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What people remember, but history does not see. Resettlement of Carpathian Roma during Operation Vistula

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Abstract

This article pertains to the resettlement of the Carpathian Roma during Operation Vistula and their successive relocation to the Western and Northern Territories of post war Poland. The story of their displacement is absent from narratives regarding the sub-deportation social landscape in post-1947 Poland, just as there is very little information about their subsequent resettlement in the present-day Podkarpackie Voivodeship.

Keywords

oral history, Roma, Lemkos, Ukrainians, Operation Vistula, resettlement, displacement



Introduction

The idea behind the scientific research concerning the resettlement¹ of the Carpathian Roma during Operation Vistula² occurred by both pure coincidence and my very own curiosity. In 2018, alongside the Dobra Wola Foundation, I was working on an oral history project devoted to Romani blacksmithing.³ During the project, one of the narrators, a native Roma woman called Olga Sucha, while recounting a story about her blacksmith father, recalled how she and her family, as well as her Lemko neighbours, were relocated to the west of Poland. This was the first moment of serendipity⁴ that I experienced while conducting field research. It came as a surprise because it was the first time I had heard that the resettlement of the Roma in the Western and Northern Territories of Poland might be linked to

- 1 In this case, I understand the resettlement of individuals or groups of people who are moved within their country of residence away from their normal place of living (uprooted from their environment) as part of forced government policy. I classify these resettlements as internal forced migrations. See M. Pachocka, K. Sobczak-Szelc, *Migracje przymusowe*, in M. Lesińska, M. Okólski (eds.), *25 wykładów o migracjach*, Warszawa 2018, pp. 335–338.
- 2 In 1945 Poland was reborn as a state not only with a new political but also territorial face. Under the terms of the Potsdam Conference, Poland was granted the Western and Northern Territories, which had belonged to Germany until the end of the Second World War, but lost its former Eastern Borderlands. This resulted in a mass exchange of population. The resettlement of Ukrainians, Lemkos and others from Eastern Poland in its new borders as part of Operation Vistula began on 28 April 1947 for other reasons. The operation was led by General Stefan Mossor. The operations were conducted in a brutal and ruthless manner. Within three months, more than 140,000 Ukrainians, Boykos, Dolinians, and Lemkos, as well as mixed Polish-Ukrainian families, were forcibly relocated to the Western and Northern Territories of Poland. Operation Vistula was of a political-military nature (for more, see J. Pisuliński, *Akcja Specjalna „Wisła”*, Rzeszów 2017; E. Misiło, *Akcja „Wisła”. Dokumenty i materiały*, Warszawa 2013).
- 3 As part of the project *Kowalstwo na Spiszu – niematerialne dziedzictwo Romów* (Blacksmithing in Spisz – intangible heritage of the Roma people), funded by the National Heritage Institute (Contract no. NID/PW/3/18) a documentary, *There were the blacksmiths, there were* was produced, which, together with two other Roma projects conducted by the Dobra Wola Foundation, was entered by the European Commission in The Golden Collection of Good Practices European Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century (<https://bit.ly/2y1PNDJ>).
- 4 Robert Merton pointed to the presence of serendipity in qualitative research, which introduces “an unexpected and strategic point of reference, which pressures the researcher to seek out a new line of research that extends the existing theory” (qtd. K. Majbroda, *Epistemiczne pułapki – metodologiczne niepokoje. Autoetnografia jako wyraz sprawczości i inwencyjności wobec nieprzewidywanego (serendipity) w antropologicznej praxis*, in M. Kafar, A. Kacperczyk (eds.), *Autoetnograficzne „zbliżenia” i „oddalenia”*, Łódź 2020, p. 293.

the displacement⁵ from the Lemko region⁶ during Operation Vistula. The general knowledge of its causes and course was known to me, and I would associate Operation Vistula with the East Slavic population but never with the Roma one. Therefore, this accidental passing, evoked from the childhood memories of the narrator, inspired me to further explore the topic of the relocation of the Roma from the Lemko region during Operation Vistula and their subsequent resettlement in the Western and Northern Territories of Poland. It also became the subject of my doctoral dissertation.

Roma people in Poland

The Roma people form a diaspora occupies almost all countries in the world. In Europe, the size of the population of the Romani community is estimated to be approximately 12 million,⁷ consisting of a network of culturally related groups with a shared ethnic background. The oldest historical document confirming the Roma presence in the Kingdom of Poland is a set of municipal records dating back to 1401 from Kazimierz district in Kraków. They mention Mikołaj Czigan, who paid a tax for the plot of land he leased. Subsequent records dating back to the 15th century collected from villages located between Kraków and Lviv indicate the resettlement of the Roma people and their involvement in local economic and social life.⁸ In Poland, according to data gathered from the 2011 National Census of Population and Housing, 16,725 people declared belonging to the Romani community.⁹ However, Polish Roma organisations are of the belief that these figures are understated and

- 5 In my research, when the Lemko talk about their forced resettlement as part of Operation Vistula, they most often use the term “resettled from the Lemko region”; for this reason, I assume, following Krystyna Kersten, that the process of resettlement “involves a specific community, is always forced, organised, the position of the displaced person is passive, while it is not significant whether this resettlement is executed under international agreements or decisions, or it is a unilateral act of the authority carrying it out, and if it concerns its own citizens or citizens of another state” (qtd. A. Pazik, *Migracje przymusowe jako instrument konsolidacji państwa narodowego w XX wieku. Przypadek wysiedleń Niemców z Polski po II wojnie światowej*, ‘Kultura i Polityka,’ no. 13, 2013, pp. 131–152). Displacement also caused problems with the integration of displaced people in their new place of residence as well as with their presence in public space.
- 6 I conducted the interview with Olga Sucha in Świątkowa Mała. This village is situated in the Lemko region. Resettlement during Operation Vistula covered a vast area of eastern and south-eastern Poland, the territories of the then Lublin and Rzeszów regions, as well as part of the Kraków area (Polesie, Roztocze, Pogórze Przemyskie, Bieszczady, Beskid Niski, and Beskid Sądecki). At present, my research is focused on the Lemko region.
- 7 https://archive.sdb.org/Documenti/Missioni/Cagliario/2021/Cagliario11_2021_03_it.pdf (accessed: 19.04.2023); <http://www.stowarzyszenie.romowie.net/e-learning/lekcja1/> (accessed: 19.04.2023).
- 8 L. Mróz, *Dzieje Cyganów-Romów w Rzeczypospolitej XV–XVIII*, Warszawa 2001, pp. 161–163.
- 9 <http://mniejszosci.narodowe.mswia.gov.pl/mne/mniejszosci/charakterystyka-mniejs/6480,Charakterystyka-mniejszosci-narodowych-i-etnicznych-w-Polsce.html#romowie> (accessed: 6.03.2023).

