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**NEW RESEARCHES IN GYPSOLOGY: *CIKÁNSKÉ SKUPINY*
*A JEJICH SOCIÁLNÍ ORGANIZACE***

(Marek Jakoubek, Lenka Budilová (eds.): *Cikánské skupiny a jejich sociální organizace*. Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2009)

A noteworthy publication on research in the field of gypsology recently appeared thanks to the activity of Lenka Budilová and Marek Jakoubek, academics from the Department of Anthropological and Historical studies at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen. Editors of the publication followed the efforts to bring about, in the form of Czech translations, the results of both the renowned and young European authors to Czech academic and lay them public. At the same time, the book offers an encounter with both the older and recent Czech production of academic texts on the given theme. The focus of the book, which unites the translations and the Czech articles, is an actual, key topic: social organization of “Gypsy groups”, their internal arrangements and mutual relationships. The subject can be viewed from a number of various angles and the attempt to compare different scholar and methodological approaches may end up to be slightly confusing. For this reason this review does not claim a comprehensive and complete assessment of the publication as a whole. I rather try to formulate several remarks, critical comments and conclusions based on my own scholar work in history. For this reason I mention mainly those articles which are closer to my own background either in terms of region (Central Europe), or methodology.

The first thing that attracts attention of every, at least slightly informed, reader is the fact that individual contributions are diversified to a large extent in terms of terminology, methodological basis and techniques. This can be easily explained by different discipline background of the authors, who comprise mostly social (cultural) anthropologists, but also linguists, sociologists, ethnologists, gypsologists and other scholars. The diversity of approaches may be regarded rather as an advantage, since it allows for examination of the topic in question from various points of view. However, if a multidisciplinary research of Roma groups is to be established, the scholars should, in my opinion, agree on at least two basic assumptions. First, they should clarify and try to harmonize the terminology used (I am referring to the so far freely and often

mistakenly used terms like *Roma community*, *ethnics*, *ethnic group*, *nomadism*, etc.). I do not have in mind the fact that completely different groups of people are very often lumped together under one umbrella term (“Roma”, “Gypsies”), which the editors rightfully criticize in the introduction. I think it is possible to unite and harmonize the use of neutral, general terms that do not concern only Roma, but culturology as a whole. Second, they should carefully read, think over and quote contributions of scholars from their own and other disciplines and take a stand towards their data and conclusions. This point may seem absurd at first glance, but essays in the reviewed collection mainly written by the older authors from the Central and Eastern Europe demonstrate its urgency. The fact, that some Czech authors are not acquainted with the results of western scholarship, or are not willing to accept a demanding terminology of social and cultural anthropology, may be both explicable and comprehensible. However, how is it possible that they present their data/conclusions only as a result of their own research without any reflection of the fact that the same, similar (or different) conclusions were drawn by a number of other authors, whose work was accessible to them? In the book in questions this holds truth for example in case of Will Guy, whose work I appreciate very much, who, in his reminiscences of his own fieldwork in 1970s in Ostrava region and in Slovakia, proves ignorance of the contemporary Czech production. Neither M. Kami ski in his noteworthy, historically focused essay (see below), does think it necessary to at least mention the literature on the situation in other Easter European countries in the given period.

Editors help the readers in their orientation by the foreword provided at the beginning of individual contributions, where they briefly introduce the authors and their approach. I agree with their assessment of the Hungarian authors, among whom mainly Peter Szuhay (*Sebeidentifikace romských etnických skupin a jejich vnímání jiných romských skupin*, p. 169–176) attracted my attention by his clarity and conciseness in outlining and highlighting the differences among various Roma groups in Hungary. The interpretations based on the fieldwork of young authors Kata Horváth and Csaba Prónai (*Mezi špinavostí a úzkostlivostí...*, p. 177–192) are, by contrast, sometimes slightly confusing. I cannot agree, for example, with their complete rejection of the historical method, even in the form of oral history (p. 183), which proved in many cases fruitful, both in historical and contemporary research.

This is, for that matter, convincingly proved by the already mentioned article written by the Polish author Ignacy-Marek Kamiński (*Dilema moci: interní a externí v dcovství. Romové v Polsku*, p. 121–153). The author offers an overview of the history of Polish Roma groups that is very interesting for a Czech reader and that goes beyond the boundaries of the contemporary Poland and suggests relationships with its neighbours, notably Slovakia. The text specifies a number

of information about the so called *Polska Roma* (a local Roma group), and *the Carpathian Roma*, who, according to the author, later divided into groups of Polish *Bergitka Roma* and the *Slovak Roma*. In contrast with other authors (e.g. Hungarian authors Kamil Erdős and already mentioned K. Horváth a C. Prónai) he clearly separates the groups of Vlach nomads, who expanded into the area of Central Europe only in the last third of the 19th century. Very interesting is also a part devoted to the analysis of external and internal leadership, legal system and other characteristics of the nomadic Kalderasha (the coppersmiths) in the socialist period. Unlike the Lovara who travelled until 1958 in the area of the contemporary Czech Republic, who practically remained deprived of their original sources of subsistence (horse handling), these nomadic peoples kept not only their traditional customs and language, but also subsistence strategies till the second half of the 20th century. It was this fact that provided them with to a certain extent more effective defence against the pressures towards assimilation from the part of the communist regime. Kamiński points to a number of phenomena neither Czech historiography nor ethnography examined so far, for example the principles of leadership in the so called *vitsa* and *natsia*, etc. In this regard his assertion that at the end of 1950s anybody could become a member of *tabor* only on the ground of *rasa* seems rather unsupported. Vlach Roma in the Czech Republic represent relatively close group till today, where the violation of endogamy principle is still rather exceptional.

