



**BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY**  
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**HISTORY OF MINORITIES**



**SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS**

**Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage in Roma Communities**  
**Educational Profile and Collective Identity. Roma Crafts in Cluj County**

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**Keywords: culture, roma, custom, cultural heritage, tradition**

### **Introduction**

Culture represents the manifestation of individual and collective identity, playing an essential role in social development and the promotion of diversity - a fundamental value requiring support and proactive initiatives. Culture is important not only in artistic and literary contexts but also in terms of lifestyle, fundamental rights, value systems, traditions, and beliefs. The diversity of cultural practices and traditions should be viewed as a wealth, not as a source of conflict.

Regarding the cultural heritage of the roma, the manner in which the cultural values of this ethnic group are manifested within the community and in society at large lacks sufficient documentation. The history of the roma is largely unknown due to the lack of sources, and existing studies are often based on folklore or legends.

Jean-Pierre Liegeois emphasizes that the roma have left behind more legends than real or uncertain documents. George Potra highlights that information regarding the origin, geographical distribution, and historical evolution of the roma is extremely limited due to the lack of reliable documentary sources. He notes that existing research about the roma primarily relies on folklore and legends rather than verified written evidence. This situation is exacerbated by the long period of approximately 500 years during which the roma were subjected to slavery in Eastern Europe, from the 14th century until the mid-19th century when they were emancipated. During this period, the roma were seen as free labor and marginalized in society. Petre Petcuț underscores that the history of the roma has often been

ignored or marginalized, leading to the perpetuation of myths and stereotypes about them as foreigners in Europe. The emancipation of the roma in the 19th century brought a new problem: how to record and transmit their authentic history, given that until then it had been passed down orally through generations. The first documented mention of the roma appears in 1348 in Serbia, when Tsar Stefan Dušan mentioned them as craftsmen at the Prizren Monastery. Over the following centuries, the roma were sporadically mentioned in various documents in different European countries, often being assimilated with other groups or ethnicities, such as the Tatars in Germany. In later periods, roma leaders adopted noble titles such as counts, voivodes, or dukes, claiming to be descendants of Egyptian pilgrims, a theory about their origin that persisted in many parts of Europe.

The lack of documented history and written cultural heritage has led to the perpetuation of a distorted perspective on the roma community. Without clear evidence and adequate records, their identity and origin have often been contested and reinterpreted by their adversaries, reflecting a problem similar to that of territorial claims in politics. The proposed doctoral thesis addresses a need identified during two decades of activity within roma communities, often neglected or insufficiently analyzed and valued at the level of civil society. One of the premises of this initiative is that the culture and history of the roma are rich but insufficiently promoted. Thus, the research aims to highlight the specific values of the roma and illustrate them as an integral part of cultural heritage.

The research project aims to illustrate not only novel aspects of the intangible cultural heritage of the roma but also how these are perceived both by the roma community and by society as a whole. The research began during my university studies and continued through active personal participation in several community projects, which provided me with a deep understanding of the daily life, needs, and traditions of the roma. Additionally, my personal experience, coming from a roma family where members attributed significant importance to inherited and passed-down traditions, especially professional skills (crafts), offered me a contextualized perspective on the community, enriching the study and contributing to a better understanding of their culture and identity.

The profound motivation behind my research was to correct and fill historical gaps regarding the roma and to highlight essential aspects of their culture, history, and traditions. With extensive experience as an expert on roma community issues and an initiator of projects in this field, I have developed a detailed perspective on the needs and challenges faced by these communities in Cluj County. I have actively worked to promote the social and cultural

inclusion of the roma, conducting extensive research in their communities, conducting interviews and surveys, and closely collaborating with their members to implement educational, social, and cultural projects.

Therefore, the research project not only seeks to clarify and improve perceptions of the roma in broader society but also to contribute to the preservation and promotion of the rich and diverse cultural heritage of this ethnic group, with a focus on traditional crafts and customs passed down through generations.

Even though the roma minority faces socio-economic difficulties, and society generally defines and labels the roma based on these deficiencies, it is important to note that the roma can also be defined by their specific cultural values, such as traditional occupations, crafts, customs, attire, and language, as well as human values such as unity, solidarity, trust, and faith. Therefore, the primary aim of this work is to present lesser-known aspects of the roma community and to emphasize their importance in defining their identity, independent of the socio-economic conditions perceived as predominant in public perception.

The research methodology included a rigorous and ethical approach, with clear objectives and well-defined hypotheses, addressing the historical and social evolution of the roma, cultural identity, and traditional occupations. The study utilized various sources, including interviews and questionnaires administered to members of the roma community in Cluj County, specialized literature, and legal documents, providing a complex and balanced understanding of the subject.

The research began with a thorough analysis of the topic, including a review of the specialized literature, an evaluation of my capabilities, and an analysis of roma communities in Cluj County. The initial SWOT analysis provided a solid framework for investigating the subject and formulating hypotheses.

In the quantitative phase, questionnaires were used to collect data, revealing varied perceptions and attitudes towards the cultural heritage of the roma. The results indicated discrepancies between general perceptions and reality, influenced by stereotypes, and highlighted gaps in understanding and appreciating roma culture.

The diversity of respondents brought a wide range of perspectives, highlighting the need for a diversified approach. The collected data revealed priority needs and concerns for the roma community, guiding the theoretical exposition and prioritizing interventions in education, social assistance, and justice. Thus, the questionnaire results provided a basis for effective policies and programs to support and promote roma culture.

Research ethics was a priority, ensuring the respect for the rights and dignity of participants, with informed consent and confidentiality. The study uses a diversified methodology, combining content analysis of specialized works with questionnaires, individual and group interviews, providing unique insights directly from roma community members, thus contributing to a deeper and more authentic understanding of the subject. It has been shown that post-December studies and articles were extremely important in deepening the researched topic. They not only added value to the research but also provided the possibility of exposing the reader to diversified perspectives on the cultural, social, and historical values of the roma, positively influencing the historical narrative of this community.

The study shows how factors such as religion, family, education, and society have influenced the recognition and promotion of roma heritage. The research also includes an internal perspective on roma ethnic identity, resulting in an innovative contribution due to the topics and methodologies used.

Familiarity with roma history and culture depends on individual interest. Recognizing traditional occupations and supporting initiatives to revitalize crafts are essential strategies for eliminating stereotypes and accepting the roma community.

Gratitude is expressed to the research coordinator, Mr. Tudor Sălăgean, and to the members of the roma communities and craftsmen who contributed to the realization of the study. Without their support and openness, this research would not have been possible.

