NEGATIVE *BI* IN ROMANI. INDIC AND IRANIAN CONNECTIONS

Alin-Gabriel Bucă[*]

Abstract: Negative *bi-* is the primary indicator of caritivity in Romani and has been invariably recognized as belonging to the pre-European component of the language. Most lexicographic sources and related studies trace it back to OIA वि *vi-* 'un-', but also acknowledge that an Iranian origin is plausible. In Romani, *bi-* can function as a preposition, non-verbal privative prefix, conjunction, and verbal prefix. This paper argues that these various constructions can be ascribed to different stages in the development of the language and to different contact scenarios. The limited set of verbs containing a reflex of OIA preverbal वि- *vi-* and the prototypical circumpositional *bi…qo* template correspond to an early proto-Romani stage (perhaps late MIA or *apabhraṃśa*), most certainly prior to the departure from the Indian subcontinent. Strongly adjectival compounds (prefixal *bi…qo*, *bi-* + adjectives, *bi-* + adjectival participles) are more likely to have arisen in a post-Indian context, as a result of contact with Persian or other Iranian languages. Finally, the use of *bi* as a conjunction with subjunctive verbs must be the result of a later, localized convergence within the Balkan *Sprachbund*. Drawing on the existing literature and the analysis of various Romani texts, the paper also attempts to disambiguate the morphological status of *bi-* in genitive nominal formations. The lexical-semantic approach proposed by Lieber (2004) and the picture of overlapping and competing negative prefixes in IE languages outlined by Wackernagel (2009) help explain the functional flexibility and diversity of this lone productive negative prefix as the result of subsequent semantic and functional reconfigurations in various contact scenarios.

Keywords: Romani, *bi-*, negative, privative, caritive

1. Introduction

This paper aims to provide a more comprehensive account of negative *bi-* in Romani, tied-in with an exploration of its diachronic background and functional evolution from a lexical-semantic perspective.

In Romani, *bi* can function as a preposition, non-verbal privative prefix, conjunction, and verbal prefix. I outline, discuss, and exemplify each type, drawing on the existing literature and our own research of various Romani texts. Most of the examples are taken from Uhlik (2020), whose extensive collection of stories is an invaluable resource for analyzing negative *bi* within the confines of a well-established Romani variety (Gurbeti).

2. *Bi* as preposition

A basic description of prepositional *bi* 'without' would be that it is the only preposition that governs the genitive (Bortezky 1994: 116), and it can be used both with nouns (1) and pronouns (2):

[*] University of Bucharest, "Languages and Cultural Identities" Doctoral School, alin.buca@s.unibuc.ro.

(1)   Vov sar sah bižaj, gurudah o tover thaj gaja **bi**[1]   **e   toverehko**   djelo.
                                                   PRIV PREP DEF axe-M.SG.GEN
         'As he was wise, he hid the ax and so he left **without the axe**.'
                                                                                    (Uhlik 2020: 206)

(2)   Gaja vov ačhilo but brš sasto thaj džuvdo **bi**   **lako**.
                                             PRIV PREP POSS.3F.SG
         'Thus, he stayed healthy and alive for many years **without her**.'
                                                                                    (Uhlik 2020: 487)

     Kozhanov (2019) describes *bi* as the primary indicator of caritivity in Romani[2] and points out that its morphosyntactic status is a matter of debate, as it is considered either a prefix or a preposition. Varying approaches to the treatment of *bi* are indeed found in the literature, set apart by particular priorities and areas of focus, as well as by different theoretical and taxonomic frames. For instance, Matras (2004) focuses mainly on the prefixation and derivational function of *bi*, while Kozhanov (2019) distinguishes between the "original" form and use of the caritive group (*bi* + genitive nouns/possessive pronouns) and "borrowed" or contact-induced occurrences (*bi* + verbal groups). Taxonomically, it is a matter of convenience to use a general descriptor such as "particle" – Sampson (1926), Gjerdman & Ljungberg (1963) or "marker" – Kozhanov (2019) which allows for further refining of morphosyntactic subclasses.

2.1 Use of prepositional *bi* with pronouns

     Prepositional *bi* is typically used with the possessive forms: *bi miro* (lit. 'without my') 'without me', *bi tiro* (lit. 'without your') 'without you', etc.

(3)   Gaja o Rrom xoxadah la, [...], the pale xalah e šošojeh **bi**   **lako**
                                                         PRIV PREP POSS.3SG.F

         guglivareh.

         'So, the man cheated her, [...], and again ate a rabbit **without her** as a treat.'
                                                                                    (Uhlik 2020: 377)

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[1] Throughout the texts in Uhlik (2020), *bi* is found either written separately or joined in a single word. These spelling variants seem to indicate a conscious choice made by the editor, Hedina Tahirović-Sijerčić, with regard to the morphosyntactic status of *bi* – preposition if separate, prefix if bound. Our glosses do not always coincide with the spelling choice, for instance in (22)-(24).

[2] Hancock (1995b: 71) also mentions the "stressed prefix" *nà-* as being common in eastern Vlax dialects, and notes that "it has a more restricted use than *bi*", meaning 'un-': *nàvučo* 'low', *nàšukar* 'plain', *nàlačho* 'bad'. However, lexicographic records of *na-* negative/privative formations are rather rare. In Courthiade (2009) we find *nasig* 'slowly' and *nalaćho* ('bad'). In Mānušs et al. (1997: 89) *na* is entered as a particle, and the same dictionary lists *naaizbistirdo* adj. 'unforgettable', *nabaxtalo* adj. 'unfortunate, luckless, unhappy', *nabut* adj. 'some, few, a little' (< OIA na + bahutā), *nadžinipen* m. 'ignorance', *nahalakiro* adv. 'imperceptibly', *naiedikhav* vt 'to hate, to dislike', *nalačho* adj. 'bad, devil', *nalini* 'unmarried (woman)', *nalino* 'unmarried (man)', *napačaibnangiro* subst. gen. 'unbeliever, infidel, atheist', *naresel* vi, 'to lack, to be short of smth., to be missing', *narobime* p. p. inv. 'undeserved', *naviginibnaskiro* adj. gen. 'innumerable', and *nazavidno* adj. 'unenviable'. At first glance, negative derivation using *na-* seems to be confined to peripheral Romani varieties, but a more thorough analysis would be needed for further clarification.

Rare, atypical genitive forms, e.g. *bi manqo*, *bi tuqo* are mentioned in Gjerdman & Ljungberg (1963: 139) and Courthiade (2016: 17). The latter also points to the examples in Sampson (1926: 221): *bi mança* (instrumental-comitative), *bi lesθe* (locative) and notes that while the former has been documented, the latter has not. The putative use of the locative with *bi* could be seen as tendency toward prepositional case leveling, as most prepositions in Romani govern the locative. The use of the comitative in pronominal and nominal *bi* constructions is not a rare occurrence, and Kozhanov (2019) observes that in some dialects the caritive construction is reinterpreted as a negation of the comitative. Vekerdi (2000) states that *bi* is used with pronouns in the ablative case, e.g. *bi manθar*, without referencing any specific dialect. In rare instances, prepositional *bi* can also be used with the reflexive pronoun *pes*. Gjerdman & Ljungberg (1963: 139) reference *bi pesa* (+ comitative). However, the form given in the index (Gjerdman & Ljungberg 1963: 212) is *bipesqo*, glossed as a genitive adjective (in which case *bi* would function as a prefix) meaning 'not being able to take care of himself', as in *bipesqo phirel* 'he is wandering about and is not able to take care of himself'. Gjerde (1994: 50) records *bipesko* 'unconscious of himself, senseless'. Instances of *bi* used with indefinite pronouns can also be found, as shown below in section 2.4, examples (19) and (31).

