

# Place names in Romani and Bayash communities in Hungary<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract:* Research into Romani and Bayash toponyms in Hungary lags significantly behind the study of the place names of other minorities, a fact attributable to the only relatively recent appearance of Romani Studies and a number of other historical factors. Among the latter, it should be borne in mind that Romani and Bayash communities only became the dominant populations in certain areas of Hungary in the last few decades and that the standard written versions of the Romani and Bayash linguistic varieties are still being formed. This study describes the main features of the ethnic and linguistic divisions of the Roma communities in Hungary; the problems of Romani and Bayash literacy; and initial attempts at collecting Romani and Bayash toponyms in the country. Although an elaborate, widely used system of Romani and Bayash settlement names exists, the collection and analysis of the microtoponyms is hindered by the fact that the settlement of the Roma population is only a fairly recent event and that the communities have not typically been involved in agriculture, an occupation much more closely associated with the use of these names. This paper provides, for the first time, a summary of the results of several toponymic field studies conducted in Hungary's Romani and Bayash communities.

*Key words:* Romani studies, Romani and Bayash linguistic varieties, settlement names, microtoponyms

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## Noms de lloc a comunitats romaní i bayash a Hongria

*Resum:* La investigació sobre topònims romaní i bayash a Hongria va molt per darrere de l'estudi dels topònims d'altres minories. El fet és atribuïble a l'aparició relativament recent dels estudis romanís i a diversos factors històrics; entre aquests factors històrics hi ha la circumstància que les comunitats romaní i bayash s'han convertit en poblacions dominants a determinades zones d'Hongria tot just a les darreres dècades, i el fet que encara a hores d'ara s'estiguin formant les versions escrites estàndard de les varietats lingüístiques romaní i bayash. El present estudi descriu les característiques principals de les divisions ètniques i lingüístiques de les comunitats gitanes a Hongria, els problemes de l'alfabetització romaní i bayash i, finalment, els primers intents de recopilació de topònims romaní i bayash al país. Tot i que existeix un sistema elaborat i àmpliament utilitzat de noms de nuclis de població romaní i bayash, la recopilació i l'anàlisi dels microtopònims es veuen obstaculitzats pel fet que l'assentament de la població gitana és un esdeveniment bastant recent i per la circumstància que aquestes comunitats no han participat normalment en les activitats agrícoles –una ocupació molt relacionada amb l'ús d'aquests noms. Aquest document proporciona, per primera vegada, un resum dels resultats de diversos estudis de camp toponímics realitzats a les comunitats romaní i bayash d'Hongria.

*Paraules clau:* Estudis sobre romaní, varietats lingüístiques romaní i bayash, noms de nuclis de població, microtopònims

## 1 THE ROMA IN HUNGARY

By way of introduction, we begin by providing some basic historical facts and by discussing the spatial distribution, relevant statistics and heterogeneity of the Roma minority in Hungary.

### 1.1 Some basic historical facts

In Hungarian historical sources, the ethnic group known as “gypsies” first appeared at the end of the 14th century, and their presence in Hungary has been reported without interruption ever since. At the beginning of the 15th century, Sigismund of Luxembourg, King of Hungary and Holy Roman Emperor, is claimed to have given a letter of safe conduct granting protection and independent jurisdiction to the Vojvoda Ladislaus and his “gypsy” retinue in the territory of his empire:

“You will afford them protection of any kind, so that the Vojvoda Ladislaus and the gypsies, his subjects, can stay within your walls without encountering difficulties [...] should any unpleasant incident occur [...] only the Vojvoda Ladislaus [...] has the right to punish or acquit” (excerpt from the Letter of Safe Conduct from Sigismund of Luxembourg, issued on April 23rd, 1423, in Szepes/

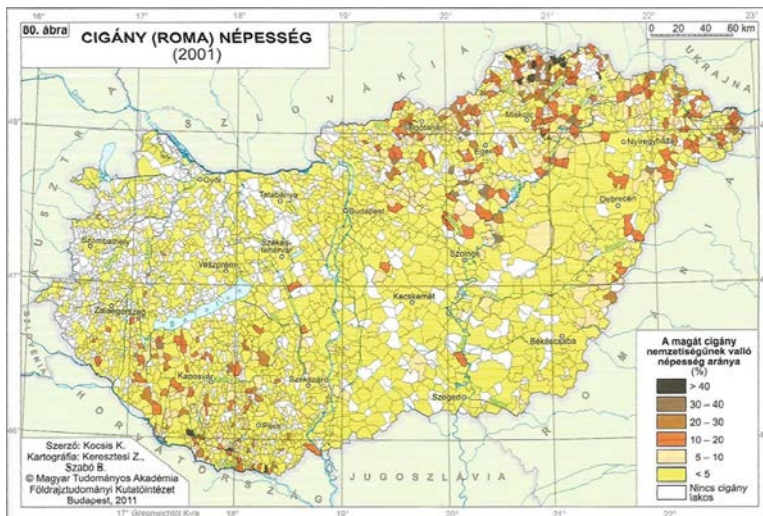
## *Place names in Romani and Bayash communities in Hungary*

Zipser Burg/Spišský hrad [Zips, Slovakia]; cf. <http://rombase.uni-graz.at>: Rombase » History and Politics » From India to Europe » Arrival in Europe).

