

Reviews

Cikáni a etnicita. [Gypsies and ethnicity]. Marek Jakoubek, editor. Prague: TRITON, 2008. 408 pp. ISBN 978-80-7387-105-5 (hardback).

Reviewed by Petra Burzová

Marek Jakoubek is a Czech anthropologist who has built up a reputation as a distinguished scholar studying Gypsy groups. During the past decade he has published a monograph and numerous articles on this topic, and has co-edited a number of publications (e.g. Budilová and Jakoubek 2007). His work and that of collaborators cannot be overlooked when theorising on Gypsies in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. *Cikáni a etnicita* is a collection of essays and articles dealing with the question of Gypsy ethnicity and nationalism. The collection aims to contribute to a better understanding of relevant concepts that may not have been sufficiently considered in Czech and Slovak literature.

The collection consists of thirteen papers (and one that has been revised for this collection) by thirteen leading scholars. Twelve are translations of articles originally published in English, most of which appeared in academic journals between 1978 and 2006. Most contributions were translated by the editor, who is also the author of one of the articles and the preface.

As Jakoubek convincingly shows, Czecho-Slovak Gypsy studies are marked by a certain isolation, which is due to the fact that local scholars did not follow international discussions in Gypsy studies before 1989 (p. 12). The ongoing establishment of Gypsy studies as a scientific discipline is accompanied by continuous publication of translations into Czech and Slovak (for detailed information on Gypsy studies literature published in the Czech Republic and Slovakia see Jakoubek 2008). As stated by the editor in the introduction, the goal of this cross-disciplinary collection was to 'introduce the international context of Gypsy studies into our environment' (p. 12). This kind of approach is arguably unavoidable in any scientific discipline in countries like the Czech and Slovak republics: isolation, based on either national origin or subject area, can only impair the process of learning from others.

The publication under review aims to enable scholars and students to compare theoretical perspectives on Gypsy groups in the Czech Republic (plus Slovakia) and abroad, and to compare empirical data obtained through research in the field of Gypsy Studies. The collection also contains some inter-

Petra Burzová is a doctoral student at the Department of Anthropology and History, Faculty of Philosophy and Arts, University of West Bohemia, Univerzitni 8, 306 14 Pilsen, Czech Republic. Email: petraburzova@gmail.com

Romani Studies 5, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2009), 169–190 ISSN 1528–0748 (print) 1757–2274 (online)
doi:10.3828/rs.2009.5

esting methodological insights (e.g. Cohn's questions for Gypsies, p. 141) and, in terms of Gypsy studies, 'unconventional' approaches (Gmelch, Lauwagie). One of the stated aims of the collection is to demonstrate to readers how difficult it is to define the subject of investigation in Gypsy studies (p. 13), and that the process of enquiry itself constitutes an important aspect of the investigation. In this way, the book serves as a guide to those interested in becoming involved in Gypsy studies research.

But the collection can also be recommended to the general public, activists, NGO workers, state officials and politicians who take a professional or personal interest in the 'Romani situation', an issue that has been attracting much attention in the Czech Republic and Slovakia (as can be seen from the offers in bookshops, from Czech and Slovak newspapers, magazines and websites). The articles are written in an easily accessible style, which by no means, however, diminishes their scientific value.

The publication contributes to the clarification of several terms frequently employed in the public/political and academic discourse. In his introduction, Jakoubek analyses the term 'Gypsies' and, referring to Matt T. Salo (pp. 10–11), he shows that Czech and Slovak controversies on labelling certain groups as 'Roma' (against the politically incorrect 'Gypsy') are of little scientific value. Debates on the terminological apparatus in the international context Gypsy studies, it is argued, prefer a usage that preserves peoples' original ethnonyms (as in the case of the Gypsy Lore Society) (p. 10).

A similar situation applies to the notion of ethnicity, which also figures in the title of the collection. According to Jakoubek, it is no longer defensible to assert a unique 'Gypsy ethnic identity' (whether based on common origin, language, shared identity or anthropological type). Scientific research (several examples of which are to be found in the collection under review) empirically proves the absurdity of such conceptions; the term ethnicity itself is, moreover, questionable, not least due to its frequent confusion with what is referred to as 'vulgar' models. Instead, terms and concepts must be clearly defined in order to be used as scientific instruments – as is the case in Williams's definition of 'community' (p. 263).

Missing from the collection is an introductory part dealing in depth with the very (controversial) concept of ethnicity, the reconceptualisation of which seems necessary. Nevertheless, each chapter does deal, to a certain extent, with 'Gypsy ethnic identity'. Many authors are radically critical of the way 'ethnicity' is often used (frequently with underlying racist values), and it is not surprising to find several references to Said's *Orientalism*, as in the contributions by Willems, pp. 66–70, and Okely, p. 109.

As for the overall structure of the publication, it is a pity that so much space was devoted to Roma/Gypsy nationalism, leaders and intelligentsia (cf. contri-

butions by Kovats, Pogány, Jakoubek, Cohn and Okely). Although these issues are tightly related to the question of ethnicity, and their examination produces a large body of evidence ‘against’ a unique Gypsy identity, these articles could have been published in a separate publication (such as ‘Gypsies and Nation/Nationalism’). However, taking into consideration the binding effect of boundaries, the collection might be viewed as an application of different perspectives to the heuristically valuable concept of boundary. Even though many authors cite Barth, it seems that, as far as Gypsy groups are concerned, it is ambiguous to speak of ethnic boundaries. In this context, Jakoubek (p. 154) mentions the remarkable concept of ‘ethnic indifference’ coined by Peter Lozoviuk, and shows that as for the ‘bearers of traditional Gypsy culture’ are concerned, ‘the Us–Them dichotomization does not proceed at the ethnic level’ (Lozoviuk, p. 54).

