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**Edited by William G. Boltz
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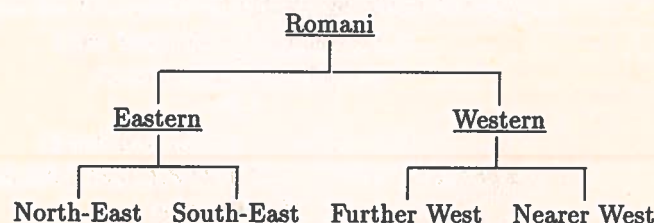
VLAX PHONOLOGICAL DIVERGENCE FROM COMMON ROMANI: IMPLICATIONS FOR STANDARDIZATION AND ORTHOGRAPHY

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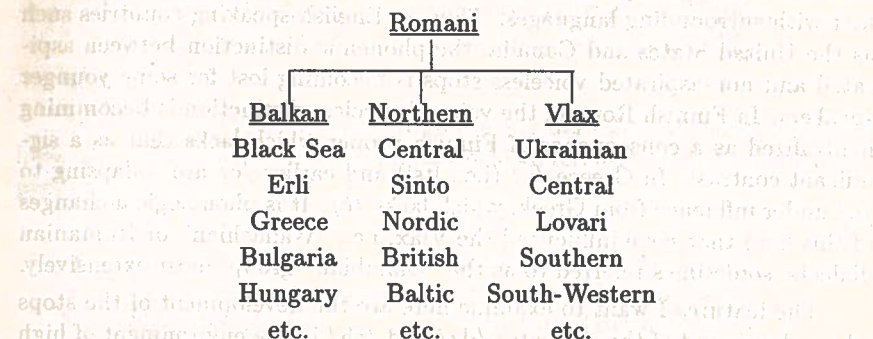
Since the late nineteenth century, Romanologists have been attempting to classify the dialects of Romani spoken throughout Europe. This has not been an enterprise of interest only to professional linguists and philologists, but has had practical implications for many people concerned with the various aspects of Romani culture and society, especially in view of the emergence of Romani civil and political rights movements, and the increasing participation of the Romani people in national and international affairs. One particular problem facing the Romani Union's language planning committee (*O Kolo le Alomasqe la Rromana Chibage*) is that with respect to overall numbers and geographical distribution a Vlax-based dialect is the obvious choice as a standard language; yet it is precisely the Vlax dialects that have diverged the most radically in their phonology from common Romani.

A number of classifications of the Romani dialects may be found in Hancock (1988). Nearly all of the earliest have attempted to group them according to geographical criteria. In 1882, for example, Elysseeff, perhaps the first to do so, divided the population thus (Kounavin 1882):



In this classification Elysseeff placed both the Greek and the British Gypsies together in the "Nearer West" group, and included speakers of the Russian dialects under the same heading with those of Iran and the Caucasus as "South-Eastern." Our contemporary linguistic knowledge of the dialects of these populations leads us to group them differently.

Later classifications have been based upon shared lexical and phonological features, although the names for the sixty or so dialects still tend to be geographical in origin. The most generally accepted genetic classification is that of Kaufman (1979, and in Hancock 1988), reproduced here in much simplified form:



One particular problem in retrieving information on population movement, and hence on external influences which have shaped these dialects, is the non-retention of information about their own migrations among Romani speakers themselves. Although there are several hundred thousand Vlax speakers in the United States, who began arriving here in the decades following the abolition of slavery in the mid-19th century, no one is aware now of the five centuries of enslavement, nor of the Vlaxs' having spent that length of time in what is today Rumania. Even the word *řobo*, originally 'slave' now means in this country 'one unwilling to work', and *řobija* means 'imprisonment'. In Europe the situation is different; there, knowledge of that period of Romani history is widespread. One Romano writer, Matéo Maximoff, has even written a novel about it (1947), and it is also dealt with in the works of Roleine (1978) and Hancock (1987).

This non-awareness is not a recent phenomenon. Seventy-five years ago Winstedt's report on a community of Kalderash Vlax Rom which arrived in Britain, speaking a heavily Rumanian-influenced dialect, made it clear that they had no idea that they were just fifty years from Wallachia and slavery. They identified themselves as Hungarian Gypsies and spoke "good Russian" (Winstedt 1912). It is unlikely that this was mere smoke-screening; there would have been no need to hide an origin in Rumania, and there is a well-established tradition of Gypsies identifying themselves in terms of the place they last were. The names "Tatar" and "Bohemian" and possibly the very name "Gypsy" are examples of this. In the United States there are Vlax-speaking groups identifying themselves as Argentinians, Serbians, Greeks

and so on. It is also possible that there has been a complete, purposeful obliteration of the memory of the centuries of slavery, which would account for its general non-retention in this country.

Wherever Romani dialects have been spoken for any length of time they have undergone phonological and other modification as a result of contact with surrounding languages. Thus, in English-speaking countries such as the United States and Canada, the phonemic distinction between aspirated and non-aspirated voiceless stops is becoming lost for some younger speakers. In Finnish Romani the voiced/voiceless distinction is becoming neutralized as a consequence of Finnish proper which lacks that as a significant contrast. In Greece /c/ (i.e., [ts]) and earlier /č/ are collapsing to /c/ under influence from Greek, which lacks /č/. It is phonological changes of this kind that have influenced the Vlax, i.e., "Wallachian" or Rumanian dialects, sometimes referred to as the "Danubian" group, most extensively.