### **Historiography of Research**

In specialized literature, numerous works by both Romanian and foreign authors address this subject. It is noteworthy that within these works, there is at least one chapter or subchapter dedicated to the evolution of the roma, especially in the post-December period. This demonstrates the importance of the researched topic and emphasizes the necessity of including it in as many specialized works on roma culture as possible. The originality of the study is highlighted by the research tools used, which include, in addition to content analysis of specialized works, questionnaires, individual and group interviews, as well as friendly dialogues conducted directly with members of the roma community, who constitute the main source of the research.

To highlight the most relevant sources used in the research, the following can be listed:

- Ion Chelcea - „Țigani din România“<sup>1</sup> (1944): A detailed monograph on the origin of the roma, family and community organization, occupations, traditions, and language;
- Elena and Cătălin Zamfir - „Țigani între ignorare și îngrijorare“<sup>2</sup> (1993): A work that explores the ethnic and social characteristics of the roma, both during the socialist period and post-1989.
- Emmanuelle Pons: Her study on the transition of roma from serfdom to members of a democratic state, illustrating significant changes in their way of life. The final output of her research is the work „Les Tsiganes en Roumanie: des citoyens à part entière? Țigani din România, o minoritate în tranziție”<sup>3</sup> (1995), translated into Romanian by "Altfel" Company from Bucharest in 1999;
- Historian Viorel Achim's work, „Țigani în istoria României”<sup>4</sup> (1998), stands as a crucial source in roma studies. It provides insights into their historical trajectory, organizational structure, culture, and emancipation in Romania;
- Lucian Cherata's „Istoria țiganilor”<sup>5</sup> (1998) reflects aspects of roma cultural heritage and their historical evolution between the 14th and 19th centuries;
- George Potra's „Contribuțiuni la istoricul țiganilor din România”<sup>6</sup> (2002) details the status of roma as serfs and freemen following the abolition of slavery in 1856;
- The Center for roma Community Resources' „Monitoring the Local Implementation of the Governmental Strategy for Improving the Situation of roma in Romania”<sup>7</sup> (2004) analyzes the applicability of this strategy in five counties;
- Maria Ionescu and Sorin Cace's „Public Policies for roma. Evolutions and Perspectives”<sup>8</sup> (2006) exposes the process of elaboration and implementation of public policies for roma between 1996-2005;

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<sup>1</sup> Ion Chelcea, *Țigani din România*, București, Editura „Institutul Central de Statistică”, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Elena și Cătălin Zamfir, *Țigani între ignorare și îngrijorare*, București, Editura „Alternative”, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Emmanuelle Pons, *Les Tsiganes en Roumanie: des citoyens à part entière?*, Paris „Editura L’Harmattan”, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Viorel Achim, *Țigani în istoria României*, București, Editura „Enciclopedică”, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> Lucian Cherata, *Istoria țiganilor*, București, Editura „Z”, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> George Potra, *Contribuțiuni la istoricul țiganilor din România*, București, Editor Mihai Dascăl, „Colecția Studii Cercetări, Sinteze”, Seria Istorie, 2002, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Centrul de Resurse pentru Comunitățile de Romi, *Monitorizarea implementării la nivel local a Strategiei Guvernamentale pentru Îmbunătățirea situației romilor din România*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura „AMM SRL”, 2004, p. 20.

<sup>8</sup> Maria Ionescu și Sorin Cace, *Politici publice pentru romi. Evoluții și perspective*, București, Editura „Expert”, 2006.



- The Bucharest-based Amare Rromentza Center's „Rromii...în căutarea stimei de sine”<sup>9</sup> (2007) results from the project "Family and School: Self-esteem and Ethnic Identity Assumption";
- „Romii în Europa”<sup>10</sup> (2008) serves as a fundamental work for understanding and acknowledging roma at the European level, involving over 45 qualified experts;
- „Romano Butiq”<sup>11</sup> (2013) presents a social economy development project in roma communities in Romania, synthesizing 14 traditional crafts;
- Petre Petcuț's „Rromii. Sclavie și Libertate”<sup>12</sup> (2016) addresses migration, slavery, and the evolution of roma in the second half of the 19th century;
- Angus Fraser's „Țigani – originile, Migrația și prezența lor În Europa”<sup>13</sup> (2017) explores the evolution of roma in Europe;
- Delia Grigore's „Identitatea rromă contemporană – Între etnotip și stereotip”<sup>14</sup> (2018) details roma traditional culture, crafts, and specific customs;
- Mirel Bănică's „Baftă, Devla și Haramul – Studii despre cultura și religia rromilor”<sup>15</sup> (2019) analyzes rituals, myths, and funeral ethnography in roma communities;
- Petre Matei's „Mișcarea romă din România în presa interbelică”<sup>16</sup> (2022) compiles articles from the interwar press regarding roma representation;
- Gabriel Sala's „Tradiții și mentalități rrome-neamul Gaborilor”<sup>17</sup> (2023) describes the customs, religion, and traditional occupations of the Gabor roma;
- Articles „Identitatea rromilor. Patrimoniul cultural material și imaterial al etniei rrome”<sup>18</sup> and „Ziua Internațională a rromilor – Perspective istorice, culturale și

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<sup>9</sup> Delia Grigore, Mihai Neacșu, Adrian-Nicolae Furtună, *Rromii...în căutarea stimei de sine*, București, Editura „Vanemonde”, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Delia Grigore, Mihai Neacșu, Adrian-Nicolae Furtună, *Rromii...în căutarea stimei de sine*, București, Editura „Vanemonde”, 2007.

<sup>11</sup> Romano Cher – Casa Romilor, Agenția Împreună, *Romano Butiq- Studiu despre meșteșugurile rome*, București, Editura „K Consulting Management and Coordination”, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> Petre Petcuț, *Loc. cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Angus Fraser, *Țigani - Originile, migrația și prezența lor în Europa*, București, Editura „Humanitas”, 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Delia Grigore, *Identitatea rromă contemporană – Între etnotip și stereotip*, București, Editura „Amare Rromentza”, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Mirel Bănică, *Baftă, Devla și Haramul – Studii despre cultura și religia romilor*, Iași, Editura „Polirom”, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Mirel Bănică, *Baftă, Devla și Haramul – Studii despre cultura și religia romilor*, Iași, Editura „Polirom”, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Petre Matei, *Mișcarea romă din România în presa interbelică: 1933-1941*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura „Institutul pentru Studiarea problemelor Minorității Naționale și Institutul Național pentru Studiarea Holocaustului din România-Elie Wiesel”, 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Marius Lakatos-Iancu, „Identitatea romilor. Patrimoniul cultural material și imaterial al etniei rrome” în *Anuarul Muzeului Etnografic al Transilvaniei*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura „Mega”, 2020, p. 353.

