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by Lane B. Baker

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# MARGINAL PEOPLE, MARGINAL HISTORY: A HISTORIOGRAPHY OF MEDIEVAL ROMANI IMMIGRATION

LANE B. BAKER



Fig. 1: 'Von den swartzen getouften heiden die miteinander gen Bernn kament' (Of the black, baptized heathens who came together to Bern). Illustration in Diebold Schilling the Elder's *Spiezer Chronik*, Burgerbibliothek Bern, MS.h.h.I.16, fo. 749<sup>v</sup> (c.1484-6). Licensed under CC BY-NC 4.0 [<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>].

Across the Holy Roman Empire, fifteenth-century chroniclers wrote of strange visitations. In 1417, 'Tatars' came to Magdeburg.<sup>1</sup> The next year, 'Egyptians' arrived in Augsburg.<sup>2</sup> The year after that, hundreds of 'baptized heathens' travelled through the cities of the Swiss Confederation.<sup>3</sup> It was much the same in other places. 'Greeks' appeared in Frankfurt (1422), 'Indians' in Bologna (1422), 'Saracens' in Paris (1427).<sup>4</sup> Writers throughout Western Europe chronicled these unexpected guests with a mixture of amazement and suspicion. By the end of the fifteenth century, most observers had concluded that these immigrants actually belonged to a single people, hitherto unknown in this part of the world. These late medieval texts gesture towards the immigration of the Roma, the largest voluntary population movement into Central and Western Europe since the Magyars in the tenth century.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik* (written c.1420–30). See Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (ed.), *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert*, vol. vii: *Die Chroniken der niedersächsischen Städte: Magdeburg. Erster Band* (Leipzig, 1869), 345–6. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are the author's own.

<sup>2</sup> *Anonymous Chronicle of Augsburg* (written c.1420–40). See Ferdinand Frensdorff (ed.), 'Chronik von 1368–1406 mit Fortsetzung bis 1447', in Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (ed.), *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte*, vol. iv: *Die Chroniken der schwäbischen Städte: Augsburg. Erster Band* (Leipzig, 1865), 1–200, at 119.

<sup>3</sup> Conrad Justinger, *Berner Chronik* (written c.1421–30). See Gottlieb L. Studer (ed.), *Die Berner-Chronik des Conrad Justinger* (Bern, 1871), 286.

<sup>4</sup> For Frankfurt, see Institut für Stadtgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main, Fonds H.02.05, Extrakte aus den Rechen- und anderen Ratsbüchern 1341–1618, no. 1, fo. 59<sup>v</sup>. For Bologna, see Lodovico A. Muratori (ed.), *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, 25 vols. (Milan, 1723–51), xviii. 611. For Paris, see Collette Beaune (ed.), *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris de 1405 à 1449* (Paris, 1990), no. 468.

<sup>5</sup> As affirmed by the First World Romani Congress in 1971, 'Rom' (pl. 'Roma', adj. 'Romani') is the preferred ethnonym of various diasporic communities with linguistic and genetic ancestry in northern India. These words derive from a native word for 'person' and are etymologically unrelated to Rome or Romania. With some exceptions, most notably in Great Britain, Romani communities disavow 'Gypsy' and its Continental equivalents (*Zigeuner*, *Tsigane*, *Gitano*, *Zingaro*, *Cygan*, etc.) as slurs. Throughout this essay, I use 'Roma' and 'Romani' to describe the people referenced in medieval sources by various other names, even as I engage with those constructs in their historical context. See Matt T. Salo, 'The Expression of Ethnicity in Rom Oral Tradition', *Western Folklore* 36/1

Despite the many historical traces left by these immigrants, Geraldine Heng has recently described the Roma as ‘a people whose lives and histories, unlike those of premodern Jews and Muslims, are as yet under-researched in medievalist scholarship.’<sup>6</sup> Even this understates the severity of the problem. The bibliography of medieval Romani immigration into Western Europe amounts to perhaps two pages of citations.<sup>7</sup> Not a single modern monograph exists. When detailing this period, most surveys of Romani history make do with a smattering of recycled references to sourcebooks or print editions. Despite the Roma’s entanglement with many threads of late medieval history, their first decades of life in Western Europe continue to attract little attention from those who specialize in that period. For decades, scholars of minorities, mobility, and marginality in premodern Europe have noticed and lamented this silence.<sup>8</sup> Far fewer have explained the gap’s persistence or offered constructive advice on how to fill it.

The Roma’s earliest years in Western Europe remain poorly understood despite a flowering of scholarship on other periods of Romani (1977), 33–56; Albert Thomas Sinclair, ‘The Word “Rom”’, *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* (hereafter *JGLS*): *New Series*, 3/1 (1909), 33–42; and ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Roma’ in *RomArchive*, at [<https://www.romarchive.eu/en/terms/>], accessed 4 July 2023. See also ‘RomArchive Ethical Guidelines’, at [<https://blog.romarchive.eu/english/romarchive-ethical-guidelines/#fn1>], accessed 4 July 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Geraldine Heng, ‘“Gypsies”: A Global Race in Diaspora, A Slave Race for the Centuries’, in ed., *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2018), 417–55, at 417.

<sup>7</sup> For introductions to the literature, see János M. Bak, ‘Gypsies’, in Robert E. Bjork (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 2010), ii. 758; Robert Jütte, ‘Zigeuner’, in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 10 vols. (Munich, 1980–99), ix. cols. 610–12; and Joseph R. Strayer, ‘Gypsies’, in id. (ed.), *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 13 vols. (New York, 1982–9), vi. 40–1.

<sup>8</sup> Maria R. Boes, ‘Unwanted Travellers: The Tightening of City Borders in Early Modern Germany’, in Thomas Betteridge (ed.), *Borders and Travellers in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2007), 87–111, at 96–8; Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller (ed.), *Randgruppen der spätmittelalterlichen Gesellschaft: Ein Hand- und Studienbuch*, 3rd edn (Warendorf, 2001), 8, 56, 103; Strayer, ‘Gypsies’, 41; Franz Irsigler and Arnold Lassotta, *Bettler und Gaukler, Dirnen und Henker: Randgruppen und Außenseiter in Köln 1300–1600* (Cologne, 1984), 167–78; František Graus, ‘Die Randständigen’, in Peter Moraw (ed.), *Unterwegssein im Spätmittelalter* (Berlin, 1985), 93–104, at 97, n. 25; and Werner Danckert, *Unehrliche Leute: Die verfemten Berufe* (Bern, 1963), 9, 267, 282.

history. Especially since the Roma Civil Rights Movement, scholars from a variety of backgrounds have documented six centuries of Romani survival against Western European prejudice, assimilation, and violence.<sup>9</sup> Historians and activists have channelled much of this energy towards a reckoning with the atrocities of the Holocaust, which claimed the lives of nearly half of all European Roma.<sup>10</sup> From this vantage point, scholars have increasingly examined the plight of Romani communities in earlier periods.<sup>11</sup> Within the German world,

<sup>9</sup> A helpful overview of the modern field, with special emphasis on Britain and Ireland, is Becky Taylor and Jim Hinks, 'What Field? Where? Bringing Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History into View', *Cultural and Social History*, 18/5 (2021), 629–50. Notable surveys and introductions to Romani history include Becky Taylor, *Another Darkness, Another Dawn: A History of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers* (London, 2014); Klaus-Michael Bogdal, *Europa erfindet die Zigeuner: Eine Geschichte von Faszination und Verachtung* (Berlin, 2011); Leo Lucassen and Will Willems, 'The Weakness of Well-Ordered Societies: Gypsies in Western Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and India, 1400–1914', *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)*, 26/3 (2003), 283–313; Ian Hancock, *We Are the Romani People / mes am e Rromane džene* (Hatfield, 2002); Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford, 1992); and Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Les Tsiganes* (Paris, 1983). For a diverse archive of diasporic Romani history, see Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma e.V., *RomArchive*, at [<https://www.romarchive.eu/en/>], accessed 4 July 2023.

<sup>10</sup> See Arnold Weiss et al. (eds.), *Zwei Welten: Sinti und Roma. Schritte zur Anerkennung als NS-Verfolgte und antiziganistische Kontinuität* (Berlin, 2022); Eliyana R. Adler and Kateřina Čapkova (eds.), *Jewish and Romani Families in the Holocaust and its Aftermath* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2020); Ari Joskowicz, 'Separate Suffering, Shared Archives: Jewish and Romani Histories of Nazi Persecution', *History and Memory*, 28/1 (2016), 110–40; Anton Weiss Wendt (ed.), *The Nazi Genocide of the Roma: Reassessment and Commemoration* (New York, 2013); Gilad Margalit, *Germany and its Gypsies: A Post-Auschwitz Ordeal* (Madison, WI, 2002); id., 'The Uniqueness of the Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies', *Romani Studies*, 10/2 (2000), 185–210; Guenter Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies* (Oxford, 2000); Michael Zimmerman, *Rassenutopie und Genozid: Die nationalsozialistische 'Lösung der Zigeunerfrage'* (Hamburg, 1996); Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxton, *Gypsies under the Swastika* (Hatfield, 1995); Sybil Milton, 'Nazi Policies towards Roma and Sinti, 1933–1945', *JGLS: Series 5*, 2/1 (1992), 1–18; and Gabrielle Tyrnauer, 'Holocaust History and the Gypsies', *Shofar*, 7/2 (1989), 13–24.

