

MIGRATION, RE-EMIGRATION AND IDENTITIES' CHANGE: THE CASE OF ONE ROMA GROUP FROM USSR

Elena Marushiakova & Vesselin Popov
University of St Andrews, St Andrews, UK

The article will trace the historical fate of one Roma community, which currently lives in Odessa (Ukraine). The community ancestors have migrated from the then Russian Empire in China during the Civil War (1918-1922) and together with the White Russians they settled initially in Harbin, and then re-settled in Shanghai. Individual members of the community moved to the Americas. The majority of the community, however, after the end of the World War II, following the agreement on repatriation between the USSR and China, returned to the USSR, and after more than two decades of roaming the vast territories of the country the Roma settled in Odessa, where they live nowadays. Years of living in China and lengthy internal migrations within the USSR had significant effect not only on the personal identity of the migrants but also on the community identity as a whole and its vision about their future. In the collective memory of the group the migration experience from the past still exists and on its base was formed and developed a new community identity. The community members well remember that they were once part of the big Roma community of *Kelderari*, they even remember their erstwhile families and can identify present-day relatives. Yet, they not only present publicly but actually experience themselves as a new community, called *Kitajako Rrom* in Roma language, also *Šanxajcurja* in Romani and *Šanxajci* in Russian. They are firmly separated from other Roma groups, including through the creation of their own narratives and endogamic borders (they strive to marry only within their community). The case of *Kitajako Rrom* shows that outcome from migration and life in a new milieu can lead not only to changes on personal level, but it can create new forms of community identity. Another part of the Roma from Russia who lived in China in the 1920s and 1930s, after their migration to Latin America processes have evolved in a different direction, and they are integrated into the local Latin American Roma groups.

Keywords: Kelderari, Kitajako Rrom, Shanghai, Odessa, Latin America

Introduction

In recent decades, more and more scholars from different disciplines tackle the questions of contemporary Roma (formerly known as ‘Gypsies’) migration and/or mobility and the connected with it issues of identity, belonging, integration, adaptation and so on. The literature on these topics is so rich that it is nearly impossible to present an exhaustive overview of the different contributions in this field. It is known through the history of Gypsies, after their arrival from India in Europe and their stay there for several centuries, that migrations form a repetitive pattern (Matras 2000: 34; cf. also Marushiakova and Popov 2006: 10-26; Marushiakova and Popov 2016: 35-64). In spite of the growing number of publications on different aspects of Roma contemporary migration, to this day, little attention has been devoted to the influences of past migration on the identity formation of different Roma groups; on the transformation of communities’ identities in consequence of migrational experiences and as a result of change of their places of living. Particularly surprising is the neglecting of the peculiarities connected with the historical migrations of Roma caused by one of the most important, consequential and political turnover of the twentieth century – the October revolution in Russian Empire. This turnover not only marked a new stage in world history but also impacted on micro-level the living strategies and visions of Roma communities about their future.

The research presented here focuses on the experiences of Roma communities that migrated from the then Russian Empire during the Civil War (1918-1922) to China. The main aim is to trace the historical fate of one Roma community, which currently lives in the Ukrainian city Odessa. The community ancestors migrated together with the White Russians, settled initially in Harbin, and then re-settled in Shanghai. Individual

members of this and other Roma communities, after living for a little more than two decades in China, returned to different places in the Soviet Union while others continued their migration to the Americas. The majority, however, after the end of the World War II and following the agreement on repatriation between the USSR and China, returned to the USSR; and after more than two decades of roaming the vast territories of the country, they settled in Odessa where they live till nowadays. Years of living in China and lengthy internal migrations within the USSR had significant effects not only on the personal identities of these migrants but also on their sense of community identity as a whole and its vision about their future. In the collective memory of the group is preserved the migration experience and on its base was formed and developed a new community identity. The community members well remember that they were once part of the big Roma community of *Kelderari*, they even remember their erstwhile families and can identify present-day relatives. Yet, they not only claim publicly but actually choose to introduce themselves as a new community called *Kitajako Rrom* or *Kitajcurja* in Romani language (*Romanes*), or *Šanxajci* in Russian. They are firmly separated from other Roma groups, including through creation of own narratives and maintaining endogamic borders (they strive to marry only within their community). Comparing this case of community of *Kitajako Rrom* from Odessa with the life trajectories of other Roma who migrated to and later from China show that the outcome from migration and life in a new milieu can lead to contrasting results. The migration and re-emigration cause not only changes on personal and family levels, but also can create new forms of community identity.

