

## MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSES OF RROMANI TERMS RELATED TO LAW

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DOI: 10.24193/subbeuropaea.2019.1.11

Published Online: 2019-07-01

Published Print: 2019-07-15

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### Abstract

*In this short article we focus upon some Rromani terms related to the law. Starting by explaining the usage of double rr in Rroma (noun) and Rromani (adjective) which are preferred by some scholars of Rromology to avoid misunderstanding with Roma, Romania etc., we present shortly what are divàno “debate”, Rromani kris or stabor “the Rromani court” and krisima “ordeals” recorded about 100 years ago in Transylvania and some Rromani expressions used in the Romani court. They are considered as old customs among traditional Rroma. But making an morphological and etymological analysis of them, we arrive at the conclusion that they are all loanwords. It suggests that these customs should come from the other nations, though we can not deny the possibility of adopting only terms into their own customs.*

**Key words:** Rroma, Rromani court, ordeals, etymology, loanwords

### 1. The use of *rr* in Rromology

#### 1.1. *Rrom* and *Rromani*

We begin by explaining the spelling of *Rrom* and *Rromani*. In English *Roma* (the name of the people) and *Romany* (their language or the adjective) are quite popular, but some of *rromologists* (specialists who are

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involved in the studies about Roma and their language) prefer to use the spells *Rroma* and *Rromani*. The reasons are:

1. that they want to avoid misunderstanding with *Roma*, *Roman*, *Romania* and *Romanian*. Sometimes I met people, who say that their name *Rroma* comes from *Romania*, because they come from there. But it is not true.
2. that there are two types of *r* in Rromani language: *r* and *rr*. The majority of Rromani speakers distinguish these two sounds. The simple *r* is pronounced as in Italian *r*. But the sound *rr* is described by International Phonetic Alphabet, depending on dialect, [ɽ] (retroflex flap), [ɾ] postalveolar flap, [rr] (doubled alveolar trill), [r̥] (extra short r), [ɣ] (voiced velar fricative), [x] (voiceless velar fricative), [ʁ] (voiced uvular fricative), or, in some dialects the difference between *r* and *rr* has been lost and it is pronounced like *r*<sup>1</sup>. All these sound described by *rr* comes from the old indic retroflex sound [ɖ] (ḍ in Sanskrit) and [ʈ] (ṭ in Sanskrit). For example, Middle Indo-Aryan \*ḍohi, ḍoha > Rromani rroj “spoon” and MI peṭṭa > Rrom. perr “belly”<sup>2</sup>. The noun rrom comes from pk. OI ḍomba- “member of a caste of singers or musicians”<sup>3</sup>.

So, the use of *rr* in Rromani studies is practical and also etymological<sup>4</sup>.

## 1.2. The concept of *Rroma*, *Gaze* and the adjective delivered from *rrom*

To understand the culture and customs of Roma, we need to know that there are two kinds of words, depending on ethnicity, which mean “human” in the Rromani language.

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Courthiade, *Morri angluni rromane čhibăqi evroputni lavustik*. How to read Rromani? on the inside cover, Budapest: Romano kher, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Marcel Courthiade, ECRRO2B13, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Norbert Boretzky, Birgit Igla, *Wörterbuch Romani Deutsch Englisch mit einer Grammatik der Dialektvarianten*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994, p. 250.

<sup>4</sup> In the 4-th International Rromani Congress held in April 1990 in Warsaw, a decision about the international common Rromani alphabet by was adopted under the patronage of UNESCO. Here is the alphabet used also in this article and the phonetical correspondence by IPA: *Vowels*: a [a], e [e], i [i], o [o], u [u], ä ši ë [ɛ], ĩ [i], ö [ø], ü [y], e [ɛ], -ă [-ɪa], -ĕ [-ɪe], -ĩ [-ɪi], -ō [-ɔ], -ū [-u]; *Consonants*: b [b], c [ts], č [tʃ], čh [tʃʰ], d [d], f [f], g [g], h [h], x [x], j [j], k [k], kh [kʰ], l [l], m [m], n [n], p [p], ph [pʰ], r [r], rr [rr/r:], s [s], ś [ʃ], t [t], th [tʰ], v [v], z [z], ź [ʒ], ʒ [dʒ], w = u which comes from softened v; the postpositional letters -q-, -θ-, -ç- appear usually in flexions. The phonetical values are -q- [k], -θ- [t], -ç- [s], but only after -n- -q- [g], -θ- [d], -ç- [ts].