2.2 Use of prepositional *bi* with nouns

When used with proper nouns, *bi* is undoubtedly prepositional, as in *bi la Zagasa* [+ comitative] 'without Zaga' (Gjerdman & Ljungberg, 1963: 139).

Typical *bi* constructions with common nouns are in the genitive:

(4)   Me som rromni ćorrori, […]/**Bi   baxtaqro**   me ʒivav, /kaj na ʒänav
                                  PRIV PREP luck-F.SG.GEN

        te drabavav.
        'Je suis une pauvre tsigane,…/Je vis **dans l'infortune**, /Car je ne sais pas lire'
        [= 'I am a poor Gypsy/I live in misfortune, /Because I cannot read']
                                                                    (Papùśa 2010: 41)

(5)   Taj trajinas ži ka l'šel berš **bi   doktorosko**.   Taj von či žanenas so si
                                    PRIV PREP doctor-M.SG.GEN

        ekh doktori.
        'And they lived to one hundred years **without a doctor**. And they did not know
        what a doctor was.'
                                                                    (Gjerde 1994: 164)

(6)   Me tromam te raćarav **bi   jagljako**   thaj **bi   čhujrako**.
                              PRIV PREP gun-F.SD.GEN   PRIV PREP knife-F.SG.GEN
        'I can spend the night **without a gun** and **without a knife**.'
                                                                    (Uhlik 2020: 1969)

Courthiade (2016: 17-18) interprets the *bi…qo* template as a circumposition consisting of "two particles, one before and one after the noun in the B-form" (oblique) and finds striking similarities with the Hindi inverted compound postposition (which he

also interprets as a circumposition expressing the caritive relationship) बिना *binā...* के *ke* 'without'[3]. In later works (Courthiade 2019: 66), *bi...qo* is labeled a "pre-postposition", and the same comparison with NIA languages is drawn (Hindi and also Punjabi *bina…te/de*). A more detailed analysis of these similarities will be provided further on. Sarău (2009: 82) also considers that, when not affixed directly to a nominative base, *bi* acts as a preposition (typically with the genitive).

2.3 Preposition or prefix?

The morphological status of *bi* in genitive nominal formations is not clear cut, since such forms themselves have an ambiguous status. Kozhanov (2019) observes that there are arguments for considering these forms either nouns, in which case *bi* would function as a preposition, or adjectives, in which case *bi* would function as a prefix. Gjerdman & Ljungberg (1963) consider that in such constructions, termed "genitive adjectives", *bi* is a prefix:

(7)   **Bi**-   **panžengo** deš si.
        PRIV PREP five-GEN
        'It's five [minutes] to ten.' [lit. 'It's ten **without five**.'].
                                                        (Gjerdmann & Ljungberg 1963: 37)

(8)   kasavi **bi**-   **porăqi**   mica si.
                 PRIV PREF tail-F.SG.GEN
        'It's one of these **tailless** cats (cat-breeds).'
                                                        (Gjerdmann & Ljungberg 1963: 139)

A similar approach is found in Sampson (1926), who states that *bi* has the function of a prefix with the force of 'un-' or '-less' when used with genitive nouns.

First, it should be noted that any discussion of the morphological status of *bi* in genitive nominal constructions must take into account the general status of genitive attributives in Romani. In her analysis of genitive adnominals (GAs), Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2000) identifies a subclass of non-anchoring GAs, whose primary function is that of qualifying or classifying the head nominal, rather than identifying their referents (*forosqo grast* 'market horse' *vs. dadesqo grast* 'father's horse'). Even though Koptjevskaja-Tamm does not include *bi* forms in her discussion, "true" privative GAs function similarly, as seen in the examples below:

(9)   Kaj säs pesqe rromnŏrri, /**bi**   **baxtaqri**,   ćorrori
                                    PRIV PREF luck-F.SG.GEN
        'Qu'il était une fois une tsigane, /**Infortunée** et pauvrette' [= 'That there once was a Gypsy woman/Unfortunate and poor']
                                                                    (Papùśa 2010: 41)

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[3] Courthiade mentions the form बिना *binā...* का *kā*, which is not quite correct.

(10)　O čhavorro kam bijandol **bi　　　vastengo**　　thaj **bi　　　prnengo**.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　PRIV PREF hand-M.PL.GEN　　　PRIV PREF leg-M.PL.GEN
　　　　'The baby will be born **without arms** and **without legs**.'

(Uhlik 2020: 268)

(11)　Me če khejni! Loli rasa! Loli šej taj **bibalengo**　　　– bal ma' na i aba
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　PRIV PREF hair-M.PL.GEN

　　　p'o dumo
　　　'But what a chicken! Red race [breed]. A red girl **without hair** [featherless] –
　　　there is no more hair on her back.'

(Gjerde 1994: 178)

　　　Pobozniak (1964) includes such forms in the larger category of *bahuvrīhi* compounds, e.g. *kaleśeresqo* 'dark-haired' (lit. black-headed), *bibutăqo* 'without work, unemployed'. The term *bahuvrīhi* is used by Sanskrit grammarians to denote a certain type of attributive compounds, typically consisting of two nouns in apposition to each other. Kale (1995: 151) observes that a *bahuvrīhi* compound "generally attributes that which is expressed by its second member, determined or modified by what is denoted by its first member, to something denoted by neither of the two; e.g. महाबाहू *mahābāhu* 'one whose arm is great'." Furthermore, a *bahuvrīhi* compound "partakes of the nature of an adjective and assumes the gender of the substantive it qualifies". In Romani such compounds are by no means rare and often serve as metonymical descriptors:

(12)　varesavi gadžikani rakli, **thulebuljaći** thaj **barečučendji**
　　　'some gadji [non-Roma] girl, **fat-bottomed** and **big-breasted**'

(Uhlik 2020: 313)

(13)　vo majanglal sah barvalo, bižaj thaj **barebuljako**.
　　　'before he used to be rich, smart, and **big-bottomed**'

(Uhlik 2020: 772)

　　　Consider a further set of examples, also from Uhlik (2020), exhibiting *bi*:

(14)　Sar tu šaj aveh gasavo **bi-　　　mohko**　　　te me dikhav, a tu te avera deh
　　　　　　　　　　　　　PRIV PREF face-M.SG.GEN

　　　bule.
　　　'How can you be so rude [lit. '**without face**']⁴ that I'm watching and you're
　　　having your way with another?'

(Uhlik 2020: 313)

(15)　E phuri ačhili i **bi-　　　mindžko**　　i **bikarehko**,　　kaj voj seha
　　　　　　　　　　　PRIV PREF/PREP twat-F.SG.GEN rooster-M.SG.GEN

　　　vi džungali vi bilačhi pala piro čorro rrom.
　　　'The old woman remained both **twatless** and **roosterless**, because she was both
　　　mean and unkind towards her poor husband.'

(Uhlik 2020: 450)

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⁴ This could also be a calque, see Serbian *bezobrazan* 'cheeky', 'rude'.

