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Beas: ethnic mobilisation and identity

Abstracts

Based on empirical research and interviews the author is focusing on the paradox phenomenon that while the ethnic mobility of the Beas reinforce their language use, that in its turn becomes a major limiting force in the interrelationship between Gypsies and non-Gypsies

"(...)It is important to present Gypsy¹ culture as an entity in order to create the Gypsy concept of nation and make it acceptable in Hungary, i.e. to make it an independent, autonomous culture and its ceasing to be regarded upon as a socially based one. It is also evident that the Roma nation concept is a part of Roma emancipation because if a non-Roma nation-concept develops –as I have explained earlier² - the concept of Gypsy social concept remains that means that Gypsy is who is poor, jobless, who cannot adapt to the actual new requirements."³

Though the above train of thoughts may be clear to many, 'Gypsy nation concept' and 'Roma nation forming' could sound rather 'strange' at least at first.⁴ The present paper tries to provide data to

¹ 'Gypsy' and 'Roma' are synonyms and this is how the terms will be treated in the paper.

² The informant explained Roma nation concept : The Gypsies could develop a nation concept on political basis where the major aspect is not the language, it accepts that it is a multi-language community, nation and consists of several special sub-cultures, differing from another. This kind of nation concept is different from the Hungarian nation concept, and the nation concept of nation states that there are several languages and one culture – a European common culture; in this case it would be a nation not specified by state borders but that they are Gypsies living in Europe and Gypsies living in Hungary.'

³ The quotation comes from *Laci* who is a Beas man socially active and ethnically mobile. He lives in a town where he is vice-manager of a library, folklore researcher, writes poetry and is also a musician.

⁴ 'Roma nation' may seem a paradoxon especially that they live in diaspora , they have no territory, and in the case of nations territory is always in the focus 'state, home country'.

understand the concept of Roma nation forming based on the results of a cultural anthropological fieldwork. The focus of the research⁵ is the analysis of ethnic mobility and the ethnic/national elements of Beas Gypsy identity.

I.1. Gypsy identities

Before treating the ethnic and national Roma identity it is worth discussing some characteristics of 'Gypsy identity'. Identity is the product of social categorization developing along the border of 'we' and 'they'; it is built on the stock of category elements of society and culture, especially those an individual is confronted by (Bindorffer 2001: 19). It follows that categorization by the majority influences the Gypsy identity, everywhere representing minority. The category of Gypsy is a product of reflection in the social mind through complicated historical processes, a false reflection in most of the cases, accepted involuntarily though realistically (Zsolt Csalog quoted in Prónai 2000: 12).

The essence of this false reflection is that it regards Gypsies as a nation, a homogeneous entity (Prónai 1995: 8). According to the American linguist, Ian Hancock, the connecting common aspect among the 'transnational' or rather 'transcultural' Gypsy ethnic groups is the knowledge that what it is they are not, that the Romani are not non-Gypsies (Hancock 2004: 20). Albeit the people described as Gypsies and non-Gypsies do not form groups that could be unambiguously defined so that reciprocally would exclude each other (Ladányi-Szelényi: 2000: 186). In the make up of Gypsy identity the border between Gypsy – non-Gypsy plays a specially important role, enhanced by the cultural elements creating the borders (cf. Barth 1996).

In this knowledge we can agree with the British scholar, Judith Okely, who claims that the Gypsy culture is never created or changed independently but always is in opposition to the dominant society surrounding the individual Gypsy groups (Prónai 1999:157). Through this process we can find various Gypsy identities and their representations, the result of adjusting to the surrounding social and

⁵ Quotations from the informants are in Italics between quotation marks, the names of the informants appear also in Italics.

economic environment. The identity in the intimacy of the family can be quite different from the one shown publicly. Péter Szuhay is of the opinion that the ethnic affiliation of the persons considered to be Gypsies represents an ambiguous system where identity has an inward and outward aspect (Szuhay 2001:13). Some concrete examples may be of help orientating in the maze of Gypsy identities.

In her book on Gypsy fortune-tellers Okely has come to the conclusion though the Gypsies themselves do not believe in fortune-telling, they consider it a gainful occupation as long as the members of the majority society adhere to their peculiar ideas about Gypsies. Thus Gypsies exploit the situation to the advantage of their own community (Prónai 1999:158-159).

During her fieldwork among Gypsies in Andalucia Nancy Thede observed that certain groups when realizing the possible alternatives of success among non-Gypsies, consciously hid their ethnic identity in certain situations and revealed it in others. (Horváth 2006:390).

The Gypsies in the outskirts of Paris have developed similar strategies to the Gitanos of Andalucia and reveal their ethnic identity only incidentally. Patrick Williams calls it 'invisibility' and said that it was their art of taking advantage of favourable situations and that was their main strength (Williams 1996:71).

