

ROMA AS A SUBJECT OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH

(IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, CZECHIA AND SLOVAKIA)

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LESSON STRUCTURE

I. Approaches to Roma in socialist Czechoslovakia

II. Research institutionalization in the 1990s

III. Post-1989 research among Roma

MAIN APPROACHES

- “Gypsies” – between cultural difference and social backwardness (ethnic vs social group)
- Searching for the historical roots of the Roma’s distinctive culture
- Romani culture as a well-bound set of values, customs, traditions, etc.
- Relational aspect of Romani culture and identity
- Roma as a subject of social exclusion (ethnicity vs culture of poverty)
- The Roma’s distinctive culture as a response to the *gadje*’s society
- Beyond social exclusion – possibilities and limits to the Roma’s social mobility

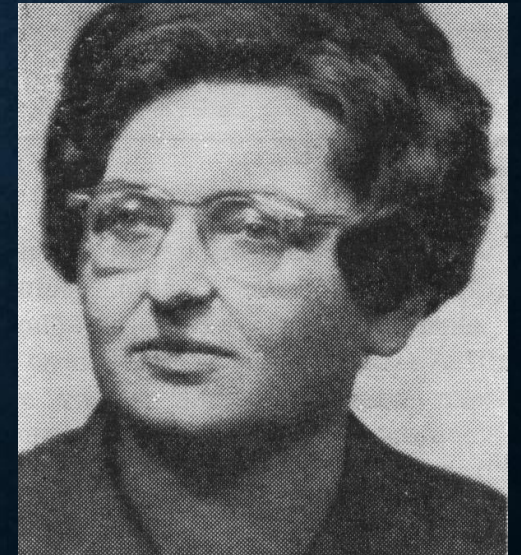
I. RESEARCH ON ROMA IN THE AREA OF SOCIALISM

- Social/cultural anthropology (SA/CA) as a “Western science” was in communist Czechoslovakia a prohibited discipline
- Ethnography and later ethnology = the collection of folklore (a set of customs and traditions)
- While in SA abroad there is dynamic development of theory – configurationism, structuralism, and others – evolutionism as the only accepted theory in Czechoslovakia (CSR)

EMÍLIE HORVÁTHOVÁ

1931 – 1996, BORN ČAJÁNKOVÁ

- Classical representative of Slovak ethnography before 1989
- Studied ethnographics, archaeology, and art history at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava.
- Organized collective research on Roma in Slovakia; carried out folklore collections in many Romani settlements
- 1952–58 – does her own research in 40 localities
- 1964 – *Cigáni na Slovensku*; extensive monograph written from a diachronic perspective provides a comprehensive ethnographic overview of elements of Romani culture (food, clothing, crafts, healing, etc.)



CHARACTERISTICS OF EMÍLIA HORVÁTHOVÁ'S RESEARCH

- Direct link between the anthropological type of Roma and culture (race = culture)
- Romani culture presented not as a different system but as an older stage of development than the majority culture, i.e., lower stage of development (P. 348) – a backward, undeveloped system
- Terms “historical delay,” “anachronistic lifestyle,” and “surviving”
- Otherness = backwardness in development
- Surface research, no knowledge of Romanes
- Based on the nationalist concept – Roma have a common language, origin, elements in their way of life, culture, and psyche
- Gypsies as an ethnic group that lives among the population of different countries in an ethnic diaspora. Ethnicity yes, nationality no, because there is no common territory
- Sources of specifics – Indian provenance, position mainly in the time of feudalism

EVA DAVIDOVÁ

1932 – 2018

- Studied ethnography and art history at FFUK. Ethnographer, sociologist, photographer.
- Since the 1950s, specialization in Romani ethnography, collection of folklore, customs, clothing, housing, transformation of traditional Romani culture associated with the post-war arrival of Roma to the Czech lands.
- 1954 – collected research at Gemer as part of Emilie Horváthová's team
- 1960–62 – a methodologist on the East Slovak Regional National Committee in Košice; until 1976 at the Sociological Institute of the Academy of Sciences; 1976 at Museum in Český Krumlov
- Private ethnographer, researched with Will Guy in the 1970s



CHARACTERISTICS OF EVA DAVIDOVÁ'S RESEARCH

Publications:

K spôsobu bývania v cigánskych osadách východného Slovenska. Nové obzory 1961

Bez kolíb a šiatrov. Košice 1965, populárněvědecká publikace jejích výzkumů

Lidové náboženství trebišovských Cikánů – Romů koncem 50. let 20. stol., před rozpadem jejich tradiční komunity. In Slovenský národopis I, 36/1988

Cesty Romů – Romano drom 1945 – 1990. Olomouc 1995 a 2000

Began to study social phenomena of the Roma as a primitive society: kinship, religion, folk superstitions

Based on the discourse of Czech ethnography where the national concept, modified by the Stalinist theory of the nation, prevailed: folk culture, traditions = anachronisms, something that ceased to be functional in everyday life.

EVOLUTIONISM – the idea of one-way development, at the top of which is our civilization, she revolved in the myth of the golden age of Romani culture – a traditional time when everything was ideal and functional. Traditional culture fell apart in the 1950s and 1960s – now in decay, decline, regression.

: The idea of the identical development of all Roma groups that have gone through similar stages

Admitted creation of a positive Roma image

WILL GUY

- Ethnographic research in the villages of the Spišská Nová Ves region, eastern Slovakia, (1970–73, conducted together with Davidová)
- Extensive PhD thesis *Attempts of Socialist Czechoslovakia to Assimilate its Gypsy Population*
- Published at Bristol University, which enabled him to overtly formulate the critique of the assimilationist policies
- Historical analysis of state policies towards the Roma and its implementation in the context of local inter-ethnic relationships
- The assimilationist policies failed because both the division between non-Roma and Roma and anti-Gypsy attitudes were deeply embedded in the society
- First ethnographically informed study of Roma migration from Slovakia to Bohemia

ELENA MARUSHIAKOVA



- Studied at the University of Sofia, doctoral study in ethnology in Bratislava – dissertation *Contemporary Ethnocultural Processes in Selected Communities of the Gypsy Ethnic Group* defended in 1986
- Assistant of Emília Horváthová
- 1980–84 research in Slovakia
- She published several articles in the magazine *Slovenský národopis* in the late 1980s
- Topics – relations and classification of Romani groups as well as folkloristic topics (healing and superstitions in Vlach Roma)

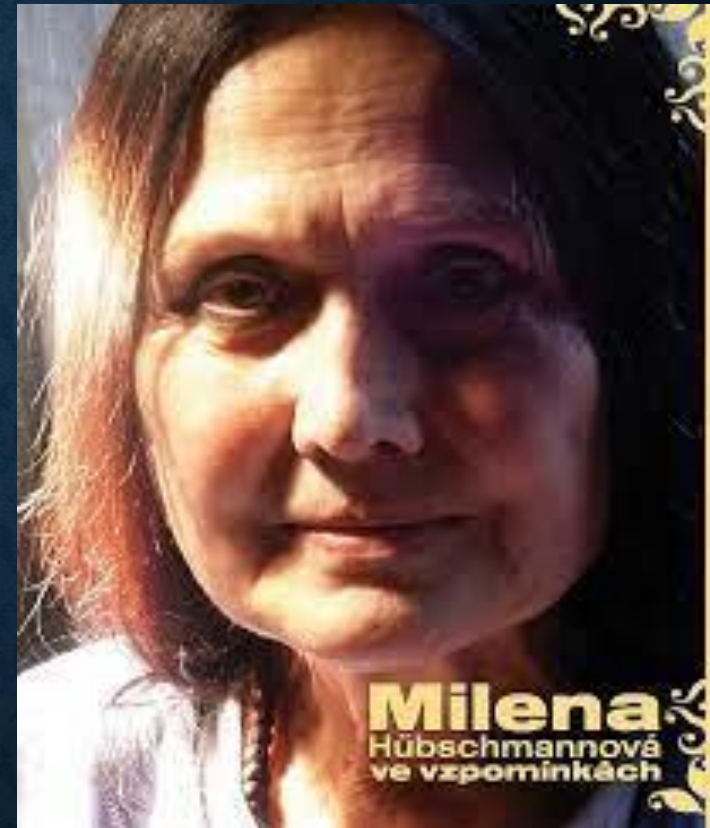
Vzťahy medzi skupinami Cigánov. Slovenský národopis 36/88 :