<sup>11</sup> For broad-ranging studies of anti-Romani prejudice and exclusion, see Michael Hayes and Thomas Acton (eds.), *Travellers, Gypsies, Roma: The Demonisation of Difference* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2007); Jim MacLaughlin, 'European Gypsies and the Historical Geography of Loathing', *Review (Fernand Braudel*

the history of anti-Romani legislation goes back to at least 1497, when the Holy Roman Empire ordered the mass expulsion of all so-called *Zigeuner*.<sup>12</sup> The preceding eighty years, in which no state-wide policies controlled Romani life in Western Europe, have proven more difficult to integrate into the existing frameworks of Romani history. This era of energetic westward immigration, a period of Romani history that linguist and activist Ian Hancock has dubbed *O Buxljaripe* ('The Expansion'), cries out for fresh analysis.<sup>13</sup>

This essay will critically assess the ways in which scholars have approached the initial years of Romani immigration. What have we learned so far? What remains to be learned? How might we deepen and broaden our histories of the medieval Roma? In order for the Roma to take their rightful position in the mainstream of medieval scholarship, we must reflect upon the long-standing tendency of scholars to overlook or avoid this chapter of European and Romani history. My analysis will centre on the German-speaking world, which produced some of the earliest historical evidence for westward Romani immigration and played an instrumental role in the creation of both 'gypsology' and modern Romani studies.<sup>14</sup> Even so, the diasporic

*Center*), 22/1 (1999), 31–59; Ian Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome: An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution* (Ann Arbor, 1987); and Rüdiger Vossen and Wolf Dietrich, *Zigeuner: Roma, Sinti, Gitanos, Gypsies zwischen Verfolgung und Romanisierung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983).

<sup>12</sup> 9 Feb. 1497 (Diet of Lindau); Heinz Gollwitzer (ed.), *Deutsche Reichstagsakten: Mittlere Reihe*, vol. vi: *Reichstage von Lindau, Worms und Freiburg 1496–1498* (Göttingen, 1979), 344, no. 51. Reiterated on 4 Sept. 1498 (Diet of Freiburg im Breisgau); *ibid.* 737, no. 119. Reissued on 10 Sept. 1500 (Diet of Augsburg); Johann Jacob Schmauß and Heinrich Christian von Senckenberg (eds.), *Neue und vollständigere Sammlung der Reichs-abschiede*, 4 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, 1747), ii, 80, no. 28. For a timeline of the Roma in Germany, see Ian Hancock, 'Gypsy History in Germany and Neighboring Lands: A Chronology to the Holocaust and Beyond', *Nationalities Papers*, 19/3 (1991), 395–412.

<sup>13</sup> *O Buxljaripe* is the final chapter in Ian Hancock's four-part periodization of Romani migration history. It follows the departure from India (*O Teljaripe*), the journey through Western Asia (*O Nakhipe*), and the immigration into Byzantine Europe (*O Aripe*). Hancock, *We are the Romani People*, 29–33.

<sup>14</sup> Regarding the relationship between the Roma and Germany, see Susan Tebbutt (ed.), *Sinti and Roma: Gypsies in German-Speaking Society and Literature* (New York, 1998).

nature of Romani history demands that we transcend the national divisions that have long fragmented the study of European history. This goes doubly for the immigration period, in which Romani groups moved with relative ease between various states. Studying Romani history requires an embrace of mobility, both as a historical concept and a research practice. The long academic marginalization of the medieval Roma points to the ways in which national and disciplinary boundaries limit our knowledge of the past. This essay sounds a call for scholarly collaboration across and despite these borders.

### Sources

Every study of the medieval Roma must grapple with the dearth of written sources from a Romani perspective. Indeed, Romani communities have historically relied upon oral traditions to preserve and transmit community knowledge.<sup>15</sup> It is only in the last fifty years that some communities have adopted alphabetic scripts for the Romani languages (*rromani čhib*), previously attested only in transcriptions by outsiders.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> For various approaches to Romani oral history, see Julia Blandfort, 'Moving Stories: Roma and the Oral Tradition of a Transnational People', in Medardus Brehl, Andreas Eckl, and Kristin Platt (eds.), *The Mediterranean Other – The Other Mediterranean* (Leiden, 2019), 69–77; Jake Bowers, 'Gypsies and Travellers Accessing their Own Past: The Surrey Project and Aspects of Minority Representation', in Hayes and Acton (eds.), *Travellers, Gypsies, Roma*, 17–29; Jelena Čvorović, 'Gypsy Oral History in Serbia: From Poverty to Culture', *Oral History*, 33/1 (2005), 57–67; Paloma Gay y Blasco, "'We Don't Know Our Descent': How the Gitanos of Jarana Manage the Past', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 7/4 (2001), 631–47; and Michael Stewart, *The Time of the Gypsies* (Boulder, CO, 1997). On Romani orality in other social contexts, see Jelena Čvorović, 'A Gypsy, a Butterfly, and a Gadje: Narrative as Instruction for Behaviour', *Folklore*, 119/1 (2008), 29–40; ead., 'Gypsies Drown in Shallow Water: Oral Narratives among Macva Gypsies', *Journal of Folklore Research*, 43/2 (2006), 129–48; Walter O. Weyrauch, 'Oral Legal Traditions of Gypsies and Some American Equivalents', *American Journal of Comparative Law*, 45/2 (1997), 407–42; and Béla Gunda, 'Gypsy Medical Folklore in Hungary', *Journal of American Folklore*, 75/296 (1962), 131–46.

<sup>16</sup> Yaron Matras, 'The Future of Romani: Toward a Policy of Linguistic Pluralism', *Roma Rights Quarterly*, 1 (2005), 31–44; id., 'Writing Romani: The

As a result, most histories of Romani life before the twentieth century rely entirely upon the testimony of texts written by non-Roma (*gadje*), which range from the literary to the administrative. The biases of such sources have prompted vigorous debates on the (im)possibility of accessing historical Romani experiences through European representations of 'Gypsies'.<sup>17</sup> This challenge is especially daunting for the medieval period, from which no texts have survived written by Romani authors or in a Romani language. In this respect, writing medieval Romani history differs fundamentally from the study of literate European minorities like Jewish or Muslim communities, and more closely resembles the study of non-writing communities such as peasants or enslaved people.<sup>18</sup> Recent scholarship has complicated

Pragmatics of Codification in a Stateless Language', *Applied Linguistics*, 20/4 (1999), 481-502; Donald Kenrick, 'Romani Literacy at the Crossroads', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 119 (1996), 109-23; id., 'The Development of a Standard Alphabet for Romani', *The Bible Translator*, 32/2 (1981), 215-19; Vania de Gila Kochanowski, 'Romani Language Standardization', *JGLS: Series 5*, 5/2 (1995), 97-107; and Siegmund A. Wolf, 'Zur Frage einer normierten Zigeunersprache (Basic Romani)', *Phonetica*, 5 (1960), 204-9.

<sup>17</sup> On the discursive category of the 'Gypsy' and its complex relationship to historical Romani communities, see the essays in Wulf D. Hund (ed.), *Faul, fremd und frei: Dimensionen des Zigeunerstereotyps* (Münster, 2014); Klaus-Michael Bogdal, *Europa erfindet die Zigeuner*; id., "Dieses schwarz, ungestaltet und wildschweifige Gesind": Symbolische Codierung und literarische Diskursivierung der "Zigeuner" vor 1800', in Michael Zimmermann (ed.), *Zwischen Erziehung und Vernichtung: Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerforschung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 2007), 71-108; Wilhelm Solms, *Zigeunerbilder: Ein dunkles Kapitel der deutschen Literaturgeschichte. Von der frühen Neuzeit bis zur Romantik* (Würzburg, 2008); David Mayall, *Gypsy Identities 1500-2000: From Egyptians and Moon-Men to the Ethnic Romany* (London, 2004), esp. 54-118; Wim Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy: From Enlightenment to Final Solution* (London, 1997); Jacqueline Giere (ed.), *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion des Zigeuners: Zur Genese eines Vorurteils* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996); Judith Okely, 'Constructing Difference: Gypsies as "Other"', *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures*, 3/2 (1994), 55-73; and Kirsten Martins-Heuss, *Zur mythischen Figur des Zigeuners in der deutschen Zigeunerforschung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983).

<sup>18</sup> The ever-growing scholarship on medieval unfreedom, especially the Mediterranean and Black Sea slave trade, offers many useful points of comparison. For an overview of the topic and some of its debates, see Samuel S. Sutherland, 'The Study of Slavery in the Early and Central Middle Ages: Old



this picture by suggesting that early Romani perspectives are not completely inaccessible. For instance, Kristina Richardson has challenged the assumption of medieval Romani illiteracy by noting the presence of book and block-printing traditions in a related community from Egypt, the Banū Sāsān.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, Andreas Zajic has explored Romani self-representation in the inscriptions of premodern tombstones.<sup>20</sup> Paola Toninato notes the ways Romani immigrants could make use of writing without authoring texts themselves.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, insofar as historians of the medieval Romani rely on the traditional methods of interpreting primary texts, they have no choice but to work with a corpus written by outsiders, shaped by their agendas, and coloured by their prejudices.

Late medieval chronicles supply some of the earliest and most widely cited evidence for Romani immigration.<sup>22</sup> As Romani families travelled

Problems and New Approaches', *History Compass*, 18/11 (2020). For a small sample of recent work, see Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260–1500* (Philadelphia, 2019); Alice Rio, *Slavery After Rome, 500–1100* (Oxford, 2017); Perry Craig, 'The Daily Life of Slaves and the Global Reach of Slavery in Medieval Egypt, 969–1250 CE' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Emory University, 2014); Kate Lowe, 'The Lives of African Slaves and People of African Descent in Renaissance Europe', in Joaneath Spicer (ed.), *Revealing the African Presence in Renaissance Europe* (Baltimore, 2012), 13–34; and Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca, NY, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Kristina Richardson, *Roma in the Medieval Islamic World: Literacy, Culture, and Migration* (London, 2022), esp. 103–38; and ead., 'Tracing a Gypsy Mixed Language through Medieval and Early Modern Arabic and Persian Literature', *Der Islam*, 94/1 (2017), 115–57.

<sup>20</sup> Andreas H. Zajic, 'Alienness and (Religious) Otherness in Late Medieval Inscriptions: A Case Study on the Epigraphic Shaping of Christian Self-Representation', *medieval worlds*, 16 (2022), 229–62, at 248–54.

<sup>21</sup> Paola Toninato, *Romani Writing: Literacy, Literature and Identity Politics* (London, 2014), 7–24.

