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The Origin, Culture and Wandering of Gypsies

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The Origin, Culture and Wandering of Gypsies

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Social Studies
Of Bard College

By
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Introduction

In my Senior Project I would like to concentrate on the wandering and cultural aspects of Romani people. My goal is to shed light on the ambiguous and controversial roots of Gypsy people. First of all I chose this topic because I have always been interested in the origin of Romani people since I am also one of them. This theme has emerged multiple times for instance in conversations but I have never received a true and trustworthy source regarding the roots of gypsy people, thus I decided to do the research myself. To be honest, in the beginning it was rather difficult to initiate the research, since the time period embraces 1500 years. However, I can consider myself lucky since after all the Egyptian roots of Gypsy people have been disproved. But where do they actually come from?

Thus, in my Senior Project I would like to elaborate on where the gypsy people derive from, how they wandered from India and also introduce the reader to their culture and music. Their true language, culture and music evolved during their journey. To this day there is a known group of people in India, they are called the Cobra Gypsies. There are two different groups in Rajasthan: the Kalbeliyans and the Bopas. They famous for their arts and culture. In the dance of the Kalbeliyans the women are beautiful goddesses and the Bopas provide the unique music. These two combined are to tell a story. During my research, as I was analyzing the dance of the Kalbeliyans, I found it intriguing that he Romani people living Europe have similar hand and dance movements like the gypsies in Rajasthan. After all the years many things have changed but it makes me proud that the tradition of the dance-culture stayed the same.

Chapter 1

The Roma originated in India. The biggest problem is that during their wandering/traveling there was no written sources. First of all some researchers telling two different statements about Roma/Gypsy/Romany people. Some legends about Roma people telling that they were originally from Egypt, *“because so, the legend that the Gypsies hailed from Egypt – which may be simply due to their dark coloring or from tall tales they themselves spread to gullible Europeans – was proven false. (Some purport this belief may have been the origin of the name “Gypsy,” from the Middle English “gypcian” which was short for “Egipcien”)”*¹

So after this, some researchers found really interesting things in Northern India that “many of the words and grammatical rules of the Romani language are virtually identical to those of the Hindi language,”² so the Roma people originally come from Northern India?

Dr. Toomas Kivisild is an Estonian geneticist. “His research focuses mainly on human evolution and evolutionary population genetics, with a particular emphasis on questions relating global genetic population structure with evolutionary processes such as selection, drift, migrations and admixture.”³ Dr. Toomas Kivisild has proved Romani people origins in the Indian sub-continent, and also identified the location and social background from which they emerged. “The study, which was published in the journal Nature, examined Y chromosomes in DNA samples to compare the genetic signatures of European Roma men with those of thousands of Indians from throughout the sub-continent. Scientists from Hyderabad's Centre for Cellular

¹ <http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2014/06/history-gypsies>

² <http://www.livescience.com/40652-facts-about-roma-romani-gypsies.html>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toomas_Kivisild

and Molecular Biology collaborated with colleagues in Estonia and Switzerland to compare more than 10,000 samples, including from members of 214 different Indian ethnic groups.

They were analyzed to match a South Asian Y chromosome type known as "haplogroup H1a1a-M82", which passes down male bloodlines, with samples from Roma men in Europe.”⁴

This is a rather significant statement coming from Mr. Kivisild since the chromosomes do not lie and finally it might be proven that Roma people derive from India. Many researchers have approach this topic from various different perspectives but most of them began at the Gypsy/Roma language. Even though it is true that the Roma language derives from Sanskrit - and within that from the Hindi language, since they contain numerous similar words – this statement is still not enough to prove that Roma people come from India.

According to Sandor Avraham “the facts are saying that after a long wandering somewhere from India gypsies reached Europe, and it is true without any doubt, but it does not imply that Romani people`s original motherland was India because besides the Romani language they are not connected to India. “⁵

“The gypsies started to wander from their original homeland, India, in the 10th century, however the question of how and why are obscure. Some people say that they left their homeland purposefully on their own, as a group of people who stood at the lowest level of the Indian cast-system. Other assume that some pressure played an important role in their decision to move

⁴ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/9719058/European-Roma-descended-from-Indian-untouchables-genetic-study-shows.html> European Roma descended from Indian ‘untouchables’ genetic study shows
By Dean Nelson

⁵ Sandor Avraham <http://www.imninalu.net/Romagyar.htm>

towards the West.”⁶ “Many groups of folks who originated from India got to the territory of East-Iran.”⁷ “Their first destination was Persia, which fact can be proven by the Persian words that can be found in the Romani language however the written evidences are obscure about this time period. There is legend saying that the Persian rulers invited musician in order to entertain their folks - these musician were presumably gypsies – however it is not a historically proven fact. On the other hand it is known that the gypsies travelled from Persia to Armenia.”⁸

“Some other groups continued their journey to East-Turkey where they were baptized. Another group of gypsies went to the territory Near-East and East-Africa. They were referred to as the Arabic gypsies and they lead a nomadic lifestyle up to this day, mainly in Egypt, Iraq and Israel. Most of the Romani people – influenced by the conquest of the Mongolians – left the Persian territories by the end of the 13th century and continued their journey towards the West.”⁹

“The sojourn of the gypsies in Armenia had a great influence on the people living there. There are many words that were used in everyday life that originate from Armenian words. For example: *bôv* meaning “oven”, *dudúm* meaning “melon, pumpkin”, *kočo* meaning “button”, *mortsî* meaning “leather” and also *vordón* – meaning “car” – which word comes from the Ossetian language that was spoken east from Armenia. The gypsies called their wagons this way. However the gypsies did not stay in Armenia. Due to the spreading of Turkish tribes they had to move on. In the 11th century they emerged in the Byzantine Empire, around Constantinople and Thrace. From this point on, the gypsy groups started to get separated and spread around the area

⁶http://www.sulinet.hu/oroksegtar/data/magyarorszagi_nemzetisegek/nemetek/sajoszentpeter/a_sajoszentpeteri_cigany_kisebbsseg_tortenete/002_Eredet_es_vandorlas.htm

⁷ <http://www.oco.hu/a-ciganyasag-eredete/>

⁸http://www.sulinet.hu/oroksegtar/data/magyarorszagi_nemzetisegek/nemetek/sajoszentpeter/a_sajoszentpeteri_cigany_kisebbsseg_tortenete/002_Eredet_es_vandorlas.htm

⁹ <http://www.oco.hu/a-ciganyasag-eredete/>

of the Mediterranean Sea.”¹⁰ “In the 14th century most of them were living at the Balkan Peninsula and their center was in the Greek city, Messenia.”¹¹ “Some other gypsies started to wander to Europe around the 15th century and now one can find many of them in America, Asia and Australia.”¹²

Nomadic lifestyle

First of all I would like to talk about the word “nomadic.” Any person, coming from any point of the world can be called nomad. It means that the person was born into a disadvantageous environment and has lots of pressure on him, thus he is forced to, for example, live on the street, and build his own house or tent. Nomadic people, like Romani people, occupy themselves with agriculture, dance, music and soothsaying, so it is easier to provide for themselves on a daily basis. However, “nomadic” does not mean that all gypsies lead that lifestyle or that every gypsy person is nomadic.

In my research I found that Romani people from India were mostly nomadic people, they lived outside of the cities. “Their homelands were around the states of Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Based on the researches there are 30 million gypsy people living there”¹³ but unfortunately many of them do not identify themselves as Romani. The reason for this is that they know that it would make people dislike them since in today`s world the word “gypsy” has many negative and pejorative connotations. On the other hand some people identify themselves as gypsies without actually being gypsies since they hope to make profit out of it. These people learn gypsy dances, music and culture but they are never going to be able to perform and

¹⁰http://www.sulinet.hu/oroksegtar/data/magyarorszagi_nemzetisegek/nemetek/sajoszentpeter/a_sajoszentpeteri_cigany_kisebbsseg_tortenete/002_Eredet_es_vandorlas.htm

¹¹ <http://www.oco.hu/a-ciganysag-eredete/>

¹² <http://www.oco.hu/a-ciganysag-eredete/>

¹³ <http://www.oco.hu/a-ciganysag-eredete/>

express themselves - with the same passion and talent – like real gypsy people. Since money plays a central role in today`s world, many Indian people who come from lower cast levels find this way of money making the easiest. Many of these people lead a nomadic lifestyle up to this day and their main profession is music making, dance, soothsaying and coinage.

The Gypsy Culture of Rajasthan

Rajasthan Roma people (Cobra Gypsies) “In northern India living nomadic people, native dancers, musicians, and their name means those who loves snakes. They are the most emblematic people tribe of the Rajasthan Gypsies, the Kalbeliyans”¹⁴ and the Bopas “The gypsy tribe of Rajasthan is one of the vagabond communities in India.”¹⁵ The group of cobra gypsies / Kalbeliyans and Bopas lead a nomadic lifestyle up to today and “travel like a caravan from place to place.”¹⁶ Many of these people have the professions explained above (music, dance, and soothsaying). “The origin of the tribe dates several centuries back. The people of this Rajasthan tribe belong to the lowest step of the socio-cultural and socio-economic ladder. There is no permanent residence for them. They sleep under the open sky some times and in the shade of trees at times.”¹⁷ An interesting fact that the “Kalbeliyans and the Bopa groups are two different surviving groups of the gypsy tribe.”¹⁷ First of all the group of “musicians and singers are the Bopas,”¹⁷ and the group of “dancers and snake charmers are the Kalbeliyans.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Cobra Gypsies – full documentary by Raphael Treza <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aNUYGRn3W9Q>

¹⁵ <http://www.indianeagle.com/travelbeats/gypsy-of-rajasthan/>

¹⁶ <http://www.indianeagle.com/travelbeats/gypsy-of-rajasthan/>

¹⁷ <http://www.indianeagle.com/travelbeats/gypsy-of-rajasthan/>



“1

Presumably the most famous profession out of these is the Kalbeliyan dance. It is interesting to notice that whenever one encounters a gypsy dancer one is able to tell that it is a gypsy dance and within that specifically a Kabeliyan gypsy dance. The main movements are in the arms and hands and spinning is also a significant feature since all these movements have a meaning. “The swirling moves that gypsy women make while dancing resemble to the movements of snakes. The serpentine style of their dance is sensuous at times. They gracefully spin around themselves putting the entire body weight on their ankles.”¹⁸

It is simply called “gypsy dance” all around the world and even many of the gypsy themselves do not know that it is actually called Kalbeliyan dance. “The way the gypsy women of Rajasthan are dressed is a kaleidoscopic magic of embroidery in different hues. Their red, black, yellow and orange outfits camouflage with the colorful milieu of Rajasthan. They are often referred to as queens of the desert.”¹⁹

¹⁸ <http://www.indianeagle.com/travelbeats/gypsy-of-rajasthan/>

¹⁹ <http://www.indianeagle.com/travelbeats/gypsy-of-rajasthan/>

There are significant differences between the culture of the gypsies who live in India and of those who live in Europe but there are also noticeable similarities. Those can be seen in the European gypsies since they still often times wear colorful clothing (for example, gold, yellow, red and blue). These colors are rather vivid and they symbolize their fiery feature and their passion. “In the royal era of India, the kings of Rajasthan used to admire and patronize the people of the Bopa and the Kalbeliyan for their performing arts. The musicians, singers and dancers of these two gypsy groups were often hired for entertainment on festive occasions in the royal families.”²⁰ “Today, they are street performers on the move. They perform to entertain a common lot, not a royal audience, in the fairs and festivals of Rajasthan. That is why the gypsy men and women of the Bopa and the Kalbeliyan have become a common face of Pushkar Camel Fair.”²¹

“The masters of folk music are the gypsy men who are playing on different musical instruments for example: dholak, been, khanjari, pungu, morchang, and khuralio.” the khanjari is a percussion instrument” it is geographically from Bengal, India and this instrument is a Membranophone-single-headed / frame drum, and “the pungu is a woodwind instrument.”²²

The pungu or been instrument “usually played by snake charmers. It is traditionally made from a dried bole gourd.”²³

²⁰ <http://www.indianeagle.com/travelbeats/gypsy-of-rajasthan/>

²¹ <http://www.indianeagle.com/travelbeats/gypsy-of-rajasthan/>

²² <http://www.indianeagle.com/travelbeats/gypsy-of-rajasthan/>

²³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pungu>



“2

As it turned out, the Kalbeliyani Indians are said to originate from Romani people and their dance is called Kalbeliyani dance. In this dance style one can find the same hand movements that they use for healing as well. One more important aspect of the Kalbeliyani dance is the colorful clothing. They mentioned several times the people who are called “untouchables.

” It means – based on my understanding – that Romani people belong to the cast of untouchables, and they do not call them “gypsy” like in Europe.

Explanation about the language

‘The Romani/Gypsy language is the member of the Aryan phylum and descendant of the Sanskrit language. During when the Romani people were wandering from India around 1500 years ago, the Romani’s language was still developing.’ ‘In the strict sense the gypsy or Romani language derives from the Sanskrit language and belongs to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European languages. Its closest relative is the Domari, the language of an Arabic gypsy group of people.’²⁴ ‘The gypsy language derives from the Indian ancient language, the Sanskrit. Their relation could be compared to that of the Latin language and the French language.’²⁵ ‘The Romani dialects contains 500 words or more which are recognizably of Indic origin.’²⁶

The variations of the gypsy denomination in in different languages

<i>Hungarian</i>	Gypsy	Egyptian
<i>Latin</i>	cinganus	aegyptanus/populus pharaonis
<i>Bulgarian</i>	цигански	египетски
<i>Russian</i>	цыганская	египетский
<i>Czech</i>	čikan	egyptská
<i>Serbian</i>	циган	египатски
<i>Croatian</i>	čigan	gipsan
<i>Turkish</i>	çingene	
<i>Greek</i>	ατσιγανος	άίγυπτος
<i>Spanish</i>	zincal	gitano
<i>Portuguese</i>	cigano	egípcio
<i>Italian</i>	zingaro	egizio
<i>French</i>	tzigane	gitans
<i>English</i>		gypsy
<i>German</i>	zigeuner	ägyptische
<i>Swedish</i>	zigenare	

²⁴ <http://www.oco.hu/a-ciganysag-eredete/>

²⁵ <http://tereless.hu/konyvkiadas/szotar.html> Peter Hardi’s interview with Jozsef Vekerdi

²⁶ Angus Fraser : The Gypsies 16 pp;

The connection between Indic and Romani languages

English	Sanskrit	Hindi	greek romani	welsh romani	kelderas romani	hungarian romani
<i>Big</i>	vadra	baṛā	baró	bārō	Baró	baro
<i>Brother</i>	bharātṛ	bhāī	pral, plal	phal	Pral	phral
<i>To drink</i>	pībati	pī-	pī-	pī-	Pē	pel, pijel
<i>Father</i>	tāta	tāt	dat	dad	Dad	dad
<i>Hair</i>	vāla	bāl	bal	bal	Bal	bal
<i>Head</i>	śiras	sir	śeró	śērō	śeró	shero
<i>Hot</i>	tapta	tattā	tattó	tatō	tató	tato
<i>I am</i>	mayā	maiń	mē	mē	Mē	me
<i>Male</i>	mānuṣa	mānusya	manús	manús	manús	manush
<i>Nose</i>	nakka	nāk	naā	nakh	nakh	nakh
<i>Our</i>	asmāka	hamārā	amaró	amārō	amaró	amaro
<i>To see</i>	dṛkṣati	dēkh-	dik-	dikh-	dikh-	dikhel
<i>Sister</i>	bhaginī	bahn	pen, ben	phen	phei	pheny
<i>To sleep</i>	svāpati	sōnā	sov-	sov-	sov-	sovel
<i>Nap</i>	gharmá	ghām	kam	kham	kham	kham
<i>Water</i>	panīyā	pārī	paní	pānī	Pai	paji
<i>You</i>	tuvám	tū	tu	tū	Tu	tu

“As we can see it in the table above, based on the technical literature one can say that the gypsy language belongs to the Indo-European languages. It originates from a common root with the Indo-European languages which was more or less unified before the BC 3000. It typically uses three grammatical genders, which is not present anymore on many of the modern languages or only traces of it can be discovered. In the Lovari language one can distinguish two genders. Besides plural and singular there was also a second kind of plural that is missing from today`s language. In its inflection it has eight cases together with the vocative case. Within the Indo-European languages it belongs to the indo languages. The gypsy language has a strong connection to Sanskrit. The basic vocabulary can be related and traced back to the literally style

of the ancient indo-linguistic monuments. The group of people, who spoke the gypsy language, has left their homeland, through Iran, in the 5-7th century. Throughout their journey their language picked up many elements from other tribes' languages. They took something from all the different groups of people they encountered – such as Persian, Ossetian, Kurdian, Armenian, Bulgarian, South-Slavic, Romanian and Greek. With the aid of these words one could trace the path of their journey and it can serve as a proof regarding their history. The gypsy language has an indo root only regarding its basic vocabulary. Its grammar is the same as the Balkanian languages. In fact today only few people speak the actual gypsy language, since the wandering groups of gypsy people picked up a lot from the languages that were surrounding them as they were on their journey. They became bilingual – most of the live on European or American cities – and the mixing and mingling of languages began.”²⁷

