



Oral Literature

1.0

Romani-Project Graz / Michael Wogg

Tale telling and ballad singing have been tied intrinsically to the social and cultural life of the Roma for centuries. The transition from pure orality to newly acquired literacy and the success of mass media resulted in fundamental changes in the oral literature – or ‘traditional textuality’ – of the Roma, causing the art of story telling to become extinct in only a few decades.



III. 1 Zlata Nikolić (center) at a recording session in Belgrad

DUJ SOMNAKUNE RAKLOŘE | TWO GOLDEN BOYS

Sah pe katar nah pe. Dešto ľume, dešto them, ľume ĩmpĕracije ſi acolo ſi vitezije, kaj marla muro papu le maĉhen.
Kĕren miſto thaj ertin, Romale! Paťivale manuſendar aſund’om la, paťivale manuſehke phenav la.
Akana phenav tumenge ek laſi paramiĉi, Romale te fala tume.

*It was because it wasn't. In the tenth world, the tenth country, a kingdom and heroes, there, where my grandfather caught fish.
Relax and pardon me, Roma! I have heard this story from honorable people, and I am passing it on an honorable man.
I will tell you a beautiful tale now, Roma, here's to you!*

Sah pe katar nah pe, dešto ľume, dešto them.

Kon ſanel, ĩne vi maj dur, sah ek ĩmpĕrato. Phenel o ĩmpĕrato pehke koĉiſĕhke...

*It was, because it wasn't, in the tenth world, in the tenth country, who knows, maybe even further away?
Once upon a time there was a king. He said to his coachman...*

III. 2

(With these words Wilma Gábor introduced the tale “Duj somnakune raklorrĕ” (“Two Golden Boys”) in the Poxtanara Romani when Mozes F. Heinschink recorded it in Budapest, in 1969)

TRADITIONAL TEXTUALITY AND THE SHIFT TO LITERACY

Worldwide ethnological research in the field of oral tradition and oral literature (or “traditional textuality”; the latter term gradually replacing the former) over the past decades has brought to light some “universal features” of oral societies. Walter Ong, an American cultural historian and philosopher, identified ten characteristics we can expect to come across when dealing with traditional textuality in general: formulaic style (the like beginning and end formulas of Romani tales); additive rather than subordinative language (see the mulo-tale on the text factsheet); aggregative rather than analytic expressions (formulas, phrases); redundancy (see the repetitions in the mulo-tale); a conservative or traditionalist approach (the whole “romipen”-concept is about tradition and so are tales); relatedness to human life and every day world (concreteness); the agonistical tonus (direct conflict and struggle of the characters, violence); empathetic and participatory strategies for decision-making and learning (“vakeripen”); homeostasis concerning information storage (personal and interpersonal storage of memory is limited, so any new, important information

replaces the old and unimportant) and situational rather than abstract concepts (concepts are used in a way that minimises abstraction, focusing on objects and situations directly known by the speaker).

Therefore, it becomes clear that a shift from oral to written recording and consequently written communication means more than just freezing the traditional status quo. Rather, it means opening up a whole new channel of communication, drastically increasing possibilities of memory storage and creating new possibilities for social and aesthetic comparison, altering the concepts of “now” and “then”, “us” and “them” and entering a new, less concrete and more abstract sphere of philosophy and knowledge, etc. However, it also means a substantial change with regards to the previous way of recording, which was the oral channel of discourse and everything inseparably connected with it such as the art of tale telling.

Ill. 3

(see Walter J. Ong (2002) *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. New York: Routledge)

INTRODUCTION

Until the beginning of the 20th century, the literature of the Roma was exclusively oral. It was transmitted in spoken form (an elder telling a story to youngsters; an artist performing a story to an audience). Affected by literacy, mass media and optional reproducibility, the tradition of story telling, still alive in the 1950s, was virtually extinct by the 1980s.

The oral literature of the Roma has changed in the past and will surely continue to face changes in the future. However, the changes which have occurred so far are nothing short of a revolution, because they mark the transition within Romani culture from pure orality to verbal expression. This is a change which the surrounding European nations experienced gradually over hundreds of years, but which has just started with regards to the Roma.