So far the explanation for relationship between Gypsy minority and non-Gypsy majority has been given that could be generalized for every Gypsy community, since being Gypsy presupposes the presence of non-Gypsy majority.

Non-Gypsy people usually form nation states and these provide the territory for the Gypsies' everyday life. In addition to the social category there appears another identity forming feature that of national socialization operated by the specific agents of socialization (schools, media, churches, army) of the national society (Csepeli 1992:111). This aspect may result in multiple-identity in the minorities without national status (Bindorffer 2001:172).

At the end of the 19th c. Henrik Wislocki explained that the Gypsy musicians could not but be influenced by the proud, generous and free [Hungarian] national genius that inspired them by the spirit of patriotism (Wislocki 1893:37). Today national socialization operates with a less romantic approach but probably more effectively e.g. through the educational system.

Michael Stewart noted that the Hungarian Roma he knew claimed to be Hungarians, that in certain context they are a Hungarian race, nonetheless stressing their being different with a different way of life (Neményi - Zádori 2000).

In connection to the Gypsy identity two identity-forming features have been considered. One is social categorization along the borderline of Gypsy – non-Gypsy, the other is national socialization by the nation state where the Gypsy communities are living. Both aspects can be traced back to the majority – minority relationship that has resulted from the Diaspora nature of the Gypsy population.

Another aspect of Diaspora existence is that the Gypsy category is heterogeneous i.e. that the various Gypsy communities usually possess their individual Gypsy identity too. The latter feature of identity will also be treated in the paper.

I.2. Ethnic and national identity

Since both belonging to an ethnic group and to a nation too results in a kind of collective identity and for the sake of comprehension and exactness it is necessary to explain the difference between the two. It would seem simple to define nation and ethnic group and also to indicate how these will be presented further. However, it is not as simple as that; therefore the theories of well known authors will be summed up in way of introduction.

The Norwegian anthropologist, Fredrik Barth, explained ethnicity as the social organization of cultural differences and as such its being the natural outcome of it. Thus ethnic identity appearing in inter-group relationships contains both the customs depending on origin and the memories of the past containing value judgements and prejudices about self and others (Sárkány 2000:97).

The development of ethnic groups is a pre-industrialist and primordial organism based on origins (Bindorffer 2001: 21), one of those human communities that were created through historical developments independent of human wishes (Bromlej 1976:32).

It is worth considering the question how nations were created. Though there are countless theories, most authors agree that nation is a modern concept and the conditions of the features of a ‘modern’

state e.g. bureaucracy, capitalism, secularisation and democracy are necessary to its creation (Smith 2004:40). According to Clifford Geertz modern nation represents human constructions turned into natural facts that were made concentrated, homogeneous and essential (Geertz 1998:26). This is the point where ethnicity and nation are connected because in order to develop nation into a natural fact (nationalism)⁶, the elements of ethnic lore (tradition of origins, history, etc.) are necessary.

To quote Barth's fitting remark, the ideas of nationalism are connected to some ethnic identities. Nationalism is pleased to be identified with ethnic identity since the latter has the historical justification nationalism is usually lacking (Hobsbawm 1993: 21).

Thus ethnicity is a primordial development, each person is born into it, while nation is a modern construction, an object of peoples' conviction, voluntary adherence and identification, loyalty and solidarity (Bindorffer 2001: 29). The relationship of the two can be explained through the analysis of various forms of nationalism.

1.3. The Roma creation of nation, the Roma nation

Benedict Anderson declared that nation-ness is the most universal legitimate value of present political life. In the past 15 years since the first edition of his book globalization has not suppressed nation and nationalism that has its renaissance e.g. in East Europe. It is increasingly evident that nation and globalization are not exclusive concepts, as nation itself is basically the product of global or regional contacts (Balogh 1993:21).

According to Craig Colhun the difference between nation and an ethnic group is that in the case of the first the right to an autonomous state or at least a kind of autonomy within it is accepted (Colhun 2004:358). This context explains why it was that the Gypsies having

⁶ According to the 'general' definition by Anthony D. Smith nationalism could be defined as the theory about the autonomy, unity and identity of a group where the members consider their group to be real or potential nation (smith 1995:43). Nationalism can be understood as an attempt at the creation or continuous reinforcement, new definition of nation. Therefore the term 'nationalism' will be applied in the sense 'nation forming'.

recognized that they could reach their basic human rights easier by the help of their ethnicity, the idea of creating a kind of 'own national concept' arose in order to enhance their possibilities and to assert their interests (Fosztó 2003:102).

In their essay Nicolae Gheorghe and Thomas Acton describe the special difficulties of creating national culture, that the great historical and cultural variety of the Roma groups makes formalization and codification extremely difficult, though it would be necessary for the purposes of education and propagation as well as giving it equal footing with the culture of other ethnic groups maybe even with accepted national cultures (Gheorghe - Acton 1996.).

The Roma national movements started in East European countries in the form of various ethnically based self-organizations in the first half of the 20th c. These initiatives – cultural and political organizations, clubs, periodicals – did not cross the given borders of states but served as bases of reference for the present national discourse of the Roma (cf. Binder 2007).

After World War II. (WWII) and the Roma holocaust (pharrajimos) the East

European socialist state systems treated Gypsies as socially handicapped groups of society, there was no possibility to express higher level ethnic identity. International Roma movement on the other hand started in Western Europe. The developments have been described in the works of Jean-Pierre Liégeois (Liégeois 2002.) and Angus Fraser (Fraser 2002.).

Without any attempt at completeness, the first Roma world congress (in Romani language: Komiteto Lumniako Romano) should be mentioned. The participants rejected the earlier names: *Cigányi/Zigan, Gitan, Gypsy* and *Roma (Romani)* has been accepted instead. There was the International Roma Committee founded and the first steps made to formulate the concept of Roma nationhood on cultural basis. It was resolved to standardize the Romani language and agreed upon the Roma national anthem ("*Gelem, gelem*") and the use of a national flag (Liégeois 2002: 191).

The main idea was reunification towards creating a Roma nation. The majority of Roma nationalists' concept was that they had arrived to Europe as one people and they had to melt into one people again (Hancock 1990:256).

The creation of national culture has played an important role in the development of nations especially if they were not in the position of forming an independent state.⁷ It is also true for the Gypsies who following the pattern of nation creation have established their mythology, genealogy, the place and time of their origin. Roma follow the East European nation-forming recipe of an ethno-cultural model to create their own nation's legitimate basis.

The foundation of national culture precedes the political activity in the Roma nation-creating process. The common language, common sense of history are in the foreground but national arts, literature, music dance, etc. also have important functions as mediators (for the developments in Hungary cf. Binder 2006).

I.4. Who are the Beas Gypsies?

In 1959 Kamill Erdős wrote that these Gypsies usually carve troughs and other wooden artefacts, they instead of the Gypsy language they speak the 'Transylvanian', i.e. Banat dialect of Romanian. Their culture is closely connected to the Romanian culture (Erdős 1989:50).

Today Act 1993/I. on the rights of national and ethnic minorities accepts the Beas language as an independent minority language. Politically it is treated as a uniform language, but experts have recognized three main dialects 'Agyelan', 'Muncsan' and 'Ticsan'. Since 1990 the Beas language became institutionalized, its literature enriched. The dialect standardization was based on is the Argyelan dialect⁸ the one of the three used by the majority of speakers (besides Hungary it is spoken in Croatia and Serbia too).

The name probably comes from Romanian *băieș* 'miner', may be in reference to their old occupation as gold penners. The inform-

⁷ Emil Niederhauser explains in connection with the nation forming processes of people that usually it the 'cultural phase' comes first followed by the 'political phase' because 'small' nations usually were the subjects of great, dynastic Empires (Habsburg, Turkish, Russian) and at the time of their 'awakening' they had no chance of a independent statehood (Niederhauser 1977).

⁸ After standardization the Beas language keeps being going out of use from everyday use. Where it is still alive, it has developed special functions, it is used in intimate family situations while in every other situation Hungarian is used. This is what the authorities call diglossia.

ants of the present study referred to themselves as *Beas*, *Beas Gypsy*, sometimes adding ‘you know, trough-carver Gypsy’.

In general *Beas* can be described as a Gypsy/Roma ethnic group speaking an archaic Romanian dialect (and also Hungarian) practising certain ancient occupations (wood carving). These description of course serve merely as a framework to a deeper understanding of the individual communities.

I.5. Ethnic mobility and ‘Gypsying’

The last introductory part the elements of form and content of ethnic mobility will be presented. In its content ethnic mobility is a process during which the groups form themselves along certain ethnic identity characteristics to reach their goals (Bárány 2003:73).

It is referred to as ‘Gypsying’ by the informants. In everyday parlance the term is fairly pejorative; *Julika*, the president of the Gypsy Central Self-government explained it as representation of interests; those people who are dealing with Gypsy matters are ‘Gypsying’. Thus it seems that ‘Gypsying’ denotes the activity of Gypsies participating in Roma ethnic mobility. Adopting the usage of the field the word ‘Gypsying’ will be used in this sense that is going to be useful in some of the interviews.

II. Topics

The temporal, areal and human dimensions of national existence are revealed in topics for the members of the nation (Csepeli 1990:60). Below the national and ethnic knowledge of identity will be discussed in major topics, analysing what thoughts and relations have occurred during the interviews, talks and observations⁹.

