

The Last Migration?

Jerusalem's Gypsy Community

by Jennifer Peterson

The English term "Gypsy" is derived from the word "Egypt," based on a misassumption that the Gypsies' origin is found in this corner of North Africa. There are Gypsies in Egypt, but they migrated from Palestine, and originally came from India.

The Gypsies of Palestine call themselves *Dom*, which means "man" in their native Domari language. In Arabic, also a native language for this community, they are called *Nawar*, which derives from the word for fire. They may have been called this because many of them worked as blacksmiths in the past.

Today, Dom Gypsy communities live in many of the towns, villages and refugee camps of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Although the estimates vary depending on

Muhammad Deeb Sleem, mukhtar of Jerusalem's Gypsy community. Photo: J. Peterson



who is doing the guesswork, there may be roughly 1,000 Gypsies living throughout the West Bank (not including Jerusalem) and as many as three times that number in the Gaza Strip.

There are also an estimated 1,000 Gypsies living in Jerusalem's Old City, Ras al-Amud, Silwan and other neighbourhoods. Suffering the fate of other Palestinians, many more live as refugees in neighbouring countries, particularly Jordan. A people within a people, these Gypsy communities share a unique heritage that connects them to a global Gypsy Diaspora, even as they identify with the more contemporary history and culture of being Palestinian.

Origin of Man

Muhammad Deeb Sleem,¹ the *mukhtar*, or head of the Jerusalem Gypsy community, tells mythical tales of the community's origin and migration from India to Palestine. An avid reader of epic sagas about Arab folk heroes, Sleem aspires to pen a collection of stories about the Dom's history and culture.²

Like all good legends, Sleem's stories are larger than life. And yet, certain elements of his stories do correspond with what historians and linguists generally believe to be the Gypsies' origin and migratory path. Details, however, are still under intense debate, and it remains unclear why the Gypsies began to move in the first place. Some believe the communities were persecuted within the Indian caste system, while others suggest that it was a simple case of economic incentive.

One scholar believes that the Gypsies may have first travelled to Persia after a northern section of India was conquered in 227 AD, to meet the need for labourers.³ Many more scholars concur that Gypsy communities moved to Persia during the reign of Bahram Gur to work as musicians and dancers. The migration of northern Indian populations to

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A young Sleem in 1941 with his father, who was mukhtar at the time. Source: M. Sleem

the Persian Gulf area during this period is well documented by Byzantine historians.⁴

The Gypsies' path from Persia westward is less well understood. It is believed that by the fourteenth century, a branch of the Gypsies arrived in the Balkans, from where they eventually migrated throughout Europe. Another branch of the Gypsies slowly made their way through the Middle East, eventually reaching as far as Morocco. It is said that the region's leaders forcibly relocated groups of Gypsies several times, settling them in Antioch and Baghdad.⁵

Sleem tells one Dom Gypsy origin tale that is based on some of these historical accounts.⁶ It describes the transfer of Gypsies from India to Persia, and then their eventual movement to the Levant. This particular legend has a well-established oral and written tradition, being recorded first by the tenth century Persian historian Hamza Isfahani. The



Persian poet Firdusi wrote a version of the legend in his eleventh century Shahname, or Book of Kings.⁷

The King of Iran, Bahram Gur,⁸ heard about the Gypsies who were in northern India. He heard about their customs and so on, and he wanted to see for himself. And so he sent a letter to the ruler of northern India, and asked him to send a few families of Gypsies - those Gypsies he had heard about, who dance and sing.

The ruler in northern India sent him about 400 families. He put them in boats and sent them to Iran. When they reached the Iranian border, people informed the King that the families had arrived in boats. The King greeted them and gave them land to live on, and tents, and gave each house a sack of wheat, and some calves. He asked them to change their customs - instead of singing and dancing and so on, to farm, raise livestock and learn how to cultivate.

He left them for a week, and then came back, incognito; he wasn't wearing his royal robes. He found that in every house there was dancing and singing and so on. He went around all the tents, and then he gathered them together. He said, "Look, I gave you sacks of wheat, and told you to leave your customs, all this dancing and singing and so on, and become peasant farmers. Why haven't you done what I told you?" They said, "Master, nothing comes from our hands, not farming or anything else. This is our custom; this is what we're used to."