It is, however, ironic that only recently it has been possible to get a picture of the traditional Romani textuality as it ‘really’ was. Modern recording techniques allow capturing of stories and songs in an almost unaltered form, and indeed a wealth of recordings has been made by contemporary scientists, depicting in much detail the oral tradition of the Roma. Nevertheless, when we talk of the oral literature of the Roma in this context, we talk of something which in many respects no longer exists.

GENRES OF TRADITIONAL ROMANI ORAL LITERATURE

Within the oral literature of the Roma several genres have developed with characteristic features both in form and content. Since the differences between the genres vary from one Romani group to another, an outright systematisation of the genres is not easily achieved. Any attempt at classification deals with a genre system that is highly sophisticated and serves both the artist and the audience in their need

for edification, moral advice, artistry, suspense, etc.

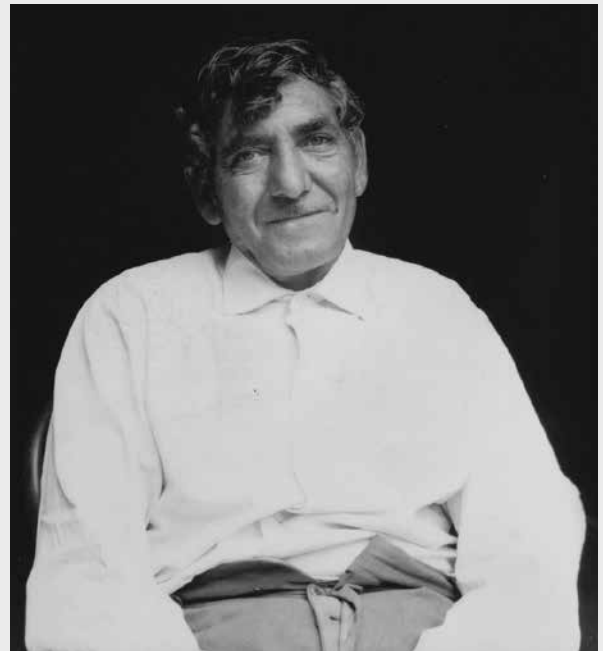
There is a division between epic and lyric forms, the latter usually finding musical expression in different types of songs. Ballads, epic songs, songs of mourning, songs of joy, wedding songs, dance songs, children’s songs, lullabies, and probably many more are known and practiced among the Roma. With regards to the former, there is a further general division into more or less fictional stories on the one hand and true stories on the other. A fictional story is usually called “para-

misi”, “pamarisi”, “paramič(i)”, “paramuzi” (or in certain communities “istorija”, “priča”), and includes what Western tradition regards as fairy tales, fables, parables and legends. Riddles and proverbs as well as jokes are also common among the Roma. Non-fictional stories called “vakeriben” by Servika Roma and “tertenetura” by the Lovara include mulo-stories, anecdotes and more historical narratives in general such as life stories. Even though it is common to call any kind of story “paramisi”; the division between fiction and non-fiction remains significant.



III. 5
Johan Dimitri Taikon, the famous tale teller (left) at tinning.
(from Lundgren / Taikon (2003)

From coppersmith to nurse: Alyosha, the son of a Gypsy chief. Hertfordshire, p. 29)



III. 6
Gusztı Szendrei, the Lovara “paramičari” Szendrei was one of the many tale tellers who remained unknown to a wider public.
(photograph by Paul Meissner)

PARAMISI

The tale is the most formalised, standard form of prose in the oral literature of the Roma. It may be of many kinds: magic tales, hero tales and novel tales which illustrate moral values as well as fables, parables, droll stories and legends. The storyteller is requested “to tell it as it is; the way it must be; the way the story goes; compactly”, i.e., so he keeps the main idea in his mind and tells the story correctly. A true storyteller must use “šukar lava” (beautiful words) and standard story formulas. These aspects of content and form pertain to all types of stories. The storyteller is judged by his usual way of telling a certain story, and the tale in some ways “belongs” to him just as a book belongs to its author.

Probably the most frequently told and widespread type of tale among the Roma is the one of the hero who conquers evil – a witch, a dragon, an evil king, treacherous friends, etc. Its structure is one of a linear sequence of tests or challenges which the hero has to pass. On

the contrary, there is the small, funny anecdote with its subclass known as “džungale paramisa”, literally “dirty stories”. Servika Roma, for instance, differentiate accordingly between “vitezjzika paramisa” (heroic tales) and “pherasune paramisa” (funny stories). “Vitezjzika paramisa” are also known as “bare paramisa” (long stories) whereas “pherasune paramisa” are known under the name of “xarne paramisa” (short tales), which indicates their length. Novel tales, which are also told frequently, are of varying structure as are magic tales in addition to legends adopted from the majorities.

In a hero tale, a Rom is usually victorious over a farmer, a parish priest (“rašaj”), a hodja and sometimes a count. He wins by being clever or by outwitting his enemies and tricking them or he employs his ingenuity to defeat them. The hero of the paramisa is often a “čhavo”, a young Rom who usually comes from a poor Romani family. In a “vitezjzika paramisi”, the young man faces his enemy and the evil embodied in supernatural and non-fictional characters appearing

in tales within the whole Eurasian cultural radius. They could be a dragon (šarkaňi, šerkano, draxo), a devil/demon (beng) or a witch (čoxani, bosorka, inžibaba, gadija, vešterka). Some among the hero’s non-fictional enemies are a wicked king (kral’is, kral’o, kraj, thagar) or a jealous, wicked queen. Usually the king demands that the Romani youth perform an impossible task in order to get rid of him. The demand often ends with the threat “miro xaro, tiri men” – “my sword, your head”, i.e., “if you do not perform the task, I will cut off your head”. Another threat intended to terrify his adversary is expressed in the formula: “Adad’ives imar tiri zumin na xala, tiri zumin xava me.” (Even today you will not eat your soup; your soup will be eaten by me.)

In addition to encountering all kinds of tales, we also come across all kinds of heroes. In “pherasune paramisa” (funny stories) they are quite often stupid and immoral. The stupid character is not necessarily a Gadžo. With regards to humorous stories the audience is entertained by a “dilino Rom” (stupid Rom)

EPICS AND TALES

When old Roma recall storytelling gatherings, successful storytellers and vitezjika paramisa, they use the nearly ritual sentence:

“Jekh vitezjiko paramisi bari džalas, the štar pandž ori.” (A heroic tale lasted a long time, four or five hours.) or *“O phuro XY xudña te vakerelel ešta, oxto orendar raři - jekh paramisi vakerelel džı tosara.”* (Old XY began to tell the story at seven or eight o'clock in the evening and went on telling it until the morning.)

Milena Hübschmannová, a Czech Romist from Prague, recalled listening to a heroic story in 1976 which took seven hours to tell. The storyteller was Michal Adam-Janču of Kladno (near Prague). The transcription of the story took up 105 typed pages.

As far as its complexity is concerned such a tale can be compared to medieval epics such as *“Nibelungenlied”*. Nevertheless, it remains a tale by scholarly definition because it does not focus on the hero's genealogy and other family affairs but on the hero himself.

III. 7

THE CATALOGUES OF TALES

The science of tales is based on international catalogues of tales, in which a vast number of tales is listed and categorized according to single motifs. Romani tales have so far not been included in any of these collections. The explanation for this is most likely the widespread misbelief that the Roma didn't have a tradition of their own which would be worthy of recognition. The prevalent view is that the Roma only borrowed from majority nations, and thus could not have developed their own tradition.

This view is false because it is a fact that no nation in Europe and worldwide has a set of tales which it could entirely call its own. Tales have never been the property of a nation; there has always been a vivid cultural exchange taking place between ethnicities and groups. Apart from that, this view is based solely on the prejudice against the Roma.

Ironically, the exclusion of Romani tales does have its advantages: if a Romani tale differs from the type of tale recorded in a catalogue or if it is not found in the collection at all, it is likely to be an “original” in some respect.

III. 8

or a “baro špekulantos” – the sly guy who cheats the innocent for his own benefit. Such “heroes” appear in tales of the whole Eurasian region. However, with

all these common tendencies, the differences between the groups also have to be mentioned. Certain types of tales are found rather exclusively in some

communities, for instance, the Lovara often tell the tale of the husband who eavesdrops on his unfaithful wife and consequently punishes her.

