

IN ALTRE LINGUE

A Lombard Sinti ethno-text on mourning and marriage

Andrea Scala (State University of Milan)

Department of Literary Studies, Philology and Linguistics
andrea.scala@unimi.it

ABSTRACT

The ethno-text presented in this contribution concerns some cultural practices connected with mourning and marriage in use in the Lombard Sinti communities. In the landscape of Romani varieties spoken in Italy by Roma and Sinti of old settlement, the dialect of the Lombard Sinti shows a good degree of intergenerational transmission and retention of inherited Indo-Aryan morphology. Of course, as all Romani varieties, the Romani dialect spoken by Lombard Sinti presents many innovations as well, especially in the lexicon. The text is a good example of the Lombard Sinti speech characterized by frequent instances of code-switching and code-mixing. Some peculiar features and innovations of this Romani dialect, emerging here and there in the text, are shortly discussed in the final part of the paper.

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The ethno-text here published has been recorded in 2010 from a 50 year old female informant belonging to a Sinti community settled in the territory of Piacenza (Emilia-Romagna, Italy). The variety used by the informant is clearly identifiable as Lombard Sinti, a dialect of Romani belonging, as all Sinti dialects, to the North-Western Branch of the Romani dialect continuum. Although being the variety of a Romani speaking group of old settlement in Italy, Lombard Sinti has not yet been illustrated by a comprehensive study. At the end of his linguistic sketch of this Romani variety – still the only grammatical description available so far – Giulio Soravia wrote:

"However, this dialect is still too little known to give a wide and well documented overview of it, being its knowledge based only on Partisani's glossary and the mass of don Riboldi, as sole published sources." (Soravia 1977: 59)

After 43 years the sources for the study of Lombard Sinti remain rather scant, however some new documents are now available and they deserve to be listed here. First of all, don Mario Riboldi, after translating the mass (Riboldi s.d.), has provided also a Lombard Sinti translation of the Gospel of Mark (Riboldi 1990); moreover, shortly after the publication of the volume of Giulio Soravia quoted above, the journal *Rom. In cammino* has published some short tales under the name of "Oliviero Sinto Lombardo" (1978, 1980, 1981). Later other short texts, among which there are also some poems, have appeared in two anthologies edited by Santino Spinelli (Spinelli 1995 e 1996). Another long text in Lombard Sinti is represented by the guide *Tutti a scuola*, published in 2009 by the Regional Government of Lombardy and destined to Italian Roma and Sinti families living in the region. The text of this guide concerning the functioning of the school is trilingual and beside the Italian text

there are two Romani versions, one in the dialect of Roma Ha(r)vati and the other in Lombard Sinti, this latter written by Yuri Del Bar, a member of the Lombard Sinti community of Mantua. Finally, the author of this paper has recorded with a Lombard Sinti speaker the whole questionnaire of the Romani Morpho-Syntax Database. The audio track and the transcription of the whole interview, labelled as IT-011 Lombard Sinti, are available at <https://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk//rms/browse/phrases/phraselist>.

Lombard Sinti seems to display a good degree of intergenerational transmission in many Sinti communities of Northern Italy, especially in those communities that are settled in the so called nomad camps. According to a recent ethnographic survey (Tribulato 2019: 192-193 and 203; Tribulato 2020: 85-86), transmission seems to be weaker among the Sinti working in the world of the funfairs. In these families, who own merry-go-rounds and other attractions, Romani grammar is no longer mastered by many speakers and especially among young people a new variety of Para-Romani is being born (Tribulato: personal communication). In this emerging Para-Romani variety the lexicon is Lombard Sinti but the grammatical layout comes from Italian; this trend could lead to a radical change in Lombard Sinti, transforming this Romani variety into a slang, i.e. in a variety of Italian marked by the lexicon. Outside the families working in funfairs, Romani inflectional morphology in Lombard Sinti is well preserved and, compared with Early Romani, only noun inflection has been lost. The lexicon acquired before the contact with Italo-Romance dialects is still rich and stable. Of course the Italo-Romance, notably Lombard dialectal and Italian, lexemes used by Lombard Sinti speakers are very numerous. Among these lexical items, those that come from Lombard dialects can be considered as loanwords definitively acquired by Lombard Sinti, since such words are used also by speakers who do not speak neither Lombard dialects nor any other Italo-Romance dialect. More in general the linguistic repertoire of Lombard Sinti speakers for a long time included Lombard Italo-Romance dialects, but now appears to be reduced to Italian and Romani (Scala 2012: 440-443). This latter represents the we-code of the community, i.e. the endo-communitarian and strongly identitarian code, whereas the former is perceived as a they-code, notably the code of the majority community. As for the composition of the repertoire the interruption in transmission of Italo-Romance dialects among Lombard Sinti communities represents no doubt the most relevant innovation of the last 50 years.

