



So o Del dela, oda ela.

What God gives will be.
Slovak Romani proverb

Religion and Beliefs

compiled by the editors

Romani groups tend to adopt the religion which is dominant in their countries of residence. In the European context this means that they are either Christian or Muslim. Even though they often do not follow all religious rituals and practices, faith in God remains an important part of their life. The importance attributed to God is also reflected in the oral literature of the Roma, such as in everyday formulas or songs. Virgin Mary also occupies an important position in their faith, as does the devil – although to a somewhat smaller extent. The belief in witches and other supernatural forces, such as the souls of the deceased, is commonly found among the Roma and has a certain impact in terms of social control.

INTRODUCTION

The long-term contact of the Roma with different non-Romani societies has led to the adoption of religious beliefs and practices dominant in the surrounding population. To give some examples, Roma are mostly Catholic in France, Spain, Italy and Poland; they are Protestant in Germany, Latvia and Estonia; Orthodox in Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania and Russia; and Muslim in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey. Roma of Muslim faith we find in other countries of the Balkans, too, such as in Greece, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Croatia, Bulgaria and Romania.

Religious conversion is often a consequence of international migration. For instance, the Lovara Roma from Central Europe, who used to be Catholic, converted to Orthodox Christianity shortly after arriving in Russia. Another example is that of the Xaladytka Roma, who are Catholic in the predominantly Catholic areas of Lithuania, while Orthodox in Russia. Another reason for conversion is the change of power relations due to historical and political developments, between the different religions in an area. In such situations, the Roma often adopted the religion of the most powerful religion, either for economic or for social reasons. An example of it are the Roma living in the Balkans who converted to Islam under the Ottoman rule.

The religious belief of the Roma is monotheistic while their worldview may rather be defined as dualistic. The dualistic view of the world as ‘good’ and ‘evil’, namely God and the devil, seems to be shared by most Romani groups.

In spite of the fact that Roma are strong believers, they usually do not strictly follow the rituals and practices followed

by the non-Romani adherents to that particular religion. For instance, they often do not participate in religious services, ceremonies and festivals. Exceptions are some pilgrimages attended by the Roma, which carry a special cultural meaning. These are perceived as important social occasions for meeting members of the extended family or members of other Romani groups, which may involve cultural exchange, arrangement of marriages and trading goods or discussion of new trade opportunities.

Religious leaders, who are mostly non-Roma and charge for their services, are generally invited to baptisms and funerals. Many Romani communities fear that the newborn child may be harmed by evil forces. There are various practices to avoid such harm, for instance, by attaching a red ribbon around the wrist of the baby. However, among the Christian Roma baptism is the most powerful way to protect the child from evil forces. The ritual of baptism is seen as an admission of the child into this world, which could be performed only by a priest. Similarly, death is seen as a passage from one world to the other and, at the time of passing, a priest must be present. A funeral performed by a priest also guarantees that the *mulo*, meaning the spirit of a dead person will not return. Priests are sometimes invited to purge a house of a *mulo* that cannot be exorcised by laic, everyday rituals. Some priests refuse to perform such a service claiming they are ‘unchristian’.

On the other hand, marriages are often arranged and celebrated among the Roma without the involvement of religious authorities. The marriage thus becomes valid after the wedding ceremony that has been organised by the community, which may optionally be followed by a church wedding.

III. 1

Ring of an Italian Sinti man with the crucified Jesus. After the conversion to the Evangelic faith, Jesus appears more often in the material culture of the community.

Credits: Chiara Tribulato



III. 2

Saint Anthony of Padua (also known as Saint Anthony of Lisbon) preaching to the fish. Painting by Victor Wolfvoet the Younger (1612–1652)

Source: Wikimedia Commons



A typical feature regarding the beliefs of Roma is that they sometimes combine in a creative way their own cultural conceptions and values with the conventional religious practices which may even come from different religions. As a Romani imam in Bulgaria said:

“We are God-fearing and obedient people and that’s why we celebrate all the holidays. I am an imam but I celebrate the St. Basil and the day of St. George and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and Easter. When they come to me, I baptise their children and when boys come of age, I circumcise them. I do what is wanted.”
(Marushiakova & Popov 1997: 126)

For the above reasons, Roma were often seen by the surrounding populations as heretics or nonbelievers and therefore they have not been readily accepted by churches. Another reason is that some Roma were engaged in fortune-telling or perceived as magicians, which was not compatible with the religious traditions of the society. In some countries, the Roma were even forbidden from entering churches on the basis of being ‘superficial’ believers. They were in some cases

confronted with similarly negative attitudes from the side of the Muslim community.

