

Anthony P. Grant

ROMANI IN THE WILDERNESS:
ON THE MARGINALISATION OF ROMANI WITHIN GENERAL LINGUISTICS IN
BRITAIN AND AMERICA, AND SOME CONSEQUENCES OF THE
"RISE OF THE AMATEUR"¹

1. PRE-TWENTIETH CENTURY RECORDS OF ROMANI: A PARTIAL HISTORY OF PARTIAL COVERAGE

The Romani language has attracted the temporary attention of a number of eminent humanists and other scholars over the past few centuries. The roll-call starts with Andrew Boorde, who provided our first sample of Romani in 1542, and who was for some time tutor to the English king Edward VI. The sixteenth-century investigator Bonaventura Vulcanius, who while in southern France collected a short wordlist of Northern Romani provenience which has also been attributed to Antoine Morillon and to the polymath and lexicographer J. J. Scaliger, was an eminent classical scholar. At the end of the seventeenth century Hiob Ludolf, collector of another short wordlist, made the languages of the Ethiopians known to the western world and his brother corresponded vigorously with Leibniz. The first person to demonstrate with convincing evidence that Romani was Indic, Johann Rüdiger, was an eighteenth century German polymath with a social conscience. Towards the end of the eighteenth century William Marsden collected English Romani and "Turkish" Romani and was one of the first people to recognise the unity of what are now called the Austronesian languages.

In the nineteenth century, established scholars continued their flirtation with Romani as a diversion from what were regarded as weightier matters. For example, in addition to assembling an invaluable if second-hand collection of data about Romani, August Friedrich Pott himself did important work on Indo-European etymologies and also on the historical development of Romance languages, as did Graziadio Isaia Ascoli, who was the first person to describe South Italian Romani but whose linguistic speciality was his Friulian mother-tongue. In the 1870s Franz Xaver, Ritter von Miklosich, the Slovene whose Romani work was a summation of all that was then known and who helped found comparative Slavonic philology, had a knighthood conferred upon him by the Habsburg Empire in recognition of his contribution to the documentation of the history of the Slavonic lan-

1 This paper is a revised version of presentations which I gave at the Third and Fourth International Conferences on Romani Linguistics (Prague, December 1996 and Manchester, September 1998, respectively). I would like to thank the conferees at those meetings, and Georg Lentze, for observations which have found their way into this paper.

guages, which were spoken by the very people whose mythically-inspired sense of Pan-Slav history was to ensure the overthrow of the Habsburgs not forty years later. The works of Pott and Miklosich were long regarded as major volumes on Romani, and they are still consulted. Other renowned linguists of the nineteenth century, both armchair researchers (at least on Romani) such as the Sanskritist and Yakutist Otto von Böhtlingk, an early pioneer of solid fieldwork techniques, and the Danish classicist Sophus Bugge, and the Uralicist and inveterate fieldworker M. A. Castrén, collected small amounts of Romani material.

Note the use of the adjective "small". Indeed, one disturbing facet about the work of many scholars on Romani is how little they actually engaged directly with the language. Ludolf and his predecessor who compiled what is generally known as the "Vulcanius list" provided short word lists of a few dozen items in length, Andrew Boorde in 1542 gave thirteen sentences that he learned in a pub. It is said that August Friedrich Pott never actually met any Roma or Sinte, and he certainly didn't do any fieldwork among them. Franz Xaver Miklosich, like Pott, assembled a huge amount of data on Romani, a thousand pages or more of material and analysis, much of which was unpublished and would have otherwise been lost sight of, but as far as I can tell from his published materials two pages of Lovari. The people who collected most on Romani tended to be on the fringes of scholarship, being general authors such as the remarkable George Borrow or concerned amateurs such as the ex-Turkish slave, American-educated doctor and student of New Testament exegesis A. G. Paspati. Anton Jaroslav Puchmayer, whose little posthumous book on Czech Romani is one of the earliest relatively full and reliable descriptions of a Romani variety, is a transitional figure with a foot in both camps. He was a priest by training, and an author of fables (some of which he translated into Romani), but he was also a friend and coadjutor of Josef Dobrovsky, the philologist who did so much to reform and revivify the Czech literary language.

Direct experience with Romani on the part of general linguists was something which was not set to continue long into later periods of linguistic thought, as the concerns of linguists began to shift from diachronic to synchronic matters. At the beginning of the twentieth century the German linguist Franz Nikolaus Finck wrote some articles and compiled two books on Romani, one a guide to Sinti and the other a compilation of data available on Lomavren (Armenian Para-Romani; Finck 1903, 1907). The material in the latter book was of great interest to such a figure as Antoine Meillet, himself an Armenologist with an interest in "mixed languages" and the problems they posed for genetic classification (for instance Meillet 1925).