(16) mora te lel la te na kamel te ačhel **bi** **šoreko**.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　PRIV PREF/PREP　head-M.SG.GEN
'he must take her if he doesn't want to be left **without a head**.'
(Uhlilk 2020: 468)

(17) *Sar tu ka leh mrne čheja, kana hi voj bangi, korri thaj **bi-** **čhibaki**?*
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　PRIV PREF　tongue-F.SG.GEN
'How are you going to take my daughter when she is lame, blind and mute [lit. '**tongueless**]?
(Uhlik 2020: 776)

(18) thaj kam avel **bi-** **vastengo**, **bi-** **jakhengo** thaj
　　　　　　　　PRIV PREF　hand-M.PL.GEN　PRIV PREF　eye-F.PL.GEN
bi- **prnengo**.
PRIV PREF　leg-M.PL.GEN
'He will be born not whole and will be **without arms, eyes, and legs**.'
(Uhlik 2020: 274)

(19) Kana bijaneha gasave čhavorreh **bi-** **vastendjireh** thaj
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　PRIV PREF　hand-M.PL.ACC
bi- **nisohćireh**
PRIV PREF　INDEF-ACC
'If you give birth to such a child **without arms** and **without anything**'
(Uhlik 2020: 274)

(20) Tu san **bi-** **mustakengo** sar khaj rromni.
　　　　　　　PRIV PREf　moustache-F.PL.GEN
'You have no lip hair [lit. **without a moustache**], just like some woman.'
(Uhlik 2020: 767)

(21) jekh čhavorro savo saha čorrorro, **bi** **dadeko**,.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　PRIV PREF　father-M.SG.GEN
bi **dako**
PRIV PREF　mother-F.SG.GEN
'a little boy who was poor, **fatherless**, **motherless**'
(Uhlik 2020: 466)

(22) Angolehte vov djelo-tar vošeha **bi** **dromehko** thaj avilo ke jekhe
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　PRIV PREF　road-M.SG.GEN
phurjako ćher.
'Then he went through a forest **without roads** and reached the house of an old woman.'
(Uhlik 2020: 494)

(23) Me sem **bi** **brigako**, **bi** **pharimahko** nakhav.
　　　　　　PRIV PREF　care-F.SG.GEN　PRIV PREF　difficulty-M.SG.GEN
'I am **carefree**, I live without **hurdles**.'
(Uhlik 2020: 797)

(24) Ni mangav ćuće niso, me kam ćuće **bi-** **poćinimahko**[5] gova lačharav.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　PRIV PREP　pay-M.SG.GEN
'I'm not asking you for anything, I'll fix it for you for free.'
(Uhlik 2020: 268)

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[5] Li. 'without pay'.

(25) Ćerdah paćiv thaj svakoneh muklah te xal thaj te pijel **bi-   poćinimahko**.
                                           PRIV PREP pay-M.SG.GEN
'[He] made a feast and let everyone eat and drink **for free**.'

(Uhlik 2020: 793)

Examples (14) through (21) illustrate a subset of adjectival compounds prefixed with *bi* which share several common traits: they function as categorial or qualifying descriptors, which fits the definition of non-anchoring GAs mentioned above; at the same time, they can be construed as negative metonymical descriptors, which would support their inclusion in the *bahuvrīhi* category; semantically, they express the absence of inalienable possessums (body parts and appendages, family members). Interestingly, the forms in (19) are fully lexicalized and behave like common adjectives in *-o* taking the oblique form to establish concord with the head noun in the accusative (*čhavorreh*). When only the qualifying trait is present, as in (22) and (23), the degree of adjectivization seems to be weaker, and *bi* could be parsed as a preposition as well. In (24) and (25), *bipoćinimahko* is used adverbially and could as well be a calque from Serbo-Croation (*besplatno*), thus making a prepositional function of *bi* more likely.

An interesting phenomenon is that of extended *bi…qo* compounds, which exhibit the insertion of the definite article or of additional attributive modifiers:

(26) teljardja **bi   le   djivotinjengo**
                PRIV PREF DEF.OBL animal-F.PL.GEN
'[he/she] left **without** the **animals**

(Boretzky 1994: 116)

(27) a. **bi   me   loveqo**
           PRIV PREF POSS1SG money-M.PL.GEN
'**without** my **money**'

    b. **bi   sa   akale   purine   gadenqo**
           PRIV PREF INDEF DEM.PL old-PL garment-M.PL.GEN
'**without** all these old **garments**'

(Courthiade 2016: 17)

(28) Te lau tu manghe eftino/**Bi   do   paralengoro**[6]
                             PRIV PREF two dime-F.PL.GEN
'I'll get you for cheap/For less than [lit. '**without**'] two **dimes** (translation mine)

(Constantinescu 2016: 57)

(29) A vov ačhilo **bi   nisave   baxtako**   thaj xarne bajengo[7].
                  PRIV PREF INDEF luck-F.SG.GEN
'And he was left **without** any **luck** and empty-handed.'

(Uhlik 2020: 101)

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[6] Most likely a calque from Romanian *două parale*, used in typical idiomatic expressions, as also indicated by the use of *do* instead of *duj*.

[7] Lit. 'short-sleeved'.

In such constructions, *bi* acts exclusively as a preposition. Unlike the subset discussed previously, these forms display opposing traits: they have a specifying, not categorial or qualifying function; they are not metonymical descriptors; they express the absence of alienable possessums. Boretzky (1994: 116) also observes that "the article (or a pronoun) can certainly intervene if reference is to be made to very specific entities", and goes on to remark that "it remains questionable whether the extended construction is old or whether it came about under the influence of other languages (Boretzky 1994: 116). This may as well be an internal development, and a parallel can be drawn with other NIA languages. In Hindi, the inverted compound postposition बिना *binā...* के *ke* 'without' allows for similar insertions:

(30)   **Bina** aisi **family ke**, kaise hogi Diwali aur kaisa hoga New Year?
         '**Without** such **family**, how will Diwali be, and how will New Year be?'
                              (https://x.com/iamsrk/status/1722962499669045539?s=20)

Besides the semantic aspects detailed above, a brief discussion of the syntactic role of *bi* compounds is in order. I agree with the assertion in Boretzky (1994: 16): "This form can be seen as a very loose addition to a verb and as an apposition". As *bi…qo* compounds have been already covered, in what follows I turn briefly to instances of adverbial use. Two main adverbial roles can be distinguished: complement of manner, as in (5), (6), (24), (25), (26), (28), (32), (33); resultative complement, as in (10), (15), (16), (19), and (31), often after medio-passive or stative verbs (*bijandol* 'to be born', *aćhel* 'to remain').

(31)   Thaj gaja litrin phral ačhile **bi**   **nisohko**.
                                       PRIV PREF nothing-GEN
         'Thus, all three brothers were left with nothing' [lit. 'without anything].
                                                             (Uhlik 2020: 380)
(32)   nisavo Rrom niči tromala te del rra angla o šingalo **bi**   **darako**,   a tu
                                                            PRIV PREF fear-F.SG.GEN
         tromajan.
         'No Roma man dared to fart in front of the cop **without fear**, but you did dare.'
                                                             (Uhlik 2020: 454)
(33)   Sar ka xas **bi**   **marnesko**?
                    PRIV PREF bread-M.SG.GEN
         'How are we going to eat it **without bread**?'
                                                             (Uhlik 2020: 330)

It is quite evident that in all instances where privative compounds function as complements of manner, *bi* is prepositional. An analysis of the second category, that of resultative complements, yields less definitive results. One could indeed argue that in (16) *bi šoreko* does not express an intrinsic state or quality or inclusion in a generic category, but I believe that the arguments set forth in the discussion of genitive adnominals support more convincingly a prefix status for *bi*.

