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The Concepts of Honour and Profanation in Family life and Social structure of the Romany Groups in Belarus (a preliminary study)

The geographical situation of Belarus on cultural and trade crossroads caused that different Romany groups settled there. Among the most numerous are: the *Russka Roma* (Russian Roma), the *Polska Roma* (Polish Roma), the *Litowska Roma* (Lithuanian Roma) and “the natives” (Belarusian Roma).

The relations of these groups represent a complicated and hierarchical system, based on obvious (mainly in dialects and rites) and elusive differences. Among the Romany groups in Belarus one can find “the most honourable”, “honourable”, “less honourable” and “untouchable”. An investigation of their relationship allows to make a conclusion that “the most honourable” seems to be “the purest” and that the rules aimed to avoid *mageripen* (profanation, defilement) are a peculiar indicator of the group prestige.

A source of *mageripen* is the lower part of a female body and everything associated with it - female clothes or the process of child-bearing. Therefore behaviour of a Romany woman is strictly regulated and the rites of purification are widespread in family life. One more meaning closely related to *mageripen* is *magirdo* “a ritually defiled”.

The paper considers how closely connected concepts *pativ* (honour) and *mageripen* operate in Roma’s mentality and exhibit themselves in different forms of social life.