The features I want to examine here are the development of the stops /d/ and /t/, and of the affricates /dž/ and /čh/ in the environment of high and mid-high front vowels, not only in native (i.e., Indo-Aryan derived) items, but in any item containing them traceable to the period up to the time of contact with Rumanian. This would include words from Persian, Armenian, Byzantine Greek, southern Slavic, as well as other languages; for example *tiro* 'your', which is Indic, *luludi* 'flower', from Greek, *pativ* 'honor', from Armenian, and so on.

As a result of prolonged contact with Rumanian, the stops /d/ and /t/ in the Vlax dialects have gone through a succession of changes as shown here, every stage of which is found occurring in some modern dialect:

/d/ → /dj/ → /dž/ → /gj/ → /g/
/t/ → /tj/ → /č/ → /kj/ → /k/

Basing ourselves on Kaufman's classification (1979), the most comprehensive treatment of the Romani dialects available, and using *buti* (Sanskrit *vr̥tti*, Prakrit *vutti*) 'work' and *stadi* (Greek *skiádi*) 'hat' as examples, we can illustrate the distribution of these sounds as follows:

Group I

1. Bukovina *buči, stadi* (Miklosich 1874)
2. Serbia *buči, stadi* (Miklosich 1874)
3. Serbia (Macvano) *buči, stadi* (Hancock)
4. Bosnia *buči, stadi* (Uhlík 1983)
5. Kalderash (Russian) *buki, stagi* (Hancock)
6. Kalderash (Yugoslav) *bukji, stagji* (Hancock)
7. Kalderash (Swedish) *butji ~ buči, stadi*

(Gjerdman, et al. 1963)

8. Kalderash (Russian?) *buči, stadi* (Ackerley 1914)

9. Russian *buči, stadi* (Barannikov 1933)

10. Hungarian *butji, stadi* (Vekerdi 1983)

11. Hungarian (Lovari) *buči, stadi* (Hancock)

12. Polish (Lovari) *buči, stadi* (Pobożniak 1964)

13. Galicia *buki, stagi* (Miklosich 1874)

(See Map 1.)

In dialects outside the Vlax group the original values of these phonemes have been retained, or have been modified differently as a result of independent factors:

Group II

14. Balkan (Erli) *butin, stadi* (Calvet 1957)

15. Hungarian (Romungro) *buti, stadi* (Vekerdi 1983)

16. Northern (Sinto) *buti, stadi* (Bischoff 1827)

17. Northern (British) *buti, stadi* (Sampson 1926)

18. Northern (Finnish) *butti, stadi* (Valtonen 1972)

19. Northern (Polish) *buty, stady* (Miklosich 1872)

20. Northern (N. Italy) *buti, stadi* (Zatta 1984)

21. Carpathian (Bornemisza) *buti, stadin* (Miklosich 1872)

22. Baltic (Latvian) *buti, stadi* (Kochanowski 1963)

(See Map 2.)

Allowing for differences in each reporter's orthographic representation, and on the basis of the availability of native speakers of different Vlax dialects in the United States (forms from this source are marked "Hancock"), we can assume that the transcriptions in group I are meant to indicate affrication or palatalization of the earlier dental stops. In two cases (Nos. 5 and 13), retraction has gone completely to a velar articulation. The development of the affricates in Spanish Romani *buchi* and *estache* (Jung 1972) are the result of contact with Spanish, and the same rule has operated in that language upon non-Romani items (cf. *leche* 'milk'). The Iberian branch is in any case not Vlax, its speakers having descended from the first diaspora.

Given that with very few accountable exceptions, it is only the Vlax group of dialects that has developed these affricated forms, we can assume that they are the result of varying lengths of contact with the Rumanian language. In Standard Rumanian, /d/ and /t/ remain unaffected in the environment of /i/ or /e/, although /g/ and /k/ become palatalized before these sounds, which may have influenced the second shift discussed below.

When we examine the Rumanian dialect of the Bayash, however, we find that the feature is widespread. The Bayash descend from the house slaves whose prolonged contact with the non-Gypsy house-holders led to their losing Romani altogether, and acquiring a form of Rumanian natively (Acton 1986). From the studies of the Bayash Rumanian dialect that we have at our disposal (Calotă 1971, Papp 1982a, 1982b, Hasler 1985), and from native speakers in the United States, it is evident that regional, non-standard varieties have served as the model, especially varieties spoken in the western part of Rumania, Banat in particular. Papp provides regional forms together with the Standard Rumanian equivalents in his dictionary, and represents the Bayash pronunciations in phonemic transcription. Other treatment of non-standard Rumanian forms are Gamillscheg (1936), Pușcariu (1943), Pop (1966) and Cazacu (1967); the following examples are from Papp:

Bayash	Rumanian	
<i>alče</i>	<i>alte</i>	'other'
<i>beče</i>	<i>bete</i>	'intoxicated'
<i>bolînše</i>	<i>bolinde</i>	'crazy'
<i>flămînge</i>	<i>flămînde</i>	'hungry'
<i>ges</i>	<i>des</i>	'thick'
<i>ginče</i>	<i>dinte</i>	'tooth'
<i>lače</i>	<i>late</i>	'windy'
<i>muratače</i>	<i>muratate</i>	'pickled'

It would therefore seem to be the case that the extent of this feature reflects the extent of contact between Rumanian speakers and Gypsies in Moldavia and Wallachia. Kaminski (1980:149-50), in his enormously valuable study of Carpathian and Vlax Romani migrations out of south-eastern Europe, adds a further social factor to this:

... this linguistic labyrinth should start with the two major dialect subgroups of the Vlachs: the Kalderasha and Lovara. While in Rumania, these two groups specialized in different occupations, and thus came under different spheres of linguistic influence. The Kalderasha, working mainly as coppersmiths, had most of their outside contact with the local peasantry, and for this reason their dialect is heavily influenced by Rumanian. the Lovara, on the other hand, specialized in horse-dealing. Their business was conducted primarily in urban markets, where Hungarian was the dominant language. Thus their vo-

cabulary shows more professional words with a Hungarian etymology.

All Vlax dialects have been affected by this kind of contact; not one has preserved the underlying, historical values of these phonemes in these positions. In addition a degree of free variation is characteristic of some dialects. Gjerdman and Ljungberg (1963), for example, include variant pronunciations such as /dji/ ~ /dži/ 'stomach' in the speech of the same informant; Ackerley (1912) does the same.

In areas where the greatest contact with non-Gypsy languages took place this feature has gone yet further, affecting the articulation of the existing, historical /dž/ and /čh/ producing the retroflex fricatives [ʒ] and [ʃ] (here written /ś/ and /ź/) in all positions. Examples of this include:

<i>džav</i>	<i>žav</i>	'I go'
<i>dženo</i>	<i>ženo</i>	'person'
<i>dživindo</i>	<i>živindo</i>	'alive'
<i>džov</i>	<i>žov</i>	'oats'
<i>džuv</i>	<i>žuv</i>	'louse'
<i>čhav</i>	<i>šav</i>	'boy'
<i>čhel</i>	<i>šel</i>	'smallpox'
<i>činav</i>	<i>šinav</i>	'I cut'
<i>čhon</i>	<i>šon</i>	'month'
<i>čhut</i>	<i>šut</i>	'vinegar'

Recently adopted items beginning with /dž/ are not subject to this shift; e.g., *džežeš* 'train', *džanta* 'inkstand', etc.

In Bosnian Romani, while the above shifts have not operated, underlying /g/ and /k/ have become palatized to /dj/ and /tj/, while /kh/ has gone to /čh/ (Uhlik 1941): *gili* 'song', *kerko* 'bitter', *kher* 'house' have become *djili*, *tjerko*, and *čher* respectively; also *mange* 'to me', *tuke* 'to you' have become *mandje*, and *tutje*. For some speakers of American Mačvano Romani, these are *mandže*, and *tuče*. In the Kalderash dialect represented by that spoken by Matéo Maximoff /th/ has gone to /č/; e.g., *them* → *čem* 'country'.

The changes discussed here can be summarized in the following table:

Historical <i>t</i>	→ <i>č</i>	<i>buti</i> → <i>buči</i>
Historical <i>d</i>	→ <i>dž</i>	<i>stadi</i> → <i>stadži</i>
<i>d</i>	→ <i>dž</i> → <i>g</i>	in Eastern Kalderash: <i>stagi</i>
<i>t</i>	→ <i>č</i> → <i>k</i>	in Eastern Kalderash: <i>buki</i>
<i>dž</i>	→ <i>ź</i>	in var. dialects:
		<i>gadžo</i> → <i>gažo</i> 'non-Gypsy'
<i>čh</i>	→ <i>ś</i>	in var. dialects: <i>lačo</i> → <i>lašo</i> 'good'

kh → *čh* in Mačvano: *kher* → *čer* 'house'
th → *č* in some Kalderash:
them → *čem* 'country'

d → *dž* in Mačvano: } Collapse of
g → *dž* in Mačvano: } *mange, mande* → *mandže*

t → *č* in Mačvano: } Collapse of
k → *č* in Mačvano: } *tuke, tute* → *tuče*

This kind of extensive sound shift is typical of the dialects of Romani that developed in western Rumania, and may be specifically associated with that of the Mačvaya and some varieties of Churari. The particular dialect called Coppersmith, i.e., Kalderash, by Gjerdman and Ljungberg (1963) is more like a form of Churari, and the existence of this characteristic, as well as certain lexical features, identify it as the latter, even though the speaker of the dialect described identifies himself as Kalderash. Unlike Mačvano, which is a geographical designation relating the population to a specific area in Serbia, "Coppersmith" or "Kalderash" is an occupational name, and applies to speakers of various dialects, not all of whom practice coppersmithing as a profession. It would be extremely valuable for this kind of study to investigate the speech of the descendants of the Netotsi, or slaves who escaped from the Rumanians to live in the mountains. Supposedly these features would be far less in evidence. By determining the extent to which these Rumanian-based changes have affected the various dialects of Vlax Romani, we will be able to estimate the degree of contact with Rumanian, and as a result the degree of assimilation to Rumanian culture attending it. In the extreme case of the Bayash, the language has been lost altogether. On the other hand, those dialects most drastically affected by Rumanian phonology are among the lexically richest and most viable in Europe today.

Distribution of Dialect Groups

A. Southern

1. All Vlax Romani dialects developed in the Wallachia-Moldavia-Transylvania area, beginning in the 14th century, and since that time have spread into adjoining regions, namely, Yugoslavia, eastern Hungary, the Ukraine, and parts of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and Greece. There are large migrant Vlax-speaking populations in the rest of Europe, and Vlax is the best represented of all varieties of Romani spoken overseas.

