

A Caucasian Loanword in Romani¹
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Linguistic evidence for European Romani's contact with the languages of the Caucasus appears to be limited to borrowings from East Armenian, Ossetian, and to an extremely small number of lexical items from Georgian, e.g., *khilav* 'plum' (Georgian *kliavi*) and *khoni* 'suet' (Georgian *koni*) (v. Pobožniak 1964:79).² I would propose that Romani *čamčáli* (pl. *čamčálie*) 'eyelash', which was recorded by Paspatis (1870:526-27) and characterized by him as etymologically obscure, is from Georgian *čamčami* 'eyelash' and is thus to be added as one of the very few non-Indo-European Caucasian loanwords in Romani.

The nonfinal stress indicates that *čamčáli* is of non-native origin,³ and there is no Indo-European, Semitic, or Altaic word that seems to explain it both phonologically and semantically. Evidence from other Romani dialects indicates that 'eyelash' was either rendered by *phov* 'brow' (Sanskrit *bhrū*; Ješina 1882:69, 90)⁴ or was unquestionably borrowed, e.g., *žjana* (Romanian *geana*), *klepke* (pl., Macedonian *klepka*), *kuprukja* (pl., Turkish *kirpik*).⁵

Phonologically, the adaptation of /c/ to /č/ (glottalization was lost) is a regular one for borrowings into Turkish, which clearly influenced the dialects recorded by Paspatis in this respect, e.g., *fitiča* 'a type of mushroom' (Modern Greek *fyúta*), *pivavica* 'leech' (Bulgarian *pijavica*; Paspatis 1870:233, 430). The problem of Romani /l/ for Georgian /m/ has two possible explanations. One of these is dissimilation, which occurs inconsistently with /n/ in this dialect (Paspatis 1870:172, 487). The old Georgian plural of *čamčami* is *čamčamni* (the modern plural marker *-ebi* can still be replaced by the now archaic *-ni* for stylistic purposes), and the form is usually attested in the plural (Abuladze 1973:532). In Romani, the Old Georgian plural would still look like a feminine nominative singular and so could have been borrowed as such. We thus have a source for /n/, which could have absorbed the post-tonic /m/ and, as will be seen below, could have been dissimilated or denasalized to /l/ later in the dialect described by Paspatis. Another possible source of /l/ could have been a Daghestanian form or process. Dargwa has *čimičali* 'eyelash' from a reduplicated root *čVm- (Murkelinskij 1971:48) and Tabassaran has both *čabčam* and *čalčim* 'eyelash' (Xajdakov 1973:48). The parallel between Daghestanian and Kartvelian, where the word is also of reduplicative origin, is striking (Klimov 1964:242).

Another argument in favor of a Georgian source for Romani *čamčáli* is cultural. In modern Georgia, *čamčami* is used as a type of shibboleth to see whether foreigners can produce glottalized consonants.⁶ It is entirely possible that this practice was already current in Georgia when the Roms arrived there; perhaps even the plural was used. Due to their constant interaction with other peoples, Roms are both polyglot and highly language conscious. If *čamčami/čamčamni* was being used as a shibboleth in Old Georgia, the Roms would have been aware of its meaning as well as of its status. They would have been in a position to use it, e.g., jocularly, in their own language, and subsequently it could have become the established form, especially if *phov* was already doing double duty for 'eyebrow' and 'eyelash'.

Looking at dialects other than those described by Paspatis, we can find several that may have preserved this loanword. In the Romani of the district of Ayia Varvara in Athens, whose speakers probably came from Turkey within the past hundred years, 'eyelash' is *sampsálo*, and Messing equates this with Paspatis's *čamčáli* (Messing Forthcoming). The change of /č/ to /s/ (probably

via /c/ through Greek bilingualism) is attested elsewhere in Messing's corpus, e.g., *seliko* 'steel' (Turkish *çelik*). The change of gender is likewise not problematic, e.g., Modern Greek *kostóumi* 'suit' is borrowed as *kostúmo* (Messing: Forthcoming). The intrusion of /p/ is not attested elsewhere in the corpus, but it is typical of Modern Greek phonology, which could have served as the source, e.g., *Sampsoun* 'Samsun' (Anatolia).