⁹ Field work started in winter 200/2006 and continued shorter and longer stays from spring to autumn 2006 but practically it has been still continuing if only with less intensity. All the informants were *Beas*, thus affiliation is marked only if the person is not *Beas*. It was the aim to talk to persons belonging to various walk of life, as it was expected that persons in different social position in ethnic and social mobility they might have different attitudes toward the Roma nation , to their own

II.1. Historical identity and mentality

National history is one of the most important ingredients of a so-called cultural nation model in the development towards nationhood. It sums up the times spent together, the common fate of the community and the mythical past frequently shrouded in romantic cover. National history stresses the nation's values, the positive characteristics that enable the people to require their place in the world of nations.

Talk on Roma history centred around two main points: on the one hand there was the 'common' Roma history (India, wanderings, etc.) and the 'own' ethnic history of the Beas Gypsy on the other. In connection with Roma national history there was a strong line between 'Gypsying' Beas and non-'Gypsying' ones, while the past of the Beas communities was of equal importance for everybody. The latter could be important for all the informants because the characteristic 'Beas mentality' has been derived from the way of life considered traditional.

"I say that the mentality and the manners of the peoples – and I am talking about two peoples – are not the same, they are totally different. The Beas are not as temperamental as the Lovari Gypsies. The Lovari¹⁰ are more quickwitted, they always fall on their feet, they can make money of everything. They are also called moneyd Gypsies¹¹ as they were merchants. The Beas carved wooden spoons, small troughs for small change while the Lovari sold one horse for the price of three." (Tibi).¹²

Julika too could best explain Beas characteristics contrasting them with those of the Lovari "Look how [the National Gypsy Self-

Roma and Beas existence respectively. The informants did not live in the same settlements but in some villages and towns in West Hungary. On their request no mention is made either of their names or the settlements.

¹⁰ Lovari Gypsy: this is how the Beas refer to the wandering Gypsies (Romany). Other frequent synonyms are wandering Gypsies and Tinkers. The three names can be used side-by-side synonymously, as will be followed in the present paper..

¹¹ in Hungarian *lővés cigány* that is a pun on Lovari (*lővé* = slang. "mony")

¹² Tibi (35) is a musician. With his band he plays traditional music as well as 'disco music' because folk music alone would not be enough for livelihood. He also manages a Roma folk dance group and they frequently give performances at Roma events in the neighbourhood.

government] is constructed.. How many Lovari are there and how many Beas? They would not let the Beas get in. The Beas are not pushy people who would trample over others. They won't push, they prefer a quiet life; like I rather make three sure steps instead of running six because I might triple over."

Similar to *Tibi* and *Julika*, the other informants too described Beas as peaceful, diligent trough-carvers in a constant contrast with the negative characteristics of the Lovari. The contrasting character of the collective identity is not entirely surprising (Albert-Zempléni 2002: 168), but it is also interesting to see who are the social opponents of the Beas. The They transpose the negative stereotypes of the majority society to the other Gypsies of their neighbourhood thus the Beas auto-stereotypes can preserve a positive self-image (Pálos 2006:111-115).

The elements of the common Roma national history, e.g. India as the ancestral home, the question of common origin are especially interesting for the 'Gypsying' persons "*In the last couple of years, since I am interested in Gypsying, I saw and heard and know was taught that we had come from India – I agree we have come from India.*" (*Julika*). It has to be added that 4-5 years earlier when *Julika* asked questions about the Indian origin of the Roma, she did not want to believe it. Through her ethnic mobility the common Indian origin of the Gypsies has become evident for her.

The 'non-Gypsying' Beas proved to have remained sceptic about India as the common ancestral home, many of them never had heard about it. Those who were familiar with it, did not accept the theory and stressed the strong differences between Beas and non-Beas Gypsies thus denying the possibility to be 'bracketed together' with the 'Tinker Gypsies'. *Julika* has summed up why the Roma national history has little relevance to the non mobile persons of the Gypsy community: "*History. If you ask any simple Gypsy woman about history they would never come up with North America , North India etc. but would say: we came from Balatonmagyaród, or we used to live in Galambok. This is history for them. The word has a different meaning for simple people and for the 'Gypsying' ones.*"

II.2. The functions of the Beas language

From the majority Hungarian point of view both Beas and Lovari speak the Gypsy language, however, between the two ethnic groups language is the most important dividing factor. For the informants their Beas language is the defining element of their Beas identity. They explained: *“We Beas Gypsies speak the Old-Romanian language”*.

Talking about their mother tongue, they frequently mentioned the loss of function of the Beas language, its being pushed into the background; and again Lovari served as a counter example. *“Actually, my child does not speak Beas, I myself speak only broken Beas. Among the Lovari the bond is stronger. The Lovari have the chance of preserving their language”* (Tibi).