Lastly, one more aspect that needs to be investigated, as it might provide clues on whether *bi* is a preposition or a prefix in certain *bi...qo* compounds, is that of concord. Boretzky (1994: 16) considers that the typical use of the masculine form in *–o* and the lack of concord either in gender or number, even though "perfectly conceivable in terms of formal syntax", show that the connection of such compounds to the NP is rather loose. One could argue, also based on diachronic and comparative grounds which are going to be detailed further on, that the *bi…qo* template with prepositional *bi* is prototypical and precludes concord of the genitive ending, as is the case with compound postpositions in other NIA languages as well. Stronger adjectivization and lexicalization would in turn entail a prefix function of *bi* and a more pronounced tendency to apply concord rules. This dynamic can be observed if we compare *bi baxtaqro* in (4) (adverbial use, complement of manner) and *bi baxtaqri* in (9) (adjectival use), both examples being excerpted from the same poem by Papùśa (2010). In (9), the application of gender concord could also be prompted by the fact that *bi baxtaqri* is inserted within a series of feminine epithets, so we should not assume full adjectivization, especially since elsewhere the same author uses the more common adjectival form *bibaxtalo, -i, -e*, which is fully lexicalized:

(34)　**Bi**-　　**baxtali**　　baxt miri!
　　　PRIV PREF lucky-F.SG
　　　'E toi, ma fortune **infortunée**!' [= 'And you, my unfortunate fortune!']

(Papùśa 2010: 79)

A similarly clear distinction between the prepositional and prefixal use can be drawn if we compare *bi darako* in (32) and *bidarano* in *o bidarano raklo* 'the fearless boy' (Uhlik 2020: 177)

3. *Bi* as non-verbal privative prefix

According to Matras (2004: 78), "of Proto-Romani origin is also the productive derivation of negative adjectives through prefixation of *bi-* 'without', the only Common Romani productive derivational prefix, [...] providing potentially a means of lexical derivation of adjectives". *Bi* can be prefixed to various parts of speech, as detailed below.

3.1 *Bi* + genitive adnominals

This type of compound is covered extensively in the previous section, so I will not discuss it any further here.

3.2 *Bi* + nominal genitives

Kozhanov (2019) writes that "nominal formations with the prefix *bi-* are generally unproductive and usually do not exceed ten examples in one dialect". This is indeed a very small subset and for instance, besides *bibaxt* 'misfortune', 'bad luck', which is

quasi-ubiquitous across most dialects, our search of the available Uhlik corpus revealed only one other nominal compound, *bilaćhipe* 'unkindness'. Lexicographic resources and descriptive grammars also contain only a small number of examples: Sarău (2009: 82) lists *biamal* 'enemy', *biamalipen* 'enmity', *bibaxt*, and *bićaćipen* 'untruthfulness'; the entries in Boretzky & Igla (1994) are more numerous: *biagoripe* ' infinity, eternity', *biamalipe* 'enmity, hostility', *bibaxt*, *bikeripe* 'idleness, loafing, boredom', *bilindripe/bisovipe* 'sleeplessness', *bimatipe* 'sobriety', *bimeripe* 'immortality, eternity', *bireslipe* 'immaturity'.

3.3 *Bi* + adjectives

Bi can be prefixed both to "true" adjectives and derived adjectives. In the former category we find a small number of examples, the most common being *bilaćho* 'bad, worthless' and *biuźo* 'unclean, dirty', both of which can be nominalized to denote the devil, Satan – compare (35) and (36) below. Other cases found in various sources include: *bikuć* 'inexpensive, cheap', *bićaćo* 'untrue, false' in Sarău (2009: 82); *bibango* 'innocent, harmless, naive', *bibaro* 'rather small, not big', *bisasto* 'unhealthy, not whole' in Boretzky & Igla (1994); *bipharo* 'light' (lit. 'not heavy') in Lee (2010). The latter category is substantially more numerous. Matras (2004: 78) noted that "like most nominal genitive derivations, those in adjectival function are usually local in-coinings that are particular to individual dialects". Here are some selected examples which are rather interesting: *bijakhalo* 'one-eyed', *bikherutno* (= *bikheresqo*) 'homeless person, nomad', *bimanušvalo* 'inhuman' in Boretzky & Igla (1994); *biamaluno* 'unfriendly' in Lee (2010); *bipaćavno* 'dishonest' in Uhlik (2020: 268, 810).

(35)   Ejke, phralale, te saha vi **bi**-   **laćho**   čhavo, pale o sunal del dija le
                                              PRIV PREF good-M.SG
        lačhi bax.
        'Well, brother, if he was a **bad** child, the holy God would give him good luck again.'

                                                                                  (Uhlik 2020: 84)

(36)   Te našti o livarno mudardah leh, pale o **bi**-   **lačho**   ka avel ande la.
                                                       PRIV PREF good-M.SG
        'If the priest had not been able to kill him, **the Devil** would possess her again.'

                                                                                  (Uhlik 2020: 290)

3.4 *Bi* + adjectival participles

This is by far the most productive combination, which can be found in abundance across all varieties:

(37)   Me ni halem khanć aghes/Dor sok țîra bokoli/**Bi**-   **peki**   ai
                                                                 PRIV PREF cooked-F.SG

        bi-   **londi**.
        PRIV PREF salted-F.SG
        'I didn't eat anything today/Only a bit of cake/**Uncooked** and **unsalted**.'

                                                                              (Constantinescu 2016: 31)

(38)   E şei le bulibaşaski/Voi kărdea ma **bi-   halo**[8].
                                            PRIV PREF eaten-M.SG
        'Bulibasha's daughter/She made me **starve**.'
                                                    (Constantinescu 2016: 169)

(39)   Gîndi-ma kou şaoro/So kărela korkoro/**Bi-   halo**   thai bokhalo/
                                            PRIV PREF eaten-M.SG
        bi-   thodo   bi-   ureado.
        PRIV PREF washed-m.sg   PRIV PREF dressed-m.sg
        'I think of the little boy/What does he do alone/**Without food** and
        hungry/**Unwashed** and with nothing on' [lit. '**undressed**'].
                                                    (Constantinescu 2016: 231)

(40)   Lehki jekh čham saha rranglini, a e aćhili **bi-   rrangli**.
                                                PRIV PREF shaven-F.SG
        One of her cheeks was shaven the other remained **unshaven**.
                                                    (Uhlik 2020: 222)

(41)   vov akana so šaj majsig pejekhvarate uštela thaj sa e rovljaha marela pire
        bi-   kandine   bilačhe[9] džuvlja.
        PRIV PREF listened-PL
        And he got up as fast as he could and beat his **disobedient** hag of a wife with a
        stick.
                                                    (Uhlik 2020: 810)

(42)   Mande hi jekh šukar manuš **bi-   pindžardo**,   andar aver them.
                                    PRIV PREF known-M.SG
        There's a beautiful stranger from another country at my place.
                                                    (Uhlik 2020: 145)

Here is a brief selection of interesting examples found in the literature: *biboldo* 'unchristened, Jewish person', *bipućhlo* 'unasked' in Gjerdman & Ljungberg (1963: 212); *bidino muj* (lit. 'unspoken') = *biakhardo* (lit. 'uncalled') 'uninvited', *bilačhardo* 'incorrigible, unprepared, dishevelled', *bidini* (lit. 'not given') = *bipharadi* 'virgin woman', *bigindo* 'countless' (lit. 'uncounted'), *bikhoslo* 'dirty, unclean', *bimuklo/ bimuklino/ bimeklo* 'prohibited, forbidden', *biresado* 'unreachable, unattainable', *bireslo* 'inaccessible, unripe, immature', *bisastardo* 'incurable', *bisuto* 'sleepless, awake' (lit. 'un-slept'[10]), *bizumado* 'inexperienced, untried' in Bortezky & Igla (1994); *biashundo* 'unheard of, unknown', *biphanglo* 'loose, untangled' in Lee (2010).