unofficially estimate that the number of Roma in Poland is between 20,000 and 25,000 people.¹⁰

There are four main Romani groups located across Poland: the Polish Roma, the Carpathian Roma (called the Mountain Roma or Bergitka Roma),¹¹ the Kelderash, and the Lovari. Each group maintains its own dialect of the Romani language, folklore, occupations, lifestyle, internal organisation, and normative system of *romanipen-mageripen*. *Romanipen* is an orally transmitted code of laws and rules that regulates the internal and external lives of the Roma. Different Romani groups abide by it to different extents, either in its entirety or with specific exceptions to it. It should be emphasised that *romanipen*,¹² when perceived as a kind of life philosophy, is rather modifiable in nature and is not a clearly codified system of norms and values.¹³ The text presented here pertains to the Carpathian Roma group. This name is used to describe the Romani group living in the southern part of Poland,

- 10 The initial results of the 2021 National Census in terms of national-ethnic structure and language of domestic interactions show that Roma origin is declared by 11,800 people, <https://stat.gov.pl/spisy-powszechno-nsp-2021/nsp-2021-wyniki-wstepne/wstepne-wyniki-narodowego-spisu-powszechno-ludnosci-i-mieszkan-2021-w-zakresie-struktury-narodowo-etnicznej-oraz-jezyka-kontaktow-domowych,10,1.html> (accessed: 10.07.2023). The Central Council of Roma in Poland and the Roma Counselling and Information Centre, representing the Roma minority, have already voiced their reservations about the construction of questions on national or ethnic identification at the consultation stage of the 2021 National Census. The initial results raised objections from the Roma community due to the absence of a question regarding dual identification. The reported number of people identifying themselves as Romani, according to estimates by the said Roma organisations, is understated. The final results of the 2021 National Census have not been published yet; therefore, I am providing data from 2011.
- 11 Edmund Klich was the first to use the term ‘Carpathian Gypsies’ in his studies. He divided the Gypsies “residing on ethnically Polish lands into Lowland Polish Gypsies (the Polish Roma group) and Mountain or Carpathian Gypsies.” Jerzy Ficowski referred to this division in his works, and today he is generally regarded as the author of this name. According to Marcel Courthiade (M. Courthiade, *Romani versus Para-Romani*, in P. Bakker, M. Courthiade (eds.), *The margin of Romani: Gypsy languages in contact*, Amsterdam 1991, pp. 1-15) the exoethnonym Carpathian Roma seems to be the most appropriate term for linguistic, cultural, and historical reasons. It is used quite frequently in linguistics. The exoethnonym is also the name Bergitka Roma (qtd: A. Bartosz, *Gdzież te wozy kolorowe z prakami?*, ‘Studia Romologica,’ no. 13, 2009, p. 285). In the dialect of the Polish Roma group, the word *berga* means ‘mountain,’ in the dialect of the Carpathian Roma *hedźios*. The Carpathian Roma refer to themselves as *Roma*, *Amare Roma* which literally means ‘Our Roma people,’ that is, Roma like us, speaking the same dialect of the Romani language. In this article, I employ the term Carpathian Roma. As someone who comes from the Carpathian Roma group, I share Marcel Courthiade’s view.
- 12 *Romanipen* is one of the main ingredients of Romani identity. Its multidimensionality and the way it is interpreted deserve a separate study. For an overview of existing definitions, see T. Koper, *Romanipen. O dwóch strategiach bycia Romem we współczesnym świecie*, ‘Studia Romologica,’ no. 13, 2020, pp. 87-120.
- 13 I. Józwiak, S. Styrcacz, M. Szewczyk, E. Mirga-Wójtowicz, *Stay calm and beshen khere. Internet i transnarodowa intensyfikacja życia polskich Romów w czasie pandemii COVID-19*, ‘Lud,’ vol. 104, 2020, p. 234.

where smaller or larger settlements of the Roma population reside. The ancestors of the Carpathian Roma group were the very first Roma people to settle in the territory of Poland.

In ethnographic descriptions, the Roma are perceived as “people without history” who live in the eternal present moment. I had the opportunity to hear such statements myself. During one of the lectures about Romani culture, I heard that the Roma do not have any history. Upset by such a revelation, I thought to myself, “What do you mean they don’t have any history; they have no past?” Even an object has a history, so how is it possible that a person or a social group has none? Why are the Roma denied being part of the history of the country they have lived in for over 600 years? Sławomir Kaprański provides the answer:

In the ethnographic descriptions that have been popularised until recently, Roma communities have often been presented as groups whose identity is expressed in the constant reproduction of a timeless cultural idiom, living in the eternal present moment, caring neither for the past nor for the future, and mostly remaining silent regarding past events, either because the past, even their own, was not something of interest to them, or because of the specific nature of Roma culture. Their silence was seen as a derivative of the circumstances concerning people with no history and no memory who maintain their identity by referring to established cultural values not noticing the passage of time, and consequently, not changing with it.¹⁴

Researchers Kamila Fiałkowska, Michał Garapich and Elżbieta Mirga-Wójtowicz, analysing the academic silence around the Roma, write: “On the Roma issue, until recently, the silence has been mostly understood as the absence of a voice or the failure to hear the voice of those being spoken about; in other words, it is the absence of Roma history in European historical discourse, as well as the continuously present absence of Roma researchers in Roma studies.”¹⁵

Academic analyses lead to the conclusion that cultural heritage is ambiguous, as it is not only positive but also negative. The negative aspects of such heritage lead to the perpetuation of attitudes rooted in the cultural memory of both majority and minority types of communities.¹⁶ Ethnicization and orientalization of

14 S. Kaprański, *Milczenie, pamięć, tożsamość: fantazmat „Cygana” i ambiwalencja nowoczesności*, ‘Ethos. Kwartalnik Instytutu Jana Pawła II KUL’, vol. 29, 2020, no. 1, p. 186.

15 K. Fiałkowska, M. Garapich, E. Mirga-Wójtowicz, *Krytyczna analiza naukowej ciszy, czyli dlaczego Romowie migrują (z naszego pola widzenia)*, ‘Kultura i Społeczeństwo’, no. 2, 2018, pp. 39–67. In the text, the authors show, among other things, how one scientific discourse that expands knowledge about particular social processes can in turn suppress others of the same kind, thus reproducing hidden assumptions, stereotypes, and prejudices about the migration of both Roma and non-Roma populations in Poland. They reveal how the ethnization, orientalization, and domination of the majority group affect the discourse on the Romani people in the social sciences.

16 E. Kocój, *Dziedzictwo kulturowe mniejszości narodowych, etnicznych i religijnych kręgu Karpat*

the Romani society reproduced in ethnographic descriptions foster exclusion and reinforce stereotypes of the outsider, which the majority excludes from Polish culture and history.