But Finck didn't need to justify this activity to an audience who already knew him as a descriptive linguist who had worked on Aran Islands Irish Gaelic and on modern literary East Armenian. Finck was also to write four works in short succession on what we would

now regard as linguistic typology. These constitute his major contribution, such as it is, to general linguistics and are still read by a dwindling minority, although his typological views were informed by a Herderian and Humboldtian emphasis on what were assumed to be the differing "spiritual" and intellectual characteristics of the peoples who spoke particular languages (it should be noted that Finck's philosophical views were relatively absent from his work on Sinti, which is just as well when one considers Herder's unfavourable views on the people who spoke the language). The early stages of the development of linguistic typology had also been a field which the Viennese scholar Friedrich Müller, who incidentally recorded texts in some Central dialects of Romani, had made his own a generation previously, especially in the wide-ranging linguistic survey in Müller (1878–1886). One does wonder whether the traces of plagiarism in Finck (1903) (he lifted much of the lexicon in his book from von Sowa 1898) were not an instance of Finck being rather patronising or dismissive to his new linguistic interest. Incidentally Finck was writing about Sinti at the same time – 1903 – as Alfred Dillmann was busy compiling his infamous *Zigeunerbuch*, which appeared in 1905.

Finck's descriptive work was accurate enough when it was honest, but some of his more general ideas about Romani were implausible. His claim that Sinti was simply "die Mundart der Zigeuner, in der jeder dem Sprachgut fehlende Ausdruck im gelegentlich sich einstellenden Bedarfsfalle durch ein deutsches Wort ersetzt wird", a view echoed by the German-educated Leonard Bloomfield thirty years later (1933: 471), was, simply, inaccurate. Although Finck was familiar with earlier work on the language and especially on Sinti, including the marginally valuable writings of the theological students Tielich and Frenckel, who had collected their data, largely by means of soliciting Sinti equivalents of German sentences, as the "Zigeunerkolonie" at Friedrichslohra in 1837, he did not discuss the less clearly contact-related but nonetheless salient lexical, phonological and structural characteristics which made Sinti stand out from other Northern dialects.

2. A COUPLE OF UNQUESTIONED ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT ROMANI DIALECTOLOGY

Behind Finck's work and that of other investigators there lie a number of sometimes contradictory historical assumptions, which led to much stagnation in the development of the field. I shall mention two of these; it should be noted that these misconceptions about underdescribed languages were not restricted to studies of Romani. The first, which was usually held by linguistically less sophisticated observers, is that the different Romani varieties were simply a series of identical vessels into which one poured different amounts of loanwords from varying languages in order to generate the various dialects. This is simply not true – the overlap between Romani dialects and the boundaries of the states within which

they were spoken a couple of centuries ago is far from watertight, since later phonological and other developments, not to mention loanwords and features of dialect mixture, have crisscrossed dialects, and since any patterning would depend upon us understanding the original routes of the various Romani groups as they moved through Europe, and for this the language and especially the vocabulary are themselves our best guides. But the idea of Romani as an (undefined) linguistic essence of sorts which needs simply only to be mixed with loans from other languages in order to produce dialectal differentiations is still pervasive.

The second false assumption, which somewhat conflicts with the first but which also rather oddly reinforces it, is that Miklosich's geographically-based classification of Romani varieties into thirteen dialects, with these varieties being ordered hierarchically in decreasing order of what Miklosich regarded as "linguistic purity", was pretty much the last word on the subject, and that any new dialects simply had to be matched up to the correct node in the family tree. For the record, the varieties as described by Miklosich, in part III of his major work, are, in "descending order of purity": Greek, Romanian, Hungarian, Czechoslovak, German, Polish, Russian, Finnish, Scandinavian, Basque, South Italian, Anglo-Scottish and Spanish. Of these, Scandinavian, Basque, Anglo-Scottish and Spanish Romani are "Para-Romani" varieties, with Romani-derived vocabulary but not Romani structure. In Miklosich's scheme Greek Romani was the purest variety, and all subsequent dialects reflected a falling-off, corruption or dilution by other languages of this almost Platonic standard.

Miklosich's various categories were defined by reference firstly to geography, and by the number and varied origins of the loanwords in the dialects rather than by the actual internal dialectal affinities as they were manifested in the structure of the dialects. Some of his thirteen divisions were more exclusive, and therefore more justifiable on the basis of modern internally-linguistic criteria, than others. Those which were especially problematic were to some extent "Russian", "Polish" and especially "German", "Rumanian" and "Hungarian" Romani.

