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Ritual Spaces and Burial Places: International Migration and Transnational Change Among the Korturare Roma

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Abstract

The migration of Romanian Korturare is analyzed with a focus on the transformation of three aspects of their funerary practices: place of burial, multi-sited funeral celebrations, and the use of communication technologies. This 'mortuary focus', which has not previously been applied to studies of international Romani migration, provides a better understanding of the interaction between territorial attachment and international mobility patterns. Observations based on ethnographic fieldwork are complemented by an analysis of social media use, audiovisual materials and a sample of 69 cases. Localities of origin continue to be the preferred place for burial and collective memorialization, while funerals become multi-sited, involving both host towns and hometowns. The mediatization of death practices reinforces both of these tendencies. The transformation reflects the role of Korturare social organization in the migration process. The broad and densely nested family networks of the Korturare keep the possibility of multidirectional migration open and act as an adaptive resource by reproducing community life abroad. At the same time, they preserve the localities of origin as the common and privileged territory of the symbolic reproduction of family ties.

1. Introduction[1]

In this article, the 'mortuary focus', the observation of what people do when a death occurs in the community (Zirh, 2012: 1768), is applied to the migrations of the Korturare[2] Roma, a Romanian minority currently dispersed throughout Europe and North America.[3]

Research on death in migratory contexts has focused mainly on populations living in Northern Europe who came from the Maghreb (Chaïb, 2000; Jonker, 1996), Turkey and the Near East (Balkan, 2015; Hunter, 2016b; Zirh, 2012), the Indian subcontinent (Gardner, 1998; Jassal, 2015) and Ghana (Mazzucato et al., 2006), and on Mexican migrants in the U.S. (Lestage, 2012). Migrant Europeans have been studied very little (Oliver, 2004). To the best of the authors' knowledge, to date no study has been conducted on how Romani migrants deal with death. This omission is quite striking because the labels traditionally attributed to the Roma, such as 'itinerant', 'not settled', or 'unwilling to integrate', persist in political and social policies, which often problematize Roma mobility in the EU (Matras and Leggio, 2017a; van Baar, 2011). Yet, the analysis of migrants' death-related practices – burial and funeral celebrations in this case – can reveal the emergence, maintenance and transformation of territorial attachments and social integration in the home and host countries.

The importance of framing 'Gypsies' as autochthonous communities with sociocultural configurations that are the product of integration in local geographies and history (Olivera, 2012), rather than as exogenous groups 'with no history', has been put forward as a paradigm since the 1980s (Okely, 1983; Williams, 1984; Piasere, 1985; Stewart, 1987; Pasqualino, 1998) and adopted more recently by anthropological historians and ethnographers on Roma in Romania (Piasere, 2005; Berta, 2007; Olivera 2012; Asséo *et al.*, 2017), as well as by scholars in the field of migration studies. The latter explore how Roma's local systems become transnational and cross-border and their sociocultural configurations change as a result of simultaneous insertion in the human environments and geographies of both places of migration and origin. Some of these works adopt a 'whole network perspective' (Molina, 2012: 8) that studies the dynamics between regions. Through the analysis of cross-border networking practices, such as the circulation of objects or the use of communication technologies, this approach explores the emergence of 'transnational social spaces' (ibid.), in which relations formerly based on face-to-face interactions or territorial continuities become transnational. Bennarosh Orsoni's 'transnational households' (2016), for example, result from the use of landline phones that recreate, at a distance, the (formerly indoor) intimacy of domestic verbal interaction; and from the exchange of goods between the Romanian villages and the towns of migration

[2] Korturare is a Romani word, from Romanian '*corturari*'.
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(Benarrosh-Orsoni, 2017). Similarly, in Silverman (2012), the circulation of taped recordings of weddings sent between the United States and the Balkans connects 'transnational families' in 'transnational celebrations', thus spreading common aesthetic systems and information about social relations. Other studies focus on migrant Roma actions embedded in transnational 'fields', i.e. they position the analysis of transnational phenomena 'inside' specific places (Molina, 2012: 8). Within this approach, the production–consumption axis has attracted considerable attention, thanks to its capacity to reveal the roles played by the localities of origin and of migration in the migrants' lives and the migrants' search for upward social mobility. Investing remittances in housing projects appears to be common among several migrant Roma groups and it indicates that the localities of origin play a dominant role as the referential context against which they assess their social status, both inside their own Roma context and in relations with 'others' (Toma *et al.*, 2017; Grill, 2012; Pantea, 2012). Home-oriented migration patterns and remittance flows vary depending on the ways in which migrants engage with, or are given access to, the social environment of host countries. Tesăr's analysis (2015b) of the *Cortorari* representation of migratory space is emblematic of a polarization between 'abroad' – where purely economic interests dominate their behavior, aimed at maximizing earnings – and 'at home' – the realm of private and domestic morality. The *Cortorari* base their income strategies on begging expeditions abroad, where they stay for limited periods of time and live in precarious conditions. Then, while 'at home', they invest their income in ongoing construction projects that follow the developmental, and future-oriented, cycle of the domestic group and make visible their present family prosperity (Tesăr, 2015a). Benarrosh Orsoni (2015) examines how Roma 'transnational households' compete with one another for the best house in the best position of their Romanian locality, but in this case many actually have little need for housing in the home village, as they are well inserted in the host context. The author suggests that families maintain their engagement in such consumption practices 'at home' as a way to reproduce their reciprocal links and the unity of the group, in opposition to the individualization of professional and residential trajectories underway abroad. Intergenerational changes in the role of the migration poles have also been observed. Pontrandolfo (2017) and Beluschi Fabeni *et al.* (2018) highlight that young Roma migrants, who have spent a large part of their lives abroad, tend to question their parents' orientation towards the place of origin and they often develop expectations of a future life in the host countries. However, such expectations are often dampened by racialized education and migration policies, and even pervasive anti-Gypsyism, which effectively preclude upward social mobility (Beluschi-Fabeni *et al.*, 2018) and even prompt migrants to resume migration and move to other countries (Pontrandolfo, 2017).