Contrary to the stereotype, not all Romani communities were nomadic in nature; in fact, it is said that a minority were nomadic while the majority led a more sedentary or semi-sedentary lifestyle. As observed by the aforementioned researchers Fiałkowska, Garapich, and Mirga-Wójtowicz, who deal with the migrations of the Polish Roma, the stereotype of the ever-wandering nation and the lack of roots result in an academic silence when it comes to discussing the Roma migrations, which makes the Roma people invisible both in Polish migration studies and Polish Romology (Roma studies).¹⁷

(In)visible

The level of knowledge regarding the Roma participating in the process of internal migration¹⁸ and historical population movements after the Second World War in Poland concentrates around the so-called 'settlement action.'¹⁹ In December 1949, a nationwide census of the Gypsies was conducted,²⁰ which indicated that 25 per cent of the Romani population were people who settled in the south of Poland. The process of collecting statistical data was the first, preliminary attempt made in order to solve the so-called Gypsy problem in the Polish People's Republic.

- *narracje lokalne i zarządzanie instytucjonalne (wstępne rezultaty badania pilotażowego)*, 'Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego Prace Etnograficzne,' vol. 44, no. 3, 2016, p. 196.
- 17 K. Fiałkowska, M. Garapich, E. Mirga-Wójtowicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 39–67.
- 18 The word 'migration' derives from a Latin word *migratio*, meaning 'resettlement.' The meaning of the word 'migration' in *Dictionary of the Modern Language* is explained as "a mass migration, the movement of people within a country or between different countries in order to change their place of residence permanently or for a certain period of time, caused by political, ethnic, religious, economic factors" (see 25 *wykładów o migracjach*, M. Anacka, M. Okólski, in M. Lesińska, M. Okólski (eds.), *Migracje: pojęcia i metody*, Warszawa 2018, pp. 15–31). In the article, I use the terms 'resettlement' and 'migration' interchangeably.
- 19 See J. Ficowski, *Cyganie na polskich drogach*, Kraków 1985; A. Mirga, *Romowie w historii najnowszej Polski*, in Z. Kurcz (ed.), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce*, Wrocław 1997; J. Drużyńska, *Ostatni tabor. Jak władza ludowa zakazała Cyganom wędrowania*, Poznań 2015; P.J. Krzyżanowski, *Kwestia cygańska*, in J. Syrnyk (ed.), *Aparat bezpieczeństwa wobec mniejszości narodowych w Polsce w latach 1944–1956*, Warszawa 2019; A. Łuczak, *Sytuacja ludności romskiej na Ziemi Lubuskiej w xx wieku*, Szczecinek 2013.
- 20 In the article, I refer to historical documents or statements in which the exoethnonym 'Gypsy' occurs; I leave it as it was written or spoken in the source texts. However, I frequently use the name 'Roma,' which I believe to be correct. The term is an endoethnonym now accepted by the Roma and the governments of the various countries of which the Roma are citizens. 'Roma' in the Romani language denotes a person bound by blood ties to that group, making "Roma one is, Roma one cannot become." It is a word that does not carry as much prejudice as the word 'Gypsy.' The Roma do not use the word 'Gypsy' when speaking in Romani. In 1971, the First Romani World Congress was held, at which the Roma anthem and flag were established and the word Roma, which identifies the group, was settled.

The settlement process of the Roma was to be facilitated by Resolution No. 452/52 of 24 May 1952 issued by the Praesidium of the Government On assisting the Gypsy population in the transition to a settled lifestyle. An excerpt from the resolution reads that its objective was to “convince the gypsy population to a settled lifestyle and create appropriate conditions for their social, economic, and cultural development, as well as have them participate in the implementation of state economic tasks.” However, the objective was not achieved. Even though the settled Romani communities benefited from the opportunities offered by the regulation, the itinerant Romani groups resisted the pressure of sedentarization and productivization policies for a long time. In 1964, a decision was made to repressively detain trains of Gypsy caravans and administratively resettle the itinerant Roma families in many cities scattered across the country. The detention and forced resettlement (the so-called Great Stop) of the Lowar, Kelderash, and Polish Romani groups were carried out with the participation of the Civic Militia officers.²¹

However, I have found no studies that would analyse the problem concerning the resettlement of the Roma in the Western and Northern Territories of Poland as a result of Operation Vistula. I am not even aware of any studies on this incident in general. This does not mean, however, that no one has ever even slightly considered the fact that the Roma’s relocation to the Western and Northern Territories of Poland was part of Operation Vistula. Eugeniusz Misiło in his work *Akcja „Wisła”. Dokumenty i materiały* (Operation Vistula. Documents and materials), among a great number of documents, included one that is crucial for my research purposes. In this document, the commander of Operational Group Vistula addresses a question to General Stefan Mossor as to what should be done with Gypsies of Greek Catholic beliefs residing in the southern part of the Jasło district. He receives the following answer: “Treat individually, depending on values and loyalty.” The author added a footnote asserting that in the villages of Tylawa and Zyndranowa, the Roma were displaced along with the Ukrainians as part of Operation Vistula.²²

In his article *Romowie na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1949* (The Roma people in Lower Silesia between 1945 and 1949), Łukasz Sołtysik writes: “The Roma generally came to Lower Silesia voluntarily. The few families who arrived together with Lemkos and Ukrainians as part of Operation Vistula were an exception to this event.” In his footnote, he refers to documents stored in the State Archives and states the name of a resettled Roma native – that is Sawko Bładycz who returned to Krynica Zdrój on 4 January 1956.²³ Piotr Jacek Krzyżanowski, however, writes in his article

21 A. Mirga, *Romowie – proces kształtowania się podmiotowości politycznej*, in P. Madajczyk (ed.), *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce. Państwo i społeczeństwo polskie a mniejszości narodowe w okresie przełomów politycznych (1944–1989)*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 125–140.

22 *Akcja „Wisła”. Dokumenty i materiały*, op. cit., p. 647–648.

23 Ł. Sołtysik, *Romowie na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1947*, ‘Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka,’ vol. 62, no. 1, 2007, pp. 200–201.

Kwestia cygańska (The Gypsy Question): “It is worth mentioning that Gypsies from the Krynica area were displaced along with Ukrainians in 1947 during Operation Vistula to the province of Wrocław; approximately 120 people then resettled in the area of Środa Śląska.”²⁴ Further traces of the stories regarding the relocated Roma as part of Operation Vistula can be found in Andrzej Mirga’s article *Romowie – proces kształtowania się podmiotowości politycznej* (The Roma people and the process of forming political subjectivity), in which the author gives the example of the Siwak family from Wałbrzych (Lower Silesia). They originated from Zyndranowa in the Beskid Niski, they were already a settled family, and they arrived in the West of Poland together with the Ukrainian and Lemko populations relocated during Operation Vistula.²⁵ Andrzej Łuczak’s publication *Romowie na Warmii i Mazurach* (The Roma people in Warmia and Masuria) includes a document revealing that the Praesidium of the District National Council in Pasłęk sent a numerical summary of the Gypsy²⁶ population residing in the district. The document reads: “There are two Gypsy families residing in the Wilczęta municipality. These gypsies are of Polish origin and were resettled in the territory of the district as part of Operation V.”²⁷ The above quotations are neither descriptions nor elaborate explanations, but simply short, informative passages. Nevertheless, they are a valuable source of data needed for my research.