The "Russian" dialect material is largely from the North Russian Romani dialects, which group with Northern dialects, but there is also some material from dialects spoken in southern Russian and in Ukraine, which are classified with Vlax dialects. The "Polish" Romani material is principally from the *feldytka* dialect, which is a Baltic Romani dialect associated with the Northern dialects, but some data from the *bergitka* dialect in southern Poland, related to the Central group, is also included.

Most of the material for "German" Romani is Sinti, as spoken in Germany and countries quite some way to the west and south. However, Miklosich also used material gathered in the 1780s by the Königsberg professor Friedrich Kraus and the unpleasant Lutheran pastor Martinus Zippel (*vide supra*) from Roma living in Ermland and in what is now Lithuania. Their work, which was much cited by Pott (1844–45) and von Sowa (1898), was

the first fairly full descriptive work of any great value on a Romani dialect. The dialect described certainly shows German influence, in addition to loans from Polish and to some extent Lithuanian (and these include the borrowing of structural words such as conjunctions), but it is not Sinti as collected by Rüdiger and others. It resembles quite closely the dialect of the Polska Roma as described by Matras (1999), although there are some differences. The dialect seems to lie midway between Sinti and the Baltic dialects, while the small collection of material in Romani from East Prussia by von Sowa (1893) appears to show an even greater number of Sinti features in addition to unambiguous influence from Baltic German (for instance *falda* 'field', Baltic German *Fald*, with the characteristic vowel change, standard German *Feld*). It is possible that the dialect recorded by Kraus and Zippel, which we know to have been internally rather homogeneous, was actually a Baltic Romani dialect which had been strongly influenced by Sinti and by German too.

"Rumanian" Romani might well have been an adequate term to describe the dialects of Romani which had been strongly influenced by Rumanian, had it not been for the fact that these do not constitute a valid genetic group. Most of them are related as members of the Vlax group: this is true of Kalderash, Lovari, Churari, Gurbeti and so on. But there are exceptions. In eastern Rumania, and in Moldavia (now Moldova), there were speakers of the Ursari dialect (for which admittedly little material was available when Miklosich was writing), which contains innumerable Rumanian loans, but which is not Vlax because it lacks Vlax structural characteristics, but resembles the dialects known as Erli or Arli, which are spoken in Macedonia and western Bulgaria. (A form of Erli when stripped of Turkish and Bulgarian loans and with the resultant gaps plugged with Rumanian loans would look a great deal like Ursari.) In fact it is most closely related to the Romani dialects (sometimes known by their self-designation Keremitika) that are spoken in Crimea, which represent an eastern offshoot of Ursari (together these dialects are called "Black Sea Romani") and which have replaced most, but not all, their Rumanian loans with words from Ukrainian, Russian or the Turkic language popularly but erroneously called "Crimean Tatar". In addition, Carpathian dialects, part of the Central group, are also spoken in Rumania.

In any case, the impact of Rumanian on these dialects, especially the Vlax dialects, is (as I shall show in Section 4) not the most important characteristic that they share. In fact Rumanian loans are among the first to be lost from the dialects when they experience prolonged exposure to other dialects or to new host languages (for instance Hungarian or Bulgarian). Some rough statistics which I have gleaned from an examination of all the literature available to me on certain Vlax dialects, may be of interest. Although almost 400 Rumanian-derived items have been documented at one time or another for Hungarian Lovari, not more than forty percent are apparently in current use nowadays. Most of the Vlax dialects which Gilliat-Smith documented in Bulgaria during the First World War were losing

large numbers of Rumanian words to Turkish equivalents (Gilliat-Smith 1915–1916), and it is probable that the process of replacement by forms from Turkish or Bulgarian has continued throughout this century. There are only about thirty words of Rumanian origin in present-day Ayia Varvara Romani in the Athens suburb of that name (Birgit Igla, personal communication, 1996) and our complete records for this dialect only show about fifty; again, Turkish (and to some extent Greek) has been the victor.

Further west, Boretzky (1989) described Vlax dialects in Bosnia and Serbia which had lost the bulk of their Rumanian elements: one such dialect preserved about seventy, another only nine, although over 250 Rumanian-derived words have been documented in our records of Bosnian Gurbeti, while Boretzky himself found about 270 such words (many of them falling into disuse) in Kalderash as spoken in Serbia. Indeed if one assembled all the data from the various available Kalderash and Churari dictionaries, which span a period of recording of over forty years since World War II, we would find that the total number of Rumanian-derived words found in any Kalderash dialect might be closer to 2000 than to 1000, but it is questionable whether even a majority of them are still known to the bulk of Kalderash-speakers. On the other hand, Crimean Romani (Toropov 1991) contains some Rumanian-derived terms (for instance *kušma* 'hat') which I have never seen recorded in any Vlax dialect.

But the most problematic or simply confusing classification which Miklosich used was "Hungarian Romani". The term was used to describe any Romani material which was spoken in an area of what was then Hungary, an area more than twice the size of modern Hungary, and even more ethnically diverse. Material which is so described in Miklosich (1872–1880) can be subcategorised according to the area where it was collected, and comprises material from Rumungro ("genuine" Hungarian Romani of the Central group), Lovari (a Vlax dialect), a form of Slovak Romani (which is also Central, but distinct from Rumungro) and occasionally Bosnian Gurbeti (also Vlax).

The prevalence of Miklosich's geographical and stadialist mindset might explain why further attempts to classify Romani dialects on purely linguistic criteria were almost absent till the 1970s (the existence of thirteen European Romani dialects is mentioned, for instance, in Lockwood 1972: 211, a work which on the next page was one of the first to mention in general linguistic literature the fate of so many Roma in the Holocaust). Indeed, this same classification, with Serbo-Croatian substituted for Miklosich's Basque, and with Welsh replacing "Anglo-Scottish", can still be found in the latest reprint of the current *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (*Micropaedia* 10: 162, originally published in 1975), 125 years after it was first promulgated.

3. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN DOCUMENTATION OF ROMANI: PROFESSIONALS, AMATEURS AND THE FIRST ROM LINGUIST

Scholarly work on Romani differed from that on many minority languages in the nineteenth century in one important respect. Practically everyone who worked on Romani and who published on the language until the end of the Second World War were Gadge, non-Gypsies, and this was certainly the case in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, when so many of the "classical works" on the language were written. The one exception from that period is strangely significant.

The fact that Ferenc Sztojka's work of 1886 (with a second, better-known edition in 1890), a Hungarian-Lovari dictionary with texts compiled by a playwright who was a native speaker of Lovari, surpassed in phonetic accuracy (for example in consistent noting of aspiration of plosives and in recording certain vocalic allomorphs) not only the work of his patron Archduke Joseph, but also anything that had ever gone before, was lost upon later commentators, even the polyglot Archdeacon Frederick George Ackerley, of whom we shall hear more, who paid the work very little heed. Ackerley misunderstood some of the linguistic consequences arising from the fact that Sztojka divided Romani words up according to Hungarian orthographic rules, and confined himself to remarks upon the poor quality of the translations of the Catholic prayers which Sztojka included. Ackerley could have improved the quality and could have considerably extended the depth of coverage of Lovari lexis in Ackerley (1932) had he bothered to incorporate Sztojka's work – but he didn't. Consequently one of the most accurate and fullest records of Romani in the nineteenth century fell into almost complete obscurity.

There are faults in Sztojka's work, for instance his fondness for coining otherwise unattested neologisms from Romani roots, but some of the criticisms levelled at his book, for example the cavil that he included too many semi- or unassimilated loans from Hungarian in his dictionary, are unfair and ill-informed. In this respect he was simply reflecting Lovari as it was spoken in his region at that period of time. Furthermore he was the first to publish a large number of words of Rumanian or other origin which were used in his form of Lovari and which have since been recorded from other Vlax varieties. At least another eighty years were to pass before another Rom broke into print with a description of his own dialect (Kochanowski 1963), and that was published in India.

For the people working in the heyday of Romani studies, the late nineteenth century, the scientific study of Romani was something of a side issue, a plaything or a mistress rather than the great love of their lives, something that they were happy to spend lots of time researching, but at a remove. Romani could be turned to by philologists as a pastime after their main tasks, of editing classical texts, or of ferreting out possible new Indo-European

etymologies, had been put to one side for a while. Such scholars hadn't made their names in academia by studying the language, because there was no career to be made out of work on Romani. Their careers had been assured beforehand, and they were not actually willing to get out there among real Roma – whom they often didn't much like, anyway – and collect much material.

This had not always been the case. Even in 1782 Johann Rüdiger expressed his rage at the ill-treatment of the Sinte in his discussion of the Indic affiliations of their language. He is an honorable exception to what went before and he certainly stands as a more creditable figure than the Lutheran pastor Martinus Zippel, first recorder of the now extinct Baltic Romani variety of the former East Prussia, with his remarks about the Roma being "vermin on a healthy body", but we should remember that Rüdiger was a product of the Enlightenment, not of the more aridly utilitarian periods which followed. But despite that he did not collect a great amount of data, and indeed was more concerned with proving a theory than with documenting the language *in extenso*.

The whole process of Romani research in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries seems to have been conducted at arm's length by almost everyone concerned. Ian Hancock has written well about the investigators' love-hate relationship with Romani and its speakers in his recent article on George Borrow's highly problematic Romani work (Hancock 1997). Nevertheless, at that time the language was still regarded as something that it was good and useful for linguists to be interested in, although its potential specific contribution to linguistic theory was regarded as minimal.