Noteworthy is the tone used by the editor in the introduction. The decisive and critical attitude will not surprise those Czech and Slovak readers who have been following the debate of several years between Czech (and Slovak) students of Gypsy studies and the editor over the pages of Czech (and Slovak) journals. Jakoubek calls for definitions. As shown by Okely, Willems and Cohn, it is clear that the absence of competent conceptualization is not limited to the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The publication proves that, within the Czecho-Slovak context one often encounters automatic and unreflected labelling of certain groups as ‘Roma/Gypsies’. Descriptions of (‘Roma/Gypsy’) ‘ethnic identity’ or (‘Roma/Gypsy’) ‘nation building’ should instead be critical and acknowledge the futility as well as the disputability of such processes. On this issue, Jakoubek’s editorial enterprise and the studies included send a clear message. Apart from the minor objections, *Cikáni a etnicita* can be recommended to anyone interested in Gypsy studies in the Czech Republic or Slovakia.

Contents: *Od Cikánů k Romům a zase zpátky* (Marek Jakoubek, 2007), *Vyjednávání “cikánství” Situační strategie* [Negotiating “Gypsiness”. Strategy in context, 1988] (Carol Silverman), *Smrtná past etnicity: Historie studia Cikánů* [Ethnicity as a death trap: The history of Gypsy studies, 1998] (Wim Willems), *“Neznáme svůj původ”: Jak Cikáni z Jarany zacházejí s minulostí* [“We don’t know our descent”: How the Gitanos of Jarana manage the past, 2001] (Paloma Gay Y Blasco), *Některé politické důsledky teorií o cikánské etnicitě: Role intelektuála* [Some political consequences of theories of Gypsy Ethnicity: the place of the intellectual, 1997] (Judith Okely), *Mýtus cikánského národnostního hnutí* [The myth of Gypsy nationalism, 1993] (Werner Cohn), *Rivalita identit: Cigán versus romský národ* (Marek Jakoubek, 2006), *Přijímání ustavující se národní identity: Romové střední a východní Evropy* [Accommodating an emergent national identity: The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe, 1999] (István Pogány), *Politika romské identity: mezi nacionalismem a chudobou*

[The politics of Roma identity: between nationalism and destitution, 2003] (Martin Kovats), Aktualizace stati o etnicitě Cikánů a Travelerů z roku 1979 [Actualization of the 1979 article on Gypsies and Travellers, 2007] (Matt T. Salo), Cikánská etnicita: Důsledky nativních kategorií a vztahů pro etnickou klasifikaci [Gypsy ethnicity: Implications of native categories and interaction for the ethnic classification, 1979] (Matt T. Salo), Kategorie “romanipen” a etnické hranice Cikánů [The category of ‘romanipen’ and the ethnic boundaries of Gypsies, 1987] (Andrzej Mirga), Neviditelnost pařížských Kalderašů: Vybrané aspekty ekonomických aktivit a sídelních vzorců kalderašských Romů z pařížských předměstí [The invisibility of the Kalderash of Paris: Some aspects of the economic activity and settlement patterns of the Kalderash Rom of the Paris suburbs, 1982] (Patrick Williams), Etnické hranice v moderních státech: Revize Romano Lavo-Lil [Ethnic boundaries in modern states: Romano Lavo-Lil revisited, 1979] (Beverly Nagel Lauwagie), Skupiny, které nechtějí být začleněny: Cikáni a jiné řemeslnické, obchodnické a zábavu poskytující menšiny [Groups that don’t want in: Gypsies and other artisan, trader, and entertainer minorities, 1986] (Sharon Bohn Gmelch)

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Cikánská rodina a příbuzenství. Lenka Budilová and Marek Jakoubek (eds.). Praha: Nakladatelství Dryada. 2007. 205 pp. ISBN 978-80-87025-11-6.

Reviewed by Claude Cahn

Cikánská rodina a příbuzenství (*The Gypsy Family and Kinship*) is the penultimate production by Marek Jakoubek, recently together with Lenka Budilová, the most prolific of a group of what has been called “heretical” anthropologists based at the University of Plzeň in the Czech Republic (Barša 2005: 4). Their overall project appears to be impatience with – and taking aim at – a series

Claude Cahn has worked at the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and in other frameworks on Roma rights issues, and is author of several studies on this and related topics. Correspondence address: 55 Sfatul Tarii str., Block B, Apt. 20, Chisinau Centre, Republic of Moldova. Email: claudcahn@gmail.com.

of what are deemed to be naked emperors including 'Romani nationalism', Romani activists and leaders, the Romani studies circle around the late Milena Hübschmannová at Charles University in Prague, multiculturalism, and a row of other bogies. Insofar as Jakoubek and his colleagues are closely involved with Czech social work with Roma and are widely published in mainstream venues, their views carry weight far beyond the halls of academia and are currently establishing and/or retrenching mainstream Czech views on their Romani neighbors.

The publication under review is a collection of essays beginning with an introductory note by the editors and then a documentary essay by Budilová and Jakoubek themselves concerning Romani kinship, drawing on work that appeared previously in English (Budilová and Jakoubek 2005, 2006). Thereafter follow ten essays, most of which are translations of works by a number of leading names in Romani studies appearing at various times since 1964 and presented in most cases for the first time to a Czech audience. The linking theme is kinship, family, marriage, social relations among Gypsies, whom Jakoubek and his colleagues decline to call "Roma" for reasons elaborated at length in the subsequently appearing *Gypsies and Ethnicity* (Jakoubek 2008) and which are also touched on here.

By way of introduction, the editors contend that there is no Czech tradition of anthropological investigation of kinship of Roma, despite the fact that "this is a field in which the majority of qualified foreign authors regard concerning this group as key" (Budilová and Jakoubek 2007: 12). Following a summary of some strands of kinship theory, the introduction explains that the essays appearing in the present collection "more-or-less proceed from 'classical' anthropological theories of kinship and under the term kinship are understood (explicitly or implicitly) a complex of relationships, statuses, rules and requirements derived from genealogical relations (which are established on the realities of siring and birthing of children)" (Budilová and Jakoubek 2007: 13). Thereafter, several pages are devoted to systematically demolishing an essay by Jana Horvathová, the director of the Museum of Romani Culture in Brno and herself Romani, for her efforts to assert usage of the term "Rom" over "Gypsy".

