



Dialects / Dialectology I.

6.0

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There is a tendency in Romani linguistics to identify, tentatively at least, the dialect groups of the Balkan Dialects, the Vlax Dialects, the Central Dialects, the Northwestern Dialects, the North-eastern Dialects, the British Dialects and the Iberian Dialects.

ROMANI DIALECT GROUPS

III.1

BALKAN		VLAX		CENTRAL	
ARLI	“zis-dialects”	Southern	Northern	Southern	Northern
Krim	Bugurdži	Agia Varvara	KALDERAŠ	Roman	Bergitka
Sepečides	Drindari	Čergari	LOVARI	“ROMUNGRO”	Bohemian
URSARI	Kalajdži	GURBET	Mačvaja	Vend	East-Slovak
<i>etc.</i>		<i>etc.</i>	<i>etc.</i>	<i>etc.</i>	<i>etc.</i>

NORTHEAST	NORTHWEST		BRITISH	IBERIAN
Lithuanian	Sinte Manuš	Finnish	Welsh	(Caló)
Lotfika	Estrexarja	(Scandoromani)	(Angloromani)	(Errumantxela)
Polska	Manouche			
Xaladitka	RÓMANES			
<i>etc.</i>	<i>etc.</i>			

CAPITALS = dialect clusters () = Para-Romani varieties¹

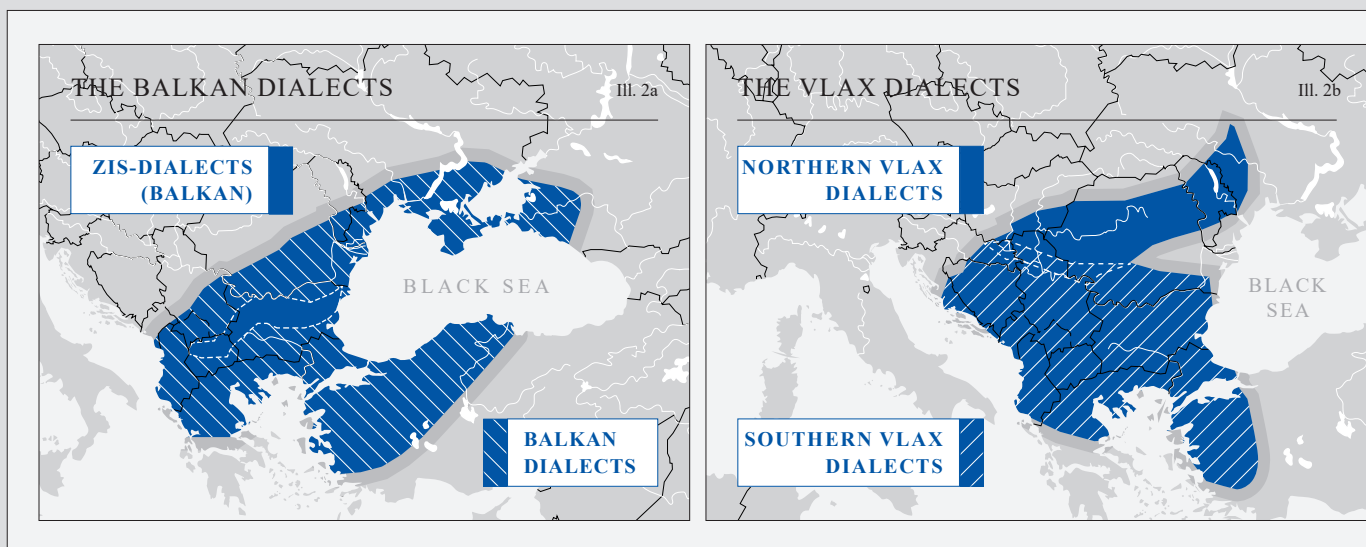
DIALECT CLASSIFICATION

There is no ‘easy’ way to classify dialects. One must first select the criteria on which a classification is to be based. Sometimes dialect classification is based strictly on geography, sometimes it is based strictly on the structural features –

lexicon, phonology, morphology – of the dialects. In the latter case, it is necessary to select those features that are of global relevance and that can be used as a reference grid to compare the different dialects and to determine the relationships among them. Scholars often disagree on which features should be given greater attention as a basis for a classification.

As a result, is not unusual to find different classification models. There is also an objective difficulty: Some dialects may share ‘typical’ features with two distinct dialect branches. Such transitional dialects are part of any linguistic landscape. It is therefore almost impossible to postulate clear-cut divisions between dialect groups or ‘branches’.

¹ Para-Romani varieties are ethnolects of the respective majority language with (mostly lexical) elements from Romani; e.g. Angloromani is a variety of English with Romani elements. Speakers of such varieties often label their ethnolects “their Romani language”.



Several factors are responsible for dialect differentiation in Romani:

- The migration of Romani-speaking populations throughout Europe, in different periods
- The geographical spread of structural changes, creating ‘isoglosses’
- The influence of contact languages
- Specific changes that are limited to the structure of individual dialects

THE BALKAN DIALECTS

Balkan dialects of Romani (also called: ‘Southern Balkan’, ‘Southern Balkan I’) are spoken in Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia (Kosovo), Romania, Ukraine, and Iran. Dialects belonging to this group include Arli (Macedonia, Kosovo, Greece), Erli (Bulgaria), Mečkar (Albania), Sepeči (Greece, Turkey), Ursari (Romania), Crimean Romani (Ukraine), Zargari (Iran), and others. [Ill. 2a]

The diagnostic of characteristic features of this group of dialects include:

- *sine* for ‘he/she was’
- Third person pronouns *ov, oj, on*
- Shortened possessive pronouns *mo* ‘my’, *to* ‘your’
- Demonstratives *akava* and *adava*, sometimes *akavka*
- Loan verbs are usually adapted with *-in-* (but *-iz-* appears in the Black Sea region)
- 2nd pl. past tense *-en* in *tume kerden* ‘you.PL did’
- Future tense in *ka*, sometimes *ma*

THE BALKAN ZIS-DIALECTS

These dialects (also called: ‘Drindari-Bugurdži-Kalajdži group’, ‘Southern Balkan II’) are spoken in northern and central Bulgaria and Macedonia. They include the dialects of the Drindari/

Drindari, Kovački, Kalajdži and Bugurdži (but note that these are occupational designations, and are sometimes also found among groups speaking other types of dialects). [Ill. 2a]

The diagnostic of characteristic features of this group of dialects include:

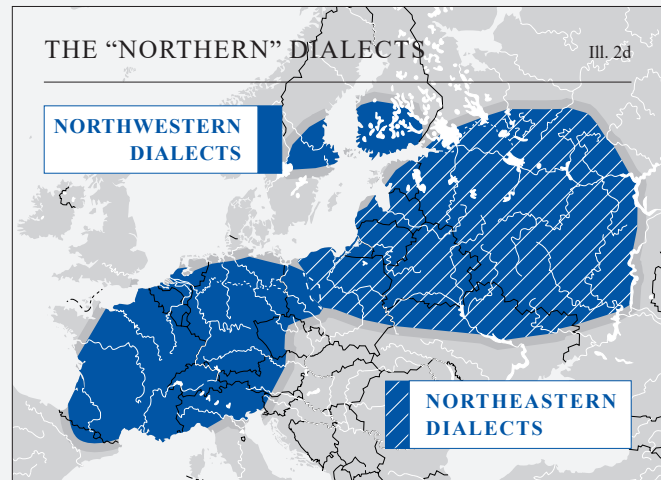
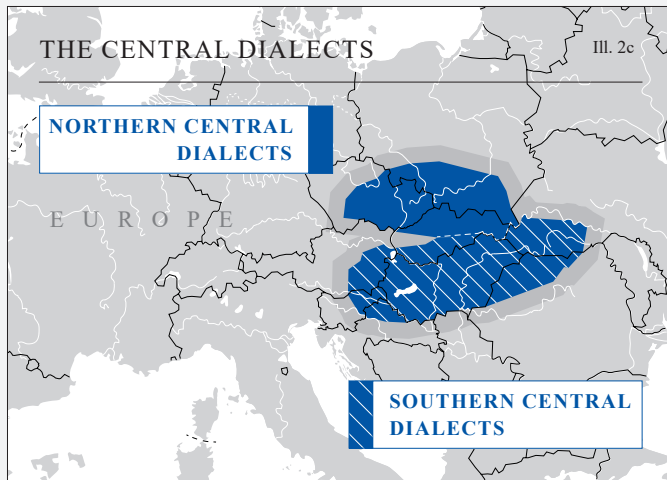
- Demonstratives *kaka* or *kəka*
- Loan verbs are adapted with *-iz-*
- *z-* in *zis* ‘day’ and *zi* ‘soul’
- *c-* in *buci* ‘work’ and *cin-* ‘to buy’
- reduction of *-e-kerela* > *kerla* ‘s/he does’

THE SOUTHERN VLAX DIALECTS

These dialects are spoken in Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, southern Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, and Turkey. They include the dialects of the Gurbet or Džambazi and groups known by other names such as Kalburdžu and Čergar. [Ill. 2b]

Their diagnostic features include:

- *seha* or *sesa* for ‘he/she was’
- Third person pronouns *vov, voj, von*
- Possessive *mənro* ‘my’, *čo* ‘your’
- Demonstrative *gava*
- Nominal plural endings in *-uri, -ura*
- Loan verbs are adapted with *-isar-*



- Past tense and copula 1.SG in *-em* as in *sem* ‘I am’
- 2nd pl. past in *-en* in *tume kerden* ‘you.PL did’
- Future tense in *ka*
- Negation in *in* or *ni*
- *dž-* in *dživeh* ‘day’
- *-č-* in *buči* ‘work’
- *-rn-* in *marno* ‘bread’
- *-ej* in *dej* ‘mother’
- *a-* in *ašunav* ‘I hear’

