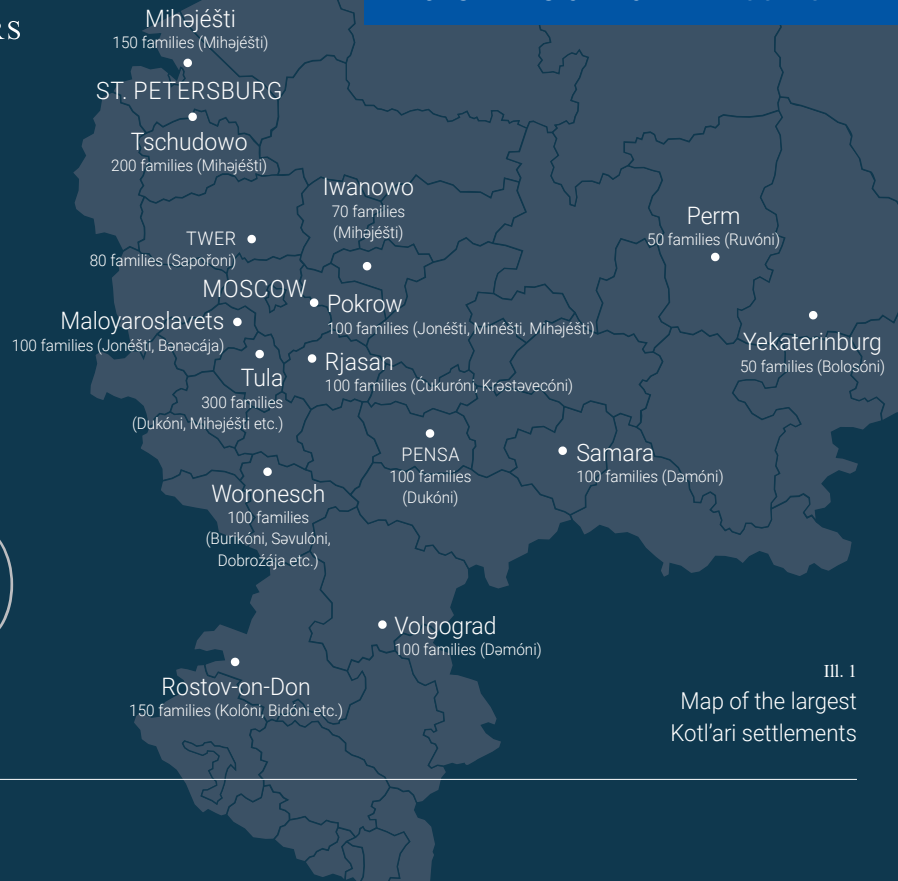




3.14

# Kotl'ar'a (Kəldərar'a) in Russia

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III. 1

Map of the largest  
Kotl'ari settlements

Kelderaša or Kelderara are the most widespread Romani group worldwide. They came to Russia more than a hundred years ago from the Romanian speaking territories and are known under the name of Kotl'ar'a. Currently they are one of the largest Romani group in Russia and certainly the most traditional one. Russian Kotl'ar'a managed to preserve the tradition by keeping the internal communal social hierarchy, rituals and beliefs, but also by adopting to new circumstances.

## INTRODUCTION

Kotl'ar'a are one of the largest Romani groups currently living in Russia and their numbers are estimated to 30,000 – 40,000 people. Close relatives of Russian Kotl'ar'a also live in the post-Soviet countries such as Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Kazakhstan. They speak a North Vlax dialect of Romani (with some inner-dialectal variation). Kotl'ar'a typically live together in settlements (from 5–6 up to 300 families per settlement) near cities and maintain close-knit group relationships. The interna-

tionally accepted term Kelderaša is not known among members of the group in Russia. The term Kəldərar'a is known only among older generation, but almost never used. The members of this group usually refer to themselves as kotl'ar'a. All these names are derived from semantically similar roots, cf. Romanian cǎldăre 'bucket' and Rus. kot'ól 'pot, caldron'. Male Kotl'ar'a are traditionally involved in various kinds of metalworking, whereas the women are fortune-tellers. In terms of social organization and assimilation into non-Romani society, Kotl'ar'a remain the most conservative Romani group in Russia.

