ON THE POSSESSIVE FORM WITH
THE AFFIX -KER- IN ROMANI*

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In Romani studies literature, the form with the affix -ker- -ger- is regarded as the genitive form of nouns or as possessive adjective. On the basis of analysis of the views of various authors and analysis of Romani texts, we came to the conclusion that the given form needs to be regarded as a possessive adjective.

The majority of authors mention the form with the affix -ker- in the singular and -ger- in the plural, in descriptions of the case system of Romani, whether theoretical works or textbooks and manuals of the Romani language. They usually assign it to the case system as the genitive, but they realize its exceptional position in this system, and some also attempt to explain why it belongs or does not belong to this system. For example, J. Lípa (1963) devoted appropriate attention in a description of the Humenné dialect of Slovak Carpathian Romani (in his terminology Czechoslovak Romani). According to Lípa, Romani has only three cases: direct, oblique and vocative (p.45). The direct case expresses the subject and object. In the further description, some disproportion occurs, since in an attempt to approximate the "Gypsy declension for interested Czechs" he speaks, when describing the meaning of the direct case, of nominative and accusative, but has to admit that the direct case in the function of the accusative is expressed in text by a form of the oblique case. Similarly, he also has to distinguish the different functions and finally also forms of the oblique case. Therefore, he considers "modifications of the oblique case" and uses the classic designations of cases in their description "for terminological approximation with Czech." Apart from the simple oblique case, which has no equivalent in Czech, and for which Lípa does not mention an ending, he speaks of the following forms ("cases"), which are formed by adding endings to the oblique case: genitive (-kero, -keri etc.), dative (-ke), locative (-te), instrumental (-ha) and ablative (-tar). The vocative completes the three Romani cases.

Apart from a detailed description of the meanings of the cases, J. Lípa devotes a special paragraph to the "genitive from the morphological point of view" (p. 74), which is especially interesting from our point of view. He points out that the form of the genitive differs from the forms of the other Romani cases by not being unchanging. He divides the genitive ending -kero, -gero into the base of the genitive ending (-ker-, -ger-) and the ending by which the genitive form is declined. He also writes that the form of the genitive is declined like adjectives of the paradigm láčho. He gives examples, which show that the genitive agrees with the noun, with which it is connected, in gender, number and case; when connected with the noun in the oblique case it takes the ending of the adjectival oblique case: *le phraleskeri graśńi, le phraleskera graśńake, le phraleskera graśńaha*. These examples can be translated into Czech either by the genitive or by the possessive adjective: kobyla *bratra, bratrova* kobyla (the brother's mare).

However, already in this phase of our considerations, we can ask whether the way something should be translated into another language can be considered conclusive, when describing the system of a language. For example, in this case why should we speak of a genitive and not of a possessive adjective? Precisely this possessive function of this form forces some researchers to consider whether it is a genitive or a possessive adjective. J. Lípa also mentions the correspondence of this form to adjectives: 1. It shows agreement with the noun, which it determines, 2. When it determines a noun as an attribute, it more frequently comes b e f o r e than after the noun, and 3. It declines in the same way as Romani adjectives. However, he also enumerates the agreements with the modifications of the oblique case: 1. It is formed from all nouns in both numbers, singular and plural. 2. The base from which it is formed is the form of the oblique case and 3. An adjective, which is the attribute of a noun in the genitive has the form of the oblique case, just as when it is the attribute of a noun, for example, in the dative case (*le phraleskera graśńake* as *párňa graśńake*). According to our view, this third agreement brings the form with -ker-, -ger- closest to the genitive of a noun, although it is necessary to say that the example given above does not illustrate the author's words. There was probably a mistake and Lípa wanted to give an example of the type *láčha phraleskera graśńake*. "On the basis of agreements with modifications of the oblique case", Lípa regards "the genitive as one of these modifications and so as a form or case of the noun and not as an adjective" (p.75).

The further Czech authors, M. Hübschmannová (1991) and H. Šebková (1999) have essentially followed in Lípa's footsteps. They do not devote attention to theoretical consideration of the case system in Romani, but in their textbooks of the Romani language, they unambiguously speak of eight cases, including genitive as well as nominative, vocative, accusative, dative, locative, ablative and instrumental. However, they could not fail to observe certain differences in comparison with the other cases. For example, H. Šebková says that the genitive differs from the other cases in forms, functions and position in the sentence. She also says that the genitive is first of all a possessive case, and as

such also behaves like an adjective. She mentions that in Romani, the genitive forms also have some features from which they could also be understood as adjectives: 1. They have gender endings, which agree in gender, number and *case* (italics A.R.) with the possessed noun. 2. They can occur in different cases. 3. They usually come before the noun representing the possessed object (p.253). In spite of all these arguments, she speaks of genitive endings and actually does not mention how these forms differ from adjectives. In addition, for example, when describing the personal pronouns, she regards the possessive pronoun as their genitive (p.253).

The recent Romani author S. Cina (2001) relies on the work of the Czech Romologists, which show reliance on the domestic, Slavist tradition, in his grammar and book of exercises in the Romani language. This means that he also assigns the genitive to the system of cases. An interesting situation appears when giving case questions for the animate and non-animate nouns: kaskero, -i, -e, which translates as "whose" with masculine, feminine and neuter variants, that is the question for the possessive adjective. The interpretation of the examples, by which he illustrates the claim that the genitive can also be formed from non-animate nouns, is also interesting. For example, he translates *skamineskere pindre* with the help of the Slovak genitive as "nohy stola", that is "the table's legs", but in brackets he says that it *literally* (italics by A.R.) means "stolové nohy", that is "the table legs", and similarly *jagakero vudud* – "svetlo ohňa" – "the fire's light" is literally "ohňové svetlo" – "the fire light". Does this mean that he does not perceive the form in –kero as a genitive?

V. Elšík (1997) is a little more cautious in naming the form in -ker-, -ger-. He does not speak of it as the genitive, but as the possessive case. However, he does regard it as part of the paradigm of the Romani noun. He also says that the possessive forms represent a special case. They form a sub-paradigm similar to the paradigm of the adjective, so that the inflectional paradigm of the noun is asymmetrical. In addition, the possessive case behaves syntactically more like an adjective, which also gives the possibility of further formal substantivization: possessive + dative: phral-e-s-KER-en-GE = "to those of the brother".

In describing the North Russian dialect of Romani, which does not differ from Slovak Carpathian Romani in this respect, the Russian Romologist T. V. Venceľová (1976, 1983) and in agreement with her the Russian linguist G. A. Zograf (1976) hold a different view to that of the above mentioned authors, who regard the form in -kero -keri -gero -geri as a case of the noun. Zograf comes to the same conclusion, not only because he relies on Venceľová's work in his description of the morphological structure of Romani, but also on the basis of an analysis of the whole system of cases in the New Indian languages.

T. V. Venceľová identifies six cases in Romani: nominative, accusative, dative, locative (prepositional or possessive), ablative and instrumental. She also mentions a special vocative form for nouns in the first class. All these cases are formed from two bases, the base of the nominative (direct) case and the base of the oblique cases, to which the case endings, which developed from postposi-

tions, are added. The form in -kero and so on, which has the form -k´iro, -k´iri, -g´iro, -g´iri is regarded as a possessive adjective, "which can be derived from any noun. Combinations consisting of these adjectives and nouns can be declined in all cases. Therefore, the forms in -k´iro and -g´iro cannot be regarded as forms of the genitive case" (1983: 53).

She devotes a separate chapter to the possessive adjective (1983: 63-64). The description of its functions confirms her in the conviction that the forms in -k´iro and so on cannot be regarded as the genitive of the noun. Romani possessive adjectives can be formed from any noun with the help of certain suffixes added to the stem of the indirect case, that is, the root + the affix of the indirect case: -k´iro and so on, in agreement with the nouns, which they modify. In the oblique cases, possessive adjectives can have either a common ending -e for all cases or case affixes and endings, which entirely agree in gender, number and case with the nouns they modify: for example romesk´ire or romesk´ir-es-t´ir gadest´ir – from the Rom´s shirt.

Possessive adjectives are used attributively, for example: dak´iro – mother's, motherly, maternal. They can also be used as nouns. Some were substantivized, for example: p´ibnask´iro – samovar from p´iben – drink (1983: 48). The North Russian Romani dialect has also adjectives with the prefix b´i – without, which indicates the lack of a quality or attribute. These adjectives are formed with the help of the suffix -k´iro, -g´iro with the exception of b´ibachtalo (-i) – unhappy, for example: b´ibal-eng´iro (-i) – without hair, hairless (1983: 49).

G. A. Zograf (1976) came to the same conclusions as T. V. Vencel'ová. In a detailed analysis of the morphological structure of the New Indo-Aryan languages, he devoted appropriate attention to Romani, which belongs to the group of languages with a clear distinction between the direct case, the oblique case and the vocative. In this, he agrees with J. Lípa, but in contrast to Lípa he does not regard the accusative as the direct case, but places it among the oblique cases. He also does not speak about the individual oblique cases as modifications of the oblique case. Naturally, he also devotes attention to the suffix -kiro -giro, which he calls the primary ("pervoobraznyj") suffix of the adjectival form, which is spoken of in traditional grammars as the indicator of the genitive. However, he emphasizes that it differs from the other cases in both form and function. It is formed like the Romani cases, that is, case endings are added to the oblique case, but it also takes the personal endings of the singular and plural, which is characteristic for the adjective. He writes further: "The words and combinations of words created by this indicator resemble adjectives not only in form, but also in function, in their basic attributive use they have the same syntactic position and distribution as adjectives. The main difference from the adjective lies in their ability not only to determine the noun, but also to combine with the derived postpositions (*he means by this the endings of the indirect case*), which is not natural to adjectives, with the exception of possessive pronouns." On this basis, he designates these forms "possessive adjectives" (p. 108, relying on J. Bloch 1965: 180-181) and he calls the indicator -k´iro -g´iro the "adjectival postposition" (as Barannikov 1935: 38).

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Zograf's account placing the Romani form in the wider context of the New Indo-Aryan languages is interesting, because the indicator of the adjectival form occurs in the system of cases of all the New Indo-Aryan languages. After analysis, he comes to the conclusion that the problem in interpreting this form is caused by the fact that in the New Indo-Aryan languages it is the single universal equivalent of two forms usually distinguished in inflected languages: the genitive form of the noun and the corresponding possessive adjective: "father's cap" and the "paternal cap", in Bengali bāp-er ṭupī, in Romani dad-es-keri stadi. G. A. Zograf admits that in semantic breadth and especially the permissibility of the unlimited developing of the determining member, it resembles more the genitive of nouns, for example, in Hindi mērē pyārē bāp kī ṭōpī – my dear father's cap, but structurally it corresponds to the adjective (p.108). Finally, he comes to the conclusion that it is justified to consider the genitive in the Indian languages, which have lost the category of gender, the form of the universal oblique case and the primary opposition in number, that is the parameters, in the framework of which adjectives are declined (1976: 109). The Eastern New Indian languages such as Bengali are such languages, but Romani is not.

After analysing the views of these authors on the form with the affix -ker-, -ger-, it is possible to say that these authors basically agree on the formation and function of this form, but, on the basis of the same starting points, they came to different views on whether it has to be regarded as the genitive of the noun or as an adjective. It appears that those authors, who mainly rely on traditional grammar and need a "complete" case system, mostly emphasize the fact that the form in -ker-, -ger- is formed in the same way as the oblique cases in Romani, that is, by means of the affix -es-, -en-, to which the appropriate ending is added, and they are willing to neglect the fact that, in contrast to all the other Romani cases, the ending -ker-, -ger- also receives an adjectival suffix, which changes in gender and number according to the determined noun, as well as the fact that this form can be further declined, that is, it can receive the endings of the other cases. Their conviction that it is the genitive is clearly supported by the possible, sometimes the only possible, way of translating this Romani form into their own Czech or Slovak language with the help of the genitive, for example, pirakeri fenek – dno hrnca – the pot's bottom. As we saw, J. Lípa was the only author among those analysed above to actually explain his decision to regard this form as the genitive of the noun and not as an adjective.

The arguments of the Russian linguists, who refuse to regard this form as a genitive of the noun and consider it to be a possessive adjective, appear to be much more convincing to us. We should add to them the fact that this form also does not behave like a case in statements. In contrast to the Romani cases, it does not combine with the verb.

Analysis of selected texts in Slovak Carpathian Romani also confirms our conclusion. We identified in them the function and distribution of the form in -ker-, -ger-, as well as whether any change is occurring in recent texts, especially in newspaper articles and expert texts, which originated as translations from Slovak into Romani, compared to simpler original Romani texts – tales and narratives.

The analysis of tales and narratives (Fabianová 1992, Giňa 1991, Reiznerová undated) showed that the form with the affix -ker-, -ger- is much less frequent than the cases of the noun. It occurs only in the possessive or possessive – attributive function. Various shades of possessive relations are expressed by it.

1. Real possession:

O Škiparis imar dikhelas... sar le *Škipariskeri žeba* šuvľov le bare lovenca (Giňa: 10). Škipar already saw, ... how *Škipar's pocket* was bulging with banknotes. O *veš* sas le *chulaskero.* (Giňa: 40). The wood was the landowners'. Sako pre leste urďa "feder" renti. La *dakeri rokľa,* le *dadeskeri cholov...* (Fabianová: 6) Everyone put on "better" clothes. *Mother's skirt, father's trousers...*

2. Appurtenance to a person (this includes the whole range of relations):

Andro anglune lavici bešľarďa barvale *gadžengere rakloren.* (Fabianová: 6). The *children* of the rich *peasant farmers* sat on the first benches. Phen mange Čhoneja, soske o Del kale žuže *čhavoreskero džvipen* iľa? (Reiznerová: 21). Tell us, Moon, why did God take such a pure *child's life* (that is: which belonged to such a pure child). ...imar ňiko ňigda pes na dodžanela, kaj pašloľas le *Romengri phuv.* (Reiznerová: 23) ... already nobody will ever learn where *Romani land* lies. O ďivesa denašenas, the aviľa the *Feľakero ďives...* (Reiznerová: 12). The days flew past and *Feľa's day* also came... ... jekhpaluneder *lavica* sas le *Romengeri* (Fabianová: 4) ... the *bench* right at the back was *Romani.*

3. Appurtenance to an animal:

O murša le *čiriklengere pora* pal e staďi ispindenas... (Reiznerová: 7). The men inserted *bird feathers* in the hat. Kajča so ole fiľeristar, te o *cirkusoskero ľiloro* molas jekh koruna u mek biš fiľeri! (Fabianová: 14). What could I do with ten haliers, when a *ticket to the circus* cost twenty crowns!

4. Appurtenance to things:

Kije *blaka* lengere bange *khereskeri* pen zgele o čhave. (Giňa: 8). The children gathered at the *small window* of their crooked *shack.*

As can be seen from these examples, the possessive form is usually placed immediately before the noun to which it relates, but its position is not binding. It can also come after the noun it determines:

O *veš* sas le *chulaskero.* (Giňa: 40). The wood was the landlords'. ... jekhpaluneder *lavica* sas *Romengeri.* (Fabianová: 4) ... the bench right at the back was Romani.

In such a position, it can be divided from the determined noun by other attributes:

Kije *blaka* lengere bange *khereskeri* pen zgele o čhave. (Giňa: 8). The children gathered at the *small window* of their crooked *shack.*

The possessive form always agrees with the determined noun in gender, number and case. Agreement in case is expressed in two ways. If the deter-

mined noun is in the oblique case, that is, in a case other than the nominative, the possessive form receives either the adjectival ending of the oblique case or a case ending agreeing with the case ending of the determined noun:

Andro anglune lavici bešľarďa barvale *gadžengere rakloren.* (Fabianová: 6). The *children of* the rich peasant *farmers* sat on the first benches. Vičinaha ko Del mi avel bolel *Kaľakeren čhavoren.* (Reiznerová: 13) We will call to God, may he come, may he baptize *Kaľi's children.* O čhonoro leske zašvicinďa pro muj, e Kaľi prindžarďa la *Feľakeres dades,* the jov la prindžarďa. (Reiznerová: 20) The Moon shone on his face and Kaľi recognized *Feľa's father* and he recognized her.

In the case of a double possessive relationship, one can be expressed with the nominative:

Tel o duj trin ďives visarďa o *Škiparis* le *greskeri parsuna* bije loľi okuľara the bijo parne pašvare. (Giňa: 12). Two or three days later, the *shape of Škipari's horse* returned without the red glasses and without the white ribs.

The form with the affix -ker- also has the same properties and functions in the translation of the simple text of the children's Bible (Godla: 1998) from Slovak to Romani. It occurs most frequently in essence in the constant combinations *Devleskero nipos* – God's people, *Devleskero solgas* – God's servant, *Devleskero manuš* – man of God, *Devleskero Lav* – God's word, *Devleskere rajipen* – God's Kingdom, *Devleskero kamipen* – God's mercy, *Devleskere pheňiben* – God's laws. The possessive form, therefore, expresses belonging to a person (God), as also in the following cases: Ko sas le *Davidoskro amal?* Who was *David's friend?* Sar pes vičinenas le *Adamoskre* the la *Evakre čhave?* What were *Adam* and *Eve's sons* called?

This form also expresses real ownership:

Ada levos kamel te chal le *Davidoskere bakroren.* This lion wants to eat *David's sheep.* No le *Noemoskero korabos* ačhelas pro paňi. But *Noah's ship* remained on the water.

In contrast to the example of double possession given above, the Bible has two possessive forms determining the same noun:

Aver *šeralo* le *Devleskere niposkro* sas o Jozue. Another leader *of the people of God* was Joshua.

Another analysed text, a translation of a scientific study (Palubová: 2003) from Slovak into Romani, confirms the preceding finding. Analysis clearly showed a great disproportion in the use of the Slovak genitive and the Romani form with the affix -ker-, -ger- (302: 22). The translators (J. Krčík, J. Poss) used this form most frequently to express various appurtenance: *boldengeri moralka* Christian morality, *avra lumakeri, avra realitakeri zor* forces of the supernatural world, *dživibnaskero kotor* life period, *manuškeri the mulengeri luma* earthly and after death world, *muleskeri voďi* soul of the dead, *manušeskeri voďi* soul of

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a person, *manušengero paťaviben* popular religion, *Devleskeri kris* God's court, *Devleskeri bar* Heavenly paradise, *dživipnaskero agor* end of human existence, *boldengeri tradicija* Christian tradition, *mulengro than* the after life, *muleskero šero* head of the dead, *romeskeri fameľija* a man's family, *manušeskero muj* a person's face, *Gašparkuskeri choľi* Gašparko's anger, *mišoskeri chevori* mouse's hole, *Žlkovskeri fameľija* the Žlkovský family, *Devleskero nav* God's name, *čhavoreskero pindro* the child's leg, *Romengero paťaviben* the faith of the Roma, avre *nipengere lumi* the world of other nations.

In some cases, the form in -ker- expresses the attribute of the noun: *šargonebalengero raklo* yellow-haired boy.

Forms with the affix -ker- and the prefix *bi-* with the meaning "without" are on the boundary between the possessive and attributive relationship, for example: *bimujeskero mulo* mulo (ghost) without a face, *biromeskere čhaja* single (without a man) girls.

The significant disproportion in the use of the genitive of the noun in Slovak and the form with the affix in -ker- in Romani indicates that these forms have different functions in the two languages. The majority of Slovak genitives are translated by other means. For example, the Slovak sentence: "Vzhľadom na doteraz publikované poznatky o náboženských predstavách a poverovom myslení Rómov (G) môže prekvapiť istý materialistický, "moderný" pohľad, vyšší stupeň raciollality (G) a väčšia miera znalosti (G) oficiálneho učenia (G) katolíckej cirkvi (G)." is translated: "Te dikhas pr'oda, so sas publikimen pal oda sar o Roma den goďi pal o Del, šaj avel baro naužarda, hoj Roma dikhen le Devles materijalistickone "modernone" dromeho, hin buter racijonalna the džanen feder, so phenel pal o Del katolicko khangeripen." (p.196) (In English: "In relation to the previously published findings about the religious ideas and superstitious thinking of the Roma, the more materialist, "modern" outlook, higher level of rationality and greater degree of knowledge of the official teachings of the Catholic Church may surprise.") The Slovak sentence: "Znamením nešťastia (G) a smrti (G) je bezdôvodný smiech konkrétneho človeka (G)." is translated: "Sikhaviben pal e bibacht the pal o meriben hin the te vareko asal the na džanel sostar, vaj vareko asal avka, sar šoha na asalas." (198) (In English: "The mark of unhappiness and death is the unjustified laughter of the specific person.")

Further examples from page 195 are: "fenomén smrti v ľudovom náboženstve Rómov" – *meriben sar o fenomenos andro Romano manušikano paťaviben* (the phenomenon of death in the folk religion of the Roma); "výskum ľudového náboženstva" – *rodipen pal o romano paťaviben* (research into folk religion); "percentuálny podiel Rómov v týchto obciach" – *andre ola gava dživen 10 – 15% Roma* (the percentage of Roma in these communities); "obyvatelia skúmaných obcí" – *manuša andre savore gava* (inhabitants of the researched villages).

In fact the abundant use of descriptions in Romani also testifies to the absence of a more developed expert style, and perhaps also to some degree to the

Romani of the translators, but, in the end, it proves that the use of the form with the affix -ker- is mainly limited to the possessive – attributive purposes.

This conclusion is also confirmed by analysis of translations of newspaper articles (RNĽ), which show a wider use of expert language. However, the forms with the affix -ker-, -ger- are used to a larger extent in the attributive function: *vakeribnaskre čhiba* language of discussions, *Europakri unija* European Union, *školakre sistemi* school systems, *palonovembroskri revolučno euforija* post-November revolutionary euphoria, *relacijakro vacht* broadcasting time and others. Sentences with Slovak genitives translated with the help of descriptions are equally frequent, for example: "v našej správe pre Ministerstvo školstva v SR" is translated: *andre amaro ľil prekal e Ministeria pal e edukacija andre SR* (Godla: 6) (in our report for the Ministry of Education in the Slovak Republic); "konferenciu riadili členovia Generálneho direktoriátu" *e konferencija dirigenas o džene andal Generalno direktorijatis* (Godla: 6) (members of the General Directorate directed the conference).

Therefore, analysis of the texts confirmed the expected conclusions. We consider the Romani form with the affix -ker-, -ger- to be a possessive adjective, in which this affix is a sign of possession. Although, the affix -ker-, -ger- is added to the base of the oblique case like the Romani noun cases, the forms in -ker-, -ger- significantly differ by requiring the adjectival suffixes for the masculine and feminine genders and the singular and plural numbers, so that they agree with the determined noun in gender and number (*dad-es-ker-o kher, Feľ-a-ker-i rokľa, gadž-en-ger-e khera*). It also agrees in case with the noun to which it relates. It is declined either by taking the endings of the oblique adjective case like a qualitative adjective of the type *lačho* good (*gadženger-e raklor-en, Devlesker-e čhavoren-ge, Devlesker-e nipos-ke*), or the case endings of the determined noun (*Feľaker-es dad-es, Kaľaker-en čhavor-en*). This form has a possessive, possessive-attributive or attributive function.

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