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DISTANCE BETWEEN THE ROMANI DIALECTS

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Much has been said about divergence among the Romani dialects, but seldom in concrete terms. In a previous paper (1983) I attempted to quantify the percentages of elements common to nine dialects from Yugoslavia, Poland and France, taking as a basis a slightly modified list of 215 basic concepts by Swadesh (1952). However, since Swadesh's list is far from being completely suitable for research in the Romani field, it has been shortened to 200 items. Some 20 concepts were replaced by five others of equal stability, while most of it has been retained in order to allow eventual comparisons. 97.5% of this list is common to Swadesh's list. In contrast to Swadesh, the research was not intended for glotto-chronological but dialectometrical notations; therefore, instead of Swadesh's twofold notation (1 for cognate, 0 for non-cognate), a fivefold scale was introduced. 4 expresses complete identity [manuš+manuš] and one point is subtracted as a rule for each differing phoneme, thus [kerav + čerav : 3] [vakerav + vačarav : 2] and so on. This calculation leads to a system of estimations which differs significantly from Swadesh's. Nevertheless a term-by-term comparison of the values obtained for more than 30 pairs of dialects in both Swadesh (S) and fivefold (T) calculations brings to light the constant relationship $T = 0.73S + 30 (\pm 1\%)$ between the two.

The value $S = 81\%$ is of particular interest since it is usually referred to as a boundary between languages and dialects; pairs of idioms with an S higher than 81% are counted as dialects of the same language, while pairs of idioms whose S is lower than 81% are considered related languages. The corresponding rate of commonality in my calculations is $T = 70\%$. In addition to this, in order to render the relationship between dialects in a more expressive way than by means of percentages, I attempted to calculate a "distance" d which satisfies all three relations:

when $T = 100\%$, then $d = 0$
 when $T = 0\%$, then $d = \infty$
 when $T = 70\%$, then $d = 1$

The unit U represents the last situation.

Such a distance is rendered by the formula:

$$d = \frac{7}{3} \left(\frac{1}{T} - 1 \right)$$

Thus two idioms with a distance of more than 1 U are separate languages, while they are dialects of the same language if their d is smaller than 1. This is naturally true only to a certain extent, since morphological and syntactic (and politico-cultural) data usually interfere with lexicostatistical facts and may even prevail, especially when d is close to the border value of 1. However, the picture is not far from the truth. Compare the d between related but separate languages (French - Italian, $d = 3.6 U$ and French - Occitan, $d = 2.85 U$) with the d between dialects (literary Turkish - Prizren Turkish, $d = 0.86$ and unified Albanian - literary northern dialect [Geg], $d = 0.40 U$). Among the nine Romani dialects analyzed, the d varies between 0 U and 0.93 U with a maximum in the 0.55 - 0.75 range.

The questionnaire contains all 200 words, some of them combined in short sentences in order to make the inquiry easier and shorter, to bring out additional morphological and syntactic data and to cross-check the main dialectal features. Depending on the informant, the inquiry is carried out in Romani (with people who tend to have interference from a non-Gypsy language) or in a non-Gypsy language (for people who tend to mix dialects).

The answers are written down in phonetic script (international system) and the 200 words of the list are brought to the classifying chart, where relevant items are listed together to establish the morphotype of the dialect. A progressive collection and publication of the morphotypes of all Romani dialects is one of the purposes of the inquiry. The other purpose is the calculation of the distance between dialects. This may be done in two ways:

1) A one-by-one distance estimation, which gives very valuable indications for the respective positions of the dialects. Pairwise comparison, however, may be done only if taking into consideration a comparatively limited number of dialects, because the number of pairs p grows in geometrical proportion to the number of dialects n :

$$p = \frac{n(n-1)}{2}$$

Thus for 20 dialects, we have 190 pairs.

2) A measuring of the distance between each di-

(Distance continued on p. 3)

(Distance continued from p. 1)

alect and a referential middle dialect. This is of special interest for emerging Literary Romani, the vehicle of which I have called *maškarutno lekhipa*, 'middle spelling'. One must bear in mind in these comparisons that the *maškarutno lekhipa* is a diastem which covers, by means of a common spelling, somewhat different realizations, when these realizations differ consistently, as *čh* [čh + s'] [čhavo + s'avo] (Cortiade 1984). In other cases, when both forms are wide-spread but the correspondence is not consistent (as in *u* ≠ *o* : *bukh* ≠ *bokh* but *ruk* and no **rokh*) two spellings are chosen as variants.

