

## **“TOLERANCE IN THE DIFFERENCE”**

### **/ATTEMPT FOR ETHOCULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ROMA IN BULGARIA-A LOOK FROM OUTSIDE/**

**Anastassia Pashova**

In the media space in Bulgaria the Roma /1/ present themselves before all with the social problems and the deviant behavior. In not many materials is written about their values, traditions and every day life. This is the reason why the not Roma do not know their ethno cultural identity. It is not a secret to anyone that for the majority people the image and the attitude towards the Roma is totally negative /2/.

The aim of the work is to draw, although cursorily, some basic characteristics of the Roma, which could give imagination about their mental adjustments, values and every day behavior and to show them as bearers of mysterious and unknown culture with own history and traditions /3/.

I would like to start with two quotations defining the place of the Roma as ethno cultural community in Europe: 4

In address in front of Roma from all over Europe the Pope John Paul VI on 26 September 1965 opposes to the disrespect and neglect connected with the Roma communities all over the world. He says: “In the church you are not in the periphery and in some respects you are in the middle, you are in the very heart of the church.”

Pope John Paul II continues and deepens what his predecessor started. He openly condemns the different forms of discrimination concerning the Roma, officially recognizes them as minority and on public forums pleads for respect to their identity: “You are part of those minorities, realized the modest and unsure conditions of life who strive to remain true to their ethnic identity, to the nomad way of living and to the old cultural tradition.” /According to Jan-Pierre Liegeois, 1999/

### **The Roma in Bulgaria**

The Roma in Bulgaria are dispersed transnational community having the same origin, historic past, language, original social organization and traditional habits. They have original and own life style culture, own specific life philosophy, reflected in their language, tradition and folklore. The most interesting with their culture is that it is not unified, but represents complex puzzle (according to Liegeois) of values, traditions and way of living – characteristic for the separate Roma groups and sub-groups, having lived and living in different times and spaces on the Balkans and in Europe. What picture will be obtained when the puzzle is solved, can only be interpreted and this is the reason why all summaries about Roma and their culture are relative and are subject of adding and correcting.

The Roma in Bulgaria realize themselves as people connected with general origin, past, language and traditional crafts, but on life style level they are divided into different groups between which exists great distance. For Bulgaria from different resources are quoted about 22 groups. /5/ In Lom they are the groups of tinsmiths and tsutsumani, included in the more general group of Roma – the Christians. Important aspect of the social organization of the Roma society is namely this segmentation which is not “lack of organization and anarchy” /6/. “Not a single man can have power on another individual, neither one group over the other” /Jan Pierre Liegeois, 1999/. This is the normal concept of the Roma about the social organization of the

community. In the rare cases of between-group marriages, from the women is required full subordination to the habits of the group of the husband, even change of dresses and language.

### **The Roma and the not Roma**

The Roma have own mental resistance in connection with which they are hardly assimilated by the population around no matter if they are traveling or settled. By today the very Roma put the border between themselves and the not Roma. The Roma exist in the “other” cultures but they never forget that they are different and with all means try to preserve this difference.

In the long history of living in Europe the community has never had as well as now own territory and own state. Since the 14<sup>th</sup> century /7/, when they settle in Europe, their ancient ethno cultural characteristics is nomadic. Their culture long years has been developing in movement because it has not been connected with definite geographic place but only with traveling in the territorial space of the other cultures. This way of existence has given utmost specifics of their culture.

During the long historical way in Europe the Roma have not been able to accept the neighboring cultures as equal partners because non stop they have been subjected to repression and persecution. For the “other” people and cultures they always remained foreigners moving to different parts of the world.

As an external observer of the community on terrain work I always intuitively felt that the Roma with whom I lived are others...different from me and my culture. I could not explain to myself why and by now still I could not understand, but I had the feeling that something is slipping from me... I thing that what impressed me most of all is that these people are simply happy... although the misery... although the attitude of the not Roma to them. Somewhat I felt that they have another way of accepting the world and own unique and different philosophy of life. I could not but see the simple and full of joy of careless children whom they take around far from institutions and control. They have preserved themselves without state, in absolute harmony between themselves, inside their own group. What other ethnos can survive without alphabet? The unique for them according to me is how they succeed to enjoy life “here and now”, how quickly they forget the bad and sad and continue forward with celebrations and songs. Writing this I remember the bible “Blissful are the mentally lower”. Maybe in the simplicity of their life is the essence of their happiness – maybe they are closer to the essence of human life... which is given by God and so you have to live it... with love to the fellow creatures.. like a game... like a present... like a gift from God. And their greatest dream is to raise their children... to marry them on a big wedding party and again... What small and simple happiness!!!

### **The nomadic – way of thinking and living**

“The life on wheels” for greater part of the Roma in the past and now has been necessary cultural, economical and social reality. In historic plan for them the nomadic is not “parasitic marginality”, but traditional culture which even today /even with settled Roma/ is like general historic memory and is widely spread in the traditions and every day life. It become live and gains density in the stories and memories of the old people in the neighborhood. The cart with the horse, the road and the fire are the symbols around which is built the collective memory. The horse is special animal for them. Without the horse they can not imagine their life. Even today they consider that “If you have a horse you will never remain hungry and it means you are rich”. In their songs they speak about the horse as friend that can always help and save you in trouble.

“For most of them the nomadic is more condition of the spirit rather than actual condition. This reflection is in force and now. Certain family can remain on one place an year or more feeling good by the time there exists possibility for change to another place by own will. When there is not possibility to move and this is compulsory or is pointed place for settling, the gypsy feels like a prisoner.” /Jan Pierre Ligeois, 1999/.

The traveling of Roma with the aim to subsist has always been preferred way of living and existing. The idea for “road and traveling” is in the basis of their living philosophy to satisfy their needs with the smallest and most necessary, because what can you carry with you when you are constantly moving. Its stop is end of the social life and the exercising the jobs of the people from the community. This is the reason why the freedom of the spirit connected with independent life, intolerance to any power and institution are the key subjects around which the Roma memory and soul are built and this is widely reflected and included in their folklore.

