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ROMANI STANDARDIZATION AND STATUS
IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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0. Introduction

Romani is one of the few widely-spoken languages of Europe for which basic issues of standardization (orthography, dialectal base, etc.) are in the process of resolution. In Haugen's (1966:16-26) terms, **Romani** is at the stage of selection of a norm. Due to the fact that the Roms are a transnational people, problems of language planning are additionally complicated by the fact that they are being confronted in the frameworks of various and varying state mechanisms. For the Roms of the Republic of Macedonia, issues of identity maintenance and sociopolitical integration must be viewed in the context of an educational policy that has included multilingualism for the past half century in a state that has only recently achieved independence and is surrounded by overt and covert threats to its integrity. This paper will examine a specific event in the current efforts to standardize **Romani**, namely a conference held in Skopje, Macedonia on November 20-21, 1992, and the document that resulted from it. The document itself will be presented together with commentary on its context significance.

1. Macedonia, standardization efforts, and Romani

Macedonia has served as the site for a number of important events in the standardization of three languages of the region, e.g. the Macedonian codification conferences of Skopje in 1944-45, the Albanian Alphabet Conference of Bitola (Manastir) in 1908, and the publication of the **Romani** grammar by Jusuf and Kepeski (1980). For Macedonian, the results of the first codification conference of November-December 1944 were not accepted by the government for a variety of reasons, and attempts to rehabilitate it in the early 1990's were based on party politics. but the basic rules of orthography and morphology were established in May, 1945 (see Friedman

1993). In the case of Albanian, later events in Albania and Kosovia - particularly the literary language unification of 1968-72 - have surpassed the 1908 Conference in overall effect, although the Alphabet Congress itself is enshrined as a crucial step in the establishment of modern standard Albanian (see Skendi 1967:366-90, Byron 1985). In the case of Romani, Jusuf and Kepeski (1980) can be compared to Pulevski (1880), which was an attempt at a Macedonian grammar that is seminal in its signaling of ethnic and linguistic consciousness but not sufficiently elaborated to serve as a codification. The language resolutions adopted at the Fourth World Romani Congress held in Warsaw in 1990 (Cortiade et al. 1991) may become the watershed event in the normativization of Standard Romani, but it is too early to judge.

In the past decade or so, there has been an upsurge in activity related to the use of Romani as a means or subject of education. This is especially true in Eastern Europe, where these efforts have occurred in the context of the region's general sociopolitical upheaval that has its origins in the early eighties and broke the threshold of stability at the end of that decade. One of the results of these events has been a new focus on the situation of Romani as a language of literacy in Macedonia, where the Roms are a constitutionally recognized nationality and constitute 3% of the population (60,000) according to the 1991 census (Velkovska 1991), although the actual number is undoubtedly higher - probably between 6% and 10% - the discrepancy in figures being due to various factors including unaccounted for classifications and the use of religion (Islam) as a possible definer of ethnic identity.

The manuscript of Jusuf and Kepeski (1980) was ready for publication in 1973, the same year as the second meeting of the Language Commission of the World Romani Congress, but publication was delayed for seven years. The alphabet that developed out of the second Language Commission meeting was published at approximately the same time in Kenrick (1981). In the following decade, little progress was made in Macedonia in bringing Romani to a level similar to that of minority languages such as Albanian and Turkish. There had been sporadic attempts at Romani language instruction at the elementary school level, but these classes did not lead to the establishment of a regular pedagogical program. In 1991, TV programming in Romani, and also Vlach (Arumanian), whose speakers accounted for .3% of the population, i.e. about 6,000, according to the 1981 census, was begun in Skopje: fifteen minutes of news on Tuesday and Wednesday, respectively. By mid-1992, Romani and Arumanian each had 25 minutes of TV lime on

Wednesdays. There is also Romani radio programming elsewhere in Macedonia, e.g. Tetovo.

2. The Macebonian Romani Standardization Conference of 1992

The November 1992 conference which is the focus of this article was sponsored by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Macedonia and the Philological Faculty of the University of Skopje for the purpose of reaching an agreement concerning the introduction of Romani as a course of study in Macedonian schools. The conference was attended by a number of Macedonian Roms active in Romani intellectual life, including Šaip Jusuf, Trajko Petrovski, Gjuneš Mustafa, Šaip Isen, Ramo Rušidovski, Tahir Nuhi, Iliaz Zendel, and others. Also present were Donald Kenrick and myself as well as members of the Philological Faculty of Skopje University and the Macedonian Academy of Sciences, most notably Olivera Jašar-Nasteva and Liljana Minova-Gjurkova as well as Živko Cvetkovski, head of the Macedonian Department. It is important to emphasize that a distinction is made between course of study (Macedonian *nastaven predmet*) and language of instruction (*umtaven jazik*).

