

## BASICS OF ROMOLOGY

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A romológia alapjai (Basics of Romology)

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## INTRODUCTION

The much-needed volume entitled Basics of Romology can be regarded as the continuation of the two writings (*Romology – Gypsyology*<sup>49</sup>, 2000, and *Knowledge for the Romology Bachelor Programme*<sup>50</sup>, 2006) published earlier by the Department of Romology and Sociology of Education, Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pécs. Widening of the subject area and the importance of disseminating the results of the research, development and teaching work carried out within the department has justified the preparation of this publication, which was born not only for educational purposes, but also from a concern for readers to get a more complete picture of the history, culture, habits, problems and successes of the Roma/Gypsies<sup>51</sup>, with particular emphasis on the situation of those living in Hungary.

The editor of the book, Anna Orsós is the head of the Department of Romani Studies and Sociology at the University of Pécs, as well as an outstanding figure of the Hungarian Roma/Gypsy sociolinguistic research. All the authors are academics and researchers at prestigious institutions of higher education.

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<sup>49</sup> Original title: *Romológia – Ciganológia*

<sup>50</sup> Original title: *Ismeretek a romológia alapképzési szakhoz*

<sup>51</sup> In Hungary, the Roma call themselves both Roma and cigány (Gypsy). For this reason we are using the term Roma/Gypsy to refer to this population group.

## Summary of content

Katalin R. Forray's introductory writing *Teaching Roma/Gypsy Studies in the higher education system*<sup>52</sup> provides detailed information about the organization and functioning of Romology as a university specialization, its training structure and history. She also provides data regarding the number of students who graduated from this specialization between 2003 and 2014. In the second part of her writing, the author presents the content of the volume. We can also find out that the authors of the book discuss all issues, that could be of interest to higher education students or to other readers interested in the topic. The first part ends with a short dedication written by Katalin R. Forray.

The next study of the volume is Ernő Kállai's writing entitled *Gypsy groups in Europe and Hungary*<sup>53</sup>, presenting the history of Roma/Gypsy in Hungary, from historical aspects. At the same time we can read about their origin, traditional occupations, ancient language, and linguistic groups like Rom, Manus, Yenish, Sinti, Gitano/Caló and Voyageur. Most of the Roma/Gypsy in Europe have been in the East region for several centuries and they have experienced discrimination throughout history. Starting from the Dualist Era (1867-1918) until World War II the perception of the Gypsies was characterized by a lack of social interest, then, after 1945 they were referred to as communities living in extreme poverty, on the margins of society, whose social integration was a very difficult task. The term „Gypsy” started to be used in a general sense, probably due to the fact that the social status of various groups had become similar. Since 1960 the situation of the Gypsies has been handled as a social problem and their integration was regarded as the most important task. The author reaches the conclusion that the Gypsies are transterritorial groups with different identities and social status, their common features being the presumed common origin, the lack of a home country, the minority situation resulting from this, as well as discrimination and the peripheral social situation existing in all countries.

Csaba Dupcsik's well-documented study, bearing the title *Images, frames, eras - sketch on the history of Hungarian Gypsies*<sup>54</sup>, processes a large amount of literature and is intended to provide basics for those who wish to undertake the study of the history of these ethnic groups. It discusses three central issues: the periodization of the Roma/Gypsies' history in Hungary, Roma/Gypsy and non-Roma/non-Gypsy people's perceptions of these ethnic groups, as well as the changing relationship between these perceptions, images and the real situation in

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<sup>52</sup> Original title: *A romológia egyetemi oktatásáról*

<sup>53</sup> Original title: *Cigány csoportok Európában és Magyarországon*

<sup>54</sup> Original title: *Képek, keretek, korszakok vázlat a magyarországi cigányok történetéhez*

different eras. The author presents three types of images of the Roma/Gypsies (outsider, displaced, outcast) along with seven approaches associated with these. He also gives an overview of the Roma/Gypsies' history in Hungary, divided into five eras. In this overview we are given a comprehensive description of the changing social situation of the Roma/Gypsies in the course of history, the professions, activities which were considered to be typical Gypsy occupations in various eras (e.g. blacksmithery, playing music, musician-metalworker), the attempts to violent resettlement and assimilation, housing conditions, the low educational level and the chances of employment.