- Can be considered a forerunner of social anthropological research
- Roma groups in Slovakia – emic perspective
- Aspects of the meaning of skin color in internal hierarchy, intergroup endogamy, *suicentric* hierarchy,
- Classification of attributes and attitudes – identity, attitude aspects
- “*Relations between individual groups of Gypsies with different lifestyles are therefore much worse than with the surrounding population*” (Marušiáková 1988b: 66).

MILENA HÜBSCHMANNOVÁ

1933 – 2005

- Czech professor of Romani studies at Charles University of Prague.
- One of the leading experts on Romani society, culture, and Romani language.
- Studied Hindi and Urdu; interested in Romani since 1953
- Multidisciplinary focus (oral history, social linguistic)
- Anthropological research – field work in 1968–69 in Rakúsy near Kežmarok, six month stay as kindergarten teacher
- Stress on language knowledge both as a research tool and subject of research
- Interpretation of various features of Romani culture through the lens of their supposedly Indian roots
- Respect for Roma as equal participants in the research



POST-1989 RESEARCH INSTITUTIONALIZATION

- 1991 – Foundation of Seminary on Romani Studies (Romistika) by Milena Hübschmannová
- The first Romani Studies program worldwide
- Focus – Roma in a multidisciplinary methodological context. The program itself is primarily philological, revolving mainly around the study of the Romani language. Anthropology is one of the main approaches, besides history, sociolinguistics, art, etc. Geographical focus on Roma issues within Central Europe. Linguistic focus on North-Central Romani – a branch of Romani historically centered in Slovakia
- Repeated research in many localities in Slovakia

POST-1989 RESEARCH INSTITUTIONALIZATION

- 1990s – Establishment of Departments of Anthropology at Czech universities:
 - Charles University, Faculty of Humanity Studies, Praha
 - University of Pardubice
 - University of Western Bohemia, Plzeň
 - University of Masaryk, Brno
- 1991 – Establishment of Museum of Romani Culture in Brno

ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH BOOM

- Late 1990s and 2000s – Significant number of important anthropological research in Slovakia/CR; main focus is social exclusion of Roma
- Monitoring of Romani Settlements (InfoRoma Foundation; 1999–2001) – Comprehensive research of Romani settlements in eastern Slovakia, mapping the degree of segregation and integration; monthly stays of anthropology and ethnology students with involvement of teachers in the field
- David Scheffel – Anthropological research in Svinia, SK; “Svinia Project,” a series of short anthropological applied projects of his anthropology students
- Jaroslav Skupnik (FF UK: Ethnology) – Long-term stay in Hermanovce, SK
- People in Need Foundation – Realized significant amount of applied anthropological research in Czech towns (socially excluded localities)



CHALLENGING ROMANI STUDIES

- Marek Jakoubek and Tomáš Hirt
- Attempt at a constructivist turnaround; criticism of existing methods and approaches to research in CR/SR attacking the current concept of using the term “the Roma”
- Critique of so-called Romani nationalism
- Many of followers writing “the Roma” in quotation marks
- Marek Jakoubek – ignores the concept of Romani culture, suggests using the concept of “culture of Romani settlements” – in opposition to modernity
- Jakoubek – in his later work uses the term “Gypsies”; Roma is considered an empty category

