



III. 1  
Map showing the possible migration route of the Vend Roma in Somogy, Veszprém and Zala.

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## Vend Roma in Hungary

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Vend Roma represent one of the first Romani migrant groups that arrived to Hungary in the 15th century and they are present in the Austro-Hungarian borderland since then. In contrast to other indigenous Romani groups in Hungary, the Vend Roma were semi-itinerant until the mid of the 20th century and, in this regard, their way of life is more similar to that of the Sinti and Vlax Roma. Today Vend Roma are characterised by a self-imposed cultural and linguistic assimilation into the Hungarian society. What constitutes the group of Vend Roma is, however, the shared historical experience, a group identity, a system of kin groups, a common language, the former semi-itinerant way of life and traditional occupations. Although the dialect comparison suggests that the Vend Roma were historically, linguistically and probably also culturally closely connected with the Burgenland and Prekmurje Roma, due to the geographical distance the Vend Roma do not maintain any contact with them, neither the collective memory of the community can provide evidence of this kind.

### GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION AND MIXED MARRIAGES

There has not been much attention paid to the culture of the Vend Roma, owing to the fact that it comprises only few hundred Romani families which are scattered on a relatively large area in Hungary. Most Vend Roma live in Southwestern Hungary, especially in Somogy and Zala counties whereas there are only a couple of isolated communities in other parts of Western Hungary like in the Vas, Veszprém and Győr-Moson-Sopron counties. [III. 4]

Southwestern Hungary is not only the “centre” of the Vend Roma but also the Boyash (in Hungarian *beás*, in Romani *kopanáši* or *koritári*), a group of Romani descent whose members traditionally speak a dialect of Romanian. As a Vend Romani woman said in 2011, the Vend Roma “are dying away,

there are not many left. You have the Boyash everywhere, many of them... You can see them everywhere. So [the Vend Roma] are just in these few villages, nowhere else. But the Boyash! There is no village where they would not have been settled down. They procreated a lot, and we are going to die away, that’s it!” The fear that the Vend Roma would ‘disappear’ does not result merely from the size of the Vend Romani group as compared to the Boyash, but it is also related to the fact that group-internal endogamy has lost its importance in the last decades. Consequently, mixed marriages became well accepted especially with the Boyash, but also with members of other Romani groups as well as with local Hungarians. Romani is generally not transmitted to the children in mixed marriages, since the parents prefer to use Hungarian in such a multilingual setting. The cultural and linguistic assimilation

Mró dad odá kada álo, odoleske odá phennahi boboši. Mro papu meg odá prahošno žukláši sin. T' akor uđe mró dad lija mrá da. And' adá má amen bobošno žuklášta sam. Mer má adá keverék hi. Taj afka hi adala, hod' com sármazind'am.

When my father came, they called him *boboši*. And my grandfather was mixed: *prahoši* and *žukláši*. Then my father married my mother. That's why we are mixed: *boboši* and *žukláši*. Because we are already mixed. So this is how we have intermarried.

## III. 2

A Vend Romani man, Transdanubia, Hungary, 2011.

(from Bodnárová 2015)

Šuko kašt šoha na tradla pátrin. | Sako te áchel tel pri cerha. Lejt vákerel kaske pherdo hi leskro muj dandanca. Ko so peske távla, odá hala. | Kitivar téle o kereko, aťivar te upre. Lóko páni hóri jarko čhinel.

Dry tree will never have leaves. | Everybody should stay under his own tent. | It is easy to speak for those who have the mouth full of teeth. | What one cooks for oneself, should also eat it. | As many times the wheel is down, it is also up. | Slow water makes deep pit.

## III. 3

Vend Romani proverbs collected by Melinda Rézműves. The transcription of the Romani proverbs has been changed in accordance with the orthography used in Romani linguistics.

(from Rézműves 2000)

of the Vend Roma is most significant in localities outside of the Somogy and Zala counties. Even though the people there are aware of their Romani origin, they often have only weak Romani identity.