Research perspective

Until recently, the Roma societies transmitted their history orally in the Romani language. Oral transmission shapes a group’s identity, its values, goals, beliefs, and social relationships. Therefore, in the case of the Roma people, the research I conduct often requires an almost detective-like search for traces confirming the existence and activities of their representatives. It is a particularly meticulous procedure involving intensive archive and library searches, finding descendants, and resorting to the resources of their family’s communicative memory.²⁸ These

24 P.J. Krzyżanowski, *Kwestia cygańska*, in J. Syrnyk (ed.), *Aparat bezpieczeństwa wobec mniejszości narodowych w Polsce w latach 1944–1956*, Warszawa 2019, p. 196.

25 A. Mirga, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

26 In all documents and publications issued before 1990 the name ‘Gypsies’ is used. See footnote 20.

27 A. Łuczak, *Romowie na Warmii i Mazurach*, Szczecinek 2015.

28 Communicative memory refers to ideas about the past events passed on from generation to generation, mostly within one family. Most scholars associate Jan Assmann as the originator of the term (see J. Assmann, *Pamięć kulturowa. Pismo, zapamiętywanie i polityczna tożsamość w cywilizacjach starożytnych*, trans. Anna Kryczyńska-Pham, Warszawa 2015, p. 66). In his view, communicative memory spans only three to four generations (80–100 years). The existence of communicative memory requires the co-presence of different generations, whose representatives orally transmit stories from the past (orality). The longer functioning of such memory is only possible through the material or ritual preservation of selected transmissions, which is the basis of cultural memory. Harald Welzer identifies communicative memory with family memory; narratives about the past, directly transmitted from one generation to the next, most often come from one’s own parents or grandparents. The transmission formed by other witnesses about history usually requires media

diverse sources can be found (documents) and conducted (interviews) thanks to the great dedication and creative approach to these searches and the methods used (for instance, the herstorical research by Grażyna Kubica-Heller)²⁹ and we can refer to such a procedure as ‘finding traces.’ Considering the methodological criteria for the correct formulation of research problems together with the presented subject and objectives of the research, the research methodology is based on data and method triangulations. With such an approach in mind, it is possible to compare the data collected through different methods, and by combining and interpreting them together, it enables us to obtain more accurate results and a much more comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the research problem. I employ qualitative methods in my research because only such an approach is possible considering the specific nature of the issue at hand. I am looking for traces and clues pointing to the Carpathian Roma participating in the relocation to the Western and Northern Territories of Poland among other Roma people and Lemkos who experienced the resettlements as children. I am also looking for people who are the descendants of those who were displaced, but they themselves were not resettled during Operation Vistula, but thanks to the preserved stories in their families, they could shed light on my research.

I have also conducted expert consultations concerning the Operation Vistula resettlements as well as researched historical records (for example, the State Archive in Wrocław, Legnica Branch of the State Archive in Wrocław, Szczecinek Branch of the State Archive in Szczecin, Archive of the ‘Remembrance and Future’ Centre in Wrocław, as well as in community archives, for instance, The Russian Apocrypha Project). The photographs, memoirs, personal documents, accounts, and documents of social life stored in the community archives constitute a rich collection of existing data. The scope of the collection is a direct and very faithful reflection of local history. This approach, together with the common practice of involving the local population in the co-creation of community archives, unquestionably puts community archives in a leading position as creators and protectors of local identity. The invaluable sources of data are records stored by the Lemko Song and Dance Ensemble ‘Kyczera’ in Legnica, which have been collected by Jerzy Starzyński since the 1990s. Another place of such character worth visiting is the Memory and Heritage Institute of Roma and Holocaust Victims in Szczecinek, which was established by the Association of

or institutional mediation (for instance, interviews printed in the press and literature, television broadcasts, or meetings organised by schools or non-governmental organisations), which become an intermediate form between communicative and cultural memory. While Assmann emphasises oral accounts within the community, as the communities he studied did not have developed media tools at that time, Welzer focuses on memory, which is constructed in the immediate human environment: see M. Saryusz-Wolska, *Pamięć kulturowa*, in M. Saryusz-Wolska, R. Traba (eds.), *Modi memorandi. Leksykon kultury pamięci*, Warszawa 2014, p. 335.

29 G. Kubica-Heller, *Siostry Malinowskiego, czyli kobiety nowoczesne na początku xx wieku*, Kraków 2006.

Roma in Szczecinek. The Institute holds a collection of various records produced by state bodies regarding the Romani community. The Roma Documentation Centre, however, located in the Public Library of Legnica, possesses an extensive Roma collection of books, brochures, magazines, and electronic documents. Biographies of resettled Lemkos and excerpts published in scientific and popular educational works about the participation of the Carpathian Roma in the resettlement during Operation Vistula are significant sources of data as well.

I conduct my research guided by the ethical and methodological indications of Florian Znaniecki, who called the humanistic factor the conviction that “every person is an expert, the best authority of their world, and they must be given the space to speak if we are trying to get closer to understanding their world.”³⁰ Norman Denzin articulated the same postulate more pragmatically, writing that “human behaviour must be studied and understood from the perspective of the people involved.”³¹ As a person from the Romani community, I represent an insider position in my research, which is referred to as a native anthropologist in the literature. Thanks to being a native scholar, I concentrate on complying with the methodological requirements of particular research procedures, while simultaneously having a unique approach to accessing data that ‘outside’ researchers do not possess.³² I see the Romani community from my very own perspective, juxtaposing my experience with the knowledge about the Roma created mostly by Gadjos.³³ This leads to an ‘inside game’ scenario in which the researched one becomes the researcher within their own group. The position I hold causes a clash between the familial, individual, and collective memory associated with Roma culture and the uncritically reproduced cultural paradigms and stereotypes about the Roma that are present in both academic and public discourses. My research perspective through self-reflection allows me to better display the point of view of the Roma as well as their worldview and values. Therefore, I consider autoethnography a process whereby the narrator analyses their experiences and reflects on personal life lessons while relating them to the social context in which they occurred. The essence of this notion is an ongoing mental process (self-reflection and self-analysis) that allows us to better understand ourselves in the world around us.³⁴ Autoethnography exposes what is obfuscated

30 P. Filipkowski, *Historia mówiona i wojna*, in S. Buryła, P. Rodak (eds.), *Wojna. Doświadczenie i zapis. Nowe źródła, problemy, metody badawcze*, Kraków 2005, p. 19.

