

KATRI VUORELA† and LARS BORIN

Finnish Romani¹

The origin and migrations of the Gypsies

Like all other Gypsies², the Finnish Gypsies are ultimately of Indian origin, presumably from the Punjab area in Northern India. For reasons unknown they left India in small groups over a long period of time, spreading westwards through Western Asia and Europe. Nor is it known exactly when they left India. Estimates range from the latter half of the first millennium BC to the eleventh century AD, depending on the source and which Gypsy

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Katri Vuorela died tragically and unexpectedly as we were preparing the final revision of this article in June 1993. Consequently, the responsibility for any errors, omissions or inconsistencies rests with the second author. Any correspondence should be directed to Lars Borin, Uppsala University, Department of Linguistics, Box 513, S-751 20, Uppsala, Sweden. E-mail: Lars.Borin@ling.uu.se

²Romani Union, the international Gypsy organization, has advocated the abolishment of the term *Gypsy*, which often carries very negative connotations. In the words of a former General Secretary of the World Romani Congress:

Roma, the correct though less familiar name, is used throughout this report in preference to *gypsy*, a misnomer which like its equivalents *zigeuner*, *zingaro*, *cigan*, *gitan* and others, perpetuates the very stigma the author wishes in some measure to reduce. (Puxon 1987:1)

The preferred term is *Rom* (pl. either unchanged or *Roma*), meaning simply '(Gypsy) man' in many, but not all, varieties of *Romani* (or *Romanes*), the language of the Gypsies. This article, however, treats a group of Gypsies which do not normally call themselves *Rom*. In its place, the Finnish Gypsies have adopted the self-designation *kaale* (pl. *kaaleet* or *kaalet*), a word which is derived from the Romani adjective *kaló* 'black'. When speaking Finnish, they use either this word or the Finnish adjective *tumma* 'dark'. More rarely will they use *mustalainen* (appr. 'black person'), which is the most widespread Finnish word for Gypsy. Recently, however, the term *romani* has gained currency in official Finnish publications. The variant *romaani*, with a long *a*, is also seen. Even though the latter is the only form found in the normative dictionary *Nykysuomen sanakirja*, actual official usage and Gypsy sentiment both favour *romani*. As Finnish Gypsies rarely use the word *Rom* about themselves, we have decided to stick to the generic term *Gypsy* in referring to this group and related groups elsewhere, also for the following reason. Notwithstanding its often (but not necessarily) negative connotations, the term *Gypsy* is at least generally known to an extent which *Rom* or, say, *Kaale* is not. In this connection, note that works which otherwise consistently use *Rom* sometimes will use *Gypsy* in their title, e.g. the work just quoted (*Roma: Europe's Gypsies*), again presumably because of the greater familiarity of the latter term (cf. also Kenrick 1993).

groups are in question, but around 1000 AD is the most commonly proposed date for those groups that were eventually to end up in Europe, while most Gypsy groups in the Middle East are thought to belong to earlier emigration waves.

At present, Gypsies are found on all continents. Of an estimated ten million Gypsies in the world today, more than half, or about six million, live in Europe, where more than two thirds, again, live in east and south-east Europe (Puxon 1987:4). Even though in the general consciousness Gypsies are considered to be nomads, in fact most of Europe's Gypsies are sedentary, and have been so for a long time. Nomadic Gypsy groups are mostly found in Western Europe, while a sedentary way of life has been the norm in Eastern Europe since the Middle Ages.

On the basis of linguistic evidence (mainly loanwords), it can be inferred that those groups which were to become European Gypsies spent considerable time in areas where Persian, Armenian and Greek were spoken. Greek accounts for a sizeable part of the non-Indian vocabulary common to the European Romani dialects. For instance, the numerals 'seven', 'eight' and 'nine' in Romani are Greek loanwords (Valtonen 1968:126), suggesting a history of long and close contact between Gypsies and Greek speakers in Asia Minor and perhaps also in Greece.

Possibly the first record of the arrival of Gypsies in Europe was made by a Greek monk, who mentions the arrival of a group of *Atsincani*, who were "sorcerers and thieves", at Mount Athos in the year 1100 AD (Clébert 1967:53f). The next record of Gypsies in Europe reports of similar groups appearing on Crete in 1322 and at Corfu in 1346. During the next 200 years, they spread westwards and northwards through Europe, reaching Sweden³ in the beginning of the 16th century.

During their migrations, the Gypsies made a living as metalsmiths, horse traders, folk veterinarians, fortune tellers and entertainers. Being basically regarded as outcasts from society, at least in Western Europe, they were also given 'unclean' or otherwise undesirable tasks, such as those of gelder or hangman. Hence, in pre-industrial Western European society, Gypsies came to perform some important services; they had a place in society, even though they were not part of it.

History of the Finnish Gypsies

From Sweden, the Gypsies went on to Finland⁴, then still a part of Sweden, where they appeared in several places at the end of the 16th century, according to sources from that time (Etzler 1944:50). Gypsies continued to enter Finland

³The first reasonably reliable official reports of Gypsies in Sweden are from 1512 and 1515 (Nordström-Holm & Lind 1982:19).

⁴And also to Norway (Mustalaisiain neuvottelukunta 1981:21).

by way of Sweden – often only to be deported back – until 1809, when Finland was ceded to Russia and later became the Russian Grand Duchy of Finland. The Gypsies which at that time remained in Finland are generally considered to be the ancestors of the Finnish Gypsies of today. It is also possible, however, that part of the Finnish Gypsy population originally came from Russia, where there have been Gypsies at least since the year 1500 (cf. Valtonen 1968:208f; Leiwo 1991:87). In any case, there are no specifically Russian elements in Finnish Romani⁵ or in the culture of the Finnish Gypsies, while on the other hand there is a large number of Swedish loanwords. Finnish Gypsies often have Swedish family names, and Finnish Romani shares many structural and lexical traits with other Scandinavian Romani dialects (Valtonen 1968:206ff).

Wherever they have gone, the Gypsies have been the subject of prejudice and persecution, culminating, but by no means ending, in the racist blood orgy of the Third Reich, where an estimated half million Gypsies perished under Nazi rule. It is indicative of the general prejudice against Gypsies, that not only were the surviving German Gypsies denied compensation after the Second World War, but the West German Federal Court issued a judgement in 1956 stating that before 1943 – when Germany's Gypsies were deported to Auschwitz – they “had been ‘legitimately’ persecuted by the Nazi authorities for being ‘asocial’” (Burleigh & Wippermann 1991:364; cf. also Kenrick & Puxon 1972).

In the persecutions we find a possible explanation for the fact that there are five to six times more Finnish than Swedish Gypsies (presently about 1,500 (Arnstberg 1988:485). The official Swedish policy towards Gypsies was extremely callous, at least in centuries preceding the present. In 1637, the first royal decree concerning the Gypsies was issued⁶, according to which all Gypsies were to leave Sweden before the 8th of November, 1638. Any Gypsy men found in the country after that date were to be hanged without trial and women and children were to be deported; furthermore, giving shelter to Gypsies was punishable by law (Etzler 1944:68f). This decree was to be followed by several similar edicts in the following 100 years, but in practice the local authorities were remarkably unwilling to enforce them. Often apparently no special action was taken against Gypsies, apart from that prescribed by ordinary criminal law, and if such action was taken, wholesale deportation – or, in times of unrest, conscription of the men – was preferred to summary execution.

In 1748, a new law was passed to “hamper the so called Tartars and Gypsies, as well as other riff-raff and indolents, in their roaming over the land” (Etzler 1944:111). The new law recognized that the Swedish territory could not anymore

⁵There are loanwords from other Slavic languages in Finnish Romani, but apparently none from Russian (Valtonen 1968:216).

⁶The term ‘Gypsy’ (Sw. *zigenare*) is used in official Swedish documents only from the 17th century. Earlier sources, and also the decree of 1637, use the term ‘tartare’, reflecting the belief that they were related to the Tartars, i.e. the Turkic nomads who had invaded Russia in the Middle Ages. The modern Swedish form of this word is *tattare*, a term which is applied to members of itinerant groups of low social status. It corresponds in meaning and connotation roughly to the English *tinker*. Students of the groups in question prefer to refer to them by the more neutral term *resande* (‘Travellers’; see, e.g., Svanberg 1987).

be rid of Gypsies, in that it made a clear difference between recent arrivals to the country and those Gypsies which had lived there for some time, or even were born in Sweden. The former were to be deported, while for the latter, the law prescribed what essentially boiled down to a policy of assimilation to the sedentary population.

It is reasonable to assume that law enforcement in general and also enforcement of those regulations specially pertaining to Gypsies was laxer in the sparsely populated Eastern half of the country, so that it was safer, relatively speaking, to be a Gypsy in Finland than in Sweden proper (cf. Grönfors 1977:19). It also seems that Gypsies were sometimes sent to Finland, in the hope that they would eventually be deported to Russia (Etzler 1944:93; Tillhagen 1965:12f). Probably, some Gypsy men and families ended up in Finland as a result of the men having been conscripted to fight in the Swedish–Russian war 1807–1809.

The cession of Finland to Russia which resulted from this war did not bring about any fundamental change in the living conditions of the Gypsies in Finland. In the 19th century, several laws were passed, all of which essentially lumped together “Gypsies and other vagrants of poor reputation, who are not capable of ordinary work” (a declaration of 1812, quoted in Grönfors 1977:16) as elements which were to be placed in workhouses. In those cases where the law singled out Gypsies as a special category, this was usually done merely in order to prescribe a harsher treatment for them (Grönfors 1977:16f). Gypsies from abroad, even those carrying valid passports, were not admitted into the country.

In 1900, a committee on the Gypsy question reported to the Imperial Senate, recommending that an official Gypsy office be set up and that special schools and work institutions be established for the Gypsies, all in order to bring about “the total assimilation of gypsies into the Finnish society” (Grönfors 1977:20).

The recommended program was not adopted, however, and the only official institution which showed some interest in the Gypsies in the following fifty years was the Church.

Before the Second World War, the Finnish Gypsies were concentrated in three rural provinces, Viipuri, Vaasa and Oulu (see map in Appendix), where they roamed the countryside (see Interview 1 below, where an old Gypsy woman describes Gypsy life at this time). The general deruralization which took place in Finland after the war affected the Gypsies as a group perhaps more than the Finnish population. Industrialization with the concomitant mass production of household articles, urbanization, more efficient communications, agricultural mechanization and industrial-scale farming in effect obliterated the niche which the Gypsies had carved out for themselves in rural Finland, leaving them with very few possibilities to pursue their traditional trades and crafts. Consequently, the Finnish Gypsies left the countryside, where they could no longer subsist, and often ended up in the city slums. As a result of this, the latest of the migrations of

the Finnish Gypsies, they are now concentrated in the cities to a greater extent than the non-Gypsy Finnish population (66% of the Gypsies lived in cities in 1979, against 60% of the population as a whole), but otherwise their geographical distribution corresponds fairly well to that of the population as a whole, i.e. they are concentrated in the southern part of the country, with the largest group living in the Helsinki area. There are no exclusively Gypsy communities anywhere in Finland, or even communities where they form a majority of the population.

According to official Finnish estimates, the number of Gypsies living in Finland was about 6,000 in 1980. To this figure should be added an estimated 2,500 Finnish Gypsies in Sweden, but there is a possible overlap between the Finnish and Swedish figures, since many individuals and families travel back and forth between the two countries. It is not unheard of for someone to live in Sweden most of the time, while being officially registered as a resident of Finland. A rough estimate of the size of the population today is that there are about 9,000 Finnish Gypsies, of which about one third, or 3,000, live in Sweden⁷. (Mustalaisasiain neuvottelukunta 1981:75) There are also an estimated 3-4,000 other (i.e., non-Finnish) Gypsies in Sweden (Arnstberg 1988).

The large number of Finnish Gypsies living in Sweden is mostly the result of a massive, mainly economic immigration from Finland of both Finns and Finnish Gypsies in the 1960's and 1970's.

Finnish Gypsy culture and social position

The social situation of the Finnish Gypsies has improved markedly in the last decades, both in Finland and in Sweden⁸. They no longer travel around in horse-carts and sleds, as they once did, finding overnight shelter where they could in the houses and barns of the Finnish farmers. Now practically all Gypsies live in their own apartments or houses, something which has had a positive influence both on the schooling of Gypsy children, which earlier tended to be sporadic at best, and also to some degree on the employment patterns of the grown-ups.

Although this improvement in the social conditions of the Gypsies was to some extent brought about by a general rise in the standard of living in Finland and Sweden from the 1950's onwards it is also the result of an increasingly active interest taken in Gypsy affairs by the political authorities, combined with a

⁷That is, the number of Finnish Gypsies has remained stable for the last ten years. Even though, as we shall see below, their language is yielding to Finnish, the Finnish Gypsies as an ethnic entity, separate from the Finnish (and Swedish) majority population, has shown, and shows, a remarkable stability and resistance to assimilation.

⁸Since about one third of the Finnish Gypsies live in Sweden (see the previous section), we will discuss their social situation in both countries in this section.

greater organization among the Gypsies themselves. Earlier, only religious organizations concerned themselves specifically with Gypsies and their problems, but with minimal involvement and, indeed, with minimal influence on the aims and work of these organizations by the Gypsies themselves. The oldest and probably best-known of these organizations is the Gypsy Mission (Mustalaislähetys), which was founded in 1906 to do religious and social work among the Gypsies.

The first organized intervention in the affairs of the Gypsies from the more worldly powers in Finland came in 1953, when Parliament appointed a committee and charged it with the task of working out proposals for integrating the Gypsies in Finnish society. On the recommendation of this committee, the Advisory Board on Gypsy Affairs (Mustalaisasiain neuvottelukunta, now renamed Romaniasiain neuvottelukunta) was set up in 1956, to collect information on the Gypsies' social situation and to work for improvement in that situation by disseminating information and putting concrete proposals to the proper authorities. The Board has representatives from Finnish Gypsy organizations among its members.

In 1970, three committees were set up to investigate various aspects of the social situation of the Gypsies and in 1971 they produced reports on housing conditions, education and a proposed orthography for the Gypsy language.

Not all proposals of the Board have been heeded. They have been most successful in the area of housing conditions. Thus, in 1975, a law was passed which obliged municipalities to produce detailed plans for bringing the housing conditions of Gypsies to an acceptable level by 1980 at the latest. In the area of education, the results have been less impressive but since 1979, the Finnish Board of Professional Education and the Board of Education have arranged regular courses for Gypsies, both professional courses and courses of a more general character, such as literacy programs and courses in Romani and Gypsy culture. (Mustalaisasiain neuvottelukunta 1981:98ff)

The Gypsies have also formed a politico-cultural organization in order to make their voices better heard in the political decision process. This organization, *Suomen Mustalaisyhdistys* (The Finnish Gypsy Union) was founded in 1967 with the explicit aims of (1) putting pressure on the political decision-makers to implement policies which are satisfactory from the Gypsies' viewpoint, (2) disseminating information about the Gypsies and their culture, (3) investigating and taking action against possible cases of ethnic discrimination against Gypsies, and (4) preserving the strong and valuable cultural heritage of the Gypsies. Suomen Mustalaisyhdistys is represented on the Advisory Board on Gypsy Affairs, together with *Mustalaiskulttuurin Keskus Suomessa* (The Finnish Gypsy Cultural Centre), an organization founded in 1971 with funds provided by the Ministry of Education to further Gypsy culture, and *Suomen Vapaa Evankelinen Romanilähetys* (The Finnish Free Evangelical Gypsy Movement), a religious organization founded in 1964. (Mustalaisasiain neuvottelukunta 1981:151ff) For several years, the Gypsy organizations have been arranging regular summer courses on Gypsy culture and language and this seems to have had some reviving effects on the language.

Even though the social situation of the Finnish Gypsies has improved considerably, especially as regards housing and education, this does not mean that they are now, in all respects, equal to other inhabitants of Finland nor that ethnic discrimination has been eradicated. On the contrary, having long been the most conspicuously foreign group in Finland, in their racial characteristics, in the way they dress, and in their behaviour, the Gypsies are still treated with suspicion and often with open hostility by the majority population. It has been shown that they are subject to systematic and negative special treatment from the Finnish police, a fact which has led to their being probably overrepresented in Finnish criminal statistics (Grönfors 1979).

The different character of Gypsy culture often leads to conflicts with the majority population. Solidarity within the Gypsy community places certain obligations on the individual. For instance, in the case of disease or death, there is an obligation on the individual to visit the ailing person or the next of kin of the deceased. These obligations – which mean that Gypsies should be prepared to leave home suddenly and often and stay away for an indefinite length of time, or receive and entertain guests in their home at any time of day or night, for any length of time – naturally conflict with the demands of society in general, e.g. that employees should come to their work regularly and on time, that municipal and other local authorities should be contacted during reception hours, that appointments made should be kept, etc. Family ties and obligations towards other Gypsies are more binding than obligations towards an employer or society (which are not perceived as being ‘genuine’ obligations).

Although, as we saw in the preceding section, the Gypsies have largely given up their former nomadic way of life and have become more sedentary, they are still quite mobile. Gypsies visit each other frequently and often stay for prolonged periods, for the reasons mentioned in the preceding paragraph and for other social reasons and they also go regularly to fairs, horse races, etc. to do business.

Another reason that Gypsies have to be mobile is the practice of blood feuding, an important component in their culture which regulates much of their everyday life. The blood feud is an integral part of the system of justice among the Finnish Gypsies. The term refers to their practice of revenge killing, i.e. relatives of a Gypsy killed by another Gypsy will take revenge on the killer and his (or her) relatives. Children and old people are normally not included among the possible targets of retaliation; the ethics of the blood feud seem to demand that the intended victim be able to defend himself. In fact, a Gypsy who tries to take revenge by attacking a person considerably older than himself risks invoking the contempt of other Gypsies, including his own family. Within the Gypsy community, physical violence is an accepted means of dealing with

lawbreakers⁹. The prospect of punishment by the majority population has no influence whatsoever on the execution of a revenge action. Killing in retaliation is not as such the most important ingredient in blood feuding. More important is rather an institutionalized avoidance behaviour. When an action which calls for violent retaliation has been carried out, the offender and his family will promptly move away from the community and will go to great lengths to avoid confrontations with the victim's family. By using the expression 'avoidance behaviour' we wish to stress the fact that blood feuding among the Finnish Gypsies does *not*, generally, involve the active hunting-down of offenders. Rather, actual physical retaliation is a last resort in circumstances which have come about in spite of the avoidance behaviour. In other words, if members of two feuding families run into each other by chance, it is very probable that the situation must be resolved through the use of violence. Avoidance behaviour is a symbolic gesture, a bloodless substitution for the taking of offenders' lives. By the very act of avoiding the members of those families with which his family is feuding, the individual admits his guilt in the action that started the feud. (cf. Grönfors 1977, 1981)

The mobility of the Gypsies and the obligation to entertain guests at any time make it difficult for adults to hold down a job and cause Gypsy children to be away from school considerably more than other children. (Iverstam, Johansson & Wall 1978:16f). Not surprisingly, then, Gypsies in general have less education and are more likely to be unemployed than other groups in Finnish and Swedish society. According to the chairman of the Nordic Gypsy Council, Aleka Stobin (personal communication), about 60% of the Finnish Gypsies are in need of additional education, being illiterate according to the official Swedish definition which defines "low or nonexistent formal education" as less than four years of primary school. An estimated 25% of Gypsies have not attended school at all. Education has a low cultural status among the Gypsies generally; there are few positive examples of individuals within the group who have been successful as a result of their education, partly because the kind of success which formal education leads to is intimately connected with a mode of existence which inevitably clashes with Gypsy cultural values. Only a small fraction of those adults who would need to do so actually wish to participate in courses arranged for Gypsies, e.g. literacy courses or professional training. A particular problem in Sweden is that courses are normally conducted in Swedish, a language which many Gypsies do not know.

By Swedish law, local authorities are obliged to provide native language instruction in school and kindergarten, a few hours per week, for children with a native language other than Swedish¹⁰. However, the legislation does not

⁹Of course, 'lawbreaker' is here understood in relation to the norms of social conduct among the Gypsies and not in the sense of breaking the written laws of non-Gypsy society.

¹⁰The Swedish term is 'hemspråk' (home language), and is defined as a language other than Swedish spoken regularly with the pupil by at least one of the pupil's guardians (normally a parent). However, Saami, Tornedal Finns and Gypsies are entitled to native language instruction even if the language is not regularly spoken in the pupil's home. (Grundskoleförordningen: ch. 5, §§ 4-12)

generally recognize that more than one foreign language may be spoken at home. Hence, the child has a legal right to receive instruction in one native language only (Natchev & Sirén 1988:4). Although the Swedish Primary School Code makes an explicit exception for Gypsies, in that “[f]or a Gypsy pupil coming from abroad, the native language instruction [...] may comprise two native languages” (Grundskoleförordningen: ch. 5, § 7), in practice, this regulation has had little effect since Finnish is the first language of all Finnish Gypsies (see the next section). Romani instruction is nowhere in Sweden offered to Finnish Gypsy children on a regular basis, as far as we know, although there are reports that individual teachers in a small number of cases have made an effort to supply regular Romani language instruction to Finnish Gypsy children.

In Finland, the Parliament (in a document issued in 1990; see Lillberg 1991) has called for greater consideration of the country's linguistic and cultural minorities in national policy-making in the cultural and educational areas. In the case of the Gypsies, the Parliament supports the proposals made by the Advisory Board on Gypsy Affairs, which aim at a general raising of the level of education among the Gypsies, the introduction of a nationwide program for the teaching of Gypsy language and culture to Gypsy children in primary schools, the production of school materials for Gypsies and the incorporation of information about minorities in general in the curricula of Finnish schools.

In a few local schools, there are now special programs for Gypsy children, usually in the form of a Gypsy teacher coming a few hours a week to teach Gypsy language and culture, in addition to the normal curriculum, to those children who wish to participate. A nationwide program has still not been implemented, however, and probably cannot be without a change in legislation. At present, Saami is the only minority language catered for in the legislation which regulates the form and content of the kindergarten and primary school system. In connection with Gypsy language instruction, a particular difficulty is the secret character of the Gypsy language: many Gypsies are opposed to the production of language teaching materials in a form which makes them accessible to non-Gypsies and as a rule non-Gypsies have not been allowed to participate in language courses arranged by the Gypsy organizations.

Finnish Romani

The following discussion of the present state of Finnish Romani is largely based on fieldwork begun by Katri Vuorela in 1986, in the course of which approximately 100 Finnish Gypsies – both in Finland and Sweden – have been interviewed in Romani or in Finnish about aspects of Finnish Gypsy language and culture.

Background

The language of the Gypsies, Romani, is an Indo-Iranian language, related to Hindi and its sister languages on the Indian subcontinent, and ultimately to the Indo-European languages in Europe, but not to Finnish, a Finno-Ugric language. In the 18th century, when the Indian origin of the Gypsies was proposed and the affiliation of Romani with Sanskrit was proven beyond doubt¹¹, Romani caught the attention of Indo-European scholars. Thanks to the key position enjoyed by Sanskrit in the development of Indo-European linguistics and perhaps because of the contention that Romani “of all living languages is most nearly akin to Sanskrit” (Thesleff 1911:82), it has been studied eagerly by linguists ever since.

Modern Romani is divided into a number of dialects (as they are traditionally called in Romani linguistics), between some of which mutual intelligibility is low or nonexistent (for this reason they are sometimes referred to as Romani *languages*). Furthermore, in many European countries, Gypsies use among themselves language varieties containing large elements of Romani, mainly in the lexicon, while the phonology and grammar are, by and large, those of some surrounding language. In the literature, such varieties have been variously classified along a spectrum which ranges from slang, through special secret languages (‘argot’, ‘cant’, etc.), to Romani. Several different subgroupings of the Romani dialects or languages have been proposed. For an overview, see Hancock (1988), and for an attempt to arrive at an objective measure of the linguistic differences among the languages and lects used by Gypsies, see Cortiade (1991).

All Finnish Gypsies now speak Finnish, most of them as their first language, and Romani to varying degrees primarily as a secret language, which is learned fairly late in childhood. Occasionally, one finds very young Finnish Gypsies in Sweden who speak Swedish as their first language. In Sweden, it is also common that the Finnish Gypsies use Finnish as a secret language instead of Romani. Compare the situation just described to the ‘Angloromani’ of British Romnichal Gypsies: “nevertheless the ancestral tongue, in great modified form, *is* maintained within the group, though it may not be learnt until the speaker is nine or ten years old” (Hancock 1978:19). A commonly used heuristic measure of the vitality of a language is the number of children speaking it (see, e.g., Krauss 1979), but obviously, such statistics would give a far too pessimistic estimate of the current status of Finnish Romani. The knowledge of Romani correlates with other aspects of Gypsy culture, e.g. women's dress, ritual cleanliness, taboo behaviour, etc. Learning Romani is a conscious effort, and part of growing up as a Gypsy. When you learn Romani, as when a Gypsy girl starts wearing her Gypsy dress at 16, it means that you wish to live like a Gypsy and that you agree to follow the rules of social conduct of Gypsy culture. From a developmental linguistic point

¹¹Neither the position of Romani within the Indo-Iranian language family as, more specifically, a Indo-Aryan language nor the Indian origin of the Gypsies are undisputed (see Hancock 1988).

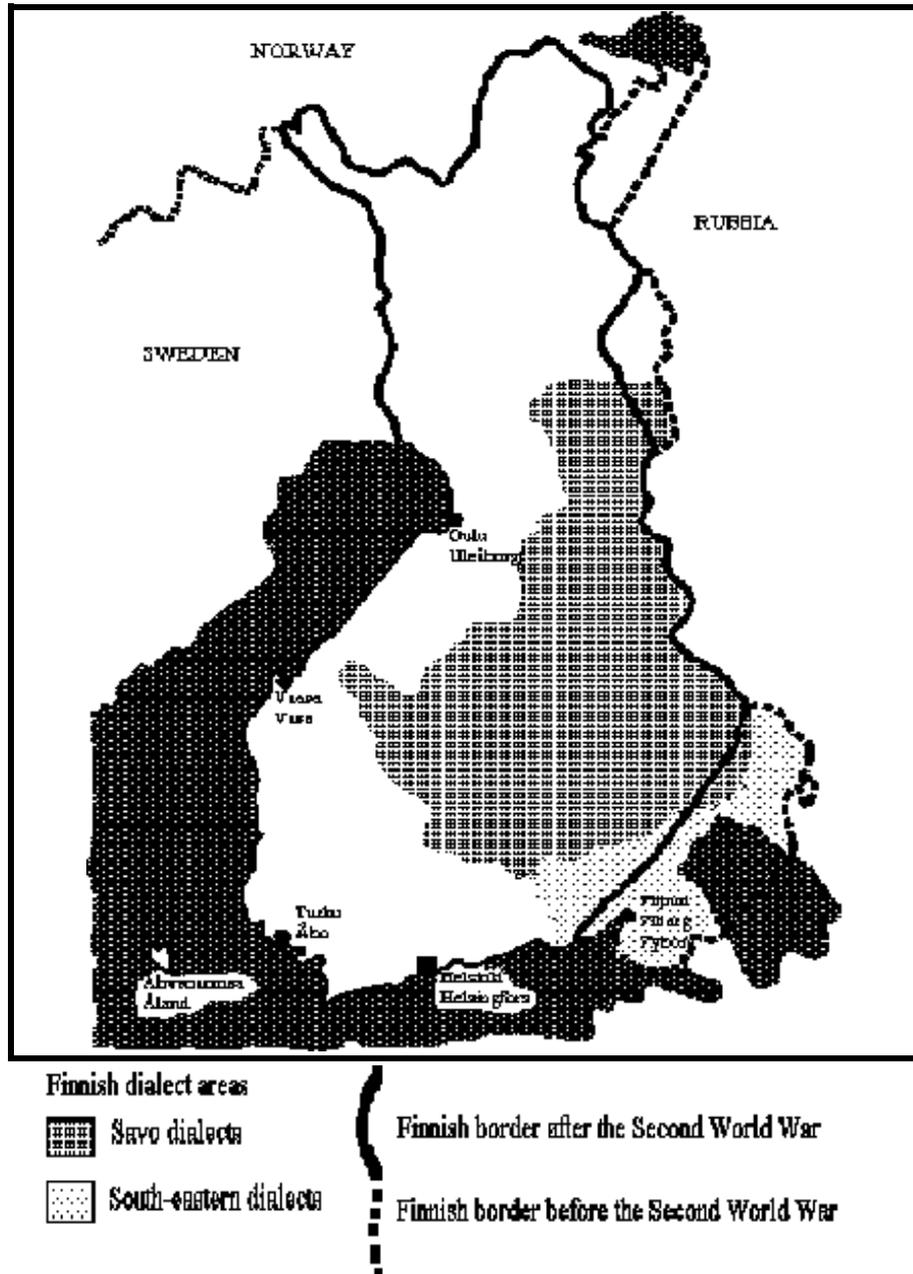
of view, however, this also means that a Gypsy may not have a firm command of Romani until he is in his twenties. However, on the other hand, as long as he lives as a Gypsy, he will continue to learn the language.

Some Gypsies, mostly elderly people, are fully bilingual in Romani and Finnish, having grown up in homes where Romani was still the everyday medium of communication between members of the household, including the children. Since Romani is increasingly being less used in everyday communication, a great deal of attrition is evident. Finnish influence is making itself felt on all linguistic levels. The phonological system is becoming virtually identical to the Finnish system, especially among younger Romani speakers in Finland, the original case inflection is disappearing and spontaneous borrowing from Finnish is common, although in general its frequency and character shows great individual variation.

Valtonen (1968) uses the somewhat infelicitous term 'style' in differentiating between two main varieties of Finnish Romani, 'higher' and 'lower style', in his terminology. The 'higher style' is, basically, an older, more original form of the language, while 'lower style' refers to a more recent, grammatically simplified Romani which is heavily influenced by Finnish. The extreme stages of 'lower style' would correspond to the Para-Romani languages discussed in Bakker & Cortiade (1991). We feel that 'style' is not the most appropriate term to use in describing the sociolinguistics of Finnish Romani today. First of all, the term 'style' is usually applied to a situation where there are a number of language users who master several varieties of a language and use these varieties under different social circumstances. This is not the case with the speakers of Finnish Romani. Instead, we would argue that Finnish Romani displays a proficiency continuum, fairly typical of language death situations, where mastery of the language is correlated with the age of the speaker¹². We also feel that there is a geographical dimension to Valtonen's 'style', in that there is a tendency for the language to be better preserved in the Eastern parts of the area inhabited by the Finnish Gypsies, i.e. Eastern Finland, than in the Western parts, i.e. Sweden (cf. Thesleff 1901:iv). Generally, however, the Gypsy population is more mobile than the average Finn (see the previous section) and because of this it is difficult to make any hard and fast statements about the geographical distribution of Romani speakers. As a rule of thumb, however, we would expect to find the best Romani speakers among old Gypsies in Eastern Finland, and, conversely, that young Finnish Gypsies in Sweden would know very little Romani.

There is an awareness among the Finnish Gypsies – who themselves may be

¹²This is also the general picture that can be gleaned from Valtonen's (1968:71ff) presentation of his informants and their language proficiency. They range from a man born in 1884, whose "language proficiency is excellent" (1968:72), to a man born in 1938 and his two sisters who "in their language use represent the lower style" and "are unable to pronounce irreproachably the difficult sounds of the language" (1968:78).



Map of Finland with geographical names mentioned in text.

speakers of the ‘lower style’ – that there are older, ‘more correct’ forms of, for example, words, an awareness which reveals itself amongst other ways in their producing hypercorrect forms.

The Finnish Gypsies speak their own variety of Finnish, the phonology and morphology of which are by and large those of the surrounding Finnish dialect in

the locality where they have grown up. In its vocabulary, phraseology and syntax, however, their Finnish shows traits peculiar to the Gypsies which are, at least in part, attributable to a Romani substrate.

The modern language

As a sample of Finnish Romani as it is spoken today we reproduce below two interview extracts. The first interview was made in 1988 and the second in 1990. Both informants are Finnish Gypsy women, who are fluent speakers of Finnish Romani, although at least the younger of the two feels more at home with Finnish and uses it much more than Romani, even in most interactions with other Gypsies. In order to illustrate the development of the language, we have chosen the informants so that the age difference between them is roughly one generation. There is, as it were, a generation of ‘apparent time’ between the Romani of the two texts.

The Romani text is accompanied by a rough interlinear glossing-cum-morpheme-analysis and an interlinear English translation. Occasionally, we have inserted comments to the translation in square brackets. Round brackets are used in the Romani text to mark ‘noise’ of various kinds, such as false starts or partial repetitions by the informant, portions where the informant's voice is drowned by background sounds on the tape, etc. We have marked the corresponding places in the translation with a uniform (...).

The transcription by and large adheres to Finnish orthography which means that length is indicated by writing a letter doubled, except in two cases:

– Long /j/ is written <ij>, as in *jeijom* (line 4) ‘we went’, which is pronounced as if it were written *jejjom*. However, the combination <ij>, as in *tijja* (line 2) ‘time’, is pronounced as long /i/ followed by short /j/.

- The combination <ng> represents /ŋŋ/, not /ŋg/.

The grammatical categories used in the glosses and their abbreviations are as follows: ablative (ABL), comparative (COMP), conditional (COND), dative (DAT), feminine (FEM), genitive (GEN), infinitive (INF), instrumental (INSTR), oblique (OBL), particle (PTC), interrogative particle (QPTC), plural (PL), past (PAST), present (PRES), singular (SG). If nothing else is indicated, the categories of case and number in nouns and adjectives default to nominative and singular, respectively, and that of gender in adjectives and genitive forms defaults to masculine.

Interview 1

o = a woman, about 70 years old, speaks Romani, Finnish and Swedish

k = the interviewer

1 o: katta ame rakkavaha? / sar kammeha tu?
 what-ABL we talk-PRES-1PL / how want-PRES-2PL you-SG
what do we talk about? / how do you want it?

- k: ku kaale sikite / vantrude
when gypsy-PL early-COMP / roam-PAST-3PL
when the gypsies earlier / roamed
- 2 o: jaa / ame vandrudijjam sikide / a / a to tiija / ka naa sas /
well / we roam-PAST-1PL early-COMP / and / and that time / when not be-
PAST-3SG
well / we roamed earlier / and / and at that time / when there were no /
- 3 stedi kai aahtammas / ta buurudammas / ame vandrudijjam / veenengi
tiija /
place-PL where be-PAST-1PL / and live-PAST-1PL / we roam-PAST-1PL /
winter-GEN-FEM time
places where we were / and we lived / we roamed / in the wintertime /
- 4 aahtan daari / tšohhako rink / ta / niijales ame jeijam / aro oboa / ta
be-PAST-1PL here / skirt-GEN-MASC side / and / summer-OBL we go-PAST-1PL
/ in turku / and
*we were here / on the häme side / and / in the summer we went / to turku
/ and*
- 5 aro neevo them / ta / ta aro (nee) / neevo / them / a doori / sikide / liijan /
in new land / and / and in / new / land / and there / early-COMP / get-
PAST-1PL
to uusimaa / and / and in (...) / uusimaa / and there / earlier / we got /
- 6 khaaben grenge / a daari sas pengalo voorosko tiija aro tšohha /
food horse-PL-DAT / and here be-PAST-3SG spring-GEN time in skirt /
food for the horses / and here [it] was bad in the springtime in häme /
- 7 naas jakke khaaben / grenge / ame jeija(m) / doori / duura(l)de / ta /
not-be-PAST-3SG so food / horse-PL-DAT / we go-PAST-1PL / there / far-
COMP / and /
*as there was not so much food / for the horses / we went / there / further
away / and /*
- 8 pertal paani jeija(m) / aro / oolandos / a / doori / liijam / grenge khaabeen /
over water go-PAST-1PL / in / åland / and / there / get-PAST-1PL / horse-
PL-DAT food /
over the water we went / to / åland / and / there / we got / for the horses food /
- 9 ta doori sas barvale tšer / dotta liijam / komunenge / khaaben / ta
and there be-PAST-3SG rich-PL house / which-ABL get-PAST-1PL / person-PL-
DAT / food / and
*and there were rich houses / from which we got / for the people / food /
and*
- k: sasko tumenge / tšihka / gräija?
be-PAST-3SG-PTC you-PL-DAT / good-PL / horse-PL
did you have / good / horses?

- 10 o: doola sas tšihka / bengale / ta tšihka / sar farkutiilo a / mare / rom /
it-PL be-PAST-3SG good-PL / bad-PL / and good-PL / how change-PAST-
3SG and / our-PL /
they were good / bad / and good / as it changed and / our / man /
- 11 tšerte / grenge / tšyöpi / ta ame dikjam / juuja /
do-PAST-3PL / horse-PL-GEN / business-PL / and we look-PAST-1PL /
woman-PL / card-PL /
did / horse / trading / and we looked / [we] women / [in the] cards /
- 12 pelehki / ta / tšertammas unti / a / jakke / djeija(m) /
and / do-PAST-1PL lace-PL / and / so go-PAST-1PL
and / we made / laces / and / so / we left /
- k: voipuvenako tume / djampel kutti?
can-PRES-2PL-PTC you-PL / sing-INF little
can you / sing a little?
- 13 o: me (kom) / me som bengali / me som bengali te jambaa /
I / I be-PRES-1SG bad-FEM / I be-PRES-1SG bad-FEM to sing-PRES-1SG
I (...) / I am bad / I am bad at singing /
- 14 a / maan hin / tukado jii / onnos hin bengalo / mango
and / I-OBL be-PRES-3SG / sick heart / breathing be-PRES-3SG bad / I-GEN
and / I have / a sick heart / the breathing is bad / my
- 15 (ondo) / onnos hin bengalo ka maan hin tukado jii /
/ breathing be-PRES-3SG bad-MASC as I-OBL be-PRES-3SG sick-MASC
heart
(...) / breathing is bad as I have a sick heart

Interview 2:

y = a woman, about 40 years old, speaks Finnish, Romani and some Swedish
k = the interviewer

- k: totta jeenestä
that-ABL man-ABL
about that man
- 21 y: ai / me / ikkatommas itt iek jeeneha /
oh / I / love-PAST-1SG together a man-INSTR /
oh / I / made love to a man /
- 22 ja maan hin kaan valapos lessa /
and I-OBL be-PRES-3SG now child he-INSTR /
and I have now a child with him /

- 23 me na ei na jaanaa / kaan et so me hortta seeraas /
I not not not know-PRES-1SG / now that what I real do-COND-1SG
I don't know / now that what I really should do /
- 24 me aahhaa jakke kokaros / maan ei naa / hispa kai me jaas /
I be-PRES-1SG so lonesome / I-OBL not not / flat where I go-
COND-1SG
I am so alone / I don't have / a flat where I would go /
- 25 eikä me ei na voipuvaa sikaves / vaurenge kaalenge / (maan) /
not-PTC I not not can-PRES-1SG show-INF / other-PL-DAT gypsy-
PL-DAT / (...) /
nor can I show myself / to other gypsies / (I have) /
- 26 ku maan hin / touva vauro valapos / ku kaale akkana / kaale akkana /
when I-OBL be-PRES-3SG / that other child / when gypsy-PL tell-PRES-
3PL / gypsy-PL tell-PRES-3PL /
when I have / that other child / when the gypsies say / the gypsies say /
- 27 tola vaure jeeneske että maan hin valapos niin touva lela nikki /
that other man-DAT that I-OBL be-PRES-3SG child so he take-
PRES-3SG away /
to that other man that I have a child then he takes [= will take] away /
- 28 nikki kouva valapos mannasa /
away that child I-ABL
away that child from me /
- k: lela nikki?
take-PRES-3SG away
takes away?
- 29 y: mm / maan hin jakke / ilako aahhes totta / ja tauva vauro jeenokaan /
mm / I-OBL be-PRES-3SG so / bad be-INF that-ABL / and this other
man-PTC
*mm / I have so [= such a] / bad feeling from that / and this other
man too /*
- 30 touvakaa ei naakaan pahatas / eikä sitsi /
he-PTC not not-be-PRES-3SG-PTC call-PAST-3SG / not-PTC nothing /
he too hasn't even called / or anything /
- 31 eikä puhtas kouva pesko valapos / ienkong / että me aahhaa kaan /
not-PTC ask-PAST-3SG that small child / even / that I be-PRES-1SG
now /
or asked about that small child / at all / that I am now /
- 32 maan mostula varmaan laakaves kouva valapos /
I-OBL must-PRES-3SG surely put-INF that child /
I must for sure put that child /
- 33 valapengo huusa kuti tiijake / että me (laa toola) / laakaves toola saaki /
child-PL-GEN house little time-DAT / that I / fix-INF that-PL thing-PL /
in an orphanage for a little time / that I (get those) / fixed those things /

- 34 että maan mostula kaan vandruves ku maan ei naa / ieko seer kai me jaa /
 that I-OBL must-PRES-3SG now roam-INF when I-OBL not not-be-PRES-3SG /
 own home where I go-PRES-1SG /
*that I must now move around since I don't have / my own home where I
 [can] go /*
- 35 eikä me ei na voipuvaa hurane / hurane / komujengo neer jal /
 not-PTC I not not can-PRES-1SG old-PL / old-PL / person-PL-GEN to
 go-INF /
nor can I to the old / old / people go /
- k: soske na?
 what-DAT not
why not?
- 36 y: no touva / maan mostula lansaves / ku maan hin pesko valapos /
 well that / I-OBL must-PRES-3SG feel-shame-INF / when I-OBL be-PRES-3SG
 small child
well that / I must feel shame / since I have a small child /
- 37 ja sitte me rahhaa panna / että vaure kaale akkana /
 and then I fear-PRES-1SG also / that other-PL gypsy-PL say-PRES-3PL
and then I am afraid also / that other gypsies [will] say /
- 38 tola mango / vaure jeeneske / että maan hin valapos /
 that I-GEN / other-DAT man-DAT / that I-OBL be-PRES-3SG /
to that my / other man / that I have a child /
- 39 vaure jeeneha / touva ei jaanela so touva seerela panna /
 (an)other-INSTR man-INSTR / that not know-PRES-3SG what he do-
 PRES-3SG then /
with another man / you don't know what he does [= will do] then /

Considerations of space preclude an exhaustive discussion of the linguistic system of modern Finnish Romani or of the changes which have produced this system¹³. Katri Vuorela's forthcoming dissertation will treat this subject in more

¹³If, indeed, one can talk about *one* system in this case. We again wish to stress the amount of variation observed in Finnish Romani spoken (and written) today. The 'system' of which we give a brief sketch below should be understood as a kind of prognosis: 'This is what Finnish Romany probably would become, given the developmental trends which we have seen earlier in this century and which we can see today, and given that it would stabilize into something which we unreservedly could refer to as *one* language system, e.g. by being codified as a standard.' Due to the amount of linguistic variation, the linguistic analysis may be very different, depending on which speakers we choose as representing the current language state, as the reader will hopefully have noticed from the interview fragments reproduced above. At any rate, it is not completely clear that, in describing Finnish Romani, we would not be better off if we discarded the methodological principle of assuming a monolithic linguistic system (essentially a normative notion, despite frequent claims to the contrary by linguists) which is a prerequisite for a 'successful' and contradiction-free traditional linguistic analysis (cf. Le Page 1969). On the other hand, we

depth than is possible here. Below, we will focus on a few illustrative examples from the phonology (segment inventory and some phonotactics), grammar (nominal and verbal inflection) and lexicon (loanword patterns) of modern Finnish Romani. One observation is pertinent here, however. As hopefully the following sections will show, Finnish Romani is in the process of slow attrition from fully inflected Romani¹⁴ towards a variant of Finnish with a considerable stock of Romani lexical material, where the intervening stages can be documented. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to see present-day Finnish Romani as a deliberately created cryptolect originally coexisting with Romani proper, which is the origin proposed for Angloromani and Scandoromani, and by implication also Fennoromani, by Hancock (1992), although he explicitly excludes the Finnish Gypsies from his discussion.

In order to discuss the developments specific to modern Finnish Romani we of course need a point of departure, or a standard, against which to compare it. The phonology, morphology and lexicon of Finnish Romani as spoken around the turn of this century have been documented in Thesleff (1901), in Ariste (1938) and recapitulated and summarized in Valtonen (1968, 1972), sources which will form the background to our discussion, and to which we will not refer explicitly below. Even the language described by Thesleff stands out as a distinctively Finnish variety of Romani¹⁵, however, and therefore we will also occasionally find use for the structural sketches of inflected European Romani in Bakker & van der Voort (1991) and Hancock (1988) to get a picture of Romani as it may have looked before the contact with Finnish. Grammars of individual European Romani dialects have also been consulted (and will be referred to whenever appropriate) to complement the rather meagre information on especially phonology and syntax found in the two works just mentioned.

Phonology

Finnish Romani as spoken today shows an impoverished consonant inventory, compared to other European Romani languages and also compared to the language state described by Thesleff (1901). The present system is similar to that of the Finnish spoken by a majority of the Finnish Gypsies in older times, i.e. East Finnish showing traits found in the Savo (*savolaismurteet*) and South-eastern (*kaakkoismurteet*) dialect complexes¹⁶ (see Kettunen 1981), in that there

are then faced with a new descriptive problem which we cannot go into here but to which we nevertheless wish to draw attention: How are we to handle the variation seen in Finnish Romani in a linguistic description of the language without resorting to normativity (or is this unavoidable? Cf. Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985)? See Simpson (1981) for a brief discussion of these matters.

¹⁴'Inflected Romani' is a term loosely used by many authors for those varieties of Romani that have preserved most of the inflectional categories, and the corresponding affixes, that can be postulated for their ancestor language.

¹⁵According to Thesleff (1899:2), the Finnish Gypsies "probably started to separate from the Gypsies in Sweden already in the 16th century".

¹⁶According to a census made in 1895, more than one third of Finland's Gypsies lived in the Viipuri province, i.e. in what was then the south-easternmost part of Finland (Grönfors

is only one series of stops, as in Finnish¹⁷ (realized as voiceless and unaspirated), corresponding to the three series in other Romani languages (voiced, voiceless and voiceless aspirated). Original initial consonant clusters are frequently reduced to a single consonant, while such clusters in other positions are often broken up by the insertion of an epenthetic vowel. The treatment of initial clusters is characteristic of Finnish in general, except for a few western dialect areas, while vowel epenthesis is found in central Finland, both in the East and West.

The vowel inventory, on the other hand, is richer than in the older language, the main additions being the front rounded vowels *ü* (written *y*, as in Finnish) and *ö*, and several diphthongs, presumably from Finnish, where front rounded vowels and diphthongs abound. There are also frequent instances of vowel harmony of the Finnish type, i.e. the quality of suffix vowels is determined by that of the last preceding non-neutral vowel in the word form. The accent is normally fixed on the first syllable of word forms, on the Finnish pattern, in distinction to most other European Romani languages, in some of which the accent is free, often varying between different inflected forms of the same lexeme (see e.g. Gjerdman & Ljungberg 1963:16; Kepeski & Jusuf 1980:30ff), while in others there is a preference towards final or penultimate stress placement (e.g. Sergievskij 1981 [1938]:155; Lipa 1963:5), or stem-final stress (e.g. Hutterer & Mészáros 1967:17f).

All these features show quite a lot of variation between individuals, however, and even in the speech of single individuals. Thus, some commonly occurring consonant variations are the following.

ph ~ p ~ pf ~ f ~ h	th ~ t ~ f ~ h	kh ~ k ~ x ~ h
b ~ p ~ mp ~ mb	d ~ t ~ nt ~ nd	g ~ k ~ ŋk ~ ŋŋ
	tš ~ ts ~ s ~ j	

There is a correlation between the individual's command of the language and the amount of variation in his speech. Those with a good command of Romani, like the older woman in the first interview above, are fairly consistent in their language use, on all linguistic levels, while those who are less fluent tend to produce many variant forms. Of course, no speech community is free of linguistic variation, but it is nevertheless a frequently made observation in the literature on language decay and death, that 'unconditioned' linguistic variation in and between individuals is extremely pervasive – as it is in Finnish Romani – in the terminal stages of a language (e.g. Dorian 1981:114ff; Dressler 1972:454, 1988:189; Krauss 1979:852; Schmidt 1985:44ff; Van Ness 1990:57ff), which would seem to vindicate our earlier contention that Finnish Romani is a dying language, and essentially monostylistic.

1977:18). After World War II, most of this province became part of the Soviet Union; the former Finnish province capital Viipuri is now the Russian city Vyborg.

¹⁷In order to get a clear picture of the Finnish influence on the phonology of Finnish Romani, it is important *not* to take Standard (i.e. literary) Finnish as a point of departure (which is what van der Voort [1991:134] does), because Standard Finnish has the voiced stop /d/ (and, at least marginally, in loanwords, /b/ and /g/ as well), features absent from practically all Finnish dialects.

Grammar

The morphology of modern Finnish Romani is characterized both by simplification, which manifests itself as a reduction in the number of morphological categories expressed, as well as in the number of distinct inflectional paradigms, and by the existence of a large number of variant forms.

In nouns, the two-gender system (masculine and feminine), characteristic of the older language and of inflected Romani in general, has all but disappeared, presumably because Finnish lacks gender as a grammatical category. As a consequence, adjectives are no longer inflected for gender. As a rule, only the old masculine inflection remains. The gender distinction forms the basis of the main nominal paradigmatic dividing line in inflected Romani, i.e. the maximally different noun paradigm types are masculine and feminine. In Finnish Romani, there is some leakage between the two types, so that originally feminine nouns sometimes take originally masculine inflections, while the opposite does not seem to occur.

The nouns of inflected Romani regularly express the following categories in two numbers (singular and plural):

<i>Case</i> ¹⁸	<i>Possession</i>
nominative	genitive (or possessive adjective)
vocative	
oblique (or accusative)	
dative	
instrumental (or comitative)	
prepositional (or locative)	
ablative	

Two of the cases are absent from Finnish Romani, except for a few remains in set expressions: (1) the vocative, whose function has been taken over by the nominative; (2) the prepositional, which mainly appeared after certain prepositions, but sometimes could function as an independent locative. It has been replaced by the nominative and partly by the genitive.

The genitive has lost its adjectival inflection and has become a proper case form, in the shape of the former masculine nominative singular form.

The oblique, which in inflected Romani marks animate direct objects and is obligatory after certain prepositions has been partly replaced by the nominative. Instead of the original construction with preposition governing the oblique there are several alternative constructions, two common alternatives being genitive

¹⁸Some authors label only the nominative, vocative and oblique as (primary) cases, calling the other forms in this column ‘secondary cases’ or ‘postpositional forms’. This terminology is motivated by the structural fact that the ‘secondary cases’ and the possessive adjective are formed by adding endings to the oblique singular and plural (the same endings in both numbers; hence, an agglutinative construction).

plus postposition¹⁹ or a bare nominative, as in the second interview above (line 33: *valapengo huusa* ‘child, genitive plural + house, nominative singular’ in/to/ an orphanage).

On the other hand, certain Finnish case endings are (irregularly) borrowed, most commonly nominative and partitive plural, and accusative, inessive and adessive singular (Valtonen 1968:169ff; Belugin 1977).

The verbal inflection has survived better than that of the nominal parts of speech, probably because it even originally was more similar to its Finnish counterpart than the latter. The older system had the following verbal forms, according to Thesleff (1901).

Present

Future

Potential I (Valtonen 1968 calls this form *conditional*, a term that reflects its contemporary usage better)

Perfect (*preterit* in Valtonen 1968; this form does *not* synchronically correspond to the Finnish perfect tense. Instead, there is a tendency to form a new perfect tense, as well as a pluperfect, on the Finnish pattern, with forms of the verb ‘be’ in combination with the past tense.)

Potential II (“corresponds totally to the Finnish simple past tense” according to Valtonen 1968:137; In the glosses to the interviews, we have labelled both potential II and perfect/preterit forms as *past*, because they *seem* to be used interchangeably by the informants, to correspond to the Finnish simple past. Further analysis of the interview material is needed before we can say anything about possible differences between them.)

Imperative

Past Participle

All the foregoing are inflected in three persons and two numbers, except the imperative (only second person forms) and the past participle (inflected like an adjective).

One noteworthy morphological innovation in the verbal inflection in the modern language is the coalescence of two originally separate Romani tenses, the present and the future, into one set of forms, corresponding in use to the Finnish present tense, which normally refers to the present, but which also functions as a future²⁰ (Finnish lacks a future tense, at least colloquially). The forms in this new

¹⁹Postpositions are much more common than prepositions in Finnish, and the majority of the Finnish postpositions govern the genitive. Hence, this construction in Romany is almost certainly due to Finnish influence.

²⁰It is true that Thesleff’s (1901) perfect and potential II also seem to have merged (see above) but not into *one* set of forms as in the case of the present and future. Rather, perfect and potential II forms seem to be in free variation, although we have an inkling that their use may reflect an aspectual distinction, at least for the oldest speakers.

present tense are largely those of the old future, with the exception of the first person singular, where sometimes the old present tense form is used.

Another innovation is the introduction of an infinitive. Earlier, Romani used a construction with a finite verb (a present form in the same number and person as the main verb) sometimes preceded by the conjunction *te* ‘that, when, if’ corresponding to the various Finnish infinitives. This construction in Romani is thought to be due to Greek influence. The modern language uses instead the second person singular or the third person singular or plural of the original present tense (ending in *-es* and *-el/-en*, respectively), apparently in free variation, as an infinitive (Valtonen 1968:133f refers to these forms as ‘subjunctive’). In the first interview there are examples of both constructions. The interviewer, speaking a more modern form of the language, asks in the line following line 12: *voipuvena tume djampel kutti?* ‘can you sing a little’, where *djampel* is ‘sing’ in the infinitive (originally present tense third person singular; the corresponding modern form is *djampela*, originally a future tense form). The informant answers: *me som bengali te jambaa* ‘I am bad at singing’, where *jambaa* is ‘I sing’, i.e. present tense first person singular, both in the old and the modern language.

Among younger speakers there is a tendency towards simplification in the expression of the category person/number in the verb. While the original system (still in use among old speakers) had separate forms for all six person/number combinations (although there was some syncretism in individual tenses), the younger speakers tend towards a system with only two forms: non-third vs. third person. This is a development which has no equivalent in the Finnish system. On the other hand, there is also a tendency, as in the nominal inflection, to borrow Finnish person-number endings, especially in the second person singular, where the Finnish ending *-t* is frequently encountered.

Lexicon

In the old language (Valtonen's ‘higher style’), there are considerably more Swedish loanwords than loans from Finnish (Valtonen 1968 has the figures 20% as against 8%), even in those parts of Finland where Swedish was hardly spoken at all and the interviews reproduced above bear this out. We find several words of Swedish origin in both texts, e.g. *voorosko tiija* (line 6; ‘springtime’, Sw. *vår* ‘spring’ + Sw. *tid* ‘time’), *unti* (line 12; ‘laces’, Sw. *udd* ‘lace’), *mostula* (line 32; ‘must’, Sw. *måste* ‘must’), *laakaves* (line 32; ‘put, fix’, Sw. *laga* ‘put, fix’) and others. Even geographical names, unless they are in Romani (line 5: *neevo them* ‘new land’, Sw. *Nyland*, Fi. *Uusimaa*), tend to be Swedish rather than Finnish: *oboa* (line 4; Sw. *Åbo*, Fi. *Turku*) and *oolandos* (line 8; Sw. *Åland*, Fi. *Ahvenanmaa*) are examples of this from the texts.

The small amount of Finnish loanwords may seem surprising, considering that all Finnish Gypsies speak Finnish and that the majority of them live in Finland. In spontaneous speech (as opposed to an interview situation) there are

more Finnish loanwords, mainly of an occasional character. In general, the younger a speaker is, the more Finnish she will use in her Romani. The extent of spontaneous borrowing from Finnish is largely governed by functional considerations. As we have already mentioned, one of the main functions of Finnish Romani is as a secret language which means that the amount of borrowing from Finnish is kept deliberately low when the language is spoken among Finns (cf. Leiwo 1991:89). Instead, in situations of lexical inadequacy, language-internal word-formation resources are mustered, or a Swedish loanword is chosen.

Writing and literacy in Finnish Romani

Finnish Romani is mainly a spoken language, which is particularly evident when it occasionally appears in written form. Very little has been published in the language, mostly religious texts (translations of parts of the New Testament, religious songs, etc.). The periodical *Romano Boodos* (The Gypsy Message), published in 4-5 issues per year by *Mustalaislähetys* (The Gypsy Mission) in Helsinki, usually contains one or two articles in Romani on more secular topics. Two other periodicals, *Elämä ja valo* (Life and Light), published quarterly by *Suomen Vapaa Evankelinen Romaanilähetys* (The Finnish Free Evangelical Gypsy Movement) in Helsinki and the irregularly appearing *Zirickli* (Bird), published jointly by several Gypsy organizations, sometimes contain items written in Romani.

Written Finnish Romani is not a literary language in the sense that this term is usually understood, i.e. there is no normalized written language with a conventional spelling and selection of variant forms²¹. Rather, each text reflects the idiolectal features of its writer's language, in an orthography which varies between individual authors, or even within one text. The texts of some authors also abound with hypercorrect forms, reflecting an attempt to write in a 'purer' Romani than the language spoken today. This is partly due to the fact that Romani is now essentially a 'foreign' language to most Finnish Gypsies, in the sense that it is learned late in childhood rather than acquired from infancy and also to the fact that Finnish Gypsies tend to display a low degree of literacy in Finnish, their first language, mainly because of insufficient education. Since they often cannot even write their first language properly, it comes as no surprise that they should have difficulties in writing Romani.

In this connection we should also note that Finnish Romani lacks completely that powerful support which the broadcasting media supply to standard languages in modern society. There are no regular radio or television broadcasts in Finnish Romani in Finland or Sweden.

²¹In 1971, a committee set up by the Finnish Ministry of Education issued a proposal for normalizing the orthography of Finnish Romani together with a normative Romani word list with approximately 3000 entries. Unfortunately, we have not seen this proposal, but judging by the motley nature of written Finnish Romani today, twenty years later, it has gone unnoticed by most of those who write in Romani (cf. Valtonen 1979:121).

The future

Even though the prospects for the Romani *language* in Finland seem quite bleak, Gypsy *culture* is still alive and well. While the language is rapidly becoming a para-Romani language, i.e. a variety of Finnish permeated by Romani lexicon, the cultural assimilation of the Gypsies is proceeding very slowly, if at all, partly because the Gypsies differ from the majority population in so many other ways than language, and because, as we have mentioned already, the behaviour of the Gypsies is subject to very strict social control; there is less leeway for deviant behaviour than in the majority culture. To grow up to be a Gypsy means that you must know and agree to follow the social rules of Gypsy culture (which includes learning at least some Romani). The alternative is an uncertain existence among (mostly hostile) strangers.

The Finnish Gypsies, despite their being distributed in small groups over a large geographical area and despite the fact that they are everywhere in a minority position, nevertheless form a dense social network, in Milroy's (1980) terms, i.e. they socialize mostly with other Gypsies, travelling often and widely in order to do this. But this also means that Gypsy culture is a 'strong' one. In contrast to some other minorities, e.g. the Finns in Sweden, for whom the language is their most important cultural symbol, while their values and way of life do not differ to any great extent from those of the Swedish majority (cf. the contribution by Leena Huss in this volume), the Gypsies can do without their language and still remain ethnically apart. We hasten to add that we have no wish for Finnish Romani to die. On the contrary, we hope that the sad trend which is apparent in the language today will somehow be reversed, and that the language will live and prosper for a long time to come.

Department of Linguistics
University of Uppsala

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