Originally, the ethno-text proposed here has been collected, together with other materials, during a long field work in different Lombard Sinti communities; now it is proposed in phonetic transcription with glosses that make available also the morphological level of the language. At the end of the transcription some short linguistic notes have been added with the aim of illustrating some features of Lombard Sinti emerging from the text. During the interview the dialogue has been conducted in Lombard Sinti. The informant originally had been invited to speak freely about the cultural practices of her community regarding funerals, marriage and birth; she answered speaking especially about mourning and marriage, whereas she did not tell almost nothing about customs regarding birth. The reference to the past is strong and constant, and in the case of mourning the intention of indicating a discontinuity in the customs appears very clear, whereas the cultural practices connected with marriage are perceived by the informant as more stable. According to the informant the current customs about mourning, marriage and birth in the Lombard Sinti communities are characterized by lack of homogeneity and by a certain degree of variety; to some extent different behaviors are admitted and different families seem to show different choices regarding

the way to live these fundamental moments of the life. In the final part of the interview the informant claims that among the Sinti the custom of paying a price for the bride does not exist. After stating this, the informant refers in a rather general and vague manner that this practice exists among the Roma. These words have to be considered with caution. The real knowledge that the Sinti have about Roma customs is generally rather scant, but actually the willingness to stress the difference between Sinti and Roma and, of course, the moral superiority of the Sinti, drives many Sinti to overextend to the majority of Roma – if not to all Roma they know – the customs they deem reprehensible and immoral.

From a linguistic point of view the ethno-text published here represents a good example of Lombard Sinti speech and provides a documentary evidence of the high frequency of code-switching and code-mixing phenomena that characterize the utterances in this Romani dialect. It is however possible that some instance of code switching can have been triggered by the fact that the interviewer was not a Sinti, although speaking Lombard Sinti. In the transcription of the text the questions of the interviewer are in bold, and the ellipsis (...) signals hesitation. In the interlinear glosses Leipzig glossing abbreviations have been used (cfr. <https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/pdf/Glossing-Rules.pdf>) with the addition of IMPF "imperfect", that merges PST "past" and IPFV "imperfective".

1. ja 'molo u funa'rai ... ɕi'venas u 'luto
a time ART.PL funeral.PL bear.IMPF.3PL ART.M mourning.SG
Once the funerals ... they were in mourning
2. e u 'luto is ja 'koa but impor'tante,
and ART.M mourning.SG be.IMPF.3SG a thing.SG very important
and the mourning was a very important thing,
3. par'ke is ta ɕi'veas = lo ... dipen'dolas
because be.IMPF.3SG COMP bear.IMPF.2SG = OBJ.3SG.M depend.IMPF.3SG
because you had to be in mourning ... it depended on
4. se 'era, se is i 'romli o u rom
if be.IND.IMPF.3SG if be. IMPF.3SG ART.F wife.SG or ART.M husband.SG
whether he/she was, whether he/she was the wife or the husband,
5. is ta ɕi'venas = lo serja'mente par ja bers
be. IMPF.3SG COMP bear.IMPF.3PL = OBJ.3SG.M seriously for a year.SG
they had to be in mourning seriously for one year
6. o pju 'aŋke, n is 'miga tʃen iŋ kumpa'nia,
or more even NEG be. IMPF.3SG NEG stay.SBJV.3PL in company.SG
or even more, they could not stay in the company of other people,