The King grew angry with them, and threw them out of Iran. They went to Mosul and Kirkuk and Suleimaniyya and spread around and settled there.

With time, their population grew. And when [Kurdish conqueror] Salah Al Din Al Ayyoubi appeared, and occupied the Arabian Peninsula, and encroached upon Iraq and Mosul and Kirkuk, and began to move towards Syria and Lebanon, he took some of the Gypsy families who were in Mosul as prisoners to fight with him.

Then Salah Al Din came to Jordan and Syria and Lebanon, and he came to Palestine, here. And then the Gypsies he had taken as prisoners dispersed. Some of them settled in Jordan, others in Palestine, some in Syria and Lebanon. Some went to the border of Turkey.

Sleem also tells another origin legend that describes the Dom as Arabs who fled to India in the wake of a blood feud between the two Dom tribes. This story then merges with the above legend, when Sleem says the Gypsies later returned to Arab lands with Salah Al Din's army. While there seems to be very little historical truth to this tale, the story indicates a need to reconcile the Indian origin of the Gypsies with their long-established Arab identity. This legend, recorded by Sleem in a short handwritten manuscript, opens with a prayer upon the Prophet Muhammad, followed by an introduction, common in classical Arabic literature, of the writer and his qualifications to record the tale.

According to Sleem's account, the Dom Gypsy tribes descend from the Bedouin Bani Murra tribe, which once lived on the outskirts of Damascus and was led by Jassas. Not far away lived their "cousins", the Bani Qees tribe,⁹ whose leader was Kleeb. He had killed Emir Hassan Al Tab'i,¹⁰ before taking control of the region himself.¹¹ This event was the catalyst for a series of power contests between Kleeb and Jassas that eventually led to the Gypsies' migration to India. Sleem narrates:¹²



Then the sister of Hassan Al Tab'i came from Yemen with her servant and mangy camel,¹³ to take revenge for the murder of her brother. This old woman was called Suad, and she settled near Jassas. After a few days, she asked her servant to take her mangy camel to one of Emir Kleeb's gardens to graze. The servant took the camel to a vast garden, where it ate from its fruits and grasses and picked from the branches of its trees.

When the garden's guards saw the mangy camel eating from the fruit-filled tree branches, they killed it and carried it to the street. The old lady's servant cut off its head and took it to her, and she started screaming and crying. Jassas, who lived next to her, came [to investigate] upon hearing her screams.

She asked him to take revenge from Kleeb for the killing of her camel. Jassas wanted to honour her by presenting her with 100 camels, but she rejected this offering. She demanded one of three forms of compensation: bringing her camel back to life, filling her lap with stars from the sky, or killing his cousin, Kleeb.

Jassas agreed to kill his cousin to avenge the murder of her camel, and invited Kleeb to compete with him in a fencing match. When Kleeb won, Jassas challenged him to a horse race. When Kleeb beat him again, Jassas stabbed Kleeb in the back with a lance and he fell to the ground in a pool of blood. Revenge taken, Suad's servant cut off his head, placed it in a sack, and together they fled back to Yemen.

Before he died however, Kleeb had scrawled a message of his murder with his own blood. When his tribesmen arrived on the scene the

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following day, they learnt of their relatives' treachery. Sleem writes:

And so a war took place between the two tribes for seven years. In the end, Kleeb's brother, Abu Laila, also known as Salem Al Zir, killed Jassas and a great number of the Bani Murra tribe. He disarmed them and ordered them to leave the country and live in the desert. He demanded that they not ride horses, but only donkeys.¹⁴

And so the Bani Murra tribe headed to the desert. They separated, with some going to the Arabian Peninsula and the Middle East, and others requesting to settle in northern India and European cities.