This attitude towards Romani, patronisingly friendly at best, and stiffly remote at worse, changed for the worse when linguistics began to feel more and more sure of itself as a field, when diachronic linguistics gave way more and more to investigation of synchronic phenomena, and when its investigators began more and more to be concerned about career progression. Romani studies became even more marginalised than before. Work was still being done on the language in the early twentieth century, but even so, "serious linguists" didn't and couldn't make careers out of Romani. The rise of specialisation within linguistics and the coalescence of various groups of interests into area studies also created problems of delimitation, and questions arose. For example, was Romani, especially if spoken outside Eastern Europe, an Indic language or a Balkan language, or what? Scholars were in disunity about which academic grouping should be held to be the focus of Romani studies, and for a long time Indologists and the emergent group of Balkanists tossed the responsibility for supporting and publishing Romani research from one to another like a pinless hand-grenade. And naturally, as a result, the reputation of the language was the real loser, while neither group bothered themselves much about collecting material or collating research on Romani.

In matters of prestige Romani suffered from two disadvantages that other minority languages in Europe, such as Slovak, Faeroese or even Livonian had not had to contend with. Firstly, its speakers did not comprise a geographical nation state or even the bulk of the population in a given area, and one consequence of this was a great degree of dialectal diversity. Secondly most of them were illiterate, so that scholars and propagandists of Romani were slow to rise among them, while the only books to which researchers wishing to find out about Romani could refer were comprehensive works such as those by Pott and Miklosich, or descriptions of individual dialects. There was no Romani counterpart to Ludovit Stur or V. U. Hammarshaimb who would turn a Romani variety into a basis for a standard language, nor any equivalent to a F. J. Wiedemann or Anders Sjögren who would devote years of their lives to collecting Romani texts and compiling formidable dictionaries and grammars from the contents as those scholars had done for Livonian. Such work, insofar as it has been done, has largely taken place within the past half-century. Romani had no codifiers, be they native speakers, researchers or learners of the language. Yiddish-speaking Jews in Eastern Europe also had no territorial state but they had a tradition of describing their own language. In the latter decades of the nineteenth century the Ashkenazim produced Itzhak Leib Peretz, Mendele Mokher-Sforim and Sholem Aleichem. Romani got the Gypsy Lore Society, the first volume of whose deliberations appeared in 1888. Their overall quality can best be described as variable, and getting worse as time went on.

In reading older Romani work, one gets the sense of the language as being regarded as something that wasn't always described as much as discovered. In the pages of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* (henceforth *JGLS*), for the next ninety or so years Gadge with an avocational interest in the language, non-professional linguists for the most part, hurried to comb their collections of folktales or the latest Bible translation see whether they could find any previously-unnoticed Indian roots or ancient loanwords. Professional linguists for the most part saw Romani, on the rare occasions when they bothered to look for it or to quote material from it, as it was conveniently embalmed in the works of Pott and Miklosich, Paspati, Finck and the under-regarded and conscientious Austrian investigator Rudolf von Sowa, and regarded the job of documenting Romani as essentially complete. A little later, of course, the contents of Sampson (1926) came to stand for these scholars as being representative of all Romani, and as the baseline against which claims and assumptions about Romani and its place in Indic historical phonology and much else besides could be measured.

The job of recording and analysing varieties of Romani passed more and more from being the province of academic philologists, who, though often interested in a bewildering variety of languages, often did little primary data-collection but largely collated and analysed material collected by other people, and who worked on Romani either as a sideline

throughout their careers or for intense but short periods of time, to interested amateurs, whose professional careers lay outside universities and whose abilities of linguistic analysis varied widely. This shift went hand in hand with the changes in direction and fields of interest in linguistic thought and theory.

Between 1880 and 1930 the locus of linguistics moved from a philosophical approach based on idealisations about language, buttressed by a philological approach based on the analysis of texts, especially those in ancient languages, and with a diachronic concern for earlier records of languages, to a much more descriptive concern with instances of language as it was actually being used at present, and with greater synchronic emphasis upon scientific observation, replication of data and findings, and increasing specialisation of scholars in a particular field (for instance phonetics). This was especially the case in America, where the impact of the nascent field of anthropology upon linguistics was stronger. Given such changes, the days of the generalist polyglot were numbered, and scholars tended ever less to turn their attention to the examination of data from any and all languages, and to solving whichever intellectual puzzles might come across their path.

