

# ROMANI STUDIES

Continuing *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*

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used the fear of massive east–west migration to justify action on and attention to the Romani plight. Thus, as an afterthought to Klímová-Alexander's book, one might be tempted to conclude that the most effective Romani lobbying of the UN was not, in fact, performed by the (intellectual officers of the) IRU, but triggered indirectly through the activities of a separate, much more militant and pro-active, Romani grassroots movement; and that through the Braham report the UN did, in fact, end up acting as a major promoter, however unintentionally, elevating the position of the Romani situation on the agenda of European politics.



**Antiziganismus und Sozialarbeit.** Gernot Haupt. Berlin: Frank & Timme. 2006. 343 pp. ISBN 3-86596-076-6.

Reviewed by Lorely French

The fear in Western Europe of mass migration of Roma from Eastern Europe has given rise to heightened anti-Roma sentiments and politics in all of Europe. This book sets out to investigate major elements of 'antigypsism', or, in German, *Antiziganismus*, within a social-work theoretical framework. Such an approach incorporates a vast body of research from the fields of history, sociology, politics, pedagogy, medicine, and psychology. Therein lies the strength of the study, namely, in its extensive coverage of existing research on the Roma from multifaceted viewpoints.

This multidisciplinary approach reflects the widely diverse background of the author. Gernot Haupt studied German studies, theology, political science, and intercultural pedagogy. He is editor of the newspaper *Sozialarbeit in Kärnten* ('Social Work in Carinthia'), and has for many years been the administrator of a Roma project in Rumania through the *Institut für Soziologie* ('Institute of Sociology'). His knowledge and experience make him hesitant to embrace any single viewpoint without thorough research and examination. He clearly takes a critical approach to earlier methods in 'tsiganology', or 'Gypsy studies', because of the historical failure of such methods to include the perspectives of the socially oppressed Roma themselves. The first chapters in the book present prime examples of such a failure, namely, the attempt to define the identity of Roma from the outside through the promotion of essentialist characteristics and citation of impersonal statistics. In determining Roma identity along the lines of race or ethnicity, scholars, politicians, social workers, among others, exclude Roma as 'the other' from societal systems. Such a forced identity

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formation from the outside has caused the Roma themselves to resist such definitions, preferring instead to portray the diversity among the many groups that form the larger collective.

The analytical framework of the study then investigates the methods of exclusion and inclusion that have played a role in Roma identity. Exclusion became most apparent under the Nazi regime and then under Antonescu in Rumania. But these are only two extreme examples in an extensive history that Haupt documents thoroughly, including expulsion in the Middle Ages; repression and attempts at assimilation since the fifteenth century; recent pogroms; deportation of asylum-seekers in contemporary times; enforced conditions of poverty, low-wage work, sub-standard housing, abysmal health care, repressed language and culture; and discriminatory political policies and public attitudes. While Roma have been excluded for centuries from the systems that have formulated their identities, they are now expected to integrate themselves successfully into the European Union. Such inclusion will not be automatic, as this book proves, but rather demands a reciprocal relationship in which the voices and actions of the Roma themselves assume a major role.

In the end, the author advocates a social-work approach that empowers the Roma through self-organization at the individual, local, and group levels. He presents some examples of how this is already happening, such as in the Roma project in Oberwart (Austria), the many Roma-controlled newspapers and media projects in Rumania, the efforts in Rumania to subsidize small Romani farm projects that help with food production, and work projects that help combat unemployment and poverty in areas with concentrated Romani populations.

Given Haupt's own experience with social work projects in Rumania, the reader might hope for the inclusion of more qualitative, first-hand reports on such projects in his book. While the final sections of the book are devoted to the above-mentioned successful social work projects, the study does stay largely on the theoretical level. This focus, of course, does not make the study any less meritorious. The thoroughness of the research and the interdisciplinary quality of the investigation make this book a welcome addition to the field of Romani studies. Haupt has indicated elsewhere that he is engaged in a long-term, more qualitative, study that will illuminate better the social work in which he is actively engaged. He has, for example, posted on the internet earlier observations on his work and study trip in 2002 (Haupt 2002). Moreover, he has written a more recent report on his interactions with Roma in Rumania in April 2006 (Haupt 2006). If he continues to produce such meticulous, thoughtful research as contained in his book, then scholars of Romani studies can look forward to noteworthy studies in which theory manifests itself in practice.

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