2. The Greek and Balkan groups fall into a number of non-contiguous dialects spoken in Bulgaria, Greece, parts of Turkey and in Macedonia, Bergenland, the Crimea and southern Italy. The Iberian dialects, now restructured on Spanish, Catalan and Portuguese, may also be related to these branches.

B. Central

Central dialects form a transitional group between the Northern and the Southern, but are somewhat closer to the latter, and are found in Czechoslovakia, and parts of Hungary, Germany, Austria and Italy. Much linguistic work has been done on dialects belonging to the Central group.

C. Northern

1. The Baltic dialects are spoken in parts of Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia and northern Russian. Their speakers suffered particularly badly under Nazism, and today these dialects are no longer numerically well-represented. The Romani linguist Kochanowski has proposed that a Baltic Romani dialect be cultivated as the international standard, his claim being that it remains closest to the original Romani language (Kochanowski 1986).

2. Sinti and Manush are closely-related branches of Northern Romani as it developed on the Continent. The British dialect, now spoken only in Wales and by a steadily diminishing number, has developed separately from it over the past four centuries. Other northern dialects are spoken in Norway, Sweden and Finland. Geographically, this group has traditionally been the most widely spoken throughout Europe, although they have been superceded during the past century by Vlax. Many northern speakers also perished during the period 1933-1945. Nevertheless, Romani activism is particularly strong among the Sinti and the Manush, and the possibility of both a Northern and a Southern Romani standard being developed bears consideration.

In a number of cases dialects spoken in the areas remotest from the Balkans have become restructured, giving rise to varieties which have retained a basic Romani lexicon, but whose phonology, morphology, syntax and idiom are those of the surrounding language. This has happened in Portugal, Spain, Scandinavia and the British Isles. The dialect of the latter has spread to former British territories overseas, and is particularly well represented in North America and Australia.

The distribution of the Romani dialects discussed above is shown on Map 3.

Selection of a Standard Dialect

The varieties of Romani used most extensively for purposes of documentation are Central Vlach (i.e., Kalderash), the Erli dialect of Balkan Romani, and the Slovak variety of Central Romani. The Balkan dialect, spoken in south-eastern Yugoslavia, supports a considerable local literature and the Romani translation of *The Destiny of Europe's Gypsies* (Kenrick & Puxon 1971) has been made using it. It is also used as the written dialect of Romani Union representatives in that part of Europe. The Central dialect does not support an extensive literature, but it is used as the written medium by a number of Romani Union representatives, including the President of the U.N. Praesidium Dr. Jan Cibula, in Switzerland. Elsewhere in Europe, and in North and South America, Vlach Romani is the most commonly-used dialect for correspondence. All Romani-language publications in North America are in Kalderash Vlach, as are most of those currently being published in western Europe as well. There are more contemporary grammars and dictionaries available for Vlach than for other dialects, and more unpublished theses. It is quite clear that for the most widely-applicable practical use, a Kalderash-based dialect would be the logical choice for a standardized dialect.

Balkan dialects differ from Vlach more than conservative Central dialects do, and their geographically restricted use argues against their being cultivated as the basis for an international standard. Differences between Vlach and Central Romani can be minimized with only a small risk of creating an artificial dialect which is native to no one, differences which are primarily phonological and lexical. It is not my intention to address the latter here. Lexical problems are the result of non-shared words for the names of concepts met with after separation in Europe, and have been dealt with by Kochanowski and others. Phonological problems, including problems of differences in stress, a significant factor in reducing intelligibility between dialects, are more easily addressed when dealing with the written, rather than the spoken, word. These may be overcome in part by devising an orthography that uses a fixed set of graphemes interpretable and pronounceable by speakers of both Central and Vlach Romani according to their own phonology, but which at the same time allows the written word to remain constant.

Although Vlach dialects are characterized in particular by the kind of affrication described above, the retention of two /r/ phonemes, and by extensive centralization and palatalization of the vowels, these features are neither exclusive to them nor consistent with them. Typically, extreme differences between the two are of the following type:

	Vlach	Central	
1	[šon]	čhon	'moon/month'
2	[ga'zo]	'gadžo	'man'
3	[raj]	raj	'gentleman'
4	[ra]	raj	'twig'
5	[bar]	bar	'fence'
6	[baʁ]	bar	'rock'
7	[sə]	si	'is/are'
8	[kə'rəs]	'keres	'you do'
9	[kər'jan]	'kerdan	'you did'
10	[la(s)]	las	'he took'

For 1 Vlach makes no phonemic distinction between aspirated and non-aspirated [č], a contrast maintained in the Central dialects. The grapheme <čh>, therefore, can be retained for either [čh] or [s], or even for [š] where the shift has gone this far. Items also occur in such dialects, e.g., in some varieties of Lovari or Kalderash, which contain an historical /š/, and the symbol <š> should be retained for these only. For all dialects, /č/ exists as an independent phoneme. For item 1, then, the written form <čhon> would be pronounced variously as [čhon], [čon], [šon] or [šon] depending upon the dialect of the speaker.