Linguistics in America was swifter in establishing itself as a separate field of study (in this case separate from anthropology) than it was to be in Britain and elsewhere in Europe, where it was largely a very late outgrowth of classical and philological studies. By the time the Linguistic Society of America was formed and the first issue of its journal *Language* came out in 1925, Romani studies were certainly not something regarded as fit for "proper scholars" – at least not in anglophone countries. Matters were different abroad, especially in Eastern Europe, where speakers of Romani were on the whole far more numerous and certainly far more visible than in much of the West or in anglophone countries, and where respected linguists such as the Pole Jan Rozwadowski could spend time working on phonetically precise glossaries of dialects and enhance their careers thereby (Rozwadowski 1936).

This is made clear by the paucity of coverage of Romani in academic linguistic journals of the time. No papers on Romani were printed in the *Transactions of the Philological Society*, the main British organ of philology, between 1920 and 1945, even though the contents of this journal were impressively diffuse. *The American Journal of Philology* was similarly bereft, preferring to publish on those linguistic cornerstones of the American spirit, Latin and Greek. The same goes for the *Transactions of the American Philological Association*. The fact that a largely unwritten language was used in the US at that time by more speakers than those of all Native North American languages put together did not seem to interest the Ivy Leaguers.

Among the "Signers of the Call" which established the Linguistic Society of America it was largely Leonard Bloomfield himself who had some interest in Angloromani. He collected some material from speakers in America, most likely in the Midwest, and was also

familiar with Finck's Sinti work and with the (erroneous) idea that Romani was especially closely related to Dardic languages. He cites a few Angloromani words and phrases (some of them containing mistakes) in his book *Language* while discussing intimate borrowing (1933: 415), and clearly recognised that the role of the language among its speakers was as a cryptolect (ibid.: 50). But his interest did not extend to any prolonged field contact with the language, just as his interest in Algonquian languages had never quite extended to him driving the two hours from Chicago to northern Indiana to record Miami from the last few people who could still recount traditional narratives in the language. Bloomfield's curiosity about Angloromani and Sinti did not promise any more prestige for a philological field whose informants were being taken less and less seriously.

However, on the whole the sort of work produced by American scholars of Romani before World War II, even by those who were good "linguists" as the term was popularly understood, was both scanty in content and amateurish and often wildly inaccurate in content. We need not detain ourselves long in looking at the work of someone such as Albert Thomas Sinclair, except to note that it was, however, better than that of John Dyneley Prince, sometime Acting Governor of New Jersey, whose work, lavishly depicted in the National Union Catalog of the Library of Congress, on Algonquian languages such as Munsee and Passamaquoddy, on creole languages, and on Romani was equally dire. Prince's general output was every bit as amateurish and as variable in quality as that of the Philadelphian Charles Godfrey Leland had been in the late nineteenth century.

But even so, some few American linguists were active in studying Romani and were well-informed as well. For instance there was Rufus S. Hendon Jr., who perceptively reviewed many 1930s productions, mostly of a Marxist-Leninist stamp, which were written in the short-lived North Russian Romani literary language for the *JGLS* (notably Hendon 1940), was to make his name with the US Foreign Service, eventually establishing himself with work in Borneo.

Recognition of the importance and interest of Romani in American academic linguistic circles was, Bloomfield apart, slow in coming. In its first fifty years of existence the journal *Language*, organ of the Linguistic Society of America, published precisely one piece on Romani, in 1940. This was a 2 ½-page note by one Leslie Tihany (Tihany 1940), and even its title gave little indication of its contents, which were, alas, to demonstrate that the Hungarian word *csóri*, a pejorative term meaning 'Gypsy', derived from Romani *čor*, 'thief', rather than from Sanskrit *corayati* 'he steals' (which was true, but who with a knowledge of Hungarian linguistic history would have thought otherwise?).

For the rest the important works which were being produced in this period went unnoticed; even Sampson's magisterial *Dialect of the Gypsies of Wales* (Sampson 1926) was not reviewed in *Language* or in other English-language philological publications. (The first

book review in the journal *Language* on Romani, incidentally, appeared in 1969; it was a review of two books by the Czech gypsiorist Jiří Lípa, and was written by a Czech-American linguist, Zdeněk Salzmán, whose specialisms were language and culture studies, and the Algonquian language Arapaho.)

4. ROMANI LINGUISTICS IN BRITAIN IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY: THE ARENA OF THE "GENTLEMAN SCHOLAR"

Meanwhile in Liverpool the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, the organ of a society which was by then very much an artistic and pseudo-intellectual love-nest for perfervidly romantic amateurs, was overflowing with texts, glossaries, specialist articles, and reviews of just about everything on Romani that was being produced anywhere (not excluding Bible translations). Indeed the sheer number of its reviews makes it an invaluable record of Romani scholarship. On average it was publishing eight pieces per annum – reviews or major articles – which contained material of important linguistic content, and these accounted for half the pages of the *JGLS*. Almost all was written by Gadge. (Much of the rest of the *JGLS* is nowadays almost unreadable in its archness, coyness and High Tory country weekend dilettantism.)