Historical Background

The last decades of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century witnessed a big Gypsy wave of migration, when the countries of Europe, and later also of North and South America, were invaded by nomadic Roma groups, originating from what is today Romania and the adjoining regions of Austro-Hungary (Fraser 1992: 131-143;

Marushiakova and Popov 2004: 169-170; Marushiakova and Popov 2009: 89-124). This mass resettling of Roma is usually explained as a direct consequence of their liberation from slavery in the Principalities of Danube and their received freedom of movement (Hancock 1987: 37-48) As later research shows, the end of the slavery of Roma is indeed an important factor, but it is not the beginning, nor the reason for the big Roma migrations (Fraser 1992: 131-143; Marushiakova and Popov 2004: 169-170). The big migrations witnessed after the end of the slavery are rather an escape from the freedom, and the new citizen obligations and responsibilities that come with it which the nomadic Roma, who have preserved themselves as a closed community but with low level of social integration into surrounding society, are not able to take. Actually, this wave of migration is based mainly on socio-economic reasons while the political factors, such as the abolition of slavery and the lifting of passport controls at the borders for those who leave Austro-Hungary (Emperor's Decree Nr. 116/1865), only regulate the time frames of the processes (Marushiakova and Popov 2009: 89-124). It is a specific kind of migration of the so-called service nomads; typical for service nomadism is the constant intertwining between a nomadic and a settled way of life and the dependence of nomads on the resources created by their interaction/trading with the settled population. In order to maintain their existence, the communities of service Roma nomads change their places of living and thus the access to and availability of resources. These are the determining factors of the groups' mobility as well as the scale and the directions of their travelling (Hayden 1979: 297-309; Marushiakova 2004: 322-340). The mobility of service nomads is expressed through continuous cyclical wandering, usually in familial groupings, in search for economical niches and the possibility to pursue their servicing occupations. In situations of uncertainty, in order to maintain their existence, the communities of service nomads change their place of living and thus the access to and availability of resources. These are the determining factors of the groups' mobility and of the scale and direction of their travels. This migration wave is known among Romani Studies scholars also as *the Great Kelderara Invasion* (Ficowski 1985) because significant and very visible part of this migration wave were nomadic

communities of *Kelderara* (copper cauldron makers), whose representatives today can be found almost in every corner of the world (Черенков & Гацак 1981: 5-10).

The arriving of the first *Kelderara* within the borders of the Russian Empire has been before 1863, when they were described near Warsaw which at that time has been within the borders of the Russian Empire (Ficowski 1985; Деметер et al. 2000). The mass entering of *Kelderara* in Russia, however, had been a few decades later, when they passed through Galicia. With their arrival to Russia, the *Kelderara* were extremely mobile and travelled through wide territories. They even reached Transcaucasia and Siberia offering their services to local population not only as iron mongers and cauldron makers but also as fortune tellers and musicians (Marushiakova and Popov 2003: 289-310). In the lands of the Russian Empire, the *Kelderara* encountered representatives of other, already local, Roma groups, such as *Ruska Roma*, *Servi*, and others.

The October Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and the following Civil War put all population of the country, including Roma and in our case *Kelderara* and the related groups (*Lovara* and *Mačvaja*), in a new situation. One part of them, settled mainly in Moscow and travelled through the country, remained and started to adapt to the new Soviet realities including (embracing the new communist ideology as a way to improve their social standing. Some even achieved high education and became members of the Communist Party structures, and/or joined the intellectual and artistic elite of the new Soviet country (Деметер et al. 2000; Лебедев 1990; O’Keeffe 2013) Another part, fleeing from the danger of war and civil unrest, managed via different ways to leave Russia and to migrate Westwards while others joined the exodus of White Russian emigration and managed to leave the USSR and to head east to China. Their route to China was the same as of the other White émigrées. Their first stop was most often Harbin, some settled there and others also in the treaty port of Tientsin (Tianjin), but the most important and preferred place for their living became Shanghai because its entertainment industry offered them a good economic niche.