The rate of commonality *T* and the distance *d* are then calculated between genuine phonetic realization of the dialect under consideration and the realization of LR which stands closest to the given dialect. Both forms [kher] and [čher] receive for instance a 4 on the fivefold scale since both are realizations of the unique Literary Romani word written *kher*, while [ther] (dial. of Southern Russia) receives a 3. Similarly both [šil] and [šul] receive a 4 because both of them coexist as variants in Literary Romani: *ši* + *šul*, while [səl] which is lacking receives a 3. One can notice that the distance between Literary Romani and the 16 dialects given as an example varies between 0.12 U and 0.54 U (except Sinto: 0.74 U), with a peak around 0.33 U.

This method provides a better understanding of the mutual relations between the different dialects and a constant point: the totality of forms which constitute Literary Romani. Furthermore it is helpful for control of Literary Romani and its *maškarutno lekhipa*, so that it will continue to be close to all dialects and relevant for them.

Thus the use of the *maškarutno lekhipa* brings the different dialects closer to one another in writing than they would have been if written in a phonetic transcription. In this manner it preserves in writing the mutual understanding of the oral communication, for it renders only the relevant and meaningful phonologic features and not the features which are just a matter of dialectal realization and which the Roms learn to ignore in a multi-dialectal context. On the other hand, phonetic spelling would transcribe meaningless as well as meaningful features, putting them on the same level and "breaking" in writing the oral mutual understanding.

A further step may be achieved in bringing the different dialects closer to one another. As is well known, the main difference (which even impedes communication) is the presence of loanwords recently borrowed from European languages and differing from one country to another. Replacing these half-integrated loanwords by common Romani words (or In-

dian words if necessary) appears to be a necessary stage toward common Literary Romani. On the basis of the words (some 92 - 95% of the list) which do not belong to this latest stratum of borrowings, a percentage of commonality *T'* and a distance *d'* have been calculated between Literary Romani and the 16 dialects analyzed.

Figure 1 is a space diagram of the distances between Yugoslavian dialects of the Gurbet type (Pg, Og, Ob) and of the Arli type (Pa, Pm, Pk), Banat Kalderaš (B), Polish Lovari (after Pobožniak 1964) (L), and Paris Kalderaš (K). For the sake of comparison, distances between the dialects and languages mentioned above are included (A-A: Albanian dialects; T-T: Turkish dialects; F-I: French-Italian; F-O: French-Occitan).

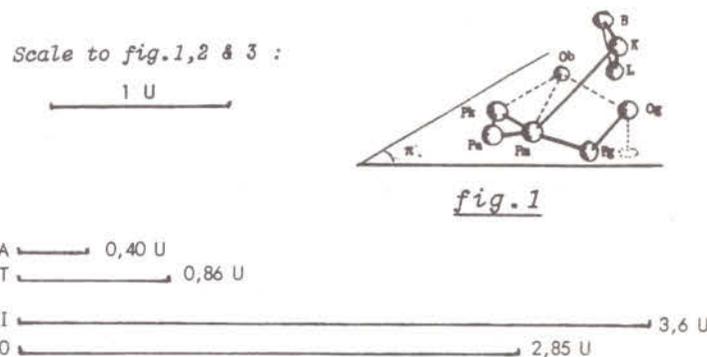


Figure 2 illustrates the distances between Literary Romani and 16 Romani dialects, from Albania: Kaburđi (AK) and Škodran (AS) (families now living in Titograd); from Bulgaria: Erlides (BE, after Calvet 1982); from Italy: Sinto della Venezie (IS, after Soravia 1981); from Poland: Kalderaš (PK), Lowlands dial. (PN) and Highlands dial. (PW) (after Ficowski 1965); from the Soviet Union: Northern dial. (UN) and Southern dial. (US) (after Barannikov 1938); and from Yugoslavia: one dialect from Tophan in Skopje (YM), Priština Gurbet (YKg) and Mohađer, an Arli-type dial. also from Priština (YKm); Montenegro Čergaš (YC) and two dialects from Serbia: Xūba in the north (YSn) and Thamar from Prokuplje in the south (YSs).

Figure 3 shows the distances between Literary Romani and the same dialects as above, but this time calculated after removing the latest stratum of loan words (5 to 7.5% of the list).

Finally the distances between Romani (as in figure 2), Hindi and the dialect of the Paria tribe in Gissar Valley, Soviet Tadjikistan, which is sometimes said to be closely related to Romani, are given in Figure 4. (Compare with the distance between Romani and a European language, for example Serbo-Croatian: *d* = 29.6 U.)

	BE	US	UN	PK	PW	PN	IS	YV	YC	AS	AK	YKg	YKm	YM	YSs	YSn
T	92,53	88,0	87,1	86,3	87,90	81,15	75,9	84,85	91,07	87,63	95,05	86,25	87,62	87,25	86,54	87,10
d	0,19	0,32	0,35	0,37	0,32	0,54	0,74	0,42	0,23	0,33	0,12	0,38	0,33	0,34	0,36	0,35
T'	95,9	93,33	93,17	93,86	95,52	88,22	83	90,84	95,98	94,44	98,04	93,24	94,0	96,4	93,75	91,0
d'	0,1	0,14	0,14	0,15	0,11	0,31	0,48	0,17	0,1	0,14	0,05	0,17	0,15	0,09	0,15	0,24

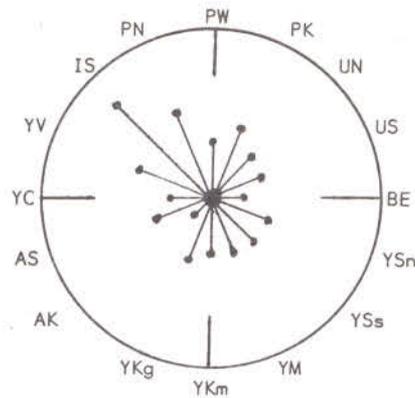


fig. 2

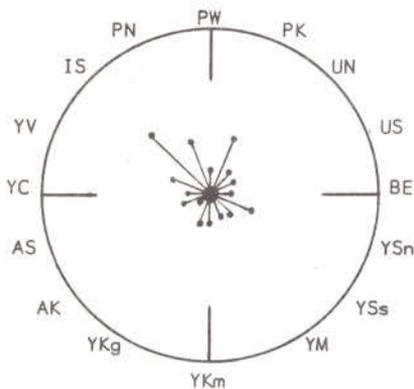
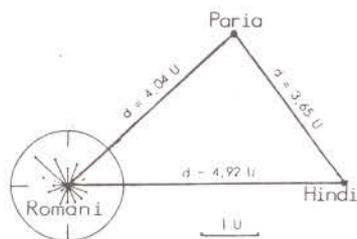


fig. 3

fig. 4



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∴ Marcel Cortiade, a translator at the French Embassy in Albania, is completing his doctoral dissertation on the recent emergence of Romani poetry in Kosovo, Yugoslavia.

MUSIC ON TAPE

William G. Lockwood

John Filcich is proprietor of probably the only record store in the world (Festival Records, 2769 West Pico Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90006) that caters to Gypsies. Actually, only about a third of his business is with Gypsies (the rest is with folk dancers and with residents of the Greek community his shop is located in), but for North American Gypsies, he is the major supplier. Gypsies all across the country place orders by long-distance telephone call. In some cases they do not stick around long enough to receive their C.O.D. orders and Filcich has a large stack of returned records and tapes marked "addressee unknown" waiting for the buyer's next call or for them to drop into the shop. There are often Gypsies there -- John says, "I think every Gypsy in the country has come through here at one time or another!" -- and it is a major node in the Gypsy communication network, especially for the large Mačwaya community on the West Coast.

Filcich grew up in a Croatian home in Gary, Indiana, and after moving to California he took part in the international folk dance movement as a way to regain touch with the multi-ethnic milieu he had known as a child. He opened his first international record shop in Oakland in the 1950s, later moved to San Francisco, and still later to his present location in Los Angeles. Very early in the history of his business, Gypsy customers began to come, looking especially for records of the northern Yugoslav songs the oldest of them remembered and the Jewish horas they used for dance music. Filcich always kept such records under the counter in a box marked "Gypsy" awaiting their arrival. He developed a Gypsy clientele, he claims, because he was the only international record shop that did not discriminate against them. Later he began to produce folk dance records and, in time, a few Gypsy records as well. The first, in the early 1960s, was by vocalist Sylvia Marks and a Gypsy rock group called "The Four Panthers." Filcich continues to sell records and tapes of Yugoslav and Jewish music that appeals to Gypsy taste. He also stocks, only for them, the large candles and the incense used at funeral feasts. But it is the music producing aspect of the business that has now become most important. Gypsy musicians and singers bring him master tapes, often prepared in their own homes (complete with background noise) and Filcich selects from these to produce commercial tapes for sale back to the Gypsy community. These are supplemented by other tapes collated from existing recordings of non-Gypsy music which John knows by experience that his customers like. He now has some 20 tapes available for the Gypsy mar-

(Music continued on p. 7)