INSTITUTE OF ETHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY, SLOVAK ACADEMY OF SCIENCE (BRATISLAVA)

- The main Slovak institution covering anthropological research among the Roma
- Tatiana Podolinská and Tomáš Hrustič
- Long-term, ethnographic research among the Roma in eastern Slovakia
- Main topics:
 - religious conversion and social change (Podolinská, Hrustič)
 - phenomenon of usury among the Roma (Hrustič)
 - political participation of the Roma (Hrustič)

TOMÁŠ HRUSTIČ AND TATIANA PODOLINSKÁ

- Hrustič, T. 2014. The Rise and Fall of Romani Pentecostal Revivals in Eastern Slovakia – A Case Study of One Mission. In *Romani Pentecostalism. Gypsies and Charismatic Christianity*, ed. D. Thurfjell and A. Marsh, 193–214. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Hrustič, T. 2016. Usury among the Slovak Roma: Notes on Relations between Lenders and Borrowers in a Segregated Taboris. In *Gypsy Economy: Romani Livelihoods and Notions of Worth in the 21st Century*, ed. M. Brazzabeni et al., 31–48. New York, Oxford: Berghahn.
- Hrustič, T. 2020. How Roma Mayors Penetrate the Municipal Power Structures: Resisting the Non-Roma Dominance in Slovak Local Governments. *Slovenský národopis* 68 (4): 397–411.
- Podolinská, T., Hrustič, T. 2011. *Religion as a path to Change? The Possibilities of Social Inclusion of the Roma in Slovakia*. Bratislava: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Institute of Ethnology SAS.
- Podolinská, T., Hrustič, T. (eds.) 2015. *Čierno-biele svety. Rómovia v maoritnej spoločnosti na Slovensku*. Bratislava: Veda.

ANDREJ BELÁK

- Anthropologist
- Focus on the health of segregated Roma in Slovakia
- Methodologically innovative – extensive ethnographic research in a Romani settlement but also among doctors and policymakers
- Applied anthropology
- Cooperation with the Healthy Regions organization



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WHY DON'T SEGREGATED ROMA DO MORE FOR THEIR HEALTH? (BELÁK 2018)

- Belák argues that there is not an essentialized Romani mentality or “culture of poverty” which prevents the Roma from “doing more for their health”
- According to Belák, the main cause is racism, which is deeply embedded in society
- Experience of racism at different stages of health system
- Socialization into inferior racialized position in society
- Internalization of dominant racist discourse
- Distinctive ideology of the “Roma way of life” is, through different health practices, inscribed in their bodies
- Structural racism as a condition of Romani identity
- Belák, A. et al. 2018. Why don't segregated Roma do more for their health? An explanatory framework from an ethnographic study in Slovakia. *International Journal of Public Health* 63: 1123–1131.

JAROSLAV ŠOTOLA AND MARCO RODRIGUÉZ POLO

- Šotola, J., Polo, M. R. (eds.) 2016. *Etnografie Sociální Mobility: Etnicita, Bariéry, Dominance*. Vydavatelství Filozofické fakulty Univerzity Palackého v Olomouci.
- Open critique of anthropological approaches on the Roma in Slovakia
 - Orientalizing the Roma as “colonial Others” (searching for distinctive origin)
 - reproduction of the image of poor Roma in the settlements (focusing on topics of social exclusion)
- Focus on social mobility and the dynamic role of ethnicity
- Several case studies from eastern Slovakia
- Social mobility of the Roma has clear limits in the normality of “Whiteness” and its dominant structures



JAN GRILL

- Long-term ethnographic research both in Slovakia and Great Britain
- Focus on Roma migration to UK
- Migration as a means of social mobility
- Negotiation of the Roma's racialized position within the migration context
- Restructuring the hierarchy of socioeconomic relations in Slovakia