Story of One Roma Group

The oral history of Roma communities as a source of historical information was neglected until recently and only now it began to attract scholars' attention mostly in studies devoted to their tragic fate during the World War II and in studies dedicated to the memoirs of the time of socialism in countries of Eastern Europe. The oral history reflecting on past migration experiences has remained until now, however, almost outside academic enquiry. We have been fortunate to be able to collect pieces of oral history of one community that returned from China and now is living in the Ukrainian city of Odessa. It is known today under the appellation *Kitajcurja* or *Kitajake Rrom* [i.e. Chinese Roma] while sometimes they describe themselves with their Russified appellation *Šanxajci*. The elderly people from the *Šanxajci* community were born in China – some in Harbin and others in Shanghai. The first results of our field research with this community we presented in a comparative theoretical study devoted to the issues of development of the category 'Roma group' (Marushiakova and Popov 2004: 145-191).

Based on the oral history we were able to collect with this community, the picture of the historical fate of *Kitajcurja* can be reconstructed with relative certainty. They left for China in 1927 as a *kumpania*. 'Kumpania' is a term used often among *Keldarara*, and other related to them groups in many places around the world, and usually means a group composed of some related extended families who travel and work together. In our case the *kumpania* included two extended families, Mineske and Staneske, and numbered about 200 people. With them arrived in China also the Petrovi extended family who were one of the bigger families in the Staneske kin and had the tendency to separate and form their own *kumpania*.

According to our informants' explanation, in 1927-28, after the end of the NEP (New Economic Policy of the Soviet state), their possibilities for earning a living shrank and many Roma families left for foreign countries, mainly to Western Europe (at that time the passport regime of the USSR had been relatively more liberal compared to later years). Their *kumpania* roamed Russia, and the cities, where they had found work (as

cauldron makers or as musicians in restaurants) while they used to live in rented houses. The last place, where they used to live before leaving for China has been Moscow. They remember this because there they arranged their permission themselves to leave the country. Their *kumpania* had been relatively poor; they had many children and not enough money to arrange the documents for everybody in their group and in order to travel westwards, which had been more expensive, so they headed to the east which had been cheaper.

At first, they were for a short time in Harbin where at that time lived a big colony of the Russian White emigration who nostalgically had loved the Russian Gypsy music and dancing. Later, they settled permanently in Shanghai, which in the 1920's and 1930's had been a cosmopolitan city and home for many Europeans, Americans, as well as many Russian emigrants. The *kumpania* of the families Mineske and Staneske earned their living in Shanghai mainly as musicians and dancers in places of public entertainment. After a while, they managed to gather enough money and even some opened their own little restaurants on famous Bund (or Waitan) waterfront area in central Shanghai. The International settlement, Frenchtown or the External Western Roads entertainment district, at that time, were famous for numerous restaurants, cafes and cabarets. Many Roma, from the first months of their settlement in Shanghai were able to find work there as musicians and many restaurants used in their advertisements the availability of Gypsy music (cf. detailed description and illustrations in French 2016). Together with music Roma in Shanghai, according to the memories of *Kitajcurja*, had been dealing with trade, with reselling of gold and currency, and the women had been fortune-telling.

Besides both families Mineske and Staneske in Shanghai at that time also lived another Roma community of *Lovara*, who came there approximately in the same time from Leningrad (Saint Petersburg), from the kin of *Guranešti*.

The marriages of the youths had been conducted in the middle of *kumpania*, though, according to our informants' stories, because their girls were so beautiful and able, other Roma often had wanted them. The mixed marriages (even in Roma midst,

between representatives of different Roma groups) were regarded as unacceptable. Only two cases of mixed marriages are remembered by our interlocutors – one girl, Lyuba, had married a Roma from *Mačvaja* and had left with her new family to Brazil, and another girl married a Russian (a non-Roma) emigrant and broke the connections with the community.