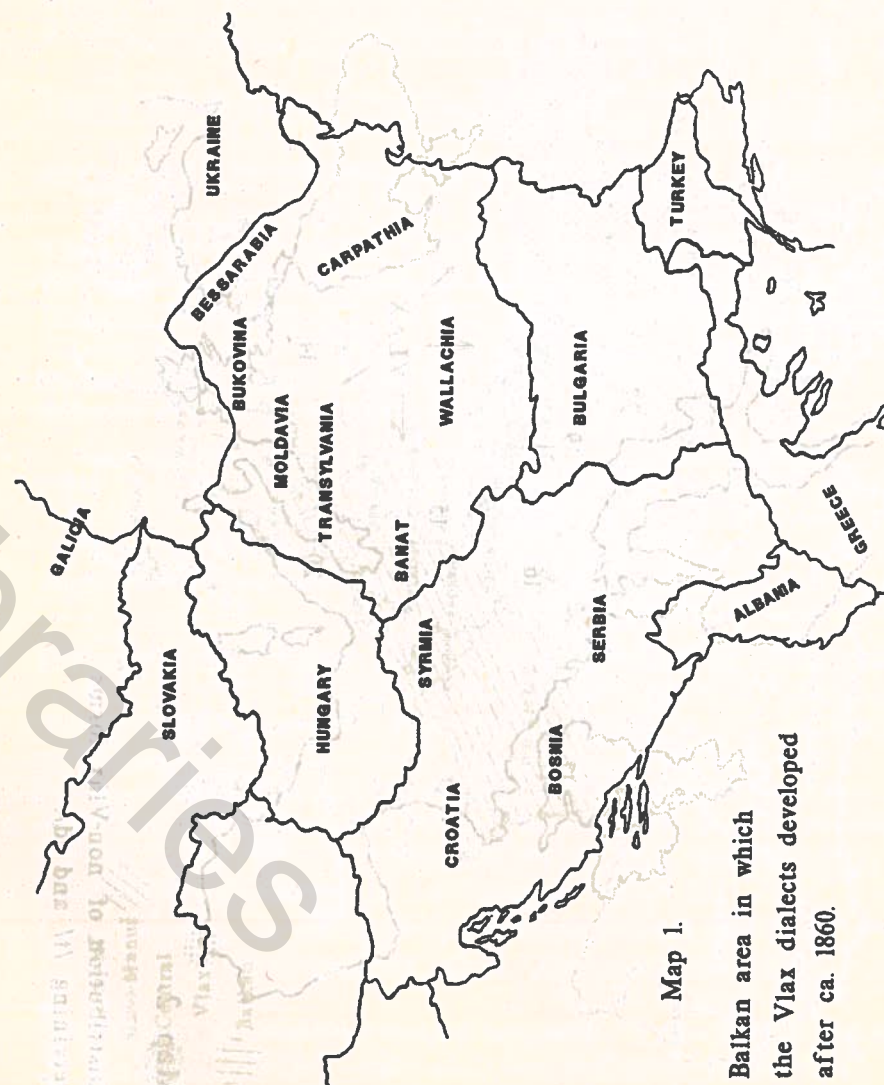
For item 2 /dž/ also exists as an independent phoneme for all dialects, but this can go to [z] or [ž] in Vlach (corresponding to the voiceless shift of [čh] to [s]), suggesting an underlying, but unattested, /*džh/ phoneme.

For items 3, 4, 5 and 6 only Vlach and the Balkan dialects retain the voiced uvular fricative, as well as the flapped /r/, the latter retaining in addition a third lateral retroflexed [ɾ]. Use of the wedge accent <ĩ>, rather than a separate symbol, would retain the grapheme and make use of a written diacritic mark already existing.

For items 7 and 8 there is no need to indicate centralization since this is not phonemic. For items 9 and 10, palatalization operates following /d/ and /l/ in several Slavic-influenced dialects, both Vlach and Central, though not uniformly in either. In some items this is phonemic, e.g., Vlach *la* 'she', *lja* (or *la*) 'he took'. One way of providing one letter having both values has been used by Barthélémy (1976), who has introduced the grave accented <à>, to be read as /a/ or /ja/ depending upon the dialect of the reader. If it were felt necessary to use only one written diacritic for the whole language, this could also be a wedge diacritic.

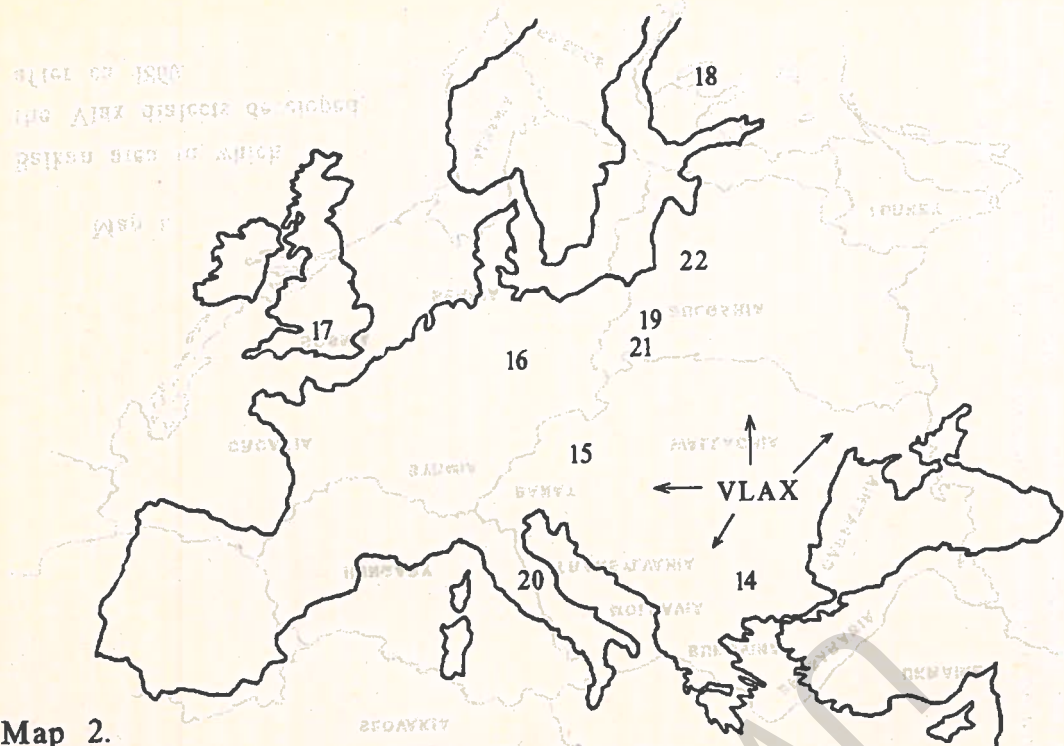
At the present time orthographies tend to be those based upon the national languages of the countries in which Romani is spoken. Thus in the United States and Canada, /čh/ and /š/ are both usually written