In the Ottoman–Hungarian wars Gypsies fought on both sides. During the period of Ottoman occupation, Hungary lost half of its population. In the 18th century, the Habsburg emperors repopulated the country with German and Slavic settlers, and a great many Roma people also arrived in Hungary, settling especially in the country's central and eastern territories. Most of these immigrants adapted to the Hungarian culture and/or language, primarily as a result of their being forced to settle permanently. In the 19th century, the emigration of the Roma from the Romanian principalities, where they had lived in slavery, to Hungary was continuous, via both Transylvania and Serbia. In the second half of the 20th century, Roma communities, who had previously lived in isolation on the outskirts of settlements, were forced to move into the inner cores of the settlements.

### 1.2 Spatial distribution

The Gypsy/Roma minority is broadly spread throughout modern-day Hungary; however, most of the Roma live in the north-eastern and south-western counties of the country.



**Figure 1.** Gypsy (Roma) population (2001) [data based on self-reporting, Kocsis & Schweitzer, 2011: 80]

Their presence in certain areas is especially evident if – as opposed to using statistical data based on self-reporting – we take into consideration the impressions of the majority of society.

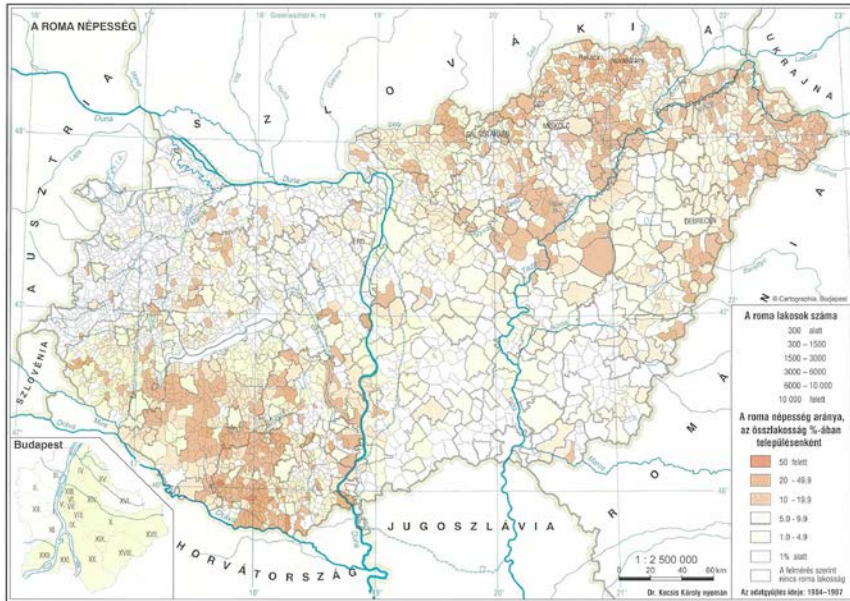


Figure 2. Roma population [data from 1984–1987, Papp-Váry, 1999: 69]

### 1.3 Statistical data

According to the 2011 census, there are 31 settlements in Hungary in which more than 50% of the inhabitants are of Roma origin. The actual number of settlements concerned, however, is believed to be much higher.

**Table 1.** Settlements with the highest proportion of Roma (Romani, Bayash) inhabitants  
[source: 2011 census, Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH)]

Settlement	Gypsies (romani, bayash)	Gypsies (romani, bayash) (%)	Resident population	County
Alsószentmárton	1 140	98.62	1 156	Baranya
Pálmajor	318	91.91	346	Somogy
Csenyéte	349	89.49	390	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén
Kiscséc	161	82.56	195	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén
Szakácsi	118	80.27	147	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén
Felsőregmec	252	77.78	324	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén
Siklósnagyfalu	313	75.42	415	Baranya
Adorjás	131	72.38	181	Baranya
Pettend	93	69.92	133	Baranya
Drávaiványi	131	69.31	189	Baranya
Rakaca	520	67.18	774	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén
Abaújszolnok	118	66.67	177	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén
Tiszabő	1 305	65.81	1 983	Heves
Nyírpilis	534	65.76	812	Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg
Tiszabura	1 733	59.86	2 895	Heves

The highly variable nature of the statistical data can be explained by the tendency among the Roma minority to conceal their true identity because of fear of discrimination or loss of prestige in the eyes of society. The unreliable nature of the statistical data is well illustrated by census data for 2001 and 2011 on ethnicity in the settlements of Szőke (Baranya County) and Vécs (Heves County). In Szőke, just three inhabitants declared themselves as being Gypsies in 2011; yet, ten years earlier 35 people had claimed they were Gypsies. During recent fieldwork, both Gypsies and non-Gypsies reported that 70% of the inhabitants in the settlement are in fact Gypsies.

**Table 2.** Changes in minority data between 2001 and 2011  
(Census 1, 2, 3, 4)

Settlement	Census 2001			Census 2011		
	Resident population	Gypsies (Romani, Bayash)	%	Resident population	Gypsies (Romani, Bayash)	%
Szóke (Baranya County)	159	35	22.01	143	3	2.1
Vécs (Heves County)	734	13	1.77	634	91	14.35

The settlement of Vécs, however, is perhaps a more characteristic case: the number of Gypsy inhabitants in the village having reported to have risen from 13 (2001) to 91 (2011).

In general, the number of people claiming Roma identity in Hungary has grown from 190,000 in 2001 to 315,000 in 2011, which is a 66% increase. Sociological surveys, however, stress that there is still a strong tendency to conceal identity and that a more realistic number of the Roma people living in Hungary lies somewhere between 500,000 and 1 million. The variations in the data also indicate that self-identification in society is influenced by a range of factors, some of which are sociological and political (e.g. prestige, local self-government, subsidization, educational opportunities), while others can be traced back to internal division.