STYLISTIC DEVICES USED TO TELL FAIRY TALES

Specific formulas are used in the introductions and conclusions of fairy tales (standardised phrases of varying length, ranging from a few words to a short story of its own). Other characteristic devices occur in all the genres, and are not limited to fairy tales.

The standard introductory formula for tales among Servika Roma is: “Sas kaj na sas, mre gule Devla baxtaleja the čačeja.” (Once upon a time, my sweet God blessed and true.) Variations of this formula are many, e.g.: “Sina kaj nana, kapa sina, plasta nana” (lit. “It was ‘cause it wasn't; there were blankets, but no pillows” – Once upon a time there were blankets but no pillows; Burgenland).

Vlax Roma of Hungarian origin are known for the most substantial introductions. The inornate “hine/sine ek Rom” (There was a Rom) is usually used for anecdotes or legends, although it often occurs in tales as well.

The concluding formulas show more variation. Non-Vlax communities living outside the Balkans use the following: “Te na mule, džı adađives džıven.” (They lived happily ever after; lit. “If they have not died, they live until this day”; Servika). Vlax Roma address the audience directly: “T'aven saste haj baxtale, phralalen haj šavalen!” (May you be healthy and lucky, brothers and friends!; Kalderaš). Non-Vlax Roma in the Balkans, however, usually end their tales with an opposition of here and there: “Athe paramuzı, akathe sastıpe.” (There the tale, here health; Prilep).

Crucial passages are sometimes also marked by special formulas. One of these is the above mentioned “miro xaro, tiri men” (my sword, your head), a formula not only widespread among the Roma but also among the non-Roma in the Balkans.

In Romani tales more than one hero wins thanks to God or a miracle of God. “O Del” (God) plays an important role in the life of the Roma and appears accordingly in standard formulas and phrases: “Le Devleske som andro vast.” (I am in God's hands.); “So o Del dela, oda ela.” (What God gives, will be.) The villain asks the hero: “Kames te džıvel čıno, abo but?” (Do you want to live a short time or a long time?) to which the čhavo replies: “Aři čıno, aři but, ča sar o Del dela.” (Neither short nor long, just as God wishes).

THE INDIAN CONNECTION

Tales are a common “traveling” cultural heritage of the entire Eurasian region with no marked difference regarding their type and topic. In 1859, Theodor Benfey, a German Sanskritist and comparative philologist, was the first to argue that European tales had originated in India, with the exception of animal fables. He identified three stages of transmission from India to Europe: firstly, oral transmission via travelers up until the 10th century; secondly, written transmission via the Islamic sphere of influence manifested in Persian, Arab, and Jewish scripts from the 10th century onwards; and third, oral and written transmission via travelers, traders and missionaries from Buddhist regions in Mongolia, China and Tibet. Benfey’s theory was heavily discussed and rejected by many, although accepted by some.

Since Benfey’s initial argument, the Indian origin of Romani tales has long been confirmed, and the possible role of the Roma in their transmission to Europe brought to the fore. Most recently, Heinz Mode and Milena Hübschmannová were of the view that the Roma’s contribution as circulators and bearers of the Indian tradition was substantial. Heinz Mode, a German folklorist, ethnologist, Indologist and an expert on Indian tales pointed to the fact that an outstanding number of Romani stories corresponded with

Indian, Persian and Turkish models. It is on the basis of this that he hypothesised that the Roma had played a role in bringing to Europe models and motifs found in Indian stories.

Milena Hübschmannová later added that the Indian background to Romani stories also brought to mind some typical characters, although “clothed in European cultural garments”. She mentioned the figure of “Bluebeard”, the man who murdered his wives, and who appeared in both Indian and European tales. Being a handsome man, he proposed to an unsuspecting girl but turned out to be a monster who murdered her. In Indian tales, the monster had the form of a tiger; in Romani tales from Serbia it appeared as a dog. Hübschmannová identified more characters and themes that were frequent in Indian, Romani and European tales in general. By stressing the similarities, she attempted to show the development from the Indian to the European stage. To this day, however, there has been no convincing proof of Romani tales’ allegedly more direct connection to India or of the suspected role of the Roma as bearers of Indian motifs and tales. On the other hand, neither of these hypotheses has yet been refuted.