simbolice”<sup>19</sup> (2020) offer details about roma culture and crafts, authored by Marius-Lakatos Iancu;

Other significant contributions include works on sociological and qualitative research methods influencing research methodology:

- Vasile Miftode's „Nivelele investigației sociologice”<sup>20</sup> (1973);
- Septimiu Chelcea's „Chestionarul în investigația sociologică”<sup>21</sup> (1975);
- Septimiu Chelcea's „Metodologia cercetării sociologice”<sup>22</sup> (2001);
- Gabriel Bauret's „Abordarea fotografiei”<sup>23</sup> (1992);
- Petru Iluț's „Abordarea calitativă a socioumanului”<sup>24</sup> (1997);
- Francois de Singly, Alain Blanchet, Anne Gotman, and Jean-Claude Kaufmann's „Ancheta și metodele ei: Chestionarul, Interviuul de producere a datelor, interviul comprehensiv”<sup>25</sup> (1998);
- Florentina Scârneci's „Îndrumar de cercetare calitativă în științele socio-umane”<sup>26</sup> (2006);
- Raluca Gârboan's „Metode de cercetare utilizate în evaluare”<sup>27</sup> (2007);
- Sorin Dan Sandor's „Metode și tehnici de cercetare în științele sociale”<sup>28</sup> (2013).

### Structure Of The Work

The structure of the thesis begins with an introduction presenting the motivation and importance of the topic, the utility of the sources used, the general structure of the work, and a brief historiography of the research.

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<sup>19</sup> *Idem* „Ziua internațională a romilor – perspective istorice, cultural și simbolice“, *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie George Barițiu*, Editor „Academia Română“, filiala Cluj-Napoca, Seria Historica, Supliment nr. 2, 2020, p. 435.

<sup>20</sup> Vasile Miftode, *Nivelele investigației sociologice*, în *Analele Universității „Al. I. Cuza” Iași*, III (filozofie), tomul XIX, 1973.

<sup>21</sup> Septimiu Chelcea, *Chestionarul în investigația sociologică*, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1975.

<sup>22</sup> Septimiu Chelcea, *Metodologia cercetării sociologice*, București, Editura Economică, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Gabriel Bauret, *Abordarea fotografiei*, București, Editura „AII“, 1992, p.56.

<sup>24</sup> Petru Iluț, *Abordarea calitativă a socioumanului*, Iași, Editura „Polirom“, 1997, pp.135-136.

<sup>25</sup> Francois de Singly, Alani Blanchet, Anne Gotman și Jean-Claude Kaufmann, *Ancheta și metodele ei: Chestionarul, Interviuul de producere a datelor, interviul comprehensiv*, București, Editura „Polirom“, 1998, p. 63.

<sup>26</sup> Florentina Scârneci, *Îndrumar de cercetare calitativă în științele socio-umane*, Brașov, Editura „Universității Transilvania“, 2006, p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> Raluca Gârboan, „Metode de cercetare utilizate în evaluare“, *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences Nr. 20*, 2007, p.40. <https://rtsa.ro/rtsa/index.php/rtsa/article/viewFile/148/144> (Accesat în data de 15.04.2021).

<sup>28</sup> Sorin Dan Sandor, *Metode și tehnici de cercetare în științele sociale*, București, Editura „Tritonic“, 2013, p. 68.

Chapter I introduces research methodologies, emphasizing the importance of ethics and their relevance. Content analysis, SWOT analysis, quantitative and qualitative methods are discussed, along with research objectives and hypotheses. The conclusion of this chapter sets the stage for subsequent chapters.

Chapter II explores the history of roma in the Romanian space, covering their origin and earliest attestations.

Chapter III addresses the presence of roma and their challenges throughout various historical periods, from the formation of Greater Romania, World War II, the communist period, to the post-communist era. Social, economic, and political measures for the recognition and inclusion of roma are discussed.

Chapter IV deals with roma identity and occupational evolution, focusing on their historical denominations and occupations.

Chapter V analyzes roma crafts in recent times, including details on the process of making products and the results of interviews with craftsmen.

Chapter VI examines roma customs, traditions, and rituals, with a focus on preserving intangible culture in Cluj County communities, covering various aspects of life such as birth, baptism, marriage, and death.

Chapter VII explores the processing and interpretation of collected data, methodologies, and techniques used for their organization and analysis, and the presentation of results in accordance with research objectives.

The final part provides conclusions and recommendations on the studied theme, bibliography, and annexes with case studies conducted in roma communities in Cluj County.

- The thesis addresses the following issues:
- Barriers in the production and sale of traditional products.
- Evaluation of artisanal products and craftsmanship by society.
- Transmission and perception of craftsmanship within roma families.
- Facilities for supporting and promoting roma craftsmen.
- Presence of these facilities in roma communities.
- Craftsmanship as tradition or means of survival.
- Superficial treatment of roma tradition.

Chapter I - Introductory theories on research methodology explore both the theoretical aspects of different research methods and the justification of their utility in the investigated thematic context. Content analysis and participatory observation were chosen

as appropriate for providing relevant information due to my experience in the field. Content analysis was essential, allowing for an in-depth investigation of the theme and integration of previously accumulated knowledge, particularly in roma communities and the valorization of cultural heritage. SWOT analysis application identified:

1. Strengths: Solid base of works, relevant knowledge, sample diversity, involvement of key actors.
2. Weaknesses: Subjectivity, source dependence, locality adequacy.
3. Opportunities: Correlating personal information with literature, using romani language, conducting comparative research.
4. Threats: Political events, community reluctance, stage replanning, leader influence.

This approach contributed to strengthening the theoretical and methodological foundation of the research, its relevance, and credibility being reinforced by critical evaluation of literature and personal experience.

The quantitative approach of the research used online questionnaires due to their accessibility and flexibility, allowing respondents to complete surveys from anywhere and at any time, increasing participation rates and reducing costs. Data analysis was automated, facilitating the generation of statistical reports. The questionnaire, designed in June 2022 to collect information on society's perception of roma culture, was distributed through social networks and by phone. It included 17 questions and was completed by 192 respondents, with continuous monitoring of progress and ensuring completeness of responses.

Most respondents (40.6%) were aged 26-40, followed by those aged 18-25 (38.5%). Respondents aged 41-60 accounted for 19.3%, while those over 60 were only 1.6%. The diverse age structure, with a predominance of young adults, enriches the sample and facilitates a deep analysis of varied perspectives, essential for researching roma cultural heritage. This diversity ensures the representativeness and relevance of the results.