#### 1.4 Heterogeneity, languages

The Roma minority in Hungary is viewed as a homogeneous group by the majority population (and also in official statistics), although the 'standoffish' attitudes of superiority held by some of the separate Roma groups towards other Roma groups are often as strong as the sense of isolation they suffer from the majority population. The Roma do not use an all-inclusive autonym in their own languages to refer to themselves as a unified ethnic group: they only know such expressions in Hungarian. Their self-identification is based on a complex and not yet completely

understood system of references to their ethnic, linguistic-dialectal, regional and earlier occupational relations. However, based on the languages they speak, the Gypsy minority in Hungary can be divided into three large groups: two groups of bilingual and a group of monolingual speakers.

A) Most members of the bilingual Gypsy communities in Hungary speak Hungarian and a variety of the Romani language. Romani is the only Indo-Aryan language that has been spoken exclusively outside the Indian subcontinent, mainly in Europe, since the Middle Ages. It has an estimated 3.5 to 10 million speakers (Matras, 2006). The term *Romani* is a glottonym, used by groups that usually call themselves Roma, and who are typically known as Gypsies by their non-Roma environment, to refer to their native language. In line with the fact that self-identification in most speaking communities is based on a reference to a native language, modern linguistic literature typically uses this term for the aforementioned New Indo-Aryan language, which belongs to the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European language family with a marked influence from the Balkans, or for any of its varieties (Friedman, 2000).

The ethnonyms of Roma communities in eastern and south-eastern Europe can often be traced back to trade names (Bakker & Matras, 1997; Friedman, 1999). Examples of the folk etymologies of names that refer to Roma groups include *cerhara* ‘tent-dwellers’ (< Romani *cerha* ‘tent’), *čurara* ‘tanners, sieve makers’ (< Romanian *ciur* ‘sieve’), *mašara* ‘fishermen’ (< Romani *mašo* ‘fish’), *kelderara* ~ *kăldărara* ‘coppersmith, cauldron maker’ (< Romanian *căldare* ‘cauldron’ and *căldărar* ‘boiler-smith, coppersmith’), *colara* ‘carpet traders, textile traders’ (< Romani *colo* ‘bed sheet’), *drizara* ~ *dirzara* ‘ragamuffins’, etc. Members of the Roma communities normally use the terms *lovari*, *kelderaš*, *cerhari*, etc. to refer to different intergroup relations and to the barriers formed by socially determined criteria. Used primarily as group names for social and ethnic categorisation in Romani, these terms often occur as dialect names in linguistic literature. For instance, the terms *Lovari* (dialect), *Cerhari* (dialect), etc. refer to the varieties of Romani spoken in communities that call themselves Lovari and Cerhari. In other words, these terms are also used to designate social varieties and dialects of the Romani language that are related to different groups of speakers. Such practices give rise to

inaccuracies as the same group name can often refer to several distinct language varieties which are, to varying degrees, similar to one another.

B) The members of the second bilingual community of Gypsies in Hungary, who usually call themselves Bayash, speak one of the Bayash language varieties. Bayash people always speak some Romanian variety as their native language. The variety used by the Bayash in Hungary, unlike the varieties spoken in Romania, has come into contact with Southern Slavic languages and Hungarian, as this variety has long been detached from the Romanian language area. Thus, Roma people speaking Romani and the Bayash people speak two completely different and mutually unintelligible languages. Today, much of the international literature customarily uses the term *Bayash* ~ *Boyash* ~ *Rudari* (Hungarian *beás*, Romanian *băiaș*, Croatian *bajaš*); yet, Bayash classification practices leave a number of serious questions unanswered. It is unclear if the term used by different authors refers to different ethnic groups or different language varieties, or if the term can have both meanings. In fact, it has yet to be divulged what the possible links are between the communities regarded as Bayash and their respective language varieties; where the term itself comes from (if it is an endoethnonym or exoethnonym) and to what extent it designates a homogeneous group or language variety. It is also unclear how the categorisations in different time periods and by different researchers correspond to one another (see Rosenberg, n.d.).

Whatever definition we decide to offer for the term *Bayash* ~ *Boyash*, we only generate problems and unanswered questions. Although the definition proposed by Pál Nagy (n.d.) – which claims “*Bayash* is the name given to Romani people who speak pre-language reform Romanian and that have traditionally chosen wood processing trades, such as trough, spoon and spindle making” – may at first sight seem to serve well, today the ethnonym *Bayash* is used also for communities that have not engaged in wood processing for generations and even for communities in which the language of the majority society (or that of some other minority) is also spoken.

C) The group of Hungarian-only speakers includes not only monolingual Hungarian speakers whose ancestors spoke the Romungro (‘Hungarian Gypsy’, cf. the autonym Rumungri pl., a compound from *rom* = ‘Gypsy’ + *ungro* ‘Hungarian’) variety of Romani, but also those who no

longer use the Sinto or Bayash variety spoken by preceding generations, such as their parents or grandparents, but continue to consider themselves Romani, Sinti or Bayash in terms of ethnic identity. Therefore, despite the common view, the category of Romungro does not include all speakers and communities that have become Hungarian monolingual speakers and communities as a result of language shift. As far as the spoken language is concerned, the Gypsy community is often regarded by non-Gypsies as a homogeneous group despite its linguistic, ethnic and social diversity and, indeed, the subgroups of Romani and Bayash speakers are themselves heterogeneous (Szalai, 2007, 2015: 121).