3.5 *Bi* + adverbs

Adverbial *bi-* compounds are extremely rare, with *bibaxtales* 'unfortunately' being more common. Interestingly, I found a form that could be interpreted as an adverbial derivation of a genitive nominal:

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[8] Cf. Romanian *nemâncat*.
[9] To be noted, both adjectives are in the oblique form, as they are followed by an animate head noun in the accusative.
[10] Cf. Romanian *nedormit*.

(43) **Bi- baxtaće** ke goj lеći rromni sićilo aver Rrom te avel.
PRIV PREF fortunately
'**Unfortunately**, his wife is used to another Roma coming over.'

(Uhlik 2020: 200)

A few other scattered examples are quoted in the literature: *bixarnes* 'at length' in Sarău (2009: 82), *bidiindes* 'without counting' in Gjerdman & Ljungberg (1963: 37), *biphares* 'easily, lightly', *bi-worta* 'crookedly, unevenly' in Lee (2010), *biromanes* 'in a non-Gipsy way' in Boretzky & Igla (1994).

3.6 *Bi* + gerunds

I only found this type of *bi* construction in the Uhlik corpus, and I assume it is a rare, local development:

(44) **Bi džanglindo** vov malada sa po kaš, kaj o Rrom učharda le e kapaha.
PRIV PREF knowing
'**Unknowingly**, he was hitting everyone with his wooden stick, and the man covered him with a blanket.'

(Uhlik 2020: 568)

(45) Kana o Rrom iklisto avri, **bi džanindo** kaj o bršind perel, vov klizaja thaj
PRIV PREF knowing
pelo pe zeja.
'When the man went outside, **not knowing** that it was raining, he slipped and fell on his back.'

(Uhlik 2020: 628)

4. *Bi* as conjunction

Matras (2004: 187) considers *bi te* (followed by the present or subjunctive) an adverbial subordinator expressing negative circumstance ('without doing X'):

(46) bi te trebul pes
'without it being necessary, needlessly'

(Matras 2004: 187)

(47) taj von kin'as les kade lestar **bi te mudarel** les, taj žanas maj angle taj pale bikin'as les.
'and they bought it [the horse] from him in that way **without having to kill** it, and they they went further on and sold it again.'

(Gjerde 1994: 47)

Kozhanov (2019), in his analysis of the questionnaires from the RMS Database, observes that the use of the caritive marker *bi* in combination with a verbal group occurs only in Romani dialects in Southeastern Europe. This is considered to be a more recent

innovation occurring most likely under the influence of contact languages such as Macedonian, Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian, Romanian, Greek: *bez* 'without' + subjunctive in Macedonian, Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian; *fără* 'without' + subjunctive in Romanian; *χωρίς* 'without' + subjunctive in Greek. Kozhanov rightly concludes that overall "this can be considered a feature of languages within the Balkan Sprachbund".

5. *Bi* as verbal prefix

Sampson (1926) notes that *bi* may also occur as an 'ancient prefix' (< OIA वि- *vi-*) in the verbs *bian-* 'to bear a child' (< OIA विजन् *vijan* 'to be born'), *biav-* 'to wed' (< OIA विवह् *vivah* 'to marry, to give in marriage'), *bičav-* 'to send' (< OIA विक्षिप् *vikṣip* 'to throw away, to scatter'), *bikin-* 'to sell' (< OIA विक्री *vikrī* 'to sell), *bilav-* 'to melt' (< OIA विली *vilī* 'to be dissolved, to melt away'), *biser-* 'to forget' (< OIA विस्मृ *vismṛ* 'to forget'). To be noted, Sarău (2009: 82) proposes a straightforward prefixal derivation: *bistrel* 'to forget' < *bi* + *starel* 'to catch', *bikinel* 'to sell' < *bi* + *kinel* 'to buy'.

OIA वि- *vi-* and its Romani filiation will be discussed in more detail further on. However, it should be pointed out that verbal *bi-* is more likely to be a vestigial, non-productive reflex that does not express a privative or generally negative meaning and instances where it is used actively for negative verbal derivation are extremely rare and not representative. It is worth noting a few rare forms recorded in Boretzky & Igla (1994). For example, *bibistardo* 'unforgettable' (*bi* + *bistardo*ADJ. PART. 'forgotten') (Boretzky & Igla 1994: 26), which does not have a verbal counterpart, so it falls in the common category of negative adjectives. The only cases of productive verb to verb derivation using *bi* are *bibaxtarel* 'to make unhappy, to ruin, to head for ruin' (Boretzky & Igla 1994: 26), *bilačhardol* 'to spoil, to become corrupted' (Boretzky & Igla 1994: 28), *bilačharel* 'to spoil, to corrupt' (Boretzky & Igla 1994: 28) and *bilačhol* 'to get worse, to grow weak, to become mischievous (of a child)' (Boretzky & Igla 1994: 29). These must be local coinages and I have not found similar constructions recorded in other lexicographic works.

6. Borrowing and contamination

Kozhanov (2019) shows that in a number of dialects where the caritive marker used with nominal groups differs from the one used with verbal groups, the latter tends to be borrowed from contact languages. Another phenomenon encountered in Slavic-speaking areas in the Balkans is the contamination with Slavic forms. Boretzky (1996: 11) believes that the form *bizo* (*bizi*) 'without' in Arli is the result of contamination between the native *bi* and the Slavic *bez*. However, Calvet (1982: 19) also records the form *bes/bez* 'without' in Arli[11], < Bulg. *bez*, while Kajtazi (2008: 45) only has the form *bizo*. A form *bizo* 'without' is also recorded in Gurbeti (Uhlik 1983: 29). A similar type of convergence grounded in semantic similarity and quasi-homophony is observed by Kozhanov (2019),

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[11] The example given in Calvet (1982: 19) reads *bez ten a dikhek niko* 'sans que personne ne le voie' (without anyone seeing him).

who considers that *bir* (found in one RMS questionnaire from Bulgaria) and *bri* (found in one RMS questionnaire from Slovenia) emerged under the influence of South Slavic forms containing the consonant *r*, e.g. *brez* 'without' in Slovenian[12]. In the same vein, Courthiade (2016: 17) observes that the preposition *biz* found in some dialects of Southern Yugoslavia could be a reflex of the Indo-Iranian *bi/be*, "namely it could be materially the same as the first element of *bi...qo* crossed with the Slavic preposition *bez* 'without'".