III. 9

GENERAL STYLISTIC DEVICES

Other stylistic devices, though frequently used in fairy tales, are not exclusively limited to them. They result from the process of storytelling itself and the storyteller’s dialogue with the audience. Typically the storyteller communicates with honourable persons, friends or guests by asking reassuring tag questions (“you know?”, “isn’t it?”) or by offering clarifying comments. He would also apologise for using a coarse word or for having to tell annoying or simply improper things. Such dialogical devices are common to oral literature in general. They serve several functions: they show the storyteller’s audience that he cares for them, and they assure him of their attention; they may

help him to structure his tale; they may also serve as a short diversion enabling the storyteller to regain his strength or may simply mark his personal style.

There are two features which are often cited when non-Roma reflect on Romani tales, sexual allusions and expletives. This does not necessarily refer to “džungale paramisa” – ribald stories which naturally require the use of hefty, graphic language. Rather it refers to formulas such as “xav čo kar” (lit. “I am eating your penis”), which may occur in every tale as means of expressing affection and are translated as “my dear”. Expletives have to be viewed in like manner, and their literal meaning should not be confused with their real meaning.

A common feature is tense change. Usually the tales are told in the past tense,

but just as common is switching to the present tense. For instance, the present tense is often used when the characters use direct speech or when a person is thinking something, making up their mind, deciding something or the like. These tense changes must in no way be viewed as errors. The present tense is used whenever during the telling of a tale the audience can identify themselves with the characters. “Present” does not refer to a certain point on a remote time scale but to “what we are experiencing together right here and now”.

Breaks of many kinds, anticipations, even apparent mistakes most often do not create problems for the audience since the listeners hardly hear the given tale for the very first time, nor would a single tale hardly be told without any reference to other “pamarisa” - tales of the majorities.

MULO-STORIES

In contrast to other tales, mulo-stories (“mulo”: dead person; revenant) are

told and understood as being true. A literary technique frequently used for telling a mulo story is first-person narrative, and the storyteller describes an actual event witnessed by himself.

In other cases he has heard the story from somebody else, and the narrative shifts from first to third person, but the story is still presented as true. This has led some scholars to regard

FUNCTION OF THE TALES

“As far as the tales and songs go, their function is completely different in the life of the Roma compared to us. To them they are much more existential and important. A life without music and dance cannot be imagined in the world of the Roma; they really play a vital role in their life as opposed to us who might indulge in them as a mere hobby. In their world they are of central importance because of community centred values. And this is what makes it exciting: even within our world another world is possible. Nowadays problems we face are ones of survival, integration or assimilation; however, this is another question.

If society changed, and the Roma were to face living conditions different to 20 or 30 years ago, then the structure of it all would change, including the tales. The question of what they could tell us now is part of the computer era. A relevant question I cannot answer, in fact. I can only say that in my days tales had an immensely important function and carried with them a fascination, which is similar to watching a really good suspense movie which makes you forget completely about your surroundings.”

III. 10

(Mozes F. Heinschink, the unpublished passage of an interview conducted by Michael Teichmann in 2007)

THE IMPACT OF THE HOLOCAUST

Among the several factors that are responsible for the profound changes in the oral tradition of the Roma the impact of the Holocaust can hardly be overestimated. The German Sinto Reinhold Lagrene says:

“The telling of tales has a long tradition and belongs to the identity forming factors of the Sinti and Roma. [...] My generation as the immediate ancestors of the survivors of the racist persecution in the ‘Third Reich’ had to put up with an unbridgeable gap in our cultural tradition, because in many families of the survivors the old people were missing. Moreover, the custom of telling tales to each other in convivial gatherings was for many years overlaid with the even more urgent necessity to cope with the horror of persecution by telling to each other [...] of the experienced hardship again and again.”

III.11

(translated from Reinhold Lagrene (1995) *Mündliche Erzählkunst als Volkskultur*. In: Solms/Strauß (eds): *Zigeunerbilder in der deutschsprachigen Literatur*. Heidelberg, pp. 95f.)

such stories as a separate genre since they involve a special set of cultural knowledge such as who may in the af-

terlife come back as a mulo; how the mulo behaves; how you will cope with him, etc. Most Roma, however, would

consider them paramisa – with the grave apodosi, of course: “But this is a true story!”