“Those people who speak the Romani language belong to the biggest linguistic minority in Europe. The majority of the gypsy population, 4-6 billion people, use this language as mother tongue or to communicate with other Roma people. In the course of time since Roma people settled down in Europe, their language became similar to particular languages in the Balkans. Those words that were formed during the first period of the history of the Romani language are called stable vocabulary. This vocabulary was influenced, among others, by the separation of the Romani language from the other ancient-indo languages, by the wandering of the gypsy population and by their settling down in Europe. This stable vocabulary shows a connection to the Sanskrit language and also to the new-indo languages. From this time period comes the word “manuš” which means man. Certain sources say that in the 5-7th centuries – after the migration from India – Persian languages influenced the Romani language. For example the word “baxt”

²⁷ Palla Ágnes: A Magyar és Cigány nyelv kölcsönhatásának vizsgálata. Szakdolgozat, Debrecen, 2009
<http://www.romanishib.hu/a-cigany-nyelv/>

originates from Persian and means happiness. In the 6-9th centuries the Romani language picked up Armenian loan-words. For example the word “dudum” – meaning melon – and the word “verda” – meaning car. In the 10th century the Romani people were under Greek influence on the territory of the Byzantine Empire. From around this time comes the word “foro” – which means city – and the word “petalo” – meaning horseshoe. After wandering to the Balkans they picked up for example the word “kraj” meaning king. Those words that are different from the basic vocabulary of the certain variations of the Romani languages are called mobile vocabulary. These words were picked up throughout the wandering of the Romani people in Europe. For example the word “train” appears in different forms in different gypsy language variation. In the Hungarian gypsy language it is “vonato” while on the English one it is “treno.” The gypsy ethnical groups spread from the Balkans throughout Europe in the 14-15th centuries. One can distinguish three layers of the Romani language: the first one is the Hungarian, Polish and Czech Romani. The second one is the Balkanian Romani language and the third one is the Romanian Romani language. The people belonging to these groups mutually understand each other. As a result of modernization and globalization a new layer of Romani language has appeared. In this new layer one can find international expressions that are mostly connected to technological achievements. In today`s world there is an ever growing demand on the standardizations of the Romani language.”²⁸

²⁸ <http://www.oco.hu/a-roma-nyelv/>

Describing Roma musicians and their music

Gypsy music is performed without the score, played by heart. The names of the composers` of the most typical standard pieces such as czardas, song and recruiting dance have never become known. Thus it is easy to spread the rumor, according to which all these songs are written by their performers. In the styles mentioned above, the execution of the pieces plays an extremely important role: the music often times represent only a skeleton that is to be completed by the technical abilities, traditional set of formulas, routine, and smart improvisations of the gypsy band. In this sense the band and the musicians also take part in the creation of the music.²⁹ So, first of all I can tell you that they are not different than other people. I am saying this, since if I said the opposite, I would start a war between Romas and others. So I do not want to say that they are different but I also don`t want to say that they are totally the same. Of course the Roma children experience a different cultural background, and the environment influences them to a certain extent, let`s say in 70 %: they can carry the legacy of for example Indian, Romanian, Ukrainian and Hungarian culture.

Let us say the other 30 % is the special blood in their veins that makes them Gypsy. So I can tell you that every person is the same but everybody has a different special blood that makes them special. Their music is very emotional and carries much more sensibility than any “pop” song would. In the lyrics of the gypsy songs each and every person can find the reflection of their own lives: everyone can find a fitting song to their current emotional states. For example one of my favorite sentences is: Because love is a purposeless desire, deprived of hope. Music is a different kind of joy that comes from inside and cannot be bought. Of course one has to work to acquire music but it stays for a lifetime. Music provides

²⁹ <http://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02115/html/1-1130.html>

a certain kind of self-confidence and self-respect. By making music and by learning day by day, we can build up a balanced and harmonic life.

Thus, from the beginning we get so many emotions from our parents and people who are strangers for us that it results in us being able to perceive different emotions, feelings and passions. Obviously we cannot remember these emotions but still we bring these feelings to our lives. Passion is invisible, untouchable but sensible.

However what is interesting and what makes me happy is that the world still appreciates and needs our culture and music – even though racism is still present. It was intriguing for the researcher that Indian people did not want to talk about gypsies, however, as he attended certain dance performances, he realized that Indian dancers used the same dance moves as gypsy people in Europe. Thus, he started to approach Indian people from the perspective of dance and began to ask about the gypsies.

Gypsy people are not the only ones who live a life like that. I dare to claim that there are many similarities between gypsy and black people, since both of these groups used music as their way to express themselves – for example the blues music. I think that the blues and the gypsy song have many similar features, since people express their sadness and pain through the music. Due to music – even though racism and everyday struggles still exist – they can have a happier life. Thus, blues could be the first movement of gypsy music: it expresses pain – which is better to be expressed, since if one suppresses it, it can cause actual physical sickness. They learnt that pain is stronger than happiness and they do emphasize this thought in their music. Those people who are considered to be “minority” have to find a way to cope with their sorrow and attempt to live happily.