This paper aims to contribute to this literature by exploring the transformations and continuities of the Korturare funerary system, particularly the interweaving of the tendency towards increased dispersion, the maintenance of territorial links with Romania and the emergence of transnational practices. The analysis looks at three dimensions: where the Korturare have buried their dead since migration started, how funeral rites have changed in response to the internationalization of the community map, and how communication technologies have affected this 'transnationalization' process.

2. Burial and funerals from a transnational perspective

Mobility continues after death. It does so as a result of the preferences of individuals who, as subjects, choose the place they consider special, the place they wish to rest for all eternity. It does so also because bodily remains are objects, with unique and powerful symbolic value, which others, from close relatives to institutions, manage and move, following material, social and spiritual demands. As argued by Marjavaara (2012), Zirh (2012) and Rowles and Comeaux (1986), among others, the observation of this particular final, after-life mobility of the dead and of the surrounding living people's practices can bring to light territorial attachments that otherwise might remain hidden. These territorial engagements can express the deceased person's preference for the real, physical characteristics of the place of burial but they more often express a desired spatial proximity with significant others, dead or living. The act of burial requires a solution for migrants' simultaneous cross-border and multi-stranded engagements (Basch *et al.*, 1994: 6). The corpse is 'less schizophrenic than the self', Balkan notes, as 'it can only be in one place at one time' (ibid., 2015: 120). Burial demands one soil among many to be chosen and it forces identities to be more fixed and less scattered (Hunter, 2016b). In communities that bury their dead (for comparisons with cremation in migrations, see: Ballard, 1990) the act of burial links, though the soil, living generations to past ones (Attias-Donfut *et al.*, 2005) and even establishes new places of origin (Chaïb, 2000: 24). The dilemma between change and the persistence of burial location mirrors the dialectic between segmentation and the social pressure for bond maintenance. Decisions regarding place of burial reflect the moral and social pressure wielded by the people connected to the deceased, for whom the maintenance of territorial proximity helps to reaffirm social links and belonging to groups. The group of 'significant others', entitled to claim a territorial right to corpse disposal, varies according to social, cultural and geographical factors and can consist of a few close relatives, wider kinship groups or entire ethnic and religious communities (e.g. Ballard, 1990; Reimers, 1999; Nieuwenhuys, 2004; Balkan, 2015). Among Roma and Travelers it has been found that the spatial arrangement of the memorial sites tends to reproduce kinship groups (Williams, 1993; Dick Zatta, 1988; Chohaney, 2014) and that conceptions of death are related to long-term practices of tending graves and visiting the cemetery, which contribute to intergenerational socio-territorial attachments (Okely, 1983; Williams, 1993).

Along with cultural dimensions, post-mortem repatriation reflects the relationships migrants have with their host countries, their perception of temporary or long-term presence, and structural inclusion in local societies. The shorter the perception of future permanence, the more likely the burials will occur in the countries of origin, at least when such countries are politically safe (Balkan, 2015; Hunter, 2016b; Mbiba, 2010). In this paper, post-mortem repatriation is analyzed considering the effects that European citizenship and effective integration in the host countries have on international mobility, and the consequent perception of future permanence abroad.

The new distances between the time and place of death and those of burial have given rise to a temporal and spatial restructuring of rituals, transforming funerals into transnational and multi-sited events. Rituals may change locally to accommodate

the role played by people in other countries in organizing, financing and attending ceremonies from a distance (De Witte, 2001; Mazzucato *et al.*, 2006), or they may become 'funerary routes' (Zirh, 2012), staged at different stops along the corpse's cross-border journey to the home-village graveyard. The territorial arrangements of rites are closely related to the possibility of international mobility by the people connected to the deceased – in terms of financial resources, the freedom to cross borders, the time available to them, and the ease of transporting the remains. In this transformation, the use of communication technologies is an important chapter in the pre-death, death and after-death experience (Roberts and Vidal, 2000; Walter *et al.*, 2012; Mosquera, 2014). Preexisting face-to-face communities now in diaspora recreate spaces in which cultural practices pertaining to death are reconstituted and restructured through digital ritual engagement and participation in digital environments (Burroughs and Ka'ili, 2015), in which physical presence becomes virtual and, as discussed in Walter *et al.* (2012), ceremonies are streamed online. Despite these general trends, not all people, groups or communities use communication technologies the same way. Selective and cultural appropriation creates an overlap between 'technoscapes' and 'ethnoscapes' (Appadurai, 2006), which, in migration, gives rise to technological translocal 'deathscapes' (Hunter, 2016a), an expression of the diversity of mortuary practices technologically mediated between separate places.