The most prominent positions in the religious life of Roma are occupied by God and the Virgin Mary. In some Romani communities, a saint like St. Sara, St. George, St. Basil, St. Anthony of Padua are also subjects of great devotion. Interestingly, Jesus Christ does not have such an important position in the religious life of Roma, which may be connected to the fearful relation of Roma in general to dying, death and dead people (although Jesus was resurrected). In the past, for instance, Slovak Roma preferred to hang a picture of the Virgin Mary in their homes rather than the cross depicting the dying Christ. Or, alternatively, a picture depicting Jesus Christ before the betrayal and crucifixion might hang on the wall.

Talking about the religion of the Roma, it must be mentioned that since the early 1950s the Pentecostal movement has gained a strong position in many Romani communities and proved to be especially successful in converting Roma. Romani Pentecostalism was born in France under the name *vie et lumière* (life and light) on the initiative of Clément Le Cossec, who was a pastor in a small Manuš community. In the following decades, the movement spread relatively quickly all over Europe and

III. 2

The human face of God and the intimate relation to Him, which is found in some Romani communities, is apparent in the following Hungarian Romani folk tale, where the poor Rom blames God for his poverty and decides to take revenge:

Odá phenel o čoro rom pe romňake, “And’a šun romnie! Me na džanap,” phenel, “o gulo Dél soske man diňa ase čorreske, ávera pale barvale hi, han, pien, me paleg čoro sjom, még te han iš man náne. Me džá, rodá ole Devle, az annya mindenit! Me šéreste čalavá le! ... o baro bunkó, romnie,” phenel, “so sja man, haď lav la uppi válla, taj džav taj šéreste le čalavav.”

The poor Rom says to his wife: “Listen, my wife! I do not know,” he says “why did the sweet God make me so poor, while the others are rich; they have what to eat and drink, while I am poor; I do not even have anything to eat. I go, I look for God, for God’s sake! I will hit Him on the head! ... [Bring me] the big knobstick, wife,” he says, “the one I had, so that I put it on my shoulders and I am going to hit Him on the head.”

III. 3

Kali Sara, the "Black Sara"
in the church of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.
Credits: Armin Kübelbeck, CC-BY-SA, Wikimedia Commons



III. 4

An Orthodox icon of Basil of Caesarea,
also called Saint Basil the Great
Credits: Wikimedia Commons



Americas. What makes this charismatic church attractive for the Roma is the more intimate relation with God, the presence of Roma priests, and the existence of a liturgy in the Romani language, which is based on their traditional songs but with new lyrics. The converted Roma often refer to themselves as "brothers and sisters" and are actively involved in the process of evangelization. Their new faith influences the norms of behaviour within the community and the relations in their kin networks.

GOD

For the Roma, God is, on the one hand, an omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and irreplaceable transcendental power and supreme authority, and on the other a benevolent figure and friend (III. 2). God is referred to as *Del* or *Devel* in Romani, or directly addressed by the form *Devla!* The root of these words has an Indic origin and is related to the Sanskrit term *deva* with the meanings of 'divine, king, priest, the Highest, representation of God'. The most commonly used attributes of God are *baro* 'great', *gulo* 'sweet' and *sunto* 'saint'.

God is strongly present in the oral literature of the Roma. For example, there are numerous proverbs, sayings and

expressions referring to God (III. 5). Among the Slovak Roma, God is invoked even for such ordinary occurrences as the arrival of morning and evening, by using the phrase *o Del diňa tosara/rat*, which translates to 'the morning/night came' (literally 'God gave morning/night').

God also appears in Romani folktales in the form of standard formulas denoting his uniqueness and supreme position. For example, in heroic stories among the Slovak Roma we find a standard statement expressing the strength of a hero: *o Del hin jekh, jov hin aver pal o Del* ('God is the first; he [the hero] is second after God [His strength]'). The opening formulas of folktales often address God, such as the formula *Mre gule Devla čačeja bachtaleja the mek* (literally 'My sweet God, blessed and just') in Slovak Romani tales, or *Káj sa, ká na sja, sa ekvar ek bastalo gulo Dél* (literally 'Where was, where was not, there was once a blessed sweet God') in Hungarian Romani tales.

Furthermore, God is present in expressions of courtesy such as greetings, blessings and also in curses, which we find in many other cultures, too. God is also present in Romani folksongs. Singers usually address God by singing *Devla, Devla!* ('God, God!') or asking Him for advice, confessing and acknowledging His majesty.

III. 5

God appears in several proverbs, sayings and expressions, such as in the following ones used among the Slovak Roma:

Savore sam le Devlestar.

God created us all (literally, we are all from God).

Roma uš'ten le Devleha, džan te sovel le Devleha.

Roma get up with God and go to sleep with God.

O Del tut and'a andre amaro čoripen.

God brought you to our poverty.

Mi del o Del bacht sast'ipen.

May God give you happiness and good health.

Ačh Devleha!

Bye-bye! (literally "Stay with God")

Dža Devleha!

Bye-bye! (literally "Go with God")

III. 6

The shrine of *Our Lady of Loreto*, located on the Adriatic coast of Italy, three hours from Rome.



III. 7

A Marble plaque with the Virgin Mary in the middle portrayed as protecting the funfair (on the left) and circus people (on the right). The plaque decorates the caravan of a Sinti family in Northern Italy. Credits: Chiara Tribulato



VIRGIN MARY

A central figure in the religious life of the Roma is by no doubt the Virgin Mary (*Devleski Dej*, literally ‘the mother of God’). Her picture hangs on the walls of many traditional Roma households; often, a small home altar is created with the depiction of the Virgin together with a candle or a little vessel for holy water. Pictures of the Virgin Mary might fulfil the need to “see” – to perceive with at least one sense – a substitute likeness of the invisible God, who extends beyond man’s sensuous capacities. For instance, as some Slovak Roma say: *Kana mangav le Devles, džav kijo obrazis*. “When I ask God for something, I go to the Picture”, while the picture is that of the Virgin. The “Picture” (of the Virgin Mary) serves for others rituals, too, such as for taking oaths. The oaths are taken in front of it while God is called to witness. There are some restrictions regarding the “Picture”, such as that family members cannot change their clothes in front of it, because it may “offend God” (*čhinelas bi pes pat’iv le Devleske*).

Roma have a very personal and intimate relation with the Madonna, which makes them believe that She may appear in various forms to them in order to warn them of possible dangers or to show them support in moments of illness and need. Depending on the situation, Her visit can be a cause of distress and concern or a source of comfort and salvation.

“In 1890 there was a terrible smallpox epidemic and one of my grandmother’s brothers had already died from this bad disease. After some time, my grandmother had fallen ill, too, and her father went to a doctor to get some medicine. But in those days people with smallpox were better off dying to avoid the risk of infecting others. The family camped near a river, because in those days Sinti people travelled a lot and used to camp near the water source. The bottle with the medicine was placed on the ground at

the water. My grandmother, who was a good believer, was praying to the Virgin Mary when at one point she saw her figure coming out of the stream and touching the bottle with the medicine which fell on the ground and released steam, as if it had been poisoned. The Holy Mary saved my grandmother, because she believed in Her.”

(Italian Sinti man, 2016. Source: Tribulato 2019: 298-299)

“I am devoted to the black Madonna of Loreto, because when I was little we used to go there every year with my mother while we were in Miramare. When I was three years old my sister fell ill with a bad disease. She could no longer swallow and was put into a pharmacological coma. One day my mother had a dream that the Virgin Mary gives a kiss to the girl and says “now go”. From that moment the girl was cured.”