	Who has the Rroma ethnicity	Who doesn't have the Rroma ethnicity
Adult man	<i>rrom</i> (sg.) / <b><i>rroma</i></b> (pl.)	<i>gazo</i> (sg.) / <i>gaze</i> (pl.)
Adult woman	<i>rromni</i> (sg.) / <i>rromnă</i> (pl.)	<i>gazi</i> (sg.) / <i>gază</i> (pl.)
Minor man	<i>čhavo</i> (sg.) / <i>čhave</i> (pl.)	<i>raklo</i> (sg.) / <i>rakle</i> (pl.)
Minor woman	<i>čhaj</i> (sg.) / <i>čhaja</i> (pl.)	<i>rakli</i> (sg.) / <i>raklă</i> (pl.)

As we see, their official name *Rroma* (*Roma*) comes from the plural form of *rrom*, which means “man of the Rroma ethnicity”. The adjective delivered from *rrom* is *rroman/o*, *-i*, *-e*, *-e* and in their language “the language of Rroma” is *i rromani čhib*. From here the name of the language or the adjective ***Rromani*** (***Rromany***) comes.

In Romania, many people consider *rroman*es to be the name of the language. It comes from the expression in Rromani “*3anes rroman*es?” which is often translated “Do you speak Rromani (Rromany)?”. But *rroman*es is not a noun but an adverb which means “according to the Rromani (Rromany) manner”, as the Romanian language has two ways to ask about the language skill “*Știi limba română* (verb-noun-adjective)? (Do you know the Romanian language?)” and “*Știi românește* (verb-adverb)? (Do you know according to the Romanian manner?)”. So *rroman*es can not be a noun.

Besides, we mention also some other words which don't distinguish the ethnicities.

		N.B.
human (m.)	<i>manuś</i> (sg.) / <i>manuśa</i> (pl.)	<i>It is a general term for “human”. It focuses on the difference between human and animal. The name of a Rromani clan Manousch comes from it.</i>
human (f.)	<i>manuśni</i> (sg.) / <i>manuśnă</i> (pl.)	<i>The suffix –ni adds a feminine meaning to the words. But this form is rare.</i>
man	<i>muruś</i> (sg.) / <i>muruśa</i> (pl.)	<i>This word focuses on the difference between man and woman.</i>
woman	<i>zuoli</i> (sg.) / <i>zuolă</i> (pl.)	<i>This word focuses on the difference between man and woman. But some native speakers tells that it can mean also “a lover of other ethnicity”.</i>

## 2. *Divàno* and *Rromani kris*

*Divàno* is a debate between two families held when a member of each family has problem between them. The problems must be solved “between brothers”, but, if they cannot solve problems by themselves, *Rromani kris* (or *stabor*) is waiting in the next step.<sup>5</sup> The word *divàno* is from Turkish word *divan* “sofa bed / meeting, discussion between two high government officials in Ottoman Empire”.

We will present shortly what the *rromani kris* is. *Rromani kris* is the traditional court of the Roma people, which is independent of the official law courts of the State. *Kris* comes from the Greek word *κρίση* “judgement”. The etymology of the another term for court *stabor* is not clear, but the German word *Stab* “staff, headquarter, member etc.” may be its origin.

According to Erdős, the reasons of its existence in their culture are:

1. “the strong clanship of the Tsigans and their love for one another, which would not allow them to tolerate the imprisonment of a fellow Gypsy even after enduring heavy losses through his evil conduct.”
2. “the fact that to bring the issue before the State tribunal would be of no avail, since the Court would not have given them credence or (more likely) have had anything to do with the matter. [...] In fact, the official law courts have shown interest in Gypsies only when non-Gypsies were involved in the case.”<sup>6</sup>

*Rromani kris* is limited mainly “to actions for damages (debts) and cases concerning women (abduction, wilful(!) desertion, and the like)”<sup>7</sup>.

About the formation of the tribunal, he writes:

“The number of judges may be 20, 10, or 2, but generally they number 7 or 8. The Court cannot, however, consist of a single judge. Unknown and foreign senior Gypsies from other districts may also sit in the Court. As a matter of fact it is always the oldest member who presides; in Hungarian Romani he is called *mujato* ‘judge’. The oarth (*colax*)

<sup>5</sup> Delia Grigore et alii, *Istoria și tradițiile minorității rromani: manual pentru clasele VI-VII*, București: Sigma, 2005, p. 68.