One scholar characterizes these legends as archetypal "ancestral guilt" stories common to peripatetic groups in an attempt to explain their origin and particular position in society. And yet certain elements of Sleem's origin myths do match up with historical accounts of the Gypsies' origins. While there is no evidence that the Gypsies were Arabs who migrated to India, there is much historical and linguistic evidence of their Indian roots and movement to Persia, as well as later relocations to and within Europe and the Middle East. What remains unclear is exactly when or why they moved.

The Gypsies of Palestine

Modern accounts of Gypsies in the Levant are largely found in linguistic studies and ethnographic descriptions written by Western scholars and Gypsylorists.¹⁶ Word lists and grammatical sketches of Domari were first collected by a German scholar from Gypsies in the vicinity of Nablus in the early nineteenth century.¹⁷ Professor of Celtic archaeology R.A. Stewart Macalister later produced a comprehensive study of Jerusalem Domari in 1914.¹⁸ He had spent



nine years digging in the area under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund, and learned some Domari from his foreman, Yusif Khattat. The data for his study was compiled from one local informant, Shakir Masin, and included stories Masin had told him. Macalister also photographed gypsy tent encampments located just north of Damascus Gate at that time.¹⁹

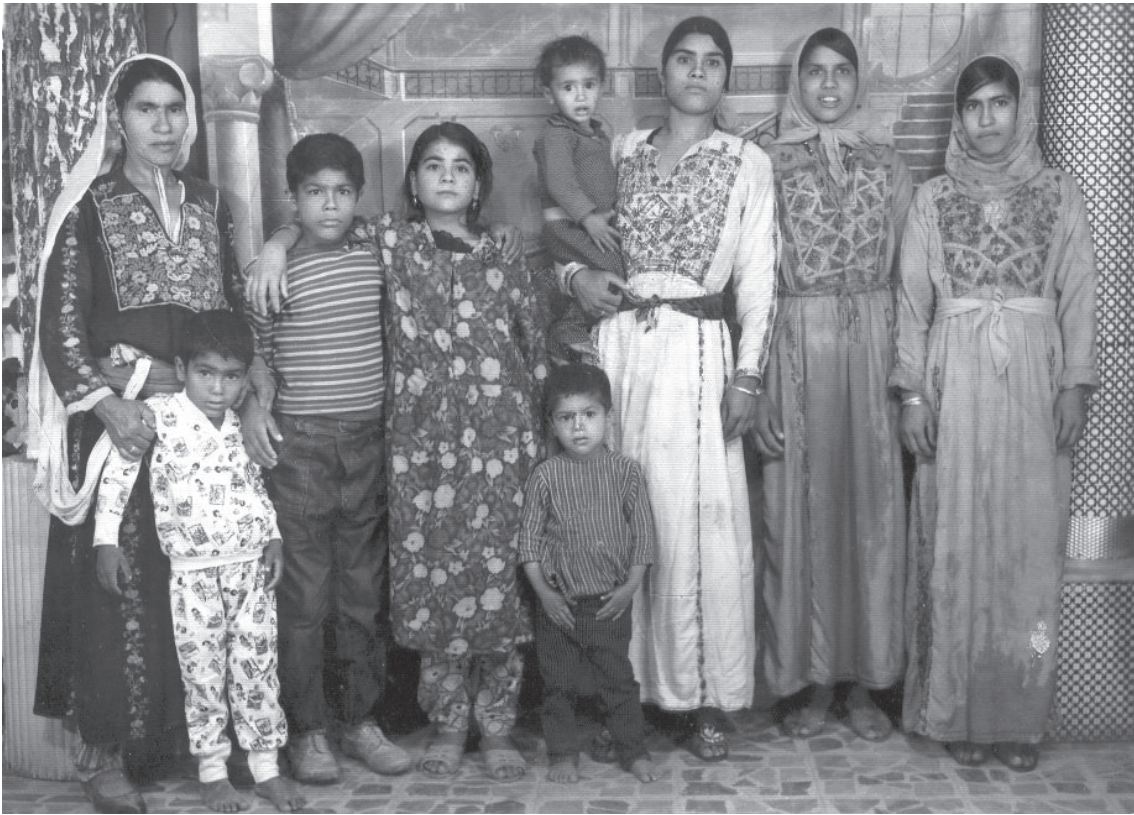
An early German description of Palestine's Gypsies portrays them as itinerant craftsmen, which, alongside entertainment, is often described as the archetypal profession of Gypsies, whether in India or throughout the Gypsy Diaspora. This historical reference also attempts to count the Gypsy population in Palestine, but census formats have often proven problematic due to their wording and purpose, as well as the sometimes ambiguous profession of identity on the part of Gypsy communities.

In 1931, when a census was taken, Western Palestine²⁰ contained nearly a million settled inhabitants, 66,337 Bedouin Arabs, and 216 Gypsies, but whether even that small number are still there or have suffered the fate of most of the Arabs one cannot tell. They wandered, stopping near towns and earning a living as smiths and sieve-makers; and they were necessary for the making of ploughshares and fitting them with new points when worn. Though there were other makers in Jerusalem, most of the big grain sieves were made by the Nawar of horse-hair.²¹

In 1947, Jacob Schimoni published a booklet on the Gypsies of Palestine, including photographs of Gypsies, sometimes with performing animals such as bears or monkeys.²² He provided a rough - albeit condescending - description of the local Gypsy language and culture.

Of the Gypsy people who roam all over the world, some are also found in Erets Yisrael [sic], a few of whom wander in this land only, while others travel in various Arab countries as well as Israel. Their centre seems to be in the Jaulan [Golan Heights]. They have accepted the Moslem faith, but it is asserted that they do not understand it, as they are on a very low cultural level and do not care much about religion. Among themselves they speak a special language called in Arabic "asfur," that is the sound or twitter of the sipor, i.e. "bird." But the majority know Arabic, which they use in their relations with the natives. They dress like the Arabs of the villages, and the Bedouin, but their wives wear even more jewels and ornaments than the Arabian women. In their trades, which are of various kinds, they are akin to their brethren in other countries: e.g. tinkers, coppersmiths, engravers. But amongst the Arabs they are regarded as thieves. Some are dancers and singers; they give entertainments such as animal shows in the streets of towns and in the vicinity of villages, particularly during such festivities as wedding celebrations and other occasions of "fantasia." For the rest, many of them are beggars who go around from door to door. Their tents are poor and miserable.²³

Sleem says that after coming to Palestine, the Gypsies worked as blacksmiths, merchants and horse dealers. During his father's generation, the Gypsies lived in tents where the Saad wa Said Mosque stands today on Nablus Road in Jerusalem, and moved between summer and winter shelters. During cold weather, they occupied stone houses further along Nablus road, but otherwise preferred their tents. By the time Sleem was born in 1933, many of the Gypsies had moved into wooden shacks along the eastern



A Jerusalem Gypsy family that fled to Amman in 1967. Source: M. Sleem

wall of the Old City.

Sleem remembers that when the Arab population was resisting British administration in the late thirties, resistance fighters would hide in these Gypsy shacks after attacking British soldiers. The British military administration also suspected the Palestinian resistance of hiding weapons in the Gypsy camps.²⁴ The Gypsies did not actually fight the British themselves; they were too frightened, Sleem relates. After searching for resistance activity in Gypsy homes, the British ordered the Gypsies to leave the area in 1939. Most of them eventually settled within the Old City, in the Bab Al Hutta area near Lion's Gate.

When the state of Israel was officially established in 1948, large numbers of the Gypsy population fled along with Arab Palestinians. Many of them settled in

Amman, where there is still a sizeable Gypsy community in Hayy Al Muhajirin, Jebal Al Nadhif, Al Hashimi Al Shamali and other neighbourhoods. Palestinian Gypsies also live in the refugee camps of Jordan, Lebanon and the Gaza Strip to this day.

Most of Jerusalem's Gypsies were still living in wooden shacks in the Old City's Bab Hutta neighbourhood when Israel occupied the city during the Six Day War in June 1967. The Gypsies left their shacks and hid nearby in Saint Anne's Church, where nuns offered them shelter. Many left for Jordan, upwards of 400 families, Sleem estimates.

Shehdeh Issa was one of these Gypsy migrants. After the war he spent two days working for the "Israeli municipality" collecting dead bodies from the streets, and then walked from Jerusalem to Amman in search of his wife, who had fled in fear with



other members of her family. It took Issa several days to locate her once he arrived in Amman, and then was unable to convince her to return. He and his now large family still live on Amman's Al Muhajirin Street, "the street of immigrants."

Another Jerusalem Gypsy migrant, Abu Muhammad,²⁵ remembers leaving in Israeli buses for the Jordanian border. Like Issa, he thought that he would sit out the war in Amman and return to Jerusalem when the situation stabilized. But his three attempts to return all failed - whether crossing the bridge or wading through shallow sections of the Jordan River, Israeli soldiers turned him back. Today, he still lives in the Hashimi Al Shamali neighbourhood of Amman, a quarter of tightly packed houses reached via long stairwells, which houses many Gypsy refugees from Palestine.

Splitting Culture

Historical linguistics and dialectology have long been the focus of Gypsy studies, as scholars attempt to retrace the migrations of Gypsy communities and the history of their dispersion to their place of origin.²⁶ Just as historical accounts tell of a split among the Gypsies, between the Roma who migrated to Europe and the Dom who ended up in the Middle East, the native tongues of these two major communities are significantly different today. While a speaker of Romani, a European Gypsy language, can understand approximately 50 percent of the speech of a fluent Domari speaker,²⁷ the two remain highly distinct dialects. Domari draws heavily on Arabic for syntactic restructuring, as well as for its phonological shifts.²⁸ Today Domari is known to be spoken in Jerusalem, the rest of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.

Although both Romani and Domari have clear Indic roots, scholars are still debating

exactly when and where they split from each other. One linguist contends that there is little evidence for a shared development of Domari and Romani outside of India, and that they may even have shared a period of contiguous existence within India.²⁹ Some scholars believe that there were two distinct Gypsy migrations, and that the Dom and Roma left India at different times.³⁰

Today in Jerusalem, the use of Domari is on the wane. It was estimated in 1999 that only 20 percent of adult Dom, in what was taken to be a population of roughly 700, used Domari as the language of daily interaction in their homes.³¹ Most young Gypsies only understand a corpus of commonly used words, and are unable to speak with any level of fluency. In addition to a collection of Gypsy legends, Sleem is intent on compiling a dictionary of his native tongue before it dies out.

But language is not the only aspect of local Gypsy culture that is disappearing. "Gypsies used to have different customs, but now they are like the Arabs," says Sleem.³² He tells of distinctly Gypsy traditions that are now fading out of practice.

When someone died, the first day, before the body is taken from the house, they'd slaughter a sheep...After they'd buried the body and come back from the graveyard, all the people who were at the cemetery would go to the house of the deceased's family and eat a hot meal. When a week passed, on Thursday, they'd go to every house with trays of baklava or kunafa or gharibeh. They'd carry the trays of sweets on their heads and go to the cemetery and pass them around to everyone. On the fortieth day, or the day before, they would get three or four sheep, and rice, and cook a hot meal, and distribute it among the houses.



The mukhtar of Jerusalem's Gypsy community meeting with the new Israeli mayor of Jerusalem, Teddy Kollek, in 1968.
Source: M. Sleem

While there are photos of Gypsy performers in Jerusalem in the early twentieth century, today this stereotypical Gypsy profession has all but died out. In Gaza, too, Gypsy entertainment has apparently ground to a halt. "The Gypsy ladies no longer dance. [It] would be a sacrilege to have a celebration while the Palestinians are being killed by the Israeli army," one ex-dancer told a reporter.³³

The increasing isolation of Gypsy communities in Palestine may play some role in the decline of uniquely Gypsy culture. Due to the restrictions on movement imposed by the Israeli occupation and the economic hardships brought with the Intifada, Gypsy communities in the West Bank and Gaza are gradually falling out of touch with each other.