Since 1993, the law in Hungary has promoted the use of the mother tongue by the Roma for all purposes (cf. 1993 LXXVII. Act on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities). At the outset, however, conditions were not necessarily ideal for its implementation, as is well reflected by the fact that the law merges Romani and Bayash, two very different languages, under the term *cigány* 'Gypsy'. Likewise, statistical surveys, as we have seen above, failed to differentiate between the speakers of these two languages.

Today, in Hungary, most Roma people whose mother tongue is not Hungarian use the Romani language that is spoken in Wallachian Roma communities. (Strangely enough, although the word *oláh* ['vlach'] practically means 'Romanian' in the Hungarian language, it is not the Wallachian Roma, but rather the Bayash who speak Romanian.) In Hungary, the largely standardized variety of Romani is based on the Lovari dialect, with a roughly fixed alphabet established decades ago, constantly spreading literacy and used in language education/exams (see Arató, 2012). Lovari is one of the northern Vlax varieties of the Romani language, in addition to Kelderaš and some other varieties spoken in Northeast Hungary. The vocabulary, phonology and morphology of the Vlax varieties of the Romani language were strongly influenced by Romanian in the past. The Mašari variety, which is quite similar to Lovari, is used in Romani-speaking communities around the town of Gyöngyös in Heves County and also in some other Roma communities in Pest County. Other Romani-speaking communities are made up of speakers of southern central varieties of the Romani language, such as Romungro (Hungarian Roma) and Vend; speakers of Sinto-Manuš

varieties of the Romani language; and speakers of Cerhari and Gurvari, transitional dialects between the Vlax and the central varieties of the Romani language. Central Romani (also known as Carpathian Romani or Romungro Romani) is also a variety of the Romani language, which has been mixed with the surrounding languages, especially with Hungarian to such a degree that its standardization has not been pursued. A high degree of literacy in Central Romani could not be observed in either the literature or our fieldwork.

The Bayash communities in Hungary are considerably scattered, which means that the vast majority of Bayash speakers report never having heard other Bayash people using a different dialect. The Transylvanian-Banat (*Arđelan*) dialect is mainly spoken in the Counties of Zala, Somogy, Baranya and Tolna, but there are populous Bayash speech communities in the Counties of Vas, Győr-Moson-Sopron, Veszprém and Nógrád, whereas there are some isolated speakers also in the Counties of Pest, Komárom-Esztergom, Fejér and in the western part of Bács-Kiskun County. Speakers of the Muntean-Banat (*Munćan*) dialect live in Alsószentmárton and in the neighbouring villages, but they also live sporadically in dozens of other places in Baranya County, as they do in some areas of Somogy County near Baranya. The communities speaking the Transylvanian-Crişana dialect are primarily found along the river Tisza and in the Counties of Pest, Bács-Kiskun, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Békés, Hajdú-Bihar, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and in the southern part of Heves County, but some isolated speakers also live in the County of Tolna. According to the census, the *Bayash* constitute 10% of the Roma population in Hungary (Rosenberg, 2018: 113–114).

Various attempts have been made in Bayash communities to educate and spread literacy in standard Romanian. The form of Bayash literacy most frequently promoted is that based on the *Arđelan* dialect, spoken by the largest group of Bayash people. However, the new Bayash alphabet and the textbooks using it are, in fact, less than thirty years old. This new Bayash spelling is based on the Hungarian alphabet and has been extended with the Romanian letters *ă* and *î* (see Arató & Gúti, 2015: 147–148). The Bayash language today is taught in some schools and its literacy is continuously developing.

Today, it seems we can safely conclude that Roma communities in Hungary use either Hungarian exclusively for all their communicative purposes or their mother tongue in addition to Hungarian. Roma communities that communicate solely in their mother tongue are practically non-existent. Roma communities adopting two languages – to borrow a term from sociolinguistics – are, therefore, bilingual communities – their choice of language being clearly defined by the communicative situations. The Roma languages are chosen exclusively in family or in-group talks. Language loss is significant: in most settlements, it seems that only those over the ages of forty to fifty can speak their ancestors' language today.

## 2 RESEARCH INTO ROMANI STUDIES IN HUNGARY

Although Romani studies in Hungary can be traced back almost 150 years (cf. the *Gypsy Grammar* by Archduke Joseph Karl of Austria, published in 1888) and seem to have been fairly vigorous in the last two decades, there has been no comprehensive, country-wide, interdisciplinary research into the topic carried out by a central institute. Indeed, Hungary cannot boast a well-equipped Roma documentation centre. What we have are a number of scattered ongoing research projects at universities and academic institutions, conducted primarily in the fields of linguistics (especially, sociolinguistics), ethnography (religion, folklore, traditions, tangible culture), history, sociology and statistics. Roma toponyms are rarely discussed and no more than a few relevant papers have been published to date (e.g. Szilágyi-Varga, 2018). In fact, no single survey has been conducted to determine in which Hungarian settlements Roma languages are in active use, despite its obvious importance for researchers who seek to collect and study Roma toponyms.