In 1956 with Act No. 1216 of the Council of Ministres dated 17 October 1957 “For solving the problem of the Bulgarian gypsy minority” practically is forbidden the nomadic, which stops the traditional way of living of the Roma. /8/ By that time the greater part of Bulgarian Roma lived not settled in one place, traveling and exercising the traditional crafts. After the Act about 90% of them settled in the villages and towns. Fully Roma settlement in Bulgaria does not exist, excluding some small villages. From the Roma about 53,7% live in towns. Geographically they are relatively evenly distributed.

After 1990 when the prohibition to live in one and the same place was cancelled, among the Roma is observed tendency to semi-nomadic – seasonal or temporary traveling with different purposes – most commonly economic, although the traditional crafts are forgotten and not used any more. For the Roma this is way to adapt to the new conditions without betraying the tradition to travel and dynamism. For example in the late spring and in the autumn in the locality Beslet in the Rhodopean Mountainous Range thousands of Roma families gather together from all over Bulgaria and they self-organise themselves in peculiar settlements. There the people till late autumn are picking mushrooms, herbs and fruits and the evenings are indescribable spectacles of songs, dances and joy. According to their stories here is the market for brides.

### **Work and life style**

The nomadic as basic characteristics of the Roma in the past is closely connected with the next one – flexibility in adaptation to different conditions of living. The main professions that have been exercised in the past have been dynamic and required moving and mobility. For centuries the Roma have been skillful mastering musicians and craftsmen – blacksmiths, farriers, tinsmiths, coppersmiths, tradesmen, animal trainers and fortune tellers. Their handicrafts are in the basis of their way of living and acceptance of the world. In the whole history this people practically have been using one and the same crafts with which earned their living. All these activities are present in Byzantine written sources and later during the centuries they have not been changed except some details in the execution. The traditional handicrafts have caste character and the very groups are closed in their internal structure. This is namely the phenomenon which allows the group to preserve it own life style. “If you want to remain Roma, you should do what your father and grand fathers have done.” This is the simple mechanism to pass the tradition and of Roma upbringing. The Roma laws existed for everybody who wanted to follow them. But if you want to remain in the group you should be submitted to its laws. The ethnic identification was done by the labor. With the professional caste specialization can be explained the unwillingness of the Roma to get system education. The education has taken out the Roma from the traditional society and that is why has been accepted as threat.

In the past and now favorite handicrafts jobs of the Roma have been blacksmith, maker of riddles, coppersmith, tinsmith...

Widely has been exercised trading and especially trading with horses. They have been famous as skillful horse riders, healers and horse tamers. This attractive trading for them could have been explained that the income from it is “here and now” which corresponds to the Roma mentality to live in the present time and looking less in the future. The commerce has been accepted as competition where the Roma could demonstrate their qualities – inventiveness, watchfulness, wittiness and quick reactions. It corresponded to their nomadic way of living. They were buying goods on one place and selling them on another.

During the communist regime in Bulgaria after 1957 nearly all Roma were forcedly made to give up their respectable handicrafts. After the settling some of them have been sent to the factories as workers, of course the heaviest and low qualified work because their previous life did not give them chance to acquire other skills and qualifications. Part of the community settled in the villages, have been becoming agricultural workers. There are such that have been left to exercise their handicrafts, but the authorities have been looking with bad eye on them and having claimed them as “private workers”.

After 1990 when most of the factories were closed, thousands of Roma remained unemployed. They were the first among the dismissed. We could see them working for the cleaning offices – work quite unattractive for the majority of people. The bigger parts of the Roma now live on social help. Because the money is short, not small parts of them make two ends meet by trade on the markets and by ambulant trade. Others collect wastes and scrub in organized way. The Roma can be seen to exercise different “holiday professions” – entertainment on fairs and fun-fairs.

There are quite rich people among the Roma but their richness is connected with illegal production, prostitution and drugs. Of course there more well-to-do Roma, who deal in trade or are in state organizations. For example in Lom greater part of the young families are abroad or trading in Serbia where they sell goods purchased from the big warehouses in Sofia. The most poor subsist gathering waste metals and paper or poking in the litter boxes. Every day in Sofia on the canal next to the railway station the Roma organize market where very cheap they sell the “discoveries” from the litter boxes. Such sales the Roma also organize in their quarters. On Sundays quarter Predel in Blagoevgrad is noisy with the cry of the industrious collectors, who are going round the city with improvised carts looking for metal wastes and paper. For these people from the “ghetto” the horse is luxury and the greatest dream and stealing sometimes necessity to survive.

### **Family, kin, group**

The basic life style of the Roma now and before is in the community and by the community. There are built the every day intensive social relations by communication – the exchange of information, memories, rumors, goods and services – fully soaked in the atmosphere of solidarity and unification.

Peculiarity of the Roma feeling of the world is the leading role of the family as value, but always with close relation to the kin and the community. Most fully and deeply this problem is revealed by Jan Pierre Liegeois in the book “Roma, gypsies, nomads” /1999/. The author builds relatively general picture of the Roma family in the context of kin family community. “The family is not sum of individualities. It is wholesome entity, solitary about the “foreign” and the other families. The relations between the individuals are relations between the family groups. Even going to another family, the man remains element of his own family.” This explains the

narrow contacts which the girl keeps with her own family after the marriage. Very often the mother is helping in raising the children not the mother in law. In the memories of most of the informers /9/, the relations with the mothers in law are negative and with the mothers – positive.

During the terrain investigation in 2002 in two small quarters of Lom, we saw how the collective way of organization of everyday life in the family and in the quarter covers the individual with dense webs of social relations and he can never get out of them and remain alone. Involved in these webs which are supported in the general activities, entertainment and problems, the separate man has not his own space.