<sh>. Aspiration tends not to be distinguished orthographically because of confusion with English spelling conventions, and no satisfactory way exists to represent the fricatives /x/ and /ř/, which are sometimes written <k> ~ <h> and <g>. Until a uniform international orthography, and its formal teaching, is instituted, however, Romani will continue to be written in a variety of orthographies.



Map 1.

Balkan area in which
the Vlax dialects developed
after ca. 1860.



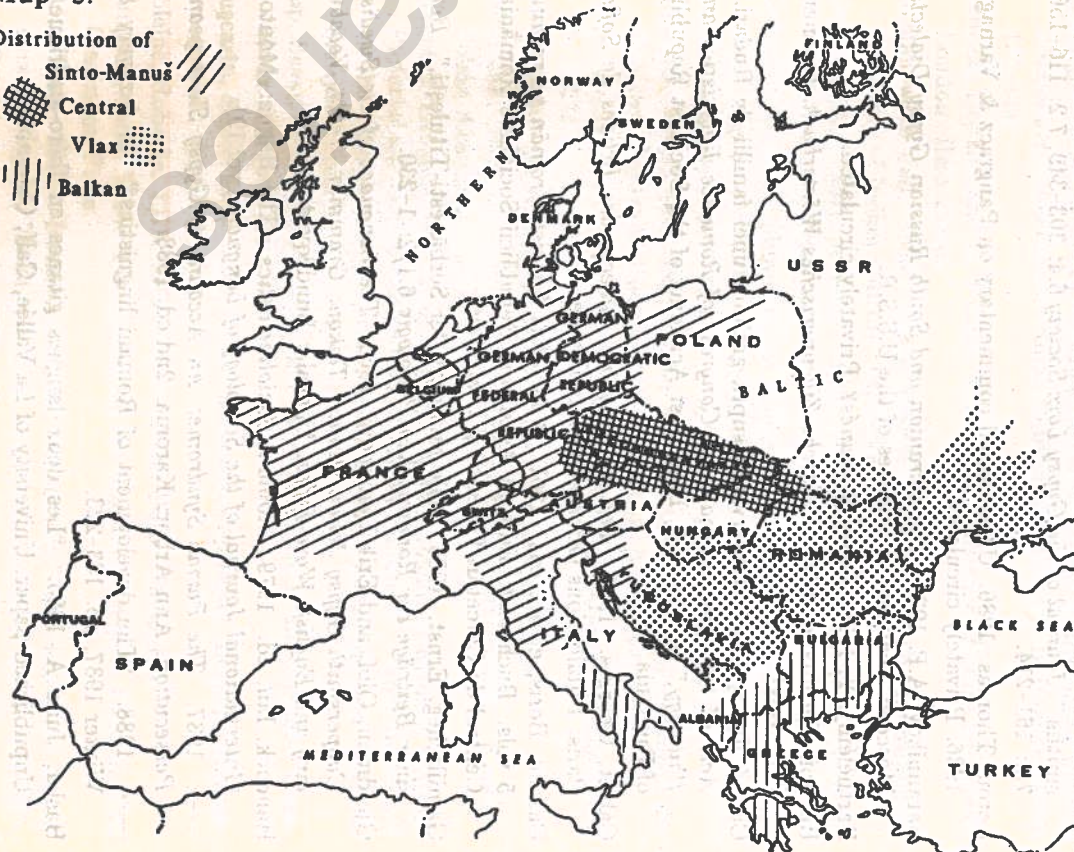
Map 2.

Distribution of non-Vlax forms
retaining /t/ and /d/.

Map 3.