NORTHERN VLAX DIALECTS

These dialects are spoken in Romania, Moldova, Hungary, Serbia, as well as in migrant communities worldwide. The most widespread and well-known Northern Vlax dialects include Kelderaš (Kalderaš), Lovari, Čurari and the dialect of the Mačvaja. [III. 2b]

Their diagnostic features include:

- *sas* for ‘he/she was’
- Third person pronouns *vov*, *voj*, *von*
- Possessives *muro* ‘my’, *čiro* ‘your’
- Nominal plural endings in *-uri*, *-ura*
- Loan verbs are adapted with *-isar-*, *-osar-* or shortened forms *-i-*, *-o-*.
- 1st person past tense in *-em*
- *džes* for ‘day’
- *-č-* or *-kj-* in *buči*, *bukji* ‘work’
- Negation in *či*
- *ž-* in *žanav* ‘I know’
- *š-* in *šavo* ‘child’
- *-nr-* or *-nř-* in *manro*, *manřo* ‘bread’
- *-ej* in *dej* ‘mother’,
- *khanči* for ‘nothing’

SOUTHERN CENTRAL DIALECTS

These dialects are spoken in Hungary, Slovakia, northern Slovenia, eastern Austria, Ukraine, Romania. They include the dialects of the Romungri, Vend and Burgenland Roman. [III. 2c]

Their diagnostic features include:

- *sina* for ‘he/she was’
- Third person pronouns *ov*, *oj*, *on*
- Demonstratives in *ada*
- Loan verbs are adapted with *-in-*
- 2nd sg. past and copula *-al* as in *sal* ‘you are’
- *kereha* for ‘you shall do’
- Imperfect in *-ahi*
- *-h-* in *leha* ‘with him’
- Loss of final *-s* as in *dive*, *di* ‘day’, *va* ‘hand’
- *-r-* in *maro* ‘bread’

NORTHERN CENTRAL DIALECTS

These are spoken in Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine. They include East Slovak Romani and the dialect of the Bergitka Roma of Poland. [III. 2c]

Their diagnostic features include:

- *ehas* or *has* for ‘he/she was’, *hin* for ‘he/she is’
- Third person pronouns *jov*, *joj*, *jon*
- Demonstratives in *kada*
- Loan verbs are adapted with *-in-*
- 2nd sg. past and copula *-al* as in *sal* ‘you are’
- *kereha* for ‘you shall do’
- Imperfect in *-as*
- *-h-* in *leha* ‘with him’; *-r-* in *maro* ‘bread’

NORTHWESTERN DIALECTS

Spoken in Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Netherlands, Belgium, Finland. They include the Sinti-Manuš dialects of Germany, France and surrounding regions, as well as Finnish Romani or Kaale dialect. [Ill. 2d]

Their diagnostic features include:

- *his* for ‘he/she was’ (Sinti only)
- Third person pronouns *jov/job, joj, jon*
- Demonstratives in *kava*
- Loan verbs are adapted with *-av-* or *-ar-*
- 2nd sg. past and copula *-al* as in *sal/hal* ‘you are’
- *-h-* in *leha* ‘with him’
- *h-* in *hom* ‘I am’ and *ho* ‘what’ (Sinti only)
- *-r-* in *maro* ‘bread’; long vowel in *diives* ‘day’

NORTHEASTERN DIALECTS

Spoken in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine. They include the Polska Romani dialect, the North Russian or Xaladitka Romani dialect, the dialects of Latvia (Lotfitka), Lithuania, etc. [Ill. 2d]

Their diagnostic features include:

- *isys* for ‘he/she was’
- Third person pronouns *jov, joj/jej, jone*

- Demonstratives in *adava, dava*
- 2nd pl. past in *-e* as in *tume kerde* ‘you.PL did’
- 3rd pl. past in *-ine* as in *jone kerdine* ‘they did’
- 3rd sg. past in *-a* as in *jov kerdja* ‘he did’
- Loan verbs are adapted with *-in-*
- *pšal* for ‘brother’,
- *-r-* in *maro* ‘bread’

OTHER DIALECT GROUPS

Some additional dialects show their own distinct features. This is due either to a period of isolation from other dialects, or to the development of features shared with several different dialect branches. As separate groups we can define the following:

- British Romani, including English Romani and Welsh Romani (now extinct, and surviving as a vocabulary only, known as ‘Angloromani’)
- Iberian Romani, including Spanish Romani, Catalanian Romani, and Errumantxela (Basque Romani), (all extinct, and surviving as a vocabulary only, known as ‘Caló’)
- The Romani dialects of southern Italy, including Abruzzian and Calabrian Romani
- The Slovene Romani dialect (also known as Istriani, Hrvati or Dolenjski)
- The Romani dialects of Iranian Azerbaijan, Zargari and Romano (although these have very close connections to the Balkan dialects, see above)

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