## 3 FIELDWORK

Although the Roma/Gypsy population is the largest minority group in Hungary, and county place-name surveys have a great tradition in the country, collecting Roma/Gypsy place names has never been on

the agenda – except for a single isolated attempt at presenting both Romani and Bayash place names among the collected toponymic data of four settlements in the volume of “Geographical Names in Baranya County” (1982). On various maps, toponyms referring to the presence of a Roma/Gypsy community do appear, but never in the language spoken by that community. One of the obvious explanations for this is a lack of knowledge about the Roma languages, but it is also attributable to the relatively late date of settlement by some Roma communities; the only recent emergence of literacy in the Roma languages; the absence of the Roma people from agriculture, an occupation in which toponyms acquire great importance; and the fact that the Roma/Gypsy inhabitants have not constituted the majority population of a settlement for a long time. Thus, for a long time, there was virtually no evidence of the existence of Roma geographical names. With respect to Roma name forms, neither the methods for their collection or written standardization have previously been established, which means recent attempts to include Roma toponyms (as well as the place names of other indigenous minorities) in the Gazetteer of Hungary are breaking new ground.

It was decided, therefore, that the first surveys should be carried out in settlements that have been permanently inhabited by a sizeable Roma/Gypsy population for a considerable period of time and in which the inhabitants make extensive use of their mother-tongue. To select appropriate settlements, we made inquiries at various national and regional administrative bodies for minorities and at institutes for minority studies, but they could provide few insights, especially as regards language use, due to the absence of any relevant surveys. Thus, we were forced to rely on sources such as the population report by settlements based on the 2001 census, prepared by KSH, the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (which, as we saw above, is only of approximate accuracy); the inferences we were able to draw from linguistic and other types of scientific works; and, finally, on information from the grapevine. Finally, we collected a series of toponyms from two dozen settlements in the counties of Baranya, Heves, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok and Somogy.

Two types of fieldwork were carried out. Wherever the occasion arose, we struck up informal, ad hoc conversations with Roma people, considered by the members of their community as being familiar with the

place and good at the language, to speak about their local surroundings, preferably in their mother tongue. We also sent out formal requests to the local authorities of settlements with a Roma/Gypsy majority and asked for Roma informants who could help us update the toponyms on the settlements' 1:10.000 maps. We started off with a collection of toponyms, appearing on maps or other documents, concerning all the surveyed settlements. The present-day use of these place names was then verified in the interviews.

In both types of fieldwork, we systematically paid attention to the following details:

- the estimated proportion represented by the Roma/Gypsy population in the settlement;
- the languages spoken in the settlement;
- the estimated proportion of native speakers in the settlement;
- literacy and education in mother tongue in the settlement;
- when the Roma/Gypsy population first settled in the village;
- where the Roma/Gypsy population originated from;
- how the Roma people spell the name of the settlement in which they live;
- how the Roma inhabitants refer to neighbouring settlements.

When collecting minor names, the presence of Roma communities in settlements has to be verified and the potential existence of minor names used by the Roma communities needs to be assumed. However, an evident problem is that the minor names used by the Roma communities are not always appreciated by Roma political and cultural leaders. Indeed, our work – that is, collecting and registering place names with the idea of displaying them on road signs and on signs for local institutions – was often met with incomprehension. The leader of one association claimed that their primary interest is to achieve a good degree of assimilation and not to seek further segregation, while several Roma leaders stressed the need to be sensitive to the feelings of the majority population on the matter.

However, as a result of our preliminary work discussed herein, the possibility of the official adoption of Romani/Bayash settlement names has become a point of debate in several settlements. Yet, those with native language competence to implement the idea are often quite unsure as to

how to spell the settlement names. Ironically, the names of settlements in which the Roma inhabitants are ready to implement the idea are often the most problematic as regards their spelling.

#### 4 TYPES AND USE OF TOPONYMS IN ROMA COMMUNITIES IN HUNGARY

Both in the Bayash and the Romani communities, abundant examples of minor names (microtoponyms) and settlement names can be found. However, familiarity with the Romani or Bayash toponyms is now increasingly limited to elderly members of these communities. Not even a good command of the native language is a guarantee that the informant is familiar with many place names. Moreover, the degree of familiarity with these names differs enormously between the sexes. Men, probably owing to their greater job market mobility, travel to more places and, hence, know more names. While most communities use nativised Romani or Bayash toponyms (i.e. foreign names adjusted to the Romani or Bayash languages), this practice is not typical in every Roma group (Rosenberg, n.d.).

##### 4.1 Minor names

It is a characteristic of both major Roma language communities that the respective systems of their geographical names are only partially compatible with those in the Hungarian (or, occasionally, the Croatian) language. Generic terms are numerous (see Table 3 below).

**Table 3.** Examples of Bayash and Romani generics

	Bayash	Romani	Hungarian
'hill'	<i>dal</i>	<i>plaj</i>	<i>domb, hegy</i>
'ditch'	<i>šanc</i>	<i>šanco</i>	<i>árok</i>
'forest'	<i>pădure</i>	<i>veš</i>	<i>erdő</i>
'meadow'	<i>rît</i>	<i>rito</i>	<i>rét</i>
'vineyard'	<i>vije</i>	<i>rez</i>	<i>szőlő</i>
'street'	<i>ulică</i>	<i>vulica</i>	<i>utca</i>

These generic terms are used together with reference points to form circumlocutions to refer to places, e.g. “the street in which the mayor lives”, “the piece of land along the road leading to Siklós”, “the forest where we gather mushrooms”, “the street above/north of the church”, etc. It is also common to indicate places by using standalone generics, as in Hungarian, e.g. Romani *taña* ‘farm’ (Hungarian *tanya*), Bayash *vije* ‘vineyard’ (Hungarian *szőlő*).

