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Gypsy in the Post-Soviet Crimea

Abstract. Throughout the existence of the state institution, marginal groups have been a big problem for its effective functioning and development. One of the most common and numerous marginal groups in the world is Roma, who have lived for centuries alongside other nations, but are divorced from the state and the development of the institutional environment of society. However, thanks to globalization, the situation is gradually changing. Social stigmatization and discrimination of Roma in some countries still separates them from social processes, but there are examples of successful socialization of a part of the Roma diaspora (for example, in the post-Soviet space). The article is devoted to the consideration of the current situation of the Gypsy diaspora on the Crimean Peninsula, to the analysis of the reasons for its isolation and the search for features of interaction with society. The topic of modern migration trends of Gypsies in the region, the economic and social factors of settlement, as well as the peculiarities of the socio-economic integration of the Gypsy population into the Crimean society, are separately disclosed.

Keywords: gypsies, migration, ethnic features, sedentarization, nomadic lifestyle, social stratification.

Introduction. Gypsies or Roma traditionally inhabit the Crimean Peninsula. Over the centuries of residence, the Crimean “*Chingene*”¹ have transformed, while absorbing the traits of the local population and retaining the specificity of their own culture. Official persistence for a long time in integrating Roma into the society and assimilating them to the local population has not worked. Gypsies retained their identity, ignoring social and administrative discrimination and ethnic segregation.

An easy solution to the problem of Gypsies would be to distinguish them from the social environment, but this is not possible. They are interested in some areas of economic cooperation and social processes. The deepening of Gypsy marginalization leads to the criminalization of their community and the increase of social danger for other ethnic groups living in the neighborhood.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the changes and to identify specific features of the Roma region's lifestyle in the background of the Crimean socio-economic transformation after 1991. The study is based on field studies of the Gypsy Diaspora of the 2010s in the Crimea.

A great deal of scientific work is devoted to the study of various aspects of Gypsy society in countries and regions. But due to stereotypes and information noise, it seems that the Gypsy issue is not receiving enough attention in the world. Contradicting this thesis is the publication of a special issue of the “UNESCO Courier” in 1984, which was devoted exclusively to the Gypsy issue: problems of social acceptance on different continents, migration problems, difficulties of preserving national identity (language, traditions), etc. In addition, monographs and ethnographic articles were published at different times that analyzed the cultural features of the Roma diasporas in Europe and America.

But the Roma population received the most attention in the Russian Empire, and then in the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation. Cultural aspects were studied in the works of various scholars (see the works of V.N. Dobrovolsky, A.P. Barannikov, M.V. Sergievsky, N.V. Bessonov, M.V. Smirnova-

¹ *Chingene* (*chingeneler*) this is the Crimean Tatar nickname of local Roma, was actively used in society until the deportation of 1944.

Seslovenskaya, G.N. Tsvetkova, A.V. Chornykh and others). For the most part, they conducted a retrospective analysis of the transformation of Gypsy culture, socio-economic survival strategies, and the impact of power on the process of sedentarization. The Roma diasporas outside Russia were studied by Ukrainian, Byelorussian and Moldovan scholars, among which one can draw attention to the articles by N. Zinevich, I. Zaatov, T. Storozhko (Ukraine), V. Kalinin (Belarus), and I.V. Drona, L.M. Sosnina (Moldova).

Studies of the modern period of existence and development of the Gypsy ethnos in the post-Soviet space (historical layer of the late XX – early XXI centuries) are engaged in some representatives of the Russian Academic Society, among which it is possible to note the collection of materials N.F. Bugay “Gypsies”, E. Drutz “Gypsies: Essays” and N.V. Besson's “Gypsies of Russia: A New Look”, which summarizes and systematizes material on the Roma socio-economic situation, features of cultural development, historical roots of contemporary problems of the marginalization of ethnic groups, etc (Bugay 2011; Drutz 1990; Demeter 2000). It is also worth mentioning the thematic issue of scientific researches of the Roma ethnos of Ukrainian scientists “Roma of Ukraine: from the past to the future” (2009), which was the result of the International Gypsy Conference held in June 2008 in Kiev. The results of regional studies of the Roma issue in Ukraine were included in the collection.