Britain was at that time the home of most of the leaders of Indology. Even so Romani received little attention, and most of that was indirect. Even Sir Ralph Lilley Turner, Britain's greatest Indologist of the time and a man, like his predecessor Sir George Grierson, who had very wide interests and who was also interested in Romani, usually published his Romani papers in the *JGLS* rather than in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* or in *Language*, and this was also true of another eminent Indologist of the same era, A. C. Woolner. Professor J. R. Firth of University College, London and later the School of Oriental and African Studies, an Indianist and phonetician who did so much to establish linguistics as a discipline in Britain, never encouraged Indianists such as Rev. Thomas Grahame Bailey, a scholar of Urdu and Panjabi, or his fellow Urduist A. H. Harley, to go out to collect Romani data in order to supplement the steady flow of research work being done on languages such as Panjabi, Urdu and Sinhala at the School of Oriental and African Studies, although we should note that there is a "Sampson Collection" of books relating to Romani still kept at the library there.

As was long the case with research on creole languages, serious linguistic work was left more and more to individuals with more connections with Romani, "gentleman scholars" who had made their names in other fields and for whom Romani research was an avocation. Some, such as W. E. Collinson, professor of German at Liverpool, or Cambridge's Professor of Comparative Philology Norman Jopson, were academics who wrote on Ro-

mani very much as a sideline and published their observations in the *JGLS*. Collinson looked through Sampson's 1926 work for calques in Romnimos on Welsh models (Collinson 1927), while Jopson published in the *JGLS* a small amount of Lithuanian Romani (Jopson 1939) which he had collected at the resort of Palanga and which he had jotted down on the backs of cigarette packets!

Other researchers such as Bernard Gilliat-Smith or Archdeacon Frederick G. Ackerley, did not teach in universities, and wrote on Romani during the leisure time permitted them by non-academic posts, as diplomat or Anglican minister respectively. Both were good practical linguists (Gilliat-Smith was a Balkanist and Near Eastern specialist, while Ackerley's area of specialism was the Baltic and eastern Europe) and both were Cambridge men: Gilliat-Smith was familiar with the models of Indo-European linguistic thought prevalent in the first years of this century, and was a graduate of Gonville and Caius, while Ackerley had graduated from Jesus College. A few, such as Stuart Mann, who studied Romani in the field while teaching English at a technical high school in Albania, who translated the Acts of the Apostles into Moravian Romani, and who finished his career teaching at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London and working on Armenian historical phonology and comparative Indo-European, bridged the gap by having both extensive practical experience of spending time with Roma and their language and by having an academic post. The most famous of the non-traditional scholars is of course John Sampson, the printer's devil from Cork who ended life with an Oxford doctorate and the honour of founding the Library of the University of Liverpool.

The great British tradition of eccentric philologists was far more active in Romani studies than Americans were. Indeed British linguists played a much more important role in the early twentieth century documenting non-British varieties of Romani, and in advancing understanding of the development and history of the language, than they ever had the previous century. Thus it was British philologists who were the first to provide an extensive description of Kalderash, in volumes 6 and 7 of the Second Series of the *JGLS* (Ackerley 1912–1914), based on material from a visiting band of Kalderara, which was gathered in the north of England, including in Liverpool and Manchester, rather than American scholars working with the tens of thousands of Kalderara who were then generally resident in the US and who even then outnumbered the speakers of all Native North American languages put together.

One pertinent example of such efforts of advancing Gadjó understanding of Romani linguistics on the part of British philologists is Bernard Gilliat-Smith's paper (Gilliat-Smith 1915–1916), which introduced the use of the terms "Vlax" and "Non-Vlax" into Romani dialectology. Indeed it could be argued that this paper brought a new dimension of rigour to Romani dialectology. This pioneering paper is a mixture of the great strengths and faults of

the journal in which it appeared. Its very archness (even its pseudonymous authorship) makes its style hard to tolerate. Yet its hard facts, findings from a wide variety of Romani dialects of north-eastern Bulgaria (some of which have never been documented elsewhere), which were collected when Gilliat-Smith was serving in the British Consulate at Varna, and its artless but theoretical observations, are significant enough to make it a classic in Romani linguistic literature. This is especially so since Gilliat-Smith breaks free in his discussion from the constraints imposed by adherence to the Miklosich model of Romani dialectal differentiation, while using his knowledge of Balkan languages to the full in following and expanding upon Miklosich's observations about what we would nowadays call "balkanisms".

