

# Words

## *in Space and Time*

HISTORICAL ATLAS OF LANGUAGE POLITICS  
IN MODERN CENTRAL EUROPE



Tomasz Kamusella

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*To my Family, Friends, Homeland,  
and Europe in this big globalized world*

*Mej Familyje, Frojndom, Hajmatowi a Ojropie  
w tym wielgym a globalizowanym welcie.*

*Для маёй Сям'і, Сяброў, Радзімы і Эўропы  
ў гэтым вялікім глянбалізаваным сьвеце*

*Dlia majoj Siamji, Siabroy, Radzimy i Eўropy  
ў hetym vialikim hljabalizavanym śviecie*

*פֿאַר מיין משפּחה, פּרענדז, כאָומלאַנד און  
אייראָפּע אין דעם גרויס גלאָבאָליזירט וועלט*

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## Roma Settlements in Central Europe, 2009

Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov

SINCE THE MIDDLE AGES, MANY DIFFERENT AND SIZEABLE groups of people have lived in Central, Southeastern, and Eastern Europe, whose names in local languages used to be translated into English as “Gypsies.” This translation is not entirely adequate, because in English the term “Gypsies” designates communities of different ethnic origins who lead a specific (peripatetic, service-rendering) nomadic way of life, including the “Sea Gypsies” of Southeast Asia. However, a significant number of the ethnically Roma communities living in the region have been sedentary for centuries. Over time, when the old empires collapsed and new ethnic nation-states emerged in the region, some of these local names were turned into “official terms” employed in administrative use in the countries where these groups lived, for instance, *Athinganoi* (Byzantine Empire, Greece), *Kıbtı* and *Çingene* (Ottoman Empire, Turkey), *Цигани* *Cigani/Tsigani* (Serbia, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia), *Țigani* (Romania), *Zigeuner* (Austria-Hungary, Austria), *Cigányok* (Hungary), *Cikáni* and *Cigáni* (Czechoslovakia), *Cyganie* (Poland), *Цыгане* *Tsygane* (Russian Empire, Soviet Union), *Čigonai* (Lithuania), *Čigāni* (Latvia), or *Mustalased* (Estonia) (Marushiakova and Popov 2016a: 11). In recent decades, these variegated exonyms have been rapidly replaced with the unifying denomination “Roma,” which often becomes a preferred endonym. This replacement can be explained by the perceived “legitimacy of political correctness” (Petrova 2003: 111) and is part of the process of democratization and European integration.

The ancestors of the aforementioned communities migrated to Europe from the Indian subcontinent more than a millennium ago. In most cases, the population self-identifies as *Roma* and speaks its own Romani language, called *Romani čhib* or *Romanes*. In Central Europe, however, there are a number of ethnically Roma communities who are described by their non-Roma neighbors as “Gypsies,” but who have lost the command of their ancestral language. They speak official languages of the countries where they live and often accept yet another language as their own mother tongue, such as Turkish, Tatar, Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian, Albanian, Romanian, Hungarian, or Ukrainian. A change in the language of a community is often, but not always, accompanied by a change in such a community’s identity. This gives rise to the phenomenon of a preferred ethnic identity. This process should not be confused with the Gypsies’ own development of a civic identity as part of the citizenry in the country of their residence (Marushiakova and Popov 2015: 26–54). In any case, regardless of all these dif-

ferences between Roma groups, the surrounding non-Roma populations continue to perceive and treat all these ethnically Roma communities as “Gypsies.”

From the very beginning of academic interest in the so-called “Gypsies” in Western Europe, their nomadic lifestyle is considered to be the Roma’s most essential social and cultural characteristic that distinguishes them from all other European nations and ethnic groups, and in turn constitutes the main pillar of Roma identity. The presence of millions of Roma who have stuck to a sedentary way of life in Central, South-eastern, and Eastern Europe for centuries is explained by past repressive measures applied to them, especially during the communist era. These measures supposedly made the Roma abandon their “natural” (that is, nomadic) way of life (Crowe 1994; Barany 2002). Historical data on “Gypsies,” however, tells a completely different story. The first reliable historical evidence of their presence in the Balkans clearly shows that the ancestors of today’s Roma led both nomadic and sedentary lifestyles (Soulis 1961: 156–157; Gilsenbach 1994: 38–40).