3. Setting and methods

The Roma Korturare originate in different towns and rural areas of the Transylvanian and Banat regions of Romania. Using data from this study, it was estimated that in 1990 about 5000–6000 individuals belonged to the population studied. By 2015, this had grown three to four times. By that time, the Korturare were found in different cities of 13 European countries and North America. They form a 'network of family networks', embedded through ties of filiation and marriage in present and past generations, which members perceive as a diffuse community of reference, with a shared history and common ancestors (see: Beluschi-Fabeni, 2013b). This system of nested family networks is the main context for marriage. Similar to what Berta notes among the Gabors (2007: 33), among the Korturare there are subgroup hierarchies based on patrilineage membership, family status, rural/urban origins and, naturally, economic success, that, in subsequent international migrations, have been conducive to rapid upward or downward mobility. Nevertheless, marriage preferences, aspiration and possibilities also depend on the self-positioning of the families inside the Korturare social structure (Beluschi-Fabeni, 2013a).

In 1990, the Korturare started migrating to Germany as asylum seekers. In 1994, when Romania was declared a safe country, migration patterns started to radiate outward, first to France and, since 1997, to Italy, Spain, the UK, Ireland, Belgium and Portugal. Most of them overstayed their tourist visas, which prevented them from visiting Romania and then returning to the host country. This circumstance, combined with better earning opportunities, led over time to a significant increase in the number of Korturare living abroad for long periods of time. The widespread economic slump prompted long-term migrations from southern Europe to the UK, Germany, and gradually to the US and Canada. While circular mobility between Romania and other

European countries has now increased, migration to non-EU countries has reproduced unidirectional flows, due to situations of irregular presence and high travel costs. For the Korturare, income production is the main motivation for living outside Romania. Since 1990, the different migration trajectories have been associated with different income-generation activities, which in turn also depend on internal family group differentiation and whether the family is of rural or urban origin. The income-producing activities include a wide array of private initiatives – selling cars, carwash businesses, car repair workshops, selling goods at open-air markets, moneylending, scrap metal collection – and salary work in factories and the service sector. Families from rural areas also engage in seasonal mushroom gathering and logging. Begging has been widely adopted in all of the migration processes, usually to complement other forms of household income, but sometimes also, due to its profitability at certain times and in certain countries, as the households' main strategy.

During early migrations to Germany, the Korturare started an intensive process of building houses in their hometowns and villages. In 2015, this process continues and is the reason for constant remittances, made even by generations that grew up abroad. More or less sumptuous, multi-storied Korturare villas have transformed the skylines of towns and villages in the old Roma areas outside the urban margins and in more central neighborhoods where the Roma have moved. While houses inhabited abroad – whether owned, rented or squatted – are perceived as instrumental, the newly-built houses in Romania are viewed as investments in a land the Korturare consider to be secure and 'their own.' They reflect a shared idea of some day returning to Romania to live, displaying the migrant family's economic success abroad and the ongoing competition for greater prestige. Since 2007, Romania's EU membership, intra-EU mobility rights, cheaper flights and greater ease of travel have increased short-term returns to Romania. The frequency of comings and goings to Romania since 2007 was motivated, among other reasons, by the wish of the owners to closely follow the construction or remodeling of their houses, but also to celebrate their children's weddings in them and to participate in the wedding celebrations of others. Attending funerals is another reason for the increased mobility of people living abroad.

The data for this study come from two periods of ethnographic fieldwork, one between 2003–2006 and another between 2013–2016, in Granada, Spain. This fieldwork was complemented with visits to Romania, England, Italy and other Spanish cities where Korturare reside. An audiovisual archive of funeral celebrations occurring between 2003 and 2007 completes the field notes and recorded interviews. Between 2013–2016, as part of the FP7 MigRom project scheme (see: Matras and Leggio, 2017b), a member (male, 24 y.o.) of the Korturare community contributed to fieldwork as research assistant. This made it possible to carry out simultaneous multi-sited observation of ceremonies, joint analysis of the use of Facebook and Youtube, and collaborative theorization during data analysis. A specific sample was gathered of 69 cases of death occurring within the Korturare network between 1997 and 2016. The qualitative data related to each case have been compiled and analyzed with respect to the following basic variables: year, country, age and cause of death, places and dates of burial and funeral celebrations, kinship relations between the dead, the funeral makers and participants. Hereinafter, 'AA' (Abroad-Abroad, 10 cases) refers to cases of death and burial occurring abroad; 'AR' (Abroad-Romania, 26 cases) to

cases of death occurring abroad with burial in Romania; and 'RR' (Romania-Romania, 33) to cases of death and burial in Romania.

4. Burial locations

Of the 36 deaths abroad, 15 were in Spain, 11 in the UK, two each in Belgium, France, Germany and the US, and one each in Italy and Ireland. Ten of them (AA), five males and five females, were buried in the city in which they died (six in Granada and one in Tarragona; one in Luton and two in New York while the other 26 (AR) were repatriated to Romania).

Age at time of death is the factor that most strongly relates to place of burial. The individuals in the AA group all died under the age of 17: five of them between four days and six months of age, two at 18 months, three at age three, nine and 17 years respectively. The AR group, in contrast, includes individuals who died between the ages of 16 and 77. This pattern confirms the discourse of informants: when very young children die it is usual — and 'understandable' (*naj lažau,* 'it is not shameful') — for parents to decide to bury them abroad, thus avoiding the costs associated with repatriation of the body, international travel and organizing the funeral in Romania. It is generally justified by saying that people do not yet 'feel that much affection' for the deceased, as affection grows as children become older, speak and interact more complexly with the environment, constructing their own social identity.