The difference between the ‘chances of survival’ of the two Gypsy languages are usually explained by survival strategies in their past, by the old ways of life. The Beas Gypsies working as wood-carvers, sometimes as day labourers lived in the neighbourhood of Hungarian villages, thus they had to use the Hungarian language, and the Beas language was no help in procuring the sources necessary for livelihood. The explanation was also given that during the socialist system there was no time and possibility to hand down the language to the younger generation.

‘Slang’ used by the Lovari during various trading transactions have been supposed to offer the greater chance for the survival of the Lovari language. With this assumption the difference in the position of the two languages has been traced back to the historical characteristics of the two Gypsy ethnic groups, since, as has been pointed out, the adoption of the Old Romanian language happened in the past too.

The question arises, if this is how the Beas regard the situation of their language what is its present function? The informants use it mainly in two areas, when they are ‘Gypsysing’ and in the family circle where they usually use it in communication with the members of the older generation (diglossia, cf. fn.8). *“Evidently I do not use it at my work place, there is no one to understand it. Neither at home, though I talk in the Beas language with my parents, that is we speak the gypsy language. Well, I use it at home and with relatives.”* (András)¹³

¹³ András (26) works in the town library, is a college student and also plays music.

Stepping out of the diglossic situation, the use of the Beas language among those ‘Gypsying’ appears as a kind of revival. Those working in the minority self-government organize Roma – days, ethnic days and similar events that offer opportunity for the Beas language to be used. E.g. *Julika* usually talks with her friend *Marika*, another GMS chairperson in the Beas Language; as she remarked “*We are frequently practicing with Auntie Marika.*”

It means that the Beas language is an important element of the preservation of Beas (and Gypsy) identity irrespective of what level the speaker is able to master it. For the ‘Gypsying’ persons with the increasingly positive Gypsy identity the importance of the language as its foundation has also been brought forward.

II.3. National symbols – the flag

There is no nation without the important symbols as flag, coat of arms and anthem. The best known symbol of the Gypsies, i.e. the Roma nation is the flag accepted by the delegates of the 1971 international congress. It may serve as coat of arms in certain situations too.

Before commenting on the opinions of the informers on the question of the flag, there is *Laci*’s explanation: “*When the blue – green flag with the wheel was introduced every Gypsy person could identify with it, because there is a symbol there: the sky is blue and the earth is green; it is easy to translate.*”

‘The flag is a more uniform set of symbols [then the anthem M.B.]. A normal, average Beas sees a cart wheel in it. It has 9 spokes and 9 is the number of Baxt, the goddess of luck. That had developed in Armenia “T-aves baxtalo!” “Be lucky/fortunate” [in Romani language M.B.]. It comes from there. It is also generally known that the Gypsy regard the wheel as fortune, fate and thus it represents the ups and downs of life.’

Almost every informant knew the flag; they interpreted the red wheel in the middle as the symbol of their wanderings. Opinions varied on the significance of the flag. *Ibolyka* (49, cleaner) treated the question pragmatically: “*Truthfully, I have seen it but do not know what to think about it. We do not live in a community where we could make use of such a symbol. What could I do with it? It does*

not authorize to anything. It is of no importance. If I could use it to help my family, like Yes, I am Gypsy and I have the right to go to any authorities that I am Gypsy, help me. It cannot be used for that. Maybe if we participated at some sports event, I would carry it because I don't feel ashamed to be Gypsy. There is a flag and that's it."

For the 'Gypsying' informants the flag had an additional meaning since they frequently saw it during their everyday work, in offices, during events, etc.) *"I want to have one too when our association will sufficiently have developed."* said *Julika*.

The flag has not raised the question of border between the various Gypsy communities, all the informants agreed that it is a symbol for all; it can represent all the Gypsies since apparently everybody is familiar with it and probably thanks to its symbolic content, has been accepted as a uniform Gypsy symbol. The flag can fulfil the role of an important national symbol, as its task is to represent all the aspects of national life. In addition, the Roma flag – together with other national symbols – is polysemous, i.e. in every time every social level of Gypsies can recognize in it their own national meanings (Csepeli 1992:78). At the same time *Ibolyka's* scepticism is also justified because the flag's abstract symbolic message has to be accepted by the majority nation and by other nations too in order to its importance being ascertained.

II.4. national symbols – the Anthem

The Roma national anthem is not as unambiguous as the flag, at least in Hungary, because there are two Gypsy anthems at present. *"The Gypsy anthem, that was considered to be the Gypsy anthem, what is accepted, known, sung is »Zöld az erdő, zöld a hegy is«* [The forest is green and so is the mountain]. *Last year it was changed; if I remember well it was after the joining of the Union that the anthem was changed and was »Gelem, gelem«* accepted." According to *Julika*.

