SPECIAL ISSUE ON EASTERN EUROPE
Volume 44, Number 1, October 1991

Since 1948, World Politics has offered analytical and theoretical articles, research notes, and review articles in international relations, comparative politics, political theory, foreign policy, and modernization, as well as in history, geography, economics, military affairs, and sociology. Under the editorial sponsorship of the Center of International Studies at Princeton University, World Politics publishes original papers on the frontiers of research and scholarship. Contents of this special issue on Eastern Europe include:

Introduction / Nancy Bermeo
Now out of Never: The Element of Surprise in the East European Revolution of 1989 / Timur Kuran
Legitimation from the Top to Civil Society: Political-Cultural Change in Eastern Europe / Giuseppe Di Palma
Social Science, Communism, and Political Change / Andrew C. Janos

Political Dynamics of the Post-Communist Transition: A Comparative Perspective / Russell Bova

The National Uprisings in the Soviet Union / David D. Laitin

Published quarterly in October, January, April, and July.

Please enter my subscription to WORLD POLITICS:
☐ $20.00 individual ☐ $40.00 institution

Subscribers in Canada and Mexico add $4.75 postage; outside North America, add $8.50. Payment must be drawn on a U.S. bank or by international money order. Maryland residents add 5% sales tax. Canadian residents add 7% GST. Toll-free number for charge orders only: 1-800-537-JHUP.

Payment Options:
☐ Check or money order payable to: Johns Hopkins University Press
☐ Bill me ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard Card # Exp. Date

Signature

Name

Address

City/State/Zip

Send order with payment to: The Johns Hopkins University Press, Journals Publishing Division, 701 W. 40th St., Suite 275, Baltimore, MD 21211-2190.

Reviews


The Gypsies, descendants of a group of people that left India in roughly the ninth century A.D. and made their way westward through the Middle East and Turkey to Greece and thence northward, have been a presence in Greece in one form or another for possibly as long as 700 years. They refer to themselves natively as roma (plural of rom, the word for 'man; husband', with feminine form romni 'woman; wife') and their language is generally referred to by outsiders (gadže 'non-Gypsies') as Romani (also Romany, in the older spelling Messing adopts), and by the roma themselves as romani (ufip), literally "(the) roms' language". After the Gypsies passed through the Balkans, great numbers of them moved on to other parts of Europe and elsewhere, but a significant number remained in or returned to Greece. A recent European Community report by M. Siguan concerning minority populations in Spain, Portugal, and Greece (Les minorités linguistiques dans la communauté économique européenne: Espagne, Portugal, Grèce [Luxembourg 1990]) places the number of roma now living in Thrace alone at 22,000.

Throughout this time, the roma have almost always been relegated to a low and somewhat marginal social standing within Greece and elsewhere (for a view of the Balkans, see Hugh Poulton's Minorities in the Balkans [Minority Rights Group Report 82, 1989] and for a perceptive, sensitive, and occasionally chilling essay on the treatment of Gypsies in Western societies, see Ian Hancock's The Pariah Syndrome: An Account of Gypsy Slavery and Persecution [Karoma Publishers, 1987]). As a result, the Greek Gypsies as a group have not attracted much attention among scholars interested in Greece, although there is in general a healthy interest in Gypsy studies focusing on other groups of Gypsians, as evidenced, for example, by the long publication history of the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society.

The tradition of a closed and tightly knit social group somewhat alienated from mainstream Greek culture makes field work among the Gypsies in general rather difficult. Nonetheless, Gordon Messing managed to gain entry amongst the sedentary Gypsies of Agia Varvara, a suburb of Athens, and over a period of some 15 years beginning in 1973 collected an enormous amount of information about the particular form of Romani spoken in this Gypsy community. (Another source is Birgit Igl's Grammatik der Kalderash, an unpublished 1989 dissertation done at Ruhr University, Bochum, Germany. Thanks to Professor Ian Hancock of the University of Texas for this infor-
nition and also for reading and commenting upon an early draft of this
review.)

Interestingly, as Messing points out (p. 11), it is likely that “the immediate
ancestors of these Gypsies came to Greece from Turkey perhaps not much
earlier than the last part of the nineteenth century,” for Agia Varvara Romani
“bears a markedly close relationship to the Turkish Romani so ably described
by Paspati in his magnificent account of 1870.”

Messing’s contribution to Gypsy linguistic and cultural studies is self-
evident: in this book are to be found not only a brief grammatical sketch of
this dialect of Greek Romani but also some sample texts, an extensive Romani-
English glossary covering more than 1200 lexical items, complete with
examples of use taken from texts and interviews, and an English-Romani word-
list that can be used as an index to the Romani-English lexicon.

Given the significant contribution of this work to Gypsy studies, one
might well ask whether it has any relevance for Modern Greek studies. The
answer is clearly yes, for at least two reasons.

First, while the field of Modern Greek studies has generally concerned
itself only with matters Greek, it is possible instead to view the field as including
the study of all aspects of modern Greek, and not just the language of the
Greeks, the literature of the Greeks, the architecture of the Greeks, the social
organization of the Greeks, etc. Under such a view, the non-Greek minority
speech communities living in Greece would be just as much a relevant part of
Modern Greek studies as would the culture and language of the Greek
majority as they are part of the fabric of modern Greece. Messing’s
book, then, would necessarily take on significance for the Neohellenist, even
though it deals with Gypsy life and language.

Second, Romani gives evidence of significant linguistic contact with the
Greek language, as is described in more detail below. This evidence provides
a glimpse into the processes of linguistic borrowing and assimilation involving
the Greek language that must have occurred within the boundaries of Greece,
e.g. in the Byzantine and Medieval periods via contact with Slavic speakers
in the north and with Albanian speakers in central Greece or during the
period of Turkish domination. As such, the Neohellenist can ill afford to
ignore the contribution modern Romani can make to our understanding of the
forces that shaped the Greek language. Moreover, the borrowings and
restructurings in Agia Varvara Romani triggered by contact with Greek gram-
mar give insights into the power relationship between Greek and the minority
languages of modern Greece, and as such are valuable for understanding aspects of
the political and social situation in Greece today.

With regard to the linguistic contact, it must first be noted that Romani
is an Indic language, i.e. part of the branch of the Indo-European language
that includes the ancient language Sanskrit and modern languages such as
Hindi or Bengali. Indeed, there is a significant Indic component in Romani
grammar (e.g. eight nominal cases, as in Sanskrit, and indicative negation
with na versus imperative negation with ma, cf. Sanskrit na versus ma:) and
vocabulary (e.g. the lower—more basic—numerals such a (y)ek(h) ‘one’, du1
two’, trin ‘three’, star ‘four’, panti ‘five’, so(v) ‘six’, cf. the corresponding Sanskrit
neuter na versus ma:) and vocabulary (e.g. the lower—more basic—numerals
such as (y)ek(h) ‘one’, du ‘two’, trin ‘three’, star ‘four’, panti ‘five’, so(v) ‘six’, cf. the corresponding Sanskrit neuter forms ekam, ave, trima, cati, pani, sa. Nonetheless, Agia Varvara Romani (like all other Romani dialects) shows many
non-Indic features.

For example, there are numerous Turkish lexical items (e.g. buluto
‘cloud’ from Turkish bulutu, merdiva ‘stairs’ from Turkish merdiven, sade ‘only’
from Turkish sade, to name just a few) and grammatical features (e.g. the
tense-suffix -di- and the use of -im (1SG), -sin (2SG), etc. as verbal person/
number endings). The extent of Turkish influence on this dialect of Romani is
significant, but it dates from an earlier stage of contact. More important
for the Neohellenist, however, is the more recent intimate contact with Greek,
for there is also a significant influence of Greek in Agia Varvara Romani.

The Greek influence includes not just the borrowing of Greek lexical items (e.g., to name but a few, mustakou ‘moustache’, paraponta ‘complaints’, preci
‘it is necessary’, and kitmisarou ‘I esteem’ from ehtimio with the common Balkan
use of the aoristic stem (e)timos- as the basis for the borrowing of a verb, as
also in verbs such as psonisarou ‘I go shopping’, zalidesav ‘I get dizzy’, etc.),
but other more pervasive influences as well. For example, there are numerous
calques (loan translations) in the Romani material, in which Greek phrases
are translated word-for-word into Romani. A few out of the many cases
Messing notes are dezanav-se avrol (p. 6) ‘I know it by heart’, literally “I-know it from-outside”, calqued on Greek to ksero ap ekso, and the use of the verb
lav ‘take’ in the expression ‘to call someone on the telephone’ (p. 84), as in
liem-les telifono, literally “I-took him telephone”, calqued on Greek ton pira
teléfono.

Also found is influence on Romani grammatical structure; for example,
a conditional verb form occurs that consists of ka, the future marker, plus a
past tense, e.g. ka mangavas ‘I should like’, modeled on Greek tha tihele, and
a double-accusative construction is found for the verb ph(her)av ‘fill’, e.g. pherdem
mi poshi par’s ‘I-filled my pocket (with) money’, apparently based on the Greek
yemisa hrmatou tin ðepi mu. Finally, as an example showing that all linguistic
components of Romani are affected by contact with Greek, the semantic shift
with sou (p. 116) can be cited; this word, of Indic origin, originally meant
‘needle, pin’, but has come to mean ‘spit’ as well, owing to its resemblance to
the Greek síkva ‘spit’ “although this has a wholly different origin, viz. from
Latin subula originally] awl.”

Most of the Gypsies interviewed were also speakers of Greek, and what
is found is not just that numerous Greek lexical items and phrases occur
in their Romani, but also that in general, as Messing puts it (pp. 28–29), “speakers
of this dialect are constantly switching codes [between Greek and Romani],
and often the Greek term is the only one available.” As he explains it, “these
are city Gypsies, they need to talk about many subjects for which their own
language cannot easily furnish words, and so, being bilingual they employ
the Greek word.” In a sense, then, Greek words are a “default setting” always
available for the bilingual speakers to fall back on. As such, their occurrence
is not at all unusual and Messing has wisely decided to omit the Greek words
used by Romani speakers in technical areas of vocabulary.