The two burials in the AA group of children aged nine and 17 elicited social reactions quite different from those elicited by the deaths of younger children. Marisa[4] died at age nine, in 2016, in a Spanish facility for persons with severe disabilities, where she had lived since she was five. Her parents were in the UK at the time of her death and for legal reasons they could not travel to Spain to authorize the repatriation. The facility, which was the child's legal guardian, could do nothing but bury her in the city in which she had died. A sizable group of the local Roma community and of facility employees gathered at the cemetery. The parents followed the ceremony by Skype, but, in contrast with other cases of death, they did not mention their daughter's death on Facebook and they asked others not to mention it either. They were concerned that the *lume* (the Korturare people), being unaware of the objective impossibility of repatriating the corpse, would criticize them for leaving their daughter far from their Romanian village graveyard. Tana, the one who died at age 17 in 2014, grew up in a Romanian center for minors until she was 15. She then joined her father and brothers in Luton, UK, but died two years later (for reasons unknown to the author and the research assistant) and was buried there. Tana's burial elicited harsh disapproval among the Korturare. According to one rumor, for example, the girl's eldest brother, considered the most 'prestigious' and 'respected' member of the family, was silenced by a younger man during a minor argument at some public event, when the latter recriminated him for having left his sister far from the graveyard of Calash, the Romanian town from which his *raca* (the patrigroup) comes. Many jokes circulated; one said that the Calash graveyard was moving to Luton and another that the sons of K* would have to go to Luton for *Luminaca,* the Day of the Dead celebration held on November 1 (see: below). Also, a satirical Facebook page,

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[4] All personal names are pseudonyms.

popular among the Korturare, – it is anonymous, although many believe the author is somebody from Calash living in the UK – posted jokes about Tana's brothers following British funeral customs. Finally, in 2017 a three-year-old boy who died during a sudden respiratory crisis was buried in New York due to the high cost of repatriating the body and also because his parents were irregular residents. No negative comments circulated following that decision, as in the other cases of death in the AA group, and the funeral was streamed on Facebook and followed by many relatives in Europe and North America.

As for the AR group, in seven cases families asked for interpersonal loans of between 5,000 and 20,000 euros to repatriate the corpse and finance the funeral in Romania. This willingness to assume financial obligations reflects the greater importance given to repatriation when the individual dies as an adult. Moreover, while in three cases close family members lent the money at no interest, in four cases the families had to borrow money at exorbitant interest rates, between 60 and 100 per cent per year.

In Korturare discourse, the fear of being separated from the place where loved ones are buried is a primary motivation for repatriating bodies. Korturare migration experience is characterized by the difficulty of residing as regular migrants, in the EU prior to 2007 and later in the United States and Canada. Continuous evictions from informal settlements in France and Italy, widespread anti-Roma sentiment (and political rhetoric) plus abusive police treatment contribute to the Korturare's perception that their presence abroad is questioned and generally deemed undesirable. They are also aware that shifting political moods such as Brexit or Trump's policy on migration to the U.S. can easily lead to changes in the permeability of international borders. Moreover, the instrumental meaning of staying abroad and choosing one country or another contributes to a shared perception of potential new migrations, which often become real long-term movements in pursuit of new economic opportunities.

Even with the geographical distance imposed by migration, family decisions about burial location are the object of scrutiny by the *lume,* as indicated by the concern families show about *lažau* ('dishonor', 'shame'), and about being the object of ridicule (*asal e lume amendar,* 'so people laugh at us'). At stake is not only the family's reputation among its close relations, but also the respectability of the entire patrigroup in the eyes of Korturare society as a whole. The 'right' to claim the corpse extends to a wider group than the nuclear family and close relatives. This illustrates the greater extension, strength and density of Korturare kin networks compared to those of mainstream European society, as a consequence of endogamic marriage and demographic patterns.

The *Luminaca* celebration (from Romanian *Luminaţa*), which begins on the eve of November 1, is often used by the Korturare as an explanation of the importance of burying the dead in the home town graveyard. That night, all families gather in the local cemetery to receive the expected visit of their dead. Each family puts a banquet on its respective graves, offering food to the dead and sharing it with the other families that gather around. Migrated families tend to order funeral wreaths that will be placed on their relatives' graves, and in recent years the cemetery feast is streamed online, using smartphones and Facebook profiles, eliciting intense interaction with people abroad. Since migration started, not being at the cemetery for

Luminaca is considered understandable and respected, while not sending a wreath for the family's own dead is reproachable but tolerated. However, burying the dead somewhere else is perceived as an ignominious amputation of the community. Not burying a loved one in the home village cemetery means depriving the community of both the living and the dead members. Not gathering all the dead in the same cemetery would pose an unsolvable question: 'How can we visit two cemeteries at once?'.

5. Multi-sited funerals

Since migration began, the Korturare have celebrated baptisms, weddings and Romanian Orthodox holidays wherever they live, even if, as mentioned, the frequency of celebration in Romania has increased since 2007. Funerals, in contrast, have become multi-sited events, celebrated simultaneously in Romania and in migration localities (for both AR and RR cases) or asynchronously (for AR), first abroad, in the place of death, and subsequently in the place of burial.

The Korturare funeral cycle follows the same structure as the one found in rural Transylvania among non-Roma Romanian society (see: Kligman, 1988) and observed also among other Northern Vlax Romani speakers (Stewart, 1997; Sutherland, 1975; Tillhagen, 1952). It involves a wake lasting a minimum of two nights, called the *privedži* (from Romanian *priveghi*, 'wake'), in the deceased person's home, where the corpse is displayed and families from the same and other localities gather. The burial occurs on the third day. The first *pomana*, a meal offered by the mourning family, takes place the evening of the burial and brings together the funeral attendees once again. Additional *pomane* are held nine days, six weeks and six months after the death. Another one, marking the year after the death, contains ritual elements of reincorporation and closes the mourning cycle. Further *pomane* are held on a yearly basis for up to six more years. During this time, rituals and beliefs assume that the deceased for whom the *pomana* is being held is actually present at the gathering and a plate of food and a lighted candle is placed in a corner of the room. After seven years, the annual *pomane* 'with the dead' become public events 'in memoriam' – in their words, they *pomeninen əl mule,* 'remember the dead' – in which it is no longer necessary to offer a meal to the deceased person.