In the collective memory of the community, the time spent in Shanghai was a good one and relatively quickly they succeeded to find a way to make a decent living, though there were also difficult moments. The hardest the *kumpania* lived through, were the years of the occupation by Japan of the Shanghai International Settlement in 1941-45 (the Bund area was within this Settlement), following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941. The majority of the Roma remained liberated avoiding internment, but they had been under many restrictions. Their oral history includes memories about hardships of the time when the entertainment industry of the city collapsed after the occupation of the International Settlement. Stories are told about arrests for short or longer periods of time for black market activities and also without any reasons, because of suspicions, denunciation or complaints by neighbours. Reported were constant blackmailing by the occupational authorities along with threatening and endless and humiliating homes searching. They remember being required to wear a red armband by the Japanese military police and being under the threat of accusation of spying for Russia, including mentioning a case of arrest of one dancer from Petrovi family who was groundlessly suspected to be a spy.

The whole *kumpania* returned to the Soviet Union in 1948. Then USSR and the newly created Chinese Republic signed an agreement on repatriation from the Chinese territory of all emigrants who are former Russian citizens. According to our informants, however, their returning to Russia was not because of the agreement but because the elders of the community were nostalgic about Russia. The informants reflect this event with following words, mixing Romanes (given in italic), with Russian (given in Cyrillic), the latter used in dialogues, some expressions and when quoting the words of Russian officials:

Aviljam ande Rusija athe в сорок восьмом году. *But bokh cârdjam, či manrro, či khanč, bikinjasa pamende dârzi te xasa, bikinjam o sumnakaj, bikinjam sa pamende ande Sverdlovska ...* Перенесли, не дай гостодь никому.

Aviljam, kana o Stalino kerdja repatriancia. O Stalin kerdjas: “Советский подданный,” - ame советский подданный samas – “советский подданный, kon kamel te avel на родину. Amare manuš phure kamle kê irin pe rodina. Razphendja tu phure manuč, trobul te žas. Gele kê konsul’stvo. Line o виза, line kova.

Aviljam, me aj mârro rrom ko konsulu. Amende - galbi, sumnakaj pi vast, urjavde. ’aj phenel o konsulo:

“Вы едете в Россию. Куда вы едете, на голод, на холод? А вы едете! Вы, такие одетые, красивые, вы артисты, вы музыканты, что вас тянет в Россию.”

“Мы хотим на родину ехать.”

[We arrived in Russia, here in 1948. We were starving much, there were no bread, no nothing, and we were selling our rags for food, we sold the gold, we sold everything in Sverdlovsk ... We lived through, God don’t let this happen to anybody.

We came back when Stalin made repatriation. Stalin said: “The soviet subjects,” - and we were soviet subjects – “who want, will come back to their country.” Our old people wanted to go back to our country. When the old people order, you must go. They went to the councillor, took visa, took this.

We went me and my husband to the councillor. We - with golden coins, gold on the hands, well dresses. And the councillor said:

“You are going to Russia. Where do you go, to hunger and cold? And you are going! You are so [well] dressed, beautiful, you are artists, you are musicians, what is attracting you in Russia?”

“We want to go to our homeland”.]

With their return, firstly they lived in Sverdlovsk (now Yekaterinburg). Then, in the conditions of post-war devastation, life had been very hard, they lived in great misery and simply starved. The post-war chaos and the devastated economy offered little or no work possibilities at all. In Sverdlovsk it was especially hard to find a job. In this city arrived also other Roma, repatriates from China, from city of Harbin. They were given a possibility of employment on the construction of Uralmash (Urals Heavy Machinery-Building Plant) and so they settled permanently there (Килин 2005: 193) As it was not possible to employ all Roma repatriates at the Uralmash, the *kumpania* from Shanghai left the city and in order to survive sold everything they could, much of their gold, and even clothes.

The *kumpania* still held together, in search of their livelihood they often changed their places of living, travelled around many cities in the USSR. They even reached Central Asia where they had been living for a long time in the city of Ashgabat (now in Turkmenistan) and lastly, in 1953 after a short stay in Nikolaev (Ukraine), they permanently settled in Odessa.

With their arrival in Odessa, men from the *kumpania* found work in the local meat factory, mainly maintaining the copper vessels for the ready production. They received factory dormitories and later they obtained ground lots for building houses in the periphery of the city. Odessa at that time was relatively rich port city and with more work and black market opportunities, gradually, the *kumpania* was getting used to the new situation. Men again started to play music in restaurants; they traded currency, gold and everyday goods on the “black market” while women worked as fortune-tellers. Life as a whole for the *kumpania* stabilized and since then no member of family left Odessa where they live up till nowadays. Some of the families continue to live compactly in an Odessa suburb, others are spread through the city but maintain constant connections and their life is closed to a great extent in the borders of the community (except their societal and economic activities).