Distribution of

Sinto-Manuš 
 Central 
 Vlax 
 Balkan 



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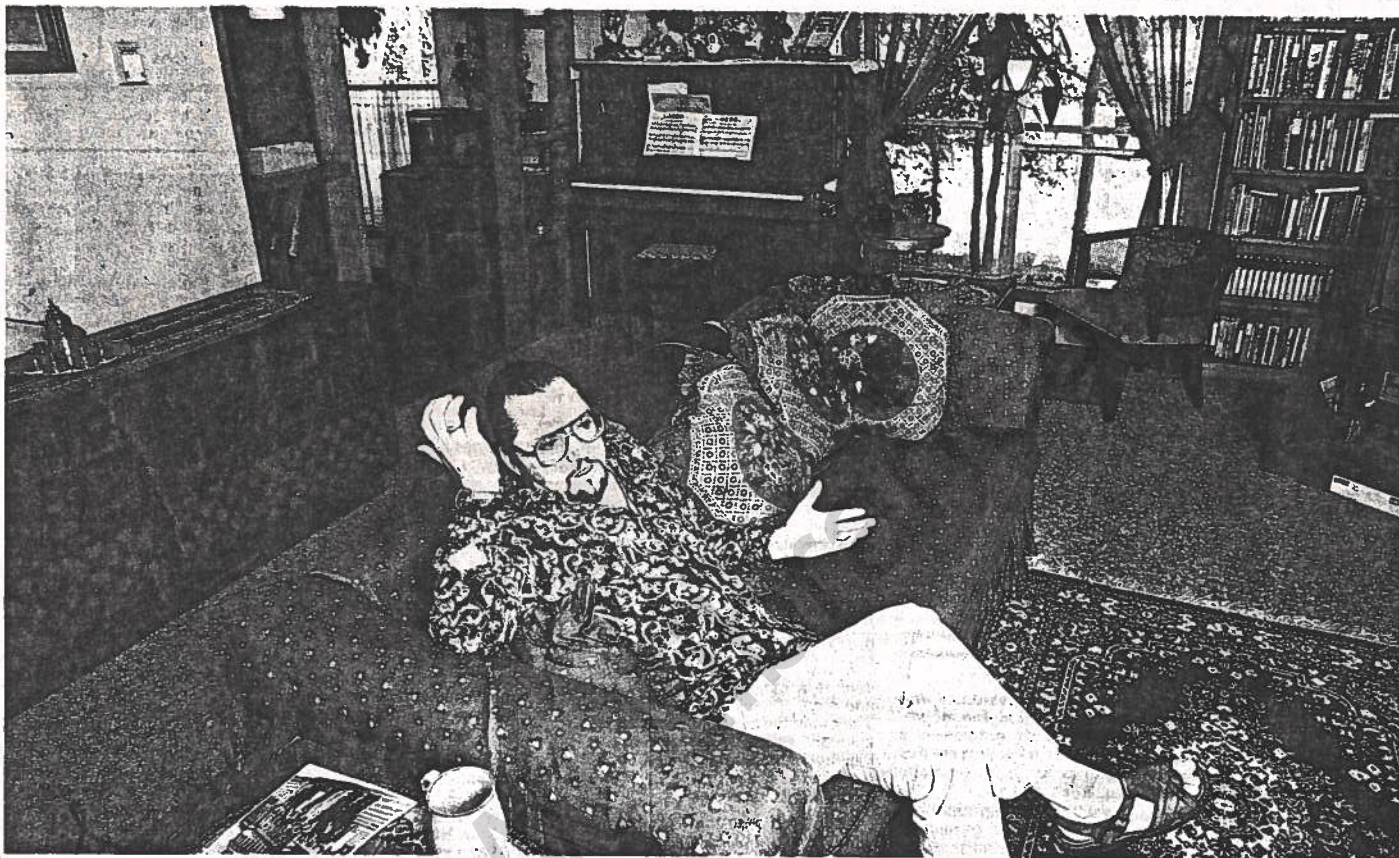
Editors' Note: Since the publication of this paper, the language commission of the International Romani Union, which met in Warsaw in the Spring of 1990, has reached a consensus on a standard orthography for Romani. This orthography incorporates some of the features described in this paper.

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IAN HANCOCK



Staff photo

Ian Hancock, who teaches English and linguistics at the University of Texas, is also a delegate to the United Nations and an expert in creole languages.

UT professor combines teaching life with preservation of Gypsy heritage

By Becky Knapp
American-Statesman Staff

Dressed in white pants and a busy print shirt, Dr. Ian Hancock leaned back against his living room sofa and remarked, in a soft British accent, that no other race has continued to be so plagued by the prejudices that his people endure.

"Just take any of this literature, and substitute the word Jew or Italian or Mexican," Hancock said, picking up a stack of photocopied papers from the end table beside him. "I think that Gypsies are the only race that are still persecuted like this today."

Hancock, who was born in England, is a Gypsy. He is professor of English and linguistics at the University of Texas, and he is one of two U.S. delegates to the United Nations for the International Romani Union, a group with no

homeland. He is also a special adviser to the Holocaust Memorial Council, which was established in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter.

"Many people don't realize that the Gypsies were the first victims of the Holocaust, for example," Hancock said. "And even today, persecution of Gypsies continues. In America, laws against Gypsies persist, and they cannot stay in certain countries or states, even today."

Hancock — whose Gypsy name is o Yanko le Redzoko — is descended from Hungarian travelers who migrated to England. The son of a merchant seaman, Hancock spent a lot of time with his grandparents during childhood. When he was in his teens, he moved, with his parents, to Canada. Before coming to the United States, he returned to England and lived in France for a while.

See Hancock, C5



Hancock says he wouldn't mind the negative image of Gypsy people in literature if the other side of the culture was also discussed.

Hancock

From C1

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Hancock is dark-haired, light-skinned, and has the high cheekbones and dark, almond-shaped eyes associated with the Gypsy people. He is an expert on creole languages, and in his study, behind the kitchen in his home, he houses "the world's largest library on creole languages."