III. 2

## Names of the largest Kotl'ari clans

Moldovája			non-Moldovája
<i>Mihajėsti (Dyńóni, Timóni, Voržóni, Řymbolóni, Žmidóni, Mustafóni etc.)</i>	<i>Sapořóni</i>	<i>Dobrožája</i>	<i>Jonėšti (Petrášti)</i>
<i>Dukóni</i>	<i>Səvulóni</i>	<i>Dešudúj (= Jovicóni)</i>	<i>Parakóni</i>
<i>Dəmóni</i>	<i>Krəstəvecóni</i>	<i>Tošóni</i>	<i>Minėšti</i>
<i>Ķolóni</i>	<i>Nemcóni</i>	etc.	<i>Bənacája</i>
<i>Ķukuróni</i>	<i>Burikóni</i>		<i>Gýrkur'a</i>
	<i>Bidóni</i>		<i>Sərbijája</i>
	<i>Ruvóni</i>		etc.
	<i>Bolosóni</i>		

III. 3

Kotl'ari family of the Voržoni clan.  
1950s. Russia.

III. 4

Kotl'ari women drinking tea from samovar. Tula Oblast. Photo by K.  
Kozhanov (2011).

Photo by K. Kozhanov (2011).



## HISTORY

Most Kotl'ari families came to Russia in the late 19th – early 20th century from the Romanian-speaking territories. At the time Russia attracted newcomers as a potentially prosperous place for work. The First World War, the Russian Revolution and the following Civil War drove some Kotl'ari families away, such as to Sweden, South America or China among others. In the 1930-s, Kotl'ar'a became one of the targets for the Soviet policy of political repressions: many Kotl'ar'a were arrested and accused of economic crimes and espionage (most Kotl'ar'a were not Soviet citizens at the time). Very few made it back to their families, while most those arrested were executed or died in prisons and camps. The notorious name of *Kárculo*, a Kotl'ari who betrayed his own people by informing on his fellow Roma to the Soviet intelligence agency, is still well remembered. During WWII, Kotl'ar'a living in the eastern parts of the Soviet Union invaded by Germany were persecuted by the Nazis. The story of the Kotl'ari clan *Grənóni* all of which was killed by Germans in northern Ukraine is still often recounted. In 1956, when nomadism was banned in the Soviet Union, Kotl'ar'a, as all Romani groups, had to drastically alter their life-style and settle down for good. The current generation of Kotl'ar'a sees Russia as their home country and has no recollection of the exact place their ancestors came from. For most Kotl'ar'a, a somewhat vague image of Moldova or Banat represents their place of origin.

## SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Russian Kotl'ar'a break down into several major subgroups, with the main distinction between the so-called Moldovaja and non-Moldovaja. Non-Moldovaja Kotl'ar'a are represented by several clans such as *Joněšti*, *Miněšti*, *Bənəcəja*, *Gýrkur'a*, *Sərbijəja* etc. The Moldovaja subgroup makes up approximately 80–90% of all Russian Kotl'ar'a. The group affiliation has probably somewhat shifted, with some non-Moldovaja Kotl'ar'a becoming a part of the Moldovaja majority (this might have been the case of the *Dobrožəja* clan). The differences between the groups lie not only in self-identity, but also in the language

and the degree of assimilation, non-Moldovaja generally being less conservative and more assimilated. Moldovaja often refer to non-Moldovaja Kotl'ar'a as *ləjécý*, the same way they refer to non-Kotl'ari Roma. All Moldovaja groups are referred to as *amarə řóm* 'our Roma' or simply *řóm* 'Roma'.

Moldovaja have many branches consisting of larger subgroups and smaller family clans (usually called *nəcyja*, also sometimes *vica*). Among the bigger Moldovaja subgroups one should mention *Mihəjěšti*, *Dukóni*, *Dəmoní*, and *Kolóni*. The names of the Kotl'ari subgroups typically come from personal names, cf. a male name *Čúkuro*, a Rom who founded *Čukuróni* clan; a respected Rom named *Tíma* was the founder of the *Timóni* clan etc. The names of a few clans are derived from female personal names, for instance, the *Voržóni* clan from the name *Vorža*. Clans can be stereotypically associated with certain qualities: *Səvulóni* are considered to be more traditional and strict; *Sapořóni* are reputed to have a hot temper, etc.