<sup>22</sup> On late medieval chronicles as a genre, especially in the German-speaking world, consult Gerhard Wolf and Norbert Ott (eds.), *Handbuch Chroniken des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 2016); Regula Schmid, *Geschichte im Dienst der Stadt: Amtliche Historie und Politik im Spätmittelalter* (Zurich, 2009); Peter Johaneck, 'Weltchronik und regionale Geschichtsschreibung im Spätmittelalter', in Hans Patze (ed.), *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewußtsein im späten Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen, 1987), 287–330; and Heinrich Schmidt, *Die deutschen*

en masse through the cities of the Holy Roman Empire, Italy, France, and Iberia during the fifteenth century, dozens of European chroniclers remarked upon the newcomers.<sup>23</sup> Nearly all such chronicles concerned the history of particular cities, preserving highly localized traditions about the many first arrivals of the Roma. As we have already seen, these early texts never actually refer to 'Roma'. Instead, they record the unexpected appearance of 'heathens', 'Tatars', 'Egyptians', and other such exotic groups. With increasing frequency, chroniclers deployed new words derived from ἀτσίγγανοι (*atsíngani*), a Byzantine Greek term applied to the Roma perhaps as early the eleventh century.<sup>24</sup> From this word, hitherto unattested in Western Europe, there quickly evolved a plethora of new vernacular exonyms for the Roma: *Zigeuner*, *Tsigane*, *Zingaro*, and more. During the early modern period, these terms would come to encompass a broad range of itinerant groups. In their fifteenth-century origins, however, they still designated a particular wave of immigrants and their immediate descendants.

While a handful of the earliest chronicles qualify as contemporary texts and possibly eyewitness accounts, most of the chronicle evidence first appears in manuscripts from the mid fifteenth century, decades after the stated years of immigration. With each new manuscript of a chronicle, scribes could edit its text, renegotiate local memory, and inscribe their own socio-political agendas upon the past. As a result,

*Städtechroniken als Spiegel des bürgerlichen Selbstverständnisses im Spätmittelalter* (Göttingen, 1958).

<sup>23</sup> For an overview of the chronicle evidence and its interpretative challenges, see Reimar Gilsenbach, 'Quellen zur Geschichte der Roma und ihrer Interpretation, dargestellt an Beispielen aus dem 15. Jahrhundert', *Gießener Hefte für Tsiganologie*, 85/1 (1985), 8–16; and 85/2–3 (1985), 3–11.

<sup>24</sup> For the Greek etymology of this term, see Benedikt Wolf, 'Helfer des Feindes: Von der Häresie der *Athinganoi* zum "Stamm" der *Atsinganoi*', in Thomas Baumann (ed.), *Antiziganismus: Soziale und historische Dimensionen von 'Zigeuner'-Stereotypen* (Heidelberg, 2015), 18–37. Further historical context is in Karin White, 'Metal-Workers, Agriculturalists, Acrobats, Military-People and Fortune-Tellers: Roma (Gypsies) in and around the Byzantine Empire', *Golden Horn*, 7/2 (1999); Ilse Rochow and Klaus-Peter Matschke, 'Neues zu den Zigeunern im Byzantinischen Reich um die Wende vom 13. zum 14. Jahrhundert', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 41 (1991), 241–54; and George C. Soulis, 'The Gypsies in the Byzantine Empire and the Balkans in the Late Middle Ages', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 15 (1961), 141–65.

different manuscripts of a single chronicle might retell the Romani immigration in starkly different ways.<sup>25</sup> Chronicles chart the ways in which many local traditions drifted toward antiziganist rhetoric. In the 1410s, chroniclers could write with benign curiosity about the appearance of ‘heathen’ travellers. Already by the mid century, the tenor had changed. Prominent humanist and pope-to-be Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405–64) summarized the emerging consensus on Western Europe’s newest inhabitants, who ‘wander Europe with their women and children, are called the Zigari, are notorious thieves, and live amongst our people in the way of nomads.’<sup>26</sup> Given the fluid and propagandistic nature of these texts, fifteenth-century chronicles are perilous sources to use in the reconstruction of Romani immigration ‘as it happened’. At the same time, they offer valuable glimpses into the evolution of elite mindsets and the public memory of Romani immigration.

An overwhelming historiographic emphasis on chronicles has obscured the untapped wealth of archival sources for medieval Romani history. The Roma typically appear in three archival contexts: grants of safe conduct, city council books, and municipal financial records. Corroborating the anecdotal evidence of many chronicles, surviving safe conduct letters (*Geleitbriefe*) record legal immunities granted by noblemen, emperors, and even popes to various Romani leaders and their retinues.<sup>27</sup> These grants, which might survive in original copies or

<sup>25</sup> For an example, see Lane B. Baker, ‘From Little Egypt to Zürich: Chronicing Romani Immigrants with Late Medieval Manuscripts’, in Johannes Junge Ruhland (ed.), *Making History with Manuscripts* (Berlin, forthcoming).

<sup>26</sup> Enea (Aeneas) Silvio Piccolomini (1405–1464) wrote what later editors would title *Asiae Europaeque elegantissima descriptio* sometime in the 1450s, shortly before his assumption of the papacy as Pius II in 1458. It was first printed in Venice in 1477. Quotation from Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Asiae Europaeque elegantissima descriptio* (Paris, 1534), lib. 2, cap. 27, 62.

<sup>27</sup> For examples of these safe-conducts in print, see Wolfgang Wippermann (ed.), *Geschichte der Sinti und Roma in Deutschland: Darstellung und Dokumente* (Berlin, 1995), 54–5; Olav van Kappen, ‘Three Dutch Safe-Conducts for “Heidens” Granted by Charles Duke of Egmont’, *JGLS: Third Series*, 41/3–4 (1962), 89–100; and id., ‘Four Early Safe-Conducts for Gypsies (1442–1454)’, *JGLS: Third Series*, 44/3–4 (1965), 107–15. See also comments in Toninato, *Romani Writing*, 8–11; Angus Fraser, ‘Juridical Autonomy among Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Gypsies’, *American Journal of Comparative Law*, 45/2 (1997), 291–304; and id., *The Gypsies*, 63–76.

as transcriptions in cartularies, designated a particular Romani headman by name and title, granted temporary freedom to move within a territory, and promised legal protection from harassment and tolls. Council books (*Ratsprotokolle*) record actions that urban governments took towards the Roma, frequently pertaining to acts of expulsion and other curtailments of legal rights within their jurisdictions. Municipal financial records, especially the expenditure books (*Ausgabebücher*) kept by many German city councils, record both charitable disbursements to Romani groups and payments to officials to expel them.<sup>28</sup> Each of these textual genres point toward different socio-political processes at work. They do not always align in their terminology or attitudes towards the Roma. Nonetheless, they provide crucial information for on-the-ground activity and balance the more sensational testimony of chronicles.<sup>29</sup> So too, these sources reveal that exclusionary attitudes competed and coexisted with hospitality, charity, and legal toleration.

Late medieval manuscripts are the original repositories for chronicle and documentary evidence of Romani immigration. Despite the centrality of manuscripts in late medieval culture, scholarship on the medieval Roma has tended to approach this handwritten body of sources via print. The most frequently cited chronicle evidence is usually drawn from nineteenth- and twentieth-century critical editions, with the unfortunate consequence of eliding noteworthy manuscript variations. Many scholars have also freely mixed the claims of early modern print chronicles with those of late medieval manuscripts. These choices largely reflect the modernist bent of Roma studies, in which most scholars have not been trained to find or read medieval documents in their original form. This disengagement from manuscripts has encouraged most scholars of the Roma to rely upon two

<sup>28</sup> For examples in print, see Eric Otto Winstedt, 'Some Records of the Gypsies in Germany, 1407-1792', *JGLS: Third Series*, 11/3-4 (1932), 97-111, at 106-11; and Eduard Hoffmann-Krayer, 'Gypsies in Basle', *JGLS: New Series*, 2/4 (1909), 368-9.

<sup>29</sup> Archival documentation can both corroborate and belie chronicle testimony. For an example, see Hoffmann-Krayer, 'Gypsies in Basle': in Basel, financial records confirm the testimony of the contemporary *Rötteler Chronik* by noting a visit by Roma in the summer of 1422, but also reveal even earlier arrivals in 1414 and 1418.

German sourcebooks for early Romani history, both compiled by non-historians. The theologian and sociologist Reimer Gronemeyer's *Zigeuner im Spiegel früher Chroniken und Abhandlungen: Quellen vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (1987) has been a major access point for many scholars of the Roma.<sup>30</sup> Gronemeyer's sourcebook compiles the texts used by the Enlightenment scholar Heinrich Grellmann (see below). While plenty of Gronemeyer's assembled sources specifically discuss Romani immigration, the bulk of his material hails from the age of print. His sourcebook includes only three sources written before 1500, all drawn from print editions. Just seven years after Gronemeyer, the journalist and environmental activist Reimar Gilsenbach published a new sourcebook for early Romani history, the first of an envisioned (but never completed) four-volume series.<sup>31</sup> His *Weltchronik der Zigeuner: Von den Anfängen bis 1599* (1994) contains several hundred references culled from a variety of European languages and genres. Despite its unmatched breadth, Gilsenbach's *Weltchronik* runs up against some of the same limitations as Gronemeyer's sourcebook. It relies upon critical editions for most of its medieval material and arranges its sources according to the date of the events described, thus mixing together texts generated in very different periods. A dependence on sourcebooks and other printed texts has led some Roma scholars to the faulty assumption that such resources contain the sum total of all medieval evidence.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, many fifteenth-century sources on the Roma still remain unpublished in manuscript.

<sup>30</sup> Reimer Gronemeyer (ed.), *Zigeuner im Spiegel früher Chroniken und Abhandlungen: Quellen vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert* (Giessen, 1987).

<sup>31</sup> Reimar Gilsenbach (ed.), *Weltchronik der Zigeuner*, vol. i: *Von den Anfängen bis 1599* (Frankfurt am Main, 1994). Volumes two and three were not completed. Volume four covers the Holocaust and mid twentieth century: *Von 1930 bis 1960* (Frankfurt am Main, 1998). For Gilsenbach's approach to the early historical evidence, see Gilsenbach, 'Quellen zur Geschichte der Roma'.

