

Polish, Lithuanian, and Xaladytka Roma Lives before and after World War Two

A different approach to Roma history

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Roma Groups

Diversity and Unity

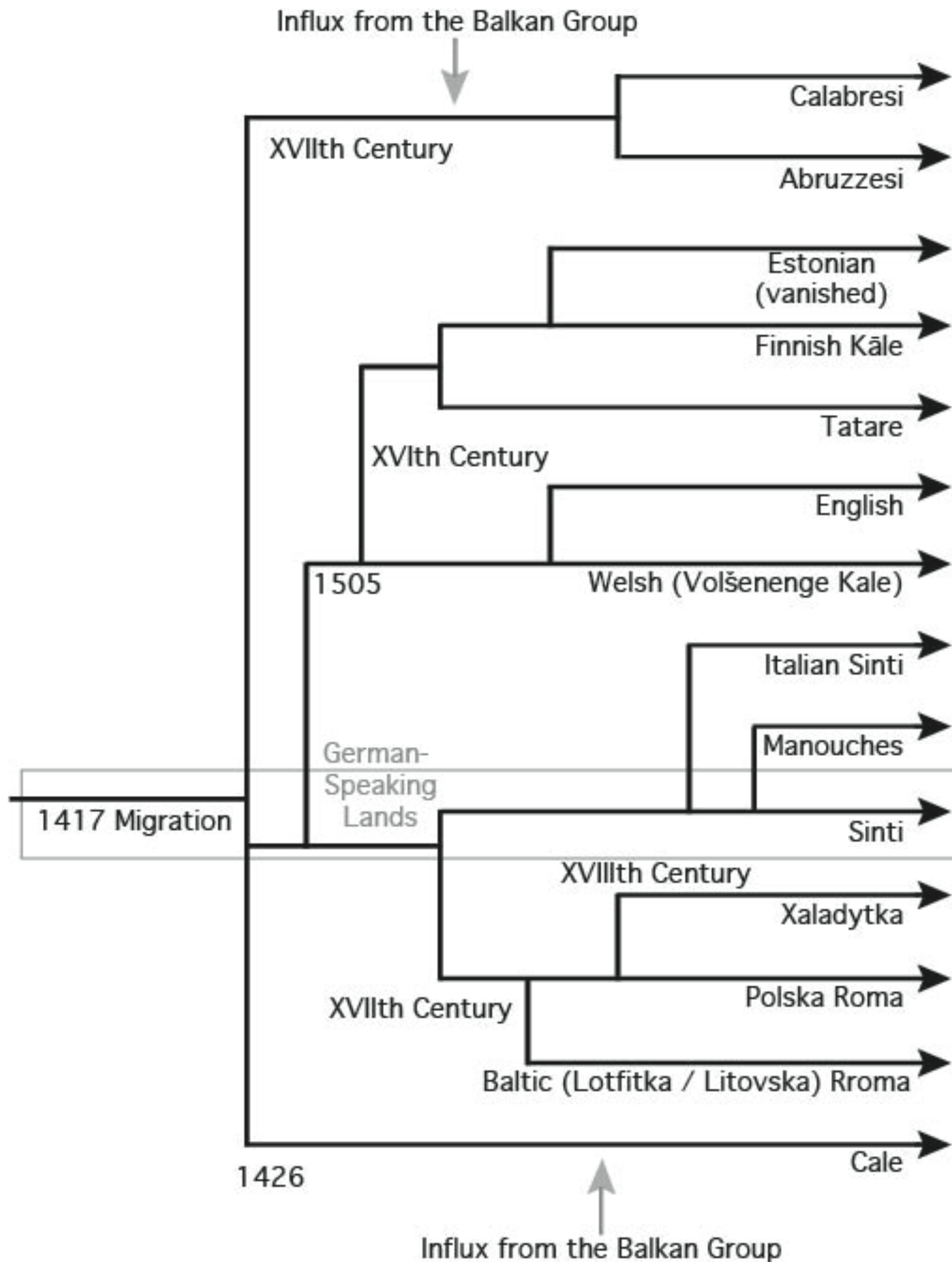
- Different approach to Roma history: Viewing their history not through the countries but rather through Roma groups
- What are these Groups?
 - ✓ The Swiss German Cantons analogy of Roma Identity
 - ✓ Groups are created either through migration or through filling a socio economic niche
 - ✓ Lovara and Kalderaša or Arlii and Bugurdži
 - ✓ Or Sinti, Cale, Polska, Xaladytka etc.
- Groups and Metagroups?
 - ✓ Metagroups are a construct grouping the various Roma groups into common entities
 - ✓ There are 4 such meta groups
 - ✓ Balkan, Carpathian, Vlach, and Nordic