With their settling in Odessa, the community of re-emigrants from China entered a new situation also in their contacts with other Roma groups in the former USSR. The

consequences of the long stay in China reflected in the first instance on the name of the group and from *Kelderara* they became *Kitajako Rrom*. They commenced to consider themselves, and started to be considered also by the other Roma, as another, detached community. Because of their migration experience they developed a feeling of superiority over the other Roma communities, even over their relative *Kelderara* who stayed in Russia. At the same time, other Roma suspected that the *Kitajako Rrom* did not preserve their ethnic purity while being abroad and for breaking the rules of the Roma way of life. Thus, in their eyes they were considered as inferior. This position between self-perceived superiority and inscribed inferiority led to endogamic closure of the community. *The Kitajcurja* today accepts fully their new position as a separate group and interiorises their new ethnonym. At the same time, they still remember their former belonging to the *Kelderara*. They also enjoy the endless discussions about it and are ready to list in details all their former distant relatives. Among these relatives are some famous *Kelderara* who succeeded to occupy high position in the Soviet society and who are renowned even today. Our interlocutors explicitly and repeatedly mentioned with high degree of pride the representatives of the famous family Demeter – Istvan (Stefan) Demeter, author of a Roma-Russian dictionary (Деметер & Деметер 1990) and a collector of folklore of *Kelderara* (Деметер & Деметер 1981); the renowned composer Petr Demeter from Moscow; Professor Georgiy Demeter, Doctor of pedagogical sciences, author of the book *Lenin on the Protection of Workers' Health and Physical Culture* which underwent five reprints during the Soviet era, including 3rd extended and revised edition (1969) and was translated into several languages within the former Soviet bloc (including two translations into Vietnamese!); and his daughter Nadezhda Demeter, Doctor of Historical Sciences, scholar at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of Russian Academy of Sciences and currently a Head of Federal National Cultural Autonomy of Russian Gypsies.

As it becomes clear from observations and also from conversations with our *Kitajcurja* interlocutors, the transition from *kumpania* of *Kelderara* to nowadays a separate group has been completed. This process, which started during their stay in

China, finally ended in Odessa. They already have their own name (*Kitajake Rrom*, or *Kitajcurja*, or *Šankhajci*), they have their own internal self-government, called *kris* ‘Gypsy Court’ (cf. Marushiakova and Popov 2007: 67-101) and they do not commit (and more importantly, do not want) matrimonial contacts with other Roma groups. By the way, the *Kitajcurja* are not an exception when it comes to marriage – today, in the whole ex-Soviet space, the separate Roma groups preserve (more or less) strictly their group endogamy.

The described relationships with the ‘other’ Roma are typical for the well-functioning Roma groups and are entirely in the spirit of their old tradition. Of particular interest are the markers according to which *Kitajcurja* differentiate (and characterize) the other Roma groups. An eloquent illustration of this can be seen in following text which is an excerpt from our field-recordings made in Odessa (for other examples from these recording see: Marushiakova and Popov 2004: 180-181).

Amari kumpania žanel so si ciganija, конечно, *Kelderarja žanen*, *Lovarja žanen*. *Ruska Roma* тоже *gadja*, *den дума naj gadja sar ame*, *vot maj*-чисто *šib amari* – вот *kadala e Šanxajski Rrom kaj si ...* С *Kišinjoenci*, *Katunarja* у нас никакие отношения. Не верьте им, они не *Rrom ciganjako*, это не *Rrom ciganjako*. Вот с Ловарями, с Крымами можем дружить, ну “здравствуй, прощай”, но с этими можно мимо пройти и не поздоровиться.

[Our *kumpania* knows what *ciganija* is, of course, *Kelderara* knows, *Lovara* knows. *Ruska Roma* also, they don’t speak like us, here our language is the cleanest, here, it is like this where there are *Šanxajski Rrom ...* With *Kišinjoenci*, *Katunarja*, we have no relations. Don’t believe them, they are not *Rrom ciganjako*, it is no *Rrom ciganjako*. Now, with *Lovara*, with the *Krimurja* we may be friends, to salute each other, but with these, you can pass them by and not say hello.]