Chapter 2

Hungarian Gypsy history and their music

As one can read it in David M. Crowe`s A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia “Official Hungarian documents show that the Roma people settled in Hungary at the end of the Middle Ages. According to Emilia Horvathova, has speculated that Gypsies fled through Hungary in 1241 to escape the invading Mongols. Some scholars have pointed to a letter in 1260 from Ottokar II (r. 1253-1278) , the king of Bohemia, to Pope Alexander IV (r.1254-1261) , in which the Bohemian ruler mentions Cingari in the army of Bela IV (r. 1235-1270) of Hungary, whom Ottokar II had defeated earlier in the year in a struggle for Styria.”³⁰

“Angus Fraser concludes in his masterful *The Gypsies* (1992) that on closer inspection “a better reading of his letter replaces Cingarorum by Bulgarorum” During the 14th century, Roma people began to settle in the Slovak portions of Hungary, particularly around castles in the region. Initially, the Gypsies were welcomed into this part of Hungary because of the area’s sparse population.” The nobility and peasants who lived in the castles treated the Roma people with respect and believed them to be people who fled from Egypt for religious reasons, the mythical place of Gypsy origin to many East Europeans at that time.”³¹

According David Crowe, “new references to Gypsies crop up throughout this period, and in 1378 official documents in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia (which in 1102 became part of Hungary through the joint linkage of both thrones), refer specially to Roma people.” Four years later, one can find court records in Zagreb that make references to butchers with the names of “Cigan or Cygan, Chickan or Czyganychn,” however one cannot know for sure whether these

³⁰ David M. Crowe : A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia pp.69

³¹ David M. Crowe : A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia pp.69

names referred to Gypsies. One scholar has suggested that Sigismund of Luxemburg, who ruled in Hungary in 1387, granted “a group called the Sincani the right to choose their own leaders,” while the first specific mention of Gypsies in Hungarian Slovak accounts was in 1399, when the “Book of Executions of the Lords of Rozmberk” mentions “a certain Gypsy, the groom of Andrew.”³²

According to David Crowe, “Hungarian records indicate that in 1416 people in the Transylvanian town of Brasov”, which is now located in Romania, “provided ‘lord Emaus of Egypt and his 120 companions’ with food and money. Soon after, a considerable amount of Roma people traveled through Transylvania and the Slovak parts of Hungary with the permission of King Sigismund (1387-1437), who, as “Holy Roman Emperor, had gathered secular and Catholic Church leaders together in Constance, Italy, to resolve a crisis in the church over the papacy.”³³

As David Crowe explains it, “Sigismund granted the Gypsies travel privileges after significant diplomatic negotiations because the Roma people, who had spent some time in the Ottoman Empire, possessed important military information on the Turks.” In 1423, he granted the Gypsy leader Ladislaus and his followers a travel permit, and as result large numbers of Roma people went to Hungary. The Gypsy settlers worked as “castle musicians and metal workers” and were so highly regarded for these latter skills” and the manufacture of weapons that “they were declared royal servants, for whose settlement and employment on private estates the consent of the king was necessary.”³⁴

³² David M. Crowe : A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia pp.69

³³ David M. Crowe : A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia pp.70

³⁴ David M. Crowe : A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia pp.70

One can read in David Crowe's *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* that "Hungarian rulers also appointed for the first time "a chief of the Gypsies" who was given the title of *egregious* (distinguished). He was served by subordinate Roma leaders or *voivode* in each county who "acted as judges in Gypsy matters."³⁵

"Hungarian Roma people also began to distinguish themselves as musicians; records show that in 1489, Gypsies were paid to perform for Queen Beatrix (r. 1475-1490), the wife of Matthias I, at Csepel Island, while another monarch, Louis II (r. 1506-1526), paid pharaohs to perform for the court in the spring of 1525. A second document seven years later refers to Gypsy minstrels, while in 1543, Queen Isabella, wife of Janos Zapolyai and daughter of Sigismund I Jagiello of Poland, marveled at Roma musicians. She wrote that at the court in the newly created Principality of Transylvania, which she began to rule with her son in 1541, "the most excellent Egyptian musicians play, the descendants of the Pharaohs."³⁶

As I mentioned before Dr. Toomas Kivisild has proven Romani people's origins in 2012 in the Indian sub-continent, and also identified the location and social background from which they emerged. According to David M. Crowe, he quoted from Ferenc Szakaly's book called: "The Early Ottoman Period." The quote is false, because the new genetics study shows that the Gypsy people were not originally from Egypt, but from India.

Returning to David Crowe, he writes that "about 200 years later "by the early 1740s, Austria's new ruler, Maria Theresa (r. 1740-1780), had implemented more restrictions against the Roma people. They promised punishment to anyone who gave Gypsies food and renewed

³⁵ David M. Crowe : *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* pp.70

³⁶ David M. Crowe : *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* pp.71

earlier threats of deportation. Any Rom who reentered the empire would be flogged on the first offense and executed if caught again.” In 1749, Maria Theresa issued a new anti-Gypsy decree that ordered that nomadic Gypsies, “vagrants and foreign beggars” were to be forced out of the Austrian Empire.”³⁷

“This legislation did not affect sedentary Roma people, “some of whom enjoyed considerable favor in high places as musicians.” Maria Theresa also ordered Hungary’s Roma to halt their nomadic ways, settle, and “be subject to taxes and to compulsory service for the lord of the manor.” To strengthen the new regulations, Gypsy were no longer allowed to possess horses or wagons and could not leave their villages without the permission of officials. The local nobility were unenthusiastic about these reforms because they had to bear the costs of enforcing them. In 1761, Maria Theresa decreed that Hungarian Gypsies would no longer be referred to as cigany but instead would be called” new citizens, ‘new peasants’. Or ‘new Hungarians’.”³⁸

