The Honour of Sharing and the Sharing of Honour

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Romani populations

Distinguished by:

Haplogroup R2
(Villar et. al. (2011) *Lenguas, Genes y Culturas...*)

Trades and crafts

Lifestyle/ethos

Type of economy
Where can Romani populations be found today?

Europe -
by variant of the language:

• preserving only a few words of Indian origin
  Example: Spanish Caló:
  Mario Maya’s: “Camelamos naquerar” (DATE)
• creolised
  Example: Anglo-Romani
• fully inflected
  Example: Lovari, the variant we will hear in the wedding video
• in-between
  Example: Manouche (France), Sintitikes (Germany, Austria, smaller groups in other countries)
Romani: one language?

- Common loanwords from Persian, Armenian, Greek, some Slavic loanwords

- Other loanwords not common to all
  Example: loan word from German in Lovari, the variant we will hear in the video: šeftari

- Mutually understandable?

  Western and Northernmost – creolised

  Balkan, Vlach and Eastern – fully inflected -
  Lovari, the variant we will hear in the video,
  is one of these.

  Manouche, Sintitikes, – in between

  But there is a lingua franca: Kelderari

  There are Romani populations who no longer speak Romani
From India to Europe

Central Asia

– Lom
– Dom

And many, many more!
India: where and when?

Central India?
Northern India?

Linguistics backed up by genetics?
“On the basis of linguistic, socio-cultural, morphological, serological and HLA haplotype evidence, the Romani Gypsies of Europe are believed to originate from Northern Indian populations who arrived in Europe around AD 1100 (9). Due to almost complete endogamy they form a genetically isolated community.”

Morar et al., “Mutation History of the Roma/Gypsies” (2004):
“the mean of 800–900 years coincides closely with the time of the exodus proposed by Hancock (2000)”
If the ancestors of Roma left Northern India just before or at the time of the first Muslim invasion, how did they fit into the Hindu caste system?

Evidence from genetics and linguistics

Cultural practices and religious beliefs

Possible bias?
  narrow academic outlook
  political attitudes
  civil rights aspirations
The question of caste

- University of Graz – Romani Linguistics Project: “Rom” comes from “Dom”

- Rajko Đurić and other authors *Ohne Heim – Ohne Grab* (1996):
  - lists a number of Indian castes and tribes with which Roma may be connected.
  - Refers to Central Asian populations of Indian origin as “Roma in Afghanistan,” etc.

- Ian Hancock’s *We are the Romani People* (2002):
  - Rajputs, *Roma-Banjara*.
  - Central Asian populations of Indian origin are not related to Roma.

- Lev Tcherenkov’s *The Rroma*... (2004):
  - A linguistic explanation (Dom) plausible, except that “one would need an analysis of the caste-related vocabulary in India around the middle of the first millennium” to prove it conclusively.
  - a number of Central Asian Gypsies (Nawar, Dom, Lom) stem from the same migration as the European Roma.

- Yet another scholarly opinion: Donald Kenrick, *From India to the Mediterranean*, (1993)
  - ancestors of Roma started to leave India at the time of the Persian invasion, they were “from various tribes, intermarried and intermixed in Persia forming into a people there, with the name Dom or Rom.”

- A Romani artist’s point of view: Toni Gatlif’s film *Latcho drom* (1993):
  - Gauduliya Lohars of Rajasthan

- This question debated on Indian media: internet-magazine article “*Are Europe’s Roma descended from the Rajputs or from the SC and ST*”?
  
Leksa Manush
Article in Sovetskaya Etnografiya No. 6, 1979

Cult of Shiva among the ancestors of Roma?

The word *trashul*
The word *masxari*
The word *das*

References for Indian material are to secondary sources
Kannauʒ?


Kitab al-Yamini - raid by M. Ghazni at the start of the second millennium – whole city taken prisoner and inhabitants sold as slaves in Ghazni and Kabul

There were Rajputs and Domba in Kannauʒ

The protecting goddess of Kannauʒ was Kali. Refers back to Rajko Djurić concerning similarities between the cult Bibia or Kali Bibi and Kali.