SETTINGS

Styles and genres of the oral literature of the Roma were formalised to a certain extent as well as the occasions on which they were practiced. Within every group of the Roma, to give the best known example, there were gatherings at which adults told tales. During these sessions more or less clearly defined interaction took place between the storyteller and the audience. A gathering was based on certain rules, and anyone who did not want to be thought of as an ill-bred boar, a “degeš”, kept to them. Typically, the participants would gather together at the house of a well known storyteller or a well respected person. The audience sometimes rented the room from the owner for a small sum. Those without money brought a log to keep the fire burning in

winter. The storyteller was rewarded with a pouch of pipe tobacco, for instance.

According to many participants plenty of coffee, alcohol, and tobacco was consumed in more prosperous times during a session, which could last nearly the whole night. Other witnesses, however, state that no eating and most importantly no alcohol drinking took place during a storytelling session. In any case, the listeners were not permitted to chat or interrupt the storyteller. On the contrary, they were continually expected to follow intently the telling of the protagonists’ heroic exploits and to encourage the storyteller with laughter, sighs, screams of horror and all kinds of interjections.

Other popular tale telling settings included the workplace, the military and last but not least wakes which lasted three whole nights and brought together many people, often from distant regions. There

are also accounts of outright storytelling competitions. Just as a good storyteller was a well respected artist, being a well respected member of the community required the ability to tell tales.

As outlined above, the storytelling itself was only partly monologous as it required the participation of the audience in a more or less ritualised way. This was true not only of the performance itself but also of its aftermath. Since the Roma had no traditional literary codex written down, it had to be agreed upon by the participants each time a text was produced. The fact that this agreement between the storyteller and the audience had to be reached every time a story was told became evident in “who-told-it-originally” and “who-told-it-better” discussions. In this context, storytelling was an art form serving both conservative functions and evolutionary needs.



III. 12
(Mozes F. Heinschink at a recording session)

ACTUALISATION AND IMPROVISATION

One more special characteristic of Romani tales is their “timelessness”. Recently, their traditional form was adapted to mirror modern, every day life with its ups and downs as well. For example, in one tale by Servika Roma there is a peace-loving king and a social worker side by side; a beautiful princess who glowed like a “200 Watt light bulb”; a king who puts ads in newspapers or on TV, etc. These combinations may seem absurd and funny, but most listeners do not think it out of the ordinary. However, actualisation and improvisation should not occur at the expense of the continuity of the story; they should not “mess up” the traditional topic.

III. 13

What Servika Roma defined as “vakeriben”, and what we would describe as being together, talking, joking and story-telling was generally among the favorite pastimes of any traditional Romani community. By means of “vakeriben”, all

kinds of information were explicitly or implicitly evaluated according to the “romipen” criteria and simultaneously passed on. In this way the community maintained its ethic, social and aesthetic norms and values. “Vakeriben” therefore acted as a

kind of cultural codex. It is not by chance that the word literally means “talk”, “discussion”, “speech”, “language”, because lingual interaction serves as the “cultural glue” keeping the Roma together and preserving them as a society.

THE ROLE OF ROMANI

The skilful storyteller was not only considered a tale master but also a language master, which contributed to his often high social standing and made him the authority on a range of issues since the dialect of Romani spoken by a given group

is one of the most decisive factors for “romanipen” or “romipen”, “romadom” or “romahood”.

Telling a story and singing a song required the use of beautiful words – the textual aesthetic codex of Romani was tied intrinsically to the social event of telling, singing or simply conversation. The end of the tradition of tale telling

thus marked the end of the aesthetic tradition of Romani as it had existed for centuries. The key factor of this tradition was a permanent discourse among the Roma as to which word, phrase or even dialect was more “beautiful” or “Romaer” than others, or as to who originally used which expression; who told which tale, and who told it which way.

STORYTELLERS

The official storytellers were men. The successful among them were known throughout the land and were highly valued, sometimes even paid. At home, women would tell tales usually meant

or adapted for children. At public gatherings children were merely tolerated, and when “džungale paramisa” (lit. “dirty stories”) were told, the children had to leave the room.