The next fifty pages of this handsomely designed volume are devoted to "Kinship, Marriage and Matrimonial Patterns: The Gypsy Kinship Network", an essay presenting Budilová and Jakoubek's research into kinship networks among a particular group of Roma in rural eastern Slovakia and the Czech Republic. The primary work of the essay is, on the strength of evidently meticulous documentation of a series of "wider kinship" or "kindreds" (their terminology – as used by Budilová and Jakoubek, "kindred" is not translated from English), to overturn the contention that "Roma" (the authors place the term in quotation marks) are exogenous. Budilová and Jakoubek go particularly to

work on several passages from a study by Milena Hübschmannová, whom they refer to sarcastically as a “guru” of Romani studies, for apparent gullibility over her interlocutors’ assertions that they take measures to avoid marrying close relatives (Budilová and Jakoubek 2007: 23).

Having established a straw man of denial of endogamy among Roma and apparently interested defenders, the authors detail a series of carefully documented family types apparently arising in the course of their research. As presented, this involves examination of 318 marriages. They appropriately do not distinguish between official and traditional or common law marriages. These 318 marriages they divide into the following categories:

1. Fifty-five marriages involving persons who are unequivocally directly related, “that is, between persons who, at some point in the past had one or more common ancestors” (Budilová and Jakoubek, p. 38). This first category includes, according to the authors, unequivocally incestuous marriages.
2. A further group concerns marriages in which, at the time of the wedding, the members of the couple were not “direct kin” (*vzájemně příbuzní*), which they clarify to mean “their families never in the past had a common ancestor” (Budilová and Jakoubek 2007: 39). However, they were already, or shortly thereafter became, affiliated in kinship terms. Here they introduce the term “čeranka”, reportedly native to the Romani groups they studied, meaning approximately “exchange”. Implicated are marriages in which “some relatives from one family marry a number of relatives from another family”. Budilová and Jakoubek counted 31 such marriages.
3. Combinations of types 1 and 2, which they deem to number 36.

The other two types are “marriages with outsiders”, of which there were 24, and a remaining series of marriages for which the authors feel they do not have sufficient information for definitive conclusions.

Thereafter follow 16 detailed charts for marriages falling under category (1) above (the authors state that they are withholding charts for the incestuous marriages); six charts of types under category (2) – “čeranka”; and seven charts mapping the combined types. The book as a whole includes, tucked into the sleeve, a comprehensive map of the marriages documented. They conclude that endogamous marriage is a characteristic trait of traditional Romani culture and, indeed, that at issue is “lateral extensive cognate matrimonial relations which strengthen the greatest possible extent of endogamy” (Budilová and Jakoubek 2007: 65). They further boldly hold that if their conclusions are correct, “then the majority of expert literature on family and kinship among Roma is incorrect” (Budilová and Jakoubek 2007: 67).

The remaining circa 135 pages of the book present a highly filtered series of for the most part foreign authors to the wider Czech public for the first time.

The common thread is family and kinship among Roma for which, despite their assertion that “the majority of qualified foreign authors” consider this avenue of scrutiny central, they are apparently compelled to rake a number of in some cases quite obscure corners for complementary material. Included are, among others: a 1975 study by Judith Okely of (primarily nuclear) family relations among English Gypsies, as well as divisions of family labour and property; a 1999 article by Elena Marushiakova; a 1984 essay by Patrick Williams; part of Werner Cohn’s 1973 pamphlet “The Gypsies” (including Chapter 7, “Inbreeding and the Bride-Price”); and several others. Also included is one 1964 item reprinted from Slovak – Emilia Horváthová’s “Family and Communal Life”. The contributions by Okely and Teresa San Román have been given new introductions. The Slovak author Arne Mann provides an introduction to the Horváthová article, entitled “Emilia Horváthová and Her Interest in the Spiritual Culture of Roma”.

Space considerations preclude detailed discussion of the other articles appearing in this collection, so a brief overview will have to suffice. The reprinted Cohn item is interesting for being what Budilová and Jakoubek’s work might sound like if it were removed from its charged political context and drained of its high-volume propagandizing. It includes among other things a useful description of the complexities of Romani in-law relations in the (primarily U.S.) Romani groups he has studied. Martin and Gamella also undertake detailed research into individual marriage relations. By contrast, the Marushiakova article, as well as the Tcherenkov and Laederich contribution, devote more attention to relations between extended family and/or sub-ethnic groups. The comparisons this collection makes possible render evident the diversity of types of kinship relations among different Romani/Gypsy groups. The individual articles taken on their own, as well as the comparisons they make possible, are very informative. This makes it all the more unfortunate that the authors concerned have been hijacked for a particular political project.

In its actual, highly charged context, the book translates, for a general Czech audience, a particular vision of documentation about Roma. A narrow group of “foreign qualified authors” are marshaled to shore up the legitimacy of the project. Within this group, the material selected for translation is also noteworthy. For example (to name only one), the Czech public will not learn about Cohn’s conception of Gypsies as “an institution of Western Culture”, nor will they read Cohn’s view that Gypsies are “needed in our culture” (Cohn 1973: 61). The editors’ own research – the centerpiece of the book – presents the strongest possible dose of structural anthropology as applied to a particular series of Czech and Slovak Romani families. Among other things for this rigid application of 1950s anthropological orthodoxy to the neglect of subsequent theoretical developments, an earlier study by Jakoubek became the subject of

criticism by political scientist Pavel Barša: “The inexorable logic of his theoretical framework, according to which every cultural system is defined by its overall structure and any interaction with other systems threatens to destroy it, erects before us the dismal alternatives of ‘us’ or ‘them.’” (Barša 2005: 4).