A homophonous and completely unrelated *bi* is found in Gurbeti:

(48)   Kana **bi** o somlal Del dela amen jek peko puj, but **bi** ćerela jek lačhipe.
         'If the holy God gave us a roasted chicken, it would make us much good.'
                                                                    (Uhlik 2020: 330)
(49)   Kana **bi** dela o somlal Del zala mol, ne **bi** rodasa khanči majbut.
         'If the holy God gave us a little wine, we would not ask for anything more.'
                                                                    (Uhlik 2020: 330)

This is obviously a Slavic borrowing. In Serbian, *bi* is the aorist form of the verb *biti* 'to be' and is equivalent to the English 'would' (Hammond 2005: 76), and one of several ways to construct conditional sentences in Serbian is to add the auxiliary short form of the aorist tense of *biti*, both in the main and subordinate clause (Hammond 2005: 83).

Conditional *bi* also occurs in Sofia Arli, in pre- and post-verbal position, as documented in Calvet (1982: 19). Etymologically this *bi* is derived from Bulgarian *bi*.

(50)   So **bi** kérsas leske
         'Qu'est-ce que tu lui ferais' [= 'what would you do to him']
                                                                    (Calvet 1982: 19)
(51)   Te arakhas **bi**
         'Si nous le trouvons' [= 'if we found [it]']
                                                                    (Calvet 1982: 19)

Finally, *bi* in conditional sentences is not restricted to South Slavic-influenced varieties of Romani. It is also found in Krimean Romani, in which it is a borrowing from Russian (< Rus. *by*). Consider the following examples from Toropov (2009):

(52)   Davas bi tut love
         'I would give you money.'
                                                                    (Toropov 2009: 46)
(53)   Na anesas bi
         'You shouldn't have brought.'
                                                                    (Toropov 2009: 47)

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[12] Slovenian Romani also has the borrowed *brèzu* 'without' < Slovenian *brez* (Brezar & Brezar 2008: 20).

7. How to conceptualize and contextualize negative prefixes?

Before embarking on a tentative exploration of possible Indic and Iranian connections to Romani *bi-*, it would be helpful to offer some brief remarks on how negative prefixes can be viewed within a more general conceptual framework.

7.1 Lieber's lexical-semantic approach

In her seminal work, Lieber (2004) introduces the feature [Loc] to analyze affixes. For instance, the semantic skeleton of *-less* is [−dynamic, −Loc ([ ], <base>)] (Lieber 2004: 109). According to Lieber, [−Loc] is the only feature needed for affixal negation, and it gives rise to four slightly different nuances of meaning, depending on the type of base to which it attaches: privation, contrary negation, contradictory negation, and reversativity (verbs).

When combining with nouns, negative prefixes generally yield a negative or privative reading. Also, in the case of such compounds, we can notice an alternation between the contradictory (CD) and contrary (CR) (scalar or gradable) readings. This type of nuanced reading can be applied to all adjectival *bi-* compounds in Romani, e.g. *bimanuśikano* CR; *biworta* CR; *biagor* CD; *bikerdo* CD; *bimulo/bimulano* CD. Lieber also states that when negative prefixes are used with verbs, a reversative meaning is yielded. In Romani, verbs such as *bibaxtarel* or *bilačharel*, though rare and not a uniform feature of the language, would certainly allow for such a reading.

Lieber goes on to state that there is no need to distinguish between privativity from other types of negativity. The polysemy of compounds with negative prefixes would thus be constructional, and their meaning would be result of interactions between the semantics of the affix and that of the base. Furthermore, within this framework, competing affixes fill the same semantic slot, e.g. *un-* vs. *in-* in English.

In light of this approach, the functional flexibility and diversity of Romani *bi-* can be easily explained by the lack of "competitors". *Bi-* has free range, as it were, and the variety of local in-coinings mentioned above makes full sense in this context.

7.2 Overlapping and competing negative prefixes in IE languages

Wackernagel (2009) provides a very interesting comparative and conceptual analysis of negative prefixes in IE languages. Wackernagel (2009: 712-713) posits the existence of a prototypic set of negatives, part of the original inventory of IE languages: a proper particle for negative statements, **ně*, and a privative prefix ('sonant nasal'). Wackernagel (2009: 732) then goes on to state that "from its frequent combination with nouns and adjectives, the sentence negative eventually developed into a proper prefix negating the meaning of the noun/ adjective, competing with the prefix in practically all its contexts of use, though often with a slight difference of meaning." Furthermore, widespread bilingualism would lead to "the use side by side of divergent forms assumed by the prefix in different languages – various shades of meaning" (Wackernagel 2009: 770), e.g. *unreligious* (i.e. 'not religious)*,* which uses a prefix of Germanic origin and yields a contradictory meaning if we apply Lieber's (2004) framework, vs. *irreligious* (i.e. 'godless, frivolous'), which uses a prefix of Latin/French origin, and supports a contrary reading.

8. Indic connections

In this section, I provide a brief account of negative/privative affixes in OIA (Sanskrit), MIA (Pāli), and NIA (Hindi a.o.) that may be connected to Romani *bi*.

8.1 Negative/privative affixes in OIA

According to Ruppel (2017: 101), OIA has a small number of postpositions. Among the most frequently used, we find विना *vinā* 'without' (+ instrumental, accusative, or ablative) and प्रति *prati* 'towards' (+ accusative): 'towards', as in नगरम् प्रति *nagaram prati* 'towards the city', with the latter being able to function both as preposition and as preverb (Ruppel 2017: 103).

On the other hand, preverbs are far more frequent. Of interest to our discussion are the preverbs अप- *apa-* 'away, off', a cognate of Greek ἀπό- *apó-* 'away from, from') and of Middle Persian *abē/apē* 'without, un-, in-, -less', and वि- *vi-* 'apart, asunder, away, out'. Whitney (1924: 500) writes that *vi-* is "third in order of frequency among the verbal prefixes which have value as such throughout the whole history of the language", and includes *apa* in this category as well. Whitney (1924: 511) adds that such verbal prefixes can also be used in a general adverbial way, qualifying a following adjective or noun, and that *vi-* in particular can be found in prepositional compounds with nouns, which, "though few in number as compared with other classes of compounds, are not rare, either in the earlier language or in the latter".

The following entry in Apte (1957-1959) maps out the full functional and semantic breadth of *vi-* in OIA:

> वि vi ind. 1 As a prefix to verbs and nouns it expresses:-- (a) separation, disjunction (apart, asunder, away, off &c.), as वियुज्, विहृ, विचल् &c.; (b) the reverse of an action; as क्री 'to buy'; विक्री, 'to sell'; स्मृ 'to remember'; विस्मृ 'to forget'; (c) division; as विभज्, विभाग; (d) distinction; as विशिष्, विशेष, विविच्, विवेक; (e) discrimination; व्यवच्छेद (f) order, arrangement; as विधा, विरच्; (g) opposition; as विरुध्, विरोध; (h) privation; as विनी, विनयन; (i) deliberation, as विचर्, विचार; (j) intensity; विध्वंस. 2 As a prefix to nouns or adjectives not immediately connected with roots, वि expresses (a) negation or privation, in which case it is used much in the same way as अ or निर्, i. e. it forms Bah. comp.[13]; विधवा, व्यसुः &c.; (b) intensity, greatness; as विकराल; (c) variety, as विचित्र; (d) difference; as विलक्षण; (e) manifoldness, as विविध; (f) contrariety, opposition, as विलोम; (g) change, as विकार; (h) impropriety, as विजन्मन्.

As we can see from its use as a preverb expressing a reversative meaning, the Indic etymology initially proposed by Sampson (1926) for the verbs discussed in 5 is hard to refute and is furthermore supported by the documented initial /v/ > /b/ sound change

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[13] *Bahuvrīhi* compounds.

pattern (Sampson 1926, Matras 2004), which is quite regular in the development of Romani, e.g. विस्मरति *vismarati* 'to forget' > *bistrel*, विक्रिणाति *vikriṇāti* 'to sell' > *bikinel*.