## ETHNONYMS AND KIN GROUPS

'Vend Roma' (in Romani *vendetike/vendicke róma*) is an endonym used first by the ethnographer and linguist Kamill Erdős which has been accepted and since then used in the ethnographic and linguistic literature. Nevertheless, today this denomination is not well-known by the group members, which does not exclude the possibility that it could have been more dominant in the past.

Most Vend Roma primarily use the endonym *róma* 'Roma' in Romani. In the Zala and Somogy counties the Vend Roma use the professionym *keseriši/šlajferi* (in Hungarian *köszörüs*) 'Grinders' when they refer to their own group as compared to other Romani groups. In the Vas county the term 'Grinder' is a derogatory word with the approximate meaning 'vagabond', and thus the local Vend Roma call themselves 'Musician' or 'Hungarian Roma'. Neither the Vend Roma in Veszprém county accept the denomination 'Grinders'. Instead, the ethnonyms 'Sinti' or 'German Roma' are used. The Sinti Roma in Hungary who used to speak the Northwestern dialect of Romani call the Vend Roma, the speakers of the Central dialect of Romani, in Veszprém county by the term *hinsznári*. The reason that group boundaries are merging can be found in the fact that both the Sinti and the Vend Roma were engaged as grinders and carousels and had a semi-itinerant way of life. There are also some intergroup marriages between them.

Vend Roma are divided into several smaller kin groups called *fajta* 'kin'. As a Vend Romani woman said, "[s]o there were these groups in the past, and the hate remained; or maybe the word hate is too strong... Well, we differentiated between each other." The majority of Vend Roma are aware of their own *fajta*, i.e. sub-ethnic identity, but it is of no cultural importance any more. The most common names of kin groups are the *boboši* (from *bobo* 'bean'), *prahoši* (from *pra-*

*ho* 'dust'), *žukláši* (from *žukel* 'dog'), *pataváši* (from *patavo* 'foot-rag'), *feňó* (from Hungarian *fenyő*) 'pine tree', *tócko* (from Hungarian *tót*) 'Slovak', *lagaló* (from Hungarian dial. *lágälő*) 'meadow', and *čeró* (unknown origin). [III. 2]

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Vend Roma are among the first Romani groups that arrived to Hungary in the early 15th century. They were providing services to the majority population in the larger area of Transdanubia which required a semi-itinerant way of life. They permanently settled down only in the second half of the 20th century.

The heavy German influence on the Romani dialect spoken by the Vend Roma indicates that they spent a considerable time in the German-speaking area, most probably in the southern parts of Burgenland in Austria and in the adjacent areas of Hungary and Slovenia. Still today, there are Romani groups speaking a closely related Romani dialect in Austrian Burgenland and Slovenian Prekmurje. On the Hungarian side of the border, however, we find only very few Vend Romani communities. These localities are directly at the Austro-Hungarian border in the Győr-Moson-Sopron and Vas counties. The dialect comparison of Vend Romani with Burgenland and Prekmurje Romani suggests that the Vend Roma migrated to Somogy and Veszprém counties from the Austrian Burgenland and the closely adjacent areas in Hungary whereas the Vend Roma in Zala seems to be closely related to the Prekmurje Roma. [III. 1]