In the Ottoman Empire over the centuries, there were “Gypsies” (*Kıptı* or *Çingene* in Turkic-language historical sources) who were sedentary and earned a living by farming, practising a variety of crafts, and working as unqualified laborers in towns and cities. There were also nomadic Roma, or more precisely semi-nomads, who owned or rented houses for winter. However, sedentary Roma were more numerous than nomads and their share in the overall Roma population increased constantly. By the late nineteenth century, the ratio was at least 2 to 1 (Marushiakova and Popov 2001: 63–64; Kenrick 2007: 170–171).

In the Austrian Empire, the proportion of Roma leading a sedentary way of life sharply grew following the Theresian and Josephine reforms of the second half of the eighteenth century. A special census of Austria-Hungary’s Roma held in 1893 reported a clear predominance of sedentary *Zigeuner/Cigányok* (that is, “Gypsy” in German and Hungarian) over any nomadic Roma (Königlich 1895; Crowe 2006: 99–120). Obviously, in Austria-Hungary, the former term was the official German-language designation for Roma and the latter was the Hungarian-language one.

The situation in the Russian Empire was different as no consistent or stringent state measures were undertaken to force Roma to settle down. On the eve of the October Revolution in 1917, a significant part of the Russian Roma had already settled in towns, while others lived in villages. In the former case, they

earned a living as merchants, craftsmen, and mostly as musicians, while in the latter, they were mainly farmers. However, the subsequent political, economic, and social turbulences turned many of them into nomads again. They fled their old lives for safety and kept moving to avoid unwanted administrative or political impositions extended by the oft-changing occupation and political regimes (Demeter 2000; Marushiakova and Popov 2003: 289-310).

The processes of transition among the Roma from a nomadic or semi-nomadic way of life to a sedentary one in Central, Southeastern, and Eastern Europe increased again during the 1920s and 1930s as a result of the modernization of the region, leading to a crisis of service nomadism (that is, itinerant or seasonal rendering of a variety of specialized services). The traditional way of life of most nomadic Roma communities became unsustainable and unproductive, forcing them to settle down. After World War Two, the communist countries adopted an active policy of forced settlement for the remaining Roma nomads. The number of such Roma nomads, however, was not very high, and in some countries was negligible. Exact numbers are not available, but it is possible to indicate, at least approximately, the ratio between nomads and sedentary Roma during the time when the processes of modernization and sedentarization took place. In the Soviet Union and Poland, itinerant (nomadic) Roma prevailed at around two-thirds and three-quarters, respectively. The situation in Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia contrasted sharply, where itinerant Roma who were subjected to the policy of forced settlement amounted to fewer than 5 percent of all Roma. In other communist states the relative shares of nomadic Roma varied. In Romania and Yugoslavia, the proportion of itinerant Roma was lower than one-third, while less than one-quarter in Hungary and Albania (Marushiakova and Popov 2008).

Differences in Roma policies pursued in respective communist countries were frequently determined, or at least influenced, by earlier historical models. The nation-states under discussion were founded during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the wake of the decline and breakups of the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary, and the Russian Empire. Each of these three empires employed different approaches towards "Gypsies." The features of these three main imperial models and their later influence may be traced through the example of Roma housing policy. In the Ottoman Empire, and the post-Ottoman polities of Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Romania, Roma live in their own ethnically determined town or city quarter, or *mahala*. In the post-Austro-Hungarian states of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia, alongside some parts of Croatia, Poland, Serbia, and Romania, Roma live in settlements of their own, placed beyond the confines of a nearby non-Roma locality, at times many kilometers away. Such Roma settlements are called *cigánytelep* (Gypsy settlement) in Hungary; *osada* (settlement) and *kolonia* (colony) in Slovakia; *kolonia* and *țigania* (Gypsy settlement) in Romania, or *osada* (settlement) in Poland. In the Russian Empire, and nowadays in the post-Soviet states in Europe and in eastern Poland, Roma usually live on a street or several adjacent

streets, embedded in the surrounding non-Roma population. This type of settlement is called *tabor* (camp) or *tsyganskiy posiolok* (Gypsy settlement). The only exception to this pattern of settlement is Ukraine's region of Transcarpathia, where the Austro-Hungarian model prevails, as this region used to belong to the Dual Monarchy until 1918.