The Crimean Gypsy plot is devoted to many research works covering all stages of the historical, cultural and socio-economic development of Roma in the Crimean Peninsula. By their character, these studies range from descriptive reports of officials and travelers (I. Tunmann, N. Svyatsky, etc.) to analytical, retrospective and ethnographic articles devoted to the study of specific aspects of Roma ethnic groups. The most valuable works of M.A. Aragioni, A.R. Kucherenko, M.V. Smirnova-Seslavinskaya, I. Zaatov, in which Gypsy origin on the peninsula, their internal social stratification, cultural features and nature of interaction with other cultures are revealed (Aragioni 2010; Kucherenko 2010; Smirnova-Seslavinskaya 2016; Zaatov 2009). However, the current situation of the Gypsy ethnic group needs deep study due to the accumulation of many acute social problems and Gypsy marginalization in the Crimean society. Today, the search for the causes of their origin is the leading goal of the scientific society for further solution.

The article is based on the materials collected during the field research of the Gypsy community in the Krasnogvardeysky district of the Republic of Crimea in 2015-2017, as well as various statistical materials: census data from 1897-2014, provincial surveys, official reports, etc. Statistical, geographical, historical and sociological methods were used in the study of the Gypsy situation and their migration movement. Field surveys are based on the following sociological methods: Gypsy population interviewing, sociometric interviewing and document analysis.

Results and discussion. First, it is advisable to provide a historical background for the development of the Roma ethnic group in the Crimea. The relative loyalty of the policy of the government of the Crimean Khanate, and then of the Russian Empire to the representatives of this ethnic group allowed the Gypsies to settle throughout the Crimean Peninsula. In the eighteenth century, compact ghetto habitats were created, such as the Gypsy settlement of Simferopol, the Salachik district in Bakhchisarai, and the outskirts of Perekop City (Armysky Bazar) in the regional north (Aragioni 2010; Svyatsky 1888). Despite the “attachment” to the ghetto, most of the Gypsy population led a nomadic lifestyle, moving through the peninsula from mid-March to late November.

Within the pre-revolutionary diaspora there was a clear division into categories by type of economic activity. Gypsies consisted of the following groups, which differed in caste intolerance towards each other: “*ayujy*” (bear cubs), “*kurbety*” (carts or horse traders), “*halayjy*” (madmen of copper products), “*elekchi*” (made of sieves, sieves and gratings), “*dauljy*” (musicians) and “*demerdjy*” (smiths) (Aragioni 2010; Smirnova-Seslavinskaya 2016).

The natural process of the existence of the Gypsy diaspora was disturbed after the formation of the Soviet Union. The main Gypsy problems at that time were: total illiteracy, high mortality rates, criminal nature of economic activity, isolation from social life, lack of permanent residence, work

and income. The latter led to the catastrophic situation of the gypsies of the foothills during the famine in Crimea in 1921-1922 (Barannikov 1931; All Crimea 1927). The Soviet government tried to solve the Roma problems (for example, by engaging in collectivization), but the Gypsy population was not ready to exchange the feeling of “freedom” with the promised state “illusory” social guarantees.

In 1944, the Gypsy community formed during the Crimean Khanate was finally destroyed. The genocide of the German occupation administration during World War II and the deportation of Crimean peoples by the Soviet authorities in 1944 completely deprived the peninsula of the Roma population (Fig. 1) (Tyagly 2005). Most Roma were killed and tortured in concentration camps, and those who survived through deception and enrollment in the Crimean Tatar people were deported to Siberia and the Central Asian republics.