This last point means that the amount of overt evidence in this work
of Greek influence is probably less than the Hellenist would no doubt want to see, despite the pervasiveness of the effects of Greek on Romani. Also, though, Messing is generally quite cautious and is careful not to attribute more to Greek influence than can be documented. As noted above, the extent of Turkish influence on this dialect of Romani is certainly significant, even if it stems from contact at an earlier period than the contact with Greek. As an example of just how difficult it can therefore be to determine the source of a word or usage in Romani, consider that the Romani word for 'coat' is *palti*, as it is in Greek, but that the word could just as easily have entered Romani from contact with Turkish, since *palti* is also the Turkish word for 'coat'. Similarly, the verb *pjav*, of Indic origin in Romani, means both 'drink' and 'smoke' and thus might make one think of the range of meanings of Greek *πίνω*, except that the Turkish verb for 'drink', *iç-,* also means 'smoke'; thus, the multiple meanings could come from Turkish as easily as from Greek. In some cases, though, Messing was probably being overcautious with his silence; for instance, it would seem that *sirdav* 'pull, drag' (p. 113) must be based on the aorist stem *sir-* of Greek *σηρνε* (with an added *-d* as in *spilav/spildav* 'push, shove'), and that *drom* 'road, street, time' (p. 60) must ultimately at least be from Greek *δρόμος*.

I noticed remarkably few typographical errors and other lapses. Perhaps the only non-self-correcting ones to mention here are as follows: p. 79, under *kismeti*, the Turkish form given as *kizmeti* 'lucky' should be *kismeti* and p. 128, the Turkish form *çifci* for 'garbage collector' should be *çifti*.

Messing intends this book to be one of a series on Agia Varvara Romani, with future volumes to include a detailed grammar and a collection of texts. Whatever the fate of those future works, there is no small amount of value and of interest in the present book that Messing is to be commended by one and all for having produced it. This volume enriches not only the field of Romani studies but also the field of Modern Greek studies, construed in its broadest sense.

**Brian D. Joseph**

*The Ohio State University*

Whether "the process of production," the cognitive path followed by any particular oral poet in creating a given song, can be inferred from an ultimately subjective series of scholastic divisions is another question. Do poets put songs together the same way that scholars like Sifakis take them apart? It would be hard to know unless a talented singer such as Milman Parry's Yugoslav bard, Avdo Međedović, could be found and studied in the very act of performance.

Our lack of information regarding the social context and function of the songs and our relative ignorance of any accompanying music raise other difficulties that Sifakis acknowledges but then ignores. Nor does he engage in the literary interpretation of individual songs. No poem is cited or analyzed in its entirety. This is strictly a study of poetics.

The disciplines of semiotics and linguistics very much govern the author's approach to the demotic songs, which he sees as a "semiotic system" (p. 25). Like normal language, the language of popular songs possesses spheres of competence and performance. Poetic language is of course distinct from normal language in its periodicity and, according to Aristotle, in the way it addresses the "general" (τα καθόλου) in contradistinction to history, which is concerned with the particular (p. 41).

Sifakis draws on the work of the Homerist Milman Parry, who first defined the formula in oral poetry as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea" (p. 83). Subsequent research has progressively revised this definition in the direction of flexibility. With Sifakis one can see that almost all of the components of the original definition have come unmoored. A look at his definition of the units of Greek folk poetry is necessary in order to see how this is so (p. 128 ff.):

1) **Formulas.** These follow the original definition. They have a common signified and a common signer allowing for small changes which do not alter their metrical value. Cf. *τι να σας ποι, μαύρα παιδιά...* and *τι να ας ποι, μορφε παιδιά...*

2) **Allomorphs.** These have a common signified and a common syntagmatic structure. Length, and therefore metrical value, are not restrictive features; a half line unit and a full line or longer unit may be allomorphs. Cf. τρία τουφέκια των βρον... and τρεις παταρίες τους ἐρέξαν...*

3) **Variants.** These have the same signified, but different syntagmatic structures and different signifiers (although some formulas may be shared in common). In contradistinction to formulas, variants are usually complex units. Cf. Ου Γώργος άρπαξε τ'ασκί νιρό να πάει να φέρει. / Στη στράτειά όπου πάντα, στην δρόμο που παγιάει, / βρίσκει τομοποίησα τούρκικα, Τούρκους στο καρασάλι και Κίνσροι τι Γώργες, κίνσε, να μει και να γομάζει / βρίσκει τομοποίησα τούρκικα, Τούρκους στο καρασάλι.

4) **Signs of the same type.** These have a common syntagmatic structure for which the terms are selected from paradigmatic groups of similar terms, except for one term that is replaced by a different term, thus differentiating the particular sign. Cf. Κα η ρήγανα το ἔβλεπεν από το παράθυρο καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τα βαγιλίε από το παλαιστήρι.

5) **Related signs.** This refers to different signs that have a different