There is not division between the professional, private and public life in the quarter. “For the sake of good and bad we are always together” /Zhivkov, p.1974/. Relatives, parents, neighbors and children live and use at the same time spaces in the houses and quarters. The collective way of living of adults and children is emotionally saturated and dense and the separation in one way or another of children from the parents is more or less exception.

According to Liegeois /1999/ the family community most often presents enlarged family consisting of many nuclear families and generations. The enlarged family bears security and stability of the group and this is why the importance of the nuclear family is relative and the family name for the Roma has no any social sense. “The foreign name is of such negligible importance that it is not even respected by the relatives. It happens hundreds of individuals to have one and the same name and the same passport name /typical example is the group “callaes” in France and in Spain” /Liegeois, 1999/. General practice for the Roma in Lom is the “double name” – one for the others and the second for the community.

In Lom massively in one space, as the yard is, there are two houses which are inhabited by three generations people, the oldest living separately. As a whole the life in the quarter is marked by sociality and collectiveness and family intimacy is impossible. Because of the early age of marriage, the new family is materially dependent on the previous generation and for this reason it is included in the hierarchy of the system of subordination and control – the daughter in law to the mother in law and the husband to the father. All of them are subjected to the general rhythm of life in the quarter. The new family can rarely remain alone, which is more, the communication in the private and the public space is sexual and differentiated by age. This differentiation can be observed every day, also on celebration level. For example in Lom, in quarter Mladenovtsi is very popular the tradition “acquired girl friends”. This is practice when once a month are visiting all wives of the husbands on one age /who in most of the cases are friends /. The men at the same time are also in general spaces – bars, where they play cards, pubs or discothèques. In Lom is very popular the day of the granny obstetrician, on which the married women at one age have one and the same dresses and dance in one chain in order to underline the relation between themselves. The family is not separate emotional media and this function is fulfilled by the family and the structures in the quarter.

The adult people in the quarter of Lom are not many /10/, which is closely connected with lower age level of death. According to data of the World Bank, the death rate of the Roma is with 10 years lower than the rest of the population of Bulgaria. The old people in the quarter admire exclusive respect and honor. They very often gather around themselves the young telling own and other stories and memories, sing old songs and in this way by words pass to the young generation the living philosophy of Roma, coded in the folklore and legends.. The children and the younger listen and remember and save what they heard. The stories and the music increase the social closeness and become background of general amusement. In most of the cases the old people take care of the young and raise them.

## **The ownership and the things**

Every day and non stop /like neighbors/ are exchanged things, services and mutual visits. You can not think of giving up service or thing to relative or neighbor. According to records of informers, this is considered as great sin and is remembered till death. In the quarter one and the same things are used by everyone, until at the end they come to the owner worn out. This is of course not problem, because another has already bought it and everyone can borrow from him things for temporary use.

For outside from the community man /like me/ the lack of feeling of ownership of things is striking. Everything belongs to everyone. As if the things have no owner and they are basically for exchange, the only sense being according to them is to keep the social relations alive. Maybe for this reason the Roma are looking on stealing with different eye. According to record of informers from Lom when going for the bride in her house, everybody is stealing something from the house and the yard. All see and know this but keep silent, because this “ritual stealing” brings health and luck to the newly married. In the marriage ritual is present the element stealing of the bride. The personal property within the community and the general space for use for them is something transitional and not long lasting. That is why it is normal to change the owner, which is more “everything is general” in the quarter, and can borrow it and use it. When someone is in need, everybody helps with what they can – this is not written law which in the community is strictly followed. When they have more, the Roma are exclusively generous towards the others. I suppose that in the basis of this attitude to the ownership is the memory for “the life on wheels”, when you take the most necessary without luxury and excesses.

This to a certain degree explains to me the strange paradox that these people are not envious or at least not envious as the not Roma. This is why, in the quarter, massive phenomenon is to see rich house and next to it – poor building. The rich Roma do not prefer to leave the quarter and prefer to build the new house on the old place, although the general public spaces like streets and yards are dirty and miserable. Visibly more important for them is the every day intensive communication with the others, the collective entertainment with always ready occasions and merry clamor with noisy music and cries, something traditional for the quarter.

These continuous “everyone with everyone” contacts keep the group collectiveness live and are in the basis of their feeling for unity and solidarity in working days and in holidays. It is not unusual for them to go to hospital, to ill or to young mother and child together fifty, sixty people or when the young mother and the child leave the hospital – the whole quarter.

Not little for this collectiveness contributes the music and dances which are available unavoidably on holidays and in everyday life. The quarters of Lom are uninterruptedly in noisy songs and cries. Even in the poorest house there are Radio and TV sets. In the rich houses there are video players and satellite dishes. They are the “eyes” and the “ears” of the Roma to the “foreign to them” world which they rarely visit. In the quarters of Lom there is built infrastructure – they have schools, in which the not Roma do not study, they have their own five evangelist churches, own shops, discothèques, pubs and places for using some services /shoe repairs, barbers/.

Maybe the counted by now behavioral strategies are product of the life philosophy of the Roma that everything comes from God and is only question of luck. “From here restraint, saving funds and piling money for “black days” is lack of belief in God and the way in which he distributes the abundance. The idea is to believe in your luck and to wait for it. The sweet is in winning with one blow, not regularly waiting.”/Slavov, 2002/. This is why the Roma rely on their own initiatives, dynamics and undertaking and keep to independence from institutions and control. The only secure place for them is the quarter and the group. This fact can be explained

why the cases of pushing out of the group is taken by the individuals as death case. "The community solidarity plays the role of guarantee for the social and psychic security of the individuals" /Liegeois, 1999/.