Of the 192 respondents, 88.3% were from the majority population, 9.9% were roma, and 5% were Hungarian. The remaining 1.5% included other nationalities such as Armenian, Ukrainian, and Romanian-Saxon. The significant presence of the majority population in the questionnaire provides a more comprehensive perspective on the perception of roma culture and heritage, essential for general understanding and guiding decisions regarding cultural diversity and protection of roma heritage.

Most respondents (83.3%) had higher education, followed by those with high school education (15.6%). Only 1% had professional education, and 0.1% had completed primary

education. This suggests that a higher level of education may reduce susceptibility to stereotypes about Roma and influences detailed responses in the questionnaire. Respondents with lower education levels, though few, provide valuable perspectives based on personal experiences, contributing

The survey aimed to assess societal opinion regarding the inclusion of a module on the history and culture of Roma in school curricula. Results indicate that 57.8% of the 192 respondents support the introduction of this module, while 24.5% consider the proposal inappropriate. Additionally, 17.7% of respondents did not express a clear opinion. Conclusions highlight a variety of views in society regarding the necessity of integrating this module, emphasizing the importance of debates and educational strategies for better understanding Roma culture and history.

The current study also focuses on evaluating societal perceptions of traditional crafts practiced by Roma in Cluj County. Findings reveal that crafts such as music (lăutăria), metalworking, and copper smithing are perceived as highly significant, with recognition rates of 88.9%, 73.7%, and 73.2%, respectively. In contrast, crafts such as furrier work and bone crafting are considered less relevant. The analysis reflects a disparity in perceptions regarding the diversity of Roma crafts, underscoring a possible decline in traditional practices in collective consciousness influenced by social and economic changes. The revitalization of these crafts is deemed crucial for conserving and understanding Roma cultural heritage, serving as witnesses to their history and evolution over time.

Regarding the research sample's stance on revitalizing traditional Roma crafts, a majority (57%) believe that metalworking should be revitalized. Significant percentages also support the revival of copper cauldron and boiler crafting (54.8%) and music (49.5%). In contrast, interest in fortune-telling, horseshoeing, sieve making, sheet metalwork, or bricklaying was lower, with approximately 20-30% of respondents advocating for their revitalization. The conclusion emphasizes a pronounced focus on revitalizing certain traditional Roma crafts, reflecting changes in social and economic dynamics and varied societal perceptions.

More than half of the respondents (52.9%) participated in cultural events dedicated to promoting Roma traditions, involving Roma artists. In contrast, 33% did not participate, and 14.1% were unaware of these cultural activities. These results underscore both significant participation in Roma cultural events and the need to improve communication and accessibility of these activities for the entire community.

The research focuses on the distinction between the terms „Gypsy” and „Roma”, clarifying their impact on post-communist Romanian society. Confusions and controversies surrounding the use of the term roma" instead of gypsy have led to significant changes in the perception and treatment of the Romanian Roma community. One notable example is the 2010 legislative proposal by Adrian Gurzău to ban the term "Gypsy." The research highlights the high level of familiarity among respondents with the discussed terminology and their interest in a deeper sociological and cultural understanding.

The study is based on 14 Roma communities in the county. Several aspects were identified through analysis: Romani is spoken in all communities, being the native language in 9, but less used in the remaining 5, especially by those born after 1980. Community leaders were identified in 10 out of the 14 communities, while the other 4 lacked clear leaders, either formal or informal. Traditional crafts are preserved and practiced in 8 localities, albeit to a lesser extent in one community and not at all in two others; nevertheless, they are still remembered in collective memory. Participant observation found that Roma traditional customs are no longer present in most selected localities, except for sporadic cases where they are still found but in a limited form.

Detailed data analysis revealed several significant findings: Romani remains an integral part of cultural identity in most communities, although there is a trend towards limited use among youth. Leadership structure in communities shows significant variations, and traditional crafts are in decline. Furthermore, Roma traditions and customs are increasingly rare and limited today. These conclusions highlight ongoing social and cultural developments and the relevance of actions to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of these communities in a contemporary framework.

Participatory observation in the Roma community of Cluj County covered various aspects of traditions and culture. Community members maintain and transmit their daily habits, including using Romani in conversations and interactions. Cultural manifestations such as traditional dances and religious events were observed, noting the presence of cultural heritage elements in these contexts.

Traditional crafts and cultural artifacts practiced in the community were also investigated. The transmission of these practices from one generation to another was observed, reflecting perceptions and expressions related to Roma traditions and cultural heritage within the community. Changes or evolutions observed in traditional practices were noted and reflected in the analysis.

The most significant period was between 2010 and 2012 when I was involved as a facilitator in the „Romano Cher - Roma House”<sup>29</sup> project initiated by K Consulting Management and Coordination - Bucharest. The project aimed to restore the connection between traditional Roma craftsmen and the current market demands. Through the project, Roma craftsmen were encouraged to continue their craft practices, transforming them into profitable and sustainable activities, while ensuring compliance with legal regulations and their representation at regional and national levels. Direct involvement in identifying and understanding traditional crafts in various Roma communities was essential for gaining a profound perspective on these cultural practices. Active participation in the process of making various traditional products alongside local craftsmen provided not only practical experience but also an authentic connection with the traditions and culture of these communities, contributing to a better understanding and appreciation of their cultural heritage.

This research extensively examined the cultural heritage of the Roma community in Cluj County, utilizing qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and participatory observation. These approaches allowed for a deep exploration of customs, traditional crafts, and factors influencing the preservation or loss of Roma traditions. To ensure coherence and relevance in interviews, a detailed guide was created that structured discussions around cultural, traditional, and identity aspects of the Roma community. The sample included 15 participants, including Roma craftsmen, community leaders, representatives of Roma organizations, and a supporter of introducing Romani language into the educational system.

Interviews, lasting between 30 and 50 minutes, consisted of 20 mostly open-ended questions, allowing interviewees to freely express their opinions. Themes addressed included the preservation of traditions and crafts, the social and political influence of the Roma community, and aspects of ethnic identity and lifestyle.

Results are presented in a detailed chapter, and the most significant interviews are included as appendices to this work. Participatory observation highlighted limitations such as researcher subjectivity and the influence of their presence on participant behavior. Additionally, the small number of interviews may limit the representativeness and generalizability of the results.