7. n is 'miga di'ken i televi'zjon,
 NEG be. IMPF.3SG NEG watch.SBJV.3PL ART.F television.SG
 they could not watch television,
8. n is 'miga ne'sun diverti'mento da ne'sun 'tipo,
 NEG be. IMPF.3SG NEG any amusement.SG of any sort.SG
 there was no amusement of any sort,
9. is ta 'tʃenas xa 'kokari,
 be. IMPF.3SG COMP stay.IMP.3PL always alone.PL
 they always had to stay alone,
10. tʃo'ε, is ta raka'renas, ma non 'molto, 'miga but.
 I mean be. IMPF.3SG COMP speak.IMP.3PL but NEG much, NEG much
 or rather, they could speak, but not much.
11. is ta ɕi'venas = lo serja'mente,
 be. IMPF.3SG COMP bear.IMP.3PL = OBJ.3SG.M seriously
 They had to be in mourning seriously,
12. par'kε si 'venas ta ɕi'nen ke na ɕi'venas
 because if come.IMP.3PL COMP know.SBJV.3PL COMP NEG bear.IMP.3PL
 because if they (the others) heard that they were not
13. u 'luto, is gwai.
 ART.M mourning.SG be. IMPF.3PL trouble.PL
 in mourning, it was trouble.
14. e im'vetʃe a'kana u 'koa 'i = lu di'verso.
 and instead now ART.M thing.SG be.PRS.3SG = SBJ.M different.M
 But now the thing is different.
15. kon ka'mena ɕi'ven = lo, ɕi'ven = lo
 who want.PRS.3PL bear.SBJV.3PL = OBJ.3SG.M bear.IND.3PL = OBJ.3SG.M
 Those who want to be in mourning, are in mourning
16. e 'njaŋka u 'romja ne u murs
 and neither ART.PL woman.PL NOR ART.PL man.PL
 and neither the women nor the men
17. n 'i = li 'butar ubli'gadi.
 NEG be.PRS.3PL = SBJ longer obliged.PL
 are obliged anymore.

18. ad e'zempjo me, 'kwando mu'jas mur dat, mur dat,
 for example 1SG when die.PRF.3SG my.M father.SG my.M father.SG
 For example, as for me, when my father died, my father,
19. a 'parte ke jo udja'relas u 'luto,
 leaving aside COMP 3SG.NOM.M hate.IMPF.3SG ART.M mourning.SG
 leaving aside the fact that he hated the mourning,
20. par'soni 'ridi da 'bruno, assoluta'mente pin'das 'menge
 person.PL dress.PST.PTCP.PL of black.SG absolutely say.PRF.3SG 1PL.DAT
 people dressed in black, no way – he told us –
21. 'kwando jo ma'relas na ka'melas kek 'luto,
 when 3SG.NOM.M die.IMPF.3SG NEG want.IMPF.3SG any mourning.SG
 when he died he did not want any mourning,
22. ne di 'romli ne du t'fau.
 neither of.ART.F wife.SG nor of.ART.M son.SG
 neither from his wife or from his son.
23. e noi non l=a'bjam 'mika por'tato,
 and 1PL NEG 3SG.OBJ.M=have.AUX.IND.PRS.1PL NEG bear.PST.PTCP.SG.M
 And as for us, we have not been in mourning,
24. ne noi ne 'mia 'mama, ne'suno.
 neither 1PL.NOM nor my.F mother.SG no one.
 neither we nor my mother, no one.
25. t'fo'e a'kana u 'koa kam'bjas,
 I mean now ART.M thing.SG change.PRF.3SG
 I mean, now the thing has changed,
26. n i ar ja 'molo ke u 'koa
 NEG be.PRS.3SG as a time that ART.PL thing.PL
 it is no longer as in the old days, when the things
27. 'is=li pju serja'mente, t'fo'e 'menjar ...
 be.IMPF.3PL=SBJ more seriously I mean our.PL
 were (lived) more seriously, I mean our ...
28. 'kome si='ditfe? ... ar pi'nel=pi? ...
 how REFL=say.IND.PRS.3SG how say.PRS.3SG=REFL
 how should I say? ... How should I say?...