The storyteller knew how to capture his audience’s attention. He was equipped with every conceivable device

for the presenting of tales, which went far beyond our modern concepts of story telling. Accounts of people present at traditional gatherings confirm without exception that storytelling was an art defined by a single and sometimes a group performance, with skilled performers enacting tales and relying on their

life-long practice and vast repertoire. Some of them were able to cause their audience to tremble in fear and laugh out in joy literally the whole night.

Since illiteracy was common in Romani society, the storyteller had to learn tales by heart and reproduce them without notes, which significantly affected the texts. For example, he did not learn his tales word for

word but rather learned the structures and the crucial parts of them. Thus, no two versions of one and the same text were identical. This also held true for ballads and songs. The best example of this is the famous Balkan ballad “Song of the Bridge” of which there are 500 different versions recorded.

Orality also had a strong impact

on the storyteller’s repertoire. The vastest repertoire consisted of 250 tales, which is the highest number reported while many renowned storytellers got by with a repertoire of about 100 tales. Available data suggests that they amassed a repertoire rather early on in life; most accounts speak of storytellers in their early twenties.

CONTEMPORARY GENRES - STATUS QUO

Although oral literature or traditional textuality is present among every people, it has in general lost its relevance due to the importance and virtual omnipresence of mass media today. The same applies to the Roma. Poets, prose writers and dramatists now outnumber storytellers by far. This, however, should not be viewed as a simple replacement since the writers usually seek their audience not only among the Roma but also among the non-Roma and have a strong tendency to write in majority languages. In addition to this, the process of storytelling brings people together, whereas writing is a lonely act which does not

contribute to social coherence in like manner. Hence, the changes that have affected the oral tradition of the Roma in the last 50 or so years are now closely related to profound socio-cultural changes in their communities. In many respects, a description of the oral tradition of the Roma is a description of something irrevocably past.

The art of tale telling among adults no longer exists. If at all, they are told only to children. Less formal genres not typical of the Romani style of storytelling such as mulo-tales still live on. The traditional aesthetic dimension of textuality has faded, although not completely, and written texts have not yet developed the normative power that permanent and everyday oral aesthetic discourse once had. In former days, the gifted youth acquired

their position in the community through learning tales, songs and Romani by communicating with the Roma and the neighboring non-Roma. Nowadays their higher education is based on textbooks written in majority languages.

Mozes F. Heinschink, a profound Austrian expert on the culture of the Roma, put it this way: “The question is: Do people need fairy tales or not? What supersedes them? They may have had an essential function in former times ... one didn’t have a TV or a radio, so they just told something ... and then, as many people were sitting together, something arose. These were then also psychic phenomena which only occurred in the community. My own experience regarding this is still wrapped up in an enigma not found in our enlightened world.”

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brednich, R. W. / Bausinger, H. / Brückner, W. et al. [eds.] (1977) *Enzyklopädie des Märchens. Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung. Volume I.* Berlin: De Gruyter. | **Cech, P. / Fennesz-Juhász, Ch. / Halwachs, D. W. [eds.] (2003)** *Die schlaue Romni / E bengali Romni. Märchen und Lieder der Roma / So Roma phenen taj gilaben.* Klagenfurt: Drava. | **Erdesz, Sandor / Futaki, Ruth [eds.] (1996)** *Zigeunermärchen aus Ungarn. Die Volkserzählungen des Lajos Ámi.* München: Eugen Diederichs Verlag. | **Heinschink, M. F. / Hübschmannová, M. / Rader, A. et al. [eds.] (2006)** *Von den Hexen. Märchen der Gurbet-Roma. Gesammelt von Rade Uhlik / E Čoxanend’i. Gurbetond’e paramiča. Čidijah len o Rade Uhlik.* Klagenfurt: Drava. | **Mode, Heinz / Hübschmannová, Milena [eds.] (1983)** *Zigeunermärchen aus aller Welt. Erste Sammlung.* Leipzig: Insel-Verlag. | **Tcherenkov, Lev / Laederich, Stéphane (2004)** *The Rroma. Volumes 1&2. History, Language and Groups.* Basel: Schwabe Verlag | **Tillhagen, Carl-Herman (1948)** *Taikon erzählt. Zigeunermärchen und -geschichten.* Zürich: Artemis.