

**Dr Paola Toninato,  
Department of Italian,  
University of Warwick  
Email: p.toninato@warwick.ac.uk**

## **The Making of Gypsy Diasporas**

### **SUMMARY**

Since the first appearance of Roma (known as Gypsies) in Western Europe, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, there have been many attempts to disentangle the complex web of their diasporic migrations. On the whole these are accounts by non-Gypsies (Gaĝe) to identify and trace back the origin of Gypsies which have eclipsed and marginalized the Gypsies' self-accounts of their origins. As a result, very little is known about the ways in which Gypsies perceive their past as well as their current migrations (both forced and voluntary).

This project aims at providing a comprehensive overview of Gypsies' own versions of their diasporas, taking into account both intellectual and non-intellectual versions. Building on seminal studies by Okely and Acton (UK), and Piasere (Italy), the project concentrates on Gypsies in Western Europe, especially in the UK and Italy. Its primary objective is to investigate the emergence of a 'diaspora discourse' which goes beyond national, ethnic and cultural boundaries and allows Gypsies to identify themselves as part of a same people. It focuses on images, symbolic and textual expressions, Gypsies' oral accounts as well as recent theories of Indian origins by Gypsy intellectuals. It asks to which extent these representations vary in different socio-cultural contexts and compares Gypsy views to non-Gypsy theories about the Gypsy diaspora. In particular, it tries to assess whether claims of Indian origins by prominent Gypsy intellectuals are shared by non-academic Gypsies, and how the latter perceive the intellectuals' pursuit of a transnational political project.