29. 'spɛta ... sai ke na tiŋka'ra = ma 'butar ...
 wait.IMP.2SG know.IND.PRS.2SG COMP NEG remember.PRS.1SG = REFL anymore
 wait..., you know I do not remember anymore ...
30. non mi = 'vjene pju in 'mente,
 NEG 1SG.DAT = come.IND.PRS.3SG anymore in mind.SG
 it does not come to my mind,
31. 'spɛta ... ah ... 'mɛŋgar tradi'sjoni, 'nostre tradi'sjoni
 wait.IMP.2SG ah our.PL tradition.PL our.PL tradition.PL
 wait ... ah ... our traditions, our traditions.
32. e iŋ'vetʃe du spuza'risjo ... na'senas vek, 'tʃenas vek
 and instead about.ART.M marriage.SG flee.IMP.3PL away stay.IMP.3PL away
 Instead, about the marriage ... they used to flee, they stayed away
33. 'pɪsal 'divas, pɔi 'venas 'kere, parduna'renas = li
 few day.PL then come.IMP.3PL home.LOC forgive.IMP.3PL = OBJ.3PL
 for a few days, then they came back home, they (the parents) forgave them
34. e pɔi festedʒa'relas = pe, 'pjenas, ki'lenas,
 and then celebrate.IMP.3SG = REFL drink.IMP.3PL dance.IMP.3PL
 and then they celebrated, they drank, danced,
35. an'davano a'vanti ... 'dʒanas iŋ'glan fin i ma'tina
 go.IND.IMP.3PL ahead go.IMP.3PL ahead until ART.F morning.SG
 they went on ... they went on until the morning
36. ta xan, ta pjen.
 COMP eat.SBJV.3PL COMP drink.SBJV.3PL
 eating, drinking.
37. 'kisi 'divas 'dʒanas vek?
 how many day.PL go.IMP.3PL away
 for how many days did they go away?
38. da 'sɔlito trin, trin 'divas.
 usually three, three day.PL
 Usually three, three days.
39. 'pɪsal!
 few
 Few!

40. 'pisał, ʦo'ɛ 'kava 'papli 'kana ka'rel = pi,
 few I mean this.M still now do.PRS.3SG = REFL
 Few, I mean: we still do this now,
41. n i ja 'koa ke kam'bjas.
 NEG be.PRS.3SG a thing.SG REL change. PRF.3SG
 this is not a thing that has changed.
42. e i 'nasita xa'jek i 'kola ke festedʒa'rena
 and ART.F birth.SG the same be.PRS.3PL that.PL REL celebrate.PRS.3PL
 And about the birth, it is the same: there are those who celebrate it
43. e 'kola ke na festedʒa'rena, dipen'dola ... du per'soni.
 and that.PL REL NEG celebrate.PRS.3PL depend.PRS.3SG from.ART.PL person.PL
 and those who don't, it depends on the individuals.
44. e 'kola ke festedʒa'rena u ka'rena?
 and that.PL REL celebrate.PRS.3PL what do.PRS.3PL
 And those who celebrate it, what do they do?
45. 'pjena ta 'xana. iŋ'veʦe 'koa du 'luto no,
 drink.PRS.3PL and eat.PRS.3PL whereas this of.ART.M mourning no
 They drink and eat. Whereas the mourning, no,
46. ɛ 'una 'kɔza pju serja'mente,
 be.PRS.3SG a.F thing.SG more seriously
 this is a thing that's more serious(ly),
47. ʦo'ɛ 'era 'una 'kɔza pju serja'mente.
 I mean be.IMP.F.3SG a.F thing.SG more seriously
 I mean, it was a thing that was more serious(ly).
48. a'dɛso ʦo'ɛ ɛ 'serja 'aŋke a'dɛso, 'solo ke a'dɛso,
 now I mean be.PRS.3SG serious.F still now only that now
 Now, I mean, it is still serious now, but now,
49. 'kana dʒi'ven = lo nur zi, ɛ impor'tante.
 now bear.PRS.3PL = OBJ.3SG.M in.ART.M heart.SG be.PRS.3SG important
 now they are in mourning in the heart, it is important
50. por'tar = lo nel 'kwɔre.
 bear.INF = OBJ.3SG.M in.ART.M heart.SG
 to be in mourning in the heart.