<sup>6</sup> Kamill Erdős, “Jottings on Gypsy Judicature in Hungary” in *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, Third Series, Vol. 40, Edinburgh: The Society, 1961, p. 57.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

taken by members of the tribunal is the equivalent of a curse. [...] Thus, for instance, the course current in among the *Dudumešt'e* living in the town of Gyula is in the following words: 'May I be damned and God never grant me luck, if I do not tell the truth.' (***Te mārel ma o Deļ, baxt te na del ma šoha, te na phenav čačipe!***)

[...] The oldest member sitting on the tribunal, as President, opens the proceedings by taking the oath to provide his impartiality. He is the first to express his opinion after listening carefully to the statements of the plaintiff and the defendant and their witnesses, if any. No majority of votes is required for making a decision. If two or three of the judges declare: 'So it is' (***Kade si!***) and the President agrees with their opinion at the close of the deliberations, it is in vain for the majority to disagree.

[...] As regards the ceremonies pertaining to the Kris : First of all the plaintiff spreads a black shawl (a woman's kerchief) on the ground, placing a sacred image on it, for almost every Gypsy carries such an image on his person. Then, kneeling in front of the kerchief, placing two fingers of his left hand on his heart, and two fingers of his right hand on the ikon, he says something of this kind : '***Te šoha nažutij ma o Maria, te na kāde si sar phendom me!***' (May the Blessed Virgin Mary never help me, if it is not as I have declared!). [...] Cases of perjury (***bangi colax***) have occasionally occurred, but only rarely. Should anyone commit perjury and be found out, he is sure to be condemned.

[...] The procedure is always public, and may be held in the open, when the judges sit in a circle with the President in the middle, or in a closed space. With some tribes [...] the audience (even women) may take part in the deliberations, provided their remarks are sensible, judicious and short, i.e. relevant."<sup>8</sup>

The word *mujalo* comes from the noun *muj* "mouth / face" in Rromani. So the judge in Rromani is "of the mouth / speaker". *Colax*, *solax* or *sovlax* is "oath" in Rromani. According to Boretzky&Igla, this noun is a variation of the noun *sovel* "oath". The expression *xal sovel* "to eat oath" gave the word *solaxal* "to swear" and the nominal form *solax* comes from it.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, pp. 57-9.

<sup>9</sup> Norbert Boretzky, Birgit Igla, op. cit., p. 263.

Expressions, such as “*Te merav!*” “Let me die / I will die (If I say an untruth)” used in *Dudumest’e* clan, are quite popular in Rromani language when they want to say “I swear.” or “I say truth.”. I heard several times in the Rromani community of Poiana-Turda, Cluj, during my research.

The sentence ‘*Te šoha nazütij ma o Maria, te na kãde si sar phendom me!*’ has a strange article *o*. This is the article for m. sg. If the modified word is *f. sg. Maria*, it must be *i* or *e*.

*Bangi colax* means “bent oath”.

### 3. The Rromani ordeal noted by Wlislöcki

#### 3.1. Heinrich von Wlislöcki and the criticism of him

Heinrich von Wlislöcki is a Transylvanian rromologist of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He was born in 1856 in Braşov, where his father, descendant from a noble Polish family, were working as a functionary of the imperial finances. After studying in the evangelic college Honterus in Braşov, he started to study in the Royal Hungarian University of Cluj and was taught by the professor of the German philology Hugo Meltzl and the sanscritologist Samuel Brassai. In 1879 he obtained the title of Doctor in Philosophy. After a while he started to study dialects and the folklore of Rroma on Meltzl’s advice. Wlislöcki studied the language, folklore and customs of Rroma, living between the tents of many Rroma tribes (nomad and semi-nomad) about 8-10 months. His main works about rromology are: *Heideblüten. Volkslieder der transsilvanischen Zigeuner* (Leipzig, 1880), *Die Sprache der transsilvanischen Zigeuner. Grammatik und Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1884), *Märchen und Sagen der transsilvanischen Zigeuner. Gesammelt und aus unedirten Originaltexten übersetzt* (Berlin, 1886), *Zur Volkskunde der transsilvanischen Zigeuner* (Hamburg, 1887), *Vom wandernden Zigeunervolke. Bilder aus dem Leben der Siebenbürger Zigeuner. Geschichtliches, Ethnologisches, Sprache und Poesie* (Hamburg, 1890), *Volksdichtungen der siebenbürgischen und südungarischen Zigeuner. Gesammelt und aus unedirten Originaltexten übersetzt* (Viena, 1890).<sup>10</sup>

We find also criticism of Wlislöcki. For exemple:

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<sup>10</sup> Heinrich Wlislöcki, *Asupra vieţii şi obiceiurilor Țiganilor transilvăneni*, Cuvânt înainte, Bucureşti: Kriterion, 1998, pp. 5-7.

*“Wlilocki cum nu era etnolog, ci filosof și filolog clasicist, [...] instrumentele sale de lucru țineau de cultura scrisă, nu de investigația unei culturii orale. [...] Această inadecvare a instrumentelor de lucru explică tendința lui Wlilocki de „a literaturiza” folclorul...” (p. 7), “...cartea lui este literatură cu impurități de știință...” (p. 13).*

(English translation)

*“Though Wlilocki was not an ethnologist, but a philosopher and a classicist-philologist, [...] his instruments of work belong to the written culture, not to the investigation of an oral culture. [...] This inadequacy of instruments of work explains Wlilocki’s tendency of “literaturising” the folklore...” (p. 7), “...his book is literature with impurity of science...” (drd. Delia Grigore and Vasile Ionescu, in “Wlilocki între extazul romantic și agonia comprehensiunii”, in Wlilocki, 1998, p. 7 and p. 13).*

So they suspect the scientific value of Wlilocki’s work. One more to cite:

*“...I have satisfied myself as to the complete atheism of the Gypsies. Wlilocki is wholly irresponsible in my view. Almost everything he says is his own imagination, scientific sensationalism. He turned Gypsy and died amid fumes of alcohol. I simply ignore all his works. I have met his Gypsy friends, who on being told of his accounts about the various deities the visions of ghost, etc. burst out laughing, delighted that they had been able to fool him so completely.” (Dr. Tancred Borenius (historian and diplomat) in *Journal of Gypsy Lore Society*, XXII. 1-2, 8 old., cited in Erdős, 1989, footnote 12, p. 51)*

So we must carefully read Wlilocki’s works. But, in my opinion, not all his works must be ignored. Even if he is criticized by folklorists, ethnologists and historian, his linguistic works are still valid. For example, *Die Sprache der transsilvanischen Zigeuner. Grammatik und Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1884), is describing well the dialects spoken in his age, comparing with these spoken nowadays. It is too much to consider all his works as „his own imagination”.

Anyway, in linguistics we can analyze even languages of imagination. Anti-wlislockians can read this short article as the analyzes of Wlislocki's invented language.

### 3.2. 7 ways of ordeal noted by Wlislocki

Ordeal is a way to determine guilt or innocence by submitting the accused to dangerous or painful tests believed to be under supernatural control. It was practiced not only in Europe, but also in Asian countries<sup>11</sup>.

Wlislocki notes that the ordeal was practiced also by Southern-Hungarian and Serbian Rroma<sup>12</sup>. He writes about 7 ways of ordeal, which was usually done in the time when the witches of the tribe were burning articles of a dead.

The ordeal is called in Rromani language *krisima*. *Krisima* comes from the Greek adjective *κρίσιμος* "critical, crucial", which is the adjective delivered from the noun *κρίση* "judgement". This noun remains in Rromani language as *kris* "judgement". *Rromani kris* "Roma justice" is still alive and famous in Romanian Rroma culture. *Krisima* is probably substantivized form from the feminine sg. form of the adjective *κρίσιμη*.

The firstly mentioned *krisima* is *krisima sastrásli*. The accused person grasps a heated iron and a burn on the hand shows his or her guilt. *Sastrásli* is an adjective delivered from the masculine noun *sastri* "iron".

The second is *krisima cikinali*. *Ćiken* in Rromani is "fat" or "lard". The accused person must put his/her ring finger (the third finger of the left hand) into boiling fat several times, usually nine times.

The third ordeal is *krisima londolyi*. *Lon* in Rromani is "salt". They put concentrated saline solution on the eyelids of the accused person. If he / she is innocent, he / she does not shed tears. *Lon* is from pk. (prakrit) *lona-* < OI (Old Indic) *lavana-*.<sup>13</sup> *-d-* before adjectival suffix *-l-* shows an alternative form of the noun *lond*, which comes by analogy from the perfect participle *lond/o, -i, -e, -e* "salted" and used in Arli dialect<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> In ancient Japan there was *kukatachi*, a trial by boiling water.