Most of Gilliat-Smith's paper consists of sentences and tables of forms in various Romani dialects spoken in north-eastern Bulgaria. He describes half a dozen such, dividing them into Vlax and Non-Vlax (or what nowadays one would call "Balkan") dialects and explaining the criteria which make them different from one another. What is interesting about these criteria is that many of them are non-lexical in nature (for as we have seen, the evidence of shared loan lexicon alone would not separate out Ursari from Kalderash). For the most part these differences are phonological or morphological, they relate to the formation of the preterit or to the shape of case endings, or to the realisation of certain sounds (such as the voiceless aspirated affricate) in different ways in different dialects. Gilliat-Smith seems to have lighted early in his career upon these distinctive and defining characteristics, and to have sought their equivalents in as many dialects as possible as part of his fieldwork technique.

Gilliat-Smith presents a list of 73 distinctively Non-Vlax forms (ibid.: 73–75), most of which are followed by a differing Bulgarian Vlax form, where there is one. His list is accompanied by notes which explain the relative distribution of these forms. Only fifteen Vlax entries involve a Rumanian-derived form. The rest are differences of several orders: I have mentioned some in the last paragraph, but others relate to the use in Vlax versus Non-Vlax dialects of different words of Indian or pre-European origin, or the presence in Vlax equivalents of a prefixed *a-* which is missing on the Non-Vlax form which is otherwise cognate, or there are examples of the retention of an original Romani form, usually in Non-Vlax dialects, which has been replaced by a form from Turkish or Bulgarian in Vlax dialects. The forms are alphabetised according to their commonest Non-Vlax equivalent.

The rest of the paper is taken up with tables, lists of sample sentences presented in several dialects, short texts and sentence collections, with brief descriptions of characteristic and salient features of a number of dialects, most of which have since received little attention in print. Throughout these Gilliat-Smith is at pains to show that what makes Vlax dialects different from Non-Vlax ones is not their possession of a *tranche* of Rumanian words, but their participation in a number of sound-changes and phonological and other retentions

which affect the Indic-derived vocabulary and structure as much as any other, and which are therefore the true diagnostics of any dialectal classification which is to move beyond the over-simplified picture of dialect development as a result of contact, which a reading of Miklosich's work would offer.

5. CONCLUSIONS: MORE WITH A WHIMPER THAN A BANG?

The history of Romani linguistic studies in Britain and America, then, and to a large extent that found in other Western European countries, is one which begins with a certain amount of attention being paid to the language by notable scholars of the time, but which gives way in the course of the development of modern linguistics to increasing marginalisation in favour of empirical studies on topics related to better-known languages (for instance the investigators' first languages). Insofar as primary research on Romani continued, it was (the Soviet Union apart) mostly conducted as before in a spirit of well- or ill-informed dilettantism – but this time the dilettantes did not have academic posts.

This is a process which has been partially arrested only in the last couple of decades or so. Not until 1972 did Romani take its place with Indo-Aryan languages in the *Bibliographie Linguistique*, rather than being lumped together with pidgins, creoles and what the compilers imagined were mixed languages. Many university libraries in Britain, including those of the Universities of Manchester and York, still catalogue Romani at the end of the linguistics listings, next to artificial or unclassified languages.

Since Roma have no firm territorial base and are nowhere in a majority in the population, Romani is rarely depicted clearly or even at all on linguistic maps of Europe. The comparative level of attention which Romani has received in the former Eastern Bloc countries, where Romani-speakers represent a significant percentage of the population, has been slow to be paralleled in America or Western Europe. Not until June 1998, with the inauguration of Professor Thomas Acton at the University of Greenwich, was there a chair in Romani Studies anywhere in Britain.

We should, I suppose, be glad that so much was written up and documented in relatively mainstream (if scientifically unsophisticated) journals such as the *JGLS*, and that some of it advanced a theoretical understanding of Romani linguistics. But perhaps we should pause and think about the extent to which the availability of the *JGLS* as a place for publication, if not exactly a scholarly journal, allowed other more rigorously-edited journals to evade publication on, and attention to, Romani at a period in history when the plight of its speakers was badly under-reported (not least in the *JGLS*), and when Roma and their language were regarded as entities which were fit to be studied but not protected. And conversely we can only imagine what advances might have been made in dialectology, diffu-

sion and language contact studies, if the considerable descriptive material on Romani, much of it within the pages of that and similar journals, had been brought to the attention of general linguists (including such luminaries as Uriel Weinreich, whose 1953 classic *Languages in Contact* has, as Salzmänn (1969: 408) remarked, not a single item about Romani in its bibliography) who never gave such periodicals a second look, while at the same time outdated or inaccurate information about Romani persisted in the general linguistic literature for a century or more.

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