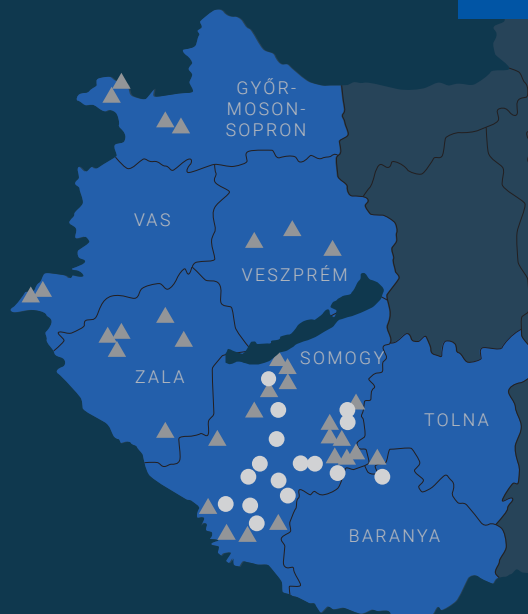
The denomination 'Vend' itself supports the hypothesis that the previous dwelling place of the Vend Roma is found in the border region of Hungary, Austria and Slovenia. The ethnonym 'Vend' is used in Hungary in reference to the ethnic Slovenes living in the region called *Vendvidék* 'the land of Vends'. This small region is situated in southwestern Hungary, near the borders of Hungary with Slovenia and Austria. According to some historical records, in the 17th and 18th centuries there was a migration of Slovene families of the Slovenian Prekmurje and Hungarian Vendvidék to the Zala and Somogy counties. This Slovene ethnic group has been almost

## III. 4

## The localities with Vend Romani speakers in western Hungary

(adapted from Bodnárová 2013)

- Counties of Transdanubia in Hungary
- ▲ < 20 speakers
- > 20 speakers



entirely linguistically assimilated to the Hungarian-speaking majority by now. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether the term ‘Vend’ indicates that these Roma used to live in Vendvidék and migrated to Zala and Somogy together with the Slovenes or it has been only later transmitted to the Roma from the surrounding population of ethnic Slovenes in Zala and Somogy.

The Hungarian linguist, József Vekerdi, has drawn attention to the fact that the Slavic loanwords in Vend Romani are of Croatian origin, more precisely of the Chakavian dialect of Croatian, rather than of Slovenian. The Chakavian dialect of Croatian is spoken in Burgenland by the Burgenland Croats who emigrated in the 16th century from areas in Croatia that had been occupied by Turks. Indeed, a very common family name among the Vend Roma is Horváth which is a Hungarian word for ‘Croatian’. This certainly also points to the historical connection between the two ethnic groups.

Another common Vend Romani surname, Baranyai, refers to the county called Baranya in southwestern Hungary while the surname Pápai refers to the town Pápa which is situated in the Veszprém county. It is possible that these localities served as dwelling places for the Vend Roma or they played an important role for some other reasons. Further common surnames among the Vend Roma are Pfeiffer and Károlyi.

## CHANGE IN WAY OF LIFE AND PROFESSIONS

The economic and social status of the Vend Roma varies from locality to locality. In general, most Vend Roma are economically and culturally well integrated into the local Hungarian society while only few Vend Romani communities, especially those who live in segregated settlements, are characterised by poverty, unemployment and low social status.

Vend Roma were semi-itinerant at least until the second half of the 20th century. They usually migrated with horse carts within Transdanubia (i.e. Western Hungary) and probably also beyond the borders. There were around eight to ten families who gathered and travelled together except in winter when they stayed in their winter dwelling place. The travelling groups left behind signs for each other in order to be able

to meet later. The sign was usually a piece of branch laid by the roadside with the thicker part of the branch pointing the direction. A branch with straw, a wreath made out of blades of grass, or a piece of the women’s skirt which was bound to a bush or a tree trunk could also serve as a sign.

Vend Roma usually built their tents near to the forest. The head of the family slept in the front part of the tent, followed by the mother with the smallest children, the daughters and the back part of the tent was reserved for the sons from the youngest till the oldest. The women were responsible to care for the children, to wash and cook. The women also contributed to the income of the family. They gathered in groups of around 10 women and went to the villages to offer the villagers fortune-telling from palm or cards.

A nomadic life-style was also required by the traditional professions of the group. The vast majority of Vend Roma has made their living from grinding knives; others operated carousels and shooting galleries, repairing pots or umbrellas, collecting herbs or weaving baskets.

The semi-itinerant way of life and traditional professions were gradually abandoned during socialism. The Vend Roma were integrated into the labour market mostly as labourers or unskilled workers. Although after the political transition in 1989 many Hungarian Roma lost their jobs, the situation was somehow better in the economically wealthier western part of Hungary. Unemployment hit most the Vend Roma who live in isolated settlements, while those who live in the villages or towns have usually full-time employment or at least a stable part-time or seasonal employment.

The winter dwelling places of the Vend Roma have gradually become their permanent residence. They were usually situated in the fringes of villages and towns, or rarely in a settlement which was geographically distant. Later, several Vend Romani families managed to buy family houses in the centre of villages and towns, and thus nowadays live scattered among the majority population. Nevertheless, there have been recently formed some concentrations of Vend Roma in a street or a quarter of villages or towns.

If someone died, the Vend Roma used to make a cross from a piece of tin which had a rounded top, long main body

The earliest attempt to document the oral folklore of the Vend Roma was made in the second half of the 20th century by József Vekerdi, a controversial Hungarian linguist who had in his later works even denied the existence of an independent Romani culture. After he was not successful during his field research in collecting oral folklore among the Vend Roma in a couple of localities, he came to the short-sighted conclusion that “[n]o traces of

Gypsy folklore are manifest with the Vend Gypsies in Hungary. They have no folk songs. They sing Hungarian popular songs (in Hungarian) with the remarkable restriction that they seem to borrow the Hungarian songs not direct from Hungarian but through Vlax Gypsy (Lovári) intermediation. [...] At variance with songs, no traces of folk tales could be found in Vend Gypsy folklore”.

(from Vekerdi 1984, p. 66-67)

### III. 5

The above statement is opposed by four Vend Romani tales published by Glaeser, Halwachs and Heinschink (1999) and six tales collected by Rézműves (2006).

and ruffled side parts. They placed this cross on the grave of the deceased, and so the Roma could recognise that the deceased person was a Vend Rom. This practice is no longer in use.

Today the Vend Roma do not differ considerably in religion or clothing from the local Hungarians. Regarding traditional foods and dishes the Vend Roma often mention the hedgehog, the suslik, the young fox and the boar. The Vend Roma used to have dogs which were trained to find the hedgehogs and foxes. They distinguished between two species of hedgehogs: the *žuklano borzo* ‘dog-like hedgehog’ and the *tűskéšno borzo* ‘spiny hedgehogs’. The former species was forbidden to eat among some Vend Roma. Others believed that the hedgehogs may eat corpses, since they are often seen in graveyards. As a Vend Romani woman shared her personal experience: *Borzo. But žéne len te hanahi. Lačho mas len siňa. Má akán ni nán afka sar régen, sar má and- oká világo siňa. P- akán má sajder dikjom, žánes, ando frajthof, hod’ lačhárd’om mrá dakro širo, lakro grobo. Dikjom, hod’ ári álo*

*má dugo angle phuf, éppen odóthar. Šoha le manca niko na hahavlahi búter. De älinjalijom akor.* ‘The hedgehog. Many people ate them. They had tasty meat. Today is different; it is not like it used to be. You know, I saw in the graveyard when I prepared the grave of my mother that a hedgehog came out of the earth, exactly from the grave. Since then nobody was ever able to feed me with a hedgehog. In that moment I fainted.’ (Vend Romani woman, Transdanubia, Hungary, 2011)

The hedgehog motive appears also in the Vend Romani oral folklore. For instance in a Vend Romani tale collected by the ethnographer Melinda Rézműves, the hedgehog is seen as a divine creature who brings luck to the Roma: *Taj akkor, jekhvar čak phrad’ini i phuv thaj ar álo jekh borzo othar. Phenel leske: Ere šun rom! Ma rov! Me le Devleskro manuš sum, čak man fer kerd’a armáňa mro dad, taj avka újom borzo.* ‘And suddenly the earth opened and a hedgehog came out. He says to him: Listen, Rom! Do not cry! I am a man from God. I have been damned by my father and this is how I became a hedgehog.’

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