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<sup>29</sup> ROMANO CHER – Casa Romilor, Agenția Împreună, *Romano Butiq- Studiu despre meșteșugurile rome*, București, Editura „K Consulting Management and Coordination“, 2013;

In conclusion, the methods used provided a profound understanding of the cultural heritage of the roma in Cluj County. SWOT analysis, questionnaires, and participatory observations contributed to forming a complex picture of the conservation and promotion of this heritage. Methodological limitations were acknowledged, emphasizing the need for larger samples and diversified research methods in the future.

The second chapter introduces notions regarding the evolution of Roma in the Romanian space, emphasizing the challenges in documenting Roma history due to their lack of access to writing and dependence on external sources, which offer a limited and incomplete perspective on their lives. In the Middle Ages, Roma were believed to originate from Egypt, but modern research indicates Indian origins, with their migration to Europe occurring between the 9th and 14th centuries. They passed through Persia and Armenia, reaching Byzantium in the 11th century and then Thrace in the early 14th century, subsequently settling in various European regions.<sup>30</sup>

The origin of Roma has been debated among historians, with theories ranging from a mistaken Egyptian origin to a better-documented Indian one. Various hypotheses, including those of Donald Kenrick and Samuel Roberts, explore their migration based on historical events and legends.

The term "Gypsy" originates from the Greek "athinganos," and the first mention of Roma in the Romanian Lands appears in 1385 in the archives of Vodița Monastery. Roma were considered slaves, and the term described more of a social status than an ethnicity. In Wallachia, the presence of Roma is documented from the 14th century, and in Moldova, Prince Alexandru cel Bun donated several Roma settlements and Tatar huts to Bistrița Monastery in 1418.

Roma constituted a marginalized social class, being sold and subjected to abuse. They were employed in various fields of work, contributing to the wealth of boyars and monasteries. In the Romanian Lands, the occupational structure of Roma was diversified, including craftsmen such as spoon makers, bear trainers, and miners, each with specific skills.

Roma miners, specialized in wood processing, produced household items and contributed to the local economy through their talent and skill. There is also a distinction between settled Roma, who were sedentary and assimilated into the majority community, and nomadic ones, known by various regional names.

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<sup>30</sup> Mihail Kogălniceanu, *Schițe despre țigani*, Iași, „Tipografia Dacia, P. Iliescu & D. Grossu“, 1900, p. 4.



Chapter three of the thesis examines the evolution of Roma in European society and within the Romanian context, focusing on their efforts to assume and promote their cultural identity despite obstacles and discrimination. The process of recognizing Roma identity has been marked by lengthy debates and struggles against prevalent stereotypes. Over time, Roma have successfully asserted their Indian origins and promoted their distinctive traditions, actively engaging in the fight for civil rights and equal treatment. Their cultural heritage, including music, dances, traditional crafts, and the Romani language, is recognized as a valuable contribution to European cultural diversity. Despite marginalization, Roma have managed to transmit these traditions from one generation to the next.

During the interwar period, Roma in Romania sought recognition in society through various socio-professional associations and organizations, such as the General Association of Roma in Romania, advocating for the representation and defense of their community's interests. The trauma endured during the deportations to Transnistria under the Antonescu regime contributed to persistent fears among Roma in affirming their ethnic identity, yet subsequent supportive policies have aided in the preservation and promotion of Roma culture.

In the communist era, official policies attempted assimilation of Roma, yet some traditional crafts and traditions survived, and Roma communities adapted various strategies to cope with regime-induced changes. After 1989, Roma gradually gained more rights, including the right to promote their culture and traditions. However, major issues such as poverty and prejudice persisted, and government initiatives, including the Romanian Government's Strategy for Improving the Situation of Roma, significantly impacted the promotion of social and economic inclusion. This strategy facilitated access to education, health care, adequate housing, while simultaneously supporting Roma culture and traditions.

The chapter underscores the central role in implementing governmental strategy measures, highlighting their positive impact on the conservation and promotion of Roma cultural heritage. The organization and coordination of activities at the county level were crucial for achieving strategy objectives, adopting a community-centered approach. Implemented measures included the promotion of Roma culture through cultural events, active involvement of community members, and engagement of Roma issues experts.

Chapter IV discusses the identity and occupational profile of Roma, highlighting their historical evolution and the diversity of traditional crafts. Initially labeled with Egyptian origins, Roma have been involved in crafts such as metalworking and music, contributing

not only to their subsistence but also to the preservation and transmission of cultural traditions. Over time, Roma have been organized into various occupational categories in the countries where they settled, whether as goldsmiths, bear trainers, spoonmakers, or musicians, under princely or boyar domination. Emancipation from slavery in the nineteenth century represented a crucial step towards their emancipation, although limited access to agricultural land led to diversification of their professions, such as butchers, sewage workers, or musicians.

During the interwar period in Romania, Roma benefited from educational and occupational improvements, institutionalizing schools and workshops for vocational training. However, the communist period brought ambivalent changes, integrating some into the industrial economy while marginalizing others, discouraging their traditional crafts.

Traditional crafts, such as metalworking and music, have been essential pillars in shaping Roma identity. These practices have served not only as means of subsistence but also as ways to transmit and preserve cultural traditions within the community. Through their contribution to Europe's cultural diversity, Roma have brought significant value to the common cultural heritage. It is important to recognize this contribution and to valorize their cultural heritage in historical and artistic contexts.<sup>31</sup>

The study conducted by „Romano Boutiq”<sup>32</sup> identified 14 distinct types of crafts among the Roma population in 24 counties and the capital, providing a comprehensive analysis of the persistence and relevance of traditional crafts in shaping Roma identity. Despite historical vicissitudes and social changes, these forms of artistic and technical expression continue to be a defining feature of Roma cultural identity. The fact that Roma tribes are still named according to the specific craft practiced indicates a deep interconnection between occupation and identity. This perpetuation of craft traditions not only reflects the community's resilience but also its adaptability to contemporary societal changes. The 14 identified types of crafts, such as silversmiths, cauldron makers, coppersmiths, hat makers, bricklayers, blacksmiths, florists, tinsmiths, carpenters, hammock makers, weavers, spoon-makers, musicians, and miners, highlight the diversity and complexity of practical crafts within the Roma community. This plurality of practices not only attests to advanced technical skills but also underscores their significant contribution across multiple domains of daily and cultural life. By maintaining and transmitting these

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<sup>31</sup> Ion Duminičă, „Simbolistica tradițională a romilor în Europa contemporană II”, *Revista de Etnografie, Științele Naturii și Muzeologie*, Nr. 13(26), Chișinău, Moldova, 2010, pp. 154-155.