### **Age and marriage**

The Roma in difference with the not Roma have different concepts for the different age periods – childhood, youth and old age. The approved by the community civil marriage model is for early and total marriage. The marriage age of Roma is generally low. With the "kardarashi", "rudari" and "earlii" who pay ransom for the girl, usually the age of the girl is 15-16 and of the 2-3 years more. With the settled "earlii" in the town quarters and in the villages this age could be lower – 13-14 years old for the girl and 15-16 years old for the boy, but there are even earlier marriages." /Marushiakova, Popov, 1993/.

The informers do not connect the early marriage with negative experience or emotions. They accept it as absolutely regular, compulsory and necessary. Even in the quarters in Lom is considered that woman at the age of 16 is already old. The early marriage which is present as memory in all autobiographical stories is normatively approved by the group and is encouraged by the rest. For the people from the generation born during the 30s is normal the woman at the age of 20-25 to be mother of several children, of 30-35 to be grand mother and around 50 to be grand-grand mother. This is the approved traditional model for the family situation of the woman.

The marriages are looked upon as means for improvement of the relations in the family and for this reason the marriages between cousins is tolerated. Because the separate groups are closed and endogamy, during the marriage the prohibition for blood relation is not followed. Second and third cousins are marring, which explains the high percentage of inherited deceases. For example "the Lom decease" for the first time is identified in the 90s but is registered in other quarters in the country.

This group and territorial endogamy is preserved by now and it is the main factor in the choice of marriage partner. To a certain extent is added the social endogamy i.e. marriages between people with similar social and economic situation.

The underlying in the memories, the official character of the marriage is more shown as an exception rather than a norm. The Roma do not insist on official civil or church marriages because for them the marriages are legal with the very wedding party, done in front of the eyes of everyone. In this way the marriage for them is sacred and unbreakable. "Actually for the gypsies basic value has the wedding party and it is the only index for marriage and its official legalization has not significance and is usually done years after the wedding party." /Marushiakova, Popov, 1993/. The traditional Roma marriage includes two clearly differentiated stages – wedding and marriage. The first arranges the material conditions of the marriage and the second – complex of rituals of which most important is the consummation of the marriage. Nowhere in the memories is mentioned church ritual, on account of the constant thematising of the virginity as a value. The virginity of the woman is condition for the marriage and this tendency is kept even today.

According to data from informers when marrying there is preliminary bargaining between the fathers of the young people about the price of the bride, because after the marriage she becomes "property" of the family of the broom. The young do not have the word during the bargaining. "In well preserved and functioning gypsy groups the basic form of the marriage is "the buying of the bride"." This form is universal with the so called "kardashari" /lovari, layashi, Thracian tinsmiths/ as well as with some groups from the community of the so called "earlii" /zvanchari from the region of Pazardhik, koshnichari from the region of Plovdiv, burgudzhii from North-East Bulgaria and others/.

The opinion of the parents is obligatory in the marriages with “request”. This form is most commonly spread. Very often, especially in the conditions of the big town quarters and ghettos, “the request” is in combination with the so called “stealing” of the bride /Marushiakova, Popov, 1993/. The most important problem of the woman is to get married, to bear and raise children and to marry them with wedding parties. In the community only the married man is recognized as man and the woman is woman when she has children. Especially bad is the attitude towards the woman if she can not have children and apriority that the woman is guilty for the sterility of the family. Very often the sterility is the reason for divorce. “The sterility of the woman could be valid reason for breaking the marriage. With the so called “kardarashi” the mother in law has the right to kick out the sterile bride. The very sterility is often explained with magic and is overcome with “magic herbs” or making offering.” /Marushiakova, Popov, 1993/. The violence over the woman in the family is very much present in the memories and can be drawn more as a norm rather than exception. The betrayal from the side of the man is silently approved and accepted for difference with the women.

In the investigated community in Lom is accepted the mother to take care about the children up to the age of seven and this is norm regarding the women. If she is dead, the care is taken by the father, who by general principle marries second time or by other relatives of the mother. The second marriages are more typical for the elder generation /born in the 30s/ and are widely spread. The community encourages second and third marriages. Evidently this rule is imposed by the fact that the men and women are equally unchangeable and a family can not exist with only one parent. The second marriages are typical both for men and women. In the family the role of the man and the woman are different but they are mutually supplemented.

### **The mother and the father**

The most important care of the mother is feeding the children. The mother is also responsible for the everyday economic survival of the family /food and dresses/. The children are breastfed up to the age of three, because it is considered that this keeps the mother from pregnancy and the children are carried non stop by the mother in her hand or on the shoulders up to the age of two. The mother is the one who teaches the girl for kitchen skills and most of to wash and clean. She is also loaded with her upbringing to the day of the wedding party.

The father is the guard of the family regarding everything which is out of the group. “Within the frame of the group he is the head of the family and possesses the authority and the power for taking decisions. The greater time he is out of the family – works or makes joy with friends, keeping social contacts. What he earns is more for exclusive expenses /holidays, baptizing, wedding parties buying horse and cart, car/” /Liegeois, 1999/. In most of the stories the father is mentioned basically with activities done, but also as a man who loves his children and takes care of them. As it is seen in the memories, he is very strong model for identification, especially in the stories of the women.

### **The children and the childhood**

The positive attitude towards the children is of special importance in the Roma community and on that basis all scientists investigating Roma /Liegeois, 1990, Marushiakova, Popov, 1993, Nunev 2000/ draw it as leading in their value system. “The gypsies have always been famous with their love to children and families with many children. The family and the children are their main value” /Marushiakova, Popov, 1993/. “On the third place in the hierarchy of our values after the freedom and the family are the children. In the Roma family each child has place depending on the sex, age and the contribution in earning means for living.” /Nunev, 1998/.