Barša notes, among other things, Jakoubek’s strategy of relying on pre-conceptions of the universality of his own position to disempower and render alien his research subjects, while at the same time harping incessantly on the purported scientific basis of his own approaches:

Pierre Bourdieu and other anthropologists of the 1960s made deep inroads into this dichotomy when they started to use cultural-anthropological methods during their research into western societies. The universality of the European subject and the neutrality of its science was shown to be a product of an entirely particular culture. Said in Jakoubek’s terminology, this means that science about ‘cultural Roma’ is itself only an expression of the collective being of ‘cultural Czechs’ or ‘cultural Europeans’. Except that it is exactly this thesis which Jakoubek revolts against with his *ad nauseam* repetitive indications of the ‘scientific basis’ of his position: his research cannot be the expression of some particular culture, but rather of neutral science. While cultural Roma are thrust into the position of disempowered objects (*odkázány do pozice nesvéprávných objektů*) ... they can at least rely on Jakoubek, that he, as a clean subject of science, will objectively capture the unconscious basis of their existence. (Barša 2005: 6)

In the current book, Budilová and Jakoubek continue to offer a thick overlay of schoolmarm (“Every social scientist knows very well (or at least should know), that it is not possible to undertake research or write a text, without having a theoretical basis...” etc., etc.). Reading Jakoubek and Budilová, one might easily forget (or rather – would never know) that sociology was once the invigorating response of outsiders to the dead weight of other disciplines.

In light of Jakoubek’s rhetorical strategies, the proximity of pragmatic engagement with social management projects (as opposed to disinterested science) is noteworthy. The “heretic” anthropologists of the Plzeň faculty are closely involved with the work of the non-governmental organization *People in Need*, an entity to which the Czech government has outsourced major segments of its social work activities, as well as with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs itself. At six per 1,000, the Czech Republic leads Europe – by far – in terms of the numbers of children per capita which its social workers remove from the care of biological parents and place in state care (Browne, K. D., C. E. Hamilton-Giachritsis, R. Johnson, and M. Ostergren, 2006). In 2006, the European Court of Human Rights found the Czech Republic in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights after social workers ordered the removal of children from the care of their biological parents for no reason other than their poverty (European Court of Human Rights, 2006). Roma constitute a matter of particular attention for Czech social workers. In

2005, the Czech Public Defender of Rights (“Ombudsman”) issued a report on coercive sterilization practices of Romani women in the Czech Republic, affirming the extensive involvement of Czech social workers in driving these practices (Veřejný ochránce práv, 2005). Since the release of the Ombudsman’s report, there has been no government action on the Ombudsman’s recommendations and, perhaps not surprisingly, new cases have been reported. In 2007, social workers coerced a Romani woman in the town of Frýdek-Místek into undergoing sterilization by threatening to withdraw her social support and social housing, as well as to remand her children into state care, if she did not undergo the procedure.

Visions of Roma (or, rather, “Gypsies”) as a socio-pathological group (and not as fully capacitated moral agents) merge with and are supported by doctrines of management of Romani communities as applied by Czech social workers. Jakoubek and his colleagues are now required reading in social work qualification courses for social workers (see for example https://stag.ujep.cz/prohlizeni/pgs_prohlizeni.sylabus?kat=CR&predm=0002&rok=2008 (accessed 3 March 2009)). Indeed, Jakoubek’s own research, as described, has at times blended social work and scientific goals. Here, for example, is the project description for a 2004–2005 field initiative undertaken by a team co-led by Jakoubek, funded by the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, called “Long-Term Stationary Field Research of Socially Excluded Romani Communities” (Jakoubek and team apparently have no qualms about using the term “Romani” where their own fundraising is concerned), in which the basic goals of the project involved, among other things, “... to elaborate and in seven selected localities open, on a pilot basis, an analytical model which would make it possible to interpret environments of social exclusion in the Czech Republic: ... (4) from the point-of-view of possibilities to overcome present disintegrative tendencies and contribute to the social cohesion of Czech society during the preservation of the internal diversity of its social (socio-cultural) space” (Centrum aplikované antropologie a terénního výzkumu, 2005). One wonders what someone so determined to emphasize the scientific legitimacy of his work is doing leading a project with social management objectives.

Elsewhere, Jakoubek has detailed at length his opposition to recognition of Roma as an ethnic group (Jakoubek, 2008). This is founded on a view of multiculturalism, nationalism, and “ethnopolitics” as all of a piece, all bad, and above all, not something in which mainstream Czech society participates. On the cover of a previous book, Jakoubek’s credo is spelled out: “The naïve belief that the cultures of all marginal groups are enriching for our state and culture is shown to be in vain. The basic principles of some of them threaten our culture, and destroy and pervert its values. This applies primarily in the field of human rights, which are one of the foundation stones of the European cultural heritage.

Traditions and habits, which are in conflict with them, must be adapted and subordinated to these legal and civilizational norms. The concept of limitless xenophilia means sure road to hell” (Jakoubek, 2004). More recently, citing C. W. Watson approvingly, Jakoubek writes: “multiculturalism and nationalism – and, we would add, ethno-politics – are mutually troublingly and dangerously interconnected, and this in spite of the fact that multiculturalism is generally regarded as a programmatic opposition to nationalism” (Jakoubek 2008: 159). Jakoubek’s vision of multiculturalism, among other things involves a rejection even of the goals of the U.S. civil-rights movement (Jakoubek 2008: 157–8).

In so writing, it perhaps goes without saying that, as elsewhere, Jakoubek neglects to cite most of the key developments in the explosion of recent scholarly literature on nationalism, preferring to make reference to several selected names. As Barša notes, Jakoubek both denies that the civic character of the Czech state is in doubt, and fails to grasp what is at issue in multiculturalism: “If we, with Jakoubek, automatically imagine the civic character of the Czech majority society, we run the risk that, in the name of assimilation into universal civic values, in reality assimilate minorities into the particular values of ethnic Czech-ness (*češství*)” (Barša 2005: 8–9).

Jan Jařab, currently a member of the cabinet of the European Commission’s Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs and previously in several Czech government functions notes, “In addition, untruthfully – and here I would almost say in lying fashion – he creates in readers the opinion that state money goes mainly for the support of Romani elites and their false cultural actions, which is completely untrue. More than 60 million crowns now goes toward socially defined projects, while the Museum of Romani Culture and periodicals receive around 10 million. Additionally, in the intensity of propaganda, *People in Need* brandishes the terms ‘ethnicity’ versus ‘professionalism’ in such a way that it is evident to everyone that the only true professionals are white (and are of course ... *People in Need*).” Jařab has also noted Jakoubek’s “attack language ... Jakoubek assumes the role of proud warrior against the establishment and political correctness, which is somewhat laughable, because the establishment at issue, in his conception, is apparently Milena Hübschmannová and Karel Holomek [author’s note: former dissident and Romani activist]” (Jařab 2007).

It would be tempting to try to disconnect the structural anthropologists Budilová and Jakoubek on the one hand, from the Budilová and Jakoubek who rant against multiculturalism, harry Romani activists, smirk at “romologists”, and work to galvanize the Czech public to a vision of “Gypsies” as in need of rescuing from themselves. The problem is that Budilová and Jakoubek make little effort themselves to disconnect their multiple projects. *Cikánská rodina*

a příbuzenství blends these efforts seamlessly, corrupting the former, possibly irrevocably. Indeed, Budilová and Jakoubek themselves would not see them disconnected, because each component is an indispensable part of a larger political project which, as noted by Barša, is centred around strong assimilationist efforts with powerful political connections (Barša 2005: 4). Anthropology deserves better.

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The Gypsies of early modern Spain, 1425–1783. Richard J. Pym. London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2007. 219 pp. ISBN 978-1-4039-9231-4 (hardback).

Reviewed by Juan F. Gamella

Literary scholar and professor of Spanish at the University of London, Richard Pym has produced the first full-length study in English of the early history of Spain's Gypsies or Gitanos. It covers the period from the first documented arrival of what were most likely patrilocal bands of "Egíptanos" to the lands of Aragon in 1425, to the last royal ordinance specifically directed at their dissolution as a distinct group at the end of the *Ancient Régime*. The text is well researched and extensively documented, rigorous to the detail and tersely written even if sometimes the chronological sequence is broken by the analysis of cases from different periods, and there is some redundancy concerning the main arguments, such as the limitations of absolute royal power to implement policy locally. Overall, the book is highly recommendable for students and scholars of ethnicity, ethnic policies, Romani studies, and Spanish history and literature in general.

Juan F. Gamella is Professor at the Department of Social Anthropology, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Campus de Cartuja, Universidad de Granada, 18071 Granada, Spain. Email: gamella@ugr.es

The author has carried out wide archival research and unearthed important documents, although most relevant information was already present in the work of other historians such as Helena Sánchez Ortega, Bernard Leblon, Amada López Meneses, and Antonio Gómez Alfaro. Pym, however, excels in contextualizing, interpreting and interconnecting the data available in relationship with larger developments in Spanish history. Thus, the reader becomes very aware of the particular socio-political climates and developments in every period and how they affected anti-Gypsy legislation, policy and discourse.

In its central chapters the book reads as the chronicle of an obsession: how the most varied and multicultural society in Western Europe became obsessed with effacing religious, linguistic and moral difference through forced baptism, coercion and expulsion, and by a fixation with purity and “clean blood” (“*pureza de sangre*”). By 1618, with Jews, Moriscos, *Erasmistas* and any other alternative groups expelled or forced into oblivion, there was nobody left to blame for the decadence, pestilence, famine and depopulation that plagued the country. As Pym concludes, “the facile pathological displacement of Spain’s perceived woes onto this despised pariah group reflected the acute crisis of confidence that had by now begun to affect important sections of the nation’s intellectual and religious elite” (page 2). In the Spain of its Golden Age, Gypsies thus became both a moral scapegoat and a literary and artistic theme of immense potential for the exoticizing, orientalizing and bohemian (literally) projections so dear to baroque and, later, romantic spirits.

These outcasts, however, proved more resilient than other larger and more important minorities, and this paradox is one of the leitmotifs of the book that allows for the application to the case of hotly debated ideas of Spanish historiography such as the unfinished, confederate nature of the Spanish Habsburg state, the limitations of the absolute monarchy to implement its designs in areas under church or noble jurisdiction, and the seemingly constant support and protection of Gypsies by many of their neighbours, both lay and clerical. All these are important arguments and enrich our view of this period.

It is arguable, however, that this is not primarily a book about Gypsies as a distinct, separate group, but about the reaction of Spain’s authorities to an imagined, foreign community that seemed irredeemable and inassimilable. The main actors of the book are Spanish religious, political and intellectual elites and, crucially, the Spanish state. Living Gitanos, “history’s real Gypsies”, as the author recognizes, remain elusive, “pretextual”, their voices and persons always conjured through the discourse of inimical, prejudiced, ignorant others. Even their identity was misjudged, their incomprehensible language reduced to a delinquent slang or “*jerigonza*” (literally, a jargon), and their difference characterized by dress and life ways that could, seen from outside, be easily mimicked by a number of vagabonds, deserters and criminals. But the book is

focused on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a period when little of factual value is known about Gypsies, and when “the task of writing about them is inevitably daunting”. Thus the book replays the paradox of most Spanish Gypsy historiography: it concentrates its efforts precisely in the periods when less can be said about Gypsies themselves, about their social history, the size and structure of their population, its demographic characteristics, the organization of their family networks and households, the mutation and erosion of their language, and, in sum, the transformations of their cultural differentiation and their identity – in the book judged as linear, continuous, unchanging, almost teleologically preordained. Even the continuity of the name does not guarantee that Gypsies of today are descendants of the “Egiptanos” of the fifteenth century. This has to be somehow researched empirically. In this sense, Pym recognizes that “the eighteenth century is very much better documented”, but in his book this period is dealt with in a very superficial way.

In fact, what permeates from the data available is that, by the mid-eighteenth century, most Gypsies probably lived peaceful, laborious lives as blacksmiths, butchers, shearers, basket weavers, horse traders and agricultural workers, settled in villages and towns, although they were forced to follow fixed annual itineraries by labor demand in the changing agrarian seasons, something many of them still do today in the countryside. And it was increasingly evident that most of their illicit ways were generated or intensified by the same provisions that tried to correct or eradicate them.

The data that is most often used in the book is therefore opinionated discourse made of diatribes, accusations and penal cases, fiction... in a Golden Age of literary fiction. In this sense, to brush aside the most important document of the whole period – the censuses ordered by the 1783 royal order – is deeply unsatisfactory. Even if these lists are “unlikely to be comprehensive”, and were filtered through the prejudice of authorities and bureaucrats, they include the names, declared age, household composition, occupation, and even physical description of nearly 12,000 Gitanos and Gitanas. After rejecting such data so lightly, the author’s “plea for further archival research” somehow rings hollow.

In sum, this is an excellent summary of what is known about a foundational period of Spanish society’s relationship with the Spanish Gypsies, and a good introduction to sources, materials and trends in Spanish Gypsy historiography. Not much is new about Gitanos as historical agents or about the generation of Spanish Romani culture and identity. Perhaps that needs new approaches and a will to go beyond the 1783 line, when Gypsies became increasingly a self-centered cultural minority and not only a penal and literary category.



Gypsies and orientalism in German literature and anthropology of the long nineteenth century. Nicholas Saul. London: Legenda. 2007. 197 pp. ISBN 978-1900755887 (hardback)

Reviewed by Gertrud Reershemius

In this book Nicholas Saul endeavours to “reconstruct the shifts in the representation of the Gypsy in German culture through the medium of literature and anthropology from around 1850 to the First World War” (Saul 2007: 6). Only the first chapter is dedicated to anthropology, where Saul refers to the writings of Jacob Thomasius, Heinrich Grellmann, Theodor Tetzner, Michael von Kogalnitchan, Carl von Heister and Franz Liszt.

Franz Liszt’s book *Die Zigeuner und ihre Musik in Ungarn*, first published in 1859 in French, perhaps did not receive as much attention as it deserved, either from contemporary readers or from modern scholarship analyzing anthropological writing on Romanies. Liszt, who actually spent longer periods of time among Romanies, grasps the uniqueness and the value of a culture in which, as he claims from a Hegelian point of view, pure instrumental music takes the place of writing, the creation of epic art and historiography. From this point of view, he can look at the Romanies as equal others, not as inferior others.

The German discourse on Romanies during the nineteenth century and beyond, however, has been dominated by Heinrich Grellmann’s book *Historischer Versuch über die Zigeuner betreffend die Lebensart und Verfassung, Sitten und Schicksale dieses Volkes seit seiner Erscheinung in Europa, und dessen Ursprung*, first published in 1783. The image of the Romanies, as created by Grellmann, became according to Saul “an expression of Germany’s particular Orientalist tradition” (Saul 2007: 6). Grellmann creates the image of the Romanies as a pre-civilized *Naturvolk* with serious shortcomings in terms of intellect and work-ethos on the one hand. On the other hand, as Saul points out, Grellman glamourizes the Romanies by emphasizing their physical beauty, especially in their women. Thus, with the authority of the enlightened scholar, he builds the foundation for political intervention and oppression while at the same time he starts to create the myth of the Romanies as the desirable Romantic Others.

Having thus established the origins of the orientalist discourse on Romanies, Saul dedicates the following seven chapters to analyses of a long list of German authors who wrote about Romanies, from Romantic poets like Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim, writers connected with nineteenth-century Realism like Theodor Storm, Wilhelm Raabe or Adalbert Stifter, to the early

Gertrud Reershemius is Professor of German Linguistics at the School of Languages & Social Sciences at Aston University. Address: Aston Triangle, Birmingham B4 7ET, UK. E-mail: g.k.reershemius@aston.ac.uk

twentieth-century author Carl Hauptmann. Commendably, Saul not only examines the A-list of German literature but also writers popular at the time but now largely forgotten, for example Karl May. It becomes apparent that very few of these writers and poets are familiar with or interested in the social and mostly grim reality of the Romanies' life during the nineteenth century. In the novels, plays and stories examined masterly by Saul, the image of the Gypsy serves as a projection for German authors trying to come to terms with modernity: the Gypsy as the pre-modern, pre-intellectual, sensual, unrestricted human being in opposition to modern man with all his self-inflicted limitations and obligations, also with more or less explicit sexual implications. For some authors like Clemens Brentano and Achim von Arnim, this romantic projection leads, as Saul puts it, to a form of "obsessive self-identification with the Romany nation" (Saul 2007: 20). Interestingly, these two writers especially combined a positive image and identification with Romanies with anti-semitism. This aspect, although mentioned in Saul's book, deserves in my view more attention and thought: nineteenth-century Germans found themselves presented with two ethnic minority groups in their midst who were perceived as "Others", Romanies and Jews. Whereas the majority of German Jews subscribed wholeheartedly to the concepts of enlightenment and modern society, actively assimilated into German language, culture and society, and became remarkably successful in many areas, Romanies did not. (They may not have had the chance to do so, but that was presumably not obvious to the majority of Germans during the nineteenth century.) Many German writers like Raabe, Keller and Fontane depict Jews as the Other who superficially seems to conform with German society but underneath remains his own true, "other" self. Whereas the image of the Romanies is used in literary discourse as an often positive projection for the pre-modern German, the image of the Jews serves rather as the negative opposite. But then, as Saul summarizes in his last chapter, the German discourse on Romanies "has been fundamentally a discourse about Germans" (Saul 2007: 163).