31 Qtd. *ibidem*.

32 G. Kubica, *How “Native” Is My “Native Anthropology”? Positionality and the Reception of the Anthropologist’s Work in Her Own Community – A Reflexive Account*, ‘Cargo Journal,’ vol. 14, no. 1-2, 2016, pp. 81-99, <http://cargojournal.org/index.php/cargo/article/view/76> (accessed: 6.08.2023).

33 *Gadjo* in Romani means a non-Roma person. It is a term used to denote the separation of the native Roma people from the majority society. This is the key category defining the ethnic boundary, which in Polish literature is rendered as an emic term in italics. In English-language literature, it functions as the accepted form. In this article, I use the term without italics.

34 A. Kacperczyk, *Autoetnografia – technika, metoda, nowy paradygmat?: o metodologicznym statusie autoetnografii*, ‘Przegląd Socjologii Jakościowej,’ vol. 10, no. 3, 2014, p. 37.

and suppressed, it speaks out loud what is silenced, ignored, and put under pressure.

Oral history has a special place in conducting research concerning Romani communities for at least two reasons. Firstly, oral transmission is highly important in the group's culture, and secondly, and most significantly, it gives the Roma the chance to speak about themselves in their own voice, from a first-person perspective. Oral history, which is the root of my research, is not just an addition but an equal restoration of the Roma as an integral part of Polish society and its history. In migration research, oral history facilitates, for example, reconstructing the process of migration or adaptation in historical context.³⁵ Oral history not only enables me to achieve my cognitive goals while conducting this research, but it is also part of the expansion of the research field, namely the story of Operation Vistula told from the perspective of the resettled individuals in direct relation to the witnesses of these events.

I also employ a biographical method in my research, which allows me to describe certain incidents through the lenses of the life stories of the people involved. The historical perspective relates to the traditional methodology of history and focuses on the facts provided by the interviewee. The sociological perspective, however, concentrates on the manner in which information is conveyed. In migration research, the correctly applied method of one person's migration story can reflect the nature and mechanisms of others migrating in the same settings.³⁶ Archival research and the analysis of existing data are beneficial to the supplementation and expansion of the studied issue.³⁷

What people remember

Interviews are considered a valuable research method for the purpose of recording and understanding what Emil Durkheim calls 'a social fact'.³⁸ The process of conducting an interview with oral history as one of the objectives is based on inviting living participants who survived a specific event to recount their personal memories regarding it. The collected memories are missing pieces to the puzzle, which essentially can render a picture that not only deviates from historical descriptions but also allows for the said picture to be put into a broader perspective.³⁹ In the

35 A. Górny, *Wybrane zagadnienia podejścia jakościowego w badaniach nad migracjami*, Warszawa 1998, p. 24.

36 A very well-known example, which is considered a classic now, is the use of the biographical method by W.I. Thomas and F. Znaniecki in their work *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918), published in Polish in 1976. In his work *Children of Sanchez* (2011), Oscar Lewis presents the stories of the poor family of Jesús Sanchez and his four adult children from Mexico City. In their own words, each of them recounts their life stories, which render a poignant and authentic portrait of this family.

37 B. Borowska-Beszta, U. Bartnikowska, K. Ćwirynkało, *Analiza wtórna jakościowych danych zastanych: Przegląd założeń teoretycznych i aplikacji metodologicznych*, 'Jakościowe Badania Pedagogiczne', vol. 2, no. 1, 2017, pp. 5-24.

38 E. Durkheim, *Zasady metody socjologicznej*, trans. J. Szacki, Warszawa 2002, pp. 27-41.

39 M. Angrosino, *Badania etnograficzne i obserwacyjne*, trans. M. Brzozowska-Brywczyńska,

conducted interviews,⁴⁰ Roma and Lemkos both recall their resettlement in the Western and Northern Territories of Poland as childhood memories. The Roma-born woman named Olga Sucha (née Siwak), mentioned earlier in this article, recounts that she was resettled with her entire family and the Lemkos to the West.⁴¹ The memory that is particularly vivid in her recollection is the journey she made by cattle waggons in very poor conditions. The family arrived in Brochów (present district of Wrocław), where the interviewee's father later worked on the railway as a blacksmith. To my inquiries as to why they decided to leave together with the Lemkos, she responded: "And what were we supposed to do here without them? They are our good neighbours; it is clear who we would have to live with instead." After some time – in the late 1950s more precisely – the authorities allowed the Siwak family to return to their home village.⁴²

One of the narrators of Roma origin, while recounting the story of her life, recalled her difficult childhood during the Second World War. When asked about the resettlement, she said:

Ruskionen Gadźień⁴³ wysiedlinde. Amen Roma maśkar Rusi samas.⁴⁴ They didn't ask who you were. They put everyone in one pile, and a car came and took these people and put them in wagons. Cows and calves were put into wagons too, and they took it all out to the West. Everything was

Warszawa 2015, p. 95.

- 40 76 years have passed since Operation Vistula, and few witnesses to these events remain alive. In the course of my research, two potential interviewees died. I conducted 14 interviews as part of the PRA Heritage pilot project (see footnote 2). In selecting the interviewees, I employed the snowball sampling method, which is a procedure of linking subsequent cases based on the recommendations of previous ones. It is possible to establish any phenomenon thanks to the participants themselves, who usually have knowledge and experience about it. This criterion facilitates identifying the field even for a novice researcher or in cases where the field is little known to the researcher. See M. Sęk, *Dobór próby przy pomocy metody kuli śniegowej (snowball sampling)*, in B. Fatyga (ed.), *Praktyki Badawcze*, Warszawa 2015, pp. 59–76.
- 41 Interview: R_K_84_ŚM_2022. During my research, some interviewees wished to remain anonymous, while others wanted their names to be published. As a researcher, I protect the privacy of the participants and guarantee the confidentiality of the information collected. The recorded interviews were secured and archived on an external drive, which is stored in the researcher's archive.
- 42 My interviewee repeatedly spoke of good relations with the Lemkos. She recalled that her father told how, during the Second World War, the Germans came to their house with the intention of deporting them to a camp. Their Lemko neighbours stood up for them, asking them not to take away such a good blacksmith. The Germans left the blacksmith with two small children, and Maria (her mother) was deported to Auschwitz where she was murdered. They felt safe among their Lemkos and were afraid of their new, unknown neighbours. They were treated in the same way as other resettlers during Operation Vistula and were subject to the same administrative restrictions.
- 43 Gadjo in the sense of a non-Roma person. Translations from the Romani language by Monika Szewczyk.
- 44 Rom. "They resettled the Ruthenians. We, the Roma people, were among the Ruthenians."

being relocated. They resettled us in Silesia. We go there to my sister if they force us out of here and throw in the waggons, like those cattle, they took us there, where they displaced those Germans, to those houses after the Germans, to live and work there.⁴⁵

The interviewee's family owned a house and a farm. They were resettled in Lubań Śląski where they ran their own farm, and, as the narrator says, "they lived well." She got married while still living there. After quite a long time, her father-in-law, who had also been displaced from the Dukla area, wanted to return to his place and his home.⁴⁶ They could not return to their former farms because someone already have lived there and had ownership rights to their farm, although their houses were still standing there. With the money they had saved while living in the West, they bought a plot of land in their hometowns. Sometime later, they put up a house and a couple of farm buildings. The farm is now managed by the narrator's son.