<sup>32</sup> Romano Butiq, *Loc.cit.*

crafts, Roma not only preserve ancestral traditions but also enrich cultural diversity and artistic heritage in society. It is crucial to recognize and appreciate the central role that these forms of artistic expression play in defining, perpetuating, and transmitting Roma identity within a framework characterized by continuous transformation.<sup>33</sup>

Regarding the names given to Roma, they demonstrate how the diversity of names under which they have been known reflects their complex interactions with various cultures over time. In the 9th century, they were mentioned as „luri” or „luli” in Persia, indicating an early presence and extensive mobility. In the 10th century, in the Arab world, they were known as „zlot”, illustrating varied cultural influences. In the 11th century, in the Byzantine Empire, they were called „ṭigani,” a term derived from Greek, reflecting different perceptions in various European cultures. Also during that period, they were referred to as „Adniscani” a pejorative name associated with their practices. The evolution of these names highlights the complexity of Roma interactions with surrounding societies throughout history, emphasizing how they have been perceived in different cultural and historical contexts.<sup>34</sup>

During their migration through Europe, Roma were known by a variety of names that reflect both geographical diversity and the perceptions of different cultures. The first historical mentions of Roma date back to 1348 when they were called „Cingarje” in Serbia. Over the centuries and in various European countries, Roma have been called differently: in Germany they were called "Tatars," in Switzerland "Heiden," and in the Netherlands the same name was used. In Central and Western Europe in the 15th century, they were called "Egyptians" or "Saracens," reflecting considerations related to skin color as well as perceptions of their magical and occult practices. In Germany, the term "Zigeuner" became predominant, while in France they were known as „bohémiens,” and in England they adopted the name "Gipsy." In Spain, they were called "Gitanos," and in Nordic countries like Finland, Norway, and Sweden they were called „Tattare.” This diversity of names reflects not only the cultural variability of the Roma community but also the changing perceptions and labels in various European contexts over the centuries. The evolution of these appellations emphasizes the complexity of historical interactions and how Roma have been perceived and represented in different cultural environments.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Marius Lakatos-Iancu, *Identitatea romilor...*, p. 361.

<sup>34</sup> Viorel Achim, *Op.cit.* p.17.

<sup>35</sup> Etves Filip, *Romii, un neam indian*, Deva, Editura „Destin“, 2000, pp. 24-25.

The contemporary debate on terminology for the Roma community highlights a complex and sensitive issue. The term „țigăni” derived from Greek with initial meanings of "impurity" and "paganism," was adopted in the historical context of slavery to describe this community. Initially, it rather denoted a social status than an ethnicity. Today, the term „țigăni” still retains strong negative connotations and is often associated with derogatory stereotypes and stigmatization in various cultures. In contrast, the term "rom" is preferred by many community members, including in the Romani language and sometimes in Romanian, to reflect a more positive and inclusive identity. However, there is no unanimous consensus among the Roma community regarding the exclusive use of this term. Some accept and embrace the use of the term „țigăni” to identify themselves. In conclusion, the term „rom” is officially adopted in national and European contexts, but the diversity of perspectives underscores the complexity and sensitivity of discussions regarding Roma identity and representation.<sup>36</sup>

In Romania, the Roma community preserves its cultural and economic identity through the practice of various traditional crafts. The study conducted by „K Consulting Management and Coordination – Bucharest” identified 14 Roma tribes<sup>37</sup> that continue to practice traditional crafts in rural areas and makeshift workshops. Among these professions are silversmiths, cauldron makers, coppersmiths, hat makers, bricklayers, florists, hammock makers, weavers, musicians, spoon-makers, miners, weavers, and tinsmiths. These crafts not only reflect the exceptional skills of the Roma but also contribute to the preservation of cultural identity in the contemporary context.

Cluj County, located in north-western Romania, hosts a diverse Roma community that contributes to the local cultural and economic heritage through their traditional crafts. The album created by Tamás Szabó and József Both provides a detailed picture of the diversity of crafts in this county, such as weaving, woodworking, metalworking, and the music of musicians. These activities not only reflect the talent and skill of craftsmen but also their significant contribution to the cultural and economic identity of the region.

Despite their cultural and economic importance, traditional crafts of the Roma face various challenges in the current socio-economic context. Industrialization and modernization have led to the decline of some traditional professions such as blacksmithing,

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<sup>36</sup> Matei Petre, „Romi sau țigani. Etnonimele –istoria unei neînțelegeri” Istvan Horvath și Lucian Nastasa, *Rom sau Țigăni - Dilemele unui etnonim în spațiul românesc*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura „Institutul pentru Studiarea problemelor Minorităților Naționale”, 2012, pp. 27-28.

<sup>37</sup> Romano Butiq, *Loc.cit.*

while integration into the labor market remains difficult due to discrimination and administrative limitations. However, efforts to conserve and promote these crafts are crucial for maintaining cultural identity and diversity in the traditional craftsmanship heritage of the Roma community in Romania.<sup>38</sup>

Chapter VI of the research explores the complexity of the Roma community through the lens of customs and material and immaterial cultural heritage. The Roma community is conceptualized as a complex system where each family functions as an autonomous entity, akin to a micro-society. Central to this structure is patriarchy, where men hold primary authority, managing financial resources and making crucial decisions. Codes of conduct are established by the head of the family, and each member's position in the family hierarchy determines their level of authority, highlighting male power.

Clans are distinct entities within the Roma community, serving as reproductive groups that regulate marital relationships to prevent incest, and as social groups based on kinship relations and common traditions. Membership in a clan is determined not only by blood ties but also by adherence to common cultural norms and values. The intricate structure of the Roma community reflects not only social organization but also political and economic authority based on ancestral traditions and a shared understanding of cultural values.

The first subsection explores the concepts of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. National cultural heritage encompasses a vast collection of shared memories, elements of cultural heritage, and fundamental values for society. In Romania, Law No. 182 of November 25, year 2000, protects the national movable cultural heritage, including archaeological artifacts, historical documents, artworks, ethnographic objects, and others, all bearing witness to the evolution of society and its contribution to the world heritage. UNESCO emphasizes the importance of intangible cultural heritage, which includes traditions, practices, and artifacts transmitted and valued by communities or individuals, essential for cultural identity and social cohesion.

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<sup>38</sup> Mălina Voicu, Raluca Popescu „Nașterea și căsătoria la populația de romi“, Revista *Calitatea Vieții*, nr. XVII, 2006, p. 264.