The Metagroups and Groups

<p>Nordic Metagroup:</p> <p>Language: Mostly influenced by German</p> <p>Original Trades: Originally horse traders and Musicians</p> <p>Original Spread: Northern and Western Europe</p>	<p>Balkan Metagroup:</p> <p>Language: Influenced by Turkish</p> <p>Original Trades: Smiths, steel working, music, and all professions</p> <p>Original Spread: Mostly in the Balkans</p>	<p>Carpathian Metagroup:</p> <p>Language: Hungarian and Slavic influences</p> <p>Original Trades: Steelwork and music</p> <p>Original Spread: ex Austro Hungarian Empire</p>	<p>Vlax Metagroup:</p> <p>Language: Very Strong Romanian influences</p> <p>Original Trades: Due to slavery, difficult to say. Copper smiths, wood work, trade</p> <p>Original Spread: Present Day Romania</p>
<p>Abruzzesi Calabresi Cale Kāle Lalere Kāle Litovska Roma Polska Roma Sinti Tatare Volšenenge Kale Xaladytka Roma</p>	<p>Arlii Bessarabian Ursari Bugurdži Burgudži Parpuli Drindari Džambaša Jerlides Kalajdži Kirimlides Prilep Arlii Sepetčides Thracean Kalajdži Varna Kalajdži Xoraxane</p>	<p>Bohemian Burgenland Moravian North Hungarian Plaščuni</p>	<p>Cerhara Čurara Dirzara Džambazi Greek Vlax Gurbeti Gurvara Kalderaša Laxora Lingurari Lovara Mačvaja Mašara Patrinara Rišarja Rudari Servi Vlaxurja</p>

Polska, Litovska, and Xaladytka Roma

Origins and Early History



- These Roma are part of the Nordic meta group, a group of Roma who fled the Ottoman invasions in present day Greece and arrived in the Rhine valley around 1417
- From there, some continued to the South and to England, from where many were deported to Scandinavia
- In German lands, they were soon strongly persecuted and denied the right of stay, forcing them to a nomadic way of life
 - ✓ So Roma are not nomads, they were forced to in Western Europe ...
- Some fled Eastwards: The subject of our talk today
- Moscow Chronicle Middle of 17th Century:
 - ✓ “Цыганы есть люди в Польши, а поидоша от Немец, на татьбу и всякое зло хитры.” (Barannikov, A. P. Cygany SSSR. Moscow, 1931)
 - ✓ “Gypsies are people in Poland, whose origins are in Germany, and they are very skilful in stealing and other bad practices.”
- These are the Roma who interest us today

Roma in Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine

There is more complexity

- The Region's history is quite complex, and often forgotten. For Roma, the essential factor has been the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which englobed present day Poland and Lithuania, Belarus, and a large part of present day Ukraine
- Why is it so relevant?
 - ✓ The region was empty, the commonwealth was tolerant of minorities and thus Roma were welcome
 - ✓ This means that the Polska and Litovska Roma who fled Germany found a place to settle, but also Carpathian Roma in the South of Poland
 - ✓ They were not the only ones: Servi, who are Vlach Roma, fled Romania to the Commonwealth as early as the 16th century. They are now very common in the Ukraine and Russia, also often intermarried with Xaladytka
 - ✓ When the commonwealth fell (due to a Swedish invasion, by the way) and the Russian Empire took over, Roma found themselves in a new country (without moving).
- The Southern part of present Day Ukraine was under the Golden Horde and later the Ottomans, meaning that in present day Ukraine you have also Balkan Roma: The Krimlides of Crimea, and Ursarja.
- The expansion of the Russian Empire and of the Soviet Union also added may Vlach Roma (Bessarabia) and Carpathian (Transcarpathian Ukraine)
- Finally, the ubiquitous Lovara and Kalderaša, both Vlach, arrived in the Russian Empire in 1904 and are now found all over Europe and the world.

