

UNIVERSITATEA "BABEȘ-BOLYAI" CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTATEA DE ISTORIE ȘI FILOSOFIE
INSTITUTUL DE ISTORIE ORALĂ

AIO

ANUARUL
INSTITUTULUI DE ISTORIE ORALĂ

XVI

ARGONAUT
PRESA UNIVERSITARĂ CLUJEANĂ
CLUJ-NAPOCA
2015

AIO

ANUARUL INSTITUTULUI DE ISTORIE ORALĂ

COLEGIUL ȘTIINȚIFIC :

Prof.univ.dr. LUCIAN BOIA (Universitatea București)
Prof. DENNIS DELETANT (Universitatea din Londra)
Prof José M. FARALDO (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)
Prof. Alessandro PORTELLI (Universitatea La Sapienza din Roma)
Prof.univ.dr. DORU RADOSAV – director (Universitatea Babeș-
Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca)
Acad. ALEXANDRU ZUB (Academia Română, Iași)

COLEGIUL DE REDACȚIE:

Lect.univ.dr. MARIA ALDEA – Universitatea Aix-en-Provence
Cercet.drd. ADRIAN BODA – Institutul de Istorie Orală – UBB
Conf.univ.dr. IONUȚ COSTEA – Facultatea de Istorie și Filosofie - UBB
Conf.univ.dr. VALENTIN ORGA - Facultatea de Istorie și Filosofie UBB
Dr. IULIA POP – Institutul de Istorie Orală – UBB
Cercet. St. II – Lavinia S. STAN– Institutul de Istorie Orală – UBB

Coordonare volum: Lavinia S. STAN

Responsabilitatea conținutului materialelor aparține autorilor
Traducerea & Corectură: Thomas TOLNAI, Tamara SIEKMANN,
Noelle HEBBER

INSTITUTUL DE ISTORIE ORALĂ – CLUJ-NAPOCA

Str. Napoca nr.11

Tel./Fax: 004-0264-596733

www.istoriaorala.ro

e-mail:contact@istoriaorala.ro

Tiparul și distribuția: Editura ARGONAUT

www.edituraargonaut.ro

Coperta: arhitect Tiberiu TRENEA

© 2015 Presa Universitară Clujeană & Institutul de Istorie Orală

Table of Contents

Lavinia S. STAN <i>Aknowledgement</i>	7
Ionuț COSTEA <i>The Roma Community: Between Proscription and Assertion of Historic Consciousness</i>	12
Ioana COSMAN <i>How Much Is a Gypsy Life worth? The Roma Holocaust in Romania: Past and Present</i>	19
Lavinia S. STAN <i>Sharing a Broken Umbrella. Roma Life-Stories in Communist Romania</i>	30
Diana-Alexandra NISTOR <i>Postponed Identities. Generations of Cortorari Gypsies in Post-war Transylvania – Wrinkled Traditions and Attempts Towards "Modernisation"</i>	55
Ionela BOGDAN <i>A Life Story is Also a Serious Business. Feminine Narratives during Communist years in the Town of Sebeș</i>	74
Sînziana PREDĂ <i>Between Romanian and Romani: Preserving the Mother Tongue in Roma Communities</i>	90
Petre PETCUȚ, Romeo TIBERIADE <i>The Roma Passenger Migrants. The Case of the Ursari from the Towns of Horehu-Poienari and Sadova</i>	114

BOOK REVIEWS

- Vintilă Mihăilescu, Petre Matei (eds.), *Condiția romă și schimbarea discursului [The Changing Discourse on Roma People's Status]*, Polirom, Bucharest, 2014, p. 224. (**Nicolae Cristea**).....135
- The Many Guises of Memory in Totalitarian and Post-Totalitarian Regimes : Luisa Passerini (ed.), *Memory and Totalitarianism*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick (U.S.A.) and London (U.K.), 2008, 177 p. (**Dorin Pop**).....141
- Living with Jim Crow: African American Women and Memories of the Segregated South. Anne Valk and Leslie Brown. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2010. 209 p. (**Ionela Bogdan**)150
- Growing Up in the People's Republic; Conversations between Two Daughters of China's Revolution* (**Călin Olariu**)154
- Paul Betts, *Within Walls. Private Life in the German Democratic Republic*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, 321 p. (**Diana-Alexandra Nistor**).....158