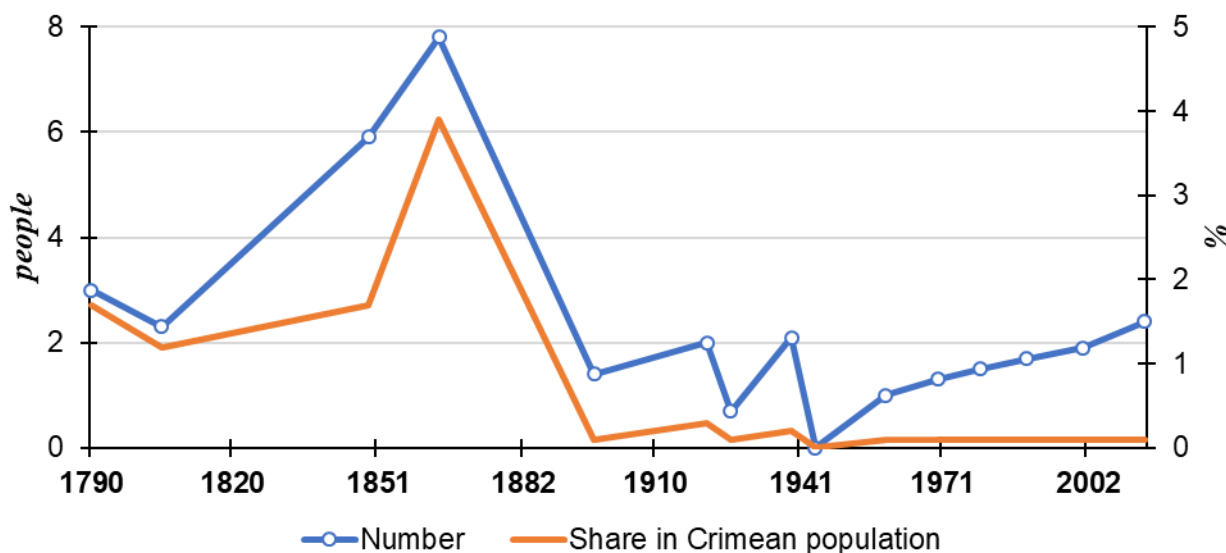


Fig. 1. The Crimean gypsy population since 1790

But in the post-war decades, the Gypsy diaspora succeeded in reviving in an updated format, getting rid of pre-revolutionary caste stratification. Of course, this Gypsy population was not related to “*Chingene*” and migrated to the peninsula from the neighboring regions of the USSR (Southern Ukraine, Krasnodar region). But for the Soviet government, the problem of the inability to control the gypsies through their nomadic lifestyle remained. Numerous attempts by the authorities to force the Gypsies into socialist construction and settlements have failed (Normanskaya 2016). However, in the 1960s, the Gypsy population was forced to voluntarily switch to sedentarization. The subsidence was influenced by the development of the mass production industry. Traditional activities (handicrafts, livestock breeding) ceased to generate a profit for the gypsies, so they settled in cities, forming local areas of compact living with chaotic development (“shanghai”), deprived of social infrastructure and communications. Neighborhoods of other shanghai cities quickly made them disadvantaged. But the camp structure was retained, albeit in a slightly modified form (all members of the family or clan were subordinate to the head – the “baro”).

After the rehabilitation of the deported peoples, the deported Gypsies returned to Crimea, together with the Crimean Tatars. Prolonged stay in places of special settlement left an indelible imprint on the Gypsies: they assimilated and began to call themselves Crimean Tatars, but still retained their traditional way of life (owned novels, wore national clothes, did not want to work, lived in isolation from other ethnic groups). Due to ethnic discrimination, many Roma returnees in every way reject their affiliation with the Gypsy ethnic group.