Expressions considered proper names in foreign languages are usually adopted and inserted without variation into their speech, e.g. Romani *ande Paprikaföldön samas* (‘we are in Paprikaföldön’, lit. ‘we are in the paprika-field’; NB *-ön* is a Hungarian suffix for the superessive case), *ande vulica Kossuth utca* (‘I was walking down the street Kossuth utca’; NB both Hungarian *utca* and Romani *vulica* mean ‘street’); or after some phonological adaptation and the addition of the compulsory grammatical suffix, e.g. Romani *Telepo* < Hungarian *Telep* (‘colony’); Romani *Alsego* < Hungarian *Alszeg* (‘the lower part of a settlement’). Translation of Hungarian proper names is very rare, e.g. Bayash *Satu-l mare* ‘Nagyfalu’ (Hungarian ‘big village’), *Šanco-l mik* ‘Kis-árok’ (Hungarian ‘small ditch’). In this respect, the present fieldwork failed to confirm the Roma place names reported in the 1982 volume of “Geographical Names in Baranya County”. In our experience, the translation of Hungarian proper names only occurs if forced, i.e. requested several times, and is unnatural in everyday speech.

## 4.2 Settlement names

Both the Romani and the Bayash languages have a surprisingly large number of names for settlements and unincorporated small inhabited places. Names are thriving not only for the neighbouring villages, but also for settlements located at greater distances. There are also native variants of minor names (microtoponyms).

### 4.2.1 *Bayash toponyms*

The Bayash communities of Transdanubia know almost all neighbouring places by their Bayash names. It is fair to say that the towns and villages with Bayash names are primarily those in which the Bayash population is now

(or was in the past) in the majority, e.g. *Pilaška* ‘Mecsekpölöske’, *Mizuda* ‘Meződ’, *Kămanșe* ‘Kálmánca’, *Pișu* ‘Pécs’, *Sabadiba* ‘Balatonszabadi’, etc. At the same time, though less frequent, populated places without Bayash inhabitants might also acquire Bayash names, e.g. *Miškulcä* ‘Miskolc’, *Sulnok* ‘Szolnok’, *Peșta* ‘Budapest’. Also, some settlements with sizeable Bayash populations lack Bayash names, even if all neighbouring villages have one, e.g. *Kölesd*, *Uzd* in Tolna County (Arató, 2013: 62). There is also a limited number of highly informal, slang, place names, including *Rqta Stupuluj* ‘Méhkerék’ and *Ĝilvano* ‘Gilvánfa’.

The Bayash communities living between the Danube and the Tisza and beyond the Tisza river seldom, if ever, use nativised toponyms; they do not know the names for places in any other language than Hungarian. The Bayash toponyms that they sporadically use include *Dobričin*<sup>2</sup> ‘Debrecen’, *Lita* ‘Létavértes’, *Pișu* ‘Vámospércs’, *Avram(u)* ‘Nyírábrány’, *Bogomir* ‘Bagamér’, *Așad(u)* ‘Nyíracsad’, *Kokota* ‘Kokad’, *Poroslău* ~ *Porosläv* ‘Poroszló’. Likewise, the names for the two big rivers are relatively well-known among these communities: *Ćisa* ‘Tisza’, *Dunăre* ‘Danube’ (see also Romanian *Tisa*, *Dunarea*, respectively; Rosenberg, n.d.).

Names can be distinguished by the source languages, including Hungarian, e.g. *Pitendę* ‘Pettend’, *Igrica* ‘Zalaigrice’, *Lirinc* ‘Sárszentlőrinc’, *Budolę* ‘Bodolyabér’, *Mađaroda* ‘Balatonmagyaród’, and Slavic, e.g. *Uldinc(u)* (Croatian *Oldince*) ‘Old’, *Rastinc(u)* (Croatian *Rastince*) ‘Egyházasharaszti’, *Bremina* (< Croatian *Bremena* < *Breme*) ‘Beremend’ (Arató, 2013: 61; for details see Table 4).

2 The official name of the town is *Debrețin* in Romanian; however, Romanian speaking communities in Hungary, such as the Bayash people, use the colloquial form *Dobrițân* (with Bayash spelling *Dobričin*).

**Table 4.** Munčan and Arđelan toponyms displaying etymological differences  
[abbreviations: Cro = Croatian, Hun = Hungarian]

Official Hungarian toponym	Muntean-Banat (Munčan) dialect		Transylvanian-Banat (Arđelan) dialect	
	Bayash form	Etymology	Bayash form	Etymology
Barcs	<i>Barča</i>	Cro <i>Bârča</i>	<i>Barše</i>	Hun <i>Barcs</i>
Beremend	<i>Bremina</i>	Cro <i>Brëmen</i>	<i>Beremenda</i>	Hun <i>Beremend</i>
Egyházasharaszti	<i>Rastinc(u)</i>	Cro <i>Rastínce</i>	<i>Hārasta</i>	Hun <i>Egyházasharaszti</i>
Gordisa	<i>Gurdišā/ Gurdiš/Gordiš</i>	Cro <i>G̀rdiša</i>	<i>Gurdiža</i>	Hun <i>Gordisa</i>
Harkány	<i>Arkañ(u)</i>	Cro <i>Àrkānj</i>	<i>Hirkañ</i>	Hun <i>Harkány</i>
Kistapolca	<i>Tapuca</i>	Cro <i>Tapóca</i>	<i>Tīpalca</i>	Hun <i>Kistapolca</i>
Matty	<i>Make/Makę</i>	Cro <i>Măća</i>	<i>Maşę</i>	Cro <i>Măća</i> (?)
Old	<i>Uldinc(u)/ Oldinc(u)</i>	Cro <i>Oldínce</i>	<i>Olda</i>	Hun <i>Old</i>
Pécs	<i>Pičuj(u)</i>	Cro <i>Pěčuj</i>	<i>Pišu</i>	Hun <i>Pécs</i>
Sellye	<i>Šilin(e)</i>	Cro <i>Šeljīn</i>	<i>Sīle</i>	Hun <i>Sellye</i>

