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## **Social Networks in Greek Thrace: Language Shift and Language Maintenance**

In the second part of the twentieth century, several Pomak- and Romani-speaking communities living in Greek Thrace shifted to Turkish, the dominant local minority language. This paper attempts to trace the process that led to a shift in some communities but not in others, despite the fact that both types of communities were confronted with a reduction in the use of their languages in the domains of public life. I argue that in highly transitive networks, a shift takes place when some highly connected individuals decide to shift to the dominant language. Although the decision of these individuals who start the shifting process is related to language functional domains and language ideologies, it is important to note that a shift may or may not materialize due to reasons that are independent of the abovementioned factors. Namely, the ideological background of the external network will have a significant influence on the speech community members and is a decisive factor in whether or not to shift.

### **Background on Greek Thrace**

East Macedonia and Thrace (see Map 1) is an administrative region (περιφέρεια) of 611,000 inhabitants in Greece with a century-long presence of several linguistic communities. This is the setting of a nowadays bilingual Turkish-Greek-speaking community (approx. 55,000<sup>2</sup>) and of three major trilingual communities: a Pomak-Turkish-Greek-speaking community (approx. 36,000), a Romani-Turkish-Greek-speaking community (approx. 20,000), and a small Armenian-Greek- (partly Turkish) speaking community (see Table 1). Next to and within the traditional multilingual communities, multilingual individuals also exist, but they are not the focus of this paper.

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<sup>2</sup> Numbers taken from several sources cited in Kostopoulos (2009, 290–291).

<b>Greek</b>		
<b>Turkish</b>		<b>Greek</b>
<b>Romani</b>	<b>Turkish</b>	<b>Greek</b>
<b>Pomak</b>	<b>Turkish</b>	<b>Greek</b>
<b>Armenian</b>	<b>Greek</b>	<b>Turkish</b>

**Table 1: The monolingual, bilingual, and trilingual communities in Greek Thrace (with a focus on the Romani- and Pomak-speaking communities).**

The communities having Turkish as their first language (henceforth L1, for the language learned in the family or within the main socialization process) have a century-long presence in the area, ever since Ottoman times, but also from earlier settlements. Slavic-speaking populations arrived in the Balkans as early as the sixth and seventh centuries, but as far as the Pomaks are concerned, a debate exists as to whether they are descendants of Slavic origin or non-Slavic populations who shifted to Slavic (see Demetriou 2004 for an overview of the various approaches on the issue, largely depending on the nationality of the researchers). The Roma first arrived in Thrace within the Byzantine Empire in the tenth-eleventh centuries. Part of them settled in the Greek peninsula, others moved towards northern and western Europe. Among the Roma now settled in Thrace, several arrived from Turkey in 1923, others from present-day Romania at the end of the nineteenth century, while still others appear to have been settled in the villages of Thrace for several centuries. Lastly, Armenians arrived from Turkey in Thrace in 1914–18 under dramatic conditions, but only a minority of them settled in Thrace.

During Ottoman rule (15th–19th centuries), Turkish was the most widespread vehicular language in the Balkans, used for trade, administration, and education (whether religious or not). In the Balkans in general, after Ottoman rule collapsed, only Muslim communities retained an intense contact with Turkish. In Greece, the Muslims of Greek Thrace were the only community to be exempted from the mandatory population exchange that took place between Greece and Turkey, being recognized as a minority in the Greek state. In 1923 (according to the Treaty of Lausanne), this minority was guaranteed the right to receive bilingual education in Greek (the state language) and Turkish (the language that was taken to be representative of the minority). The population exchange took place on a religious basis and was independent of the language traditionally used in the communities as L1. Therefore, the right to bilingual education applied to various com-

munities, the majority of which, at the moment of the treaty, had Turkish (Turkic) as L1, while others had Pomak (Balkan Slavic) or Romani (Indo-Aryan) as L1.

The linguistic profile of the communities was modified in this new political frame. During the second half of the twentieth century, an influential homogenization process affected the Muslim Roma and Pomak communities of Greek Thrace both linguistically, with Turkish progressively becoming the communities' first language, and religiously, with the Sunni majority prevailing over the Shia minority. Within this process, several Romani- and Pomak-speaking communities shifted to Turkish.



**Map 1: Greek Thrace.**

## Social Networks and Language Shift

A widespread hypothesis explaining language shift in the case of minority languages has been the reduction of the functional domains in which the minority languages were traditionally used and the addition of new domains from which the minority languages are excluded (Dorian 1981; Matras 2009, 52). One problem that arises with this approach in the Greek Thrace context is the fact that the Romani- and Pomak-speaking communities did not shift to the language of the state and administration, Greek, but to a local minority language, Turkish. Moreover, despite such a generalized domain reduction of Pomak and Romani, some communities continued the process of in-group language transmission, while others shifted to Turkish. One hypothesis might be that all of the communities will eventually shift to Turkish and that there is merely a difference in the speed of the shift. Nevertheless, it is important to attempt to identify the factors responsible for the differences in speed that can be observed, for example, in urban settings as opposed to isolated villages, or in peasant communities as opposed to trade-related communities, in more or less religious communities, in more or less educated communities, or even in communities geographically closer to Turkey or not. But it rather seems that the language shift has spread in some prefectures and not in others independently of sociological factors other than the ideological orientation of the communities and the allegiances at the level of politics.

Following studies that take social networks to be a crucial component of language maintenance and language shift (Milroy & Margrain 1980; Milroy 2002 on endangered and minority languages), in this paper I will compare the types of networks that can be found in the communities that shifted and in the communities that did not shift to Turkish. As shown, both communities form in-group social networks with high transitivity, which means that most of a person's contacts have contact with one another. This is often the case for minority-language speaking communities and more true of rural communities showing such *dense* and *multiplex* networks (Milroy & Margrain 1980). I argue that in this type of highly transitive networks, language shift can easily take place when some highly connected individuals make the decision to shift to another language. Such a choice rapidly affects the entire community and may lead to a complete language shift within two generations. Moreover, I argue that no direct correlation can be observed between functional domain reduction and language shift. Rather, language ideology furnishes the conditions for some highly connected individuals to

start the shifting process. