

WHY ROMA HISTORY MATTERS? PEOPLE WITH NO PAST, HAVE NO PRESENT AND NO FUTURE

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Abstract:

The paper discusses the history of the Roma and their language, from the beginnings of migration from India to the present day. It exposes the close relationship between the history of Roma and their language. The author points out that the history of Roma is written by others and not Roma people. So these historians reconstructed, history of this nation, from traces that are left from no Roma people: in city chronicles, judicial acts, decrees, or edict, travelogues and similar documents. Therefore, Roma people are more objects than subject in that kind history of the Roma.

Keywords: Roma, history of Roma, Roma language

1. HISTORY OF ROMA PEOPLE

1.1. History is on Romani language Naxhlipen, and means the past

There is no agreement about many historical facts relating to Roma in the scientific community, especially historical facts about their early migrations from India to Byzantium and further to the countries of Southeast Europe. On behalf that we suggest you to consider the data of arriving Roma in European countries. Since we are in eternal city, let's see what J. G. Frazer said about it, in his book *The Golden Bough*, on page 11, Belgrade 1992. "According to some, a place of romantic meetings wasn't in Nemean wood, but it was in a grove near Arc of Constantine in Rome, where other Egeria sacred source appears from a dark cave. Roma Vestals everyday brought earthen pots, which they wore on their heads, and washed the temple of Vesta with the water from this source. In Juvenal time, this natural rock was framed by marble; this holy place has been desecrated by the group of poor Jews, to which were allowed, same as Gypsies, to settle in the grove. We can assume that the spring which flows into Nemean Lake, was the first Egeria source and that the first settlers, coming down from Albanian mountains to the banks Tibar river, brought this Ninfa and found new habitat for her in a grove called the Gate." L. Juvenal, who lived from 60-127., in his satire mentioned about 110.year: "In Italy strolling magicians, astrologers and acrobats from Phrygian and India." This confirms that some people from India were already present in the Roma Empire.

1.2. Arrival time of Roma in Europe

In front of you is a map, that is made especially for the Museum of Roma Culture in Belgrade and it presents the earliest and latest information of Roma immigration in different countries. It is incomplete, because its purpose is to renew with the information. As you can see, there is a huge difference in dates of Roma migrations in some cities and countries given by earlier and today historical research. Certainly, we can say that these and other data that are already known from recent history and other school research must be introduced in public, especially to historians. We expect for ten years, that this map will be much different, which will change the earliest period when Roma emigrated from India and came to this area.

1.3. Concepts of history and history of Roma

As you know, the concept of history refers to the knowledge of past events or what has happened in the past. This meaning of the history comes from the time of Herodotus, who is known as "father of history". But what to do with Roma who have never heard for this bearded gentleman, who, by the way, in his fifth book of history had mentioned some Sing or Singin. How much of this in the book is true, check by yourself what was Herodotus wrote. Maybe it is not time and place to check this because many who has more achieved in this discipline had done that before us.

1.4. Herodotus-Singi and Singini

To avoid any doubt, because we are not all historians here is the quotation in extenso:" The only who live over the Ishtar (Danube) and that I was able to find out -wrote Herodotus - are people whose name is Singini, which wear as Midjans. Their horses are shaggy all over the body, and their hair is long to five centimeter, they are small, with a blunt snout and can't carry on man, while they are very quick in carriage; because that the local people drive in carriage they towing. Their country extend from Enet to Adriatic. They say for themselves that they are immigrants from Midjan, but how they moved from there, we are unable to explain. All of that could happen in a large period of time. People from Lygija who live above Massalia called retailers Singins, and people from Cyprus uses that term for spear." There Herodotus probably thinking on people who make spears. This can be read in the *History of Herodotus*, Book 5, published by Dereta, Beograd, 2003, p.216. or in book "Roma in Belgrade" from Dragoljub Acković.

1.5. Legende of Kannauj

Not only Herodotus wrote what was important historiography of Roma, because many European, and even more Arabian historians have already done it, that is mentioned in the "History of the Roma" wrote by PhD Rajko Đurić. There you can read: "The oldest chapter in the history of Roma is an integral part of the history of India", he says, "especially on north and northwest on whose territory they had in the period from VIII to XII century, several kingdoms." There are many different opinions about that how many kingdoms of Roma were in India. It is especially interesting story about Kanauj, that probably all you know, and we want to repeat only words from French historian Louis Frédéric: "Residents from Kannauj were dignitaries, scholars, artists, craftsmen". On European continent, as we already know, Roma were mainly engaged in craft works and arts such as dance and music.

1.6. Roma apprehension concept of history

As all of us know the concept of history, comes from another Greek word which means knowledge of the past gained from inquiries and listening. Its very similar with Roma understanding of this concept. To remind, the fact is that Roma for history use term Nakhutnipen which means past. This could explain to us how it is possible that almost illiterate Roma still know their history. We all know institution of talk-man and we just want remind you about professional talk-mans that are also famous today among the Roma. They have contributed to preserve lot of history of this nation. Of course, there are notes from history of Roma that were previously unknown or concealed. Here is a drastic example. When we talk about Roma as term that is use in our daily speak, many people say that we have adopted this term at 70s at the First World Congress of Roma in London. They claim that this is a novelty of arrogant Roma intellectuals. However, in one writing from 1422, which was found in Italian town, Forli said that Roma were aware about they originate from India and that they called Roma, not Gypsies. More precisely, even at that time they were aware of their historical and cultural identity.

2. WHO IS WRITING THE HISTORY OF ROMA

2.1. Who wrote and still writes history of Roma

A. Mirga and L. Mruz say: "Roma do not have their own history, written in their own language with ethnic heroes, celebrity events or failures in which they could show their own relationship to the events of the past "(Andrzej Mirga-Mruz L., Roma, differences and intolerance; p.27, Akapit, Belgrade, 1997). We partly agree with this statement, and we want to mention a few examples that refute aforesaid. Here are few of those books that can be used as textbook for middle and high schools. If we accept the fact that Roma have a history, then its task should be based, as the history of other nations on reliable evidence, from the first, second or third sources, to describe and explain the development of Roma society in the past. History should answer the questions: what, where, when, how and why. From those who provided answers to these questions depends on what will be determined. During the past historical time, were Roma able to provide in writing, the answers to these issues? No. They didn't. The others were doing that, if they ever did. Can Roma do it now? Almost, but not enough. Therefore it is necessary entered the lessons of Roma history in school curricula of primary, secondary and high schools. That is why history of Roma is important. Unfortunately, in this moment about history of Roma people, usually don't write Roma. If you're wondering why it should write Roma people? The answer is because of inquiries and listening which are the component of definition of this subject, history.

2.2. History of Roma in Roma opus

Epic poem "Song of King Prithviraj", whose author is Bardai Chand, a contemporary and friend of the King of North India the Prithviraj III (1168-1192) from the royal dynasty Chauhan, is one of the few, unless if its not the only one, literary work of art that is still present on the collective memory of Roma. His opponent hot-tempered and vindictive Jaichand, whose nickname was "the lame Peng" because the limping, warred for short time against Prithviraj. When Jaichand was defeated he wanted to revenge. He called Muhammad Ghorī, Afghanistan Sultan, in the war against Prithviraj, and promised him that he will be with his army on his side against Prithviraj. In historical sense, this war opened the doors to

conquerors of India, and it was the real cause for the exodus of Roma. Therefore, Song of Prithviraj, who was the last king of the Roma, also summarized history of Roma, which were told on literary language. Collected folklore, which was published in the former Yugoslavia, is the best proof of that, especially one that was published by academic Rade Uhlik, from Sarajevo. Of all historical figures and legendary heroes in the oral tradition of the Roma, Peng was mentioned the most, ie. Jaichand, as the personification of evil and destruction "Roma Empire" (Rajko Djuric, History of Roma literature, p.16, Vršac, 2011.).

2.3. Roma history haven't battles, killing and royal dynasties

Elements for defining term Roma history are inquiries and listening. Why is this so? First, the documents about some historic events from the Roma past are work of those who are not Roma people, and whose mother tongue is not Roma. That means that all historical documents were written in another language and only those who know the language were able to read and interpret it. Were able illiterate Roma to read them? We will not reveal anything new if we say that history of Roma, don't contains massive battles, stories of conquest countries or continents and killing or inauguration of its own dynasties with all their portraits in cathedrals and museums. Roma history do not contains that. All that about we have just said, but in a different way, is recorded in Roma tales, legends, and jokes and so on. So that they could only know those who were Roma or otherwise learned Roma language.

2.4. Connection between Roma language and their history

Because through studying of language we can learn a lot, even history of a nation. In fact, there is agreement that studying Romani language is best clues by which was writing their history, culture. First of all, the most important historical source was their move to different areas and coexistence with different peoples. By tracking their movements through changes in language, we came to the knowledge of the history of this nation. Because, if we study the documents in the archives, we will get the impression that Roma are concerned only with theft and crime. Why we claim that? Because in Archives about Roma, they are mostly found calls for the trial and conviction for petty theft. Inquisition also took its toll, with convictions for witchcraft, burning at the stake.

2.5. Roma haven't common history, but have a common language

Roma in different parts of the world haven't a common history, but they have a common language, on which occurred some dialects. Studying them, we can see how much is their language important and have influence on preservation of identity. Because history is, a science that in addition to their mother tongue and possibly geography have great affects on preservation of the national identity of each nation, also the Roma. In primary schools in Serbia, history is taught from textbooks from five grade and further. In most history textbooks that are used in Serbia since the end of World War II until today, Roma call Gypsies, which has a pejorative meaning. Only in the first decade of the third millennium begins to use the term Roma. History of Roma is studying in primary schools in Serbia, precisely in Vojvodina, through the subject Roma language and culture. Of course, the textbook for this course doesn't exist, so knowledge and involvement of lecturers is very important. Considering the fact that the teachers in these schools are not always enough educated, we can't expect from them to achieve any significant results.

2.6. Where could learn history of Roma

Possibilities to educate Roma children about their own history through activities of cultural institutions are at this moment insufficient, so we should devise effective ways for such activities. If such institutions existed, the role of Roma cultural institutions should be much higher in studying history of Roma. Namely, in Serbia, beside the Museum of Roma culture, Roma Art Gallery and Specialized Library "Trifun Dimic" in Novi Sad, other institutions almost no exist. If you want to change the attitude towards the Roma people, you definitely have to work on being know all similarities for Roma people, but also what are the differences from other people. Hundred past years Roma people live in community with other nations, and that kind of living together still didn't give positive results, especially in the field of knowing history, culture and language of the Roma.

2.7. Impact of the Roma political elite to create a common history

In recent times appears Roma's need to create study primarily of their own history. Roma's political elite is concentrated in local and international organizations of Roma, which are created within ethnically differentiated mass of the population. These members of Roma's elite present Roma people and trying to create a unique Roma community. For example, such as Sinti, Manush, Ashkali and Egyptians. Which does not mean that in the future will develop and new trends.

2.8. Get to know for respect each other

Desire of other nations to know history of Roma, and everything that relates to Roma (for example from Munich Bureau against Dilman Gypsy book, learning Roma songs and dances, and much more) is dominant for various reasons among European and other nations from the time when Roma people appeared in Europe or other continents. As we know Roma do not have their own history, written in their own language with ethnic heroes, celebrity events or failures in which they could show their own relationship to the events of the past (Andrzej Mirga-Mruz Leh, Roma, differences and intolerance; p.27, Akapit, Belgrade, 1997.).

2.9. Roma history is in theirs mind not in books

History of Roma is mainly reflected in minds of Roma, not in books they wrote, but in the new time there are such books. It is history written by others, because Roma themselves rarely speak about their history on their own language. As consequence of those, Roma history events are not evaluate by their own system of values. The history of Roma wrote and still writes others not Roma people. So these historians reconstructed, history of this nation, from traces that are left from no Roma people: in city chronicles, judicial acts, decrees, or edict, travelogues and similar documents. Therefore, Roma people are more objects than subject in that kind history of the Roma. When we meets a history of Roma that should have in mind.

3. INSTEAD CONCLUSION

With all politics and life coaching of great Mahatma Gandhi, we agree completely. But, with his statement: "the happiest is nation that hasn't history", we will never agree. He knows how he reached this conclusion. We apologize great Gandhi for insolence. Because, as Rajko Djuric say in introduction of his book "there is people without historiography, but there is no nation without memory", and continues: "Remember means existence, and lack of memory means to disappear". Therefore, almost all researchers of Roma history, especially those who are Roma origins, claim: "what is remembered lives in language and everything that is created is born in language, starting from the myths and legends of various stories, songs etc." Through language, man and his community get consciousness and build self-awareness, national and human community as Djuric conclude and add: "The letter enabled writing down data on historical events and figures." On that way is made mentioned historiography that Roma people already have. In the fact, difficulties are because Roma people can hardly study their history from primary, but from secondary and tertiary historical sources.

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