The confluence of indigenous and foreign Gypsy populations has led to the formation of social stratification within the Roma diaspora. At present, the Gypsy Diaspora can be classified into three characteristics: religious affiliation, the nature of family ties, and income (Fig. 2). By Gypsy religion,

it is divided into two main groups: Muslim Roma (“chingene” descendants who returned from deportation) and Orthodox Gypsies (who came to the region from 1944 to 1990). But this gradation is rather conditional. The Gypsy population, for the most part, is indifferent to the observance of religious rituals and their commitment to religion depends solely on the religiosity of the environment.

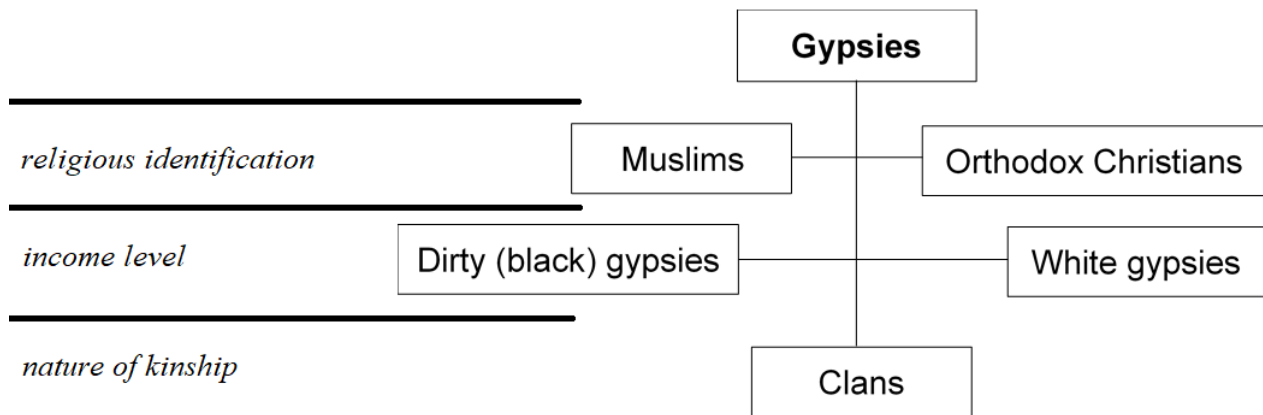


Fig. 2. Classification of Crimean gypsies

By the nature of family ties, the Gypsy population is clearly divided into clans. In today's Crimean Roma community, clans represent families (more than 10-15 people) with strong social roots that are subordinate to the family head. After the sedentarization, the camp structure was transformed and adapted to the settlement. The main camp characteristics were preserved: the presence of a key figure (baro), the overall budget and the closeness of families from representatives of other ethnic groups and the deaths of the Roma. It should also be noted that Roma family isolation and rejection of marriage between members of gypsy families with different levels of gender are also characteristic. Therefore, the transition of young people from clan to clan is clearly regulated by the bar. And if a gypsy man or a girl marries a person of another nationality, it is cruelly punished and inevitably leads to the breaking up of any relationship and family communication with members of their clan.

However, in parallel with clan fragmentation, there is a vertical stratification of the Gypsy population by income level. The poorest sections of the Roma, who live below the poverty line and who commit theft and deprivation, are referred to as the “dirty (black) gypsies” group, while the wealthy sections of the so-called gypsy elite refer to “white gypsies”. These groups are quite separated from each other. And if the latter interact with representatives of other ethnic groups, “dirty gypsies” are stigmatized and discriminated against. In places of their compact residence (“shanghai”) there are signs of natural ghettoization, as representatives of other ethnic groups are wary of such a neighborhood. Gypsy “shanghai” is controlled only by law enforcement agencies, but the state's laws do not actually apply to them.