Matched according to settlement patterns in the three empires, the number of homes (and residents) in variegated types of Roma settlements differs significantly. In the territories of the former Russian Empire, dwellings in a Roma settlement number not more than several dozen. In the former Austro-Hungarian areas, the number of dwellings in a Roma settlement can reach several hundred, while in the post-Ottoman territories they can number several thousand. Because Romania was built from territories belonging to the Ottomans and the Habsburgs, in Oltenia and Muntenia Roma settlements are closer in character to the Ottoman model, while in Transylvania they more closely resemble the Austro-Hungarian ones. The map with the names of Roma settlements in Central, Southeastern, and Eastern Europe is not complete and comprehensive, because there are no exhaustive and accurate (or even approximate) statistics on the Roma and Roma settlements in the region. The selection of Roma settlements presented on the map is not representative. Instead, the selection is typological and aims at showing a whole range of various types of Roma settlements as attested in the region.

The map shows preselected Roma settlements in the following countries: Turkey (17 settlements), Greece (10), Albania (6), Bulgaria (18), Macedonia (3), Kosovo (3), Montenegro (6), Serbia (19), Bosnia and Herzegovina (5), Croatia (6), Slovenia (5), Hungary (5), Romania (12), Moldova (6), Slovakia (7), the Czech Republic (7), Poland (6), Ukraine (7), Crimea (3), Belorussia (5), Lithuania (4), Latvia (4), Estonia (2), and the Russian Federation (10).

The names of the Roma settlements featured on the map are labelled with the forms used by their Roma inhabitants. These place names typically coincide with the forms employed by the non-Roma majorities. Hence, the names of such settlements are rendered in the language of the surrounding non-Roma population, that is, usually in each given state language. Only in some post-Ottoman Balkan states are the names of Roma settlements in Turkish, while in some former Austro-Hungarian territories they appear in Hungarian. However, the everyday use of all these names in Romani-language communication incorporates them into this language, regardless of the names' actual origin.

Only rarely did Roma develop their own Romani-language names for their settlements, usually by modifying the "official" one in the majoritarian language, for instance, *Šutka*, which is a Romani version of the Macedonian-language place-name of *Šuto Orizari*. At times, the Romani-language use preserves an older form of an official placename which subsequently changed, as in the case of the quarter *Kon'ovitsa* (Коньовица) in Sofia, Bulgaria. In general Bulgarian-language usage this area lost any distinctive name, while the local Roma still use it. The name of a Roma settlement can also refer to a nearby object, as *Fakulteta* in the Bulgarian capital of Sofia. This Romani



name is an allusion to the nearby National Center for Agrarian Science (or “Faculty”). In other cases, the Romani-language name of a Roma settlement may be a metaphorical name imposed by the non-Roma population or selected by Roma themselves, such as Fekete Város (“Black Town” in Hungarian) in Slovakia or Abisinia (“Abyssinia”) in Bulgaria.

Balkan Roma settlements enjoy their own specific Romani-language names since they constitute distinctive quarters within towns and cities. However, Roma settlements in rural Central Europe are typically referred to with the name of a nearby non-Roma village. Interestingly, in eastern Slovakia, in accordance with the Law on the Use of Minority Languages (Zákon č. 184/1999), bilingual Slovak and Romani road signs were erected with the names of villages, in most cases both language forms being identical. Because some Roma settlements in Slovakia are located far away from the non-Roma village or city, Google Maps tends to designate them with the uniform label of *Rómska osada* (Roma settlement) only, which leads to confusion and unjustifiably denies its actual name to a given Roma settlement.

Map 40 features different types of Roma settlements: city, village, district, quarter, neighborhood, mahala (variously spelled as mahalle, maala, mala, mahalava, or mayla), osada, kolonia, tabor, poselok, camp (in the case of Roma refugees from Kosovo). It is important to note that the names of Roma quarters and neighborhoods are official, hence they feature in official documents and on maps. On the other hand, the Romani names of mahalas, osadas, kolonias, or tabors are typically un-