The second subsection details traditions related to life milestones within the Roma community. Marriage, for instance, is not just a union between two individuals but a complex manifestation of community identity and social cohesion. Ritual practices such as "nail reading" and "children's oath" underscore the importance of magical traditions and the supernatural in Roma culture. Wedding ceremonies involve the entire community and reflect solidarity and equality within it, contrary to gender-based division of labor in daily life. These traditions not only reflect cultural identity but also contribute to strengthening social ties and ancestral customs.<sup>39</sup>

In Roma culture, marriage is a pivotal moment marked by significant traditions and rituals. The marriage process begins with a proposal from the groom's parents to the bride's family, followed by discussions and negotiations. It is noteworthy that unlike other Roma communities, the custom of selling girls is not practiced; instead, the groom's family provides a dowry based on economic capabilities and social status. The marriage itself spans two days and two nights, following a well-defined schedule. This includes separate celebrations at the homes of the groom and bride, where joy is celebrated and the families and friends of the future spouses meet. A notable moment is the presentation of money by the groom's father for the couple's prosperity, which is then distributed among the guests as a symbol of generosity and the joy brought by the event.<sup>40</sup>

In Roma culture, funeral ceremonies are solemn and deeply significant, characterized by respect for family privacy and the avoidance of practices like bed sheet games to preserve the sacredness of the moment. Despite some differing traditions, respect for the integrity and reputation of the bride remains a central concern in the community.

Birth within the Roma community is greeted with joy and ceremony, and the arrival of a boy is particularly appreciated as a continuation of the bloodline and assurance of clan perpetuation. Pregnant women are guided to avoid negative influences and focus on the beautiful aspects of life during pregnancy. After birth, the child is greeted with symbolic gestures of protection and prosperity, reflecting the community's desire for a blessed and fortunate life for the new family member.

In Roma culture, baptism has two main variants: „bolimos,” involving a religious baptism according to Christian traditions, and "ground baptism" and "fire baptism," which are specific rites of Roma culture reflecting a deep connection with nature and ancestral traditions. These ceremonies are essential for blessing and protecting children from the

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 87.

<sup>40</sup> Delia Grigore, *Op cit.* p. 106.

beginning of their lives. Overall, life within the Roma community is marked by a series of rituals and traditions reflecting profound respect for life cycles, cultural identity, and values passed down through generations.<sup>41</sup>

Within the Gabor community, a distinct branch of the Roma population, key events in their lives, such as birth and associated rituals, are considered fundamental to social stability and prestige. The birth of a boy in the Gabor family is viewed as proof of masculinity and potency, conferring special status to the family.

In Gabor culture, the farewell to the deceased is accompanied by musical rhythms and secular songs, performed exclusively with the voice, without the use of musical instruments. These songs are meant to pay final respects to the departed and to cheer them for the last time. The choice of the first song is usually made by the closest person present. The funeral ceremony takes place over a single night, and the following morning, participants return home. During the last day's gathering of the ceremony, all present pay their final respects to the deceased and acknowledge their value to the community. Forgiveness plays a central role in this stage, with each close relative's name mentioned, even in their absence. Another significant moment of the ceremony is the knocking of three nails into the coffin, a sacred ritual symbolizing the conclusion of the funeral ceremony and providing protection and safety for the soul of the deceased in the afterlife. It is essential to mention that in Gabor culture, constant vigilance over the deceased is necessary to prevent curses from affecting the family. Additionally, the specific traditions and beliefs of this community strongly prohibit performing autopsies, considering it could disturb the peace and tranquility of the deceased's soul.<sup>42</sup>

### **The Death**

In Romani culture, the concept of death is treated with profound seriousness and is surrounded by an aura of mystery and reserve. Similar in the other religious and ethnic groups, Romani people conceive death as the passage of the soul from the physical world to the spiritual realm. This transition is accompanied by numerous beliefs and traditions rooted in their religious beliefs and specific culture. Death is considered a taboo subject within the Romani community, and discussions about it are avoided or treated with great reserve. It is believed that mentioning death or related aspects, such as misfortune or bad luck, can attract misfortune and calamity upon the family. In the Romani worldview, there exists a strong duality, such as between good and evil, light and darkness, God and the Devil. This duality

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 106.

<sup>42</sup> Sala Gabriel, *Op.cit.* p. 66-67.

is also reflected in how death and the afterlife are perceived. Avoiding mentioning the name of a deceased person to prevent calling forth the spirit and using euphemistic terms to refer to death are common practices within the community, as it is believed they could attract malevolent spirits or disturb the deceased's soul's peace. Additionally, Romani culture includes a series of signs and premonitions associated with death, interpreted as announcements of imminent tragic events. These signs are often observed in dreams and are interpreted according to the specific traditions and beliefs of the Romani community.<sup>43</sup>

Funeral ceremonies within the Romani community represent a solemn and profound moment, rich in tradition and significance. These ceremonies mark the passage of a person into the afterlife and are characterized by specific practices and rituals that reflect respect and devotion towards the deceased and their families. A central aspect of funeral ceremonies is the preparation of the deceased's body for burial. This process involves dressing the deceased in new and well-maintained clothing, intended to offer dignity in the eyes of other community members. Additionally, significant personal items are placed alongside the deceased as a tribute to the life they lived. During the funeral ceremony, community members gather to express their respect and condolences to the deceased and to offer mutual support. Lamenting songs and prayers reflect the depth of sorrow and hope for the eternal rest of the departed soul. Following the burial, the community mobilizes to provide support and assistance to the grieving families. Solidarity and unity are central aspects during these difficult times, with community members actively involved in providing aid and sharing stories and memories of the deceased. Funeral ceremonies in Romani culture are a tribute to the lives and memories of the deceased and an expression of solidarity and compassion within the community. These ceremonies serve as moments of commemoration and healing, highlighting the importance of traditions and human connections in the face of loss and grief.<sup>44</sup>

In Romani culture, there is a ritual known as "exit through the back door," which is an essential part of funeral ceremonies. This ritual involves taking the deceased's body out of the house through the back door. The purpose of this gesture is to prevent the soul of the deceased from returning home and remaining attached to the earthly world. Another important tradition involves placing coins on the path to the cemetery and even over the deceased's coffin during the burial. This practice aims to ensure that the soul of the deceased will have financial resources for its journey to the afterlife. It is noteworthy that all aspects

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<sup>43</sup> Delia Grigore, *Op cit.* pp. 114-115.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem* pp. 116-117.