Below follows a summary of what can be known about the two anthems. Considering first the Beas anthem, it is worth quoting *Laci*, the local expert, in detail. *"The Gypsies always had their favourite songs. And this prayer was forgotten for a long time, though it was well liked; and Karcsi Bari made a poem from the text of the prayer*

that Jakab Orsós had collected in Co. Zala. The original Beas text said that God punished the Gypsies because we had nailed Christ on the cross. Legend has it that the Gypsies were the people of the Pharaoh and in the Middle Ages they were the executioners and they also made nails for such purposes. This is a well known legend. The Beas understood that an anthem has to contain references to God. Kalyi Jag started singing this song in the 1980s and it is on their first disc under the title 'Zala prayer'. This is how it spread and became an anthem, because there were no other Beas songs with God in them."

In Julika's opinion "It was the melody that appealed to us, we did not sing it as an anthem but as a nice song." She had no idea how it became an anthem "12 years ago, since there is the National Gypsy Self-government, we had to choose one."

For András' 'anthem' as a category is connected to the Hungarian state: "Whether the Gypsy anthem means the same for me as the Hungarian anthem to the Hungarians? One thing is certain when I learned 'Zöld az erdő' it was simply a song for me. It may be sad but the Gypsy anthem does not mean much to me; merely a song. That is how I feel about it. I know one has to know it and I teach it to the young people because they have to know it. If I hear the Hungarian anthem, I feel a frission; if I hear the Gypsy (Beas) one I don't."

The opinion about 'Gelem, gelem', the official Roma anthem is succinct. "The Beas anthem is the anthem of the Gypsies for me, the other one does not mean much as I do not know it ... and I would not want to have to sing the anthem of such people" (András); "I don't understand it I don't know it" (Ilonka); "I don't know what it is about, and to tell the truth I do not really care about it. I like it as a song not as an anthem" (Julika); "My personal opinion is that practice will solve the problem. The Beas anthem is well known, the other one is not, therefore the former is going to be sung" (Laci).

It is evident that the Beas prefer their 'own' anthem; they accept 'Gelem, Gelem' as a pleasant song, if they know it at all. Julika added that "at events both the Beas anthem and the Hungarian anthem are sung. Here and everywhere else. Now 'Gelem, gelem' too. The two together." Then she added that it happened that the two Gypsy groups boycotted each others performance, and ".. of course it was always the Tinkers who started it..".

Evidently ‘*Zöld az erdő*’ of Beas origin is the accepted Gypsy anthem for the Beas that in everyday context is just a nice song. When it appears officially as an anthem immediately starts acting as a border between the groups because symbolically it represents the Beas, in contrast with the majority (Hungarian anthem) and the other Gypsies (*Gelem, gelem*).

Finally, of the informants only *Laci*, who is successful both in his social and ethnic mobility, was ready for cooperation in the ‘anthem question’. “*It is going to be similar to the case of the ‘Szózat’ [Appeal]¹⁴ with the ‘Himnusz’ [Anthem]; at functions there are always the two together. This is how the Gypsy communities are going to have two anthems. Even though Gypsy policy claims that Gypsies are going to be emancipated if there is one flag and one anthem.*”

II.5. Family, endogamy, borders

The relationship between Gypsy groups is mirrored in the rigid custom of endogamy. Marriage between members of ethnic groups is much less frequent than between a Gypsy person and a non-Gypsy one (Szuhay 1995:333). The borderlines between the Gypsy ethnic groups can be observed by the marriage customs. Thus *Julika*’s parents still adhered to endogamy and tried to make their children to follow suit.¹⁵ In the case of *Julika* and her eight siblings three quarter of the partners/spouses were Beas, one quarter Hungarian; there was not a single non-Beas Gypsy among them. The younger siblings are the ones who have chosen Hungarians thus the crumbling of the borders of endogamy can be observed with exclusive opening towards Hungarians.

In the partner choice of the next generation, the grown up children of the nine siblings, Hungarian partners are dominant (no Lovari

¹⁴ Szózat [Appeal] a poem by Mihály Vörösmarty, at functions usually sung after Himnusz [Anthem], written by Ferenc Kölcsey, music by Ferenc Erkel.

¹⁵ “Water and oil won’t mix’ (In Beas: „Apá k’ulij nu szá kiviridestyé!”) This was sentence *Julika*’s mother warned her to follow endogame rules. When she was 15, *Julika* did not want to marry the Beas man her family appointed for her; the parents disowned her. Her mother made piece only after *Julika* gave birth to her child from her Hungarian husband.

partners were chosen either). Dóra Pálos describes the phenomenon as the loosening of ‘Gypsy tradition’ accompanied by the wish to comply with the real or imagined expectations of the majority society (Pálos 2006). Endogamy may cease altogether among young people living in towns and participating in social mobility. Several informants explained that they would not choose their partners according to their origins. The 17 year-old brother of *Tibi* declared that he even would choose a Tinker.