Very often a Kotl'ari has a community first name differing from the passport one. Usually passport names sound more Russian-like, for instance, community name *Buduláj* and passport name *Sergėj*. The most common Kotl'ari surname is *Mixáj*, others are *Jánoš*, *Sávva*, *Kuláj*, *Staněsku*, *Xristov* etc. The passport name and surname are used only when dealing with non-Romani society (documents, school, etc.). The community first name (often nicknames) along with the father's or mother's name, and a clan affiliation are the main marks for inner-community identification. Thus, when meeting for the first time, Kotl'ar'a ask each other the following questions: *Sár bušós?* 'What is your name', *Kásko sán?* lit. 'Whose are you?' (i.e. who are your parents, relatives), and *(Anda) ée nəcyja sán?* 'What nation (subgroup of Kotl'ar'a) are you (from)?'. An answer could be something like *o Sáno le Grofósko, anda Mihəjěšti* 'Sano, [the son] of Grofo, from the *Mihəjěšti* [clan]'.

In every settlement, there is a leader (*baró*, *primári* or the Russian borrowing *baróno*) who mainly represents the settlement when communicating with the external world. Such a person has several helpers, older men highly respected in the community (occasionally referred to as *zambaróna*, a Russian word, meaning 'vice-baron'). The role of women in the social hierarchy is traditionally limited to housekeeping. Problems within the settlement are solved collectively by a group of el-

III. 5

Bringing presents to godparents on Christmas.

Leningrad Oblast.

Photo by K. Kozhanov (2011).



III. 6

Kotl'ari women with children.

Tula Oblast.

Photo by K. Kozhanov (2011).



ders. In case of a more serious internal problem, a *kris*, a gathering of older respected men from nearby settlements, can be called for. Two main kind of problems considered by the communal court are of economic character (various disagreements related to sharing of the profit or repaying debts) or family related (very often disagreements over marriages). As a rule, the *kris* finds a compromise and obliges the side which was found guilty to pay the fine. In the extreme cases of putting the community at danger, a family can be demanded to leave the settlement (*dén bišthajštár* 'give twenty four', i.e. 24 hours, or one day to leave the settlement).

### PROFESSIONS

Traditionally Kotl'ari men were professionals working with metal. Their trade consisted primarily of two directions: tinning old metal utensils covered with corrosion and production of larger containers such as pots, cisterns, feed boxes and similar. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, demand in this type of work dropped. Now the trade is gradually being lost. However, many Kotl'ar'a are still engaged in some work with metal. Many of them buy various technological assets such as fasteners or electric accumulators and then sell them for higher price (often after cleaning and fixing them) to factories or private customers. In the last few years, during the summer time most Kotl'ari men started working as construction workers building or fixing summer houses of the non-Romani population. Sometimes their role is limited to supervision as often they hire brigades consisting mainly of migrant workers from Central Asia. The wealthiest Kotl'ar'a have their own business such as shops, or even gas stations and hotels.

Kotl'ari women are traditionally fortune-tellers. In the past, they would go to the larger cities near the settlement and tell fortunes to people they would meet in public places such as train stations or markets. Nowadays, due to neo-Nazi attacks and police raids, fortune-telling is more dangerous, and many Kotl'ari women, especially of the younger generation, stay at home. Poorer families can send their women to tell fortunes. They can be joined by older women, who still tell fortunes, mostly out of habit. Some Kotl'ari women start their own small businesses within the settlement, e.g. selling women's clothes and fabric.

Whenever possible, Kotl'ari women engage in seasonal work, such as picking apples or potatoes.

Kotl'ar'a have formal school education to a lesser extent than other Romani ethnic groups in Russia. It is partly due to the widespread school segregation of Kotl'ari children. However, the number of Kotl'ari children receiving high school education is still constantly growing. In the recent years, there are first Kotl'ar'a who graduate from universities.

### CLOTHES

In the non-Romani discourse, the way Kotl'ar'a dress and live stereotypically represents the common Romani way: colorful long skirts, head coverings, men with moustaches, and numerous children. However, during the 20th century Russian Kotl'ari clothing has changed significantly.

Traditional Kotl'ari male clothing consisted of a shirt, wide pants and leather boots. The older generation can still remember big decorated belts their grandfathers used to wear. Nowadays, traditional Kotl'ari male clothing is as good as lost. In everyday life male Kotl'ar'a wear casual clothes, currently common among the non-Romani population. A few basic restrictions are always adhered to: in the settlement grown-up males do not wear short pants or appear bare-chested. For celebrations men usually wear suits with ties and patent-leather shoes. Older men can put on black felt hats (*pələrija*) or papakhas, tall Caucasian fur hats.