The ultimate goal of the Roms present at this conference was not the establishment of Romani as a language of instruction in a parallel education system (*nastaven jazik*) but rather the teaching of Romani as a subject in elementary schools and pedagogical academies (*nastaven predmet*), with a view to preparing a cadre of teachers and ultimately a lectureship and Department of Romani at the University of Skopje. One of the explicit goals of Romani politics in Macedonia is the establishment of such a Department, but a qualified cadre of faculty has yet to be trained. It is worth noting that some Roms in Macedonia have been under pressure to assimilate to Albanian or Turkish language - for which government-funded parallel education systems exist in Macedonia - on the basis of shared religion, i.e. Islam, a situation that is also occurring among Macedonian Muslims. The Macedonian government has thus begun to support the preservation of Romani ethnic and linguistic identity not only in connection with Article 48 of the Republic's constitution, which guarantees minority language rights, but also in order to reduce challenges from Albanian and Turkish.

The Romani-identified political party in Macedonia, the Party for the Complete Emancipation of the Roms of Macedonia (Romani *Partija Saste Emancipacijake e Romengiri tari Makedonija*, Macedonian *Partija za Celosna*

Emancipacija na Romite na Makedonija or **PCER**) had at this time one representative in parliament, Faik Abdi. During 1992, a second party, the Democratic Progressive Party of the Roms, split from PCER over various issues, including questions of language standardization, dialectal compromise and the place of Romani in educational institutions (*Nova Makedonija* 21.X.1992:4). It was in this context that the November 1992 conference took place. Although representatives of different sides of Romani politics were present, the conference itself was kept apart from partisan considerations. Nonetheless, the document that resulted from these deliberations, reproduced here in English translation with additional commentary in square brackets, was agreed upon by representatives of the various political currents as well as by the intellectuals that produced it. The document addresses a number of general and specific issues in Romani language standardization and should be viewed in the context of Jusuf and Kepeski (1980), Kenrick (1981), and Cortiade et al. (1991). As indicated above, both Jusuf and Kenrick were present at the conference. Moreover, both Jusuf and Kenrick participated in the deliberations of the Language Commission at the Fourth World Romani Congress, at which Cortiade et al. (1991) was discussed and signed. Jusuf was a signatory to that document, but Kenrick was not. Mention should also be made here of Hancock (1975, 1993), which, while important for the history of Romani standardization, did not have a direct bearing on the 1992 conference. The former had been superseded by subsequent publications and events while the latter had not yet appeared.

3. *The 1992 Romani Standardization Document: text and commentary*

'GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. This codification is for the Romani language as a course of study in the Republic of Macedonia. This codification is viewed as a necessary step toward the international Romani literary language and not in competition with it.'

This statement was intended to address Cortiade et al. (1991). The Romani participants in the conference felt that the situation in Macedonia required a regional standard for use in Macedonian elementary schools, with a view to study of the international standard later. See also comments on the Alphabet.

'2. In view of the fact that the majority of Roms in the Republic of Macedonia use the Arlija dialect, this dialect shall serve as the basis of the Romani literary language in the Republic of Macedonia, but with certain grammatical, phonological, and especially lexical additions (and modifications) from all the Romani dialects of the Republic of Macedonia such as **Džambaz**, **Burgudži**, **Gurbet**, and others.'

Throughout the history of Romani standardization efforts in Macedonia, Arlija has served as the basis, but, as indicated above, this question had become a politically divisive issue. This compromise was satisfactory to all present at the conference.

'ALPHABET

The Romani alphabet in the Republic of Macedonia consists of the following letters in Latin transcription. The corresponding Macedonian orthography is used for Cyrillic.

Aa, Bb, Cc, Čč, Čh/čh, Dd, Dž/dž, Ee, Ff, Gg, Hh, Ii, Jj, Kk, Kh/kh, Ll, Mm, Nn, Oo, Pp, Ph/ph, Rr, Ss, Šš, Tt, Th/th, Uu, Vv, Žž'

The corresponding Cyrillic alphabet would be the following (the order follows that of the Latin alphabet):

Аа, Бб, Ѓѓ, Чч, Чх/чх, Дд, Џџ, Ее, Фф, Гг, Хх, Ии, Јј, Кк, Кх/кх, Лл, Мм, Нн, Оо, Пп, Пх/пх, Рр, Сс, Шш, Тт, Тх/тх, Уу, Вв, 33, Жж

Most of the differences between this alphabet and those proposed in previous works are treated below. Three salient issues not addressed otherwise are the indication of unpredictable stress by means of a grave accent, the use of the acute instead of the *haček* (Romani *čiriklo*) to mark palatals and the use of a special symbol 3 for the voiced palatal affricate (fricative in some dialects) all in Cortiade et al. (1991). The issue of marking stress is not addressed here. Apparently the participants did not feel it was an issue. The use of the *haček* instead of the acute for strident palatals is well established both in East European orthographies and in linguistic transcriptions, as well as in many Romani publications, including both Jusuf and Kepeski (1980) and Kenrick (1981). Despite the fact that a number of publications have appeared in the orthography of Cortiade et al. (1991), the participants in the conference preferred to follow the type of practice currently use in Macedonia and elsewhere (e.g. Petrovski 1992, Hübschmannová 1991 et al.). The same attitude dictated the use of **Dž** instead of 3. The fact that the acute is used for mellow palatals in East European languages that are in

contact with **Romani**, e.g. Serbo-Croatian and Polish, was also felt to favor the use of the *haček* for strident palatals for **Romani** in Macedonia.

The situation can be compared to that of the Albanian alphabet congress of 1908. The crucial decision of that congress was the adoption of the principle that Albanian would be written in a Latin alphabet rather than Arabic or Greek, although the two major Latin alphabets then in use - one based on the principle of one letter per sound the other using digraphs - were both endorsed. Eventually a single alphabet became official. Similarly, while most Roms agree that the alphabet used for **Romani** should be Latin (the mention of Cyrillic is simply for contexts where transliteration of individual items might be desirable in Macedonia, as opposed to the exclusive use of Cyrillic in Mahkov 1992), there is not yet a general consensus concerning the details of orthography. See especially points 4 through 8 below.

COMMENTARY

In some **Romani** dialects, the uvular fricative /x/ is distinguished from the glottal aspirate /h/ and/or the rolled /r/ is distinguished from another related type of sonorant, but in view of the fact that such distinctions are not made in the Arlija dialect special letters [for these distinctions] have not been introduced into the alphabet. Such pronunciations are permitted as literary for those speakers who have such distinctions in their native dialects.'

These are two major contested issues. Jusuf and Kepeski (1980), Kenrick (1981) and Cortiade et al. (1991) all prescribe a graphic distinction for /x/ and /h/, but Jusuf and Kepeski (1980) fail to make the distinction in practice, using both <x> and <h> in the same roots, e.g. xiv, *hiv* "hole", *xor* "depth" but *horadaripe* "deepening", an illustration of the problem that would be encountered by speakers of dialects without the distinction. Given that minimal pairs are extremely rare and that the sounds themselves are in free variation in dialects where they are not phonemic, the majority of Roms at the meeting felt that a single grapheme should be used. In the case of the two types of /r/, Cortiade et al. (1991) makes the distinction facultative while both Kenrick (1981) and Jusuf and Kepeski (1980) give only one /r/ in their standard orthographies.

BASIC ORTHOGRAPHIC, MORPHOLOGICAL AND MORPHOPHONOLOGICAL RULES

I. There is no special sign for the so-called dark vowel (schwa) in the alphabet because the vowel is very rare, marginal, or entirely absent in most

Romani dialects. In the rare instances of schwa in the Arlija dialect, the corresponding form in DZambaz or some other **Romani** dialect with a different vowel will be taken as the literary norm, e.g. instead of Arlija *vërdon* ["wagon"] DZambaz *vurdon* is accepted.'

Schwa is of foreign origin in **Romani** and only occurs in dialects influenced by contact with languages where schwa is phonemic. Its occurrence is generally limited to borrowings from those languages. Thus, for example, in Jusuf and Kepeski's (1980) vocabulary of 2,292 entries, only 31 items, representing at most 21 roots, contain schwa. Although Jusuf and Kepeski (1980) use the sign <ä> for schwa, Kenrick (1981) and Cortiade et al. (1991) both exclude it as dialectal. In view of the fact that many occurrences of schwa in one dialect correspond to some other vowel in another dialect, this was viewed as a good opportunity for expanding the vocabulary of standardized Macedonian **Romani** beyond the limits of the Arlija dialect.

'2. Where there is aspiration in the root of a word, it will always be written, e.g. *jnh* ["eye"].'

Although some dialects have deaspiration of underlying aspirates in some positions, the adoption of the morphophonemic principle of representing the underlying morphophoneme in spelling which is common to many of the languages of Eastern Europe was adopted.