According to Balint Sarosi, a Hungarian musicologist and ethnomusicologist, “The gypsies have no common musical language, there is no common melodic treasury, or way of making music which is identical with all the gypsies scattered throughout the world. So does gypsy music exist at all? It does exist but it is generally different in each country, and everywhere it displays many features in common with local folk music.”³⁹

³⁷ David M. Crowe : A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia pp.73

³⁸ David M. Crowe : A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia pp.74

³⁹ Balint Sarosi : Gypsy Music pp:23

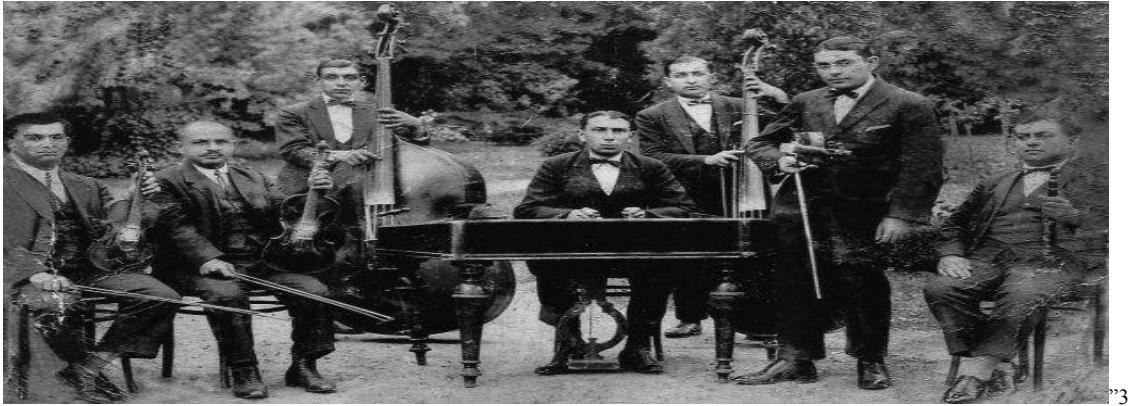
Gypsy music is really interesting, because there are so many ways to describe our emotions with music, but for me especially Hungarian gypsy music can show my feeling the best.

In the world there are numerous kinds of gypsy music – such as Indian, Romanian, Czech, French and Hungarian. Maybe out of all these Hungarian gypsy music is the most unique.

According to Balint Sarosi “The history of the Hungarian song has not yet been written, nor any analysis of its style (or styles). We are also severely lacking song collections compiled in accordance with scholarly demands : at present there is only one such collection-that of Gyorgy Kerenyi, published in 1961 under the title *Nepies dalok* (Popular songs), containing songs which originated in the 19th century and which are more or less popular among the people, too. The Hungarian songs which have been written in our own century- the majority of those now in fashion-are found dispersed in popular songs book (Szol a nota, Notaszo, and “Songs books” by composers, etc. The folksong collector also comes across an abundance of Hungarian popular songs, old and new, even in the most remote parts of the country. Certain types of song have become built into the broader oral tradition and there they live the same life and perform the same function as the folksong taken in its more literal sense.”⁴⁰

For example in the Czardas movement – which is a type of dance – for every second syllable there is a chord, which makes it rather colorful. This movement can be seen as a reflection of the Romani people`s character: there are also colorful and passionate. One can often see them in showy, fiery colors such as red, golden, yellow, white and black. Since music`s goal is to entertain people, gypsy music also has an entertaining and fast movement style called “Fresh.” It is a fast paced piece of music and makes people dance: thus, it reflects happiness. Gypsy music usually has three movement. In the first movement one can hear the sorrow.

⁴⁰ Balint Sarosi : Gypsy Music pp: pp.151



In the second movement – called Czardas – there is pain and the non-understanding of gypsy people, however a ray of hope is also present. In the third movement – called “Fresh” – happiness and understanding plays a role. To me this is similar to Buddhism. It reminds me of the Four Noble Truths. First of all there is pain and suffering in the first two phases but in the third one there is pain, however this pain teaches us how to reach happiness and good things in life. In the fourth phase this pain becomes joy since one learnt that – after the long suffering – due to the pain already experienced one cannot hold it inside.

One has to approach pain from a different perspective but this attitude can only be reached after experiencing the first three phases. For this reason I say that without suffering there is no euphoric happiness. Since one experienced pain already – and successfully overcome it – in the future, when pain comes again one will know how to handle it and profit from it, and, one will know that at the end happiness will emerge.

Many Hungarian composers – such as Bela Bartok and Zoltan Kodaly – were interested in Hungarian gypsy music. Also the famous French composers – Saint-Saens and Ravel – were intrigued by it. They used it in their pieces, such as the Ravel in his “Tzigane” and also Monte in his famous “Czardas.” What was the most interesting for me is that in Saint-Saens piece “Gypsy Air” after the introduction there is a Hungarian Song excerpt in classical form.

These gestures influenced the gypsy population in a positive way that also “white” people were interested in their music and culture and also incorporated it in their works.