Why a Group Based History?

Groups vs. Countries

- It is impossible to speak about Roma history without understanding the origins, arrivals, and the overall historical context
 - ✓ Western European stereotypes and repression vs. no discrimination in the Ottoman Empire vs. a rather initially positive view of Roma in Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Russia
 - ✓ Who is and who was recognised as Rom: This depended on the country and on the group. “Fahrende” in Western Europe, Slave in Romania, Smith in the Carpathian and Balkan, etc.
 - ✓ This had an influence on integration, and on life and death, for example during the Holocaust
- Our Roma of interest today were originally horse traders and musicians
 - ✓ They were successful at their job, as the imperial Russian army bought horses almost exclusively from these Roma
 - ✓ This also meant that these Roma would travel during the summer to buy and gather horses for the army. You do not find a few thousand horses next to your house
 - ✓ So many of them travelled during the summer (with tents and horses), but all had permanent houses and as such were part of the villages and towns.
 - ✓ There were no ghettos or segregated settlements for these Roma (for others, that existed)
 - ✓ This integration is still visible today, for example in Ukraine

Pre World War Two History

Few Changes, except in USSR

- In Poland and Lithuania, not much changed for these Roma groups until World War Two
 - ✓ Nothing really disturbed their way of life, and they were mostly spared the impact of Wars and shifting borders
 - ✓ Not victims of any repression or special laws (at least for the ones we are talking about - for others, i.e. Vlachs, there were more restrictions)
- With the Russian revolution, and the fall of the Russian Empire, the situation of all Roma changed quite drastically
 - ✓ The Soviets created Roma collective farms, many of which were in the Western part of the country, i.e. in the Ukraine
 - ✓ Some of the original motivation was to “settle” travelling Roma, Roma who were mostly Vlachs, but it also affected Xaladytka Roma
 - ✓ There were attempts to “standardise” Romanes and to create a unified Roma language
 - ✓ In brief, the Soviets tried to mould Roma into their soviet view of the world. They also effectively tried to eradicate the culture, not by force, but by constant pressure. To this day, in all Roma songs in Russia, one couplet is sung in Russian, so that censors would understand the theme of the song ...
- The Soviets also introduced the concept of “nationality”, to which we will come back later in this talk

The War and the Holocaust

The forgotten Holocaust

- The fate of Roma in Poland, the Baltic's, Belarus and the Ukraine is not very well known nor recognised
 - ✓ We will make a parenthesis here on Latvia and Estonia, where history was different
 - ✓ and concentrate on Poland/Lithuania and the occupied part of the USSR
- In those regions, Polska, Litovska, and Xaladytka Roma seldom made it to concentration camps
 - ✓ We know of a few, but this was a minority
 - ✓ They were simply murdered on the spot wherever they were found, There are literally hundreds of places where Roma were executed
 - ✓ Not just by the SS, but by regular troops, the german police, etc.
 - ✓ Who was deemed a "Zigeuner" depended largely on the views of the local population who informed the Germans. Locals were otherwise seldom involved
 - ✓ This "local" definition as well as the German view of "travellers" as Roma, effectively helped many Roma of the groups we are talking about of being recognised as such and thus killed. This was especially the case in Belarus and the Ukraine
- How many died is impossible to know, as no records were made, and no one knows about the pre-War population of Roma
 - ✓ In Latvia, where we interviewed in the 1990s all surviving Roma, we estimate that roughly 50% of the local Roma were killed. There, in majority by locals
- Quite a few Roma fought actively in the resistance, especially in the Ukraine and in the Baltic States