Although Kotl'ari women's clothing has also changed over the last few decades, its basic elements remained intact. Women's everyday clothes consist of several parts: a blouse, a skirt and a head cover. The traditional blouse (*kófto*) used to have wide sleeves and was worn over skirts, but now a regular T-shirt with short sleeves is much more common. The traditional skirt consisted of a piece of fabric with pleats only in the upper part sewn on to a wide belt. Traditional skirt was not sewn together, so a vent-hole in the front part of the skirt was covered by an apron (*kətrýncy*). In the recent years, Kotl'ari women started wearing sewn skirts. Currently, the skirt consists of two elements: *řót'a*, an underskirt, and *fělešo*, an overskirt. The apron remains another obligatory element of a grown-up woman's clothes. An important notion of *pəkəlimós* or *magarimós* which

III. 7

Wedding celebration.  
Leningrad Oblast. 2011.  
Photo by K. Kozhanov.



III. 8

Kotl'ari settlement in winter.  
Perm Oblast.  
Photo by D. Vaiman.



can be roughly translated as ‘impurity’ comes into play here. Kotl'ar'a believe that the clothes touching the lower part of a grown-up woman's body are impure and do their best to avoid touching those clothes. Rot'a, the underskirt, is considered impure. It is always kept separate from other clothes. When doing laundry, women wash underskirts by hand in a separate washbasin, and later hang them out to dry behind the houses or in other places not seen by people. *Kətryncy*, an apron tied in the back, is always a “clean” part of women's lower clothes. It is used to wipe children's faces and can be touched. Just a few decades ago, the rules were even stricter and, for instance, water from the well was brought on top of the head (using a specially rolled piece of fabric called *glamniko*) to prevent the bucket with water from accidentally touching the skirt.

The skirt and the apron used to differ in color, but nowadays they are almost always the same color. Finally, another important part of women's clothes is *posoti*, a separately sewn pocket which is worn under the apron. It is used for keeping money and other small things, e.g. cell phones.

All married Kotl'ari women cover their hair. Traditionally a scarf (*dikhló*) covered all of the upper part of the head and was tied in the back. Mourning women tie their scarves in front under the chin. Nowadays, very often only a part of the hair rolled together on the back of the head is covered by a long piece of fabric (*póša*).

Married Kotl'ari women also have a traditional hairstyle: braids twined around their ears (*amboldinar'a*). Nowadays, usually only older women or women from more traditional settlements still braid *amboldinar'a* in everyday life. However, *amboldinar'a* as a symbol of a married woman are still significant in the Kotl'ari tradition. Very often a newlywed girl, on the second day of the wedding, not only covers her hair for the first time but also braids *amboldinar'a*, showing her new status.

Unmarried girls do not wear traditional clothes, and no strict rules apply to their clothing style.

#### DWELLINGS

In the warmer seasons Russian Kotl'ar'a used to be nomads travelling from one place to another primarily by trains, thus differing from many other Romani groups in Russia who pre-

ferred horses. While camping, Kotl'ar'a would build tents (*córa*). The loadbearing construction of a tent consisted of two poles (*kovérka*) crossed in upper front part of the tent and one pole installed vertically in the back (*beli*). The front and back parts were connected by a horizontally placed pole (*beránd*). The construction was covered with a piece of cloth tied with a rope to tent pegs. After WWII, like many other Romani groups in Russia, Kotl'ar'a started using tarpaulin military tents. As a result, the construction of the tent was somewhat altered. Sometimes nine poles were used: three poles in the front part of the tent, three in the back and three would be tied to them on top. Gradually such tents evolved into constructions that looked similar to houses. The side parts or top of the tent could be covered with wooden panels. Tents were used almost exclusively during the summertime, while in winter Kotl'ari families would reside in rented housing. In rare cases when no appropriate residence was to be found, they would use tents in winter as well.

Even though tents are not used anymore in everyday life, they sometimes function as part of rituals. For instance, when the eldest son leaves his parents' house and moves into his own, a small tent is made in a new house.