Since international migration started, the *privedži* tend to last longer, because of the days required for repatriation of the corpse (AR cases) and also to give people from abroad time to arrive before the burial (AR and RR). In addition, the dead person's close relatives (descendants and ascendants, spouse and male siblings, and, albeit with a lesser sense of duty, nephews and male cousins) who are unable to travel to Romania organize a simultaneous *privedži*, without the corpse (hereinafter 'secondary' *privedži*, opposed to the 'primary' one in presence of the remains), in the migration localities where they live. In AR cases, all the simultaneous secondary *privedži* started the day of the death – in the death locality, in Romania and possibly in other countries where relatives of the deceased were living. Those *privedži* then continued through the day the corpse arrived in Romania, at which point the mandatory two nights (minimum) of wake in the house of the deceased took place prior to burial. In all AA cases, the events were of lesser importance due to the age of

the deceased, and in three of them – babies who died very young – no *privedži* was held at all. In the AA cases, the *privedži* was held in the dead person's house, in the migration locality, but the corpse stayed at the morgue for legal reasons.

The multi-sited *privedži* celebration, which initially emerged in response to the difficulty of travelling to Romania, has become a stable element in international Korturare networks. Although the number of people travelling to Romania to attend primary *privedži* has increased since 2010, secondary *privedži* abroad continue to be celebrated, mobilizing people from all over the host country and even making it necessary to hire party halls. Starting in 2007, a change in the kinship relations between the secondary *privedži* hosts and the deceased person became apparent. Whereas they had formerly been children and siblings, after 2007 they were nephews, grandchildren and even in-laws, because the closer relatives travelled to Romania. In contrast, there are two cases in which two secondary *privedži* were held abroad (one family organized *privedži* in New York and Chicago and the other in Chicago and Montreal) in which the hosts were children of the dead who could not travel to Romania due to economic and legal constraints.

The significance of family celebrations in Korturare community life and of men's ritual performances at the *privedži* helps to explain this continuity. The Korturare engage in minor or major celebrations on an almost weekly basis. The events may involve a few families that live nearby or hundreds of people from various cities. Such a busy social agenda is a salient feature of Korturare daily life, locally in host countries and in Romania, but also at the international level, such as when people travel from different countries to attend a wedding. Celebrations play an essential role in maintaining and negotiating interfamily relations, in demonstrating an individual's participation in public life and in the creation of individual and family reputations. Death-related celebrations and weddings are considered the most important events and are capable of bringing together the most participants.

As for funerals, the primary *privedži* ritual spaces and performances are distributed by gender and the roles assigned to men and women differ radically. Women spend the whole time close to the corpse, in the room in which it is displayed in an open coffin, and also in the procession and near the grave when it is buried. They *privedžin haj rovaren* (vigil and cry) with loud, public lamentations. In a different room, usually the living room, on each of the three nights, adult men sit around a table laden with food and beverages, from soft drinks to spirits, the latter being essential at such occasions. They recite the Lord's Prayer just before midnight, and spend the evening engaged in lively conversations and heated debates, interrupted by toasts 'for' and 'with' the dead. Whoever proposes the toast says a blessing loudly (*te jertil o Del X,* May God forgive X), all the others repeat it, allow a sip to fall to the floor, 'for the dead', and take a drink.

Until the mid-90s, the only music at funerals was ritual verses, sung mostly in Romanian, that women commingled with lamentations. Some informants from a medium-sized town in the eastern province of Cluj-Napoca remembered that in their town some Romani women with special singing abilities were often asked to sing, for free, at local Romani funerals. Beyond that there is no memory among the Korturare of externally hired musicians performing at funerals until the mid-90s, when live music was introduced (especially from the *manele* genre) and gradually became an essential

funerary element, especially among the wealthier families (cf. Bonini Baraldi, 2008). This change led to a modification of the toasts, as they were transformed into what the Roma call *dedikacje,* 'music dedications.' All through the night, the men take turns giving the singer a tip and requesting certain songs. One by one, the men stand at the microphone and repeat typical formulas, such as asking for divine forgiveness (*te jertil o Del...*) of the dead and for the protection of the living (e.g. *...haj te ažutil o Del*, 'may God help'). Each one names first the deceased person and the mourning family, then his own family's dead, then the dead and living members of the families present, and finally 'all the Roma and their dead.' The *dedikacje* keep going all night, as an exchange between the people in attendance, who represent their families and family groups. The secondary *privedži* are simpler than the primary. The women gather in a space separate from the men but do not dramatize the pain as publicly as when the corpse is present. Men also recite the Pater Noster, stay together until late at night, toast the dead, talk and debate for hours. In very few cases have live musicians been hired: instead, music is played through sound systems. Therefore, in secondary *privedži* there is no *dedikacje* circuit as in primary ones.

The toasts and *dedikacje* exchange are ritualizations of the broader reciprocity system that stands behind the gathering of people at the event. Roma say they attend *privedži* to 'give' the mourning family *respekto* (or *pačiv*, 'honor') as well as to 'gain' ('*gysčigin*') it. 'Roma prefer to go to funerals over weddings', one informant said, 'because you give *respekto* not only to [living] people, but also to their dead; and you don't want to be alone when you remember yours.' Because of their existential gravity, not comparable to that of other events, death-related celebrations make excellent social spaces to express solidarity with and involvement in the lives of others. Beyond the intention of offering emotional proximity, the construction of *respekto* through presence at family events, whether or not death-related, refers to the necessity and the objective of reinforcing mutual obligations and expectations in one's – usually already quite broad and dense – network of family-based relations, and even the possibility of entering more prestigious family circles.

Such an economy of attendance at family events is in no way a 'hidden agenda'. Quite the contrary, participation in funerals is an explicit expression of gratitude to the mourning family for having participated in similar events in the past, and unjustified absences from funerals can distance families from one another for years. Similarly, the mourning family's adult men publicly acknowledge those attending the *privedži* and promise to attend their future 'happy' events. Such a promise has multiple meanings. One, if the mourning family's men were to say explicitly that they would participate in death-related events in the future, it would be like wishing ill on others, even though attending funerals is known to be the ultimate way to 'give *respekto* back.' Two, with their words they are offering attendance at future weddings of the families at the funeral, which entails a contribution to the *darro,* the conspicuous money gift for the groom's father. In fact, a *but respektime* (prestigious) man is *pindžardo* (well-known), because he has attended many other families' events, 'many people speak well of him' and he has the ability to draw many people to his own family events.

Intermarriage is the glue of the Korturare network of family networks and internal differentiations. Endogamy serves to reinforce ethnic bonds and determine the social position of families within them. The Korturare base their income-production strategies on a market economy with non-Korturare society. Among

themselves, however, market-based transactions are sporadic, short-term and generally frowned upon, even boycotted. In this sense, the Korturare are not a merchant community as described by Coleman (1988). The marriage procedure of the *darro* and the *garancja* (the bride-wealth) is the main channel of wealth redistribution, gift-based, in which the amounts involved – in the form of gold, jewellery and cash – have increased drastically since migration began. Participation in wedding circles, and in their economy, is an important way for men, as leaders of their families and even of family groups, to establish and maintain interfamily links, negotiating social position in the community and improving the marriage options of younger family members.

Attending weddings is by invitation only, but participation in *privedži* is open to everyone. The painful experience of losing a family member makes 'open door' *privedži* an exceptional arena for *respekto* making – and for establishing reciprocity. The importance placed on 'not making people laugh at us' (*te na asal e lume amendar*), which underlies the repatriation of bodies, reappears in discourse on why it is necessary to celebrate parallel *privedži* abroad. It reflects the pressure by the local groups of families living abroad to reproduce spaces in which members can build and reinforce internal social capital. It is also a result of the family-based migration of the Roma, in which entire households tend to migrate with other kin-related households, forming in the host country local communities comprised of various household networks.

5.1 Technologies of communication

With the expansion of VHS technology in the early 90s to today's ubiquitous smartphones, the Korturare engage in rich, self-contained production-consumption of audiovisual products of weddings, funerals, baptisms and even birthdays and other family events. Professional VHS and DVD recordings were soon omnipresent and came to be a compulsory budget item in the planning of weddings and funerals, together with the hiring, at both kinds of celebration, of *manele* singers and live music.

Music and celebrations have become indissoluble on VHS recordings, all over the increasingly international Korturare map. Weddings are 'great weddings' depending also on which *manele* singer plays. The more famous the artist, the more prestigious the family seems. *Manele* artists, in turn, have made themselves known in Roma society by playing at celebrations and being sponsored by influential Roma families (see also: Giurchescu and Speranta, 2011).

In connection with funerals, VHS complemented and sometimes even replaced the professional photo-portraits that prevailed until the early 1990s as a form of memorialization. Video recordings could last between two and four hours (using even two cassettes), and cover the period from the last night of the *privedži* celebration to the first *pomana* after the burial and both the male and the female spaces. Shots of women weeping in pain while draped over the coffin, headshots of the dead and portraits of the whole corpse alternated with slow tracking shots of the men at the table, one by one, and of the singer. The music was interspersed with women's lamentations and cyclically interrupted by men taking the microphone to offer their *dedikacje*. Then VHS tapes of funerals started to circulate by mail among the migrant families abroad as the only tangible medium in which the funeral could be experienced from afar, even if post-facto. In mourning homes abroad, during the first

few months after the death, the recordings were played often, even on a daily basis, and families living nearby, who had already participated at the secondary *privedži*, gathered again to watch the 'real' funeral, to see the corpse, the people, the faraway home village, the graveyard, the burial. Funeral recordings were then played for the *pomane* which, like *privedži*, were held in several locations at once.

The absence of the corpse in the secondary *privedži* undoubtedly brought about a radical transformation in the experience of bereavement, which is deeply linked to physical proximity, visual exposure and the relatively long presence of the corpse among the mourning group. 'The corpse provides unequivocal evidence of social as well as biological death' (Valentine, 2010: 4) and the VHS partially filled in for the corpse's absence, offering its virtual presence and the reality of death, as well as a perceptive experience of the ritual space and the bereavement of family members.

