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MIRJANA MIRIĆ & SVETLANA ČIRKOVIĆ, *GURBETSKI ROMSKI U KONTAKTU: ANALIZA BALKANIZAMA I POZAJMLJENICA IZ SRPSKOG JEZIKA* [GURBET ROMANI IN CONTACT: THE ANALYSIS OF BALKANISMS AND SERBIAN LOANWORDS]. BELGRADE: INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES SASA, 2022, 229 P.

*Reviewed by Anđela Redžić\**

As it may be seen from the very precise and informative title, the authors focus on the linguistic phenomena occurring in Gurbet Romani as spoken by both adults and children in Knjaževac, a city in eastern Serbia, and in the adjacent village of Miničevo. The monograph is written in the Serbian language, enabling the scholarly community to acquire valuable insights into the understudied Romani language in Serbia. Furthermore, it provides the Roma community in Serbia with a sense of linguistic acknowledgment, given that it approaches Romani on a par with any other language. The purpose of this review is to present and recommend the book for further reading and research by offering a comprehensive overview of its content and technical aspects.

The monograph is divided into five chapters. "Introduction" and "Linguistic Material" are followed by two extensive chapters that delve into the topics outlined in the title "Balkanisms in the Knjaževac Gurbet Romani" and "Serbian Loanwords in the Knjaževac Gurbet Romani". The last chapter, "Concluding Remarks", is followed by a comprehensive summary in English, and an extensive list of literature. The monograph also offers an index of concepts, enhancing its accessibility and facilitating targeted search. Mirić and Čirković make use of tables and charts to ensure a comprehensive presentation of research findings, enabling the reader better to understand and visualize the data.

The introductory part of the monograph provides an overview of the Romani language, its various dialects, and the sociolinguistics surrounding it. Romani is "primarily a spoken language, usually used

within familial settings, among members of the speaker community, and without a unified standard" (p. 11). As a language lacking a specific homeland, it is particularly valuable as a subject of study from a sociolinguistic perspective, the perspective of minority languages, as well as typological and contactological studies, given that its speakers are invariably in contact with other, typically majority languages, and usually are bilingual or multilingual from early childhood. The authors briefly but meticulously deal with assessments of the Romani language vulnerability and the existing problems in that assessment: the language-nation relationship, the number of speakers, and the Romani language use in Serbia itself, specifically in Knjaževac and its environs. Previous research<sup>1</sup> has demonstrated that the Romani language "is passed on to younger generations of speakers, and in addition, the preservation of the language is stimulated by teaching the Romani language in primary schools, language workshops [...], and by publishing activity" (p. 19). By the end of the introductory chapter, readers' attention may be drawn to a noteworthy theoretical examination of the distinction between code-switching and borrowing,

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<sup>1</sup> M. Mirić, "Tendencies in expressing verbal aspect in Gurbet Romani: pilot experimental study with elementary-school children". In *Studies in language and mind* 3, eds. Sabina Halupka-Rešetar & Silvia Matrinez-Ferreiro, (Novi Sad: Faculty of Philosophy, 2019), 47–92.

two phenomena with a mostly unclear border in linguistics and of great importance for Romani language research. In the second chapter, Mirić and Ćirković delineate the methodology of collecting and transcribing the material of the Knjaževac Gurbet Romani, as well as used examples, along with which they also explain abbreviations used in glossing. The analysis of Balkanisms and loanwords is conducted on a sample of about 16,000 words, supplemented by additional examples drawn from the already published texts.<sup>2</sup> Metadata about the research participants is presented in two tables, one concerning adults, the other children. These tables contain information regarding the place and date of recording, word count, as well as the age and gender of the interlocutors, whose personal names have been withheld to protect their anonymity. The entire material is archived in the Digital Archive of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, and the authors point out that it is accessible to researchers upon request. Access to the data necessitates adherence to a protocol governing its use.

