PERTTI VALTONEN

TRENDS AND SPECIAL TRAITS IN FINNISH ROMANI

The reader of Finnish Romani texts is struck by certain traits, both
phonetic and morphological, that he may find somewhat discomfitting.
I shall attempt to deal with the most prominent of these and to find
explanations, even tentative, of them.

Romani texts can be found in the Romano Boodos published by the Finnish
Gypsy Mission. There one can find contributions from genuine Gypsy
sources. Apart from this the number of Romani texts published nowadays
is next to nil. The best way is still to record Romani on tape and ana-
lyse the contents later on: tedious work but linguistically very profit-
able.

What is most bewildering and puzzling in Finnish Romani today is the
lack of means to express the concept of 'where' and 'where to'. The
prepositions corresponding to English 'to' and 'in' have fallen out of
use and postpositions such as those used in the modern Indo-Aryan lan-
guages are not included in the Romani nominal paradigms. When reading
or hearing Romani you thus have the impression of being confronted with
a succession of words, no particular sense being attached to the whole.
This is, of course, no new phenomenon at a certain stage in the develop-
ment of a language.

A similar situation seems to have prevailed in sixteenth century Awadhī
(Pūrbī, Kōsalī) as seen in the poetry of Jāyasī or Tulsīdās (Padmavat
and Rāmacarita-mānasa). Dhar states in his edition of Padumāvatī: "In
similar circumstances where postpositions could have been used in the
modern language the noun or pronoun in its b a s e form or in the
case form without any postposition expresses the required sense of case
relationship. And it is the paucity of case forms and general omission
of postpositions which constitute one of the greatest difficulties in
translating." Let us take two examples: *Dōsara khaṁda* (both dir. sing.

forms) *saba rūpa samvārā* 'In the second storey all forms were depicted'
and *Āju Imdra haum̐, āeum̐ sēna barāta* (both dir. sing.) *Kailāsa* (without
preposition) 'Now I am like Indra with his army who has come to Kailasa
with the marriage procession'.

The statement above is an excellent description of the state of affairs
in Finnish Romani today. Compare, for instance, *Me āxtom Tšorto prūga*
'I was in Varkaus', *Me jāvā Tšorto fōros* 'I go to Varkaus' (Kalle Hagert),
Me aahtom nii ieko stedos 'I was also at one place' (Romano Boodos 9/1975)
and *Hispa sas dōri strannako bakka* 'The cottage was there on a hill close
to the shore'. This procedure is quite common in Romani today. Even the
most fluent speakers of Romani do so. But what are the reasons?

Curiously enough, there is something similar in Hindi today in connection
with certain place-names. *Yaśpāl* writes, for instance, in his novel *Jhūṭhā
sac* 'False Truth', *Kanak niyam ke anusar ākasmik āvaśyaktā ke lie cchuṭṭī
lekar D i l l ī jāne lagī* 'Kanak intended to leave for Delhi asking for
leave according to the regulations, pleading casual necessity as an ex-
cuse' (cf., however, *Dillī mẽ* and *Dillī se* 'in and from Delhi').

One of the reasons is that there is no locative in the case system of
Romani. In older Finnish Romani the prepositions *aro* 'in' and *kajo* 'to'
were used in connection with the case termed prepositional: *are tšērenne*
'in houses' (Ariste), nowadays only in *apo tšēr* 'at home' (different prep-
osition). In fact, there is no case in the present-day Romani which could
convey the meaning of 'in' and 'to'. The Romani cases are namely Nom.,
Acc., Dat., Gen., Abl., Prep., and Instr. In other dialects and sometimes
in Finnish Romani, too, the prepositional case was used in the sense of
'to': *Me džāvā gāveste* (Palmroth) and *Hlepputom mengo rinkate* (Saska Borg)
'I go to the village' and 'I managed to get to our side' resp. This is a
trait to be found in other dialects and is extremely rare in Finnish Rom-
ani, whereas Pott, for instance, cites many examples of that use (cf.,
however, Dardic *rāte* 'to the rajah'. In the Gypsy Grammar by Archduke Jo-
seph /Budapest 1888/ the form in *-te* is called dative and that in *-ke*
locative). In the beginning of the century the dative and prepositional
were contaminated in Finnish Romani and used in the sense of 'to' (cf.
Jalkio's statement in his annotations, preserved with the Finnish Gypsy
Mission). Now, however, the mere base form is used or periphrases are in-
vented to that end.

Another of the reasons why prepositions are not used may be the example of Finnish (there is a large number of them in Finnish, of course: vide Penttilä, Suomen kielioppi, p. 678, but none in the meaning 'in'; an agglutinative suffix -ssa/-ssä is added instead). Finnish has deeply influenced the internal and external structure of Romani and this may be one of the manifestations of that influence. The gypsies simply do not know how to use these prepositions and should be taught their use.

The ancient locative has been lost except in some stereotyped expressions. These are *angle, apre, arre, pāle, ratti, tšēre* resp. 'before, up, in, after, at night, at home'. *Arre* is etymologically the same as the prep. *are, aro* < skt. *ántara* (loc. *antare*), pkt. *aṁtara-*, hind. *ā̃tar* (Turner 357). Skt. *ántara-* has furnished adverbs and postpositions to many new IA languages, too.

In Sanskrit the locative and accusative are the most common cases which denote the concept of 'whither': cf. *Śobhanasthāne tvayā aham nītaḥ* 'You have led me to a fine spot' (Pañc. 269) and *Grāmam ajyām nayati* 'He leads the offering to the village'. Sometimes, however, in connection with a passive verb the supposed accusative turns out to be a nominative: *Mayā grāmo gamyatē* 'I go to the village' (Speijer, § 40). In (Finnish) Romani this is not possible as there is no passive proper or instrumental of agent.

The Romani case in *-te*, be it termed dative, locative or prepositional (as it should be used only with various prepositions) is surely ancient. Postpositions corresponding to Romani *-te* are to be found in all the modern languages of India excepting Guj., Singh., and Western Rājasthānī. Bloch states that locative has inherited the functions of dative. And, as we already saw, Romani prepositional corresponds to dative in so far as the use is concerned. Closest to the Romani prepositional in *-te* comes the dative in Paisācī languages in *-taṁ, -keṁ* resp. Romani *-te, -ke* (Sampson § 293) and the Beng. loc. in *-t, -t-e*.

The functions and names of the cases with the formant *-t-* vary greatly in the modern IA languages. The use in Dardic languages comes close to that in Romani: *rāte* etc. Thus, in theory, Romani *-te* could be connected with many modern cases in the new IA languages with *-t-*, viz. Pañj. *te* (gen.), Sindhi *te* (adess.), Bihari *te* (agent), Hindi *taiṁ, tāi* (abl.), Maṛ. *teṁ* < Apabhr. *tehiṁ* (*-kehiṁ*, cf. Romani *-te, -ke*). Skt. *tarite* is supposed to result in Pkt. **tarie > te* but this is hardly the origin of Romani *-te*.

Romani etymologies can often be traced to a wide variety of dialects
ranging from the east of India to the west and north. According to
Turner's generally accepted theory, Romani first belonged to the Cen-
tral group comprising Raj., Hindi, Pahari, and possibly Bihari. The
gypsies may have left this group before the demise of the ancient mor-
phological system and moved to the northwest, coming under the influ-
ence of Dardic languages whence they about A.D. 1000 started towards
Europe. Chatterji, however, dates this departure to Europe before the
Christian era. In any case, correspondences are to be found with many
different dialects and the deviations from the established (phonetic)
rules in Romani can best be explained as borrowings from other dialects.
Furthermore, there is every reason to suppose that the gypsies, even
before they left the Indian orbit, roamed from place to place (as their
language also proves). One cannot even be sure if their language was
always an Indo-Aryan one. The changing of a language family is no nov-
elty in India and such a course would seem well suited to the gypsies.

If there is bewilderment regarding the expression of the locative, the
ablative is still well preserved. Formerly it ended in *-tar* as is still
the case in many other dialects: Arwidsson *o djein-es-tar* 'from the man',
nowadays *jēn-es-ta*, *dsēn-es-ta*. *-tar/-ta* is normally added to the ob-
lique stem sg. The origin of *-tar* is somewhat obscure. On the contrary,
petrified forms of the old ablative in Skt. *-āt* have been preserved as
for instance in *anglāl* < Skt. *agrắt* (Skt. *a* + cons. cluster > Rom. *a*,
Skt. *a* > Rom. *e* and Skt. *ā* > Rom. *a*) 'from the front of' and *dūral* <
Skt. *dūrāt* 'from afar'.

I have collected various etymologies for the Romani *-tar* and tried to
think up some of my own. None of these theories can be considered cer-
tain. 1) Skt. *-tas* is somewhat close to *-tar* but it does not explain
the *-r*. Besides, *-tas* has become Pkt. *-to* and according to Romani
phonetic laws it should become *-te* (locative?). 2) Skt. p.p. loc. *tari-
te* (√ *tṝ*) has in Pkts as its equivalent **tarie* > **taie* > (Hind.) *te*.
This one has *r*, but would better suit the prepositional *-te*. 3) In
Afghan or Pašto there is a preposition *tar*: for instance P. *tar sara*
'from the head'. Though Gypsy dialects have Afghan loan-words and though
in Romani some words can be used both as prepositions and as postposi-
tions, it is not very probable that *-tar* is a loan from Pašto. 4) With
more probability it can be compared with the Khōwār (Dardic) abl. suffix