The Caló form *sosimbres* 'eyelashes' cited by Borrow (1901:410) which Pott (1845:250) attempts to derive by conflating Hungarian *szem* 'eye' with Romani *phov*, may in fact derive from the abovementioned Georgian plural form *čamčamni*. There is no /c/ in Caló, and /s/ can also be a reflex of /c/ in Spanish. The cluster /mn/ would have given /mbr/ under Spanish phonotactics (e.g., *hombre* from *hom(i)nes*). The plural in *-es* is a regular Caló borrowing from Spanish, and the loss of the first /m/ before /s/ is similarly attributable to Spanish phonological rules (cf. *mesa* from *mensa*). The vocalism is problematic, but labialization and either metathesis or dissimilation could account for the /o/ and the /i/. If Caló *sosimbres* is also of Georgian origin, then the ancestors of the Gitanos must have separated from the Roms of the Ottoman empire before the latter developed /l/ in *čamčáli*.

Finally, Romani dialects from Yugoslavia show both types of development. The Mečkar dialect of Kosovo has *camcale* (pluralia tantum; Marcel Cortiade: personal communication) which may well preserve the original Georgian dental. The Bosnian Gurbet form *cincána* (Uhlík 1983:90) might also derive from original *čamčamni* with the assimilation of /m/ to /n/ and the raising and backing of /a/ to /i/ either under stress before the nasal or unstressed via schwa, both of which processes are known in Romanian, which significantly influenced this Romani dialect.

NOTES

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²I am indebted to Prof. Ian Hancock of the University of Texas for bringing *khilav* and *khoni* to my attention.

³Georgian stress rules are much debated, but stress is never final.

⁴Cf. also Hamp E.Indo-European "(H_e)op". *Münchener Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft* 40, 1981, 35-38, also v. *Ériu*, 35, 1984, 202.

⁵The Romanian word is used in Kalderaš (Ian Hancock: personal communication) as well as in other dialects (Uhlík 1983:90). Marcel Cortiade of the French Embassy in Albania informs me that the Macedonian word is used in the Cergar dialect and that the Turkish (also cf. Albanian *qerpik*) occurs in the Kabudžie dialect.

⁶I am indebted to Prof. Dee Ann Holisky of George Mason University for this information.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Archaisms in Romani

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It is often thought that because a language has undergone notable effects of contact diffusion (an interesting topic in itself) its interest as a witness to archaic survival is minimal. The notion seems to be that since known change has occurred the entire language has been so invaded and depleted that no interest for history remains. In fact, the isolation which has facilitated new contacts may also have provided the conditions for archaic conservation.

Contacts may, too, have furnished the conditions for what Goethe called *Wahlverwandtschaft*, that is, the selective shared retention of similar inheritances. Romani exemplifies these themes in a striking way. But there will be time to explore only one syndrome of examples of the first type.

The verb stem 'to fill' occurs in Welsh Romani (WR) as *phārd-* and in Balkan Romani (BR) as *pher-*. A careless attempt to give an Indo-European historical account of these forms might seek to derive the sequence *ph--r-* somehow from the Indo-European base **pelH₂*, which we see in Latin *plēnus*, Russian *polnyj*, English *full*, German *voll* and *viel*. As we must recognize, an Indo-European voiceless (e.g. **p*) cannot give a Romani aspirate (e.g. *ph*). Therefore an Indo-European base beginning in what we traditionally reconstruct as **bh* will be the only acceptable ancestor for WR *phārd-* and BR *pher-*.

Now let us shift our attention to the word WR *phārō* BR *pharo* 'heavy'. Sampson (1926:292) has correctly traced *phārō* to Indic *bhārika-*, which would be a derivative of *bhāra-* 'load, burden', but he has not commented on the morphology of this form in detail. Actually we have here a very valuable attestation of an Indo-European formation in Indic. It is easy to see that semantically 'heavy' is derived from 'burden', i.e. 'burden-ed' or 'burden-like'. In turn, 'load, burden' is derived as a nominalization from the verbal notion 'carry, bear' just as we find in English *bur-den* from *bear*.

In Indo-European a well known normal way to form nominalizations from verbal roots was to inflect the base in what we call the thematic