Phonological adaptation seems to be the most common method for forming a Bayash settlement name on the basis of its Hungarian name. Bayash often borrows Hungarian locative suffixes (*-ba*, *-be* are often used beside the rare *-bā*) as parts of the toponyms, e.g. *Šamba* ‘Zalacsány’, *Kimšibę* ‘Kemse’, *Vitibę* ‘Vejtí’, *Tāmāšība* ‘Tamási’, *Sirimbeę* ‘Szörény’, *Jenāšība* ‘Mecsekjánosi’, *Kumaromba* ‘Zalacomár’, *Rigiriibeę* ‘Regenye’. The suffixes are re-lexicalised and invariably survive (Fleck–Derdák–Orsós, 2000: 35).<sup>3</sup> Several prefixes meaning ‘little’/‘large’ are also used in Bayash

<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon is frequent in other languages; cf. Romani *Kantorjanošiba* ‘Kántorjánosi’, Croatian *Kotoriba* ‘Kotor’. Perhaps the best-known example is the Turkish *İstanbul* < Greek *εἰς τὴν Πόλιν* ‘in/to the city’ (FNESz 1: 636 and personal communication by Endre Tólos).

to draw distinctions, e.g. *Rajku-l Mare* ‘Felsőrajk’, *Titošu-l Mik* ‘Kistöttös’, *Nana Mare* ‘Felsőnána’, *Šimarta dă Sus* ‘Felsőszentmárton’, whereas other types of distinctive additions are nearly always lost in toponyms.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.2.2 *Romani toponyms*

A Romani toponym mostly designates a place or sphere of interest. The existence of a Romani toponym shows that the Romani know of the locality or have been there, or know someone who has been there; it does not mean that Romani people live or have ever lived there. People have varying degrees of contact with places or specific locations. As a result, some Romani toponyms are in widespread use, such as *Pešta* ‘(Buda)pest’, *Seksarda* ‘Szekszárd’, *Foka* ‘Siófok’, etc. At the same time, there are names of localities or parts of localities that are used only by the few Romani people living in the immediate neighbourhood of the place, such as *Muta* ‘Újireg’ (< Hungarian *Muth puszta*), *Geba* ‘Nyírkáta’ (< Hungarian *Gebe*). In Romani, most of the nouns designating inhabited localities belong to the athematic feminine subclass and, so, end in *-a*, e.g. *Mora* ‘Mór’, *Enjinga* ‘Enying’, *Djarmata* ‘Fehérgyarmat’. The Romani local names of non-Hungarian origin do not necessarily reflect actual or recent bilingualism of the speakers of the respective variety, e.g. *Debrecina* ‘Debrecen’ (< Romanian *Debrețin*), *Segedino* ‘Szeged’ (cf. Romanian *Seghedin*, Serbian *Ceġedin*).

Table 5. Romani settlement names in Mašari dialect

Hungarian	Romani
Alattyán	<i>Alattjanja</i>
Átány	<i>Atanja</i>
Heves	<i>Heveše</i>

4 The loss of prefixes (or suffixes) generates a great number of homonyms with ambiguous reference, e.g. *Kumaromba* ‘Zalacomár’ and ‘Homokkomárom’. Alsószentmárton is not the only name to become *Šimarta* in Bayash, as names including the element Szentmárton such as Hegyhát-, Kis-, Felső- and Zalaszentmárton will certainly produce the same form, and Szilvás-, Tót-, Mura-, Kemenes- and Kebeleszentmárton will probably also do so.

*Place names in Romani and Bayash communities in Hungary*

Jánoshida	<i>Janošida</i>
Jázapáti	<i>Apati</i>
Jásziványi	<i>Ivanja</i>
Jázkisér	<i>Kišere</i>
Jásladány	<i>Ladanja</i>
Kömlő	<i>Kömlőva ~ Komleva</i>
Kőtelek	<i>Kőtelke ~ Ketelke</i>
Pély	<i>Pelje</i>
Tiszaroff	<i>Roffo</i>

In the present survey, Romani settlement names were collected from informants living in Jászkisér, Heves County (see Table 5). The written forms of the settlement names including the sounds *ö, ő, ü, ú / ø, ø:, y, y: /* are uncertain, as the Romani alphabet does not contain proper letters for these sounds, although Romani speakers do use them in loanwords.

5 A CASE STUDY: ALSÓSZENTMÁRTON  
(BARANYA COUNTY)

The settlement Alsószentmárton presents a unique case. The village is located in the Siklós micro region in the southern part of Baranya County near the Croatian border:

“The 50 localities in this highly heterogeneous micro region belong to three geographical areas with several types of settlement ranging from tiny villages to small urban centres, from agricultural villages to tourist centres, and from suburban villages to ethnic ghettos” (Csalog, 1979: 13; Virág, 2011: 293).

Today the inhabitants of the village are 100% Roma population, who speak the Munčan variety of the Bayash language. It is a permanently settled community, with several generations having lived in the village to date. Their schools, however, as a result of a decision taken by the community itself, use exclusively Hungarian; thus, every member of the community is practically bilingual. They do not use Munčan in writing. Until the 1920s, the village had a Croatian (Šokci) and German population, many of whom were Croatian–Hungarian bilingual speakers. Although the 1982 volume “Geographical Names in Baranya County”

mentions that the majority of the inhabitants are Gypsies, the collected and published toponyms are either Croatian or Hungarian name forms.