A comparison is offered, to a certain extent, by the reviewed anthology itself. The Czech and Slovak authors involved comprise names like the (so far often neglected) anthropologist Mária Dubayová, the ethnologist Eva Davidová, the demographer Květa Kalibová, cultural anthropologists Rastislav Pivoň, Michal Růžička, Lucie Plavjaniková and the editors, and, in the concluding essay, the “freelance author” Antonín Ferko. The first one, untimely deceased M. Dubayová, is represented by a reprint of her text addressing relationships within and outside the Roma family, mainly the choice of a marital partner (*Rómska rodina na Slovensku*, p. 195–205). Eva Davidová (*Mezigenerační změn: ke ztrátě dvou generací Romů v uplynulém p století v d sledku poválečné migrace a asimilačních tlak v 50. – 60. letech 20. století*, p. 236–265), uses the example of relatively well integrated Roma families from the South Bohemian town of Český Krumlov to show the impact of the pressures towards assimilation from the part of the communist regime on the disintegration of values and interruption of continuity in Roma kinship communities. Like M. Dubayová, she draws on her own extensive fieldwork, but unfortunately neither she uses the opportunity of comparison by the reference to texts, that were published for example by the editors of the reviewed book in their previous anthologies. The problem of an insufficient historical background is also found in the text of K. Kalibová (*Demografické charakteristiky Romů ve vybraných zemích střední a vý-*

chodní Evropy, p. 214–237). Inaccurate is mainly the first part of the text, where the author asserts that Hungarian and Slovak Roma are mostly settled since the 18th century and before they were characterized by “*a traditional nomadic way of life*” (p. 222). The assertion about the former nomadic way of life of all Roma is, however, encountered in the texts of a number of authors, who frequently do not distinguish the forced, mostly chaotic movements of homeless “vagrants”, or a temporary work migration of half-settled artisans, from the true nomadism. This is an example of the urgent need to clear up the meaning of one of widely used terms.

Very interesting is an attempt of Rastislav Pivoň to point out to the fact that “ritual impurity” is a concept characteristic not only of the Roma (or, more precisely, also of the Jews), but rather something we normally find also in the history of the majority European societies. Basically his approach is clearly correct: his data may be complemented by the fact that in some parts of southern Moravia ethnologist described closed areas where endogamy marriages were preferred and the neighbouring groups were considered hostile even in the 20th century. Regardless of this fact I am slightly sceptical to the final part of Pivoň’s study where he suggests that the concept of ritual impurity may have other roots than Indian caste system. A certain type of caste system is, in fact, probably typical of any traditional, closed society, as was indicated years before by Miklucho-Maclay in his investigations. However, the evidence of ritual impurity from the period of the Middle Ages in the Czech lands only shows, in my opinion, that the ban on contact concerned only certain kinds of professions (knackers, executioners) and did not extend so markedly (in particular) to the prohibition of commensality as in the traditional Roma culture. In any case this kind of incentive should be taken seriously into consideration and should be paid more intensive attention in future research.

A number of interesting insights even for the historical research is offered by the final chapter by editors of the book (*Trojgenerační model transformace sňatkových vzorců v cigánské skupině*, p. 286–304) and their students Lucie Plavjaniková and Michal Růžička (*Socio-prostorová dynamika p íbuzenství v cigánské osadě*, p. 305–325). Both contributions are based on research in Slovak Roma settlements and use illustrative visual diagrams of kinship relationships among the people in analysed communities. They show, apart from other things, that today Roma settlements in Slovakia are not closed kinship units, but rather that preferred spouses come from other settlements in Slovakia and from a number of Czech localities, where members of the original communities moved after 1945. They analyze mainly strategies, principles and functioning of the so called “pre čeranki” (“by exchange”) marriage and kinship relationships that spring from complex combinations of multiply kin relationships. The study of Plavjaniková and Růžička provides us with a deeper understand-

ing of the “*dynamics and changes in the social organization of Gypsy settlements that may be caused by external factors*” (p. 323). This may help in the efforts to grasp the significance and role of marriage strategies in Roma groups in older historical periods (before 1945), too.

Noteworthy is also a charming closing *Addendum* by Antonín Ferko (*Ztraceno v p ekladu*, p. 326–332), where the author in an essayistic form analyzes various interpretations and meaning shifts of the terms *degeš*, *gadžo*, etc. By incorporating this contribution of a different genre, the editors proves (like in their previous anthologies) that literary style frequently allows for easier understanding of complex cultural relationships than scholar study with a strongly scientific face.

Anthology is supplemented by English abstracts of all articles and brief CVs of their respective authors. A collective monograph of this kind (which is in fact a more appropriate term than “anthology”) may have deserved other supplements, like index and a comprehensive bibliography, though. Apart from this small critique I would like to highlight an exceptionally high stylistic level and well done editorial and translational work of M. Jakoubek and L. Budilová, which stands out mainly in comparison with a number of other scholar books that are being published at present and that are full of mistypes, inaccuracies, or nonsense in the scholar terminology.

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