Similarities between languages of the area, Sadrī, Braʒ, Awadhi and Romani

Ancestors of the present-day Romani populations were therefore city-dwellers and there is no point in trying to trace them back to any of the nomadic populations found in India today.

“all Hindī, Nepalī, Panẓābī, and Guζarātī speakers, among others, are equally related to the Rromani people...”
Is there anything among Roma that resembles caste or untouchability?

• To investigate this we need to look at
  Romani law
  Status of marriage
  Various aspects of avoidance
  out of fear of pollution

  Group-specific trades and crafts (video)

  Interaction between different
  sub-ethnic groups (video)
Romani Law

  Ronald Lee: “The kris is rooted in the Rom folk religion, the code of personal behaviour, Rom customs and laws and the concept of ritual pollution.” Weyrauch (ed.) Gypsy Law...(2001)

• Mediation by elders – Delimitation of territories
  - discussed by Juan de Dios Ramírez Heredia in several works
  - (explored by Toni Gatlif in his film Vengo)

• Feuding – Delimitation of territories – Extreme case of Finnish Kaale
Types of marriage

• Bride-price

• Elopement or agreed wedding with shared costs

  Proverb of the Russka Roma:
  \textit{Graia amare, urden tumaro} - Andronnikova
  \textit{Yazik tsiganski ves v zagadkax} (2006)

• Marriage not institutionalised – extreme case of the Finnish Kaale
Purity and Impurity

No one is born an untouchable

but

there is a status akin to untouchability
Existence of a hierarchy among different European Romani communities?

- Rajko Đurić (1996): hereditary groups
  - socialising and intermarriage
  - trades and crafts
  - hierarchy of relatively “higher”
    and “lower” groups

- Lev Tcherenkov (2004): ‘hierarchy’ extremely variable and subjective,
  influenced by prestige which is in turn influenced by adherence or non-adherence to tradition

- Ian Hancock (2002): does not write about ‘hereditary groups’ in Đurić’s terms, but rather about a ‘hierarchy’ in Tcherenkov’s terms;
  states that Romani religion is ultimately expressed “in the concepts of honour/shame, purity/impurity”
The oral tradition

• Songs, stories, proverbs are built on formulas which contain the concepts/precepts of Romani law and these vary, to some extent, from community to community.

• A rich, living oral tradition is a source of prestige: if a community remembers/performs/discusses so many songs and stories, especially in Romani, this means that they know the law, that is to say, ‘their’ law.
Weddings

• One life-event where the law, the particularised status of marriage, concepts of purity/pollution, and the oral tradition of a Romani community converge, is a wedding.
Wedding: Kwiek Lovara, Poznan, Poland [posted 2013]
The Lovara

Slavery in Romania

Trades: horse-dealing and horse-breeding, trade in various goods, fortune-telling
Nowadays: dealing in cars, trade in antiques, rugs; fortune-telling, performance

Lovari - variant of Romani strongly influenced by Hungarian

Example: Te aven baxtale le xanamikura, le terne [several elders addressed as nano ‘uncle’] sogodi Žene paša kadi mesalji, te aven baxtale, sia paciv tumenge!

There are now Lovara in almost all European countries. This wedding took place in Poznan, Poland, but the Kwiek family is also represented in Sweden and Germany.
What is a wedding for?

- To render honour to the bride and her family by means of speech, song, dance, gestural language, food and drink.

The significance of dance.


*Koli pervo molo jag zakhachija, togda pervo molo skheldja Rom*

- To bring together the two extended families, rather than just the bride and groom.
speech/presence of elders/the table
the genre “slow song” – *e lokhi gili*
blessing/admonition by the eldest of the elders/in incorporation into the groom’s family
The bride’s head is covered
Gold
The Kwiek wedding:
When money is not money, but kinship
The Kwiek wedding: honouring the bride through dance – the genre “dance song” - e khelimaski gili
The Kwiek wedding: the sharing of honour
The Kwiek wedding:
the elders mobilise their kin
The Kwiek wedding:
the sharing of honour among brothers-in-law
Conclusion

I have tried to show you some aspects of the following:

- how a Romani family enacts its particularised honour of sharing and sharing of honour

- how sub-ethnic groups among Roma understand themselves and each other

- how this may inform our appreciation of these communities and a re-construction of their Indian origin
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