in -*sar*, -*ār*, -*ar* (Grierson VIII, p. 136). Cf. Khow. *Ma-te ma bash-ò tan māl-ār dĕt* 'Me-to (cf. Romani *man-de*, *rakles-te*) my share own property-from give', i.e. 'Give me my share of the property'. 5) There is a Persian loan-word in some languages of western India which has been used as such or reduced to a postposition with different meanings, viz. Persian *khāṭir*: cf. Maithili *Āmåk^a khātir^a jān^a jan^u gamāu* 'Do not lose your life f o r mangoes' and modern Awadhi *Hamorī khātir dūdhụ lajāõ* 'Bring milk f o r me' and Dardic (Kasṭawārī) abl. postposition *khā-tara*. 6) Skt. *ántara-* is stated to have furnished postpositions to different IA languages (according to Chatterji Beng. *tårē* < skt. *ántara-*, see his ODBL) etc. but this does not seem to suit our case. 7) Skt. *sthåman-* 'site' has also furnished postpositions, e.g. Lahnda *thãõ* 'from' and Oriya -*ṭhāru*, -*ru*: Or. *Saṃjha dhupa sarilāthāru* '...from the closing of the evening *dhupa*-ceremony'. In many Indian dialects, esp. Dardic ones, there exists an ablative -*r*- which could be added to the Skt. *sthåman* > *ṭhā* 'place' to form -*ta-r*. The double -*ā*- in *sthåman-* seems to attest to this view. Or should the Romani prep. *aro* 'in' be associated with Or. *ṭhåre* 'in' and Skt. *sthåman*, and not with Skt. *ántara-*? 8) Skt. abl. masc. and neuter is said to have left no trace in new IA languages except in Romani -*al* (vide supra). However, I would like to view the Skt. abl. in -*āt* in Romani -*tar* as follows: Skt. -*āt* > -*al* (as is usual) > -*ar* ; *raklestal* > *raklestar* > *raklesta*. There are many cases in which the liquids *l* and *r* vary freely at the end of the word: Arw. *bachcher* 'he is begging' is nowadays *baxxel* and there is -*r* in the dialect of Asian gypsies compared with -*l* in European dialects (present, 3rd person). In any case, the problem is with the -*r*, not -*t*. This -*t* may have come, for instance, from other forms of the declination (by analogy).

The change Skt. -*t*- > Romani *l* or *r* is curious: e.g. Skt. *gíti* 'song' > Rom. *džīli* and Skt. *pṛchati* 'he asks' > Rom. *puxxela*. This curious change is only shared, in addition to Romani, by Kalasha, Khowar, Shina, Pashtu and some Kafir dialects. Otherwise, as is known, Skt. -*t*- > 0 in new IA languages, excepting some Dardic dialects. In many respects, as is also seen above, Romani shares a number of developments with the Dardic group both in the field of phonology and morphology. Romani seems to have developed along parallel lines. When Romani or its ancestor language came into contact with the European languages, new traits

entered the language. The definite article was probably developing in Greece, the infinitive was being dropped according to the model of Balkan languages as well, and *f* and the suffix *-os*, which is very common in Romani, were making their first appearance in the same area. The vocabulary was overwhelmed by loans from European languages. The internal structure of Romani was also affected.

A prominent trait in Finnish Romani is the increasing number of Swedish loan-words. I have encountered more than 80 of them since the appearance of Thesleff's dictionary, which comprises about 1800 basic words. One would suppose that loans would be taken from Finnish rather than Swedish. This is the case in the Lower Style or present-day common Romani but the gypsies who make a literary use of Romani, for instance, without exception make loans from Swedish instead of coining new words or using periphrases. It may be that this is dictated by considerations of secrecy within the Romani speaking community. Even words as common as *at* and *om* (Sw. *att* and *om*) are not to be found in Thesleff's dictionary. Peculiarily enough, most gypsies, even in the east of Finland, seem to understand these new Swedish loans. On the western coast, however, this would be quite natural.

Borrowing from Swedish has caused Romani to develop in the same direction as prevails nearly everywhere else: original words are given up and loan-words with adopted inflexion are used. Let us take two examples. In the Romano Song Book (London 1972) you can meet with Romani verses like the following:

> "Can you *rokker Romani*?
> Can you fake the *bosh*?
> Can you *dick* the *vesher*,
> While *mandi chins* the *kosh*?"

A similar hybrid language is the Swedish tattarspråket, which has an original Romani substratum: Min *devel*, de' *asjar gräcko* du *kerar tjakis* 'My God, it is a sin if you act thus' (original words in italics).

Such will be the fate of Finnish Romani too, if effective measures are not taken. This isolated branch of the language family of India would well deserve to be preserved.