The negative and privative meaning expressed by *vi-* when used in combination with nouns (2a) seems to have been carried on in *beng* 'the Devil', which is considered by Sampson (1926) to be a reflex of OIA व्यङ्ग *vyaṅga* 'having limbs away or gone, limbless', the latter being also mentioned in Whitney (1924: 509) as an example of *vi-* used with true prepositional value.

8.2 *Vi-* and *vinā* in MIA

Both *vi-* and *vinā* were continued in MIA. Frankfurter (1883: 73) notes that *vi-* 'apart, asunder' is included by the native grammarians in the list of *upasagga* (prepositions), which can be prefixed to verbs or nouns and modify their meaning. *Vinā* 'without' belongs to a slightly different class, which comprises words that "are used like modern preposition and adverbs and only comparatively seldom in combination with verbs and nouns." (Frankfurter 1883: 74). Duroiselle (2007: 84) considers that *upasagga*, which are prefixed to verbs and their derivatives, are in fact verbal prefixes. It is noted that *vi-* 'asunder, apart, away, without' implies "separation, distinctness, dispersion", e.g. √*jā* 'to know > *vijānāti* 'to know distinctly, to discern' (Duroiselle 2007: 85).

8.3 Negative/privative affixes in NIA (Hindi)

8.3.1 Negative prefixes

Srivastava (1995: 165-169) distinguishes three sets of negative prefixes in Hindi:
(i) OIA prefixes generally used in *tatsama*[14] words, including वि- *vi-* 'apart, away, out', e.g. वियोग *viyog* 'separation', विवाद *vivād* 'dispute', विभाग *vibhāg* 'department'; अप- *apa-* 'away, forth, off', e.g. अपभ्रंश *apabhraṃśa* (lit. 'corrupt language') denoting the transition stage between late MIA and NIA, अपशब्द *apśabd* 'abuse'; निर- *nir-* 'absence' निराकार *nirākār* 'shapeless, formless'; न- *na-* 'absence, negative sense' नास्तिक *nāstik* 'miscreant, infidel'.
(ii) Hindi prefixes (or rather inherited OIA prefixes), which can be added to pure Hindi and *tadbhava*[15] words, including अ/अन- *a/an-* (before vowel-initial bases) 'absence; -less', e.g. अपार *apār* 'vast', अनन्त *anant* 'endless' (it is also included in the first category, albeit used with *tatsama* words); नि 'absence, without'.
(iii) Urdu prefixes (of Persian origin), including बे *be* 'without', e.g. बेवकूफ़ *bevkūf* 'nonsense, stupid, foolish'; ना *nā* 'absence, without', e.g. नापसंद *nāpasand* 'dislike'.

Chaturvedi (1997), however, considers वि- *vi-* a *tadbhava* prefix which conveys 'absence, otherness', as well as 'separation', e.g. विदेश *videś* 'abroad', sometimes acting as an intensifier, e.g. विचार *vicār* 'idea, conception, feeling'.

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[14] तत्सम *tatsama* = learned borrowings from Sanskrit.
[15] तद्भव *tadbhava* = native inherited vocabulary from MIA.

The entry in McGregor (1997) reads:

वि- vi- [S.], pref. 1. apart; away, off (e.g. विलग, adj. disconnected; विस्तार, m. extent). 2. different, opposite (e.g. विक्रय, m. selling, sale; विविध, adj. of different kinds; विदेश, m. foreign lands). 3. division, distinction (e.g. विभाषा, f. dialect).

As can be seen, compared with OIA, *vi-* has lost its previous preverbal function, which remains somewhat visible in deverbal forms such as विक्रय or in verbs such as बिकना *biknā* 'to be sold', an intransitive reflex of विक्रीयते *vikrīyate* 'be sold', an inflected form (middle voice 3ʳᵈ person pl.) of root क्री *krī* 'buy' with prefix वि- *vi-*. Its semantic field is narrower in NIA, and its negative/ privative function has been taken over by other competing prefixes, both inherited and borrowed (*a-, nir-, be-, nā-*). A similar process of functional and semantic reconfiguration must have taken place in proto-Romani, which would explain why the archaic verbal prefix became unproductive and is only vestigial in verbs such as *bikinel*, *bistrel*, etc.

Chaturvedi (1997) identifies an *apabhraṃśa* reflex of the Sanskrit *vinā-*, namely बिन *bin*, which has preserved its initial negative and privative meaning in expressions such as बिन जाने *bin jāne* 'not knowing, unknowingly' (to be noted, the verb is treated as a masculine noun and placed in the oblique form).

8.3.2 Postpositions in Hindi. Privative *ke binā*

Hindi is characterized by the presence of a large number of postposition, most of them compound: के *ke* (the great majority) / की *ki* + …, e.g. के बिना *ke binā* 'without', के मारे *ke māre* 'because of', के सिवा(य) *ke sivā(y)* 'except for', के अलावा *ke alāvā* 'apart from' (< Pers. علاوه *alāve*), etc. The preceding noun is placed in the oblique form. Note that के *ke* is also the marker for the plural genitive. बिना *binā* can also be attached directly to the noun, mainly in the literary register:

(54)   इश्क बिना क्या मरना यारों/ इश्क बिना क्या जीना
        Iśk binā kyā marnā yārõ/ **Iśk binā** kyā jinā
        'What is dying, **without love**/What is life, **without love**'

                                        (in *Ishq bina*, song from the movie *Taal*).

Oftentimes, especially in the colloquial language, compound postpositions are inverted:

(55)   बिना आपकी सहायता के हम सफल न हो सकें।
        Binā āpkī sahāytā **ke** ham saphal nā ho sakẽ.
        '**Without** your help we couldn't have been successful.'

                                        (McGregor 1987: 149)

It is important to note that the template N_OBL. + Compound postp. [*ke*_GEN. MARK + POSTP] is quite prevalent in NIA languages. Beames (1875: 299) notes that "many of the

postpositions are derived from the Skr. locative and ablative cases, necessitating the placing of the noun to which they are attached in the oblique genitive".

(56)   **घरों के पास** बह रहा है बाढ़ का पानी।
         Gharõ   ke   pās bah rahā hai bāṛh kā pānī.
         house-M.PL.OBL PL.GEN near
         'Floodwater is flowing by the houses.'
                        (https://youtube.com/shorts/3xOLcRlzorU?si=_M5Z6BL2pcXKGKr4)

Pronouns used with compound postpositions also take an "oblique genitive" (genitive plural) form: **मेरे** लिए *mere liye* 'for **me**', whereas their proper oblique forms are used when followed by simple preposition. Interestingly, in the case of the first-person singular pronoun, its oblique form itself (मुझ *mujh*) seems to be an old Prakrit genitive (Beames 1875: 306). According to Beames (1875: 307), "there are confusions arising from the consciousness that the oblique was really an old genitive; so that, when they got a new genitive, they used it also as an oblique. One hears in Hindi also, colloquially, such expressions as मेरे से[16]".

