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Roma Identity in Shutka

Abstract

Roma identity is most often framed within a monochromatic, dualistic relationship consisting of the 'Roma' on one side, and the 'Majority' on the other. This research attempts to problematize this relationship by proposing that Roma identity is forged not in opposition to Majority non-Roma populations, but is a result of complex relations within a network of interaction among various Roma populations themselves. This research will be undertaken over a period of six months in Suto Orizari, a district of Macedonia's capital city of Skopje, and will be based primarily on techniques of participant observation, coupled with data collected from both structured and unstructured interviews. Sutka, as the location is often called, was chosen due to its large and diverse community of Roma, encompassing several language groups, religious affiliations, and historical backgrounds, nestled in a context that could be argued to be one of the most equitable toward the Roma in Eastern Europe. The significance of this study lies in its potential to shift the discourse on Roma identity from that of a "Majority contingent," perspective that is over reliant on descriptive analogues to that of one which places the Roma at the nexus of inquiry and adopts a Roma-centric perspective - examining the day-to-day level of interactions in and around the numerous boundaries of what most simply attempt to encapsulate in the over-simplistic gloss, Roma.