(Italian Sinti woman, 2016. Source: Tribulato 2019: 299)

SAINTS

In some Romani communities there is a religious tradition in worshipping and praying to a particular saint. For instance, the Roma in Bulgaria and Serbia worship St. Basil (III. 4) and celebrate his day (*Vasilica*) which falls on the 14th of January. This day is the New Year’s Day in the Julian calendar, and therefore *Vasilica* is referred to as the Romani New Year by the surrounding population. St. Sara is worshipped by many Romani groups in western Europe and Romani pilgrims pay a visit to Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer to celebrate her (see next chapter).

St. George is worshipped by most Romani groups in the Balkans and one of the most important holidays of these Romani groups is the celebration of St. George’s Day. St. George, who is mostly portrayed as a “virtuous knight” on a horse fighting a dragon, is – among others – the patron saint of soldiers, smiths, travellers and artists, and one of the most important saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church. In particular,

III. 8

Detail from the Poster of the movie *Time of the Gypsies* (1988) directed by Emir Kusturica, which shows a scene of the celebration of Saint George's Day.



III. 9

St. George and the Dragon by Italian Renaissance artist Vittore Carpaccio, 1502
Source: Wikimedia Commons



the Serbian Orthodox Roma consider him their patron saint. In the Orthodox church year, *Djurdjevdan/Djurdan* (from the Serbian *Durđevdan* “George’s Day”) falls on the 6th of May, which is the birth day of St. George. The festivities, however, already start one or two days earlier. The Muslim counterpart of the Orthodox St. George’s Day is called *Herdelezi/Hederlez/Erdelez*. The name comes from the Turkish *hidrellez*, which is a compound of the names of the prophets Hızır and Elijah. According to the legend, the meeting of the two prophets in the 9th century was at the origin of this once very popular Turkish celebration. Since it is not celebrated by the Turkish non-Roma any more, nowadays *Herdelezi* is seen in Turkey as a purely Romani celebration.

The festival represents a spring celebration marking the transition between spring and summer and allegedly brings good fortune and wealth. The celebration may differ across countries, Romani groups and professed religions, but some elements of the ritual and their meanings are mostly recurrent.

In earlier times, both Orthodox and Muslim Roma would fast for several weeks prior to the celebration. They were not allowed to eat the meat, milk or cheese of the sheep. In that sense, the ceremony shows some similarities with the celebration of Easter, which also involves corporal and spiritual cleansing as well as consecrated food that is eaten after a period of fasting. Nowadays, the preparations for the feast begin one or two days before St. George’s Day. During these days, the houses are cleaned, sometimes even repainted and often decorated with candles, flowers and leafy branches which are collected in the morning. In some groups, the family dining room is decorated with twigs from a pear tree, to which Easter eggs and candles are fastened. The Roma from the North Macedonian town of Prilep, for instance, on the evening of the 5th of May climb up the Mount Dabnica to spend the night there, prepare dinner together and, the next morning, bring water from a mountain well to their families. At the foot of the

mountain they are welcomed with music. The water, as well as the candles and the fresh twigs, are considered symbols of spring and new life.

On the 6th of May, the celebration usually starts with a ritual bath in scented water with flowers and honey. After the bath, all participants dress festively. The celebration revolves around the slaughtering of a lamb (the *kurban*), which is previously procured by each family. Sometimes candles, twigs and money are fastened to the horns of the slaughtered sheep. The lamb is usually roasted in the yard and part of it is consumed by the family. Another part of the lamb is shared with the neighbours who usually come to pay a visit and wish a happy *Djurdjevdan*. In the evening, the celebration continues with music and dance. The feast often serves as an occasion to meet relatives, show respect for the elderly and visit the graves, and thus it also functions as a means of maintaining and strengthening social cohesion.