VHS video tapes were also a medium with which to communicate a family's presence at the funeral, thus transnationally 'putting on the record' the *respekto* given locally. They conveyed women's lamentations with references to people abroad, greetings and funeral formulas pronounced while looking at the camera, as well as men's *dedikacje* directed to family members. For example, women's lamentations, which usually take the form of a dialogue with the dead (e.g. 'get up right now and do not leave these children of yours alone!') or with God ('why didn't you take me instead of him...?') included references to those relatives that would have watched the tape days later and at a distance, as well as respect, greetings and even jokes directed to them. For example, in a recording obtained in Granada in 2003 of the *privedži* for a five-year-old girl who died in Romania while her parents were abroad, the grandmother, kneeling next to her granddaughter's corpse in the open coffin, repeated: 'Oh God, your parents are not at home and they will say I killed you!', while in other moments of the recordings, people stood up before the camera to simply leave their *t'avel baxtalo/i...* – the most common greeting – to another person that would have watched the tape later in Granada. Men also transmitted through the VHS tapes formulas and *dedikacje* intended for the absent family members ('May God forgive our dead, my friends, and may my father live well, as may the others who will be with him while watching this cassette' said a man in a *privedži dedikacja* in 2004).

In 2007, the international circulation of VHS cassettes and DVDs started to decrease and in 2010 it essentially ended, because the increase in international travel of the closest mourning kin made it less necessary and also because of the advent of YouTube. Hiring professional cameras for long recordings continued – until 2016 at least – and, in some cases, entire events were uploaded to the platform. Videos in the form of shorter professional or self-made montages of pictures and video *privedži* moments, accompanied by *manele doine*, became the most frequent format posted to the platform after the event and they also had a general memorialization aim. YouTube became the main means of convergence, circulation and archiving of the professional or self-recorded products of Korturare family events, in which funerals and other celebrations became available to a wider public than the well-defined and more limited recipients of VHS cassettes or DVDs. A 'Korturare digital network' – initially comprising young members and gradually including adult and elders – emerged through the rapid exchange of audiovisual material. However, while the immediacy of the material interchange increased a great deal, using internet depended on the availability of landline phone connections, which were very rare in Romanian

Korturare houses (see also: Benarrosh-Orsoni, 2016: 153). Therefore, it did not bring substantial changes to the celebration of the *privedži* themselves or to other stages of death management.

Between 2009 and 2010, mobile connectivity and the massive use of smartphones allowed a more pervasive incorporation of technology to more stages of the death experience and ritual practice. Facebook is by far the medium most frequently chosen by the Korturare as a digital platform, where the broader *lume* can be reached and communication is public and diffuse. It has become the space for sharing the news of a death − or informing people about relatives in critical condition or at the terminal phase of an illness − and to message back condolences immediately after the death in the form of religious formulas from all over the localities of migration. It is also a medium by which to exert social control over how the death process is managed; as seen above, such control can take the form of jokes spread by anonymous profiles and of gossip.

Professional camera operators are still hired at funerals, but the people in attendance also take pictures and videos and stream them in real time. The recently released application Facebook Live has even further increased the immediacy of the interaction between the funeral space and people far away, as videos are broadcasted live and messages come back in real time. A transnational space of ritual flows (Castells, 1999) connects ritual places in simultaneous interaction.

Along with the evolution of audiovisual production, it is interesting to note that the territorial element takes on greater importance when the celebration takes place in Romania. When weddings occur in Romania, for example, especially among the wealthier Korturare people, the family's sumptuous house is often carefully depicted and featured as the location and aesthetic framework of the celebration. When weddings occur abroad, at first sight it can be hard to determine if they are in London, Granada or Chicago, as the festivities are held privately in huge, bright party halls, the same wherever they are, and there is no interest in showing the landscape or contextualizing the event geographically. Similarly, funeral recordings in Romania are vivid assemblies of place images. The interior and exterior of the house where the wake takes place is always depicted carefully, both by professional cameras and attendees, and even more if it is a fancy building. The contrast between the luxury home and the fact that it is now the setting of the owner's *privedži* produces two opposing sentiments among the Korturare. On the one hand, living abroad and striving to obtain money for a house back home is seen to be pointless, because in the end it is death that brings the person to the house. On the other hand, seeing the house generates elaborate narrations and memories of how effectively the deceased lifted up (*vazde*) his name and that of his family. Many other images and videos of places surrounding funerals and mortuary rites in the home towns circulate internationally, such as the long procession to the cemetery, the band playing as people walk down familiar streets, which evidence changes as time goes by; or the cemetery itself, which on the night of *Luminaca* is full of candles and life and reverberates on hundreds of Facebook profiles. The Korturare often describe such nights as one of the most beautiful things of theirs.

6. Conclusions

The aim of this article is to shed light upon the migration patterns of the Korturare Roma by analyzing the transformation of their funeral practices in terms of choice of burial location, adaptation of funeral rites translocally, and the use of communication technologies.

Since 1990, the Korturare have undergone an intense migratory process; originally from the Northeastern regions of Romania, they are now living in a dozen European countries and in North America. This migration process has occurred in different phases: first to Germany as asylum seekers, then westwards to other European countries, often as irregular migrants, and, after Romania's inclusion in the EU in 2007 as EU citizens. Further mobility within the EU and new migrations to the US and Canada followed the economic crisis.

During this migration process, while localities of origin have remained the preferred burial place throughout the geographical transformation of the community, funerals have become multi-sited, both as simultaneous events to the funeral occurring in Romania and as a diachronic extension of the ritual between the place of death and the place of burial.