One of the questions arising from Saul's well-written and thought-provoking book is whether his analysis could also be applied to other European literary discourses: is it a German phenomenon we are looking at here or can the same images, projections and discourses be found in French, Spanish, English and other writings of the nineteenth century?

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Lebensart und Verfassung, Sitten und Schicksale dieses Volkes seit seiner Erscheinung in Europa, und dessen Ursprung.



Lola's luck: My life among the California Gypsies. Carol Miller. Boston: GemmaMedia. 2009. 225 pp., numerous color photographs, \$20.00 (USA). ISBN 978-1-934848-00-5 (Pb.)

Reviewed by David J. Nemeth

I shall begin with a synopsis. In 1966, when Carol Miller began to study Gypsies, she was an anthropology graduate student at the University of Washington. The kindness of Professor Edward Harper there and her encounter with his undergraduate thesis (1951) had piqued her interest in Gypsies. Another reason for her research trajectory into Romani studies at that time was that she had two teenage children at home to care for, and there were Gypsies conveniently nearby. Attempting to meet Seattle Roma, Miller initially hits a brick wall. But then she meets Machvanka Katy, and, after that, Katy's mother Lola, a renowned *BaXali* (Big and Lucky woman) and *Phuri Dai* (Old Lady) with "power" (p. 4).

Early on, Miller writes "The language Romani has no word for friend" (p. 50). Yet the colorful and eccentric Lola, who believes her luck lay "with America", enlists Miller as her chauffeur and announces that she and Miller are bound to be best friends. As driver and companion to Lola, Miller gains direct entry to the Seattle social events, an access critical to her proposed study of Roma ritual and belief. Initially, Miller has to stick to observation. Lola, when questioned, invariably responds that "Gypsy things are secret" (p. 50), as, indeed, they were and still are – at least in theory.

Miller's academic apple cart nearly upends when she falls in love with bon vivant Stevo Polo, a married Roma with many children. She admits, "I sensed the danger, the loss of self, the death in life that is passion, and tried to resist ... [Before] long our connection had become the crime of the century" (p. 35). In an abortive effort to create a threesome, Stevo tries to incorporate Miller into his family as Wife Two. But Stevo's Romni, Tutsi, is hell-bent on reclaiming her husband and threatens suicide, acid in the face, breaks windows, creates scenes that lead to repeated evictions, and adds weight to their sinking bad-luck marital ship by bearing more children

In 1972, Miller follows the Seattle Machvaia back to California, their home and ritual headquarters. Lola's nine children, who are married into every major lineage, sponsor her into the world of California Machvaia Roma (Brown 1936;

David J. Nemeth is Professor of Geography and Planning at University of Toledo, Bancroft Street, Toledo, OH 43614-3390, USA. Email: david.nemeth@utoledo.edu

Sutherland 1975). Without a research grant or any university affiliation, occasional and part-time employment affords her a meager income and allows her the leisure to attend important Machvaia ritual moments. When destitute, Miller puts her furniture in storage and moves in with the initially hard-to-know Katy.

By 1978, Miller has written several academic articles, continued to see Stevo, and she realizes she has, in a sense, gone native. But Outsiders are Outsiders-by-blood. They are never ritually acknowledged as married to Machvaia, so Miller remains “Carol *Djuhli*.” Indeed, when Zoni, Lola’s youngest daughter and Miller’s dearest companion, dies, Miller becomes clinically depressed and her therapist articulates the obvious, that Miller “was not born Machvanka and could never really become one” (p. 197).

That’s when, going over her Lola fieldnotes and the story she began to write when Lola died in 1975 – an early manifestation of *Lola’s Luck* – Miller finds the key to survival and the corrective for her depression. Meanwhile, a Mexican Roma family seeks revenge on Stevo’s family and he goes into hiding. Miller does not try to follow him; she is broke, without a car, and aware she can survive without Stevo – thanks to her investment in her mentor’s life story and Lola’s lessons concerning luck.

Years later, Miller’s narrative ends when she encounters Stevo at a Machvaia Thanksgiving party. His reputation has been partially rehabilitated by advancing age and he is dancing a rumba with his seven-year-old granddaughter. Across the floor, “With a nod of acknowledgment my way, he is doing what he does so well, creating the perfect and unforgettable moment” (p. 225). Machvaia, it seems, live to accumulate, to experience and treasure, exceptional moments.

Lola’s Luck deserves thoughtful critique at numerous levels. It is a nourishing Romani-studies stew freshly cooked up as a romantic self-narrating potboiler. This *very* private recipe for general consumption is an affable and affordable book-gift from Miller, one of the most widely cited among contemporary American Romani-studies scholars, and a specialist on California Machvaia customs and ritual behavior. At a time when disposable cash is scarce and Romany-related titles from Routledge range upwards of \$150, *Lola’s Luck* dispenses entirely with theory and multi-syllables in order to pack into 225 pages the most visceral punch and valid knowledge any Romani studies scholar can ever expect to buy in one volume – all for a paltry twenty bucks.

Lola’s Luck is visually stunning in paperback from a quality-conscious micropublisher who takes obvious pride in her craft. The result is an exquisite book production of superb design and execution that is clearly attentive and sympathetic to its provocative author and her epic (in the sense of surpassing the ordinary) narrative. I believe Miller intends *Lola’s Luck* primarily as a

talisman for members of the California Machvaia community to hold, behold and to inspire their luck. Most of them don't read books, so it is in their hands a charm(ing) photo album of familiar faces immersed in mysterious glyphs – all of which amounts to a memorable publishing “moment.” Indeed, the deep lavender inner covers are “just right” and gorgeous. Miller and her publisher understand this, and so should we all after reading her self-narrative.

As an example of beauty objectified, Miller's gift-book to the Machvaia has “luck” written all over it: shimmering in the light and embellishing its front and back covers are photo reproductions of a mint-quality American ten-dollar golden eagle, Miller's own keepsake. Inside, this luck-bringing image serves to separate Miller's narrative passages as it celebrates time's passing in a tale that spans over thirty years. Luck is Miller's constant theme, pursuit and obsession, start to finish.