51. ar ka'rel=pi ja spuza'risjo 'kava 'divas?
 how do.PRS.3SG=REFL a marriage.SG today
 How is the marriage made today?
52. ad e'zempjo, noi ... men, tʃo'ε, 'menge i 'koa 'kjake, 'fatʃile,
 for example.SG 1PL.NOM 1PL.NOM I mean 1PL.DAT be.PRS.3SG thing.SG so easy
 For example, we ... we, I mean, for us it is a thing like this, a plain thing,
53. par'ke i but ... i but 'sinti
 because be.PRS.3PL many be.PRS.3PL many Sinti.PL
 because there are many ... there are many Sinti
54. ke 'i=li but tradi'sjoni, ki'nen=li ... e 'pape
 REL be.PRS.3PL=3PL.OBL many tradition.PL buy.PRS.3PL=SBJ and still
 who have many traditions, they buy ... and still
55. festedʒa'rena kun u 'riape, kun i 'gustare da 'spoza,
 celebrate.PRS.3PL with ART.M dress with ART.F ring of bride.SG
 celebrate with the wedding dress, with the wedding ring,
56. tʃo'ε, men na, i 'koa 'kjake 'semplitʃe.
 I mean 1PL.NOM no be.PRS.3SG thing.SG so simple
 I mean, we don't, it is a thing like this, plain.
57. na'sena vek, 'vena 'pale e bon,
 flee.PRS.3PL away come.PRS.3PL back and that's enough,
 They flee away, come back and that's enough,
58. tʃo'ε, 'pɔi i 'kola ke festedʒa'rena, 'kola ke
 I mean then be.PRS.3PL that.PL REL celebrate.PRS.3PL that.PL REL
 I mean, there are those who celebrate, those who
59. na festedʒa'rena, par'ke 'kana n i 'butar da 'moda.
 NEG celebrate.PRS.3PL because now NEG be.PRS.3SG longer of vogue.SG
 don't, because now it is no longer in vogue.
60. e u dat e i dai perduna'rena xa?
 and ART.M father.SG and ART.F mother.SG forgive.PRS.3PL always
 Do the father and the mother forgive always?
61. Dipen'dola, se i ja per'sona si i ja tʃau
 depend.PRS.3SG if be.PRS.3SG a person.SG if be.PRS.3SG a boy
 It depends. If he is a person ... if he is a boy

62. ke 'dʒala 'lɛŋge a 'dʒɛnjo, a u fa'miʎi,
REL go.PRS.3SG 3PL.DAT to taste.SG to ART.PL family.PL
they, the families, like him,
63. va 'bene, parduna'rena,
go.PRS.3SG well forgive.PRS.3PL
okay, they forgive (them),
64. altri'menti 'lena 'pale i tʃai o u tʃau, dipen'dola
otherwise take.PRS.3PL back ART.F girl.SG or ART.M boy.SG depend.PRS.3SG
otherwise they take back the girl or the boy, it depends.
65. e u dat i ta del 'loe?
and ART.M father.SG be.PRS.3SG COMP give.SBJV.3SG money.PL
And must the father give money?
66. na, men, al'menu men na uza'raja 'miga,
no 1PL.NOM at least 1PL.NOM NEG use.PRS.1PL NEG,
No, we, at least, we are not used (to doing it)
67. iŋ'vetʃe i but, u 'zlavi, u ru'meni,
whereas be.PRS.3PL many ART.PL Slav.PL ART.PL Romanian.PL
on the contrary there are many, the Slavs, the Romanians,
68. in'soma dipen'dola, jon, u unɣa'rezi, tʃ=ano kwel ...
in sum depend.PRS.3SG 3PL.NOM ART.PL Hungarian.PL LOC=have.IND.PRS.3PL that
in sum it depends, they, the Hungarians, they have that way over there
69. 'i=li 'doa 'metodo doi da
be.PRS.3PL=3PL.OBL that way.SG there of
they have that way over there of...
70. ta ki'nen=la, ta pleska'ren, par'ke poi,
COMP buy.SBJV.3PL=3SG.OBL.F COMP pay.SBJV.3PL because then
that they buy her, they pay, because after that,
71. 'ja 'vɔlta ke poi ... le 'dɔne pju ke 'altro ...
a time.SG that then ART.PL.F woman.PL especially
then once that ...the women especially...