THE PILGRIMAGES

Among many Romani groups, the cult of saints is associated with pilgrimages, which became regular events in the course of the 19th century. Pilgrimages are undertaken by many Roma, irrespective of their religion or group belonging. As noticed by the linguist Yaron Matras, the concept of pilgrimage was easily adopted by the Roma since it is in line with their traditional form of social organization based on cycles of travel for spiritual and family meetings. Pilgrimages are seen by the Roma as opportunities to worship a particular saint, but also as moments of family time and community togetherness, as well as an opportunity to trade.

Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, which is situated in the Camargue region in the south of France, is probably the most popular internationally known pilgrimage site visited by the Roma from various countries of Europe. As a pilgrimage destination, it became especially popular among the Catholic

III. 10

The *guardians* on white horses leading the procession for St. Sara in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

Credits: Federica Troisi, photographer

III. 11

Believers bathe in the Mediterranean Sea after the water has been blessed by St. Sara in Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer.

Credits: Giorgio Alban



Roma at the beginning of the 20th century. The Romani pilgrimage takes place on the 24th of May to honour *Kali Sara* (dark-skinned Sara, literally “Black Sara”), though she is not recognised as a saint by the church. According to some legends, Sara is the Egyptian servant of Mary Jacobe and Mary Salome. The two Saint Marys (together with Mary Clopas) were the ones who found the empty tomb after the resurrection of Jesus and later on travelled by boat to Camargue. There is another legend, according to which Sara was not a servant but a local woman who welcomed the two Marys after landing in Camargue. In the book “The Legend of the Saintes-Maries” (1521) by Vincent Philippon she is characterised as a charitable person who helped people by collecting alms. This has led to the popular belief that she was a Romni. Despite the fact that we know little about the life of Sara, the rite connected to the cult of *Kali Sara* is very strong and widespread among the Roma.

The statue of Sara is kept in the candle-lit crypt of the church. During the celebration, believers wrap bright new robes around the statue of the “saint”. After the church service, the statue is carried right into the Mediterranean Sea by a procession led by sixteen men on horses, called *le guardians*. The believers bathe in the sea water, which is considered to be blessed by the “saint” and fill their bottles to take some water to their homes. The procession is an important opportunity to meet with members of their extended kin groups as well as to trade goods, share stories and play music with Roma from all over Europe.

During the two days prior to the procession, several flamenco musicians, singers and dancers perform on the squares, streets and in the cafés of the town and anyone is welcome to join this spontaneous jam sessions. A day before the procession, the two saint Marys are also celebrated. However, their procession is usually not attended by Roma. Currently, the celebration of St. Sara has turned into a tourist attraction which is attended by as many visiting tourists and journalist as Romani believers.

There are several other holy places in Europe visited by various Romani groups, although these are smaller in size than the pilgrimage to Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer. For instance, the pilgrimage to the Austrian Mariazell, which takes place on the 10th of August, was originally attended by the Sinti, and nowadays also by the Lovara, the Orthodox Kalderaša, the Serbian Gurbeti and some Muslim Arlii. In Poland, there is a pilgrimage on the 8th of December to the Jasna Góra Monastery in the town of Częstochowa, organised by the episcopate and attended by the Lovara, Polska and Xaladytka Roma. The monastery is the home of the “black Madonna” painting, which is believed to have miraculous powers. The most important Romani pilgrimage in Slovakia takes place in Gaboltov on the first Sunday in August, while in the Czech Republic it is the pilgrimage in Olomouc organised in September. There are several pilgrimage sites in Hungary visited by Roma, such as in Csatka, Mátraverebély or Máriaipócs.

Muslim Roma follow a similar practice and pay homage to certain Muslim saints by visiting their tombs or birth places. In Bulgaria, for example, on the day of St. Elias, the Roma go to the shrine of Bali Effendi (called Ali Baba) in the suburb of Sofia and light a candle on the tomb. In recent decades, the pilgrimage to Mecca also attracts Muslim Roma.