Apparently, one main marker (besides the dialect) that determines the attitude of *Kitajcurja* towards the other Roma is the term *ciganija*. It is a complex term that synthesizes all the positive and characterizes the Roma according to themselves; it is the quintessence of ‘the Roma’ and it is equivalent to the notions *romanija*, *romanipe(n)*, or *romanimos* also met among other Roma groups (Mirga 1987: 243-255; Marinov 2016: 211-236). The notion *ciganija*, as well as the self-appellation *Rrom ciganjako* (literarily ‘Gypsy Roma’, meaning ‘true, real Roma’), are widely spread among *Kelderara* in Russia (Деметер & Деметер 1981: 165) and their closely related groups that speak the New Vlax* dialects of *Romanes* also living in the territories of Bulgaria, Romania, Republic of Moldavia and South-Western Ukraine.

As it becomes clear from the above, the families Minesko and Stanesko have transformed from *kumpania* (in Russia before their departure for China) and a *subgroup* (in China) to the creating their own separate *group* (*Kitajcurja*) in Odessa. The reasons for such a development must be understood in the context of the history of the group. Their historical fate separates them from the rest of the *Kelderara* and puts them into completely different conditions. In Shanghai, their closeness had been forced by their circumstances. For a small community, which insists on its unity, the only possibility to preserve itself in a foreign environment is under strict endogamy. From here, comes the aspiration to seize the matrimonial contacts outside of the community – not allowing them to mix with the ‘others’. In the new conditions in Odessa, the *Kitajcurja* still continue to strictly preserve this model of matrimonial behaviour. The reason for this

* We consider the terms ‘Old Vlax’ and ‘New Vlax’ more appropriate than the ‘Southern Vlax’ and ‘Northern Vlax’ used by some linguists for defining the two main dialectal communities of Vlax Roma, because the geographical principle on which the division is based is unclear; for example, the criteria for the south–north division are unclear, because it is not indicated which is the starting point for this south-north division. We prefer the terms ‘Old Vlax’ and ‘New Vlax’ because from a historical perspective they are much more clear and precise. According this perspective the two dialectal communities are clearly distinguished – the bearers of the so-called ‘Old Vlax’ dialect of Romani are the descendants of the Roma migrating from Wallachia and Moldavia in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries and the bearers of the ‘New Vlax’ dialect are Roma descendants of the Roma migrating from Wallachia and Moldavia in the second half of nineteenth – early twentieth centuries.

may be because they had felt (at least at the beginning) as ‘new’ in this place, and because in the time of their isolation in China they had lost (or at least weakened) their old relations with the other *Kelderara*. Additional factor for the “identity contraction, and for commencing the process of ‘locking’ in the community” (Sharlanova 2012) may be the above mentioned, suspicion of other Roma communities that working in the entertainment industry in China may have led to loosing of the moral purity of the Roma women.

So, the peculiar historical experience of the *Kitajcurja* served to change their old identity and to consolidate internally the new identity as a new established Roma group. It is known that the oral history of Roma as a whole not only reveals diversity and ambiguity of historical interpretations in the multiplicity of historical truths but also it is often transformed for the sake of their current ethnic mobilisation (cf. Kapralski 2012). The case of *Kitajcurja* we are discussing shows the usage of oral history for the establishment and confirmation of borders within a specific Roma group of *Kelderara*. There is palpable doubt whether the process of establishing of a new group in case of *Kitajcurja* is sustainable, foremost because of their low number, but in spite of this their case is illuminative for the processes under this study.

It was not possible to find confirmation of data from orally transmitted memories of *Kitajcurja* from Odessa in records of official institutions, as they were considered as part of their country of origin’s migrant population and so they were not classified as a separate nationality by either the Shanghai Municipal Council or the Shanghai Municipal Police. We were able, however, to find a confirmation of orally transmitted memories of *Kitajcurja* from Odessa in the illuminative study of Paul French (2016) on the interwar’s Shanghai entertainment industry and the place of Roma in it, based on extensive media and published memoir writings. According to this study, in late 1930’s, Shanghai’s Roma population was of approximately 300 people and the majority of them lived concentrated in the French Concession on Route Vallon (Nanchang East Road), Rue Bourgeat (Changle Road) and Route Pere Robert (Ruijin No.2 Road). Most of the Shanghai Roma were from *Lovari* and *Kelderaša* subgroups and a few were from

Mačvaja and *Ruska Roma* communities (ibid.). Similarly, according to our interlocutors, the sources quoted in Paul French's work state that "most of these appear to have belonged to three large extended families of Russian Roma origin; the Petroffs, the Minesko and the Vishnevsky clans" (ibid., cf. above mentioned by our informants *Kelderara* families of Mineske, Staneske and Petrovi as well as *Lovara* kin of *Guranešti*).