Two other narrators were already born in the Western Territories of Poland. Regarding the resettlement, they remember what their parents, grandparents, and older family members relayed to them. Antonina's mother⁴⁷ came from Wysowa and her father from Blechnarka. The narrator does not remember the name of the village her parents lived before their resettlement. The fact is that they were relocated with her brother to Kamienna Góra in 1947. The other narrator, Adela, recounts that her parents⁴⁸ had already met in the Western Territories, where her father had arrived in 1945 while her mother was relocated with her family from Mochnaczka to the Legnica area.

Another interviewee, Janina, was born in 1943. After the death of her father, who was killed on the frontline, her mother and her older brother moved to the village where her grandmother lived. After some time, her mother remarried. Janina's grandmother and other family members were forced to resettle, while she, her mother and brother were not. Her stepfather served in the Polish army and was allowed to occupy the abandoned farm left by the Ukrainians.⁴⁹ The house

45 Interview: R_K_89_Ty_2022, for more information see footnote 41.

46 In the interview, the narrator first said, "to his place" and after a short while added "his home." In her understanding, these are not the same things. "To his place" means to return to the place, the area from which they were displaced, and "to his home" means inherited farms. For this reason, in order to emphasise the narrator's understanding, I use both terms.

47 PHUJ 2019/2023, anonymized interview R_K_74_ŚR_2022, 18 June 2022 (recorded by M. Szewczyk), researcher's private archive.

48 PHUJ 2019/2023, anonymized interview R_K_68_L_2022, 11 November 2022 (recorded by M. Szewczyk), researcher's private archive.

49 Groups of cultural borderlands with multi-dimensional identities and equally divided ones perceive themselves differently: "Some Carpathian Ruthenians in Slovakia and Ukraine (Transcarpathia) and Lemkos in Poland consider themselves Ukrainians, while others maintain that they are the fourth (next to Russians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians) East Slavic nation. A relatively small and, in fact, marginal group consists of those Carpathian Ruthenian residing in Transcarpathia and Slovakia who deny belonging to the Ukrainian

they moved into was very nice and well equipped (it was richer, more modern than others, with wooden floors and a roof not covered with straw). Despite all of this, it was difficult for them to live without their family and without their Ukrainian neighbours. They eventually sold the farm and relocated to the West Pomerania region to join their previously resettled family in 1954. According to her account, relationships with Ukrainians in the Bieszczady Mountains and Pomerania were very good. In her words: “There were no more Ukrainians in the Bieszczady, and here [referring to a village in the West Pomerania region] there were a lot of them. When help was needed, we went to the Ukrainians, not to the Poles.”⁵⁰

The resettlement of the Roma people because of Operation Vistula was also mentioned by one of the Lemkos in the interviews conducted. It was said that the Roma people were indeed displaced along with the others during that process. However, one Roma family remained in the village: a blacksmith family. The people who were not resettled pleaded with the authorities for the blacksmith and his family to remain with them. They argued their case, stating that the man was the only blacksmith in the area and that he was highly regarded by the locals for his skills.⁵¹ Jerzy Starzyński, a Lemko-native who takes an active role in the preservation of Lemko history, traditions, and language, said in an expert interview that in the conversations he had with the resettled Lemkos, there were numerous mentions of the Roma, both as locals of the said villages and as displaced people. He himself knew Roma people from Nowy Sącz who had been resettled as part of Operation Vistula. One of my narrators, a native Lemko woman, said that there were no Roma living in her village, therefore they were not part of the resettled group. At the end of the interview, however, she concluded: “Roma are just like us; there is no place for them anywhere.”⁵²

In my research, I use archived existing data previously collected by other authors as part of their primary research projects. In an interview conducted by Tomasz Kosiek with Michał Szydywar,⁵³ who was forced to relocate during Operation Vistula from Dołżyca to Stępień near Szczecinek, when asked about there being any Gypsies in his village, he responded that there were three families, and they

nation with the conviction that Carpathian Ruthenians are part of the Greater Ruthenian community” (qtd. E. Michna, *Odrębność językowa małych grup etnicznych i jej rola w procesach walki o uznanie oraz polityce tożsamości. Analiza porównawcza sytuacji Rusinów Karpackich i Ślązaków*, ‘Studia humanistyczne AGH,’ vol. 13, no. 3, 2014, p. 118. In my research, interviewees refer to themselves as Ukrainians, Lemkos, and Ruthenians.

50 PHUJ 2019/2023, anonymized interview R_K_80_Sz_2023, 5 March 2023 (recorded by M. Szewczyk), researcher’s private archive.

51 PHUJ 2019/2023, anonymized interview Ł_M_83_Ko_2022, 20 October 2023 (recorded by M. Szewczyk), researcher’s private archive.

52 PHUJ 2019/2023, anonymized interview Ł_K_89_Ol_2022, 26 July 2022 (recorded by M. Szewczyk), researcher’s private archive.

53 АОРІР, sig. ОРІР III-1-7-525, Interview with Michał Szydywar, 8 April 2015 (recorded by T. Kosiek).

were all moved together in 1947. In 2000, in Krynica, Jerzy Starzyński recorded the memories of Vasył Szost from the Złockie village.⁵⁴ In the interview, conducted in the Lemko language, the narrator recalled that there were Jews and Gypsies in the village where he lived, and his father sold a piece of land to one of the Gypsy families. These Gypsies were excellent musicians, and they “made quite a career” with their music in Krynica. He could not remember, however, what their full names were, but he did recall that one of the boys was called Osif and went to school with him. He also confirmed that the Gypsies had been displaced along with other villagers. He knew that they lived in Środa Śląska (Lower Silesia). He remembered meeting some Romani people in the Western Territories of Poland who were originally from Złockie. The meeting in question took place at a wedding reception at Petro Tychański’s house. The Roma natives, known as excellent musicians, were hired for the wedding celebration. After the ceremony in the church, a Gypsy man looking to be about 90 years old approached the narrator and said: “*No widzisz, Wasku, szto toty hady Lachy z nami zrobili, wyszmyrali nas.*”⁵⁵ The narrator adds “with us,” which can be interpreted as the common fate of both the Lemkos and Gypsies.