WITCHES

Devel and *beng* are the main transcendental powers. However, there are other supernatural forces that can harm people or, less commonly, help them. Some of these forces are believed to be invisible, while others are embodied by human (or human-like) beings. An example of a personified supernatural force is the witch. The original Romani term for witch is *čoxani/čovaxani*, while loanwords from the contact language are also used, like *bosorka* in Slovak Romani, *vražitoŕa* in Ursari Romani, *veštica* in Arli Romani, or *džadija* in Sepečides Romani.

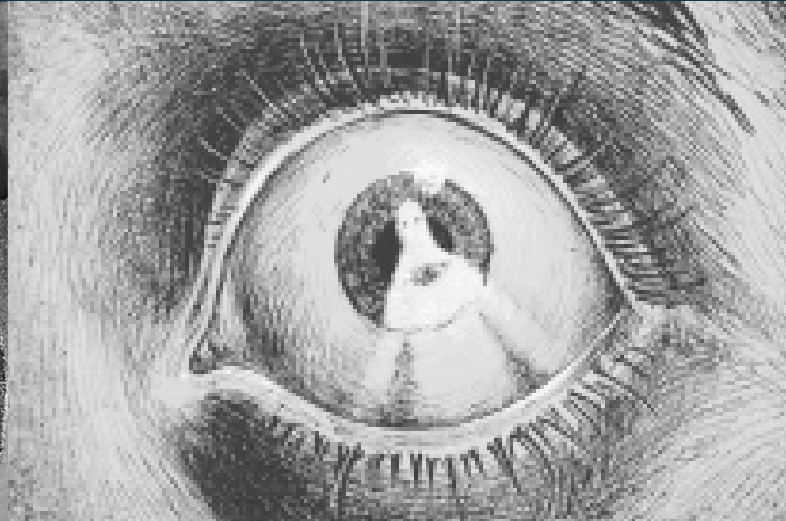
III. 12

Illustration to the tale *O Rom njerij e benges* (The Rom wins over the devil) by Žaneta Kalejová, a 13-year-old Romani girl. (Cech, Petra et al. 2000: 24)



III. 13

Detail of an illustration from the anthology *O Mulo!* which comprises stories about the souls of the dead written by Romani authors from Slovakia and the Czech Republic. These stories show that the belief in mule is still vivid and transmitted from generation to generation among the Roma. (3ax.cz © Kher.cz, in Ryvolová, Karolína ed. 2019)



The concept of the witch may differ from Romani community to Romani community. For instance, among some Slovak Roma, witches are primarily women from another world who come to steal unbaptised newborn babies and leave others of an identical appearance in their place. The parents might recognise this “substitution” when the child is misbehaving or sick. Furthermore, evil forces are believed to manifest themselves in real female human beings, too. A woman may either be born as a witch, or a witch can, before she dies, transfer her abilities to another woman.

A witch often manifests herself as a non-Romani woman who transforms into an unclean animal in the night, such as a frog. Then she visits some people in order to harm them. If such a frog is killed and if the next morning a peasant woman is found dead, the people would realise that she was a witch. However, not only non-Romani women can become witches. Many Romani women, too, are thought to be able to perform magic, make someone ill or cause someone’s death. Yet, at the same time, they are capable of curing, predicting the future and, based on that, giving good advice. Nevertheless, witches are feared because they assume the right to control supernatural forces, a right which usually belongs only to God.

“O phure romňa len át odá tudomáňi, aso o čohaňňa. Avka hod’ amen daras kathar o čohaňňa. Adá náne čáčo, hod’ amen roma ráti tromas te phirkeren, vad’ amen tromas andar i khangéri te čóren valaso, vad’ ase búta te keren. Hod’ amen uppe phagas o šíri taj čóras ase búta. Amen kathar o gulo Dél báre daras, taj kathar o čohaňňa.”

“The old women take over the power of witches. So we are scared of witches. We, Roma, wouldn’t dare to walk at night or steal something from the church or damage the graves and rob them and so on. We are very scared of God, but also of witches.” (Rom from Hungary, 2008. Source Bodnárová 2013: 124-125)

DEVIL

The *beng* (devil) symbolises the dark and evil forces, opposed to the good and the light that is represented by *Devel* (God). The role of *beng* is not entirely clear. For instance, in Slovak Romani, the word *beng* is usually used for a bad person. Otherwise, the generally unclean force that stands against God is termed *bižušo* (unclean). Evil forces may transform into objects and animals, too. For example, the *žamba* (frog) and *sap* (snake) are considered “unclean” among the Slovak Roma.