The third chapter presents a study of morphosyntactic Balkanisms, drawing upon Victor A. Friedman's exhaustive list of Balkanisms in Romani.<sup>3</sup> The authors commence this chapter by introducing the concept of the Balkan Sprachbund and situating the Romani language within it. Due to the marginalization of Romani, two-way bi- and multilingualism, which are considered the fundamental drivers of Balkanization processes and the integration and survival of Balkanisms, did not occur. The introduc-

tory part of this chapter – together with an introduction to each Balkanism under study – merits reading, reference to relevant literature, and further research for those predominantly interested in Balkan studies. In the chapter's conclusion, Mirić and Ćirković place Knjaževac Gurbet Romani within the languages/dialects of the Balkan Sprachbund according to features: the definite article, preservation of the vocative case, analytical declension, replacement of the infinitive with finite complementation, the use of the universal complementizer *kaj*, and the analytical future with the future particle *ka* (e.g., pp. 127–128). The authors further analyse and provide examples of prominent Balkanisms which are less developed in Romani than in other Balkan languages/dialects. Those are: accusative doubling, object reduplication and analytical constructions with prepositions. Given the particular interest of the author of this review in the use of cases, the text that follows will place greater emphasis on this aspect. The occurrence of accusative doubling is close to object reduplication (p. 65), and both are related to the general case use and syncretism between case forms. The nominal inflection in Romani displays the highest resistance to Balkanization processes. In this regard, it is essential to note that the Romani language case system is distinct compared to other Balkan languages/dialects, primarily in terms of the number of case endings, of which there are eight: nominative, genitive, dative, ablative, accusative, vocative, instrumental, and locative cases (for greater clarity, the cases and case relationships within nouns and pronouns in Knjaževac Romani are listed in Tables 4, 5, and 6). Moreover, case endings are appended after an agglutinative suffix, referred to as a second-layer marker in Romani linguistics (p. 66). Animate nouns express a direct object with the aforementioned agglutinative suffix, while inanimate nouns use the nominative in this function. The authors employ the term *nominative* in this as well as in other functions

<sup>2</sup> Б. СИКИМИЋ, ed., *Језик и традиција књажевачких Рома* (Knjaževac: Народна библиотека "Његош", 2018).

<sup>3</sup> V. A. Friedman, "Romani in the Balkan Linguistic League". In *Valkanike Glossologia: Sygkronia kai Diakronia / Balkanlinguistik: Synchronie und Diachronie*, eds. Christos Tzitzilis & Charalambos Symeonidis, (Thessaloniki: University of Thessaloniki, 2000), 95–105.

where the case that could be characterized as a *general case* is encountered, guided by the morphological principles that underlie implicit grammatical rules in the Romani language. As this type of syncretism is also present in Serbian and other Balkan languages (it is also the most prevalent type of syncretism in all languages,<sup>4</sup> the above data highlight the special importance of the Romani nominal system for examining the dissemination of Balkan-type analyticism in the synthetic case system. Concerning analytical case constructions, it is particularly noteworthy that in the investigated Romani variety, they are expressed through a combination of prepositions and nominatives (and this can also be the case with animate nouns) (see example 36b, p. 89). The results of the analysis show that the inflectional form of the locative has been lost, while the genitive and ablative are confirmed by a smaller number of examples. Additionally, the instrumental is also replaced by analytical constructions, although its synthetic forms are still frequent. The remaining cases in the synthetic form exhibit considerable stability. Mirić and Ćirković conclude the chapter by suggesting that they see further research in the semantic analysis of case use, and we can hope that we shall soon have the opportunity to read about it.

In the fourth chapter, Serbian loanwords are analysed, quantitatively and qualitatively. The authors address the complex issue of determining the origin of loanwords in the Romani language, specifically whether they were borrowed directly from Serbian or indirectly, through Serbian mediation, from another language. The solution they come up with includes both words from the Serbian language and those that entered Romani through it, primarily English loanwords, while words for which the

origin cannot be precisely determined, that is, those that also exist in other Balkan languages/dialects (such as *coffee*), are excluded from the analysis. This analysis is also conducted based on speech corpora derived from both elder and child speakers, enabling a diachronic perspective, which is a novelty in Romani studies on loanwords. This approach proves to be of considerable value for the study of Romani, a language that lacks substantial older materials for comparative purposes. When analysing the two corpora, Mirić and Ćirković observe no substantial generational differences as regards the presence and borrowing frequency of Serbian loanwords: "The established similarities indicate that both generations of speakers are characterized by the same type of bilingualism and language mixing" (p. 157).