Book *readers* comprise several different audiences for *Lola's Luck*. General readers interested in lusty romance novels featuring Gypsies and otherwise unappreciative of ethnographic authenticity might find Miller's book a bit tame: What did that naughty Carol and Stevo actually *do* in private that created such a fuss? Other readerships with less prurient interests will have their own standards and expectations by which they will judge the success or failure of *Lola's Luck*.

And what an unusual roller-coaster ride Miller offers Romani-studies readers, whose academic expectations will be rocked and roiled page after page while yet being intellectually rewarded. The private Sturm und Drang of Miller's personal self-narrative embraces the book's priceless ethnographic gems so intimately that sorting them out systematically from their encompassing passion and pathos may require in many instances careful reading – and twice over. Or, prospective readers among Romani-studies scholars and academics might just follow the recommendations of two of their esteemed colleagues, Rena Gropper (1975 and elsewhere) and Anne Sutherland (1975 and elsewhere), both acknowledged experts on the Machvaia, who endorse *Lola's Luck* in approving comments appearing prominently on its back cover.

In answer to the epistemological question “How do we know what we know about the California Machvaia?” we in Romani studies – even before the publication of *Lola's Luck* – were already heavily indebted to Carol Miller's scholarship for her several ground-breaking and knowledgeable academic contributions (including 1968, 1975, 1988, 1994, 1997, 2001; Miller and Gropper, 2001). Most of her published research focuses on Machvaia ritual beliefs and practices, and how Machvaia social behavior is guided by member perceptions and conceptions of luck, purity and defilement, all of which when considered together offer special insight into the nature of Romany religion. In *Lola's Luck* Miller literally “fleshes out” her earlier findings in depth and detail by narrating

Kafkaesque scenes from her “unbelievable” personal experiences. She also introduces her readers to new knowledge discoveries previously unexplored in her academic publications, including coverage of Machvaia kinship ties, settlement history, social hierarchy and rank, as well as territorial behavior.

Although Miller neglects to mention the coincidence it cannot have harmed her – and probably considerably aided the success of her fieldwork – that she is a “Miller”, a name (both as an American Christian name and surname) that has especially great cachet among the California Machvaia for having storied luck associated with it. Barbara Miller, for example, bossed the prosperous San Francisco Machvaia territory during Miller’s field work. An important character in her narrative, Carol Miller relates how Barbara Miller once offered her wayward son to Carol in marriage. Although many such doors of research opportunity opened for Miller, there were some obvious limits to her ability to access and observe the Machvaia at length, or in depth. For example, Miller has little to say about the Machvano social, economic and ritual life, as her access to gendered male-dominated social spaces was off-limits to her as both a female and a *djuhli* (non-Romani woman).

Readers might wonder how close Miller could possibly get to the heart of the matters she wants to study among the Machvaia, for example, by extending herself beyond the public ritual and deep into the private ritual. But perhaps she did not even choose to go there. She did not marry Barbara Miller’s son, for example. Also, her shared fantasy with Stevo was to run away together, but not to live as man and wife *romanes*. Miller’s cerebral commitment to persevering among the Machvaia seems steady, while her emotional commitment flags from time to time. Her claim “I wanted to be like them, to opt for courage and adventure” (p. 22) cannot from events described in her narrative be conclusively interpreted to mean that she wanted to *be* them. A close content analysis of her narrative reveals instead that she does not condone some of what she observes among the California Machvaia, nor does she ever claim to covet the everyday life of a California Machvanka.

One remarkable omission in Miller’s self-narrative is lack of any realization or acknowledgement that her personal fieldwork experience among the California Machvaia, however much unique, is not exceptional. This distinction allows her personal experience to some significant extent to be generalized, and to be scientifically analyzed to explain commonalities in the experience of outsider field work among the Machvaia, and perhaps among Romanies elsewhere. Academic fieldworkers are *an exploitable category of clients* that Romanies everywhere, now and in the past, are quite aware of, unafraid of, and prepared to engage with for their own useful purposes. To Romanies experienced with exploiting academic outsiders, the principal condition of engagement is that they themselves always maintain control of the relation-

ship (“Gypsy Taskmasters, Gentile Slaves” is how I have described this recurring phenomenon [Nemeth 1981]). Miller’s self-narrative in this harsh light might be interpreted as a temporal record of her progressive trauma-bonding to Stevo and other Machvaia according to a conspiratorial and theatrical script they have concocted that begins with Miller agreeing to play Lombard to his Gable. Miller is not the first and will not be the last “of her kind” (the adventurous academic) to be swallowed up and then, without remorse, spit out by the California Machvaia community. Indeed, Miller confesses in her narrative “I belonged to Lola” and then describes how other Romanies coveted her services and occasionally attempted to steal her away (p. 49).

In conclusion, *Lola’s Luck* is a must-read experience for anyone interested in Romani studies and biographies of Romani studies scholars. Carol Miller is correct to conclude she has been lucky even after all she has endured and sacrificed. Her narrative reveals that she was hardly risk-averse in her long quest for intimate knowledge and experience among the California Machvaia. With this very personal contribution to Romani studies she has joined a handful of scholars who are at home afield and who have risked everything exploring at length among Romanies while pausing to share their exceptional adventures, each in their own way, with their less adventurous colleagues and with the public at large.

In truth, Miller has dared to share much more of a candid story of her life among the Romanies than have any of her predecessors. She is in fact a better writer than most. Her disarmingly uninhibited narrative style of presentation may be a far cry from an academic monograph, but *Romani Studies* readers are especially advised here not to be dismissive of her efforts without cracking the book and to preparing to take notes. She delivers a rich, thick vein of ethnographic knowledge that ranges from cover to cover, to be mined everywhere, and much of it deeply imbedded in her storytelling. Far from lightweight, *Lola’s Luck* is a paperback laden with ethnographic content sure to be judged in due time as an invaluable contribution to Romani-American studies scholarship.

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