how people adapt to those. Further research on needs and experiences of Roma communities in Ireland is pivotal. Employing an ethnographic approach while doing so has aided deeper understanding of Roma experiences while ensuring the research is non-invasive and participatory.

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Title: Roma Artistic Expressions in Portugal: an Exploratory Approach to Making Roma Culture Visible

Abstract: Portuguese Roma have been victims of persecution for centuries, but they have preserved their culture, showing cultural resistance and affirming their identity (Nunes, 1996; Costa 1995). Roma people are part of Portuguese society, yet the Roma culture is still little known and valued. Roma are most often associated with negative, homogenizing stereotypes and images and labelled as social parasites (Silva, 2022). Portuguese studies have focused more on precarious living conditions and poverty and social exclusion (precarious housing, high illiteracy and school drop-out rates, inaccessibility to the labour market and issues of racism and discrimination), segregation and marginalization (for example, Magano, 2010, Mendes, 2007). In general, Roma cultural issues and artistic expressions are still little studied. Family festivities are the main occasions for celebrating the family and manifesting the traditions of the culture (weddings, petitions, birthdays, baptisms, etc.). Visibility has increased with the dissemination of videos on social media of festivals, music and singing, as well as religious moments (“cultos”), in which it is possible to observe these artistic manifestations, assumed and interpreted by several generations of families.

It is therefore important to uncover and analyse the culture and artistic practices of the Roma that persist despite repression, particularly those who resisted 40 years of dictatorship and heavy police repression. The aim of this communication is to present an exploratory approach to Portuguese Roma artistic expressions, based on other European references (Marushiakova & Popov, 2016; Silverman, 2012) by analysing recordings available on social networks and other sources, in conjunction with the significance of the families' cultural heritage, while also equating the persistence of cultural ethnocentrism in Portuguese society with the failure to value Roma arts and failure to recognise Roma culture as part of Portuguese culture.

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