This prototypical "oblique genitive" before postpositions, mostly likely developed in the *apabhraṃśa* stage, along with the prevalence of inverted compound postpositions in NIA languages, lends substantially more credence to the parallel drawn by Courthiade (2016) with regard to the *bi…qo* discontinuous morpheme ("circumposition"/ "pre-postposition") in Romani. This would also help explain the general lack of concord of *bi…qo* genitive adnominals with prepositional *bi*. To wit, *qo* would function in a similar manner as *ke* in Hindi compound postpositions, where it has lost its function as a genitive marker and acts rather like a "neutral", semantically void particle connecting the noun in the oblique form to the second part of the postpositional compound.

9. Iranian connections

In this section I provide a brief account of negative/privative affixes in Middle Persian (MP), Early and Classical New Persian (NP), and Modern Persian (ModP)[17], and explore possible connections to Romani *bi*.

9.1 Middle Persian *BE* and its NP reflexes

Jügel (2013) argues that a series of Old Persian/PIE inputs yielded MP forms *abē*, *bē*, *be* which, due to their semantic and phonetic coalescence, are analyzed under the umbrella term *BE*: PIE adverb/preposition $*b^he > *ba\text{-}id > b\bar{e}$ 'outside, without'; PIE

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[16] *Mere se* 'from me', instead of मुझसे *mujhse*.
[17] Conventional historical stages: Middle Persian (4th century BC – 7th century AD); Early New Persian (7th century – 13th century); Classical New Persian (13th century – 18th century); Modern and Contemporary Persian (18th century – present) (Maggi & Orsatti 2018).

emphatic particle *b^he/b^ho > *$ba\text{-}id$ > $b\bar{e}$; OP adverbial compound *$apa\text{-}id$ > $ab\bar{e}$ 'without, -less, away'. According to Jügel, MP *BE* would comprise several incarnations:
(i) Preposition and prefix 'without, -less', given as $ab\bar{e}/ap\bar{e}$ 'without, un-, in-, -less' in Abramyan (1965), seemingly a cognate of OIA अप *apa* 'away, forth, off' (Whitney 1924);
(ii) Conjunction 'but';
(iii) Adverb 'outside', mostly in combinations, e.g. $b\bar{e}r\bar{o}n$ 'outside' > NP بیرون *birun* 'outside';
(iv) Preverb 'away, forth';
(v) Verbal particle: terminative meaning; grammaticalized prefix marking tense and/or aspect-perfective, and then also mood, i.e. the subjunctive. The subjunctive specialization is generally considered a later development (Maggi & Orsatti 2018: 67).

Arising from MP *BE*, the following reflexes are attested in NP/ModP:
(i) BE_4 (most likely) > preposition به *be* 'to, at, in' (indicating direction and location, as well as indirect objects); 'with' (combining with abstract nouns to form adverbs of manner), e.g. به سرعت *be-sor'at* 'with speed, quickly' (Yousef 2018: 133)
(ii) BE_5 > verbal prefix به *be*, used to express the subjunctive in ModP
(iii) BE_1 > privative preposition بی *bi* 'without', synonymous with بدون *bedun-e*:

(57)   بی هیچ توضیحی نامه را داد و رفت
         Bi hich **towzihi** name rā dād va raft.
         '**Without** any **explanation**, he gave the letter and left.'

(Yousef 2018: 134)

(iv) BE_1 > negative/ privative prefix -بی *bi-* 'un-; -less', e.g. بیپایان *bi-pāyān* 'endless' (compare with Romani *biagoresqo* and Hindi अनंत *anant* 'endless, infinite')

9.2 Negative بی *bi* in Modern Persian

Hajri (1998: 106) describes prefixal *bi-* as a negative prefix that is generally attached to nouns to form negative or privative adjectives, e.g. بی دانش *bidāneš* 'ignorant, without knowledge'. In addition, it can be used to form compound adverbs with nouns, as in بی شک *bišak* 'certainly, undoubtedly'. Khormaee et al. (2019) argue that the primary privative meaning accrues secondary meanings through metonymic extension: 'not to do', e.g. بیخواب *bixāb* 'awake, sleepless', i.e. 'who does not sleep' (compare with *bilindraqo* 'sleepless'); 'not to do properly', e.g. بی مسئولیت *bimas'uliy[y]at* 'irresponsible' (compare with *bilaćhardo* 'incorrigible, unprepared'; 'not to do/occur at the right moment', e.g. بیوقت *bivaqt* 'at the wrong time'.

A comparative study of negative prefixes نا *nā* and بی *bi* by Rahimian et al. (2022) based on the Hamsahri corpus and using Lieber's (2004) lexical semantic approach showed that نا *nā* is less frequent (535 entries), is non-anchoring (the co-indexing principle cannot be applied) and can only be used with nouns, never with adjectives; on the other hand, بی *bi* is substantially more frequent (1139 entries), is anchoring (the co-indexing principle can be applied), expresses more often a contradictory meaning

(76.27%) than a contrary meaning (23.73%), and can be used both with nouns and adjectives.

From a semantic and functional perspective, strongly adjectival *bi-* compounds in Romani (prefixal *bi…qo*, *bi* + adjectives or adjectival participles) are quite similar to Persian words formed with negative نا *nā* or بی *bi*. Even in the absence of direct wholesale borrowings, it is not farfetched to imagine that following the contact of proto-Romani with New Persian or other Iranian languages in the area, a reconfiguration and extension of the inherited Indic template (prepositional *bi…qo*) could have occurred, especially on account of homophony and semantic congruence. As noted above, similar coalescence processes are likely to have taken place within the Balkan *Sprachbund* as well.

10. Conclusions

Most lexicographic sources and related studies trace Romani *bi* back to to OIA वि *vi-*, but also acknowledge that a Middle/ New Persian origin is plausible (Boretzky & Igla 1994, Mānušs et al. 1997, Vekerdi 2000). Mānušs et al. (1997: 32) give both etymologies (OIA *vi-*, and MP preposition *be*, *bē*), while Vekerdi (2000: 35) only mentions the Persian etyma (Pers. بی /bi/). Hancock (1995a: 41) mentions that it could be related to Persian, NIA (Hindi), or OIA.

As stated by Matras (2004: 23), it is difficult to distinguish Iranian items in Romani from cognates shared by Indo-Iranian as whole, and "precise etymologies are further obscured by the similarities among the Iranian languages". Indeed, one cannot argue for an exclusive Persian etymology for *bi-*. However, if one takes into account its functional and semantic profile (described in sections 2-5), the general insights and principles laid out by Lieber and Wackernagel (summarized in section 7), as well as the diachronic dynamic of negative affixes in Indo-Aryan (section 8) and Persian (section 9), a more nuanced picture emerges.

I would argue that the various *bi* constructions detailed in section 1 can be ascribed, at least roughly, to different stages in the development of the language and different contact scenarios. The limited set of verbs containing a reflex of OIA preverbal वि- *vi-* and prototypical prepositional *bi…qo* template can be safely ascribed to an early proto-Romani stage (perhaps late MIA or *apabhraṃśa*), most certainly prior to departure from the Indian subcontinent. Strongly adjectival compounds (prefixal *bi…qo*, *bi-* + adjectives, *bi* + adjectival participles) are more likely to have arisen in a post-Indian context, as a result of contact with Persian or other Iranian languages. Finally, the use of *bi* as a conjunction with subjunctive verbs must be the result of a later, localized convergence within the Balkan *Sprachbund*.

Being a lone inherited productive prefix and lacking competitors, *bi-* can be seen as an affixal "jack of all trades", enriching and reconfiguring its semantic and functional range in various contact scenarios, which would account for its substantial multifunctional and polysemic profile.

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