FIELD TRIP RESEARCH PHOTOGRAPHS INTERVIEWING

**The Roma in Romania:
Sharing a Traumatic Past -
Living in a Problematic Present**

Lavina S. STAN

Acknowledgements

This special issue of the *Annual of Oral History (AOH)*, no. XVI, *The Roma in Romania: Sharing a Traumatic Past - Living in a Problematic Present*, came out as a necessity as it deals with what oral history is all about: invisible and unheard people in written history, i.e. the Roma. It is the result of the intensive work done by an enthusiastic team of young international scholars with diverse backgrounds, united by a project called *The Untold Story. An Oral History of the Roma People in Romania (UnToRo)*. Although not everyone had a direct contribution to this volume, the work of all of them laid its foundation and generated oral history resources to be used by scholars in various disciplines to generate complex research on Roma issues. Most articles in this AOH issue are based on more than 400 interviews recorded between July 2014 and December 2015 with Roma from various communities in urban and rural areas, in rich and poor neighbourhoods, men and women of all ages, living in counties such as Alba, Arad, Braşov, Cluj, Dolj, Hunedoara, Mehedinţi, Maramureş, Mureş, Sălaj, Sibiu, Timiş as well as abroad.

The research leading to these results has received funding from the EEA Financial Mechanism 2009 - 2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014, which is an initiative of the Oral History Institute, Faculty of History and Philosophy at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca and it is implemented in partnership with the University of Iceland in Reykjavik. Our long-term collaboration with the University of Iceland started in early

2000 and was instrumental in getting the grant in a highly competitive context. Therefore, we thank our partners for their strong input in the research, for their professionalism in dealing with both administrative and scientific issues, for their involvement in the project activities and for being excellent friends. Thus, one of the project's purposes, to strengthen bilateral knowledge between the donor state and beneficiaries (which in the beginning sounded a little too bureaucratic in the project-writing wooden language), became in fact a reality. We would especially like to thank Professor Guðmundur Hálfðanarson, leader of the Icelandic team, for his contribution to understanding identity issues related to Roma, as well as for his thoughtfulness in facilitating mutual appreciation between the young scholars with different national identities in order to work as a coherent team. We are also grateful for his availability to travel several times a year from Iceland to Romania (or other places) in order to work together on project activities. Bridging the gap between the countries, Professor Doru Radosav, the leader of the Romanian team, provided permanent support and advice in dealing with complicated management issues and complex oral history perspectives that sometimes challenges the historical establishment. In fact, the very existence of the project itself and of oral history at institutional level at the Babes-Bolyai University are the result of his dedication to promoting it as a unique innovative historical approach.

Special thanks also go to senior researchers involved in the project activities, in particular to our colleague and friend Ólafur Rastrick whose academic interests encouraged us to look for the cultural heritage of Roma communities in order to valorise and preserve it. Ionuț Costea and Valentin Orga, senior researchers from the Romanian team, provided permanent support and

encouragement, and opened doors for us in some rather closed Roma communities. The young researchers on the team showed their diligence in conducting oral history interviews with a people-centred perspective. Marco Solimene, an anthropologist and postdoctoral researcher at the University of Iceland, has the longest experience in dealing with Roma issues as his doctoral dissertation dealt with the Bosnian Roma living in Rome, Italy. His contribution to the project guaranteed that our foundations were scholarly solid and ready to build on. Moreover, his participation to oral history interviews in Romanian with the Roma is a professional milestone for all scholars working in this area of research. Albeit an oral history project, *UnToRo* also benefitted from the expertise of a Romanian postdoctoral researcher, Manuela Marin, in dealing with archival documents about the Roma produced by/during the communist regime. This project would not have been achievable without the contributions of doctoral students Adrian Boda, Nicolae Cristea and Călin Olariu, who covered all technical aspects and made sure that all interviews were systematically registered, saved and transcribed in order to be used by researchers. Photographer and cameraman Cristian Bota contributed to the project by creating an impressive photo and video archive that documents different aspects of the Roma's past and present everyday life. Last but not least, special thanks go to our project assistant Nelica Morar, who supported the team with everything related to the financial management of the project and eased the bureaucratic load allowing researchers to do their actual job of researching.

The other members of the project team are the authors of the articles published in this *AOH* issue. They managed to meet the deadlines and were open to rewriting their contributions based on the editors' and translators' suggestions. So, a big thank for

senior researchers Ionuț Costea, Ioana Cozman and Petre Petcuț, postdoctoral researcher Sînziana Preda, and doctoral students Diana Nistor and Ionela Bogdan for the excellent work done so far.

Special thanks also go to Thomas Tolnai for translating some of the texts into English and making himself available for last-minute modifications in order to be able to publish the volume in time. My personal friends, Tamara Siekmann and Noelle Herber, also helped with proofreading and editing several English texts. This *AOH* special issue was ready in time due to their involvement and availability.

This project would have been very difficult to implement without the support we received from the leadership of the Faculty of History and Philosophy, namely professors Ovidiu Ghitta, Dean and Ioan-Marius Bucur, Deputy Dean whose availability helped us overcome all problems we faced at certain times. Likewise, Professor Virgiliu Țârău assisted the young researchers on the team in getting through the web of documents available at CNSAS, making this part of dealing with the written traces of the past a bearable activity.

Special thanks go to the MA students of the *Memory, History, Orality in the 20th Century* programme, at Babeș-Bolyai University for willingly enrolling in field work in rather difficult conditions and for their contribution in our classroom discussions which enriched my perspective on history and historiography. I would like to mention all of them here: Dorin Pop, Diana Suciu, Adrian Iușan, Simion Belbe, Gheorghe Cazacu, Răzvan Ciobanu, Alina Zărnescu, Ionuț Maranda, Diana Moisa, Cătălina Vrabie, Andrada Păstae and Marina Trufan.

This project involved not only professionals, but also our friends and families. My baby Milan was four months old when

we went recording our first interviews in the town of Sebeș. Our spouses are all part of this, our extended families and friends to whom we recount our fascination with the world we discover and want to speak about. Ultimately, this project exists because there are extraordinary Roma people whom the non-Roma prefer to avoid, ignore or acknowledge with prejudices and stereotypes. Their world is amazingly similar to ours in the story-telling about a shared past that needs to be healed for everyone living in this country. It is different and complementary in its idiosyncrasies, worth being outlined to become part of the master historical narrative the Roma live in, or to create their own past. Thus, this *AOH* issue appears because of the Roma and for the Roma we met and became friends with.

**The Roma Community:
Between Proscription and Assertion of Historic
Consciousness**

The history of Roma was asserted as soon as social awareness of the ethnic group has been raised. The rationalism, cosmopolitanism and the peculiarity of the 18th and 19th centuries ensured a major support with this regard. The interest in the Roma was generated by the discovery of the Orient which fascinated the Western World due to its ethnic and cultural diversity. Thus, the cosmopolitanism and peculiarity of this alternate world, the closeness of the "noble savage" have created a topos in the literary world. We can note a sign thereof in the so called "People's Geography" trend which includes the work of Romanian prince and scholar, Dimitrie Cantemir, *Descrierea Moldovei [The Description of Moldavia]*.¹ The orthodox rationalism has also contributed to the promotion of the debate regarding the social status of this ethnic group. Ever since the settling of Gypsies in the Romanian principalities and their historical documentation at the end of the 14th century, their social status had been that of slaves, regardless whether they were residing on monastery or feudal lord estates. By the 18th century, slavery had also been challenged in the Eastern religious denominations, i.e. in the dominant orthodoxy religion of the Danubian principalities. It is beyond doubt that the Romanticism of the 19th century shed a new light on the peculiarity of Gypsies in the social and demographic

¹ Dimitrie Cantemir, *Descrierea Moldovei*, Bucharest, 1965.

How Much Is a Gypsy Life worth? The Roma Holocaust in Romania: Past and Present⁹

Abstract

The history of the deportation of Romanian Roma to Transnistria during the Second World War had been concealed for a long time. The written tradition of the Roma is underrepresented because many community members have not achieved the necessary level of education to be able to write. Therefore, the attempt to recover the history of the Roma Holocaust comes mainly from oral history, a research methodology available in Romania only after 1990. The testimonies of survivors together with the official documents kept by the Romanian authorities present the horrific story of Transnistria.

Keywords: *Roma Holocaust, Holocaust in Romania, deportations to Transnistria, Romanian Roma*

Historical context of the deportation of Roma to Transnistria

The emancipation of Roma living on the territory of present-day Romania took place in 1856 after 471 years of slavery (1385-1856) – the longest period in Europe.¹⁰ In the first half of the 20th century, the majority of the population was still in a profound state of poverty and lack of education. However, the number of

⁹ *The research leading to these results has received funding from EEA Financial Mechanism 2009 - 2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014*

¹⁰ Petre Petcuț, "Samudaripenul (Holocaustul) rromilor în România" [Samudaripen – The Roma Holocaust in Romania], in *Studia Hebraica*, no. 4, Bucharest, 2004, p. 225.

**Sharing a Broken Umbrella.
Roma Life-Stories in Communist Romania¹**

This construct [history] will, of course, be the work of the dominant members of the society. But in so far as some of them are the equals of others, it will record contests and come itself to be contested between the antagonist equals. And is possible also that it will record the resolution of these contests and come to be the narrative of a state of affairs in which equals rule and are ruled by one another.²

Abstract

History played and still plays an important role in the nation building process in Romania. When occurring, in a rather silenced historians' world, the debates are always among equals and do not touch issues related to the Other, such as the deep scars of the Romanian past, for example Roma slavery. There is no room yet for the Roma in the Romanian master narrative. Oral history might be a challenge for the master historical narrative, because it provides a voice to those not belonging to the dominant group, it is still highly conditioned by the limits imposed by the Roma-non-Roma dialogue. Roma tell sometimes different stories, in a different manner, other times they tell similar stories in similar manner with the non-Roma. I argue that these narratives, collected from the Roma, are more often than not complementary rather than contrasting to the non-Roma narratives and they are essential both for writing about and understanding the communist regime in Romania as a whole. This chapter deals with the content and shape

¹ The research leading to these results has received funding from EEA Financial Mechanism 2009 - 2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014.

² J.G.A. Pocock, "The Politics of History. The Subaltern and the Subversive," in *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1998, p. 219.

of Roma life stories, trying to analyze how and what Roma say - or do not say - when remembering the(ir) past.

Keywords: *oral history, narrative, Roma, communist regime, Romania*

Is there any chance whatsoever for the Roma to get a place in history? What kind of history are we speaking about? Following J.G.A. Pocock's logic, the constructed historical narrative in Romania, produced by the non-Roma elite, left out almost all references³ to Roma communities' past. Pocock is introducing an aporia that says that because the historical discourse is constructed by a dominant group, it may sometimes be contested by other dominant groups or individuals which makes the conflict equal, translating the debate to the accepted and legitimizing master narrative about the past. Therefore, there is no way for the Other to become part of history than by the ways proposed by the dominant elite, which brings us back the historical master narrative.

History played and still plays an important role in the nation building process in Romania.⁴ When occurring, in a rather silenced historians' world, the debates are always among equals and do not touch issues related to the Other, such as the deep scars of the Romanian past, for example Roma slavery. There is no

³ There are, however several works on the history of Roma, especially those written by historian Viorel Achim, but they belong to the same elite-production agency. Unfortunately, this very study cannot escape this logic, either.

⁴ See, for example, the recent debate between Lucian Boia and Ioan-Aurel Pop on the nation building process in Romania (<http://www.romanialibera.ro/aldine/history/razboiul-istoricilor-pentru-%E2%80%9Econstiinta-nationala---lucian-boia-vs-ioan-aurel-pop-400940>; http://www.realitatea.net/disputa-intre-doi-istorici-romani-lucian-boia-si-ioan-aurel-pop-au-dorit-ardelenii-unirea_1844034.html)

**Postponed identities.
Generations of Cortorari Gypsies in Post-war
Transylvania – Wrinkled Traditions and Attempts
Towards "Modernisation"¹**

Abstract:

Cortorari Gypsy communities in Transylvania describe themselves as being different from other Gypsy "nations" living in this area. When the discussion reaches the subject of the community/communities² of Cortorari/ Căldărari (coppersmiths) they emphasise the most important thing that we should take into consideration: the strict tradition applied in various aspects of everyday life. The article is based on oral history interviews conducted during two field research campaigns³ in some of the (mostly former) Coppersmiths Roma communities. It aims at analysing the Cortorari's identity/ identities in post-war

¹ The research leading to these results has received funding from EEA Financial Mechanism 2009 - 2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014.

² The Cortorari/ Căldărari community identify themselves as being a "nation" (in the Romanian language most frequently they use the term of: "nație" and also that of "neam"). In her study, *"Women Married off to Chalices": Gender, Kinship and Wealth among Romanian Cortorari Gypsies*", Cătălina Tesăr tries to explain what this "neam"/ "neamo" polysemantic term might mean, depending on the context: kinship, kinsman, stock extraction, bloodline, branch, ancestry, kind (of people). She concludes that all of these meanings converge on the ideas of common ancestry and of an essentialist representation of identity (p. 146).

³ The research campaigns were conducted in the Sibiu and Braşov Counties during the summer of 2015, in the following villages: Bîrghis, Cincu, Ighişu Vechi, Merghindeal, Nocrich, Porumbacu de Jos, Porumbacu de Sus, Sâmbăta de Jos, Sâmbăta de Sus and Ucea de Jos. The article is based on the testimonies of eleven interviewees out of which six belong to the Cortorari community.

Transylvania in terms of their traditions and how these have changed or not over the years in the Cortorari's everyday, family and professional life. Some of the research questions the essay aims to provide answers to are: How are traditions maintained and transferred from one generation of Cortorari to another? How is "modernisation" perceived and how does it emerge and influence the community? How do elder and young Cortorari Roma perceive or relate to them? What changes (if any) does the young generation notice in terms of their traditions? And how does the clash between tradition and modernisation influence the young generations of Cortorari? Some relevant answers can be provided based on the interviewees' recollection of their past as a group permanently connected with the Romanian society, finding sometimes pertinent explanations, often of historical nature, for the changes they have undergone as an ethnic group in post-war Transylvania.

Keywords: Cortorari/ Căldărari Gypsies, tradition, school, identity, marriage, young generations of Cortorari/ Căldărari

One of my first interviews within the Cortorari community in Transylvania was quite a remarkable one: a Cortorari lady told me about her family history as passed on to her by her parents and grandparents: how they used to live in tents, to cook, raise their children, work or beg in different Transylvanian villages. Even though her brother was in the room, the interviewee answered almost all my questions and she constantly made comparisons between their lives in the past, in the communist period, and the present times. For that reason, she kept emphasising: "Our traditions are no longer the same," "Times are different," but at the same time she remarked: "How nicely we used to live back then... but, what a good life we have today." I could tell that the interviewee's narrative was consistent with the master narrative of