Tibor Cserti Csapó's study entitled *The position of the Roma/Gypsy groups in modern society - Sociological approaches and related issues*<sup>55</sup> focuses on the main directions, problems and dilemmas of Romology research, and it also provides insight into a number of research results. The major methodological dilemma of Romology research is whom and on what basis (external features, language, culture, typical names) we call Gypsy or Roma. As in Sociology researchers do not usually deal with the individual sub-groups, in the spirit of fairness they mainly use the dual denomination Roma/Gypsy. The study also reviews the ways and forms of Social Statistics, sociological interest regarding, and the methods used in the research on Roma/Gypsy communities in different historical eras. In Hungary these communities had mainly been explored from the perspective of ethnography, folklore and linguistics, then, in the seventies, sociology-oriented studies started to emerge. Today, scientific research is mainly aimed at the disadvantaged socio-economic situation of the Roma/Gypsies and the search for solutions to this problem. The author tabulates data described in these sociological studies, which use different approaches, and draws attention to the basics of the scholarly method used in sociological research (regularity, comparability, sample size, representativeness) as well as the importance of compliance with these in order to get more accurate research results.

The next study of the volume belongs to Andrea Szalai and bears the title *The languages of the Roma/Gypsy minority: sociolinguistic aspects*, in which the author outlines the varieties and origins of the languages spoken by the Hungarian Gypsy communities (Roma, Beas<sup>56</sup>). We can get acquainted with names, which can be traced back to occupation names, such as čurari/csurár (grinder), kelderás/kelderár/köldörár (tinker), cerhári, colári, etc. The Romani (also Romany) language possesses a grammatical system characteristic to that of the Indo-

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<sup>55</sup> Original title: *A cigány csoportok helyzete a modern társadalomban – Szociológiai megközelítések és azok problematikája*

<sup>56</sup> also Boyash, Beash

European languages, while the Beas language to that of the neo-Latin languages, and for their speakers they are mutually unintelligible languages. Although both languages are usually called Gypsy in Hungarian, it is important to keep in mind that they are two different languages spoken by two different linguistic communities. According to the author it is also important that linguistic research (pragmatics, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, discourse analysis) be carried out in the case of these two languages, too. Her article provides an overview of the results of research into language socialization strategies, carried out in a bilingual Roma/Gypsy community in Hungary. We can learn about the use of the Romani language in different speech situations, the terms *duma* and *vorba*, which are the names for the formal and informal speech in the Romani language, and we can also find out that the curse and the conditional curse (oath, promise) is a common discursive form in the conversation among Roma/Gypsies.

Anna Orsós' study entitled *The Beas language* explores the status of the Beas language, spoken in Hungary, which has had a written form for about twenty years. It also examines questions related to the language use of the Beas-speaking community, presents the results of linguistic research on Beas and Romani languages, and discusses the emergence of the subject matter in legislation and education, along with its educational development opportunities. We can read a detailed description of the meaning of the word *beas*, and of its three dialects (Argyelan, Muncsan, Ticsan), and the clarification of the concepts bilingualism and diglossia is also provided. Dialects of the Beas language are used in different countries, but its written form was created in Hungary, in the early 1990s, by Katalin Kovalcsik and Anna Orsós. In 2009 the descriptive grammar of the Beas language was finalized, which is the result of Anna Orsós's and László Kálmán's joint work. Research on Beas linguistics and language usage shows, that the Beas language is becoming less widely used, but according to the author this fact does not entail the loss of identity. The objectives of the Romani and Beas language minority education have partially been achieved, however the University of Pécs can boast about significant achievement in this respect, e.g. one can pursue studies in these two officially recognized languages, within the Doctoral School of Education one has the opportunity to take part in further training and research, and there is an accredited examination centre as well, where one can acquire a certificate of proficiency in Beas language. According to the author, the most important task of the Beas-speaking community is to increase the prestige of the language, to preserve it as their mother tongue and to pass it on.