*“Well, but we the gypsies, do not want to have one or two children. We want them to have*



*brothers and sisters. Third babe was bore, again boy. We talked with my husband that we are not going to remain alone and after 8 years I born again boy. Now I have three boys, they live very well, as well as my daughter.” /Maria, p.1940/.*

The high birth rate many times and with pride is underlined in the memories of the born in the 30s, no matter it closely interweaves with stories for the miserable way of living in the childhood. As if in the mind of the Roma two things are connected. And this is quite explicable, keeping in mind the vision of the Roma to satisfy themselves with the minimum of the most important of the material things. The children for them are in the sphere of the spirit, the tradition, which they bear. That is why many children are subject of pride and prestige in the group.

The best proof for positive attitude of the people from the generation of the 30s – 40s towards children and the high birth rate is the attitude to the abandoned other children. In the memories clearly is to be seen the responsible attitude to them. In the stories of three of the women becomes clear that except their children they have raised other children no matter the poverty in which they lived. For example in the Roma quarter of Berkovitsa have been taken and raised 30 other children abandoned by their parents /according to informers/. In the quarter of Lom when the own children are raised and when they remain alone, the elder women bring home and take care of poorer or abandoned children, who are accepted as own. This is established also by other investigators /Leigeois, 1999/ in wider context. “The social solidarity maintains the unity of the members of the family: without marriage - rare phenomenon - remain with their parents; the orphans are given shelter without exceptions.”

*“After that I married Dzhamal. With him so and so God sent us 4 children...with Shana they became 5, Shana is taken child, Stoicho, Anchet, Lichkata and Demkata. From there we moved to live in Oshtava. And again we lived poorly.” /Pena, p.1914/.*

The taken other child is gift from God equal with the own ones. Maybe this traditional attitude to children /own and others/ explains the attitude of the people towards children from different sex. For equal are accepted and boys and girls no matter that the investigated groups are patrilineally structured and could be expected that only the sons will bear the power and the prestige of their parents and the daughters will be accepted as second quality children.

*“We were nearly equal in the house, my father did not make difference between my brothers and my sisters.” /Donka, 1940/.*

*“With us there is no difference a boy or a girl, the problem is to be alive and healthy. Eh..., when you have only boys you would like to have a girl and just the opposite.” /Elka, 1930/.*

The group self-consciousness exercises strong and long lasting action on the attitudes and the relations with children. The children – boys and girls are not accepted only like property of the parents but also as members of the group. All of them – adults and children are together not only in the private space at home, but in the public space – on the streets, the yard, the shop. “The upbringing of children is collective and is ensured by the whole family. The child lives with three or four generations more and the socialization is carried out in the frame of this community. The generations are not contradicted one to the other. They represent one general entity in which does not exist division of the world of the children from the world of the adults: the children are in constant contact with the adults and together protect themselves from negative influence of the surrounding world, they are never alone and always there are people around them.” /Liegeois, 1999/. Because in the quarters there is not heavy traffic, the small kids quietly and without control by the parents play outside not being directly observed by everyone – neighbors, relatives and all in any way, without direct control and followed by eye. Everyone except for his own child

is taking care for the security of all children.

*How are you going to look only after your children, are not the other children yours, are not they born by mother. This is only with you. If the other man or child is not in good situation and you do not you care about them. What should I control the children on the streets?! They are not alone, there are other people. They will throw an eye on them.” /Elka, 1930/.*

In the memories of nearly all informers – women there is a story about how care has been taken about the younger brothers and sisters.

*“All children, no matter what sex, work. They help their parents to pick linden, herbs, iron, they are cracking walnuts, they gather onions and potatoes. If the father is handicraftsman, he is teaching his sons and they help him. Look, my father is shoe repair and my two brothers worked with him. The girls are doing woman’s work – cleaning, brushing, washing, cooking since very young. I remember that I was crawling but I was helping mother in cleaning the dust. We were very clean with us, like in a drug store, although we were seven children. But what, the elder were looking after the younger and life was going well” /Elka, 1930/.*

Soaked in the family life the child communicates with many people. From them all the child gets caress, commands, reproaches and sometimes slaps in the face. Very early the child must learn to distinguish the moods and the wishes of the separate adults, in order to accommodate to them and to get something for his own sake. This develops exclusively good observances and knowledge of the language of the non verbal communication in contact with people. Still very young the child acquires social skills and quickly learns to be initiative and independent. “The experience, initiatives and responsibility are acquired within flexible schedules by hours and without exceptive bans. The freedom of the initiative does not mean lack of control. Simply there is not direct individual control, neither abundance of commands, implicating subordination. The control is global – realized by the whole group.” / Liegeois, 1999/.

The attitude of the grown children from the generation of the 30s could be defined as “economic” as they equally with the adults ensure subsistence. For this generation the children are economically useful assistants in life and in old ages. This is why the group normatively approves the need of “children” and not “child”. This could be explained with the exclusively difficult conditions of life – struggle for the physical survival of the family, many children, lack of food. The grown up children are places in the role of parents of the younger, when the parents and the relatives are absent or dead, and outside working equally with the parents for ensuring subsistence. Placed early in the position of adults, they show initiative and responsibility towards the close people. The childhood in the first decades of the century is connected mainly with memories for labor from earliest age and work for the survival of the family. “Such childhood, in which the kids are taking care for the survival of the family since the age of 6-7 to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is also considered “normal” in the whole of Europe. At the same time, although the compulsory primary education in Bulgaria, the school manages to cover only half of the children.” /Popova, 1999/.

*“To tell you my misery is big. Since the age 11-12 I was with tinsmiths in the villages around Trun, close to the border. But however it is. Later after one – two years I was going for bristle, my father, our quarter, the Bulgarian gypsies were going for bristle, for pig bristle. /Petko, p. 1933, Samokov/.*

*“I come from a poor family. My childhood passed difficultly, I had to start work at the age of ten in order to help my parents. We were seven member family, I had three sisters and one brother. I could not go to school because I had to work. Sometimes I worked one week, I was cleaning the houses of the rich people, I was washing, cleaning, cooking and taking care of their children. I received money, dresses and food.” /Dida, 1933/.*

On life style level the Roma born in the 30s live exclusively in the present times, do not have long term plans connected with the future. If they think about the future, it is in not traditional way – they connect it with the future marriages of their children and if they save money, it is for the marriage – this is the most important and significant for them event.