<sup>32</sup> E.g. Donald Kenrick, 'The Origins of Anti-Gypsyism: The Outsiders' View of Romanies in Western Europe in the Fifteenth Century', in Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt (eds.), *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-Images of 'Gypsies'/Romanies in European Cultures* (Liverpool, 2004), 79–84, at 79: 'Together with the town clerks' reports we have in total some 62 contemporary records for the period in question (1400–1450) (see De Meneses 1971, Gilsenbach 1994, *JGLS* Series 1 and 2 [passim], Van Kappen n.d. and Vaux de Foletier 1970);

*Past Historiographical Approaches*

Within a century of the Roma's first appearances in Western Europe, chroniclers were already revisiting this initial wave of immigration. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century accounts reflect the hardening attitudes of the early modern period, during which Romani communities throughout Western Europe suffered from widespread violence, expulsions, and accusations of criminality.<sup>33</sup> Early modern writers filtered late medieval chronicles through their own antiziganist stereotypes, sometimes with incongruous results. Confronted with texts from the Middle Ages that described the Roma as humble pilgrims or exiled lords, some concluded that the early modern 'Gypsies' had stolen the identity of these medieval migrants.<sup>34</sup> According to one persistent theory, these 'Gypsies' were actually a band of European

and Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy*, 13: 'Closer reading of these sources [in Gronemeyer] reveals that the written tradition concerning the earliest identification of Gypsies in western Europe rests entirely on the testimony of two witnesses from that era [Hermann Korner and Andreas von Regensburg].'

<sup>33</sup> Miriam Eliav-Feldon, 'Vagrants or Vermin? Attitudes towards Gypsies in Early Modern Europe', in ead., Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler (eds.), *The Origins of Racism in the West* (Cambridge, 2009), 276–91; Stephan Steiner, 'The Enemy Within: "Gypsies" as EX/INTERNAL Threat in the Habsburg Monarchy and in the Holy Roman Empire, 15th–18th Century', in Eberhard Crailsheim and María Dolores Elizalde (eds.), *The Representation of External Threats: From the Middle Ages to the Modern World* (Leiden, 2019), 131–54; Karl Härter, 'Kriminalisierung, Verfolgung und Überlebenspraxis der "Zigeuner" im frühneuzeitlichen Mitteleuropa', in Yaron Matras, Hans Winterberg, and Michael Zimmermann (eds.), *Sinti, Roma, Gypsies: Sprache – Geschichte – Gegenwart* (Berlin 2003), 41–81; and Stefan Arend, 'Zigeuner und Zigeunergesetzgebung in Deutschland im 16. Jahrhundert', *Tsiganologische Studien*, 2 (1990), 71–87.

<sup>34</sup> For examples, see Heinrich Brennwald's *Schweizerchronik* (written c.1508–16), in Rudolf Luginbühl (ed.), *Heinrich Brennwalds Schweizerchronik*, 2 vols. (Basel, 1908–10), ii. 495–6; Johannes Stumpf, *Gemeiner loblicher Eydnoschafft Stetten, Landen und Voelckeren Chronick wirdiger thaaten Beschreybung* (Zurich, 1548), 425b; id., *Schwytzer Chronika* (Zurich, 1554), 199b; Heinrich Bullinger's *Tigurinerchronik* (written 1572–4), 9.18, in Hans Ulrich Bächtold (ed.), *Heinrich Bullinger Werke: Vierte Abteilung. Historische Schriften*, pt. i: *Tigurinerchronik*, 3 vols. (Zurich, 2018), ii. 741–2; Johannes Guler von Wyneck, *Raetia* (Zurich, 1616), 156b–7a; and Fortunat Sprecher von Bernegg, *Pallas Rhaetica armata et togata* (Basel, 1617), 91.

criminals who darkened their skin with oil, spoke an invented language, and play-acted as Egyptians.<sup>35</sup> Heinrich Brennwald (1478–1551), a Swiss historian and early proponent of this theory, claimed that the migrants of 1418 had ‘upheld Christian order’ and departed after seven years.

Since then, however, a ragtag people has cobbled itself together. They travel around the country, claiming that they can’t go back across the sea because of the Sultan, stealing whatever they can, and causing truly great harm to the world. None of them has ever even been to Egypt. These are the *Zigeuner*, and all of them would be worthy of hanging at the very least.<sup>36</sup>

Not all early modern scholars posited such a complete rupture between medieval and modern. Some scholars, like the cosmographer Sebastian Münster (1488–1552), accepted the medieval wanderers as ancestors of the ‘Gypsies’ of his time, but still dismissed their eastern heritage as nothing more than ‘fictions [*fabellae*]’.<sup>37</sup> Others accepted that the ‘Gypsies’ were a people of their own with at least some ancestry outside Europe.<sup>38</sup> Even as perceptions of the Roma coalesced into

<sup>35</sup> On the ‘replacement’ theory, see John Morgan, ‘“Counterfeit Egyptians”: The Construction and Implementation of a Criminal Identity in Early Modern England’, *Romani Studies*, 26/2 (2016), 105–28; Shulamith Shahar, ‘Religious Minorities, Vagabonds and Gypsies in Early Modern Europe’, in Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago (eds.), *The Roma: A Minority in Europe. Historical, Political and Social Perspectives* (Budapest, 2007), 1–18; and Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy*, 14–16.

<sup>36</sup> Luginbühl (ed.), *Heinrich Brennwalds Schweizerchronik*, ii. 495–6.

<sup>37</sup> Sebastian Münster, ‘De Gentilibus Christianis, quos vulgò Züginer vocant, et latinè Errones’, in id., *Cosmographia universalis*, (Basel, 1544), lib. iii. Originally published in German and subsequently in Latin (1550), French (1552), Czech (1554), and Italian (1558). For the Latin text and a reflection on Münster’s depiction of the Roma, see D. M. M. Bartlett, ‘Münster’s *Cosmographia Universalis*’, *JGLS: Third Series*, 31/3–4 (1952), 83–90. Münster borrowed much of this account wholesale from Albert Krantz, *Saxonia* (Cologne, 1520), 11.2. For similar theories, see Cyriacus Spangenberg, *Mansfeldische Chronica* (Eisleben, 1572), 1.308; and Christoph Besold and Johann Jacob Speidel, ‘Zigeiner’, in id., *Thesaurus practicus* (Tübingen, 1629), 867.

<sup>38</sup> For examples, see *Bayerische Chronik* (s.l., 1522), 8.122; Achilles Pirmin Gasser, *Annales civitatis ac rei publicae Augsburgensis* (Augsburg, 1576), 312;

a pan-European prejudice, no single account of the medieval immigration prevailed. The first arrival of the Roma persisted for over a century as a topic for casual speculation by encyclopedists and regional historians. In 1677, the German professors Jakob Thomasius and Johann Christoph Schmidt were still debating the basics: whether the 'Zigeuner' were an ethnic group of their own, where in the world they had originated, and how long they had lived in Europe.<sup>39</sup>

In the late eighteenth century, Enlightenment scholars grappled anew with the question of Romani origins. Johann Christoph Christian Rüdiger, a German humanist and political economist, mounted a major revisionist argument in 1782.<sup>40</sup> In contrast to much prevailing speculation of the previous two centuries, Rüdiger believed that the Roma were a nomadic South Asian people who had immigrated into Europe and fallen into poverty through systematic exclusion. Even as he judged contemporary Romani society as 'a contemptible, scattered lot of foul fortune tellers, poor beggars, and wicked rogues', Rüdiger suggested that this had not always been the case:

According to the accounts of Aventinus and other historians, at the beginning of the fifteenth century [the Roma] came in great hordes through Syria and Anatolia up to the Danube, and then spread out further into France, Spain, and Italy. They were divided into tribes under dukes and equipped with draft cattle and money. They were an orderly but nomadic people, like present-day Bedouin Arabs or Mongolians, like the former Normans, Goths, and Saxons under their chiefs, or like the Israelites under Moses. To some extent, they were

Christian Wurstisen, *Bassler Chronick* (Basel, 1580), 4.23; Martin Crusius, *Annales Suevici* (Frankfurt am Main, 1595), 7.3; and Johannes Limnaeus, *Juris publici imperii romano-germanici*, 2nd edn (Basel, 1645), 3.9.1.

<sup>39</sup> Jacobus Thomasius and Johann Christoph Schmidt, *Dissertatio philosophica de Cingaribus in disputationem* (Leipzig, 1677). See also Ahavaser Fritsch, *Diatribes historico-politicae de Zygenorum origine, vita ac moribus* (Jena, 1680); and Job Ludolf, *Ad suam Historiam Aethiopicam antehac editam commentarius* (Frankfurt, 1691).

<sup>40</sup> Johann C. C. Rüdiger, 'Von der Sprache und Herkunft der Zigeuner aus Indien', in *Neuester Zuwachs der teutschen, fremden und allgemeinen Sprachkunde in eigenen Aufsätzen, Bücheranzeigen und Nachrichten*, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1782–96), i. 37–85. On Rüdiger, see August Leskien, 'Rüdiger, Johann Christian Christoph', in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, 56 vols. (Leipzig, 1875–1912), xxix. 468.



met with friendliness – so much that (according to Aventinus) Emperor Sigismund gave them letters of safe conduct, and that (according to Crusius) their lords received respectable grave inscriptions with the title of ‘duke’ and ‘count’. But of course, in most places this must have quickly given way to quarrels with the long-established inhabitants.<sup>41</sup>

Rüdiger went on to argue that private property rights, the erosion of the commons, and rigid state laws had doomed the nomadic Roma to opprobrium and criminality. In this way, he could explain their apparent transformation from tolerable medieval nomads to despised criminals without recourse to theories of replacement or fraud. It was early modern society, with its ‘arbitrarily invented lordship, property, and love for fatherland’, that had created the modern ‘Zigeuner’.<sup>42</sup>

Rüdiger’s account heralds a number of shifts in the academic treatment of Romani history. His work was among the first to approach the question of Romani origins from a linguistic angle.<sup>43</sup> Rüdiger’s primary evidence for a South Asian homeland consisted of the phonetic and lexical similarities between Romani and Hindi.<sup>44</sup> By arguing for the Roma as an ethnolinguistic group with their own language and premodern history, Rüdiger discredited the notion of the ‘Gypsies’ as a confederation of European thieves. His Rousseauian views on the clash between nomadism and private property also allowed Rüdiger to integrate modern, medieval, and ancient Romani populations into a seamless historical narrative, however different their various historical situations might first appear. Rüdiger’s account also signals the shift towards linguistics and social theory as the major disciplines for understanding the Romani past. As demonstrated by his hasty citation of only two sixteenth-century

<sup>41</sup> Rüdiger, ‘Von der Sprache und Herkunft der Zigeuner aus Indien’, 37–8.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* 38.