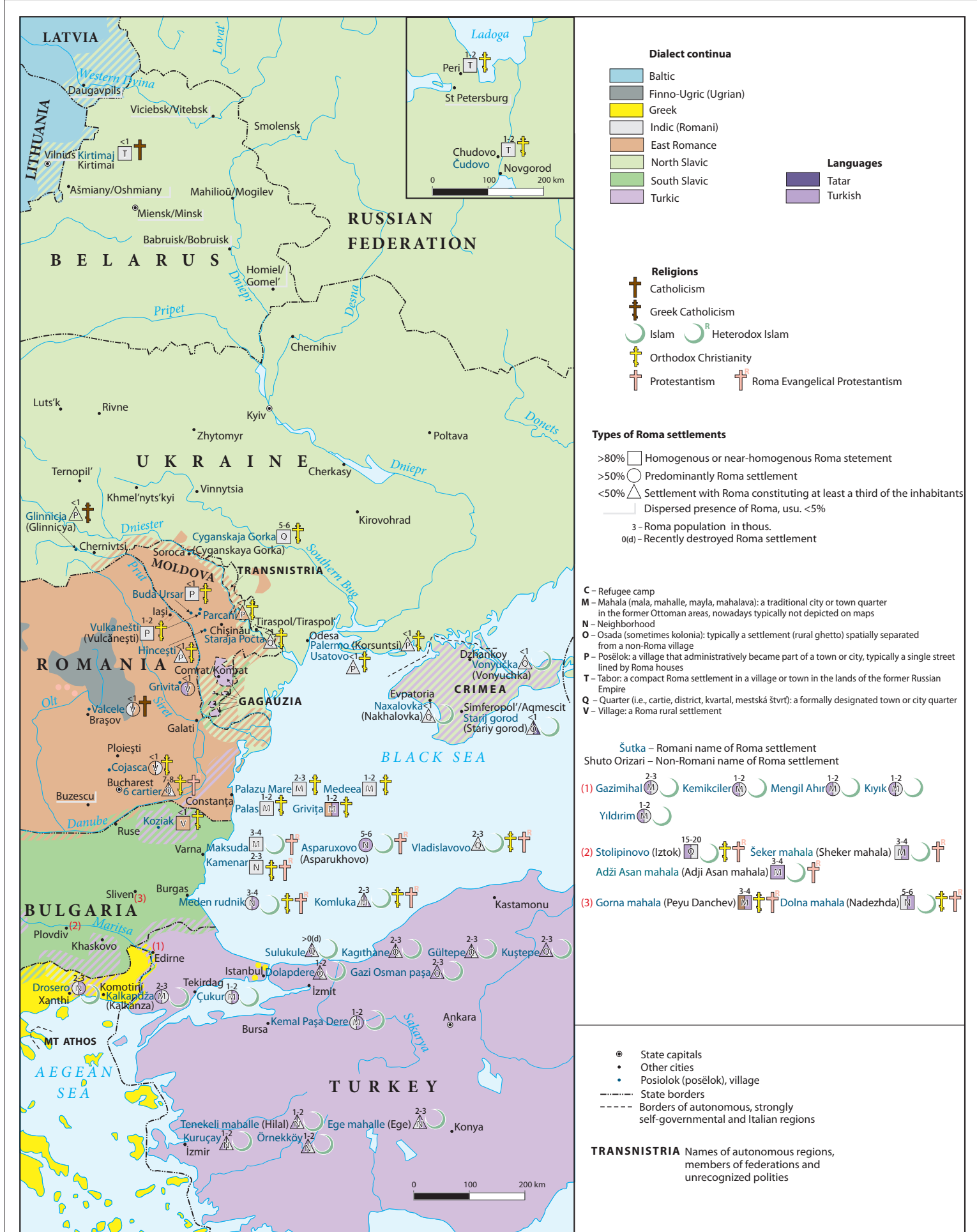
official “folk terms” employed by Roma inhabitants and, often, also by neighboring non-Roma populations. The map also provides the numbers of Roma inhabitants in featured Roma settlements and the relative share of Roma in comparison to their total populations. This information allows for distinguishing homogenous or near-homogenous Roma settlements, Roma settlements where Roma constitute a majority of the inhabitants, settlements with Roma constituting at least one-third of the inhabitants, and localities with Roma constituting 1 to 5 percent of the inhabitants. Obviously, the number of Roma inhabitants can be assessed only approximately.

The map also provides information about the native language of a given settlement’s Roma community, which usually is Romani, but may also be Turkish, Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Montenegrin, Romanian, Moldovan, Hungarian, Slovak, Ukrainian, or Tatar. Likewise, similar information is given on the religions professed by Roma in their settlements, namely, Sunni Islam, heterodox Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Catholicism, Protestantism, or Greek Catholicism. The presence of new Roma Evangelical churches is also indicated. This category includes, the Pentecostal Church, the Baptists, the Church of God, the Apostolic Church of Pentacost, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, or Jehovah’s Witnesses. However, the map does not aspire to reflect in detail the overall picture of the Roma settlements in Central, Southeastern, and Eastern Europe. The primary goal is to show how such a comprehensive map could be executed in the future.



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