The international dispersion of the Korturare is the result of variable adaptation and integration in different countries, intertwined with the capacity to respond to hardships in the place of residence by emigrating to other places. This potential for international mobility is due to the social capital within the broad and dense social network of Korturare family groups. The institutionalization of multi-sited funerals is inherent to the international dispersion pattern and the generation of a transnational Korturare social space, made by this broad, dense system of kinship networks. Multi-sited funerals point to the importance of family events in the community's life, as arenas for the construction of interfamily relations and prestige. Yet, they also show how a decisive adaptation resource relies on the family structure of Korturare migration and its potential in recreating local community life abroad. At the same time, the potentiality of social organization of the Korturare migration in reproducing migration and mobility also provokes a perception of non-definitive presence in migration places, reinforced by current and past experiences of exclusion and the consciousness of possible future limitations to cross-border movements or residence abroad. The fear of one day not being able to visit the tombs of deceased family members is very present in Korturare discourses that express a preference for the repatriation of the remains. The deceased is embedded in a wide kinship network dispersed along several 'diasporic nodes' (Voigt-Graf, 2004) that converge in the Romanian localities, as the only node in common.

Concomitant with structural factors, internal cultural logics intervene in articulating both geographical dispersion and home-oriented migration patterns. Migration, even if it implies extended time abroad, is generally conceived as instrumental for earning money, while the localities of origin are where income is spent or invested. Since 1990, the Korturare have been investing important amounts of the remittances in the construction of houses in Romania. As in other migrant Romani groups, Korturare building projects generally involve luxurious and high-visibility architectures, and continuous reforms and acquisition of plots with better locations in the town or in the traditional Roma areas. Even Korturare couples who

grew up abroad invest in houses of their own in Romania, to the extent that their slow emancipation from the patrilocal households allows. Moreover, since travelling to Romania from other EU countries has become much easier, families, especially the wealthier ones, are more often holding weddings in the Romanian houses. Similar to what Tesâr and Benarrosh-Orsoni observe, remittance flows and conspicuous consumption associated with real estate projects and celebrations are embedded in the developmental cycle of the domestic groups. The importance placed on post-mortem repatriation by the Korturare indicates an analogous connection. As suggested above, mobility does not end with death, but continues as the completion of individual belonging to places and social groups (Marjavaara, 2012). Among the Korturare, the 'funerary route' (Zirh, 2012) foresees the deceased making a compulsory stop at his or her house, where the *privedži* takes place. This is the house that the deceased person 'inhabits' last before physically abandoning the living. Apart from the legal constraints of host countries, which often prohibit the holding of wakes with corpses in private homes, for the Korturare it would be unthinkable for the *privedži* to be celebrated in other places. The *privedži* is the last moment in which the deceased are physically with the living, in a not-yet-concluded separation between the body and the soul (see also: Stewart, 1997: 221-223). This last gathering must happen 'at home', that is, in the family house, with the closest relatives (and the large group of other families) all around. After the burial, the separation will be completed, but even so the dead person continues to be a living presence. For years, it will participate in the *pomane* that, on a fixed date, the household celebrates, even transnationally, reproducing itself as a group and its bonds with other families. Even after the dead family member definitively leaves the household, it will eat at the *Luminaca* meal at the cemetery, when all the dead come back and gather with the living. This long-lasting 'living death', as Piasere (1985: 239) calls the slow process of ritual separation from the deceased, is part of the household and family reproduction. The yearly gathering for *Luminaca* day, and the importance given to it, also imply that, in a certain way, the 'living death' never ends. Yet, the relation of the household and family with the deceased individual becomes, over time, a more diffuse relation in the network of family groups with de-individualized ancestors. Geographical proximity to the cemetery, and its continuity in the future, is then an essential element of Korturare social reproduction. Moreover, as the author notes (ibid.), the 'living death' reflects the slow construction of the social person during the initial phases of life, a process that culminates with marriage and the birth of children (see also: Tesar, 2015). Among the Korturare, repatriation of individuals who die very early in life is not viewed as imperative, reflecting a similar slow process of social incorporation. The importance of burying the adult, and near-adult, members at home is linked to the pressure against community segmentation that burial in the place of migration would represent (Chaïb, 2000: 24). The demand for the corpse is a demand made by Korturare society on its living members, whose unity is physically marked by the location of its family tombs.

   Communication technologies are progressively permeating the social and symbolic experience of death, reflecting the reinforcement of a transnational society of reference. Professional VHS recordings have been used as a *post facto* medium for experiencing, from abroad, the reality of a funeral taking place in Romania, and as a channel for the communication of ritual formulas from the funeral space to mourning people elsewhere. Progressively, through YouTube and landline internet connection

first and, later, through mobile connections and smartphones, funeral videos have been exchanged simultaneously, in real time and self-recorded. Videos, text messaging and photos have converged in communication flows that connect different ritual spaces and a wider network of recipients than VHS videos ever did. Along with the increase in the simultaneity, convergence and publicness associated with today's communication technologies, they also mediate many more moments of the death experience, from the news of a death to memorialization. The mediatization of mortuary practices also reproduces the death-related home-oriented pattern, by amplifying the presence of and social control exerted by the Korturare notional community.

The increasing international visibilization of the funeral ritual in Romania reduces the perception of distance and helps underline that the primary *privedzhi* is the focal point of the transnational celebration. It amplifies the visibility of its attendees, their ritual performances, as well as their absence, and even creates greater social pressure for travelling to Romania to attend the event in person. Social and moral pressure involves further ideological nuances related to the connection between territory, social organization and perception of social belonging. Satirical jokes posted anonymously in Facebook, verbal humiliations in public gatherings that allow the common age hierarchies of respect to be broken, or the fear of shame and public derision are signs of a shared legitimation of the *amare Roma*, 'our Roma' (the Korturare) as the ultimate moral reference. Thus, the deceased belong not only to a family group, or a local community, but to a whole 'network of family networks', the same one in which marriage is sought and that represents the individual's primary moral world.

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