<sup>43</sup> See Yaron Matras, ‘Johann Rüdiger and the Study of Romani in 18th-Century Germany’, *JGLS: Series 5*, 9/2 (1999), 89–116; and *id.*, ‘The Role of Language in Mystifying and Demystifying Gypsy Identity’, in Saul and Tebbutt (eds.), *The Role of the Romanies*, 53–78. Rüdiger was not, strictly speaking, the first European scholar to hypothesize an ethnolinguistic origin in India; cf. Christian Wilhelm Büttner, *Vergleichungs-Tafeln der Schriftarten verschiedener Völker, in denen vergangenen und gegenwärtigen Zeiten*, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 1771–9).

<sup>44</sup> Rüdiger, ‘Von der Sprache und Herkunft der Zigeuner aus Indien’, 63–77.

sources – Martin Crusius and Johannes Aventinus – Rüdiger did not directly consult a single medieval text. His historical knowledge of the fifteenth-century immigration was mediated entirely by a small corpus of sixteenth-century writings.

While Johann Rüdiger was one of the first scholars to make a systematic case for Romani origins in India, it was Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann (1756–1804) who transmitted the idea to a wider audience.<sup>45</sup> One year after Rüdiger, Grellmann hypothesized that the Roma were descended from members of the Indian *sudra* caste.<sup>46</sup> The details of their medieval history were less certain. ‘History has not precisely noted in which years and in which province of Europe the Gypsies first appeared’, he admitted in his influential 1783 study.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> On Heinrich Grellmann and his contributions to ‘gypsology’, see Katrin Ufen, ‘Aus Zigeunern Menschen machen: Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann und das Zigeunerbild der Aufklärung’, in Hund (ed.), *Faul, fremd und frei*, 70–90; Joachim Krauss, ‘Die Festschreibung des mitteleuropäischen Zigeunerbildes: Eine Quellenkritik anhand des Werkes von Heinrich M. G. Grellmann’, in Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Jahrbuch für Antisemitismusforschung* 19 (Berlin, 2010), 33–56; Claudia Breger, ‘Grellmann: Der “Zigeunerforscher” der Aufklärung’, in Udo Engbring-Romang and Daniel Strauss (eds.), *Aufklärung und Antiziganismus* (Seeheim, 2003), 50–6; Wim Willems, *In Search of the True Gypsy*, 22–92; id., ‘Außenbilder von Sinti und Roma in der frühen Zigeunerforschung’, in Giere (ed.), *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion des Zigeuners*, 87–108; Martin Ruch, ‘Zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte der deutschsprachigen “Zigeunerforschung” von den Anfängen bis 1900’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, 1986), 94–134; Friedrich Ratzel, ‘Grellmann, Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb’, in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, ix, 636–7; and R. Pallmann, ‘Grellmann (Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb)’, in Johann Samuel Ersch and Johann Gottfried Gruber (eds.), *Allgemeine Encyclopädie der Wissenschaften und Künste: Erste Section* (Leipzig, 1818–89), xc, 136–7.

<sup>46</sup> Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellmann, *Die Zigeuner: Ein historischer Versuch über die Lebensart und Verfassung, Sitten und Schicksale dieses Volks in Europa, nebst ihrem Ursprunge* (Dessau, 1783), sect. 2, chs. 3–6, 176–274. Republished four years later as *Historischer Versuch über die Zigeuner: Betreffend die Lebensart und Verfassung, Sitten und Schicksale dieses Volks seit seiner Erscheinung in Europa und dessen Ursprung* (Göttingen, 1787) and in English translation as *Dissertation on the Gypsies: Being a Historical Enquiry, Concerning the Manner of Life, Economy, Customs and Conditions of these People in Europe, and their Origin*, trans. Matthew Raper (London, 1787).

<sup>47</sup> Grellmann, *Die Zigeuner*, sect. 2, ch. 1, 155.

Grellmann assumed that the answers to these questions lay in ‘old annals [*alte Jahrbücher*]’, but a perusal of his work reveals few medieval texts among his sources. Like Rüdiger, Grellmann built his picture of the immigration almost exclusively from early modern print histories, merely alluding to the anonymous manuscripts that had inspired those works.<sup>48</sup> Unlike Rüdiger, Grellmann decried the Roma as an ethnic group with intrinsic antisocial tendencies. For Grellmann, there had been no early modern transformation of Romani society: the Roma had inherited these parasitic cultural patterns from their origins in India’s labouring caste and brought them to Europe in the fifteenth century.<sup>49</sup> In his interpretation of events, the immigrants had simply managed to trick authorities into granting them legal protection. To the extent that early chroniclers portrayed the Roma as pious or lordly, they too had been deceived. Eventually, Grellmann argued, the fraud ran its course: ‘The golden age of the Gypsies lasted quite a while, but after people had been lenient toward them for over half a century, the old preconception finally gave way.’ Despite Romani efforts to secure tolerance, ‘people saw all too clearly that they were the dregs of humanity instead of holy pilgrims.’<sup>50</sup> Although subsequent scholars critiqued and refined Grellmann’s particular hypotheses, his disengagement from medieval evidence, total reliance on early modern print texts, and portrayal of medieval Romani immigrants as ‘thieves, frauds, and rascals’ set the tone for the emergent field of ‘gypsiology’.<sup>51</sup>

The medieval history of the Roma occupied a small corner within nineteenth-century European gypsiology. It was philologists, ethnographers, and folklorists who dominated this growing field.<sup>52</sup> The

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. chs. 1–2, 155–76. See e.g. the vague reference to a ‘manuscript chronicle’ used by Johannes Stumpf, which, in Grellmann’s view, had misled the Swiss chronicler with its claims of ‘bogus virtuousness and honour’ among the medieval Roma.

<sup>49</sup> For a comparison of Rüdiger and Grellmann’s paradigms, with an eye for their modern analogues, see Yaron Matras, ‘Scholarship and the Politics of Romani Identity: Strategic and Conceptual Issues’, *European Yearbook of Minority Issues*, 10 (2011), 211–47, at 212–16.

<sup>50</sup> Grellmann, *Die Zigeuner*, sect. 2, ch. 2, 172.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 175.

<sup>52</sup> For overviews of nineteenth-century gypsiology and gypsylorism, see David Cressy, *Gypsies: An English History* (Oxford, 2018), 148–207; Jeremy Harte, ‘Romance and the Romany’, *History Today*, 66/1 (2016), 30–6; Judith Okely,

Romani languages, along with their implications for Romani origins, continued to engross linguists.<sup>53</sup> Many other gypsologists, especially in Britain, directed their attention to the products of vernacular culture: Romani songs, poems, and stories. An administrative desire for surveillance merged with fetishizing exoticism in the popular books and articles of the period,<sup>54</sup> many of the latter appearing in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* (1887–92, 1902–present, rebranded in 2000 as *Romani Studies*).<sup>55</sup> Apart from questions of ethnolinguistic origins, most gypsologists engaged with the textual particulars of Romani history only in passing. In keeping with the nostalgic conservatism of folkloristics, many instead portrayed the Roma as a people outside

‘Retrospective Reading of Fieldnotes: Living on Gypsy Camps’, *Behemoth: A Journal on Civilisation*, 4/1 (2011), 18–42; Michael Hayes, ‘Nineteenth-Century Gipsiorism and the Exoticisation of the Roma (Gypsies)’, in id. (ed.), *Road Memories: Aspects of Migrant History* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2007), 20–35; Mayall, *Gypsy Identities*, 152–87; Ken Lee, ‘Orientalism and Gypsylorism’, *Social Analysis*, 44/2 (2000), 129–56; and Ian Duncan, ‘George Borrow’s Nomadology’, *Victorian Studies*, 41/3 (1998), 381–403.

<sup>53</sup> Key texts in the ensuing linguistic debate include Johann Erich Biester, ‘Über die Zigeuner: Besonders im Königreich Preußen’, *Berlinische Monatschrift*, 21 (Feb. 1793), 108–65 and (Apr. 1793), 360–93; August Friedrich Pott, *Die Zigeuner in Europa und Asien: Ethnographisch-linguistische Untersuchung, vornehmlich ihrer Herkunft und Sprache*, 2 vols. (Halle, 1844–5; repr. Leipzig, 1964), and Franz Miklosich, *Über die Mundarten und die Wanderungen der Zigeuner Europa’s*, 8 vols. (Vienna, 1872–7).

<sup>54</sup> For examples of typical texts from this period, see Theodor Tetzner, *Geschichte der Zigeuner: Ihre Herkunft, Natur und Art* (Weimar, 1835); George Borrow, *The Zingali: An Account of the Gypsies of Spain* (London, 1841); id., *Lavengro* (London, 1851); id., *The Romany Rye* (London, 1857); Jean-Alexandre Vaillant, *Les Romes: Histoire vraie des vrais Bohémiens* (Paris, 1857); Richard Liebich, *Die Zigeuner in ihrem Wesen und ihrer Sprache* (Leipzig, 1863); Walter and James Simson, *A History of the Gipsies: With Specimens of the Gipsy Language* (London, 1865), 302; Henry Woodcock, *The Gipsies: Being a Brief Account of their History, Origin, Capabilities, Manners and Customs, with Suggestions for the Reformation and Conversion of the English Gipsies* (London, 1865); Charles Leland, *The English Gipsies and their Language* (New York, 1873); and Francis Hindes Groome, *In Gipsy Tents* (Edinburgh, 1880).

<sup>55</sup> For a reflection on the journal’s history and turn-of-the-century transition, see Yaron Matras, ‘From *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* to *Romani Studies*: Purpose and Essence of a Modern Academic Platform’, *Romani Studies*, 27/2 (2017), 113–23.

modernity and the ordinary course of historical time.<sup>56</sup> To the extent that scholars discussed the medieval Roma, they rehashed Grellmann's early modern sources and antiziganist interpretations.