### **The school**

For the Roma born in the 30s the very idea for education is very distant and the school is accepted as a threat.

What are the grounds for negative attitude of the adults towards the school as institution?

The Roma child in the past and now grows on the border between two worlds, in which are active different rules and norms and his “close world” is not the other and just the opposite. The school as institution is connected with “the other world” and by this reason apriority the attitude to it by the side of the parents from the old generation is negatively loaded. “The parents are sometimes not decisive. They are afraid not to lose their children because the school represents passing over the border of their own perception... The child can not have at one and the same time two different cultural and social beings and to pass from one to the other every time when crossing the door of the class room... The school institution is different for the ways for socialization of the gypsy child in the family” /Jan Pierre Liegeois, 1999/.

If we add the lack of command of dominating language, the picture becomes exclusively complex, which is more, the individual can support own self-identification of significance only in environment confirming the positive primary identity. “Because the school is institution representing component of the surrounding society, is accepted by the Roma as compulsory and very often is suffered as one obligation more, as one of the tentacles, stretching to children in order to be assimilated. The school long time has been one of the means for compulsory assimilation and in this perspective it is left simply as other institution spread in front of the gypsy. The parents clearly realize the fact, that such a school can form, but forming to conform, to reform or to deform.” /Jan Pierre Liegeois, 1999/.

The French gypsologist Jan Pierre Ligeois /1993/ draws some more reasons for this attitude of the Roma towards the school: “The school is new and other closed space for the Roma. The Roma child is less integrated in the world of education, at the same time more active in social respect. The very Roma teach their children the feeling for reality, understanding the environment, liveliness, ability to strive to the other, spirit of independence, of initiatives, ability to develop different strategies for survival, feeling for rhythm and movement” /Jan Pierre Liegeois, 1999/.

The school is not connected with the future realization of the children born in the 30s. The most important for them is to know the profession of the father, if they are boys and if they are girls – labor skills, to be married and to have children. In difference with their memories about studying which are vague and fragmentary, the informers think the future of their children connected with education.

*“I am happy mother and grand mother. Although we are Roma, I have always aimed with my husband to teach our children in love towards education, labor, to be honest people and of honor. That is why they have difficulties in life especially today but they manage. I have always said: “Eat bread and salt but sleep well.” /Diana, 1936/.*

*“I like life now, because my children can study now and there are many educated people – gypsies, the people are driving good cars and already have mobile phones. Ah, the children are born ready educated.” /Velichka, 1937/.*

*“Life is non stop struggle for surviving. I bought dowry for my both daughters, but at that time there was work and I worked much in order my children not to feel that they are growing without father and so that they are not deprived from nothing. I was deprived from everything, from fashion, from entertainment, but my children missed nothing. They have always been clean and tidy, I sent them everyday to school. And my children were educated although I was alone. I do not agree with the young people today, with their understanding of life. It does not matter gypsy or Bulgarian, or Turkish, the most important is to be man with capitol letter. In every herd there is carrion, the most important is not to give up and continue struggling.” /Lidia, 1942/.*

### **The generation of the 60s**

In the autobiographical memories of the born during the 60s – 80s very distinctly is outlined the changed and imposed new model of the small family – with two and three children. They usually are raised in nuclear families, by grand mothers, because the parents are at work at other places.

*“I am an ordinary young man at the age of 26. I come from family of craftsmen and I belong to the ethnic group of Roma. I was born in the town of Kyustendil and I was raised here in the separate Roma quarter. My family had four members. I have elder brother who is unemployed and single. My parents are also unemployed. My mother by profession is hair dresser and my father has inherited his handicrafts from his father – he produces stoves for wood and coal, stove pipes etc.” /Georgi, 1976/.*

*“I was born 23 July 1964 in Sofia. I live in the quarter “Krasna polyana”. I am the second child in turn, I have a sister, who is elder than I am and younger brother.” /Elka, 1964/.*

Holders of this change are namely this generation of people, who in many respects are holders also of the new values and attitude towards themselves and the others. “One of the transformations in general, concerning the Roma family, is the reducing the size of the family groups because of the relatively long settlement, which makes difficult the regrouping, the policy of accommodation in unsuitable houses, as well as result from mixed marriages, which often isolate the obtained “not full” family.” /Liegeois, 1999/.

In the new generation children, the childhood as space and living is differentiated by the life of the adults. The children from this generation are separated as age group – they are going to school, their parents spoils them, take care of them, buy them toys and where possible they create separate rooms. As a result they are more dependent and controlled by the adults. The order, discipline, even beating is included in the memories.

*“Till the age of 18 I did not know what discothuque is, bar, I did not know what is to drink alcohol. All this was prohibited by my parents.” /Ivan, 1980/.*

*“My mother and my father were keeping much the family. I started smoking in the kindergarten, I wanted to try what is smoking, because I was looking that the others also smoke. I was still not used to taking in, but I already was smoking packet a day. Time passed, but my father caught me. I was with my brother. He beat me too much. Then I realized that the cigarettes are dangerous and not good to the health and because I was young they were hindering my growth.” /Stoyan, 1983/.*

From the children are required and are taught concrete qualities, their behavior is controlled. From the everyday life is excluded the hard labor of the children and they are looking after themselves. In the centre of the family upbringing, except the care for the health and food, object of special attention becomes the education as well as the perspectives connected with the future.

Changed are the place and the role of the school and the education in the life of the children from this new generation. Different is their story in which is present the school in difference with the informative mentioning by the born in the 30s. Probably the reasons for this are many:

- Constant settlement and work of the parents;
- The imposed model in the family with two and three children;
- The processes of desegregation of the Roma children;
- The compulsory pre-school group;
- The enlarged vision of the very children by massive introduction of Radio, TV, the mass media raise the prestige of the education and impose new models of identification and perspective.