A People Within a People

"We are a people inseparable from the [Palestinian] people. We've been here for hundreds of years. [But] it's a very lost community, it's very forgotten," says Amoun Sleem, a Gypsy woman living in Jerusalem's Old City.³⁴ She speaks not only of a slowly disappearing cultural heritage, but of the struggle to remain a thriving minority in a region with a complex history of national conflict.

Amoun is the founder and director of the Domari Gypsy Society of Israel. Controversial within the local Gypsy community and finding no support from wider Palestinian society, the organization has largely turned to outside assistance from Jewish and Christian organizations (as is indicated by the organization's chosen name, which identifies with Israel rather than Palestine).³⁵ The involvement of foreign



missionary volunteers bearing humanitarian assistance raises concerns that some seek to convert the Muslim Gypsy community.³⁶

The organization's website has been instrumental in making Jerusalem's community known to Gypsies in the greater global Diaspora.³⁷ Today, some Gypsies from Europe and the United States who are interested in making contact with Gypsies in other countries travel to Jerusalem to meet the community. Muhammad Sleem shows photos of visiting foreign Gypsies dressed up in traditional Palestinian costume by their hosts.

These factors cause some to describe Palestine's Gypsies as "caught between societies." Subject to a certain degree of prejudice within Palestinian society (where the Arabic word for Gypsy, *nawari*, often has a pejorative meaning), and treated by the Israeli government like all other Palestinians, Gypsies sometimes get the worst of both worlds. However, Muhammad Sleem proudly tells of meeting with a high-ranking police chief in Ramallah when the Palestinian Authority was established in 1993. "He welcomed me and respected me. He welcomed me as the *mukhtar*, and as a citizen of Jerusalem, of the Old City. He wanted to meet me, you see," Sleem explained.

In fact, Sleem and his forefathers, all *mukhtars* of the Jerusalem Gypsy community, have been officially recognized by a succession of ruling powers as the representatives of their people. His grandfather was appointed *mukhtar* of the Gypsies by the Ottomans, and his father was granted that same recognition by the British Mandate Administration in 1928, and then later by the Jordanian government in 1956. After his father's death, Sleem was officially appointed *mukhtar* by the Jordanians, and then by the state of Israel in 1968 after it occupied East Jerusalem.

But perhaps due to their complex political

and social environment, Jerusalem's Gypsies try to stay out of politics as much as possible. This is a survival mechanism common to Gypsies around the world, says Kati Katz, a professor of Social Work at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.³⁸ "Not getting in the conflict, claiming neutrality, and trying to survive," is how she says Gypsies manage to stay afloat as minorities in whatever country they are in. Amoun agrees. "We aren't taking a particular position on the conflict, but just like the Palestinian people, we are affected by the situation," she says. Muhammad Sleem says that the Gypsies are scared of getting involved in political or military skirmishes.

But the Israeli occupation and the Aqsa Intifada affect Palestine's Gypsies regardless. Unemployment, restrictions on movement and military attacks do not differentiate between non-Gypsy and Gypsy. Amoun tells how young Gypsy men are rounded up and jailed with other Palestinians in Israeli arrest campaigns.³⁹ "The Intifada has really upset people; it's strangling them," she says.

Yet despite the myriad of political and cultural challenges facing Palestine's Gypsies, they continue to firmly identify with both their Palestinian and Gypsy identities. And despite connections with the global Gypsy Diaspora and awareness of their Indian origins, Palestine remains their motherland. Abu Muhammad, living in Amman since 1967, says he still does not like the city and dreams of returning to his Jerusalem home.

Issa, also in Amman since 1967, proudly rolls up his sleeve to show a tattoo of the Dome of the Rock on his upper arm. In 1972, he finagled a permit for a few days' visit to Palestine, and one exuberant drunken evening, had his arms tattooed up and down with his name, a mermaid, Saint George and other drawings. He chose the Dome of the Rock first, because it is part of his homeland, he says. Issa also visited Jaffa during that trip. "My mother bathed me in the Mediterranean



Sea when I was a small child, and I had to see where my roots are," he remembers.⁴⁰

The Gypsies of Jerusalem say they have lived in the city for hundreds of years, and are as intent as other Palestinian Jerusalemites in holding on to their coveted residency status. Despite the hardships of living under Israeli military occupation, they have no intention of leaving. Like many Gypsies around the world, they consider their days of wandering long past, and are firmly settled in their communities. Should fate decree that the refugee Gypsies in neighbouring countries migrate once again, the only destination they would choose is certainly home - Palestine.

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Endnotes

¹ The name "Sleem" is a variation of the Arabic name "Salim".

² Matras, Yaron. "Two Domari legends about the origin of the Doms" in *Romani Studies* 5 (Vol. 10, No. 1, 2000) 49-75. Matras writes that a number of legends and biographical narratives told by Sleem were published in Hebrew: Yaniv, Y. *Ha-Tso'anim bi Yehuda u-vi-Yerushalayim* [The Gypsies in Judea and in Jerusalem]. (Jerusalem: Ariel, 1980) 52.

³ See Kenrick, Donald. *Gypsies: From India to the Mediterranean*. (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1993).

⁴ Matras, 53.

⁵ See a sketched historical timeline at www.domresearchcenter.com/history/body.html.

⁶ The following legend was narrated by Muhammad Deeb Sleem in Jerusalem on March 28, 2003.

⁷ Matras, 53.

⁸ Bahram Gur was the Sassanian King of Persia from 418-438 AD.

⁹ Bani Qees is referred to as Bani Rabi'a in other versions of this legend, such as those told by Gypsies in Syria and Egypt. See Matras, 53-54.

¹⁰ This seems to be a reference to the Himyarite King Al Tuba' Asa'ad of Yemen.

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¹¹ Sleem explained that this king had killed Kleeb's father, and later had wanted to marry Jassas' sister Jalila, who was Kleeb's wife.

¹² This legend was translated by the author from a brief manuscript prepared by Sleem in the summer of 2002. His research was based on history books and conversations with Gypsy elders, including those who came to Jerusalem from Europe, "cities of the world," and the Arabian Peninsula. A slightly different version of this story, as narrated by Sleem in the Domari language, was also published in Matras.

¹³ In the version recorded in Matras (p. 61), the old woman brought a mangy sheep, and after perfuming it said, "This sheep is descended from the redeemer Prophet Saleh." The Prophet Saleh was from the Thumud tribe, and has shrines in Iraq, Palestine and Egypt. Legend tells that he was challenged by his unbelieving tribesmen to pray to his God and produce a pregnant camel from a large boulder. If he could do so, and the camel gave birth before their eyes, they claimed that they would accept his God as theirs. The Prophet Saleh prayed for this miracle, and it was bestowed. But the Thamud refused to share their water with the camel and her offspring, and eventually slaughtered them both. Upon God's instructions, the Prophet Saleh and a small group of true believers then left the region, and an earthquake swallowed up the remaining Thamud.

¹⁴ The version of this legend published in Matras (pp 66-67) includes a quote by Salem Al Zir that emphasizes the social ostracism of the Gypsies: "You are not allowed to remain here. You must go and live in the wilderness. When you travel, you must travel in the hottest time, when the weather is fire-hot. And you may not ride horses; you must only ride donkeys. You are not allowed to live together - four or five households - you must remain dispersed. And your destiny is that you shall only sing and dance. This is to be your life."

¹⁵ Matras, 53-56

¹⁶ For a critical discussion and analysis of Gypsylorism and the role of historical linguistics, see Lee, Ken. "Orientalism and Gypsylorism," *Social Analysis: Journal of Cultural and Social Practice* Issue 44 (2) (November 2000) 129-156. Lee writes, "Like Orientalism, Gypsylorism is a discursive formation that emerges from asymmetrical exchanges of power of different sorts (political, economic, cultural, intellectual and moral) that in turn help to re-constitute and perpetuate the unequal exchanges that underlay the initial discursive formation. It could be said that Gypsylorism is but a particular variant of Orientalism, in that it began with the discovery that the Romani populations of Europe had originated in India, that is, that they were indeed an exotic and Oriental Other. Whilst Orientalism is the discursive construction of the



exotic Other *outside* Europe, Gypsylorism is the construction of the exotic Other *within* Europe - Romanies are the Orientals within." (pg. 132)

¹⁷ See Kruse, Fr. *Ulrich Jasper Seetzen's Reisen durch Syrien, Palastina, Phonicien* (Berlin: 1854).