On the topic of medieval immigration, the first serious revision to Grellmann's account came from French archivist Paul Bataillard (1816–94). Bataillard was neither a folklorist nor a gypsiologist per se, having studied under the eminent French historian Jules Michelet and trained at the prestigious *École des chartes*. In an article published in the *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* (1843–4), Bataillard nonetheless endeavoured to reconstruct a new itinerary for medieval Romani immigration.<sup>57</sup> Forty years later, Bataillard expanded his work, translated the article into English, and republished his hypotheses in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*.<sup>58</sup> Armed with newly acquired Romanian and Greek charters that predated the fifteenth century, Bataillard pushed against mainstream gypsiology by arguing that the Roma had lived in South-Eastern Europe since the early Middle Ages, perhaps even antiquity, and had contributed to the adoption of metallurgy in Europe.<sup>59</sup> On the subject of western immigration, Bataillard engaged in further revisionism. He interpreted the visitations of 1417–38 as stops on a single exploratory campaign led by a small handful of Romani headmen, only followed by mass migration in the middle of the century.<sup>60</sup> Bataillard fell into some of the same traps as gypsiologists before and after him: neglecting important manuscripts, relying upon sixteenth-century histories for fifteenth-century

<sup>56</sup> Katie Trumpener, 'The Time of the Gypsies: A "People without History" in the Narratives of the West', *Critical Inquiry*, 18/4 (1992), 843–84.

<sup>57</sup> Paul Bataillard, 'De l'apparition et de la dispersion des Bohémiens en Europe', *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*, 5 (1844), 438–75, 521–39. Followed by id., 'Nouvelles recherches sur l'apparition des Bohémiens en Europe', *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes*, 11 (1850), 14–55; and id., 'Les débuts de l'immigration des Tsiganes en Europe occidentale', *Bulletin et mémoires de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris*, 3/12 (1889), 255–65.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Bataillard, 'Immigration of the Gypsies into Western Europe in the Fifteenth Century', *JGLS*, 1/4 (1889), 185–212; *ibid.* 1/5 (1889), 260–86; *ibid.* 1/6 (1889), 324–45; and *ibid.* 2/1 (1890), 27–53.

<sup>59</sup> See id., *État de la question de l'ancienneté des Tsiganes en Europe* (Paris, 1877).

<sup>60</sup> Paul Bataillard, 'De l'apparition', 4, 44–7; id., 'Nouvelles recherches', 36–7; id., 'Immigration' (Apr. 1889), 194–6.

events, and too often trusting the assertions of politically motivated chroniclers. While Bataillard managed to introduce some new chronicle and documentary evidence, his most enduring innovation was his harmonization of various local traditions into a single, coherent itinerary. In the decades following Bataillard's article, a handful of studies continued discussions of early Romani history and announced the discovery of hitherto unnoticed archival sources.<sup>61</sup> These works enriched the basic narrative without changing it: preserving ancient cultural forms, and ill-equipped for Western modernity, the Roma had entered late medieval Europe under the leadership of adventurous chieftains and maintained their obsolete lifeways ever since.<sup>62</sup>

In the wake of the Holocaust, a new generation of scholars and activists cast a wary eye on old paradigms.<sup>63</sup> At best, gypsology seemed of

<sup>61</sup> Michael Jan de Goeje, 'Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis der Zigeuners', *Verlagen en mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde*, 2/5 (1875), 56–80; id., *Mémoire sur les migrations des Tsiganes à travers l'Asie* (Leiden, 1903); Adriano Colocci, *Gli Zingari: Storia d'un popolo errante* (Turin, 1889); Henry Thomas Crofton, 'Early Annals of the Gypsies in England', *JGLS*, 1/1 (1888), 5–24; id., 'Supplementary Annals of the Gypsies in England, before 1700', *JGLS: New Series*, 1/1 (1907), 31–3; Hoffmann-Krayer, 'Gypsies in Basle'; Richard Pischel, 'The Home of the Gypsies', trans. Dora E. Yates, *JGLS: New Series*, 2/4 (1909), 292–320; John Sampson, 'On the Origin and Early Migrations of the Gypsies', *JGLS: Third Series*, 2/4 (1923), 156–69; and Winstedt, 'Some Records of Gypsies in Germany'.

<sup>62</sup> For a survey of the field in the early twentieth century, see George F. Black, *A Gypsy Bibliography* (London, 1914).

<sup>63</sup> Writings from and about the Romani Civil Rights Movement are too vast to encompass here. For helpful summaries, see Jean-Pierre Liégeois, 'The Emergence of the Roma Civil Rights Movement in France', trans. Thomas Acton, *RomArchive* (2019), at [<https://www.romarchive.eu/en/roma-civil-rights-movement/emergence-roma-civil-rights-movement-france/>], accessed 6 July 2023; Thomas Acton, 'Beginnings and Growth of Transnational Movements of Roma to Achieve Civil Rights after the Holocaust', *RomArchive* (2018), at [<https://www.romarchive.eu/en/roma-civil-rights-movement/beginnings-and-growth-transnational-movements-roma/>], accessed 6 July 2023; Matras, 'Scholarship and the Politics of Romani Identity', 217–22; Margalit, *Germany and its Gypsies*; Grattan Puxon, 'The Romani Movement: Rebirth and the First World Romani Congress in Retrospect', in Thomas Acton (ed.), *Scholarship and the Gypsy Struggle: Commitment in Romani Studies* (Hatfield, 2000), 94–113; and Yaron Matras, 'The Development of the Romani Civil Rights Movement

secondary importance to the concerns of European Romani communities fighting for legal recognition in the post-war political landscape. At worst, the entire field appeared to be mired in racist constructions and implicated in fascist regimes.<sup>64</sup> In the context of activism, several writers revisited earlier chapters of Romani history.<sup>65</sup> For some, the medieval past presaged twentieth-century violence. Only a year after the end of

in Germany 1945–1996', in Susan Tebbutt (ed.), *Sinti and Roma: Gypsies in German-Speaking Society and Literature* (Oxford, 1998), 49–63.

<sup>64</sup> Jan Selling, 'Assessing the Historical Irresponsibility of the Gypsy Lore Society in Light of Romani Subaltern Challenges', *Critical Romani Studies*, 1/1 (2018), 44–61; Thomas Acton, 'Scientific Racism, Popular Racism and the Discourse of the Gypsy Lore Society', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39/7 (2016), 1187–204; and Herbert Heuss, 'Wissenschaft und Völkermord', *Bundesgesundheitsblatt*, 32 (1989), 20–4. For discussions of the specific intellectual continuity between Nazism and 'Gypsy specialists', see Fritz Greußing, 'Die Kontinuität der NS-Zigeunerforschung', in Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ed.), *Sinti und Roma: Ein Volk auf dem Weg zu sich selbst* (Stuttgart, 1981), 385–92; Joachim S. Hohmann, *Robert Ritter und die Erben der Kriminalbiologie: 'Zigeunerforschung' im Nationalsozialismus und in Westdeutschland im Zeichen des Rassismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), 351–79; id., 'Die Forschungen des "Zigeunerexperten" Hermann Arnold', *Zeitschrift für Sozialgeschichte des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts*, 10/3 (1995), 35–49; and Arnold Spitta, 'Deutsche Zigeunerforscher und die jüngste Vergangenheit', in Tilman Zülch (ed.), *In Auschwitz vergast, bis heute verfolgt: Zur Situation der Roma (Zigeuner) in Deutschland und Europa* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1979), 183–8.

<sup>65</sup> On France, see François de Vaux de Foletier, *Les Tsiganes dans l'ancienne France* (Paris, 1961); id., 'Le pèlerinage romain des Tsiganes en 1422 et les lettres du Pape Martin V', *Études tsiganes*, 11/4 (1965), 13–19; id., *Mille ans d'histoire des Tsiganes* (Paris, 1970); and Jean-Pierre Liégeois, 'Bohémiens et pouvoirs publics en France du XVe au XIXe siècle', *Études tsiganes*, 24/4 (1978), 10–30. On the Netherlands, see Olav van Kappen, *Geschiedenis der Zigeuners in Nederland: De ontwikkeling van de rechtspositie der heidens of Egyptenaren in de noordelijke Nederlanden, 1420–1750* (Assen, 1965). On Spain, see Amada Lopéz de Meneses, 'La inmigración gitana en España durante el siglo XV', in Asociación Nacional de Bibliotecarios, Archiveros y Arqueólogos, Martínez Ferrando, *archivero: Miscelánea de Estudios dedicados a su memoria* (Barcelona, 1968), 239–63; and ead., 'Noves dades sobre la immigració gitana a Espanya al segle XV', *Estudis d'història medieval*, 4 (1971), 145–60. For a look at scholarship at the end of the 1970s, consult Andreas Hundsalz, *Stand der Forschung über Zigeuner und Landfahrer: Eine Literaturanalyse unter vorwiegend sozialwissenschaftlichen Gesichtspunkten* (Stuttgart, 1979).

the Second World War in Europe, the Romani author Matéo Maximoff denounced Germany by evoking the betrayals of the fifteenth century: 'Their crime goes back through the centuries. For since 1417, when the Gypsies first made their appearance in Germany, persecution of the "Zigeuner" has never ceased, despite the privileges granted to them by Emperor Sigismund.'<sup>66</sup> Activists could also marshal the ethos of the immigration period to support new political initiatives, as evidenced by Maximoff's calls for the reinstatement of medieval travel privileges and a voluntary emigration of Roma out of Germany.<sup>67</sup> For the English activist Thomas Acton, the spirit of post-war Romani politics – which led to the First World Romani Congress in 1971, the Second in 1978, and the establishment of the International Romani Union<sup>68</sup> – echoed efforts by medieval Romani immigrants to secure legal recognition from 'transnational and local feudal monarchs.'<sup>69</sup> At the same time, many scholars in the 1960s and 1970s took a newly sceptical stance towards medieval *gadje* texts. As Jean-Pierre Liégeois asserted in 1978, every history of the 'Gypsies' was built upon a bedrock of repressive documents, written by powerful outsiders, and motivated by their fears of 'troublemakers

<sup>66</sup> Matéo Maximoff, 'Germany and the Gypsies: From the Gypsy's Point of View', *JGLS: Third Series*, 25/3–4 (1946), 104–8, at 105. For an interesting comparative text from a few years prior, see R. A. Scott Macfie, 'Gypsy Persecutions: A Survey of a Black Chapter in European History', *JGLS: Third Series*, 22/3–4 (1943), 65–78. For context, see Gilad Margalit, 'The Representation of the Nazi Persecution of the Gypsies in German Discourse after 1945', *German History*, 17/2 (1999), 221–40.