The Post War Years

Travel Interdictions and Relocations

- After the War, many Roma took the opportunity to move Westwards with the large wave of refugees
 - ✓ Many Vlach Roma from Poland and Russia moved to Germany, creating the “Sinti and Roma” - happy to expand after the war
 - ✓ Poland was moved ca. 300 km westwards, with many Poles and Roma from the eastern part of the country being resettled in former German lands
 - ✓ So nowadays, Litovska and Xaladytka Roma live more in Western Poland, while the Polska are more in the eastern part of the country
- Travelling Roma were forbidden
 - ✓ In Russia in October 1956; in Poland, in 1964
 - ✓ One generally is under the false impression that this affected all Roma. In fact, it affected mostly the later Vlach arrivals, the Kalderaša and Lovara.
 - In Poland, it caught also Polska and Xaladytka Roma as this was done at a time where Roma were under way for horse trading, thus effectively separating families (even though the large majority had houses)
- It also resulted (mostly in Poland), to families having to register for the first time, and giving a “family name”. We know of many Roma families who suddenly had different family names depending on the places they were registered ...

Post War Years

Nationalities and Denial

- The Soviets introduced a concept of “Nationality” which is not very well known nor truly understood in Western Europe
 - ✓ Nationality in this context had nothing to do with citizenship
 - ✓ It was vaguely oriented along random ethno-cultural, as well as religious lines
 - ✓ We know and have seen first hand passports with nationality “Tsigan”, “Jew”, “Moslem”, “N...” besides Armenian, Russian, etc.
 - ✓ This perdured much after the fall of the USSR, for example in Latvia but also in other countries
- Nationalities, combined with a desire of reducing the numbers of minorities starting under Nikita Khrushchev would prove to have some lasting side effects
 - ✓ Wishing to reduce the number of “Tsigani”, many Roma in Russia were re-classified as Russians, especially in the Baltics, Belarus, and in the Ukraine
 - This only for the Xaladytka Roma
 - Kaderaša for example, were mostly stamped to be “Moldovans”
 - All the while, while keeping the series numbers of passports nicely segregated (i.e. recognisable for authorities)

Post Communist Times

Nationalism and Populism

- The fall of the Iron Curtain, the Soviet Union collapsed, and the Baltic States, Ukraine and others regained their independence
- For Roma, especially for the ones of the groups we have been talking about, this often meant that relatives were suddenly in another country with another passport
 - ✓ Family ties in those groups stretched across the entire region and were not held by country borders
- Many Roma also found themselves in limbo, as they had been reclassified as “Russian” in countries that were no longer Russian friendly
 - ✓ We had a large project in Lithuania in the late 90s so that “Russians” Roma could get their passport (even when they were Litovska Roma, they were initially denied)
- Nationalism and populism were also on the rise in many countries, and the attitude towards Roma changed as a result. They were often made scapegoats for many ills, or simply associated with less integrated Roma.
 - ✓ This can be seen in the Ukraine, where the press was exceedingly anti-Roma, but effectively very much against the Roma from Transcarpathia and against the Vlach from Bessarabia.
 - ✓ There were many pogroms in several cities, and the judicial system was not exactly forthcoming
 - ✓ Nevertheless, it also reflected on others, and their situation did deteriorate
- Now with the current war, there have been cases where Roma (Xaladytka) were victims of Russian occupiers. We know also of many of those Roma who are fighting on the Ukrainian side right now
- This period also saw a huge emigration. One is more likely to meet a Polkso Rom in the UK than in Poland nowadays ...

Conclusion

- Writing about Roma, about their history and their culture, requires actually a more differentiated approach based on Roma groups
 - ✓ Even within a single (present day or older) country, the fate of Roma was bound and tied to their groups, and different groups had very different fates
 - ✓ Roma groups are de-facto transnational, especially since their creation pre-dates the establishment of modern countries
 - ✓ Generalisations are simply blatantly wrong and misleading (think paying for the bride - purely Vlach, nomadic, etc.)
- These generalisations have been used as a mean to discriminate
 - ✓ Populists use the negative stereotypes and examples to generalise against all Roma
- The specificities of the different Roma groups should also not obscure the fact that it is a European Transnational Minority, currently the largest one
 - ✓ Differences among the groups should not hide or be used against the common history, culture, and language

Q&A