A Different Way

The processes of identity change flow differently among the individual Roma families, immigrants from the Russian Empire to Shanghai, who originated from other Rom groups. Such were less numerous representatives from the community of *Ruska Roma* who similarly to *Kitajcurja* migrated to China and were repatriated from there to the Soviet Union, but they did not form a separate subgroup on the base of their migrational experiences. After returning to Russia they joined their former sub-group known as *Sibirjaki* and their stay in China is remembered only through individual or family nicknames (cf. Bessonov 2017: 117-118, 138-139).

Part of another Roma group, namely the *Lovara*, after their stay in China, decided not to be repatriated to the USSR, but via different routes succeed to migrate to Latin America (mostly in Argentina and Brazil). Their routes of travel and fate is comparatively well-documented in the literary production of Victor Vishnevski, a *Lovara* Rom, born in Shanghai, now resident of Brazil (Vishnevski 2011), and also in the unpublished research of Sheila Salo in the USA's archives as presented at the conference of the Gypsy Lore Society in Granada, Spain in 2005.

In contrast to the case of *Kitajcurja* in Odessa, in Latin America the Roma coming from China started slowly to integrate not only in the respective societies of their new countries of residence but also into the midst of other Roma communities there. Gradually, they formed a network of interconnected communities sharing a common consciousness and feeling of belonging towards gravitating around Latin America.

Additional factor for their unification became the International Romani Pentecostal Church which spread widely and encompassed most of the Latin American Roma. With the development of an international Roma movement in the last two decades and more, the Roma activists in the USA and Latin America united in the *Pan-American Romani Alliance, the Council of the Kumpanias and Organisations of the America* (SKOKRA). Among them, a new idea about the future of the Roma has emerged and it is expressed in the wish to obtain the status of an aboriginal people, so that they can preserve and develop their specific culture. As a result, the demand for being granted the status of 'indigenous people' was included in the declaration *The Roma People: The Other son of Pacha Mama – Mother Earth, Continental Meeting of the Roma People of Americas* at the meeting of *The Forum of the Americas for Diversity and Plurality* in Quito at 15 of March 2001. This request indicates clearly the new development in the identities of the community, a very different one from the Odessa example. What we are observing in Latin America is not a closure within the frames of one's own community on the basis of the migration experience, living in China and repatriation, but the unification of communities and at least the initial state of development of a distinct regional identity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can sum up that heritage of migration and re-emigration in case of the studied Roma group of *Kitajcurja* had led not only to changes on personal and family levels but created new forms of community identity. This doesn't happen with other communities with similar experience. The reasons we were able to identify in the oral history of the community and in their current conditions are: the number of the members of community, re-settlement into the same locality, in living proximity with members of the same community which however remained without migration experience, and the process of 'locking' in the community caused by internal group mechanism of self-government and marriage patterns.

Acknowledgement

This article is based on our past field researches in Russia and Ukraine (and especially in 2002 in the city of Odessa) and on our current historical research. It is written as a part of the research project *RomaInterbellum. Roma Civic Emancipation between the Two World Wars* which has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant agreement No 694656). It reflects only the authors' views and the agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

References

- Бессонов, Николай. 2017. Этнонимы и прозвища цыган в СССР и на постсоветском пространстве. In: Kozhanov, Kirill, Mikhail Oslon & Dieter W. Halwachs, eds. *Das amen godi pala Lev Cerenkov: Romani historija, chib taj kultura*. Graz: Universität Graz – Treffpunkt Sprachen Forschungsbereich Plurilingualismus, 111-142.
- Деметер, Петр С. & Деметер, Роман С. 1981. *Образцы фольклора цыган кэлдэрарей*. Москва: Наука.
- Деметер, Петр С. & Деметер, Роман С. 1990. *Цыганско-русский и русско-цыганский словарь (кэлдэрарский диалект)*. Москва: Наука.