In the first part of her writing entitled *The Romani language in the mirror of research and education*, Szilvia Lakatos presents the origins of the Romani language and the stages of its development. Then she summarizes the characteristics of the conservative Romani and Para-Romani (Anglo-Romani, Caló, Hungaro-Romani) language types. The second part of the study presents Hancock's, Matras's and Tálos's classifications of the European dialects of the Romani language. Over the past few decades much international and domestic research has been carried out in order to identify the dialects of the Romani language. In relation to research conducted in Hungary, the author makes reference to the work of researchers like the Csenki brothers (folk song collections, records related to dialects), Kamill Erdős (dialect research), Miklós Hutterer and György Mészáros (*A descriptive grammar of the Lovari Gypsy dialect*<sup>57</sup>), József Vekerdi and György Mészáros (*Syntax of the Vlach Gypsy dialect in Hungary*<sup>58</sup>), Ervin Karsai (*Stylistics sketch of Romani (Gypsy)*<sup>59</sup>), Gyula Papp (*Auxiliary material for the development of Hungarian linguistic communicative skills of Boyash children*<sup>60</sup>), Ildikó Babos (applicability of metaphor theories) and András Márton Baló (descriptive grammar of the Romani (Lovari) language). Research carried out on the Romani language use in Hungary has also made use of the methods of psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, as well as linguistic anthropology and ethnography of communication. The author considers it of major importance to identify and describe the two registers of the Romani language (duma and vorba). Currently in Hungary the Lovari language is becoming more and more prominent in standardization. One can do a state accredited language examination in Lovari and it is also taught in some schools. The study also discusses the role of the Romani language in education and the fact that more and more people take school leaving examination (baccalaureate) and language proficiency examination in Romani.

Tamás Hajdu, Gábor Kertesi and Gábor Kézdi's study entitled *Roma/Gypsy young people in secondary schools. Report from the Hungarian Life Course Survey of TARKI, waves 2006-12*<sup>61</sup> undertakes the exploration of the causes leading to high school backwardness. The authors present the data and the method of measuring ethnicity, then they compare the educational career of the currently twenty-year-old generation and another generation which was of similar age twenty years earlier. They state that the place of residence (the transport and geographical disadvantage) itself has only got a moderate significance as far as

<sup>57</sup> Original title: *A lovári cigány dialektus leíró nyelvtana*

<sup>58</sup> Original title: *A magyarországi oláh cigány nyelvjárás mondattana*

<sup>59</sup> Original title: *A romani (cigány) stilsztika vázlata*

<sup>60</sup> Original title: *Segédanyag beás cigány gyermekek magyar nyelvi kommunikációs készségének fejlesztésére*

<sup>61</sup> Original title: *Roma fiatalok a középiskolában. Beszámoló a TÁRKI Életpálya-felmérésének 2006 és 2012 közötti hullámaiból*

Roma/Gypsy students' high school backwardness is concerned. In what follows, the authors investigate the ethnic differences manifesting in high school dropout, the type of high school they graduated from, the results of the school leaving examination and further education at universities. One of the conclusions they reach is that only 9% of the non-Roma/Gypsy young people are not going to have a secondary education diploma, while almost half (48%) of the Roma/Gypsy young people end their high school career with no success. The results of the research are in line with the basic research findings of the international literature, according to which the majority of the school backwardness arises in early childhood and elementary school age.

János Zolnay, in his study bearing the title *Chances of Roma/Gypsy students in public education*<sup>62</sup>, gives an overview of the schooling of the Roma/Gypsy from the theoretical context to the specific issues. He outlines the chances of Roma/Gypsy children in public education from 1945 until 1985, when the school inspection was abolished and the use of alternative curricula and textbooks, then the free school choice and the establishment of alternative schools and foundation-schools gradually became possible. The author pays special attention to the education policy decisions of the last decade and to their impact on the development of schooling. After the regime change the inequalities of the public education system meant quality differences between individual schools as well, at the same time the segregation of socially disadvantaged, poor and ethnically stigmatized students became more and more severe. The author of the study concludes that only those Roma/Gypsy students have the chance to get into high schools, who did not attend a Roma/Gypsy-majority, segregated elementary school, while those who attended segregated ones, can only get into vocational schools.

The next study in the volume is László Fórika, Tamás Török and András Magicz's writing entitled *The system of minority rights*<sup>63</sup>. The first part discusses the basic concepts of international law and international protection of minority rights, then clarifies the concepts of minority / nationality, identity / national identity / double identity, collective national identity / personal national identity, Romani/Gypsy linguistic identity, autonomy / regional autonomy / cultural autonomy. The second section presents the system of minority rights, including those under international law. The European Union today is trying to answer the complex problems of the Roma/Gypsy community through four parallelly operating mechanisms. The third chapter deals with the organizations of the international protection of minority rights

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<sup>62</sup> Original title: *A roma diákok esélyei a közoktatásban*

<sup>63</sup> Original title: *A nemzetiségi jogok rendszere*

(Ombudsman, Equal Treatment Authority, non-governmental organizations). The Equal Treatment Authority has worked since 2005 and is an autonomous institution, which guarantees personal dignity, and safeguards the implementation of the principle of equal treatment. The study will help the reader understand the meaning and operation of jurisprudence, as well as the schooling problems and opportunities of the Roma/Gypsy population.

*Ethnography and cultural anthropology: research and mosaics on the culture of the Roma/Gypsy groups*<sup>64</sup> is Péter Szuhay's study, which examines the cultural heritage of the Roma/Gypsies living in Hungary.

The first part explores the most important research areas of ethnology and ethnography in Hungary (physical, spiritual, social ethnography). The second part contains a description of the Roma/Gypsy linguistic and ethnic groups in Hungary. In the third part of the study we can read the historical overview of the ethnographic research on Romani/Gypsies, beginning with the observation method used by gypsyologists, through folklore to ethnographic research. The author devotes a chapter to the anthropological research on the Roma/Gypsy communities, in which he discusses in detail the elements of the anthropological method, presenting the most important works of the outstanding researchers of the discipline. The teachability of the Romani/Gypsy culture is the central topic of the next section. The author draws attention to the fact that it is an enormous responsibility the extent to which we can generalize what we teach as Roma/Gypsy culture.

The volume ends with Zoltán Beck's study entitled *Basics of the Roma/Gypsy literature and fine arts*<sup>65</sup>, in which the author presents the Roma/Gypsy belles lettres and fine arts in Hungary. We can read about the historical evolution of the term Gypsy literature, as well as about descriptive monographs and outstanding literary creations. The author of the first Hungarian-language overview monograph is Dénes Csengey, who presents in his work the Roma/Gypsy writers and poets of the Hungarian literature, while until the early 2000s the organizer and main theoretician of the Roma/Gypsy fine arts in Hungary was István Kerékgyártó. Together with the previous study, we can get a holistic view of the artistic performance, with which the Roma/Gypsy population has contributed to the enrichment of literature and arts in Hungary.

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<sup>64</sup> Original title: *Néprajz és kulturális antropológia: kutatások és mozaikok a cigány csoportok kultúrájából*

<sup>65</sup> Original title: *A cigány, roma irodalom és képzőművészet alapjai*

## **Conclusion**

The sophisticatedly designed publication includes a total of twelve writings, the scientific diversity, professional approach and standard of competence of which emphasize that it is a much-needed book indeed. All of the studies included in the carefully and clearly structured volume end with notes, including explanatory information, and a rich bibliography which make them complete. I think, that the authors have managed to reach their goal, as throughout these 382 pages we are offered a complex picture of the history, culture, problems and successes of the largest minority group living in Hungary.

Overall, we can say that readers are holding a very interesting, diverse, scholarly volume in their hand, which does not only serve to help students prepare for their exam, but is also exciting and fun.