of the funeral ceremony are exclusively managed by non-Romani members of the community, as in Romani belief, the deceased's body is considered impure, and it is necessary for the responsibility of funeral rituals to be undertaken by those outside the community. In some Romani communities, there is also a practice of burning personal items of the deceased as a form of releasing the soul or purifying objects from the negative energies associated with death. Additionally, women play a significant role in funeral ceremonies, lifting the deceased's body from the coffin and sprinkling it with holy water or alcohol according to their community's traditions and beliefs. These aspects highlight the complexity and depth of funeral traditions in Romani culture and underscore their importance in commemorating the deceased and bidding farewell to them. <sup>45</sup>

Funeral rituals practiced in Romani culture are deeply rooted in tradition and are designed to facilitate the passage of the deceased's soul to the afterlife and to provide emotional support to grieving family members. These rituals reflect not only respect for the deceased but also the fundamental values and beliefs of the Romani community regarding life and death. One of these important rituals is to remove all objects from the room that could hinder the dying soul from following its journey. This symbolic gesture is meant to provide peace and facilitate the transition to the afterlife. Additionally, the ritual of mutual forgiveness is an expression of the desire to release the dying soul from any regrets or remorse. Through this forgiveness, both the dying person and the grieving family members can find inner peace and accept separation more easily. The belief that the soul of the deceased remains tied to the family for a period after death reflects the strong bonds and the importance of family relationships in Romani culture. This belief emphasizes that the process of separation is gradual and that the family plays an essential role in preparing the deceased's soul for the journey to the afterlife. Furthermore, the idea that dying individuals feel the approach of death and bid farewell to their loved ones adds a profound emotional dimension to these funeral rituals. These beliefs and practices illustrate the respect and sensitivity of the Romani community towards the process of transition and interpersonal relationships. Overall, funeral rituals in Romani culture are a complex amalgamation of meanings and symbols that reflect the wisdom and traditions of this community in the face of death and grief. <sup>46</sup>

In Gabor culture, death is a crucial moment with profound and complex significance, bringing the community together in a unique and solemn manner. Funeral rituals occupy a

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem* p.118.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem* pp. 119-120.

central place in this tradition, serving to mark the passage of the deceased's soul and to strengthen bonds among the living. The funeral ceremony spans three days and three nights, preparing for burial on the fourth day. During these days, the family and community gather to express respect and offer condolences. The preparation of the deceased for burial is done with great care and respect for tradition. The deceased is dressed in specific and traditional attire, with the colors carefully chosen based on various criteria, including age and social status. The conduct of the funeral ceremony is supervised by a designated person responsible for ensuring the proper conduct of the event. They ensure that all specific customs and traditions are observed, and the funeral procession proceeds according to ritual. A notable aspect of Gabor tradition is their categorical refusal to accept autopsies in the case of a community member's death. This attitude stems from their deep-seated beliefs and specific values, which highly value the preservation of the deceased's body integrity and the maintenance of ancestral traditions. Thus, death becomes a moment of deep solemnity and respect in Gabor culture, where the community comes together to bid farewell to the departed and to pay them a final tribute.<sup>47</sup>

In Gabor culture, the separation from the deceased is accompanied by musical rhythms and secular songs performed exclusively with the voice, without the use of musical instruments. These songs are meant to give a final tribute to the departed and to cheer them for the last time. The choice of the first song usually falls to the closest person present. The funeral ceremony takes place over the course of a single night, and the following morning, the participants return home. During the meeting on the last day of the ceremony, all present pay their final respects to the deceased and acknowledge their value within the community. Forgiveness plays a central role in this stage, with each name of the deceased's loved ones mentioned, even in their absence. Another important moment of the ceremony is the striking of three nails into the coffin, a ritual considered sacred, symbolizing the conclusion of the funeral ceremony and offering protection and safety to the deceased's soul in the afterlife. It is essential to mention that in Gabor culture, constant vigilance over the deceased is necessary to prevent any curse from affecting the family. Furthermore, the specific traditions and beliefs of this community firmly prohibit performing autopsies, considering that this could disturb the peace and tranquility of the deceased's soul.<sup>48</sup>

In Romani culture, the family plays a central role and forms the foundation of individual and collective identity. The traditional structure is patriarchal, but each member

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<sup>47</sup> Sala Gabriel, *Op cit.* pp. 74-75.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem* p.75.

has well-defined roles: men are the heads of the family and provide economic subsistence, while women manage the household and social relationships, also contributing to the family's income through the sale of products. Reciprocity is a fundamental value, evident in practices such as marriage, where the exchange of goods and money between families not only consolidates the union between two individuals but also between communities. Family relationships are diverse and complex, including blood relations, affinities, and alliances through godparents and godchildren. The family extends beyond consanguine members to encompass the entire network of relationships that support the traditions and cultural values passed down through generations. Solidarity, respect, and the preservation of traditions are fundamental to social cohesion and the maintenance of identity within the Romani community.

Research highlights the importance of interpreting results within the context of preserving and evolving Romani cultural heritage. It is worth noting that this research focused on two distinct cultural dimensions within the community: the preservation of traditions and integration into the mainstream society. By using appropriate research methods, including document analysis, participant observation, and interviews, a comprehensive understanding of the studied phenomenon was achieved. The results highlighted the variability of cultural adaptation among the Romani community in Cluj County, categorizing communities into three distinct categories.

The advanced theory developed by Magyari-Vincze Eniko outlines a series of significant obstacles in establishing a positive identity within the Romani community. These barriers include issues such as poverty, criminality, and poor living conditions, which in turn contribute to their marginalization concerning access to adequate education and employment opportunities. These aspects are considered crucial for achieving a dignified life and developing a proper sense of self-respect.<sup>49</sup>

Firstly, conservative communities are distinguished by their firm commitment to preserving cultural traditions and values, including the Romani language, traditional crafts, and customs passed down through generations. A notable example is the Gabor Romani community, which stands out for its efforts to perpetuate cultural identity.

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<sup>49</sup> Eniko Magyari-Vincze, *Excluderea socială la intersecția dintre gen, etnicitate și clasă - O privire din perspectiva sănătății reproducerii la femeile rome*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura „Fundației pentru Studii Europene“, 2006, p. 88.

Secondly, evolving communities maintain certain distinctive elements of Romani culture, such as the use of the Romani language within the family and the practice of traditional customs, but are affected by cultural changes and the influences of the majority.

In contrast, assimilated communities relinquish distinct traits of Romani culture in favor of adopting predominant values and traditions. These communities often experience significant challenges in balancing cultural preservation and adaptation to mainstream society.

In conclusion, the results emphasize the dynamic nature of cultural preservation and adaptation among Romani communities in Cluj County, Romania. These insights provide valuable insights for developing educational programs, social interventions, and policies aimed at fostering cultural identity, promoting social cohesion, and addressing the specific needs of Romani communities.

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