The internal design of a traditional Kotl'ari tent was simple and practical: the *pológo* was a piece of thin fabric (often gauze) inside the tent that protected its sleeping residents from mosquitos and flies. As *pologo* was widely used by other Romani groups in Russia, it is to be considered an external borrowing into the Kotl'ari tradition. Feather beds and pillows were kept in the far back of the tent. Icons were tied to the back pole. The back part of the tent was considered to be the “cleanest”. The newlyweds' bed was always put down near the entrance to the tent. A cradle, a square wooden frame covered with fabric would be tied up to the upper pole. An important part of the tent design was a small table with short legs. When eating at this table, Kotl'ar'a would sit crossed-legged on the floor. Pots and dishes, as well as working instruments such as hammers or anvil were kept inside the tent.

Nowadays Kotl'ar'a live in permanent houses which they build from various materials. The simplest version of a Kotl'ari house is a wooden construction covered with two rows of planks. Its internal layout is similar to that of a tent and may in fact be viewed as a continuation of the traditional tent. Such houses usu-

III. 8

Cooking vegetables for Lutika.

Perm.

Photo by D. Vaiman (2017).



III. 9

Morning tea with the traditional pie sǎvijáko.

Leningrad Oblast.

Photo by K. Kozhanov (2018).



## Lutika

*Ingredients: eggplant, bell pepper, raw onions, tomatoes (optional), vegetable oil, salt, Tošóni, etc.*

*Lutika is a traditional Kotl'ari dish which can be part at both every day and festive meals. It is a light side-dish, eaten with bread or traditional flatbread, bokoli. Traditionally lutika is cooked on an open fire. Place eggplants and bell peppers on the burning wood or coals. Once the skin of the vegetables has burnt, take out the veg-*

*etables and put them in cold water. Peel the eggplants and bell peppers, then chop finely. Cut raw onions and optionally some other fresh vegetables such as tomatoes or cucumbers. Mix the cut vegetables, add some salt and black pepper, then pour some olive oil, and mix again. Lutika is ready to serve!*

ally have no porch, lobby or hallway, thus people entering the house come into the living room right away. Such houses were a cheap and fast option allowing certain mobility. Currently, more and more often houses are built from other materials such as bricks or structural panels. The evolution of Kotl'ari houses has resulted in new internal design, the house being divided into a large spacious living room, small bedrooms, and kitchens. Usually latrines are placed outside the house, but in the recent years more and more Kotl'ar'a have toilets and showers inside.

Some houses are built with garages and second floors, but this phenomenon is not too widespread as it contradicts traditional Kotl'ari practices related to the concept of 'impurity'. Grown-up women cannot stand above men (otherwise the men would become *pakálimé* 'impure'). Thus, women are not allowed to go up to the second floor. While this rule is still pretty strict, garages built under the first floor are more and more common. However, many Kotl'ar'a still find this unacceptable.

In some settlements, new houses are built with no official papers, and demolition of such houses and even entire settlements became a pressing issue in the last two decades. Very often the legalization of a Kotl'ari settlement is opposed to by the local authorities. Gradually, however more and more Kotl'ar'a do their best in order to legalize the houses.

## FOOD

Kotl'ar'a's everyday food is in sharp contrast with their festive cuisine at the time of big celebrations. Everyday food typically consists of fried potatoes with cabbage and meat (*petimós*), meat served with mashed potatoes, pasta or rarely rice. Tea is an important part of any Kotl'ari meal. Tea is served with fruits in the

cup, most typically pieces of apple. Some Kotl'ar'a still make tea with water from *samovars* which are metal containers used to heat and boil water.

A festive table is much richer and consists of a variety of dishes. One of the main elements of a festive table is *sarmáli*, cooked cabbage leaves wrapped around the filling typically consisting of meat, rice and onion. Among meatless food, *lutika*, a salad made from roasted eggplants, bell peppers and fresh onions, stands out as a special treat. *Kotl'ar'a* cook sweet dishes usually only for celebrations, the central dish probably being *sǎvijáko*, a pie roll filled with raisins, walnuts and cottage-cheese among others. Every celebration includes an extensive amount of alcohol, the most popular kinds being vodka (*řatija*) and beer (*b'ar'a, píva*). This alcohol is almost never fully consumed during the celebration and is used for the rest of the year.