Romanian Gypsy history and their music

As David Crowe describes it in his work *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* “there is some disagreement over when Gypsies began to enter Romania, though most evidence supports Nicolae Gheorghe’s contention that they arrived in Wallachia in the 12th century and later in Moldavia. Their presence in the region predates the creation of Wallachia in the early 14th century by Voivode Basarab, as well as that of Moldova in the mid-1300s. Known to Hungarian rulers as Cumania. Wallachia and Moldavia initially served as Hungarian outposts against incursions by the Crimean Tatars, successors to the Mongols. The Mongol invasion of southeastern Europe via Russia in 1241-1242 had temporarily halted Hungary’s move into Transylvania and stimulated efforts by Wallachia’s voivode (princes) to assert their independence from Hungary.”⁴¹

As Mr. Crowe writes, “Moldavia found itself threatened by the Crimean Tatars and by Poland, which desired Moldavia’s strategic trade outlets. Both principalities found themselves increasingly threatened by the region’s new power, Ottoman Turkey, by the end of the 14th century, while Wallachia continued to guard against Hungarian incursions. It was in this environment that the earliest actual evidence of Romanian Gypsies emerged. “On October 3, 1385, a document issued by Voivode Dan I (r. 1385-1386) to the Monastery of the Virgin Mary

⁴¹ David M. Crowe : *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* pp.107

at Tismana confirmed an earlier gift of 40 Roma families to the Monastery of St. Anthony at Vodita from his uncle, Voivode Vladislav.”⁴²

The Romanian gypsy music stands closest to the Hungarian gypsy music. One can also find there the three movement structure (Song, Czardas, Fresh) only the rhythm and the bass line are different. Even though the Romanian Gypsy music style derives from the Balkan Gypsy music it still has a close relation to Hungarian Gypsy music. The essential message of their music is the same as any other gypsy music. Music is absolutely necessary for them to express themselves and to make a living.

Indian and Hungarian Gypsy instruments

First of all, because of the nomadic lifestyle they had no chance to purchase good instruments, so they had to make their own ones.⁴³ First these were percussion instruments and then simple string instruments. Throughout my research I found an interesting thing that there is an Indian string instrument – the Santoor/Santour - which is eerily similar to the Hungarian dulcimer. One would think that the dulcimer is a Hungarian instrument but it derives from an ancient Indian instrument. The Santoor and the Hungarian dulcimer share the same kind of shape which is the trapezoid.

⁴² David M. Crowe : A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia pp.107

⁴³http://www.ichcap.org/eng/contents/photo2.php?mode=view&code=M0000042&no=613&s_wr_subject=&s_wr_content=&stx=&page=&searchNation=&sub_menu=M141383955609



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The dulcimer is “usually attributed to the Ancient Persians. Their empire included some areas now occupied by Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. Of course we cannot be very clear but it seems to have come from somewhere in that area. The earliest visual representation of a Dulcimer is in a 12th century manuscript made in Byzantium. The instrument was introduced into Western Europe in the 15th century. Because of the versatility of the instrument, it’s ease of adaptation to different musical scales, its portability, and the explosion of travel. It spread towards many different cultures and became a very popular instrument throughout many areas of the world.”⁴⁴

According to the New World Encyclopedia “the early version of the dulcimer (santoor) was known in cultures from Greece to Mongolia and was known in India and throughout the Middle East and was widely used in rural areas since it was portable and easy to use. It was often used to accompany weddings and dances. It later became an instrument that was related to folk music and buskers. The dulcimer is a stringed musical instrument of two main varieties. In the case of the hammered dulcimer, the strings are stretched over a trapezoidal sounding board.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ <http://www.timmanning.net/newhtml/history.html>

⁴⁵ <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Dulcimer>

As one can find it in certain sources, “the Santoor is a dulcimer-like, lovely bell-sounding stringed instrument, which is hit or picked with one or two sledges of walnut wood. It consists of a trapezoid wooden sounding body, over which 25 to 30 string groups with four strings each are tightened.” Two out of the four strings are tuned identically, and its sound range is more than three octaves. The Santoor played today originated from Persia, from where it found its way to India in the fifteenth century.”⁴⁶

“Since it is only possible with difficulty to glide through the tonal intervals when playing this instrument, generally it is considered a less typical instrument of Indian Classical Music. Since then the Santoor has become a popular instrument both in India and in the West, on which mostly cheerful Ragas are played.”⁴⁷

Khanjari and pungu instruments

It is intriguing to note that the instrument has different names in the different areas in India. In the North it is called “khanjari” and in the South “kanjira.” Khanjai and pungu instruments play an important role in the cultural and social life of Bopas`.

According to ICH Digital Archives “Kalbeliyan Songs and Dances are an expression of the Kalbeliyan community's way of life as snake handlers of the yore. The women in flowing skirts dance to the beat of the 'khanjari,' a percussion instrument, and the 'poongi,' a wind instrument. These instruments are made by the Kalbeliyan themselves from natural materials. On

⁴⁶ <http://www.raga.info/indian-music/instruments.html>

⁴⁷ <http://www.raga.info/indian-music/instruments.html>

the occasion of Holi (the festival of colours), the Kalbeliyans perform a special dance. It is remarkable that in today's context, the Kalbeliyans' traditional music and dance has evolved into a creative and contemporary version that enthralls audiences worldwide. The music of the 'poongi' has a sinuous quality, which makes a dancer swirl and dance like a serpent. The songs also portray the creative and poetic acumen of the Kalbeliyans. The Kalbeliyans are reputed to compose lyrics spontaneously and improvise songs impromptu during a performance. The vast repertoire of songs covers all the rites of passage in their life. Though their traditional livelihood of snake handling is relegated to history now, the Kalbeliyans have preserved their cultural practices and established an identity for themselves through their performing arts."⁴⁸



”5

Kanjari



“6

Pungi

⁴⁸http://www.ichcap.org/eng/contents/photo2.php?mode=view&code=M0000042&no=613&s_wr_subject=&s_wr_content=&stx=&page=&searchNation=&sub_menu=M141383955609

The Roma Flag



“7

Gypsy Anthem

Zarko Jovanovic Jagdino

“Gelem, gelem, lungone dromenca
Maladilem baxtale Romenca
Ah, Romale, kathar tume aven,
le caxrenca, baxtale dromenca?