¹⁸ Macalister, R.A.S. *The language of the Nawar of Zutt, the nomad smiths of Palestine* (London: Gypsy Lore Society Monographs 3).

¹⁹ Eliyahu, Ariel (now known as Valery Novoselsky, see interview below). 2001 International Romani Union Report: The Gypsy People of Israel, Gaza and the West Bank.

²⁰ The reference here is to British Mandate Palestine. In nineteenth century colonial imagination it was common to refer incorrectly to "Western Palestine."

²¹ E.O. Winstedt, "Palestinian Gypsies," in *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, Third Series Vol.31 (1952) 77-8. Winstedt took this description from references to Gypsies in G. Dalman's *Arbeit und Sitte in Palestina*, an eight volume series published between 1928 and 1941.

²² Eliyahu.

²³ Schimoni, Jacob, from Areve Erets Yisrael (Tel Aviv, 1947) as translated in Regensberger, Reinhold, "Gypsies in the Land of Israel," *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, Third Series, Vol. 37 (1958) 52.

²⁴ Matras.

²⁵ He asked that his name be changed in this article for fear that it cause him trouble with the "authorities" and prevent him from obtaining the travel permits necessary to visit Jerusalem.

²⁶ See also Lee's argument that the linguistic focus of much early Orientalism and Gypsylorism stems from the needs of colonial control and the "development" of racism, p 141: "The notion that language was the key to civilizations and to human origins meant that the search for the Indo-European Ur-language was inextricably linked to the construction of racism, since by finding the group of people who spoke the Ur-language, one would thereby find the first and purest civilization, from which others were merely derivative. ..[I]t is impossible to consider the development of academic disciplines - including Orientalism and Gypsylorism - without considering the role of philology and of the development of racism."

²⁷ Interview with Valery Novoselsky, a Ukrainian-born Roma Gypsy, on March 26, 2003.

²⁸ Matras, Yaron. "The State of Present-Day Domari in Jerusalem," *Mediterranean Language Review* 11, (Wiesbaden: 1999) 1-58.

²⁹ Ibid, 55.

³⁰ See Kenrick, Donald. "What is Domari?" *KURI Journal* Vol.1, No.5 (Fall/Winter 2001).

³¹ Matras (1999), 4.

³² Interview with Muhammad Deeb Sleem on March 28, 2003.

³³ Neacsu, Calin. "In the Torment of the Intifada, the Gypsies of Gaza are Losing Their Identity," www.domresearchcenter.com/news/gazawb/isra7.html.

³⁴ Interview with Amoun Sleem, March 21, 2003.

³⁵ The organization has several Jewish Israeli and Christian international volunteers, and the Jewish organization JOINT has sponsored career-training courses for the community. An Israeli lawyer serves as the organization's advocate, and is working on obtaining official recognition for Jerusalem's Gypsy community from the Israeli government, as well as reparation for the Holocaust, in which some Gypsies were persecuted.

³⁶ See for example, a website devoted to creating Dom churches: www.dom.gypsyministries.com/. Messianic Jewish organizations with religio-political agendas, such as For Zion's Sake Ministries, are also involved with the Jerusalem Gypsy community, through the Domari Gypsy Society of Israel.

³⁷ See www.geocities.com/domarisociety/english1.htm.

³⁸ Interview with Kati Katz on March 6, 2003. Dr. Katz is a scholar of Gypsy communities, and focuses on the Gypsies of Hungary.

³⁹ Furthermore, Allen Williams of the Dom Research Center claims that Gypsies in the Gaza Strip have indeed played a limited but active role in the Aqsa Intifada, see: "The Dom of Gaza: A DRC Update, June 2002," *KURI Journal* Vol.1, No.6 (Spring/Summer 2002). See also Neacsu's article.

⁴⁰ Interview with Shehdeh Musa Ali Issa in Amman on April 4, 2003.