In 1981, he reunited two communities of black Seminoles, separated 132 years after a series of slave raids on their settlements in Oklahoma, after discovering that the two groups spoke the same creole language.

In addition to his interests in Romani, he has had more than 150 works published, only about 60 of which deal with Roms.

"Which just goes to show that you can be a Gypsy and be something else as well," he said. "I am a Gypsy, but I am also an academic."

This year, Hancock received UT's humanities award for non-academic work by faculty for his work with Romani civil rights. He also is involved with the Romani Anti-defamation League.

To many people, the word "Gypsy" creates an image of caravans containing carefree, mischievous people: Women in long skirts, peasant blouses, head scarves and lots of jangling jewelry; swarthy, barefoot men in tattered shirts and earrings, and wily, grinning children.

Even popular music helps perpetuate the image of Gypsies as vagrants who travel from town to town, lying and stealing and working magic.

Gypsy Woman, a song released by The Impressions in 1961, described a Gypsy girl as "dancing with all the men in the camp fire light." Several years ago, Cher recorded a song entitled, *Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves*, which told of a Gypsy girl who was "born in the wagon of a traveling show, and her mama used to dance for the money they'd throw."

It is that image that Hancock would like to see changed.

"I suppose what I am most concerned with is that the general public have a more accurate perception of what Romani people are about," he said. "And I suppose that you really have to understand history to know how these images got started in the first place."

Gypsies originated in India, but migrated through the Middle East and into Europe about 1,000 years ago. The name, Gypsy, is a misnomer that is slang for Egyptian.

During World War II, about 500,000 Gypsies

were killed in Nazi concentration camps, and even before Hitler created anti-Jew programs, anti-Gypsy laws were enforced. As early as 1833, Hitler's troops were sterilizing Gypsies and sending them to the concentration camps.

"Gypsy slaves were brought to America right alongside African slaves in the 1600s, although that doesn't get into the history books," Hancock said.

There is still a sterilization program required for Gypsies in Czechoslovakia, Hancock said. In the United States, there are laws on the books in Mississippi, Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey that require Gypsies to have licenses, making them the only ethnic group in this nation that is still controlled by legislation.

"Those kind of laws have left no alternative for the Gypsy people but to keep moving," Hancock said. "Because of that, Gypsies, as a rule, have little schooling. When you have a population that is largely illiterate, it is very hard to fight the stereotyping."

The stereotyping of Gypsies is also hard to combat, Hancock said, because most Gypsies do not socialize with *gadzia*, or non-Gypsies, because tradition dictates that non-Gypsies are unclean.

"If I were strict, I would give you coffee in a special cup that was reserved for non-Gypsies to drink from," Hancock said. "That is done in many Gypsy homes, although non-Gypsies never know it. There would be a special seat for non-Gypsies to sit on that Gypsies would not use, because cultural beliefs say that there are certain things that pollute (a Gypsy)."

"Some of these have to do with food preparation; for example, if you drop a piece of meat on the floor, you have to throw it out. And Gypsies view non-Gypsies attitudes about pets as unclean, such as letting pets eat from their dinner plates, letting animals on their beds."

Other Gypsy traditions dictate that the upper half of the body is nothing special, but that the lower portion must be covered — which is why Gypsy women wore long, flowing skirts that covered the legs, Hancock said.

"Gypsies often use two different soaps to wash upper and lower body," he said. "Different towels are used, too. Gypsies consider the feet to be unclean, and so, if a Gypsy were visiting me and I touched him with my foot, that would be a very rude thing to do."

He scoffs at such "Gypsy experts" as Peter

Maas, *Serpico* author who also wrote *King of the Gypsies*, a book that focused on the Bimbo family of Boston.

"It was purely sensational, and was nothing more than a piece of garbage," Hancock said. "The (Bimbo) family sued him successfully, but that kind of writing is something that people do because they are able to say such things about Gypsies without fear of reprisal. There are no Gypsies out there to complain. The one good thing about that book was that its appearance was the thing that brought many of us together to make the Gypsy image better."

Hancock and his wife have two sons and a daughter, and although he feels it is important for his children to know their heritage, he said that he does not allow them to tell classmates that they are Gypsies, because there is so much prejudice against the race.

"It is just obvious to me that that would invite unwarranted attention to their ancestry, and they hear enough negative things about Gypsies," Hancock said.

"Last year, for example, one of my daughter's teachers told a boy in the class that if he didn't stop talking, she'd sell him to the Gypsies. And in one of the library books the children brought home, there was a story that said something like, 'Gypsies lie. If you don't tell lies, you're not a proper Gypsy.'"

"These are the kind of things that are on shelves in school libraries, and this is the stuff that children are reading. That is how prejudices get started at an early age, and I have been fighting forever with the schools about things like this. I wrote a letter to the school, and the principal wrote back and told me that it was only fiction, but that is like saying that the story of Little Black Sambo is fiction, so it doesn't hurt children."

Another teacher of his daughter's once suggested that the whole class come to school dressed as Gypsies for Halloween, Hancock said.

"The point is that Halloween has nothing to do with Gypsies," he said. "It is not a holiday or special day, but in non-Gypsy folklore, the association is made, and our ethnic dress is sold in stores as Halloween costumes."

"I realize that there comes a time when you can be too sensitive, and I am not really opposed to the negative portrayal of Gypsies, as long as the other side is shown, also. I would just like to see some truth included in these stories, at least part of the time."

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