The Roma Documentation Centre located in the Public Library of Legnica, stores the archived life story of Maria Siwak, written down by Andrzej Cyrano.⁵⁶ He wrote Maria Siwak’s biography based on numerous conversations he had with her, but as he writes himself, he did not record the interviewee’s story on tape. Maria Siwak was born in 1939, and she is a native Roma woman who moved to the West together with her family during Operation Vistula. She recalled that people continued to live in fear and uncertainty after the war ended. Furthermore, she remembered going to the so-called Recovered Territories (as Communist propaganda referred to the former German territories annexed to Poland after the Second World War). Maria Siwak’s family was not forced to leave the village by the authorities; they decided to relocate to the West on their own instead. Her memories of the authorities’ policy towards her family are interesting. She recounted how they were ordered to occupy the houses and farms left behind by the Ukrainians who were removed during Operation Vistula. Maria’s family did not accept the authorities’ offer, as they remembered that more than one of those displaced neighbours had previously helped them in their time of need or warned them of danger. As Maria recalls, her mother considered it unhonorable to accept such an offer. They could not take all their belongings: “a family cruelly uprooted from their homeland,

54 Access to the transcription of the interview was granted to me as a courtesy of the Lemko Song and Dance Ensemble ‘Kyczera’ in Legnica.

55 Lemko: “Well, you see, Wasku, what those awful Lachy [Poles] did with us, they threw us out” (transliteration in Latin alphabet in Lemko language, translated by Jerzy Starzyński).

56 These are Andrew Cyrano’s recollections based on many years of conversations with Maria Siwak. The memoirs are digitised and consist of 23 pages of the author’s handwriting. Access to the memoirs was made available to me by the Roma Documentation Centre.

like a weed aggressively pulled from the ground.” Maria described such behaviour as “not gypsylike.” A memory that she recalls very vividly is the journey she made in wagons designed to carry cattle. They made it to Brochów, and from there they headed to Wrocław. She describes Wrocław as a city full of rubble and rats. They left for Legnica shortly after.

Roma in the memories of resettled Lemkos

Piotr Filipkowski observes that the biographical method in the field of sociology interpenetrates with oral history in many aspects, and what makes this interpenetration possible is the aforementioned humanistic factor of Florian Znaniecki. As Filipkowski goes on to write, this “belief is shared by both humanistic sociology and oral history. And what is worth adding is that it takes (actually, it must take) precedence over a rigorously codified methodology.”⁵⁷ The common characteristic between oral history and the biographical method is that the life of a human being is captured in a narrative. It can be said that the biographical approach is the scientific analysis of the life story of a human being or the process of the story itself. The reasoning for such a belief is that all processes concerning large human collectivities are rooted in the lives of those individuals who co-create this collectivity. At the same time, an individual’s life reveals information about the society and times in which they lived.⁵⁸ In oral history, oral accounts tend to be transformed into biographical narratives, and such a process occurs when, for example, one writes an autobiography or biography. Paul Thompson and Joanna Bornat assume that “spoken history (oral history) and biographical narrative (life story) are overlapping forms,”⁵⁹ as is the case with the research conducted for this article. In order to identify the process of Roma migration to the Western and Northern Territories of Poland during Operation Vistula, I have also used the Lemko autobiographies published in print of Michał Oleśniewicz, Teodor Gocz, and Vladimir Garber.

The Roma people remain vividly remembered by the Lemko natives; authors recalling life in the Lemko region share their accounts of their interactions with the Roma community and the subsequent resettlement they experienced together. Michał Oleśniewicz in his autobiographical publication *Dola Łemka* (Lemko’s fate)⁶⁰ recalls his life, describes his village, and talks about his family, villagers, customs, and resettlement during Operation Vistula. In this story, he does not

57 P. Filipkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

58 K.P. Kaczorowski, *Badania innych kultur a różnorodność metod biograficznych. Szanse i wyzwania w praktyce badawczej na przykładzie badań kurdyjskich migrantów w Stambule*, in M. Piorunek (ed.), *Badania biograficzne i narracyjne w perspektywie interdyscyplinarnej. Aplikacje – Egzemplifikacje – Dylematy metodologiczne*, Poznań 2016, pp. 59–84.

59 P. Thomson, J. Bornat, *Głos przeszłości. Wprowadzenie do historii mówionej*, Warszawa 2021, p. 32.

60 M. Oleśniewicz, *Dola Łemka: wspomnienia*, Legnica 2009.

forget Jurko Bladycz,⁶¹ whose family was the only Roma family living in Berest. As Oleśniewicz writes:

Jurko lived with his family along with us in Berest, and together with us he was relocated during Operation Vistula, and we went together to Oleśnica on a single journey. There, we were separated, and they moved him 15 kilometres away from us. He found out about us by accident and came to visit. He walked for half a day because he didn't know the way. He missed the people from Berest very much. He stayed with us overnight and left the next day. It was our last meeting. Despite all the sadness, we had a chance to play the violin together.⁶²

The above quotation confirms that the Roma were indeed relocated together with the Lemkos as part of Operation Vistula to the Western and Northern Territories of Poland. The Berest displacement process, as mentioned by Oleśniewicz, started on 29 June 1947. Oleśniewicz, together with Bladycz and others, left the place in a transport marked R-268 on 2 July 1947. They reached the unloading station in Oleśnica on 7 July 1947. The transport carried 257 people, 11 horses, 167 cows, and 59 sheep or goats.⁶³ After reaching Oleśnica, the villagers were relocated to the districts of Wschowa, Oleśnica, Środa Śląska, Jawor, Złotoryja and Bolesławiec in Lower Silesia. In the list compiled from the *Cards of the resettlement of the Lemko population resettled from the Nowy Sącz region*, we can find information that Jurko Bladycz lived at address number 66, he left with a family of 11 people, and that he took with himself three goats or sheep, a cart, and a plough, but he left behind a house, a shed or a pigpen and one hectare of land he owned, half of it being arable.⁶⁴ It is noteworthy that Jurko Bladycz is listed as a Lemko native in this official resettlement documentation. There is no trace of his ethnic Romani origin. On 15 August 1950, the Praesidium of the Provincial National Council in Kraków published in the Official Journal *The notice on the initiation of expropriation proceedings in the municipality of Berest*. Among those expropriated is a native Rom named Jurko Bladycz.⁶⁵ This precedent marks the very first case of Roma expropriation encountered in my research.

In his autobiography, Oleśniewicz also tells the story of the Roma from Wierchomla, about whom he heard from Olszanica-resident Mrs. Sobczyk. During the

61 The story of Jurko Bladycz is described in M.I. Szewczyk, *Relacje sąsiedzkie Romów i Łemków w autobiografii Michała Oleśniewicza*, in Helena Duć-Fajfer (ed.), *Imy, Obcy, Swój w dyskursie łemkowskim/rusińskim*, 'Rocznik Ruskiej Bursy,' vol. 18, 2022, pp. 119–137.

62 M. Oleśniewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

63 Quantitative list of resettled Ukrainians from the Nowy Sącz region together with livestock in the period from 28 April to 22 August 1947, in E. Misiło (ed.), *Akcja „Wisła.” Dokumenty i materiały*, Warszawa 2013, p. 1077.

64 State Repatriation Office. State branch in Nowy Sącz. L.1136/47.

65 Official Journal of the Praesidium of the Provincial National Council in Kraków, Kraków, 15 August 1950, No. 18 Position no. 333–339, https://jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl/Content/114035/PDF/NDIGZASO02352_1950_018.pdf, (accessed: 6.07.2022).

Nazi occupation, when the Germans took the Roma away for extermination, Wierchomla was the place where they took a married couple and left their young children and grandmother behind. The grandmother's name was Czerweniak. After the murder of the couple, the survived family lived in very poor conditions and was aided by the locals. The older child was employed by farmers to herd their cows. They survived the occupation, and during Operation Vistula, they were displaced with the entire village.⁶⁶

Vladimir Garbera describes his life in Mochnaczka before the resettlement. He recalls the Roma living there, describing them as hard-working and honest people who were not beggars but skilled musicians and blacksmiths. When concluding his story about the Roma, he states: "Gypsies went with us to the West."⁶⁷ In contrast, Teodor Gocz in his autobiography *Życie Łemka* (Lemko's life) provides a list of all families living in Zyndranowa in 1937. Among those families, Gocz mentions five Roma ones, namely Hryc Sywak (Wiryj Hryc), Tymko Sywak, Hryc Sywak, Ylko Sywak, and Petro Szoma.⁶⁸ He writes about the Roma from Zyndranowa in the following manner:

Gypsy families were not part of Operation Vistula. Gypsies followed the exiled Lemkos of their own free will. Old Lemkos died in exile, but no one brought them to their home village to bury them here. This was done instead by the Gypsies of Zyndranowa. When Tymko Sywak died in Stargard Szczeciński in 1968, the family brought his body to Zyndranowa and he was buried there, as his wife had been a few years earlier in 1956. Their wish was to rest where they were born. This seems to prove the attachment of the Gypsies to their hometowns and to the Lemkos, with whom they were very close.⁶⁹

Conclusions

A rather common stereotype associates the Roma people with a nomadic lifestyle. The stereotype of the ever-wandering nation suggests no roots, only temporary living, and thus no stable structure. Meanwhile, in all dialects of the Romani language, there is the word *kher* meaning 'home,' a permanent dwelling place. The stereotype of the ever-wandering nation, which has strongly attached itself to the Roma, has served to exclude them from any discourse. There is no point in discussing the displacement of the Roma population if they occupy a given place for a while – a literal moment. Research in community archives, analysis of existing data, interviews with representatives of the Roma and Lemko minorities indicate the Roma people were part of the resettlement to the Western and Northern Territories from the Lemko region during Operation Vistula. They also reveal the attachment of the Roma to

66 M. Oleśniewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

67 M. Szyszko-Grabana, A. Szyszko, Rev. A. Grabana, *Z łemkowskiej skrzyni. Opowieści z Ługów i okolic*, vol. 1, Strzelce Krajeńskie 2003, p. 57.

68 T. Gocz, *Życie Łemka*, Zyndranowa-Krosno 2011, p. 17.

69 *Ibidem*.

the Lemko region, as evidenced by their subsequent returns from the Western and Northern Territories of Poland, even ‘posthumous returns,’ as mentioned by Gocz. The presented excerpts from Lemko’s accounts show that interactions between these groups were of a good or even friendly nature. They do not only contradict the common stereotypes about Roma, but they also depict the positive attitudes of both the Lemkos and Ukrainians towards them, with these attitudes being naturally reciprocal. The social network is the basis for social support and the formation of group boundaries. People’s preserved accounts of the lives they had, their personal reflections on these experiences, and the memories of other people show us how local communities directly involved in various events and processes perceive themselves and their neighbours. Paul Thomson has stressed many times the potential of oral history, either as an amateur project or an academic one, to become a tool that could lead to social change. Norman Denzin has stated that “it is possible to arrive at statements relating to the entire population based on a single biography or a small set of them. This is because such a solution is made possible by analytical induction. Each case and each event within a case becomes a critical source of data that confirms or rejects previous hypotheses.”⁷⁰

The quote previously mentioned in this article regarding the manner in which the Gypsies of the Greek Catholic beliefs were handled: “Treat individually, depending on values and loyalty,” shows how the state policies of the time executed ethnic, religious, and social erasure in favour of a monochromatic and nationalist policy. The data I have collected, both from state and community archives as well as ongoing multi-site ethnographic research, shows a more complex reality. It reveals the marginalisation of the Roma in academic discourse and the simplification of the multi-ethnic dimension of internal migration after the Second World War in Poland. The memoirs presented here are only a small part of the research I have conducted. The subject of the relocation of the Roma population during Operation Vistula, the accounts of their subsequent resettlement in the area of the present-day Podkarpackie Voivodeship, as well as the experiences of the resettled Carpathian Roma related to adaptation to new conditions in the Western and Northern Territories of post war Poland, are beyond the scope of this article. The data that was collected during the preliminary research for my PhD thesis is the beginning of further exploration of these issues.⁷¹

70 Qtd. P.K. Kaczorowski, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

71 The study was funded by the Heritage Priority Research Area under the “Excellence Initiative - Research University” programme at Jagiellonian University in Kraków. MiniGRANT’s “Dynamics of the Migration of the Carpathian Roma to the Western and Northern Territories. Pilot Studies” (completion date: from 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2023).



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Summary

The article presented here pertains to the relocation of the Carpathian Roma during Operation Vistula and their resettlement in the Western and Northern Territories of Poland. Socially ingrained stereotypes of the Roma as nomadic wanderers and a society without history or generational memory are reinforced through the ethnization and orientalization of this group. The data collected indicates the Roma were in fact part of the resettlement to the post war Western and Northern Territories of Poland from the Lemko region during Operation Vistula. The story of their relocation is absent from narratives regarding the sub-deportation social landscape in post-1947 Poland, just as there is very little information about their resettlement in the present-day Podkarpackie Voivodeship. The data collected, both from state and community archives as well as from ongoing multi-site ethnographic research, reveal a complex reality in which academic discourses fail to account for the Roma and, consequently, simplify the multi-ethnic dimension of former neighbourhoods in Podkarpacie.