



# Romani History: Methods, Sources, Ethics

## Call for Papers

Workshop of the Prague Forum for the Romani Histories  
at the Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences

Villa Lana, Prague, 8-9 June 2022

### **Partners:**

Vanderbilt University

Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences

Romani Studies at the Central European Studies Department, Charles University

**Organizers:** Ari Joskowitz, Kateřina Čapková, Martin Fotta, Helena Sadílková

On the sixth anniversary of the founding of the Prague Forum for Romani Histories, this workshop sets out to take stock of our collective efforts to promote the academic study of Romani history. Until recently research of Romani histories stood in the shadow of the work ethnologists, philologists, musicologists, anthropologists, and sociologists have done in Romani Studies. In the last decade, however, new projects have contributed significantly to the creation of an emergent field of Romani history. The workshop explores how research on the Romani past can illuminate and enrich broader issues in historical research. At the same time, it seeks to interrogate the methodological, ethical, and practical challenges of historical research in the context of Romani studies.

The workshop wants to focus in particular on the responsibilities Romani and non-Romani historians have in regard to Romani narratives and the limits of their ability to address them; how academic work can be understood in terms of social capital and gatekeeping when studying populations that have historically been deprived of avenues for economic and social mobility; ethical questions about the use of private documents and oral history research in case of people who face discrimination and state surveillance; and finally the ability of the digital humanities to either mitigate or exacerbate inequalities in access to information and privacy rights.

To explore new paths and persistent challenges in the field, we ask for the submission of papers that deal with concrete examples from Romani history (irrespective of period or region) that allow for further methodological reflection. It has become a truism in the field that it is difficult to discover unmediated access to Romani voices in archives. We would like to explore these erasures in the context of larger discussions in other history subfields about silenced voices, unacknowledged methodological assumptions, and the history of archives. Contributions can also reflect on the history of historiography and the role historians play in the complicated politics of Romani representation.

The following questions reflect some of the concerns that motivate our call:

- How does Romani history relate to other historical sub-fields? What is the role of academic history in Romani studies? How does it relate to other disciplines?
- How did historians and how should historians think of their relationship to the subjects of their history? Does the writing of history express the uneven power relations between the mostly non-Romani historians and the Romani communities they describe? What are the challenges the Romani historians face in the mostly non-Romani academic world? What are historical strategies and best practices in other fields that might address such issues?
- What is the relationship between Romani history and Holocaust studies? Since research on Nazi crimes is the only subject where academic historians dominate in the larger field of Romani studies, how does this influence our understanding of Romani history?
- How does the study of the Romani past contribute to various and competing attempts to rethink the history of Europe, the Americas, or the Mediterranean? How does Romani history address recent attempts to think about the Atlantic world, the imperial nature of many self-defined nation states, and the legacies of Europe's land-based empires? How does Romani history reflect the turns and shifts within the discipline at large?
- Which normative questions emerge in the practice of Romani history compared to related subfields? Does it matter, for example, that researchers who conduct interviews compete with those who pay interviewees (more) for their willingness to talk to them? Do we need more concrete guidelines for ethical conduct in Romani history? Does Romani history need to deal differently from other subfields in European history with issues of anonymization, privacy, and digitization?
- How does the relationship between historians and archivists shape the field? What is the role of historians as users and creators of archival collections and as lobbyists for their funding?
- Which gatekeepers shape the practice of Romani history? How do different funding structures and ways to organize scholarship in different national contexts shape Romani studies? What is the role of policy-making and activism for the practice of Romani history?
- How do debates on the constructed nature of ethnic categories and controversies surrounding nomenclature open or close avenues for research?

- What is the institutional framework for Romani histories research and does the history of this research infrastructure help us to understand some of the challenges of today's situation of this subfield?

Please send an abstract of your paper (approx. 300 words) and your CV until 15 April 2022 to [romanihistories@usd.cas.cz](mailto:romanihistories@usd.cas.cz). Applicants will be informed by 24 April 2022.

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