## CELEBRATIONS

Most of Kotl'ari celebrations are religion-related. Christmas (*Krečúno*) and Easter (*Patradl'*) are the main holidays. St. Peter and Paul's day (*Sin Pétri*) is also an important day. In recent years, the New Year celebration (1st of January) is becoming an integral part of the Kotl'ari celebrations.

Time around Christmas was time to tell fairy tales. Many Kotl'ar'a still remember how they would gather in someone's house and listen to stories told by an elderly person (one story could go on for a few evenings). Telling fairy tales at other times was forbidden (this is still relevant for many Kotl'ar'a). On Christmas Eve (*žúno*), Kotl'ar'a used to visit all houses of the settlement singing a short song called *kolínda* with which they

III. 10

Giving dyed eggs to children on Easter.  
Leningrad Oblast.

Photo by K. Kozhanov (2018).



III. 11

Bride and groom with groom's godmother.  
Leningrad Oblast.

Photo by K. Kozhanov (2018).



would greet the owners of the house. This tradition is now almost entirely extinct in most Kotl'ari settlements in Russia.

On Christmas Eve, the main table is set, covered with food and alcoholic beverages. Each family does its best to cover the whole table abundantly with the most attractive and unusual delicacies.

On Christmas itself, around noon, male members of the community gather together and start visiting all the houses of the settlement. After entering a house, the guests wish the family who live in the house all the best and taste their food. Depending on the size of the settlement, the visiting may last up to 6–7 hours. In the evening, members of the community go home, where they host their guests, or visit their friends and relatives. On the second day, the visiting around is repeated, yet on this day godchildren are supposed to bring presents and gifts (*koláča*) to their godparents. Usually the presents are brought to the people whose house the guests are visiting at the moment. Presents typically consist of a garment (often shirts for godfathers) and a bottle of alcohol (most commonly beer).

The central festivity in the Russian Kotl'ari tradition is probably Easter (*Patradi*). Preparation for this day starts in advance, during the Great Fast. The preparation for Easter is accompanied by various rituals, the most important of which is probably burning dry grass in the morning of the Shear Thursday, three days before Easter. The fire is made in memory of the defunct (*te tat'ón le mulořá* 'so the dead ones would warm up'). An important part of the Easter celebration is represented by dyed eggs. Similarly to Christmas, all male members of the community visit all houses of the settlement. Children run from house to house receiving eggs for their wishes.

The third big celebration is the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul (*Sin Pétri*, July 12). Before that day Kotl'ar'a used to refrain from consuming fresh fruit or berries. Nowadays, this ban covers only people whose parents died. Sin Petri is celebrated only for one day.

Each 'big day' (*dés baró*) starts with a short ritual devoted to the defunct relatives (*dén anda vást* 'give from hands'). The male members of the family sit at a separate table with food to commemorate the deceased. The person lifts a plate with food and then says *Te avél angla* (name of the deceased) 'May [this dish] come before...'. Thereafter he kisses the plate.

## WEDDING

Wedding is an essentially important event in Kotl'ari life. As a rule, Kotl'ar'a marry only within their group, rarely taking brides from other Romani groups. Marriages with non-Roma are extremely rare. Currently, weddings are arranged by parents. Kotl'ar'a marry at an average age of 14 to 16. The bride is typically two or three years older than the groom. Weddings at such a young age are a relatively new phenomenon dating back to the 1990s. Several generations ago, a more typical nuptial age was around 18 to 20. The actual wedding is always preceded by the ceremony of marriage proposal (*tomn'ála*), when the parents of the groom and bride come to an agreement. Tomn'ala can be followed by the wedding right away or a few years can pass between the two. The groom's parents cover most of the expenses for the tomn'ala: the ritual of the marriage proposal consists in the expression of consent on the bride's relatives' part and uncorking a bottle of champagne (*plóska*) adorned with a red ribbon and a golden coin. Once the agreement is reached, a traditional payment of golden coins (*gálbi*) is arranged. The usual number of coins to be paid is twelve, but sometimes more are requested. Most of these coins are later given back to the groom's family.

The wedding ceremony lasts for two days. It is preceded by a few days of preparation, among which the most important one is buying all necessary food for the table (*žán te tinén* 'go to buy'). The first wedding day starts with bringing the bride's dress to her house. Modern Kotl'ar'a use white wedding dresses common among non-Roma as well. Then the bride dresses up, wearing abundant golden jewelry. Her godfather puts a symbolic crown (*kunúna*) on her head. The groom wears a festive suit which is decorated by a small flower tied together with a red ribbon which is put on the suit by his godmother. Most commonly Kotl'ar'a marry in the summer, when the weather is warm. Any member of the settlement can come to the wedding, joined by the newlyweds' relatives from other settlements. The wedding takes place at the groom's house decorated for the occasion. A red piece of fabric is tied to the house roof as a symbol of a new daughter-in-law (*bori*) brought in the house. The main table is typically set inside the house, and a smaller table is arranged

III. 12

Collection of presents during the wedding.  
Ryazan Oblast. 2017.  
Photo by K. Kozhanov (2017).



III. 13

Church blessing of food on Easter.  
Leningrad Oblast.  
Photo by K. Kozhanov (2018).



outside. In the recent years, the wealthiest Kotl'ar'a sometimes hire non-Romani waitresses for the wedding, but the food is always cooked at home. For the wedding (and sometimes tomn'ala as well) celebration Kotl'ar'a always hire musicians who sing live to pre-recorded sound. During the day, all the guests dance and eat. Another important ritual of the first day is the collection of presents (*tiden dāro*). The bride holds a plate covered with a piece of cloth, where money and sometimes other presents such as jewelry or clothes are placed. The present-giver says his wishes and names the people for whom the present is intended. In the evening, when the guests leave, the bride and groom are finally left alone for the wedding night (*pativ*). On the second day, the festive table obligatorily includes a pig's head (*šəró le baləsko*). The second day is also the day when the bride starts covering her hair.

#### RELIGION

Russian Kotl'ar'a are Orthodox Christians. All main celebrations of the year such as Christmas, Easter or St. Peter and Paul's day are related to the church year. However, for Kotl'ar'a going to church on these days is not obligatory. All Kotl'ar'a baptize their children during the first years of life. The ritual of baptism somewhat differs from that of the traditional church, e.g. Kotl'ar'a can have several godfathers and godmothers (and their presence is not even obligatory during the ceremony), while the church tradition allows only one of each. Most Kotl'ar'a do not get married in churches. This is partly due to the fact that the age at which they get married is too young according to church rules.

#### FOLKLORE

Russian Kotl'ar'a have a rich tradition of oral folklore. It primarily includes traditional songs and various types of narratives such as fairy tales and ghost stories. Traditional songs are referred to as *phurikané dil'á* 'old songs'. "Old" songs are opposed to new songs written by well-known authors (both in Romani and Russian) and contemporary non-Romani music.

Fairy tales (*paramiča*) are losing their ground in the everyday life of modern Kotl'ar'a in Russia. Even though many people still know fairy tales, they do not tell them often. Some Kotl'ar'a refuse to narrate fairy-tales during the year (*náj vója*,

*kárd'on bubója* 'it is not allowed, furuncles will appear'). So it is only around Christmas that tale-telling is allowed.

Kotl'ari folklore tradition also includes stories about mythological characters. The most conspicuous one is *mam 'ořý*, an anthropomorphic figure appearing as an old woman who visits Romani houses and asks for water. This character is also related to the prohibition of having water in a tent or house at night. Having visited the house, *mam 'ořý* can vomit out "pulp", described as a red or yellow substance that can be found near houses. This substance may be used as a basis for a "mascot" which brings luck and happiness to its possessor.

Kotl'ar'a say that a truly lucky person (*baxtaló manuš*) gets lucky through hard work and resilience. However, the idea of luck is still an essential part of many Kotl'ari beliefs and rituals. Kotl'ar'a have a sophisticated system of lucky charms that can be made out of accidentally caught bats, "wormy" frogs, snakeskin, beehives etc. One can become prosperous by welcoming the mythological character *mam 'ořý* or finding a treasure in an open field (*komára*). Even these luck-bringing rituals require certain qualities from the person: one must not be afraid and must know how to act.

#### DOCUMENTATION OF THE RUSSIAN KOTL'ARI CULTURE

Russian Kotl'ar'a preserve a complex system of traditional social organization supported by numerous restrictions and beliefs. The Kotl'ari folklore tradition is the richest among Romani groups in Russia. An important role in the documentation of that culture was played by the Demeter family of the *Joněšti* clan. This family collected and published a collection of Kotl'ari folklore (1981) and a Romani-Russian/Russian-Romani dictionary (1990). A book of this family's memoirs was published in Russian and Romani (Demeter-Čarskaya 1999).

A new generation of researchers and activists (both of Romani and non-Romani origin) have become active in the recent years. A history of the Sapořoni clan was told by the member of the community (Petrovič 2007). A collection of fairy-tales was translated into Kotl'ari Romani by a young Kotl'ari. New researchers are getting involved in the description of the Kotl'ari language and ethnography (A. Chernykh, M. Oslon, K. Kozhanov).

III. 14

Notes and lyrics  
of the song  
"Vošo and Parastiva"  
(transcribed by D. Skramtai)

*aj da, naj daj naj daj naj mamō  
da naj, da na naj da naj da le nə, majmo  
da naj, da na naj da naj da le nə majmo,  
kaj but řom, devla, d-avena, majmo,  
sabranija 'l řom kərəna, majmo,  
karing von-oj ba te źan-oj, majmo  
aj ə paća te pytrən-oj, majmo  
patradi le řom te xan-oj, majmo,  
Vošo źal po xoraxane le, majmo,  
Lacy źal pe řomənija, majmo,  
Lacy paća pytərd'as-oj, majmo,  
Vošo drom kaj xasard'as-oj, majmo,  
či źanel xoraxanes-oj, majmo,  
khərə Lacy d-avil'as-oj, majmo,  
sa la lum'a kaj tid'as-oj, majmo,*

*sa j lum'a, devla, trad'as-oj, majmo,  
kon pe vatra kaj d-ašel-oj, majmo,  
sav do Toma aj Parastiva, majmo,  
sav do Toma aj Parastiva, majmo,  
aźukərən le Vošos-oj, majmo,  
thola Parastiva aj rovela, majmo,  
— kaj san, Vošo, kaj san, bre le, majmo?  
avesa, Vošo, mudardo le, majmo,  
vork'avesa phandado le, majmo,  
vork'avesa bokhalo le, majmo,  
thola Toma thaj phenel-oj, majmo,  
— dosta, dale, na maj rov-oj, mamō,  
kə do tata kaj mul'as-oj, majmo.  
či jekh vorbica či phenela, majmo,  
əta Vošo kaj d-avela, majmo,*

*aj řindo thaj pynřango le, majmo,  
thona pe leste dikhən-oj, mamō,  
Vošo kotar muj kaj dela, majmo:  
— kaj, Parastiva, do j lum'a, majmo?  
— kə sa j lum'a kə trad'as-oj, mamō,  
Lacy paća kaj kərd'as-oj, mamō,  
ap tu so le kaj kərd'an-oj, bre len?  
xasarđem-oj bə d-o drom-oj, mamō,  
či źanava[h] xoraxanes-oj, majmo,  
anda vəř telal avilem-oj, mamō,  
jag le gada pa mande dem-oj, mamō,  
te na xan ma ba le ruv-oj, mamō,  
te na xan ma ba le ruv-oj, mamō.  
Te aven baxtale sasteveste!*

*A lot of Roma are coming,  
The Roma are making a gathering,  
Where they should go,  
And start (lit. open) a settlement  
So the Roma [can] celebrate (lit. eat) Easter,  
Vošo is going to Muslim [countries],  
Latsy is going to Romania,  
Latsy founded a settlement,  
Vošo lost the way,  
[He] doesn't know the Muslim [language]  
Latsy came home,  
[He] gathered all the people,  
All the people, oh God, left,  
Who stayed on the camping-ground?*

*Just Toma and Parastiva,  
Just Toma and Parastiva,  
[They] are waiting for Vošo,  
Parastiva starts crying:  
— Where are you, Vošo, where are you?  
Will you Vošo, get killed?  
Or will you be imprisoned?  
Or will you be hungry?  
Toma starts saying:  
— Enough, mother, do not cry anymore,  
That [my] father died.  
Not a word saying,  
Vošo is coming,  
Cut and barefoot,*

*[They] start looking at him,  
Out speaks Vošo:  
— Parastiva, where are the people?  
— All the people left,  
Latsy founded a settlement,  
But what did you do?  
I lost the way,  
I don't know the Muslim [language]  
I came by foot from the forest,  
I burnt my clothes,  
So that the wolves don't eat me,  
So that the wolves don't eat me.  
May you be happy [and] healthy!*

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