*"I remember when I went to school I was very happy because I got acquainted with many children. At school I felt free because I got rid of the home obligations. At school I simply felt as child, I played, I learned new and unknown to me things connected with my life. But I am very sorry that I could not graduate. I reached 8 class but I did not finish it because during the first term my husband had already stolen me." /Vaska, 1968/.*

*"I studied in the kindergarten in the town. I was very well bred by my parents. Sometimes I responded to my mother and father was punishing me. He was always repeating that if I am well bread I would not have done this. He was educating me very well and taught me to address the older with respect. At school I was excellent student not only with marks but with discipline and culture. All teachers were admiring me, my knowledge and culture." /Zheni, 1985/.*

*"I spent my childhood with my grand mother and with my grand father. Still at the age of three they gavet me good education. At the same age my parents sent me to the cruche. Everybody in the quarter said that I am too young to be there. My father said that for education and culture I was not young. I learned to speak in Bulgarian very young and continued speaking only in Bulgarian. In the kindergarten there was one more girl from the quarter and because she was speaking gypsy she was called "gypsy". /Zheni, 1985/.*

No matter these new tendencies and attitude towards the school and the education, the statistics is sad. In investigation of "Alfa Research" in 2004 /11/, only 10.5% of the gypsies have secondary school, 89.5% have 8<sup>th</sup> class and less than 1% university degree.

Namely because of this worth wile are the words of Dani Peteau-Manceaux "The school of one does not mean in any case school of other. The faith in the truth of the contrary statement is widely spread attitude... In the sphere of the school institution the gypsy and not gypsy expectations differ considerably. The plans and the ambitions of the gypsies are completely different from citizens not gypsy. For the gypsies between the success at school and the social or economic success there is not any real relation. The wishes and the values of the gypsy families and the school institution are absolutely different and their meeting leads to conflicts... "/according to Liegeois, 1999/.

It is worth to think about the idea of Burger and Lookman /1999/, that "To be successful the school socialisation, the taught by the teacher material should be "made like at home", making it alive /i.e. as alive as "the home world of the child", relevant/ which means to connect it with the available in "the home world" structures /and interests/ i.e. provoking the attention of the child to cut from the natural for him objects and to transfer to "more artificial subjects" i.e. the ethnic culture to enter the school and the school to turn into school for "everyone" – place for acquiring values, dialogue and tolerance towards the "other" and the "other things".

I do not know to what extent I succeeded to draw some basic ethno-cultural characteristics of the Roma on the basis of one concrete example from the town of Lom and the

auto-biographic memories from the book “Tolerance in the difference”, but I give account to myself and can not but put accent on the fact that the Roma groups and sub-groups in Bulgaria and in the world are like the parts of puzzle which you can see and understand only if you can solve it. Unfortunately with small exceptions /11/ in Bulgaria the separate Roma groups and their culture are nearly not investigated and they have not found place in the public space, which makes these people distant and foreign to the not Roma. This is the reason the ethnic culture of the Roma not to have found place in the space of the Bulgarian education, which makes it distant and foreign to the Roma children.

Definitely I think that namely the education of the Roma is the way they can not only acquire knowledge but also new social skills for reaching values and arrangements which give possibility for successful and active adapting to the changing world.

Notes:

1. In Bulgaria the Roma are third in number ethnic community in the country after the Bulgarians and the Turks. The data from the last counting of the population shows that during the last 120 years the number of gypsies is quickly increasing – 100000 at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – to 350000 in 2000. According to the opinion of specialists these data is too low. The reason is that part of the Roma – 30% identify themselves as Turks and 13% as Wallachians. As approximate number is pointed 800000. For 65.8% of the Roma with us – mother tongue is Roma language, for about 8% - mother tongue is Bulgarian and for 30% - mother tongue is Turkish. Over 55% of the Roma are Christians, one big part being protestants /Marushiakova, Popov, 1993/. Till the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Roma had unsettled and nomadic way of living, today 90% of them are settled. Fully gypsy villages in Bulgaria there are not, with exception some of them. The Roma living in towns are 53,7%. They are relatively regularly geographically distributed. They live in all districts, but the highest share is in the districts of: Sliven /13.5%/ , Montana /10.7%/ and smallest in the Western Rhodopes and in Gabrovo region. The Roma in Bulgaria are exclusively mixed community, composed of more than 20 sub-groups and groups. /Marushiakova, Popov, 1993/.

2. Marushiakova, E., Popov, V., The gypsies in the Bulgarian press – 1992, S, 1999; Grekova, M., Kirilova, Ad., Gologanova, h. How the gypsies are present in the life of Bulgarians, magazine Sociological Problems, 1996, issue 2 and etc.

In the conducted on 27 September 2004 discussion “Ethno political questions and the membership of Bulgaria in the European Union”, organized by newspaper “Capital” / 16-22 October 2004/ are quoted data from “Alfa Research” from which is seen that only 38.2% from the Bulgarians and 36.2% of the Turks would like to work with Roma or would take them for work and only 25% would like to have them as neighbors or friends. Still lower are the values connected with the arrangement for accepting the marriage of the children with Roma – 4.2% for Bulgarians and 1.5% for the Turks. The interesting here is that the two big ethnos in Bulgaria have similar negative attitude towards the Roma.

In the “Bulgarian uni-lingual dictionary” published 1976 by team with head L. Andreichin – “gypsy” is defined as “man from spread all over Europe and Asia from Indian origin with nomadic or settled way of living” and “gypsy life style” as “Inherent to gypsy qualities and actions: begging too much bargaining etc.” From here is seen that in the public space this community is characterized by its way of living or by concrete deviant actions that have been institutionalized as belonging to it qualities and not by its actual ethno cultural characteristics.