Aj, Romale, aj, Čhavale!

Vi man sas ek bari familija
Mudardasle e kali legija.
Athe vreme, uštyi rom akana
Te xutrasa, maj mišto keresa!
Aven manca sa lumake Roma,
Thaj putras le romane droma!

Aj, Romale, aj, Čhavale!”⁴⁹

“I went, I went on long roads
I met happy Roma
O Roma where do you come from,
With tents on happy roads?

O Roma, O Brothers!

I once had a great family
The Black Legions murdered them
Come with me Roma from all the world
For the Roma roads have opened
Now is the time, rise up Roma now
We will rise high if we act!

O Roma, O brothers!”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cig%C3%A1ny_nemzeti_jelk%C3%A9pek

⁵⁰ <http://www.cigany-zene.hu/2010/08/gelem-gelem-a-romahimnusz/>

Anthem

In 1971, on the First Roma World Congress in London, the “Gelem, gelem” song has been accepted as the official Anthem of Gypsies and the Opre Roma! phrase. The original form of this song is a Balkanian gypsy folksong that has multiple variations. It has been around in arrangements in many forms since the 1930`s. Based on this, the anthem was composed by the Yugoslavian composer Zarko Jovanovic Jagdino for the honor of the world congress. Originally the anthem was supposed to be the “march” of the congress but the delegation announced it to be the official gypsy anthem. The Anthem became more and more popular throughout the years. It gained so much fame and popularity amongst the Gypsies that it technically became a folksong again. Today it is performed in numerous different ways also with different lyrics. Non-Gypsy text variations were also written: there are usually no translations but newly written lyrics.⁵¹

Flag

Even though it is made of simple visual elements, its symbolic features are rather complex. Its elements refer not only to permanent movement and change but also to the most essential principles in life. The blue stripe means the sky – not only in a physical but also in an abstract sense. I refers to eternity, freedom and to the opportunity and to all those things that are on the other world: heaven, for Catholics to the catholic God and for Muslims to Allah. The green stripe symbolizes Earth. The plants, fields and the greenness of nature. I refers to nature-loving feature of Gypsies and there life style which stands close to nature. At the same time – as opposed to the endless blueness of the sky – it also means the boundaries of the earth, the

⁵¹ <http://www.romnet.hu/index.php?where=print&module=news&id=276>

concrete capabilities, and the circle of more limited opportunities. In Christianity it is the color of hope that connect the mundane with the divine. In Islam it is the color of the prophet, who showed mundane believers the way to Allah. The red wheel – or as it is called in a Sanskrit expression, the Chakra – is a multi-faceted symbol. It refers to the flag ancient homeland, India, where Chakra is the symbol “dharma” the most important principle. “Dharma” – in the Hindu religion - does not only mean the mundane jurisdiction, the social justice, but it also carries a spiritual sense: it is a cosmical law and order. The wheel symbolizes naturally the notion of travelling, the wandering lifestyle and the migration. With its shape and color the wheel stand for the rising and setting sun, thus referring to the cyclical nature of time, to the chance to the reborn. The red is also the color of blood, which is a double symbol on its own. On the one hand it stands for the liquid that keeps the body alive, thus it is the symbol of life. On the other hand it means the blood that is spilt and in this sense it stands for the innocent victims of history.⁵²

On the occasion of the Gypsy World Day, the gypsies living all over the world revived an old Indian and Balkanian tradition, according to which they go to nearby river together and sing together while putting flowers and wreaths on the water. The first Gypsy World Congress was held between the 8th and the 12th of Aril in 1971. The organizer was – per procuration of the Indian government – the World Council of Churches. There delegations from 23 different countries and they have made the following decisions regarding the history of gypsies: The different Gypsy ethnical groups should accept each other as brothers and consider themselves the

⁵² http://www.kethanodrom.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=121:a-cigany-himnusz-szerzje&catid=69:hires-ciganyok&Itemid=85

members of the same nation. The name of the different gypsy ethnical groups all around the world should uniformly be “Roma” They accepted the official symbols of Romas: the flag, the anthem and the moto. They articulated the necessity to standardize the Roma language. In the meanwhile they accepted temporarily the “Lovari” gypsy language as an official one.

They accepted the first temporary gypsy alphabet. On this congress five boards have been established, who are playing an active role in the organization of the following World Congresses that are held every five years. These are the following: social committee, financial committee, porajmos committee, cultural committee and linguistic committee.

In honor of the Congress the Unites Nations pronounced he 8th of April to be the International Roma Day.⁵³

⁵³ <http://www.romnet.hu/index.php?where=print&module=news&id=276>

Conclusion

First of all, throughout my research I have found numerous information that I had no knowledge about previously. This fact in itself changed the way I am perceiving the world right now and made me open-minded. I have discovered those attributes that the Indian and the Romani people share with each other – such as many aspects of culture, dance-movements and the roots of the language.

Second of all, I got to know that some thoughts that I believed to be true are disproved – for example that Gypsy people come from Egypt. It has always been clear to me that the culture of Indian people evolved and became more abundant throughout the years, however I was not familiar with the fact that it also stayed within such traditional frames up to today. I had the chance to gather more information about the Kalbeliyans and Bopas who still live in India. It was also a great experience to take a closer look on the traditional Gypsy instruments and their Indian relative, the Santoor.

During my research I also got to know the origin of the Romani people`s flag and anthem, with which I was not closely familiar beforehand. The experience of writing this project also made me a prouder Roma person who believes in the gypsy values and is able to appreciate it even more.

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