72. u 'romja 'i =li 'pleskardi per 'loro poi
 ART.PL woman.PL be.PRS.3PL = SBJ pay.PST.PTCP.PL for 3PL then
 the women are paid, then for them
73. non e'zistono ne'anke pju,
 NEG exist.IND.PRS.3PL either anymore
 they do not even exist anymore,
74. par'ke ε 'kome se le = a'vessero
 because be.IND.PRS.3SG as if 3PL.OBJ.F = have.AUX.SBJV.PST.3PL
 because it is as if they would have
75. ven'dute, bika'den = li, no?
 sell.PST.PTCP.PL.F sell.PRF.3PL = 3PL.OBJ no
 sold them, they have sold them, haven't they?
76. e 'dɔpu ke 'djen = li vek ...
 and after that give.prf.3pl = 3PL.OBJ away
 And after that they gave them away ...
77. si, bon, or'mai non ε ... n i 'butar
 yes, well, at this point NEG be.IND.PRS.3PL NEG be.PRS.3PL longer
 yes that's enough, ever since that time they are not ... they are no longer
78. 'koa 'lengar, non ε pju 'rɔba 'loro.
 thing.PL their.PL NEG be.IND.PRS.3SG longer stuff.SG their
 their things, they are no longer their stuff.

Some linguistic notes

Phonology:

- a) alternation between [-e] and [-i]: form such as ['kokari] "alone.PL." (9) and ['gustare] "ring" (55) show an innovation in final vowels. In more conservative dialects the first would be ['kokare] and the second ['gustari]; both [-e] for the plural of an adjective and [-i] for a feminine noun ending in vowel are Indo-Aryan inherited inflectional morphemes. In Lombard Sinti there is a general trend to neutralize /i/ and /e/ in final position and the alternation between the two phonetic realizations [i] and [e] in the utterances of the speakers seems to be due to free variation, cfr. ['paple] (54) and ['papli] (40) "still, yet, again", [=pe] (34) and [=pi] (28) "REFL.3SG". The neutralization between /i/ and /e/ in final position leads to morphological syncretism between feminine singular and common plural (sensitive to gender only in few nouns indicating animate entities). The ambiguity created by this homonymy is however sustainable by Lombard Sinti morpho-syntax system, mainly thanks to the article, which remains distinct ([i] for feminine singular and [u] for plural).

- b) loss of intervocalic [v], especially after [o]: the phenomenon is very common in Lombard Sinti and attested in this text in forms such as ['koa] "thing, stuff" (2), ['loe] "money" (65, used by the interviewer but genuine) and ['doa] "that" (69). More conservative variants are ['kova], ['love] and ['dova], cfr. also Piedmontese Sinti [ko'va], [lo've] and [do'va].
- c) [e] > [a] in unstressed syllable before [r]: this change is very clear in ['butar] "more, longer, anymore" (17, 29, 59, 77), cfr. Piedmontese Sinti [bu'ter]. In the case of [ka'rel=pi] "do.PRS.3SG=REFL" (40) we have an occurrence of the verb "to do" that in all Romani varieties is [ker-]. In Lombard Sinti the vowel [e] is preserved only in [ker]! "IMP.2SG" where it is stressed. Of course, it is possible to think that the underlying form of the verb root is /ker/ and that a phonological rule changes /e/ into [a] before /r/ when it occurs in unstressed syllable. But the assumption of such a rule would need more confirmation. An analogous case is that of [ma'relas] "die. IMPF.3SG" (21), cfr. in other Romani dialects the root is [mer-], Piedmontese Sinti [me'relas]. Lowering of /e/ that surfaces as [a] before /r/ is a well attested phenomenon also in the Italo-Romance dialects of Northern Italy (Rohlf's 1966-1969: I 164).