- Деметер, Георгий С. 1969. *Ленин об охране здоровья трудящихся и физической культуре*. Москва: Физкультура и спорт. (3rd ed.)
- Деметер, Надежда, Николай Бессонов & Владимир Кутенков. 2000. *История цыган: Новый взгляд*. Воронеж: ИПФ “Воронеж”.
- Ficowski, Jerzy. 1985. *Cyganie na polskich drogach*. Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- Fraser, Angus. 1992. The Rom Migrations. *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, Ser. 5, 2 (2): 131-143.
- French, Paul. 2016. *Gypsies of Shanghai: The Roma Community of Late 1930s and 1940s Shanghai and Their Role in the City's Entertainment Industry*. China Rhyming (e-book).
- Hayden, Robert M. 1979. The Cultural Ecology of Service Nomads. *The Eastern Anthropologist* 32 (4): 297-309.
- Kapralski, Sławomir. 2012. *Naród z popiołów: Pamięć zagłady a tożsamość Romów*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.
- Килин, Алексей П. 2005. Политика перевода цыган на оседлый образ жизни: проблемы реализации. 1926-1937. In: *Документ. Архив. История. Современность*. (Сборник научных трудов). Вып. 5. Екатеринбург: Издательство Уральского Университета, 187-226.
- Marinov, Aleksandar. 2016. Romanipe: Roma Identities in Migration. In: Marushiakova, Elena and Vesselin Popov, eds. *Roma Culture: Myths and Realities*. Munich: Lincom Academic Publisher, 211-236.
- Marushiakova, Elena and Vesselin Popov. 2003. Ethnic Identities and Economic Strategies of the Gypsies in the Countries of the Former USSR. *Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte* 9: 289-310.
- Marushiakova, Elena and Vesselin Popov. 2004. Segmentation vs Consolidation: The example of Four Gypsy Groups in CIS. *Romani Studies*, Ser. 5, 14 (2): 145-191.
- Marushiakova, Elena and Vesselin Popov. 2006. De l'Est a l'Ouest. Chronologie et typologie des migrations tsiganes en Europe. *Etudes Tsiganes* 27-28: 10-26.

- Marushiakova, Elena and Vesselin Popov. 2007. The Gypsy Court in Eastern Europe. *Romani Studies* Ser. 5, 17 (1): 67-101.
- Marushiakova, Elena and Vesselin Popov. 2009. Gypsy Slavery in Wallachia and Moldavia. In: Kamusella, Tomasz and Krzysztof Jaskulowski, eds. *Nationalisms Today*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 89-124.
- Marushiakova, Elena and Vesselin Popov. 2013. Two Patterns of Roma Migrations from Southeastern Europe. In: Dimitrova, Tanya and Tede Kahl, eds. *Migration from and towards Bulgaria*. Frank and Timme: 227-244.
- Matras, Yaron. 2000. Romani Migrations in the Post-Communist era: Their Historical and Political Significance. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 2: 32-50.
- Марушиакова, Елена. 2004. Сервизните номади на Балканите. In: Велчева, Надя, ed. Проблеми на съвременната етнология. София: ЕИМ – БАН, 322-340.
- O'Keeffe, Brigid. 2013. *New Soviet Gypsies: Nationality, Performance, and Selfhood in the Early Soviet Union*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Ром-Лебедев, Иван И. 1990. *От цыганского хора к театру "Ромен". Записки московского цыгана*. Москва: Искусство.
- Sharlanova, Valentina. 2012. The Road of Turkish Immigrants Towards the EU. In: Hristov, Petko. (Ed.) *Migration and Identity: Historical, Cultural and Linguistic Dimensions of Mobility in the Balkans*. Sofia: Paradigma, 96-106.
- Черенков, Лев Н. & Гацак, Виктор М. 1981. Предисловие. In: Деметер, Петр С. & Деметер, Роман С. 1981. *Образцы фольклора цыган кэлдэрарей*, 5-10.
- Vishnevsky, Victor. 2011. *Memories of a Gypsy*. Cheverly: Salo Press.