'3. Automatic devoicing is not spelled at the end of a word, e.g. *dad* ["father"].'

Same as point 2 above.

'4. Where an underlying dental or velar stop or sonorant occurs before a front vowel or jot, i.e. t, d, k, g, l, n plus i, e, j, the underlying consonant is used in spelling, e.g. *buti* ["work"], *kerdjum* ["I did"], *geljum* ["I went"], *lil* ["letter"], *pani* ["water"].'

This is an area of both considerable and salient dialectal variation and morphophonemic alternation in **Romani**. Underlying or historical dental and/or velar stops in these positions can be pronounced as palatals and/or with affricated or fricativized articulation in various dialects of Macedonia and elsewhere (see Vencel' and Cerenkov 1976 for details), e.g. Arlija *buti*, DZambaz *buki*, Burgudži *buci*, Gurbet *buči*; singular *buti*/plural *buka*, etc. Similarly, /l/ and /n/ can become palatals or lost, e.g. Arlija *pani* but DZambaz *pai* (<*paŋi). Jusuf and Kepeski (1980) show considerable variation, e.g. writing both <k> and <kj>, <l> and <lj>, etc. before front vowels in the same lexical items at different occurrences. Cortiade et al. (1991) articulates

this same principle for vclars, but has special graphic symbols for alternating dentals and vclars in their function as case markers (also called postpositions, see Friedman 1991), viz. θ and q , respectively. Thus in the orthography of Cortiade et al. (1991) the same morphophonemic alternations have different spellings, while the same graphic symbols have different pronunciations, as illustrated in the following table:

	Cortiade et al. (1991)	1992 Macedo- nian Conference	dialectal pro- nunciations	
Rom (loc. sg.)	Romes θ c	Romcste	[romeste]	[romesde]
Rom (loc. pl.)	Romcn θ e	Romende	[romende]	[romende]
Rom (abl. sg.)	Romes θ ar	Romestar	[romestar]	
Rom (abl. pl.)	Romes θ ar	Romendar	[romendar]	
Rom (dat. sg.)	Romcsq c	Romcskc	[romes \acute{c} e]	[romeske]
Rom (dat. pl.)	Romcnq e	Romengc	[romende]	[romenge]
done (m.sg.pt.)	kcrdo	kcrdo	[derdo]	[kerdo]
done (pl.pt.)	kerde	kerde	[\acute{c} erde]	[kerde]

There has also been confusion in prepositions and adverbs, e.g. and-o “in the” (Cortiade et al. 1991) but *an θ -o* “in the” and *and θ ro* “inside” (Sar \acute{a} u 1992).

It is important to emphasize that in the various dialects of Romani the same phonological changes that effect the dental case endings also effect the dental participial marker, and, similarly, the same processes affect velars before front vowels in both roots and grammatical endings in those dialects with fronting of velars. To this can be added the fact that voicing is distinctive. The Roms present at the 1992 meeting were unanimous in their decision to follow morphophonemic practice and spelling using underlying consonants. Cf. comments on the alphabet above.

‘5. In writing the first person singular aorist the final consonant is preserved according to the root, e.g. kerdo [“done”] > *kerdjum* [“I did”].’

This is a specific example of point 4, but at the same time it specifies the Arlija form of the first singular aorist, which can also be *-em* or *-om*, with or without jotation, and is a salient dialectal feature, i.e. one which is taken by speakers themselves as indicative of dialectal affiliation. In Cortiade et al. (1991), a *ha \acute{c} ek* is used over a vowel that follows a consonant that is jotated

in some dialects but not in others (except in case suffixes, see point 4), e.g. *kerd \acute{o} m*.

‘6. Where there is jotation, it is written with *j*; the letter *i* is only written as a vowel:

Romni, *Romnie*, *Romnja*, *Romnjatar*, etc.

[“nom. sg., voc. sg., nom. pl. abl. pl.”]

Jusuf and Kepeski (1980) are inconsistent in writing <*i*> for <*j*> in final position in some words, e.g. *šaj/šai* “it is possible”, *muj/mui* “mouth”. Similarly, there has been variation in the spelling of feminine obliques under the influence of the nominative e.g. abl. *Romniatar/Romnjatar* for [romnjatar]. Given that /*i*/ can contrast with /*j*/ as indicated in the vocative singular and nominative plural forms of *Romni* “(Romani) woman, wife” cited here, it was agreed that there was a basis for a consistent distinction. See also point 5 above.

‘7. In suffixes where *Džambaz* and other dialects preserve an older *s* which has been lost in Arlija, *s* is written: *devles*, *devlesa*, [“god” acc. sg., instr. sg.] *manges*, *mangesa*, *mangas*, *martgasa* [“want”, 2 sg. short/long, 1 pl. short/ long].’

Jusuf and Kepeski (1980) do not address this issue directly but rather mix forms with and without original /*s*/ throughout the work. In Cortiade et al. (1991) this problem is addressed in the instrumental case but not elsewhere. Thus, for that suffix there is a special grapheme, viz. ζ , but no prescription for other positions where /*s*/ alternates with /*j*/, 0, etc. Hence *devle ζ a*, but *mangesa* or *mangea*. This was another area of important compromise for the Roms present at the conference. The fact that the forms with /*s*/ are older while those without /*s*/ represent dialect-specific innovations gave greater authority to the principle of adopting the compromise.

‘8. The instrumental case is always written with *s*, e.g. *mansa* [“with me”], *Romensar* [“with the Roms”].’

Although /*s*/ > /*c*/ after /*n*/ in the instrumental, the alternation is automatic and so the underlying /*s*/ is kept in spelling. Moreover, in Arlija and some other dialects the instrumental plural has a variant in /-*r*/, although this is not etymological, the Romani participants included it.

‘9. The personal pronouns are the following:

me, *tu*, *vov*, *voj* [1 sg., 2 sg., 3 sg.m., 3 sg. f.]

amen, *tumen*, *von* or *ola* [1 pl., 2 pl., 3 pl.]’

There is considerable variation of form in the third person personal pronouns and in the possessive pronouns. The 1992 conference accepted variation in the third plural personal pronoun but not elsewhere.

'10. The possessive pronouns are the following:

mo, to, po [1 sg., 2 sg., reflexive]

amaro, tumaro [pl., 2 pl.]

leske, lake, lenge [3 sg. m., sg. f., pl.]

See point 10 above. The singular possessive pronouns show the most variation and phonological change. By adopting these forms, those at the conference felt they were choosing those forms which were simplest and most transparent and most easily learned by speakers of other dialects.

'11. The definite articles are the following:

nominative masculine singular: *o*

nominative feminine singular: *i*

all others: *e*

o Rom, i Romni, e Roma, e Romnja, e Romeske, e Romnjake, e Romenge,
etc.'

These are the rules for Džambaz rather than Arlija, which has *o* in the nominative plural. It thus represents a significant dialectal compromise. It also gives equal weight to marked masculine and feminine forms rather than marking the feminine nominative *i* as opposed to the masculine and plural nominative *o* as is done in Arlija.

'12. The comparative is formed with the prefix *po-* or the suffix *-eder*. The superlative is formed with *maj-*.'

At this stage it was felt that the most essential points had been covered and that a basis for further work and elaboration had been established. The points 12 through to 15 were added on as examples of the type of elaboration that would need to be covered in the course of standardization.

'13. The names of the days of the week are the following: ***kurko, palkurko, dujtodi, tritodi, štartodi, pančtodi, savato*** ["Sunday, Monday, etc."]

14. The names of the seasons of the year are the following: *anglonilaj, nilaj, palonilaj, iven* ["spring, summer, etc."]

15. The names of the months are the international ones.'

4. Conclusion

Haugen (1966: 16-26) defines four stages in the development of language planning and standardization: 1) selection of norm, 2) codification of form, 3) elaboration of function, and 4) acceptance by the community (cf. also Ismailji

1991). As was indicated at the beginning of this article, the **Romani** documents under discussion here all represent the first stage. They are proposals, initiatives concerning linguistic form, but their implementation is still in process. When compared with early documents in the histories of other languages spoken in Macedonia (cf. Xhuvani 1905/1980, Koneski 1950, Peco et al. 1972), the 1992 document under consideration here can be seen to be of the same basic type. In addition to addressing essential issues such as dialectal base and alphabetical form, features of phonology and morphology that are most basic, problematic and/or salient to speakers themselves are those for which norms are specified. Language contact is generally studied in terms of lexical and structural borrowing, but **normativization** can also be seen as a contact process, especially in a context such as that of **Romani** in Macedonia. The elaboration of a **Romani** standard in Macedonia is taking place not only in the environment of the international **Romani** movement, but also in contact with other standard languages that have themselves only recently achieved elaboration and acceptance, which are in fact on-going processes. Just as Lunt (1951), by encouraging Macedonian grammarians to use the third singular present as the citation form of the verb, had a significant impact on the standardization of conjugational types, so too, documents such as that produced by the 1992 Skopje conference have the potential to influence the on-going process of **Romani** normativization in such a way that the lessons of other languages can be applied and modified where appropriate.

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