<sup>12</sup> Heinrich Wlislocki, *Volks Glaube und religiöser Brauch der Zigeuner in Darstellungen aus dem Gebiete der nichtchristlichen Religionsgeschichte IV*, Münster i. W.: Aschendorffschen Buchhandlung, 1989, pp. 100-1.

<sup>13</sup> Norbert Boretzky, Birgit Igla, op. cit., p. 169.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.



The fourth is *krisima kanrásli*. *Kanro* in Rromani is “thorn, spine”. They prick the third finger of the left hand of the accused person by a thorn or a needle. If he or she is innocent, no blood rans from it.

The fifth ordeal is *krisima hutyadi*. The accused person must jump from a high place and must make a good landing without tumbling. *Hutydi* is from the verb *xutel* “to jump”. *Xutyidi* can be understood as the participle “jumped”. It is forcibly used as adjective with the meaning “of jumping”.

The sixth ordeal is *krisima sibakri*. The accused person must lick a heated iron. *Sibakiri* is the genitive case of *čhib* “tongue” in Carpathian Rromani dialect.

The seventh is *krisima anraseli*. The accused person throws 3-9 eggs, according to the seriousness of the crime, he or she would commit, from a distance toward a tree. No hit on the tree shows his / her guilt. *Anrasli* is an adjective from the noun *anro* “egg” in Rromani.

### 3.3. Adjectival suffixes

In the names of these 7 ways of ordeal practiced by Rroma people, we find a common ending, namely *-li* in *krisima sastrásli*, *krisima cikinali*, *krisima kanrásli*, *krisima anraseli*.

The adjectival suffix *-al/o*, *-i*, *-e*, *-e* quite popular in Rromani<sup>15</sup>. According to Courthiade, the meaning of this suffix is:

“so si les but K<sup>16</sup> ja bare K.”

“(It means) that he has many K or big K.” (Eng. transl.)

(Courthiade, 2009, *Mellek nevék*, p. 501.)

For example: *balal/o*, *-i*, *-e*, *-e* “pig (adj.), piggy”, *pišumal/o*, *-i*, *-e*, *-e* “who has many fleas”, *čikal/o*, *-i*, *-e*, *-e* “muddy”, *panǎl/o*, *-i*, *-e*, *-e* “damp, wet”, *bengal/o*, *-i*, *-e*, *-e* “”, *jakkhal/o*, *-i*, *-e*, *-e* “lascivious”, *šingal/o*, *-i*, *-e*, *-e* “horned”, *melal/o*, *-i*, *-e*, *-e* “dirty”.

There is an another adjectival suffix in Rromani, namely *-asl/o*, *-i*, *-e*, *-e*, which means, according to Courthiade,

“pherdo K-(ençar)”

“plenty of K” (Eng.)

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, Liste der grammatischen Morpheme, p. 413: -aló Adjektivsuffix [ vgl. pk. -āla ].

<sup>16</sup> K = kòkalo “born; the stem of the word”.

For example: *kišajasl/o*, -i, -e, -e “plenty of sand”, *praxasl/o*, -i, -e, -e “plenty of dust, powder”, *panăsl/o*, -i, -e, -e “plenty of water”, *rašajasl/o*, -i, -e, -e “religious zealot”, *šaxasl/o*, -i, -e, -e “plenty of cabbages”.

The adjectival suffix *sastrásli*, *kanrásli*, *anraseli* may be from *-asl/o*, -i, -e, -e (*e* in *anraseli* is an anaptyxis). But it seems that in this dialect there are no clear difference between *-all/o*, -i, -e, -e and *-asl/o*, -i, -e, -e.

## Conclusion

Analyzing morphologically and etymologically the Rromani words related to law, we found many loanwords: the names of meeting or judging, such as *kris* „court”, *krisima* „ordeal” (both from Greek), *divano* (from Turkish) „debate” or *stabor* „court” (probably from German). These words were adopted into the Rromani language after they had got in contact with the nations of which languages the loanwords come from. We can suppose that these customs might have been borrowed or imitated from the other nations. Of course, we can not deny the possibility of adopting only terms into their own customs. We must beware of simplistic judgment only by the linguistics.

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