Table 6. Minor names from the settlement Alsószentmárton

Munčan form	Geographical feature	The meaning/reference of the name
<i>Adica</i>	arable land	a Croatian term for 'a small area surrounded by waters'
<i>A lu Gužvañu nivã ~ Niva a lu Gužvañu</i>	arable land	'the pieces of land towards Tótokföldje'
<i>Gužvañ</i>	part of a settlement	a plain called Tótokföldje in Hungarian
<i>Kale a lu Rastinculuj</i>	road	'the dirt road to Egyházasharaszti'
<i>Kale a lu Rečki</i>	road	'the dirt road to Recske'
<i>Kale a lu Tîrguluj</i>	road	'the dirt road to Siklós'
<i>Kãnalę</i>	channel	'the channel'
<i>Klukučič</i>	arable land	a toponym borrowed from Hungarian <i>Klokocsik</i> ~ Croatian <i>Klokočik</i>
<i>Kruče a lu ñamculuj</i>	cross	'the cross towards the Germans'
<i>Kruče a lu Tîrguluj</i>	cross	'the cross towards Siklós'
<i>La stalã</i>	agricultural building	'at the stable', the former cattle farm
<i>Mãrmãnc ~ mãrmînc</i>	cemetery	'the cemetery'
<i>Pãdure a lu Dravi ~ A lu Dravi Pãdure</i>	forest	'the forest towards the river Dráva'
<i>Paša mare</i>	pasture	'the large pasture'
<i>Paša mikã</i>	pasture	'the small pasture'
<i>Pod a lu Rečki</i>	bridge	'the bridge to Recske'
<i>Pod dã fer</i>	bridge	'the iron bridge'
<i>Rečka</i>	lake	the backwater called <i>Recske</i> (sic!)

At our request, the mayor invited six informants, who showed themselves to be knowledgeable about the locality and willing to help. Most of the places in the settlement are indicated with the help of circumlocutions, including nearby reference points, e.g. *Kale a lu Rastinculuj* ‘the dirt road leading to Egyházasharaszti’, *A lu Gužvañu nivã* ‘the pieces of land towards Gužsvány/Tótokföldje’. The reference points are mostly inhabited places (a neighbouring settlement, a farmstead) or significant bodies of water. Their hydronyms have been borrowed from the earlier inhabitants, e.g. *Dráva*, *Recska*, *Lanka*, *Boros*. The phrase *a lu* is a variant of the invariable genitival article *a* and the dative *lu* (standard Romanian *lui*), meaning ‘of the’. With respect to the names of fields, we find very few forms borrowed from the earlier villagers, although many of these minor names have been previously recorded. Two loan names still seem to survive: *Adica* was borrowed in its original form; *Klukučič*, however, was adapted. Some generic terms in the language can also function as proper nouns (e.g. *Kãnalë*, *La stalã*, see Table 6), which is a common feature in the name stocks used by the peoples of the Carpathian Basin. Streets and squares are known by their official Hungarian names, or they are named after a well-known person living there in the form of circumlocutions.

The inhabitants of Alsószentmárton read and write in Hungarian, as the Munčan dialect has practically no written version. In fact, the Munčan dialect displays considerable differences from the Arđelan dialect, which serves as the basis for Bayash literacy, with respect to its phonology (e.g. *kale* ~ *kalë*) and lexemes (e.g. *pašã* ~ *ligilo*). However, the inhabitants of Alsószentmárton feel strongly that the Munčan name for their settlement should appear on road signs and in texts. Yet, the written form of the Munčan name is not standardized, and the informants could not reach a consensus on how to write the settlement name. Some informants reject the forms in Bayash orthography (based on the Arđelan dialect, see Arató & Gúti, 2015; Rosenberg, 2017); others are ready to use them. According to some informants, a distinctive addition is needed; others believe that it is important only in the Hungarian form of the name. Some informants would use the distinctive addition at the end of the name form as in Romanian; others would follow the Hungarian word order and use the distinctive addition at the beginning of the name. The latter

solution might easily result in quite uncommon spelling patterns. The situation is almost identical in the case of the name for Siklónagyfalu, the neighbouring settlement, also of Muncán majority.

Despite all these difficulties, the Muncán geographical names from Alsószentmárton – after they undergo an exhaustive language study – will be the first names used by a Roma community to be included in “Magyarország Földrajzinév-tára” (FNT, the state-initiated database of geographical names entitled “Gazetteer of Hungary”).

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

Although Roma communities are still primarily an oral culture, there is little doubt that the time is ripe to record their place names in writing and, in given cases, several of them might also be registered officially. Roma communities in different parts of Hungary often know and use settlement names in their own mother tongues, which – in contrast with the settlement names of other minorities – have largely been overlooked to date by the corresponding authorities (public administration and official bodies for statistics, cartography and road management). The standardization of Romani/Bayash settlement names and their establishment as part of the native language culture constitutes a classic task of language planning, partly due to the variety of variants available, but spelling conventions also have to be worked out, because only the Hungarian alphabet is used in reading and writing in most Roma communities in Hungary. How the new written forms of the names can be introduced so that they boost Roma self-identity and demonstrate the symbolic strength associated with public native language use is a problem that also needs to be addressed.

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