3. The greater part of the autobiographical memories on which is based the analysis are published in the book “Tolerance in the difference” /Live worlds and values of Roma culture/ - Pashova, 2002. Used are not published materials collected by A.P. on terrain investigation in Lom in March 2002.

4. See Jan Pierre Liegeois /1999/.

5. Unfortunately their number is not exact because the separate groups and sub-groups are in complex hierarchy and sometimes have more than one “name” which additionally throws fog on the picture.

/Marushiakova, Popov, 1993/.

6. Act No.258 of the Council of Ministres dated 17 Oct 1958 “For arranging the problem of the gypsy population in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria.

7. The different authors define quite wide limits of time for the beginning of the migration processes from Ancient India and their settlement all over the world started in the V century and coming to Europe and the Balkans constantly in the XV century. The first more or less sure historical data for gypsy presence on the Balkan Peninsula are from IX – XI centuries - the time of the Byzantine empire. One fact is sure – when in the 14<sup>th</sup> century begins the Ottoman invasion and the conquering of the Balkan Peninsula, here there are already constantly settled for comparatively long time gypsies.

8. In the “Bulgarian uni-lingual dictionary”, published by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in 1976 by team with head L. Andreichin – “nomad” is “a man from immigrant tribes; wanderer, roamer” and “wanderer” means “man without constant settlement, gypsy and roamer”

9. The autobiographical memories are from the book of Pashova, An. “Tolerance in the difference” /live worlds and values of the Roma culture/, Blagoevgrad, 2002.

10. According to data of the World Bank /2005/ the gypsies in Bulgaria and Romania are on first place about the death rate of children in Europe and the life time is on the average with 10 years less than the rest of the population in Bulgaria. The quarters-ghettos visited nearly have not old people above the age of 50. Undoubtedly the poverty is the first and most serious factor for the high rate of illness among the Roma population. It is incomparable with the one of the rest poor Bulgarian population. The question is about inherited poverty, deepened by massive and long term unemployment of the Roma. According to the World Bank from 1995, the poverty of the gypsies in Bulgaria is 9 times higher in comparison with the Bulgarians. The inadequate nutrition, because the lack of money, is also big problem in most of the quarters. This is a factor influencing particularly serious on children, old and chronically ill.

11. Newspaper “Capital” /16-22 October 2004/.

12. Marushiakova, Popov, /1993/; Tomova, /1995/; Kmetova, /1992/ and others.

## REFERENCES

Алексиев, Б. Пространството при циганите. – В: Етническата картина в България (проучвания през 1992 г.). С., 1993.

Георгиев, Ж., Томова, И., Кънев, К., Грекова, М. Етнокултурната ситуация в България – 1992 г. Социологическо изследване.

Георгиева, Ив. Изследване върху бита и културата на българските цигани в Сливен, Изв. ЕИМ, т. IX, 1966.

Грекова, М., Кирилова, Ад., Гологанова, Н. Как циганите присъстват в живота на българите, сп. Социологически проблеми, 1996, кн. 2.

Кварталът и хората (Столипиново – началото на една дълга промяна), С., 1997.

Кметова, Т. “Лонджа” – специфична форма на парична взаимопомощ сред циганите в София. - Български фолклор, 1992, кн. 2.

Кючуков, Хр. Турските цигани в Североизточна България. – В: Аспекти на етнокултурната ситуация в България. С., 1992.

Кючуков, Хр. Занаятите на турските цигани от Североизточна България. – В: Етническата картина в България (проучвания през 1992 г.). С., 1993.

Лацкова, И. Родена съм под щастлива звезда, София 2000

Лиежоа, Жан Пиер. Роми, Цигани, Чергари, София, 1999

Марушиакова, Е. Етническа характеристика на циганите в България. – Българска

- етнография, 1991, кн. 4.
- Марушиакова, Е. Циганските групи в България и тяхното етническо самосъзнание. – Българска етнография, 1992, кн. 1.
- Марушиакова, Е. Циганите в България и тяхната религия. – В: Аспекти на етнокултурната ситуация в България. С., 1992.
- Марушиакова, Е. Отношения между циганските групи в България. – В: Етническата картина в България (проучвания през 1992 г.). С., 1993.
- Марушиакова, Е., Попов, В. Циганите в България, С., 1993.
- Марушиакова, Е., Попов, В., съст. Циганите в българския печат – 1992 г., С., 1992.
- Марушиакова, Е., Попов, В., Кючуков, Хр. Беседи за българските роми (циганите). С., 1992, Министерство на образованието и науката.
- Нунев, Й. Ромското дете и неговата възпитателна среда, С., 1998.
- Пашова, Ан. Толерантност в различността /Жизнени светове и ценности на ромската култура/, Благоевград, 2002
- Пашова, Ан. /съставител/, Ромското дете и неговата социализация, Благоевград, 2003
- Пашова, Ан. Ромското дете и проблемите на неговата социализация, Сб. Ромското дете и неговата социализация, Благоевград, 2003 с. 5 – 11
- Пашова, Ан., Исторически промени и тенденции в отношението към децата и детството в ромското семейство, Сб. Ромското дете и неговата социализация, Благоевград, 2003, с.11 – 53
- Попова, К. Националното дете, София, 1999.
- Попов, В. Циганите в България и тяхното етническо самосъзнание. В: Аспекти на етнокултурната ситуация в България. С., 1992.
- Попов, В. Преферираното етническо самосъзнание при циганите в България. В: - Аспекти на етнокултурната ситуация в България. С., 1992.
- Попов, В. Българи и цигани (междуетнически отношения). – В: Етническата картина в България (проучвания през 1992 г.). С., 1993.
- Томова, И. Циганите в преходния период. С., 1995.
- Турел, А. Циганите – транснационално малцинство, сп. Компас, 1998, кн. 3-4.
- Фотев, Г. Другият етнос, С., 1994.