JAN GRILL

- Grill, J. 2012. 'Going up to England': Exploring mobilities among Roma from Eastern Slovakia. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38 (8): 1269–1287.
- Grill, J. 2016. 'Endured Labour' and 'Fixing Up' Money: The Economic Strategies of Roma Migrants in Slovakia and the UK. In *Gypsy Economy: Romani Livelihoods and Notions of Worth in the 21st Century*, ed. M. Brazzabeni et al., 88–106. New York, Oxford: Berghahn.
- Grill, J. 2018a. 'In England, they don't call you black!' Migrating racialisations and the production of Roma difference across Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44 (7): 1136–1155.
- Grill, J. 2018b. Re-learning to labour? 'Activation Works' and new politics of social assistance in the case of Slovak Roma. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 24 (2)



TOMÁŠ KOBES

- Anthropologist
- Focus on kinship and inter-ethnic relationships

Naši Rómovia [Our Roma]

- Ambivalence for Roma identification
- The Roma as both local inhabitants (they live in the village and share local habits) and outsiders (they are still “Gypsies”)
- Situational aspect and locatedness of a complex Romani identity
- Kobes, T. 2012. „Naši Romové“ – difrakční vzorce odlišnosti východoslovenského venkova. *Romano džaniben* 19 (2): 9–34.

YASAR ABU GHOSH



- Anthropologist
- Abu Ghosh, Y. 2008. *Escaping Gypsiness: Work, Power and Identity in the Marginalization of Roma*. PhD thesis. Charles University, Prague.
- Also deals with the category of “Gypsiness”
- Ethnographic research in a small town in South Bohemia
- Strategies of the Roma to “escape” the stereotypical and racialized category of “problematic and filthy gypsies” – “escaping Gypsiness” – not only the stereotypical image of a “Gypsy” but also state and police control
- “Gypsiness” structures relationships among the Roma themselves
 - two groups of Roma living in different blocks of flats
 - one of them was to show that they are “less Gypsy” than “those problematic Gypsies” on the second block

WALLACH, KUPKA

- Security studies
- Ethnographic research in Roma ghettos of North Bohemia
- Topic of Roma securitization – depicting the Roma as a security threat in the dominant discourse and state policies
- On the contrary, these Roma face various security risks
- Strategies of the Roma to protect themselves



PAVEL KUBANÍK

- Romani studies discipline
- Using anthropological methods
- Sociolinguistic research
- Language socialization of the Roma in an East Slovak Romani settlement and within families living in the Czech Republic
- Language as a means of cultural acquisition



JAN ORT

- Long-term ethnographic research in eastern Slovakia
- Focus on inter-ethnic relations
- Strong identification of the Roma with a certain place
- “Conflict-free” and “harmonious” relationships conditioned by the subordinate position of the Roma
- The Roma internalize their inferior position
- The very notion of “conflict-free” reveals the shared precondition of “problematic Gypsies”
- Roma strategies of belonging to a certain place and certain community but also how to subvert the dominant order



MARKÉTA HAJSKÁ

- Long-term study of subethnically-mixed Romani settlement formerly inhabited only by Vlach Roma (2000–2018).
- PhD theses – focus on the process of social construction and maintenance of ethnic borders between non-Roma and Roma and non-Vlach Roma and the role of language in this process
- Focus on a Vlach Roma family unit which become transnationally located (topic of migration)

CONCLUSION

- Shift from the contents of distinctive culture to the more complex negotiation of Romani identity within “non-Romani” society
- Shift from social marginalization to social mobility
- Tendency to place “Romani culture” into its “natural environment” of Slovak Romani settlements
- Language – the important (and not always reflected) aspect of anthropological research among the Roma (language competence x studying language as a part of Romani culture/identity)
- Overcoming the power asymmetry between researchers and Roma as a “subject of research”
- BUT still missing Romani researchers