THE SOUL OF THE DEAD

One of the most important transcendental figures is undoubtedly the *mulo* (plural *mule*) – literally the living dead, the deceased person or soul of the dead which, for some reason, may return from the other world. The belief in *mule* is found in (most probably) all Romani groups, which may indicate that this belief originates from the early European or even pre-European period. Among the most common reasons why the *mulo* returns from the other world are unsettled conflicts with a living person, the name or property of the dead person has been offended or he could not find his peace in the other world. These visits occur mainly at night, when the *mulo* appears either in human form or transformed into an animal like a dog, cat, bird or butterfly. They also walk sideways so that no one can see their faces. Their presence is recognised through various signals like the barking of dogs and the flickering of electric light. A *mulo* usually causes fear, occasionally tries to strangle someone, gives people bruises and causes illnesses, but he never kills anyone. Yet, unlike the ghosts, the *mule* are not necessarily bad. They may also return to help and defend their families. When a *mulo* appears in a dream, it is usually to warn the living of something that is about to happen or to advise them on their daily choices. Among some Sinti, for instance, the *mule* may also be invoked by the relatives in case they need help, by means of

III. 14

The devil often appears in Romani tales where he is usually defeated by the cunning and smart Rom, such as in this Lovara tale told by Karl Nitsch (Cech, Petra et al. 2000: 23):

Taj lel peski lavuta o Rom, taj žal-tar andi khangeri taj bešel peske kote pe'k barr taj kezdi te cirdel. Na kecave šukare gjila bašavel, hod mevi o kaštuno Del kezdiyas te rovel. T'avel o beng taj šunel les taj šunel les taj šunel les taj šunel. Ale vo leske: "Jaj Romungrona, naštig sitjares vi man kadej šukares te cirdap pi lavuta?" "Na so-j kodo, muro raj-beng, aj mindjar sitjarap tu, feri du percura, de feri tjire vundji lungi-j, ke phagres muri lavuta e lungone vundjenca, si te šinav le tuke tele."

The Rom takes his violin and goes to the church and sits there on a stone and starts to play. He played such nice songs, so that even the wooden God started to cry. The devil comes and listens to him and listens to him and listens to him and listens. Then he says to him: "Ah, Romungro man, can you also teach me how to play the violin so nicely?" "Well, it is easy, my master devil, I am going to teach you, it takes only two minutes, but your nails are long, so you would destroy my violin with your long nails; I must cut them."

lighting candles inside or outside the caravan. On the other hand, some Roma believe that the *mulo* who died a violent death may help the *beng* in his evil deeds.

In general, Roma show great respect for the souls of the deceased. The memory of the deceased must be protected and honoured with various rituals. For example, on special occasions, Roma bring alcohol and food to the grave of their dead relatives. They often put lighted cigarettes on the grave and talk to the deceased. At Christmas in the year a family member died, there is an empty place at the table for the deceased and food is served on a plate for him as if he were alive.

The possessions of the deceased are often burned or destroyed and their names become taboo to pronounce. The burning of the deceased's possessions or the avoidance of his name can be traced back to the deeply anchored fear that he

may not depart this world or that he might return to haunt his friends and family. The memory of the deceased should be protected by his relatives, and therefore the worse curses are the ones that involve the name of a deceased from another family. In this sense, the fear of *mulo* functions as a means of social control, since Roma will try not to harm or curse others out of the fear that the offended *mulo* will return to haunt them.

The person who is haunted by *mulo* because he has offended him must make amends to him. For example, he must return the objects borrowed from the deceased to the descendants or he must put food on the windowsill for the *mulo*. The participation of the friends and family members in a three-day wake, the placement of objects into the casket, as well as diverse burial rites serve to give the deceased peace in the other world in order to avoid his visits as a *mulo*.

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