Though the rule of endogamous marriages appear to be loosening it can be stated about the Beas community in question, that endogamy has still been preserved where marriage with the members of other Gypsy groups are concerned; however, there have been no sanctions against marriages with Hungarians even it would seem popular especially among the young.

III. Ethnic mobility and the permeability of borders

Ethnic mobility can cause important changes in the life of the individual. For Gypsies especially it can mean new jobs, new connections and even new social standing. The fact that the ‘Gypsying’ persons have partially left their community leaves its mark over every aspect of their life. This fact and misconceptions about the tasks and possibilities of minority self-governments lead to tensions. The present study deals with ethnic and national aspects of identity ‘only’.

In connection to the various topics, there are considerable differences between ‘Gypsying’ and ‘not-Gypsying’ Beas, especially in their attitude toward the question of origin, the flag and language use. On the other hand there were no special differences along the borders of endogamy that plays an important role in the preservation of Beas identity. That means that ethnically mobile Beas persons have strongly remained Beas.

III.1. Dialogue on unity – *Tibi* and *Józsi*

To illuminate the above description it seems useful to include a longer discourse that took place in ‘artificial’ circumstances staged by the members of the ‘field’. It was initiated by *Tibi*

Who thought it would be interesting to have a debate over ‘Roma national unity’ between *Tibi* and his friend *Józsi* (45, a Lovari artist (painter)).

Tibi: *Józsi is a Lovary Gypsy. I am not. Whether we could speak about homogeneous language, a unity of the Gypsies ..?*

I believe there has been no proof for the Beas [of the Indian origin M.B.]. Until it is not completely proved, I do not believe it.

Józsi: *Menyhért Lakatos and his companions had the opportunity to go to India in order to follow up their own race and they have found it...*

Tibi: *This is why I say, until it is not proved, I do not believe it. It is also arguable whether these Gypsy ‘races’ really want it.*

Józsi: *Yes, they do...*

Tibi: *What I mean is would the Beas and Lovari Gypsies discuss it, to do it together, or is it just on the level of representation that they are ready to cooperate.*

...

Tibi: *I still think there is prejudice among the three ‘races’. The musician Gypsies look down at the Lovari, the Lovari at the Beas. This is what I experience.*

Józsi: *It has to be accepted that we used to be a dormant grain. Now this people has awoken, to take it symbolically, and now starts to find itself. This is a slow process. The Hungarians had 1000 years for their development, we have it since 1990 and if we look at the state of development compared with the Hungarians, it can be stated that we are on the right way. Right way in the right direction.*

It is negligible that we fume against each other, This exists in every society, everywhere that one neighbour looks down at the other; it is nothing, these are human characteristics; it cannot be eradicated for the time being. Let’s hope it will disappear some time.

Tibi: *It is not merely human, I believe that ... the Lovari. There are antagonisms! Yes, there are! Believe me Józsi!*

The short excerpt of the discussion reveals the stand point of the two participants. Though both of them are ethnically mobile, *Józsi* is a 'Gypsy artist', *Tibi* a 'Gypsy musician', and connected to Roma politics too.

It happened that the Roma leaders of the neighbourhood were discussing matters concerning the tasks in preparation of the coming minority elections and *Józsi* was the only non-Beas present. For the Beas *Józsi* does not apparently belong among the Lovari as a member of 'bad Gypsies', This follows from his manners and way of thinking; in his case the stereotypes about Gypsy groups do not work. He once said: 'It is important for the Romany to show their wealth; I denounce that. At my level of thinking I am not concerned about material things. I have got over that stage, they have not yet. I smile at it because I do not care any more.

According to the members of the 'field', *Józsi*, belonging to the 'majority Gypsies' looks at the question pragmatically. For him no doubt 'the people have awoken'.

Tibi, who feels to be in minority even among Gypsies, has not accepted the common origin, he supports his doubts by "differences of the races'. May be it can be explained by the auto- and hetero-stereotypes necessary to the maintenance of his ethnic identity.

III.2. Politics and arts

During the interviews there appeared two areas where the borders offered transit: politics and arts.

István, the leader of one of the Roma organisations was of the opinion that cultural and identity unity could not be feasible, Gypsies should take action together in politics. The idea has been propagated by others too, since the state-supplied possibilities of organisations (minor self-government, civil organisations) exist on Gypsy and not on Beas or Tinker basis.