Ionela BOGDAN

**A Life Story is Also a Serious Business.¹
Feminine Narratives during Communist years
in the Town of Sebeş²**

Abstract

The present article aims to analyse the manner in which Roma women from the town of Sebeş remember their lives during the Communist era, with emphasis on their memories in regard to their work environment, when participation in the labour market was mandatory and according to the law everyone who was able to work, was required to do so. Using the methodology of oral history, it will be studied how Roma women, who were employed in factories of the town, relate to their workplace while bringing into attention aspects such as relations between minority-majority, gender issues, nostalgia towards the Communist era, differences between the urban and rural environments, potential mentality changes and behavioural changes.

Keywords: *Romanian Roma women, Communist regime, work environment, relations between co-workers*

The aim of this paper is daunting: to capture and preserve life. The goal seems and is presumptuous, considering it comes from someone who even though tries to walk through life with eyes wide open while maintaining a balance, still juggles with

¹ Luisa Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1987, p. 4.

² The research leading to these results has received funding from EEA Financial Mechanism 2009 - 2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014.

Between Romanian and Romani: Preserving the Mother Tongue in Roma Communities¹

Abstract

The present study sets out to examine the concept of linguistic identity in several Roma communities in Romania, investigated by means of oral history interviews in the period June – September 2015, in Transylvania, Southern Oltenia and Banat. It refers to a range of issues related to the bilingualism of some groups like Cortorari, Gabori, Rudari, especially to the situation of idioms spoken by them in the context of the major transformations undergone by the Romanian society after 1989. The sedentarization process, migration to urban areas (also to Western Europe), and acquisition of new cultural patterns are reflected on their mentality and vernacular language. Our research took into account attitudes manifested in relation to mother tongue and the official language, framework of their use, the generational differences among the speakers. Another aspect investigated is the role of language as an agent of cultivating specific cultural traditions. Romani language is promoted within the national education system and through activities carried out under the auspices of Roma organizations and NGOs. The issue of this language appears to be a problematic one: not having enough specialized teachers, lacking the contexts for commonly practicing it, this idiom is spoken particularly in the family and homogeneous communities. Last but not least, we followed the perception on Romanian language and its place in the acculturation phenomenon.

Keywords: *Romani language, mother tongue, bilingual, identity, acculturation*

¹ *The research leading to these results has received funding from EEA Financial Mechanism 2009 - 2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014.*

Petre PETCUȚ
Romeo TIBERIADE

**The Roma Passenger Migrants.
The Case of the Ursari from the Towns of Horezu-
Poienari and Sadova¹**

Abstract

Far from being the most significant from a statistical standpoint, the migration of numerous Roma groups from Romania to Western European countries is part of a long tradition of intra-European migrations. The most recent migration wave began following the fall of the Iron Curtain and the EU extension towards the East. Although not numerous, Roma groups in France are highly visible due to a combination of circumstances chief of which is their living in establishments similar to refugee camps. The migration of Romani has influenced French-Romanian relations, impacting areas such as police cooperation between the two states or provoking tensions at the local level, in towns where bidonvilles are deployed. This article focuses on Roma of Romanian origin who since 2005 have built 7-8 successive platzes in the region comprising the cities of Massy, Palaiseau, Wissous and Champlan, about 15 km South of Paris. The number of inhabitants have varied between 50 and 200 adults and children. The majority originate from the towns of Horezu-Poienari and Sadova (Dolj county, South of Romania), but there are also Roma from Segarcea, Calopăr, Cerăt or Gângiova. According to their accounts, they are cărămidari and they speak the ursari dialect.

Keywords: Roma, France, settlements, migration

¹ The research leading to these results has received funding from EEA Financial Mechanism 2009 - 2014 under the project contract no. 14SEE/30.06.2014.