Morphology

- d) -o- verb inflection: forms as [dipen'dola] "depend. PRS.3SG" (43, 61, 64, 68) and [dipen'dolas] "depend. IMPF.3SG" (3) show the productivity of the verb inflection with -o- as intransitivity marker. This inflectional pattern in Romani characterizes intransitive verbs and in many dialects it can change the valence of a transitive verb (Matras 2002: 119-128). In Lombard Sinti the inherited intransitive verbs showing -o- inflection are very few (cfr. forms such as [bi'tʃos] "you are called, your name is...", [bi'tʃol] "he/she is called, his/her name is...", [mol] "it costs"), but some intransitive loan verbs from Italo-Romance dialects and from Italian have been morphologically integrated in this inflectional pattern, cfr. [vi'vola] "live. PRS.3SG", [vu'lola] "fly. PRS.3SG" (cfr. e.g. It. *vivere* "to live", *volare* "to fly" and Milanese dialect [vi:f] "to live", but [vi:vum] "we live", [vu'la] "to fly").

Between morphology and syntax

- e) a modal periphrasis: in some passages of the text we find the periphrasis [inflected form of "to be" + [ta] + SBJV or IMPF of the lexical verb], cfr. e.g. [is ta ɕi'venas=lo] (5 and 11) lit. "they had to bear it (*scil.* the mourning)" (cfr. It. *portare il lutto* "to be in mourning"), [n is 'miga tʃen iŋ kumpa'nia] "they had not to/could not stay in company (of others)" (6), [is ta raka'renas, ma non 'molto] "they could speak, but not much" (10) etc. This periphrasis clearly has a modal value and in this text it occurs as a way to express deontic modality (cfr. also 3, 7 and 9).

Syntax

- f) post-verbal negation: in addition to the Indo-Aryan inherited negation [na] (with the allomorph [n] before vowel), Lombard Sinti uses also ['miga], a negation adverb borrowed from the Italo-Romance dialects of Lombardy. The inherited [na] is regularly placed in pre-verbal position (6, 7, 8, 12, 17, 21, 26, 29, 41, 43, 59,

66, 77), whereas ['miga], as in the Italo-Romance dialects of Lombardy (Vai 1996), is a post-verbal negation (6, 7, 8, 10, 66). In Lombard Sinti the Jespersen's cycle of negation is in progress from |[na] + vb| to |[na] + vb + ['miga]| and finally to |vb + ['miga]|, but all three possibilities are still admitted by the speakers and their distribution (if existing) is not yet clear.

Lexicon

- g) ['molo] "time" (1, 26), surely from Germ. dial. *mol*, cfr. Standard Germ. *Mal*; this word is not registered by Partisani (1973), but it is attested in other Sinti varieties such as Venetian Sinti (Soravia 1981: 27).
- h) ['luto] "mourning" (1, 2, 13, 19, 21, 45) is a loanword from It. *lutto*; also many other nouns referring to important moments of the life are loanwords, cfr. [funa'rai] "funerals" (1) and [spuza'risjo] "marriage" (32), borrowed from Lombard dialects (cfr. e.g. in the dialect of Milan [fyna'rai] "funerals" and [spuza'lisi] "marriage", but in the past the rotacism of intervocalic [l] was very widespread in Milanese) and ['nasita] "birth" (42) from It. *nascita* (the phonological adaptation of [ʃ] in [s] is quite regular, cfr. Scala 2020: 90). Of course, in Lombard Sinti there are inherited verbs for talking about actions and practices related with these and other key-moments of life, but the abstract nouns designating them are currently represented by loanwords from Italo-Romance dialects of from Italian. The glossary of Partisani (1973: 14) records *bja* "marriage" (and *báro bjav* lit. "big marriage" with the same meaning), an inherited Indo-Aryan word (Boretzky-Igla 1994: 312) that seems no longer in use in many Lombard Sinti communities. In the same glossary an Indo-Aryan inherited word as *muléskero* is glossed as "funeral" (Partisani 1973: 14), but usually in Lombard Sinti this word means "cemetery".
- i) [tradi'sjoni] "traditions, customs" (31, 54) is borrowed from It. *tradizioni* with the regular phonological adaptation of [ts] in [s], because of the lack of alveolar affricates in Lombard Sinti (Scala 2020: 90). Of course, the Lombard Sinti have traditions, but they do not have any inherited word for the hyperonymic concept of "tradition".

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