Gypsy music, and Gypsy art: the concepts suggest a homogeneous Gypsy/Roma picture; experience also has shown that these are areas where the Beas do not dissociate themselves, whereas in other contexts they strongly do. The informants did not mind that the music way played by Tinkers, it was only important that that it

should be 'Gypsy music'. Though there are Beas bands (very few), Tinker bands and of course musician Gypsies, but they play all kinds of music at the request of the audience: Hungarian songs and songs with Lovari and Beas texts too.

Tibi and his musician companion *Tomi* mentioned only two slight differences between Lovari and Beas music. According to them the melodies and instruments are the same, therefore there is no separate Lovari or Beas music. In the case of songs the language is important and thus the community it came from.

András, also a musician, can only discover minor differences between Beas and Lovari musical life: *"the Tinkers are better in slow numbers. It does not mean that the Beas feeling does not come through but somehow the others do it better temperamentally. Bodó, a Beas from Zalakomárom sang a song in Hungarian without guitarre accompaniment, it was awesome. Then I thought that both Beas and non-Beas is capable to create something unbelievable. This is again something common between Beas and non-Beas Gypsies."*

The acceptance of political cooperation can be explained by the idea of the non-Gypsy majority about a homogeneous Gypsy people, and this does not allow separate organisations. For the state regulation of minority organisations only 'Gypsies (Roma)' exist.

Music and art in general can bring Beas and other Gypsies on common denomination, they are not constitutive elements of Beas identity thus it is not part of the 'border'.

III.3. Self image and nation

The most important function of our identity is to lead us toward positive social evaluation accompanied by psychological wellbeing. Thus it is evident that the effect of ethnic mobility upon personal self-image cannot be neglected. Let's imagine the Gypsy person who earlier planted, hoed, raked at a firm day by day now is meeting notars, mayors and politicians, participates in the meetings of 'big' self-governments (concrete example of one of the informants).

The various Roma events will grow in importance where the ethnic content usually is represented by ethnic food and music. Here the Gypsies are in majority over non-Gypsies and thus 'Gypsy'

becoming meaningless, loses its 'negative' connotation. The group that appears to be homogeneous for the outside observer will, of course, preserve the inside borders, everybody is conscious of the ethnic affiliation of the others (Beas, Lovari, grinder or musician).

Thus to the often negative feeling of being Gypsy positive connotations could be added thanks to ethnic mobility. It might strengthen the process where the alternative is not personal assimilation but by preserving their own culture the Gypsies would become a socially equal part of society (Forray – Hegedűs 1990:15). For the non-Gypsying Roma this process would come later and indirectly.

One of the proofs of the increasing importance of Gypsy identity is the 'rediscovery' of the language (cf. above II.2.). Unlike *Ibolyka*, for *Julika* and *Marika* language is no longer a legacy that cannot be used in their lives but a means to strengthen their Gypsy and Beas identity that is advantageous for those who possess it.

From the point of view of a homogeneous Roma nation this is a paradoxon since Roma ethnic mobility strengthens the Beas language, which in turn is one of the major borders between Gypsy groups. This paradox could only be dissolved by a new definition of the nation concept along the lines of a pluralistic (multilingual, multicultural) nation. Pluralistic nation concept is advocated by the fact too that the Beas informants all have Hungarian elements among their identifying concept (Cf.I.1).

It is another question whether such a nation could exist; lacking the 'classic' attributes of a nation would it be accepted by the community of nations? It is not the aim to argue for and against interpretations and definitions only to point out that there is one pattern of nationhood among the many not sufficiently thought out – that has undoubtedly influence upon the individual and community alike (Gergely 2002). In Gypsy-research of empirical aims it could be affective to choose an attitude focusing on events where the nation will appear as an institutionalized form, a practical category or an eventual event instead of being a substance, a collective (Brubaker 2004).

Let us close the paper with the train of thoughts of *Julika* – maybe instructive for everybody – “*I could learn a couple of songs in Lovari because I liked them, because they are beautiful. I believe there are two – three things that are common and could hold us together. As you have said: the language; it can bind us if the other is interested*

in what I say. Music, dance, culture. If we are open toward each other we can come closer to one other. No unity; I am not certain there will be unity. Person to person, they can be friends. Get married. But to form unity, something that is not at family level ... no, the time has not come yet.'

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„A víz az olajjal nem keveredik!” (beásul: „Apá k’ulij nu szá kiviridestyé!”) Ezzel a mondattal figyelmeztette Julikát édesanyja az endogám szabályok betartására. Amikor ő 15 évesen nem akart hozzámenni az általuk kijelölt beás férfihoz, szülei kitagadták. Édesanyja csak Julika – magyar férjétől született – gyermekének megszületése után békült ki vele.

Minority culture