The results of the quantitative analysis show that approximately 30% of the word tokens in the sample are borrowed from Serbian. When considering word classes, Serbian loanwords account for more than 50% of the overall corpus. These results are effectively visualized through eight charts, depicting various aspects of the quantitative analysis. The first four charts display the percentage of occurrence of all Romani words and Serbian loanwords, as well as the percentage of lemmas originating from both Roma and Serbian sources. The other charts show the percentage of lemmas of Romani and Serbian origin across different word classes, along with the frequency of use of Romani words and Serbian loanwords within these word classes. The results provide a hierarchy of borrowing according to their frequency in the corpus: "pragmatic particles, conjunctions > nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, indefinite pronouns > prepositions, grammatical particles, complementizers, numerals > demonstrative, personal, possessive, interrogative and reflexive pronouns, definite article" (p. 158). The most conservative are the definite article and various types of pronouns (see above), where 100% of the lemmas within the given word

<sup>4</sup> M. Baerman, D. Brown & G. Corbett, *The Syntax-Morphology Interface: A Study of Syncretism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

class are of Romani origin. Numbers and quantifiers, interrogative pronouns as well as original Romani prepositions exhibit notable resistance to borrowing. Conversely, the influence of Serbian loanwords is the greatest in the group of conjunctions and pragmatic particles.

The qualitative analysis focuses on the morphological adaptation of inflected word classes in the context of Serbian loanwords. The Serbian loanwords remain in the same word class but integrate into Romani grammatical patterns. Nouns are frequently borrowed: masculine nouns may acquire the suffix *-o* in the nominative case, while feminine nouns retain the original form from the Serbian language. Irrespective of gender, all loaned nouns are accompanied by the definite article. Adjectives are also frequently borrowed and, regardless of the gender of the noun they agree with, they receive the suffix *-o*. Verbs in the Romani language represent another word class with complex morphosyntactic properties, which may pose challenges to those learning the language. In this regard, the basic information and literature cited by Mirić and Ćirković are highly valuable. “Romani verbs consist of a root to which suffixes are added that mark different categories, such as valence, perfectiveness [...] and markers that signal whether the verb is borrowed” (p. 177). In Knjaževac Gurbet Romani the verbs borrowed from Serbian receive the component *-i-* or *-o-* in the present tense, while in the past tense markers *-sard-* (for transitive) and *-salj-* (for reflexive/reciprocal verbs) are employed. Notably, the marker *-sard-* occurs often with intransitive verbs in Knjaževac Gurbet Romani. As one of the factors influencing this phenomenon, the authors refer to agency, considering that even with intransitive verbs, an agent or initiator is present in the context (p. 182). Moreover, Knjaževac Gurbet Romani has borrowed the particle *bi* from the Serbian language for the construction of the conditional, *nek(a)* for the imperative, and consistently uses the modal verb

*mora* in the 3rd person singular. Adverbs are another word class for which earlier authors emphasized the origin of contact languages, and the structure of Knjaževac Gurbet Romani confirms this. Pertaining to the analysed loanwords, it is particularly noteworthy that each chapter addressing a specific word class provides basic information, and reviews prior research on the subject.<sup>5</sup>

The fifth and final chapter summarizes the results of the two main chapters and offers concluding remarks. The authors, Mirjana Mirić and Svetlana Ćirković, modestly acknowledge potential limitations of their methodology and analysis, and propose guidelines for future research. Overall, the monograph contributes considerably to understanding the Romani language in Serbia, the phenomenon of Balkanisms and loanwords, as well as the contact of the Romani language with Serbian. The relevance of this monograph goes beyond the realm of Romani studies, being of interest to scholars engaged in the fields of Balkan linguistics as well as to those concerned with the Serbian language and its dialects.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. E. Adamou & K. Granqvist, “Univenly mixed Romani languages”, *International Journal of Bilingualism* 19/5 (2015), 187–227; E. Adamou & Y. Matras, “Romani Syntactic Typology”. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Romani Language and Linguistics*, eds. Yaron Matras & Anton Tenser, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 49–81.

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