That is why the problem of integration into civil society is a pressing issue for the Roma. The social situation leads to Gypsy isolation, the inability to guarantee their rights and freedoms. The main factors of isolation in modern Crimea are: marginal way of life, neglect of social rules and moral principles, archaic nature of traditional culture, active obstacle to intercultural interaction (prohibition of marriages), low level of education and employment in the informal (illegal) economy. The total criminalization of most Gypsies contributed to the repudiation of the representatives of this people by society. This has put Roma on the social bottom, making it impossible to use social elevators accessible to other nationalities.

In terms of employment, in most cases the Roma population is involved in the informal economy. Among them are the following types of illegal activity: production and sale of narcotic drugs and surrogate alcoholic beverages, wandering and fraud (petty larceny), resale of various goods, etc. Such economic activity of the Roma is a serious social problem, but the corruption of the institutions of power at all levels does not contribute to its solution. The most specific type of economic activity is

“hired” widespread among wealthy (“white”) gypsies. Gypsy families, for the minimum remuneration, contain “mercenaries” – lumpen (marginalia) who carry out various household tasks at their homes (Gusakov 2017). It is the voluntary cooperation of Gypsies and Lumpen, when the former work to solve the social problems of the latter in exchange for manual labor and assistance in running the farm. But since the beginning of the 2010s, some Roma have been moving away from traditional laxity to work and are officially employed in sectors of the economy that do not require special education (utilities, agrarian sector, construction, etc.).

It is almost impossible to determine the exact size of the Gypsy Diaspora of Crimea. There are two problems with this: individual Roma repatriates do not associate themselves with this ethnic group, and some Roma do not have documents and are not considered by local authorities. Significant progress has been made in the past twenty years about the issue of accounting for Roma by public authorities. Ironically, it was influenced by the social policy of Ukraine during the presidency of V.A. Yushchenko, her greater focus on maintaining the poorest sections of the population and measures to increase fertility in Ukraine. The incidence of registration and official documents for gypsies was the prevalence of post-Soviet social assistance in Ukraine. For many Gypsy families, they served as the main source of stable income.

Migration transformation. After 1944, the principle of choosing Gypsies to reside was changed. Previously, they settled and formed areas of compact residence in Crimean suburbs and cities, but now the Gypsy “shanghai” is more likely to be found in rural areas, where the number of police officers who control them is smaller. Consideration is given to transit settlement functions, economic prospects, the availability of soil for the spread of informal economic links, and the lack of oversight by law enforcement.

Before World War II, Gypsies, like other ethnic groups, formed separate national quarters primarily in the cities of the peninsula (Armenian, Simferopol, Bakhchisaray). Nomadic Gypsies migrated seasonally to the peninsula for some economic benefits. The desire of the Soviet authorities to forcibly bind the nomads to the land did not bring any results.

But the deportation of the Crimean peoples changed the natural order of ethnic settlement, the Crimean cities lost national autonomous quarters of Gypsy settlement, although in other regions of Ukraine they were preserved (for example, in some cities of Transcarpathia). Now, Gypsies who migrated to the peninsula from neighboring regions were evenly displaced. The total control of Soviet power over ethnic settlement on the peninsula did not allow for the formation of separate national areas in cities and rural areas.

But after the restoration of Ukrainian independence and the removal of ethnic restrictions, large Gypsy diasporas were created in some localities (up to 10% of the population in some settlements). These are first big cities (Simferopol, Dzhankoy, Yevpatoria) and important transport hubs with developed sector of informal economy (urban settlements of Oktyabrskoye, Vladislavovka, Gvardeyskoye, some villages, etc.). In addition, collective farm control over the countryside was lifted in the 1990s and Gypsies were able to buy housing in villages. This has led to the migration of part of the Roma from cities into the countryside. However, if you look at the statistics of this migration movement is not (Fig. 3). The lack of live dynamics is due to the lack of certification of a large proportion of urban Roma in Soviet times and rural Roma in modern Ukraine.

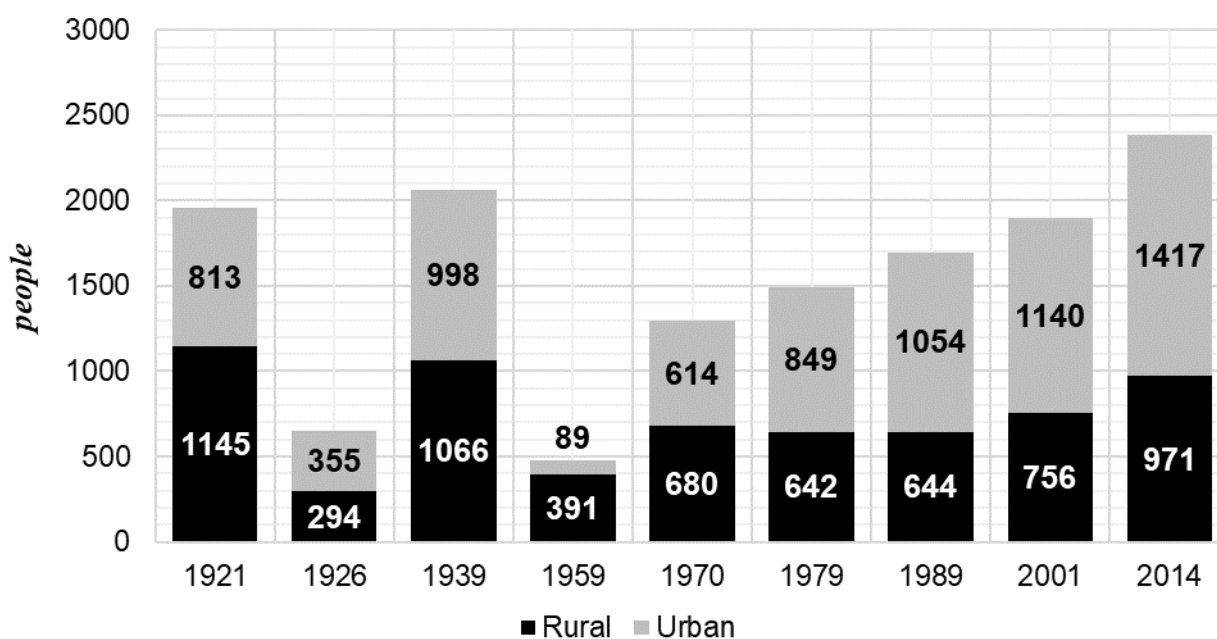


Fig. 3. Rural and urban gypsy population in Crimea

Conclusions. The Gypsy Diaspora retained its identity, notwithstanding social discrimination and social stigma. Employment in the informal economy, ghettoisation of local habitats, increased criminalization and marginalization of the Roma community are serious obstacles to the socialization of its members. The social way of life differentiates the Roma from the status of full citizens. Both the Gypsy community and society need interaction, but this does not happen. The lack of dialogue between the Roma and the authorities only aggravates the situation, exacerbating the isolationist tendencies of the Roma population.

Gypsy isolationism is driven by two groups of factors – traditionalist origins and the specifics of intercultural interaction. The first group includes patriarchal and cultural barriers that do not allow Gypsy communities to engage in conformist movements, the second group includes the various cross-cultural relationships and taboos that exist in Gypsies with respect to other ethnicities. However, at the present stage, Gypsy society is experiencing a liberation period and discovery for the rest of the world. This is due to the refusal to adhere to the ancestral traditions and canons among the youth.

In terms of migration mobility, Gypsy society is becoming more inert and quieter. Gypsies abandoned the nomadic way of life in the 1950s and 1960s and moved to a settled settlement in urban and rural areas. But there is a concentration of gypsies in the middle-class settlements (urban settlements) that have the functions of transport nodes. Migration of Roma to rural areas is gradually waning, but this does not affect the numerical growth of the rural Gypsy population (in this case, the high birth rate and middle age of the Gypsy community are affected).

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