

**Gábor BENCSIK**

***The Image-Anthropological Approach to Historiography  
Gypsies in 19th-Century Hungary***

In the last hundred years historiography has changed profoundly. However, most historians seem to neglect the achievements of the iconic turn, and make stand against the attack of the “barbarian hordes” of the pictures, defending the strongholds of the text.

In reality the picture is an eminent source of the historian’s evidence, especially in the cases when not the protagonists of history, but different minorities (children, women, ethnic minorities, etc.) are concerned. The latter are barely covered by contemporary written sources, but frequently depicted as accessory, or even main, figures in contemporary pictures. Analyzing for example the etchings depicting Hungarian gypsies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we can obtain several new pieces of information, from small details to general conclusions. Through the analysis of the pictures we can demonstrate the changing attitude of the majority towards the gypsies from acceptance to rejection. They clearly show the visual – and conceptual – stereotypes of the majorities. Nevertheless the pictures do testify to a great break in the life of the Middle-European gypsy society: how they lost their ability to take part in the general pattern of production characteristic of the surrounding societies.

**Gábor BENCSIK**, born 1954, is historian and journalist, publishing director of the weekly *Magyar Demokrata*. At Gödöllő University he graduated as agronomist, at Pécs University as historian. His research interests are focused on the history of gypsies in the 19th century, especially the visualization of the gypsies of the age, and the use of contemporary pictures as historian’s evidence. He is author of five books, including *Cigányok* [Gypsies], and editor of the book series *Magyar Roma Történeti Könyvtár* [Hungarian Roma Historic Library]. E-mail: [bencsik.gabor@magyarmercurius.hu](mailto:bencsik.gabor@magyarmercurius.hu).