<sup>67</sup> Maximoff, 'Germany and the Gypsies', 106–8.

<sup>68</sup> See Grattan Puxon, 'The First World Romani Congress', *Race Today*, 3/6 (1971), 192–9; Donald Kenrick, 'The World Romani Congress', *JGLS: Third Series*, 50/3–4 (1971), 101–8; Matéo Maximoff, 'Réflexions sur l'avenir de l'organisation internationale tsigane', *Études tsiganes*, 17/4 (1971), 10–11; Donald Kenrick and Grattan Puxon, *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies* (London, 1972); Thomas Acton, *Gypsy Politics and Social Change: The Development of Ethnic Ideology and Pressure Politics among British Gypsies from Victorian Reformism to Romany Nationalism* (London, 1974); and Jean-Pierre Liégeois, *Mutation tsigane* (Brussels, 1976).

<sup>69</sup> Acton, 'Beginnings and Growth': 'In the pre-1600 feudal era in Europe and the Middle East, we do find examples, much mocked by the 19th century Gypsy-lorists, of Roma attempting to negotiate with transnational and local feudal monarchs. The leadership that was capable of doing this, however, vanished in the 16th century outside the heartlands of the Ottoman Empire.'



on the margins'.<sup>70</sup> For the first time, specialists reckoned more seriously with the shortcomings of the historical sources that previous generations had used so freely.

By the 1980s, most scholars had joined Maximoff in framing 'Gypsy' history as a long series of injustices against the Roma. This narrative found one of its clearest proponents in Romanichal linguist and activist Ian Hancock. With the publication of *The Pariah Syndrome* (1987), Hancock staged an academic and moral intervention:

In Romani, there is the saying that *kon mangel te kerel tumendar roburen chi shocha phenela tumen o chachimos pa tumare perintonde*, 'he who wants to enslave you will never tell you the truth about your forefathers.' We cannot wait for others to document this truth; our forefathers' history must be told by ourselves.<sup>71</sup>

Many scholars have taken Hancock's call to heart, critiquing the long-standing dominance of *gadje* voices within Roma history and turning towards Romani perspectives.<sup>72</sup> The last two decades of the

<sup>70</sup> Liégeois, 'Bohémiens et pouvoirs publics en France', 11.

<sup>71</sup> Hancock, *The Pariah Syndrome*, 1.

<sup>72</sup> For recent reflections on positionality in Roma Studies, see Saga Weckmann, 'Researching Finnish Gypsies: Advice from a Gypsy (1983)', in Diane Tong (ed.), *Gypsies: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (New York, 1998), 3–10; Imre Vajda, 'The Gypsies—The Roma and Scientific Research: Some Thoughts about the Role of Gypsy Intelligentsia in the Wake of the "Who is a Gypsy?" Debate', in Ernő Kállai (ed.), *The Gypsies/The Roma in Hungarian Society* (Budapest, 2002), 149–56; Ken Lee, 'Belated Travelling Theory, Contemporary Wild Praxis: A Romani Perspective on the Practical Possibilities of the Open End', in Saul and Tebbutt (eds.), *The Role of the Romanies*, 31–49; Caroline Mellgren, 'The Other Way Around: The Roma Minority's View on Doing Research on Sensitive Topics', *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 3/4 (2015), 14–24; Ethel Brooks, 'The Importance of Feminists and "Halfies" in Romani Studies: New Epistemological Possibilities', *Roma Rights*, 2 (2015), 57–61; Marett Katalin Klahn, 'Knowing Differently: On Thinking and Doing "Roma"', *ibid.* 63–9; Anna Mirga-Kruszelnicka, 'Challenging Anti-Gypsyism in Academia: The Role of Romani Scholars', *Critical Romani Studies*, 1/1 (2018), 8–28; and Lucie Fremlova, 'Non-Romani Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity: Queer(y)-ing One's Own Privilege', *Critical Romani Studies*, 1/2 (2018), 98–123. See also the essays in Lorely French (ed.), *Roma Voices in the German-Speaking World* (London, 2015).

twentieth century witnessed several new historical studies informed by a social justice framework, alongside the aforementioned source-books by Gronemeyer and Gilsenbach.<sup>73</sup> However, this renewed interest in Romani rights and culture did not necessarily lead to new interpretations of the medieval period.<sup>74</sup> Even in a field that had moved on from nineteenth-century gypsology in many respects, a reliance upon shopworn citations and old scholarship has continued to plague treatments of the fifteenth-century immigration. In the process, old biases—for instance, the idea of Romani immigrants as inveterate fraudsters—have persisted into the twenty-first century.

In the last twenty years, new voices have engaged with medieval Romani history. A few of these entries have appeared within the traditional fold of Romani studies.<sup>75</sup> Increasingly (and belatedly), however, this period has attracted the attention of specialists in medieval

<sup>73</sup> Olímpio Nunes, *O povo cigano* (Porto, 1981); Liégeois, *Les Tsiganes*; Vossen and Dietrich, *Zigeuner*; Nicole Martinez, *Les Tsiganes* (Paris, 1986); Patrick Williams, *Tsiganes: Identité, évolution* (Paris, 1989); Joachim S. Hohmann, *Geschichte der Zigeunerverfolgung in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main, 1981); id., *Verfolgte ohne Heimat: Geschichte der Zigeuner in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990); Fraser, *The Gypsies*; Giorgio Viaggio, *Storia degli Zingari in Italia* (Rome, 1997); Giere (ed.), *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion des Zigeuners*; Thomas Fricke, *Zigeuner im Zeitalter des Absolutismus: Bilanz einer einseitigen Überlieferung* (Pfaffenweiler, 1996); and Donald Kenrick and Colin Clark, *Moving On: The Gypsies and Travellers of Britain* (Hatfield, 1999). On Romani immigration specifically, see Bronisław Geremek, 'L'arrivée des Tsiganes en Italie: De l'assistance à la répression', in Giorgio Politi, Mario Rosa, and Franco Della Peruta (eds.), *Timore e carità: I poveri nell'Italia moderna* (Cremona, 1982), 27–45; id., 'Cyganie w Europie średniowiecznej nowożytniej', *Przegląd Historyczny*, 75/3 (1984), 569–96; Angus Fraser, 'The Rom Migrations', *JGLS: Series 5*, 2/2 (1992), 131–45; and id., 'Juridical Autonomy'. For a historiographical survey written in this era, see id., 'The Present and Future of the Gypsy Past', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 13/2 (2000), 17–31.

<sup>74</sup> See too the broader critiques in Romani Rose, 'Die neue Generation und die alte Ideologie: Zigeunerforschung – wie gehabt?', *Tribüne: Zeitschrift zum Verständnis des Judentums*, 21/81 (1982), 88–108.

<sup>75</sup> E.g. Aaron C. Taylor, 'A Possible Early Reference to the Gypsies in Spain Prior to 1420: Ms. 940 of the Trivulziana Library in Milan, Italy', *Romani Studies*, 26/1 (2016), 79–86; Kenrick, 'The Origins of Anti-Gypsyism'; and Elisa Novi Chavarría, *Sulle tracce degli Zingari: Il popolo rom nel Regno di Napoli, secoli XV–XVIII* (Naples, 2007).

literature and history.<sup>76</sup> For these scholars – Kristina Richardson, Geraldine Heng, and David Abulafia among them – the medieval Roma have dovetailed naturally with work on marginality, race-making, and cross-cultural encounters, all themes of interest within medieval studies since the 1990s. From these perspectives, fifteenth-century rhetoric about the Roma resembles long-standing medieval prejudices against ethnic outsiders and the itinerant poor. With fresh engagement from medievalists have also come new questions and new transregional interpretations.

### *Taking Stock and Moving Forwards*

Chroniclers wrote about the arrival of exotic ‘dark’ foreigners within their own neighbourhoods, directly likening the newcomers to all manner of distant, racialized others; yet the Roma feature only sparingly in the impassioned debates over medieval race-making. Crowds of ‘baptized heathens’ supposedly practised divination and syncretic religion in an age of heterodoxy; yet the Roma appear

<sup>76</sup> Richardson, *Roma in the Medieval Islamic World*, 103–38; Heng, ‘“Gypsies”: A Global Race in Diaspora’; David Abulafia, ‘The Coming of the Gypsies: Cities, Princes and Nomads’, in Peter Hoppenbrouwers, Antheun Janse, and Robert Stein (eds.), *Power and Persuasion: Essays on the Art of State Building in Honour of W. P. Blockmans* (Turnhout, 2010), 325–34; Erwin Pokorny, ‘The Gypsies and their Impact on Fifteenth-Century Western European Iconography’, in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration, and Convergence* (Melbourne, 2009), 597–601; Peter Bell and Dirk Suckow, ‘Lebenslinien: Das Handlesemotiv und die Repräsentation von “Zigeunern” in der Kunst des Spätmittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit’, in Iulia-Karin Patrut and Herbert Uerlings (eds.), *‘Zigeuner’ und Nation: Repräsentation – Inklusion – Exklusion* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008), 493–549; Ernst Schubert, ‘Duldung, Diskriminierung und Verfolgung gesellschaftlicher Randgruppen im ausgehenden Mittelalter’, in Sigrid Schmitt and Michael Matheus (eds.), *Kriminalität und Gesellschaft in Spätmittelalter und Neuzeit* (Stuttgart, 2005), 47–69, at 64–6; Christian Kleinert, ‘Pilger, Bettler, edle Herren: Frankfurter Spuren zum Leben der Roma im 15. Jahrhundert’, in Heribert Müller (ed.), *Ihrer Bürger Freiheit’: Frankfurt am Main im Mittelalter. Beiträge zur Erinnerung an die Frankfurter Mediävistin Elsbet Orth* (Frankfurt am Main, 2004), 197–229; and Baker, ‘From Little Egypt to Zürich’.

almost nowhere in countless studies of medieval religious diversity. Members of a highly mobile Indic diaspora explored and established a permanent presence in Western Europe during its own 'Age of Discovery'; yet the Roma do not often crop up in the reams of literature on mobility, diaspora, and encounters on the cusp of early modernity. Within many academic subfields, some of them burned over by decades of debate, we might expect to find the Roma centre stage. In almost every case, the Roma have been relegated to the margins or ignored entirely. Existing scholarship on medieval Romani history too often relies on hastily cited surveys, old gypsiological articles, and a handful of regurgitated early modern chronicles largely unchanged since Grellmann selected his 'old annals'. How do we explain the ongoing marginalization of this chapter in Romani and European history?

