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

**DIALECT CLASSIFICATION**

There is no ‘easy’ way to classify dialects. One must first select the criteria on which a classification is to be based. Sometimes dialect classification is based strictly on geography, sometimes it is based strictly on the structural features – lexicon, phonology, morphology – of the dialects. In the latter case, it is necessary to select those features that are of global relevance and that can be used as a reference grid to compare the different dialects and to determine the relationships among them. Scholars often disagree on which features should be given greater attention as a basis for a classification. As a result, is not unusual to find different classification models. There is also an objective difficulty: Some dialects may share ‘typical’ features with two distinct dialect branches. Such transitional dialects are part of any linguistic landscape. It is therefore almost impossible to postulate clear-cut divisions between dialect groups or ‘branches’.

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

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**ROMANI DIALECT GROUPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BALKAN</th>
<th>VLAX</th>
<th>CENTRAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARLI</td>
<td>“zis-dialects”</td>
<td>Southern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Krim</td>
<td>Bugurdži</td>
<td>Agia Varvara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sepečides</td>
<td>Drindari</td>
<td>Čergari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URSARI</td>
<td>Kalajži</td>
<td>GURBET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NORTHEAST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lithuanian</th>
<th>Lotfika</th>
<th>Polska</th>
<th>Xaladitka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NORTHWEST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sinte Manuš</th>
<th>Finnish</th>
<th>Welsh</th>
<th>(Caló)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estrexarja</td>
<td>(Scandoromani)</td>
<td>(Angloromani)</td>
<td>(Errumantxela)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manouche</td>
<td>RÓMANES</td>
<td>etc.</td>
<td>etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**IBERIAN**

| CAPITALS = dialect clusters | ( ) = Para-Romani varieties |

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Ill. 1

Romani Dialect Groups
Several factors are responsible for dialect differentiation in Romani:

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

**THE BALKAN DIALECTS**

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

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

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

**THE BALKAN ZIS-DIALECTS**

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

**THE SOUTHERN VLAX DIALECTS**

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

Their diagnostic features include:

- *seha or sesa* for ‘he/she was’
- Third person pronouns *vov, voj, von*
- Possessive *manro ‘my’, čo ‘your’*
- Demonstrative *gava*
- Nominal plural endings in *-uri, -ura*
- Loan verbs are adapted with *-isar-*
• Past tense and copula 1.SG in -em as in sem ‘I am’
• 2nd pl. past in -en in tume kerden ‘you.PL did’
• Future tense in ka
• Negation in in or ni
• dž- in dživeh ‘day’
• -c- in buči ‘work’
• -rn- in marno ‘bread’
• -ej in dej ‘mother’
• a- in ašunav ‘I hear’

NORTHERN VLAX DIALECTS

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

Their diagnostic features include:
• sas for ‘he/she was’
• Third person pronouns ov, oj, on
• Possessives muro ‘my’, čiro ‘your’
• Nominal plural endings in -uri, -ura
• Loan verbs are adapted with -isar-, -osar- or shortened forms -i-, -o-
• 1st person past tense in -em
• džes for ‘day’
• -c- or -kj- in buči, bukj ‘work’
• Negation in či
• ž- in žanav ‘I know’
• š- in šavo ‘child’
• -nr- or -nř- in manro, manřo ‘bread’
• -ej in dej ‘mother’,
• khanči for ‘nothing’

SOUTHERN CENTRAL DIALECTS

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

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

NORTHERN CENTRAL DIALECTS

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

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

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

Their diagnostic features include:

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

NORTHEASTERN DIALECTS

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

Their diagnostic features include:

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

OTHER DIALECT GROUPS

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

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

BIBLIOGRAPHY: