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Norbert Boretzky and Birgit Iglá. *Kommentierter Dialektatlas des Romani*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2004. Teil 1: *Vergleich der Dialekte*. [xx + 344 pp.] Teil 2: *Dialektkarten mit einer CD Rom*. [xxii + 371 pp.] ISBN 3-447-05073-X

Reviewed by Viktor Elšík

The publication under review (the *Atlas* for short) is certainly the most comprehensive work on Romani dialectology that is currently available. It was the first author who, in a series of comparative descriptions of individual dialect groups of Romani (Boretzky 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2003), introduced the methods of geographical representation of cross-dialectal differences into Romani linguistics. While retaining the general spirit and methodology of these publications, the authors of the *Atlas* extend the focus to Romani as a whole, expand the inventory of researched structural features, and deepen the evaluative and interpretative dimension of their analysis. They draw on data from an impressive number of sources, including almost all published descriptions of, and numerous texts in, individual Romani varieties, the University of Manchester's *Romani Morphosyntactic Database* (Elšík & Matras 2001–), their own fieldwork, and unpublished manuscripts and personal communication by other researchers.

The *Atlas* consists of a descriptive volume and a map collection. The descriptive volume is divided into four chapters, and contains a subject-and-language index and an author index. Chapter 1 (pp. 1–31) contains some discussion of the history of Romani linguistics and of the pre-European history of Romani, a review of the authors' classification of Romani dialects, and a list of their sources by dialect. Chapter 2 (pp. 33–207), which is the core of the volume, presents a systematic survey of cross-dialectal variation in phonology and morphology. Chapter 3 (pp. 209–228) discusses around a hundred lexical items in cross-dialectal perspective, dealing with “lexicophonological” and semantic differences in etymologically identical lexemes as well as with etymological differences in the expression of identical or similar concepts; there is also a discussion of some rarely attested lexemes. The descriptive chapters are accompanied by over 100 comparative tables. The final Chapter 4 (pp. 229–314) is devoted to an historical evaluation of the data through a summary of characteristic features of individual dialect groups and feature comparisons between selected groups. The book

closes with a review of possible scenarios regarding the development of dialect diversity within Romani.

The map collection contains over 500 maps that show the cross-dialectal distribution of over 300 structural features within Romani. There are three types of maps: “northern” maps focusing on dialects established in northern, western and southwestern parts of Europe – viz. the authors’ Northern and Northeastern groups (pp. 3–108); “southeastern” maps focusing on the more diverse dialects of east-central and southeastern Europe (pp. 109–339); and “European” maps covering both areas (pp. 341–366). The “northern” and “southeastern” maps of identical features are located in different parts of the volume, though they have an identical number: if one wants to see the overall distribution of, say, the different forms of the adjective ‘clean’, one has to jump between a map on p. 108 and a map on p. 337. All the features that are shown on the maps are also discussed in the descriptive volume, though sometimes the maps must be consulted in order to learn the details of a feature’s cross-dialectal distribution. The map volume closes with five evaluation maps (pp. 367–371): a geographical schema of Romani dialect history, two maps with inter-dialectal isopleths, and two maps showing significant isogloss clusters. All the maps are available both in a printed form and in an electronic format on a compact disk.

Although the structural features whose cross-dialectal variation and distribution is investigated in the *Atlas* are numerous, they certainly do not cover all linguistic structures of Romani. Above all, there is no separate section on syntax, although particular syntactic issues are occasionally addressed (e.g. the development of the infinitive in some dialects on pp. 191–192). Also, there is no discussion of recent or variety-specific borrowings in lexicon, syntax or morphology, and so, for example, Hungarian-derived causative marking in some Romani dialects is not mentioned in the section on causatives, and cross-dialectal variation in factual complementisers, which are frequently borrowed, is not dealt with at all. This is in line with the general methodology of the publication, which puts emphasis on diachronic analysis. Synchronic cross-dialectal comparison appears to be merely a prerequisite for the reconstruction of dialect history, and the researched structural features are those that are deemed to be diagnostic for the classification of Romani dialects.

The authors present a version of dialect classification that gradually emerged in the past decade, especially in Boretzky’s publications. They classify Romani dialects into seven major groups: Northern, Northeastern, North Central, South Central, Vlax, South Balkan I, and South Balkan II. Most of the groups are termed dialect “families”,

while the Northern and the South Balkan I groups, which show greater internal heterogeneity, are termed dialect “conglomerations”. In addition to the major groups, the authors recognise several dialects with unclear or ambiguous affiliation: Croatian–Slovene–Istrian Romani (referred to as Gopti in the *Atlas*), Abruzzian Romani, and South Russian–East Ukrainian Romani. All the groups are numbered by Roman numerals, and further subgroupings and particular varieties are identified by additional alphanumerical symbols. For example, I.3.3 stands for Piedmontese Sinti (a dialect of the Sinti subgroup of the Northern conglomeration), V.B.3 stands for the Ajia Varvara dialect (of the southern subgroup of the Vlax family), and I/VI stands for Abruzzian Romani (which is considered to be a Northern dialect with some ties to the South Balkan I family). The fact that these numbers, which lack any mnemotechnic value, are used throughout the text makes the reading very tedious: one has to browse back to a list of dialect symbols (on pp. xiii-xv) constantly.

Disregarding some minor modifications such as Matras’ (2002a) introduction of a Northwestern group, Boretzky’s classification of Romani dialects has been widely accepted, to the extent that it is sometimes referred to as the “consensus” classification. It is the historical interpretation of this classification that remains controversial. While Matras (2002a, 2005) considers the division of dialects into the above groups to be merely a useful “reference grid”, the authors of the *Atlas* argue for a deep genealogical reality of the groups. They deem it likely that Romani was significantly differentiated already in its pre-European period (p. 292). Their view of dialect history is perhaps best summarised in a schema of the “separation of dialect families” (II, p. 367), which shows six separate migration routes of Romani speakers out of Anatolia or extreme southeast Europe, corresponding to six out of the seven current dialect groups. The evaluation chapter of the descriptive volume then contains numerous further suggestions regarding migration histories of different Romani groups, some of which sound quite bold to me: for example, the speculation that it is more likely than not that the North Central speakers migrated to Europe only after the South Balkan I speakers did (p. 304). On the whole, speaker migration is clearly the key factor in Boretzky and Igla’s model of Romani dialect history.

To be sure, the authors do not exclude feature diffusion (i.e. without speaker migration) from their model. Nevertheless, they assign it much lesser significance (p. 301), especially in comparison with the crucial position it enjoys in the alternative model developed by Matras. They stress that Romani dialects do not constitute a single dialect continuum, and that neighbouring dialects are not necessarily more similar to

one another than geographically more remote dialects (p. 296). In addition to feature diffusion between adjacent dialects, Boretzky and Igla distinguish another type of inter-dialect contact mechanism, viz. dialect “mixing” through borrowing between coterritorial but structurally distant dialects (p. 300), a mechanism that again requires speaker migration. For example, South Russian–East Ukrainian Romani is considered to be a “mixed” dialect of Northeastern origin with a strong Vlax admixture (pp. 237–238); it is unclear to me why fudged forms such as *voné* ‘they’ (cf. Northeastern *joné* and Vlax *von*) should be seen as evidence for one direction of admixture or another. Unfortunately, dialect mixing is also invoked with some of those dialects that do not fit well with the authors’ dialect classification. There is always a danger here that the application of the concept of dialect mixing in a strict genealogical model might be just an all-mighty conceptual trick, whereby varieties that do not possess the whole set of “defining” features of a genealogical group, which, at least in principle, may be set arbitrarily, are considered to be mixed by default.

The only major dialect group that is not assumed to have resulted from a separate migration of Romani speakers into Europe is, according to the authors’ view, the South Central group. According to their account, this group developed due to an out-migration of some South Balkan I speakers from western Balkans to Hungary and their subsequent contact with speakers of the North Central group (p. 304). Although I tend to see more evidence for the authors’ migration-based scenario for the development of the South Central dialects, I find some of their arguments against an alternative, diffusion-based, scenario rather biased. Currently, the North Central dialects possess an innovative non-indicative copula root *av-*, like the dialects to the north, while the South Central dialects possess the conservative root *ov-*, like the dialects to the south. The diffusionist, Boretzky and Igla claim (p. 304), would have to assume that the South Central dialects once possessed the original *ov-*, then replaced it with *av-*, and only then acquired *ov-* again through diffusion from the south. They rightly view this as a very unlikely scenario. However, since *av-*, not *ov-*, is the innovative form, the diffusionist may simply assume that *av-* failed to diffuse to the South Central dialects from the north. Paradoxically, the authors themselves suggest the same type of an unlikely loss-and-diffusion scenario in case of the lexeme *ruš-* ‘be angry’. They prefer to consider its presence in the South Central dialects to be a result of secondary diffusion from the north (pp. 228), although it is much more straightforward to consider the retention of an inherited item here, which happens not to have been retained in the dialects to the south of South Central.

The above examples bring us to yet another problem of the authors' methodology. Given the genealogical emphasis of their classification model, it is somewhat surprising to see shared retentions, alongside shared innovations, being employed as markers of individual dialect groups. The authors are, of course, aware of the unequal significance of different types of developments (cf. the discussion on pp. 230–231) and they appear to evaluate them accordingly in their analysis. However, the readers would have a better chance to see for themselves whether, and to what extent, the genealogical argument actually holds if the evidence were ordered by type of development (say, shared innovative structure *over* shared loss of a conservative structure *over* shared conservative structure) rather than by language planes or randomly. Without such re-ordering, or without a more explicit summary of shared innovations, it is quite demanding to dig out the actual genealogical evidence from the impressive lists of synchronic similarities and differences within and between dialect groups. Once the readers delve into such an exercise, they may gain doubts about the genealogical reality of some of the groups. To take an extreme example of the loose Northern “conglomeration”, among the 12 features that are exclusive or almost exclusive to it and, at the same time, shared by dialects of all of its subgroups (p. 280), only two are unambiguous internal innovations: the contraction and the semantic shift in **kajekh* ‘some’ > *kek* ‘none’, and the use of the demonstrative (*a*)*kava* in the adverbial ‘today’. It is unclear to me how the assumption of a distinct Northern genealogical lineage could be justified by such thin evidence.

Factual errors are bound to occur in any work that contains such a wealth of data as the *Atlas*. However, having focused on the North Central data, I noticed only very few: the suffix *-ker-* does not have any transitivity function in this dialect group (p. 169); the etymon *dives* ‘day’ has undergone an obligatory palatalisation of its initial dental (p. 209); *dživ-* ‘live’, *ispid-* ‘push’, *lovina* ‘beer’ are widespread (pp. 228, 214, 226); *xanamik* ‘son’s wife’s parent; daughter’s husband’s parent’, *khilav* ‘plumb’ are attested in East Slovak Romani (pp. 225, 160); *ruk* ‘tree’ is attested in Bohemian Romani (p. 218); and a few more. Note that all of these errors can be corrected by using sources cited by the authors, especially Hübschmannová et al.’s (1991) dictionary of East Slovak Romani. The authors automatically interpret all lexemes in this dictionary to be North Central forms. This is problematic since the items marked as “regional” include several that are in fact only attested in the South Central dialects of Slovakia, e.g. *pero* ‘Rom settlement’ (cf. II, p. 358). Though there is not much the authors could

have done to uncover such “ghost” distributions, the reader should be reminded that factors like this may somewhat skew the picture the *Atlas* aims to offer.

Several points of my criticism, which almost exclusively concerns issues of historical interpretation in Boretzky and Iglá’s model of Romani dialect classification, have been raised before (see especially Matras 2002b, 2005). The authors of the *Atlas* have assembled an enormous amount of comparative data, including data on minor structural idiosyncracies, whose relevance for a genealogical dialect classification should not be, in my view, dismissed out of hand. In order to arrive at a more consensual picture of Romani dialect history, however, students of Romani will have to re-evaluate the available data from various theoretical perspectives, in all likelihood employing a thoughtful combination of migration-based and diffusion-based hypotheses.

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Viktor Elšík is Lecturer in Linguistics at Charles University, Prague.
Correspondence address: Libušina 429, 25263 Roztoky u Prahy, Czech Republic. Email:
viktor_elsik@email.cz