Since the late Enlightenment, most new work on medieval Romani history has taken place within the interdisciplinary but isolated field of 'Gypsy'/Romani studies, sequestered from the mainstreams of its constituent disciplines.<sup>77</sup> The gypsologists of the nineteenth century comprised an especially small and inward-looking group, within which historians were always a minority. Most historical questions fell to folklorists and linguists without the requisite technical skills to deal directly with medieval documents. The same can be said for much of the twentieth century, in which sociology emerged as the reigning paradigm. Scholars have haggled over the 'poverty' of modern Roma studies, with many defending the reinvented field's scholarly rigour against charges of sloppiness.<sup>78</sup> Even so, the methods

<sup>77</sup> On the field's interdisciplinarity, see Xavier Rothea, 'Piste pour une historiographie [sic] des Tsiganes en France', *Études tsiganes* 39–40/3–4 (2009), 14–41.

<sup>78</sup> For a modern debate on the intellectual merits of modern Roma Studies, begin with the critiques of Zoltan Barany, 'The Poverty of Gypsy Studies', *NewsNet: The Newsletter of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies*, 40/3 (2000), 1–4; and id., *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality, and Ethnopolitics* (Cambridge, 2002), 5–9. Critical responses to Barany include Colin Clark, 'What Poverty? A Response to Zoltan Barany', *NewsNet: The Newsletter of the AAASS*, 40/5 (2000), 7; and Thomas Acton, 'Response to Zoltan Barany's "The Poverty of Gypsy Studies"', *ibid.* 8–9. See too Zoltan Barany, 'In Defense of Disciplined Scholarship: A Response from Professor Zoltan Barany', *ibid.* 9–12.

of premodern history remain ancillary to the interests and disciplinary training of most Roma specialists, forcing many sincerely motivated scholars to rely upon secondary or tertiary materials when writing on this period.<sup>79</sup> If the gypsologists and their activist successors have not read or written much history—much less medieval history—the converse is equally true: most historians have not engaged with the work of Romani specialists. Indeed, even Bataillard, a historically trained archivist of medieval manuscripts, published his most ambitious study in the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, thereby garnering little attention from other medieval historians. This trend has continued well into the twenty-first century, with new work on early Romani history clustering in a handful of specialist journals (such as *JGLS/Romani Studies*, *Études tsiganes*, and *Gießener Hefte für Tsiganologie*).

Since the 1960s, historians beyond Romani studies have shown growing interest in the early centuries of Romani life in Western Europe. However, these conversations have centred on the twin themes of state-sanctioned violence and literary construction, drawing primarily on texts from the sixteenth century and later.<sup>80</sup> Medieval sources, in contrast, do not yet show evidence of wide-scale state persecution and often do not feature the concept of the ‘Gypsy’ at all. Donald Kenrick, pre-eminent scholar of twentieth-century Romani history, admitted of the fifteenth century that ‘this is a period in which we have no poems, plays or fiction mentioning Gypsies. The literary stereotype of Gypsies had not yet evolved.’<sup>81</sup> In medieval material, the Roma are rarely defined with precise conceptual boundaries. Such sources have proven resistant to research methods like

<sup>79</sup> See Michael Schenk, ‘Tsiganologie und Historische Forschung: Von den Unzulänglichkeiten einer produktiven Verbindung’, in Joachim S. Hohmann, *Handbuch zur Tsiganologie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), 37–47.

<sup>80</sup> See e.g. Cressy, *Gypsies: An English History*; id., ‘Marginal People in a Stressful Culture: Gypsies and “Counterfeit Egyptians” in Margaret Spufford’s England’, in Trevor Dean, Glyn Parry, and Edward Valance (eds.), *Faith, Place and People in Early Modern England: Essays in Honour of Margaret Spufford* (Woodbridge, 2018), 202–21; Bogdal, *Europa erfindet die Zigeuner*; Chavarria, *Sulle tracce degli Zingari*; Richard Pym, *The Gypsies of Early Modern Spain, 1425–1783* (Basingstoke, 2007); and David Mayall, *English Gypsies and State Policies* (Hatfield, 1995).

<sup>81</sup> Kenrick, ‘The Origins of Anti-Gypsyism’, 79.

digital word searching and unsuitable to many of the questions that historians of the early modern period typically pose.

The reluctance of medieval historians to write about Romani immigration may be the most surprising of all. Here too, several forces have kept the Roma at the fringes of academic discourse. The chronology of Romani immigration has one part to play. The fifteenth century has traditionally occupied historians of Europe with several major themes: the rise of humanism, maritime exploration, Ottoman expansion, and religious dissent. With the erosion of Renaissance studies as a bridge between medieval and early modern history, the fifteenth century has increasingly fallen into a no man's land within anglophone history departments. The very thematic trends that would encourage a closer look at Romani immigration have also diverted attention away from the relevant sources. Much work on medieval alterity has concentrated on literary texts, and most scholarship on the 'persecuting society' of medieval Europe has focused on the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.<sup>82</sup> The study of Romani immigration through contemporary documents often demands specialized knowledge of regional vernaculars, which renders them uninviting to historians trained primarily in medieval Latin. Especially in North America, the number of medievalists who study fifteenth-century social history through vernacular sources—in other words, the subset of historians most equipped to investigate Romani immigration—has dwindled. In Europe, ongoing interest in local and regional history has exposed a larger swathe of scholars to the relevant sources, but questions of race-making, diaspora, and mobility have gained less traction in the Continental academy. Although the later twentieth century saw fruitful work in Europe on 'marginal groups' (German *Randgruppen*), this scholarship tended to

<sup>82</sup> On alterity as a research theme for medieval studies, see Paul Freedman and Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'Medievalisms Old and New: The Rediscovery of Alterity in North American Medieval Studies', *American Historical Review*, 103/3 (1998), 677–704. For the classic study of the medieval 'persecuting society', with a focus on clerical literati of the twelfth century, see R. I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950–1250* (Oxford, 1987). Cf. John H. Arnold, 'Persecution and Power in Medieval Europe: *The Formation of a Persecuting Society*, by R. I. Moore', *American Historical Review*, 123/1 (2018), 165–74.

focus on socio-economic niches rather than ethnolinguistic identity groups.

The pragmatic challenges of working on the medieval Roma can also explain why so few scholars have thrown themselves into this area of research. In fifteenth-century sources, the Roma flit into view briefly, unpredictably, and under a host of different names. With no repertories apart from Gronemeyer and Gilsenbach, it remains a laborious task to locate these needles in the haphazardly indexed haystacks of archival material. The geographic scope of these references, when combined with their incredibly low frequency within any single archive, has discouraged the engagement of many otherwise qualified and interested scholars. As with other diasporic groups, the history of the Roma continues to be obscured by the overwhelming influence of national and regional borders, which affect everything from language training to research grant allocation.

The Roma—a relatively late, scarce, far-flung, and conceptually slippery group within medieval sources—have proven difficult to integrate into many research programmes. How, then, might we heed the call of so many scholars to expand our knowledge of their immigration? I would like to offer five suggestions for this work:

*Focus on medieval evidence:* Since the eighteenth century, scholars have fallen back on the more accessible and sensational testimonies of chronicles from the age of print. This practice distorts our understanding of the immigration by importing early modern prejudices into a period that had not yet invented them.

*Focus on manuscripts:* Scholars relying on sourcebooks or print editions have failed to observe the sometimes drastic variations between different manuscripts of single chronicles. Instead of treating these sources as monolithic, authoritative ‘texts’, a manuscript-centred approach would highlight the ways in which medieval scribes developed their image of the Roma in a piecemeal, heterogeneous fashion.

*Engage with archival material:* Despite the difficulties enumerated above, historians must recognize archives as wellsprings of

unpublished, hitherto unstudied evidence for Romani immigration. Administrative sources do not promise 'objective' truth, but they can balance the more literary perspective of chronicles with evidence for on-the-ground social and legal developments.

*Engage transnationally:* Despite the international nature of modern Romani political activism, much new scholarship continues to focus on the communities that reside within particular states. This approach does not square well with the medieval reality, in which a variety of political forms existed on multiple scales, borders had not coalesced into modern nation states, and the Roma moved with speed and ease across these borders.

*Root out antiziganist assumptions:* Historians must continue to examine the inherited antiziganist biases in their own scholarship. Here, the authority of Romani communities and scholars plays a vitally important role in unlearning pernicious habits of thought. The assumption of Romani criminality and asociality should not inform our scholarship. So too, we must guard against more insidious forms of Romani erasure. Studies on the literary and administrative construction of the 'Gypsy' have at times unintentionally denied the presence of the Roma as an actual ethnolinguistic group.<sup>83</sup> Likewise, condemnations of antiziganist violence can overshadow the active resilience of Romani communities amidst those conditions. As a corrective to such trends, thoughtful scholarship must always recognize Romani presence and agency in their own history.

In the late Middle Ages, Romani communities immigrated into Western Europe. They charted their own courses in a strange land and survived in the ways they deemed best. As historians, we will often encounter them in the records much as medieval Europeans saw them: briefly, incompletely, and with many questions that will go unanswered. Even so, their presence in the annals of European history should not be ignored. The challenges that come with the

<sup>83</sup> See Matras, 'Scholarship and the Politics of Romani Identity', 212-16.



MARGINAL PEOPLE, MARGINAL HISTORY

study of medieval Romani history should be a cause for excitement, not surrender.

LANE B. BAKER is a Ph.D. candidate in history at Stanford University. He studies the social history of medieval Europe, with particular interest in marginality, social control, and urban landscapes. He is currently writing a dissertation on the social history of the Roma in the fifteenth-century Holy Roman Empire.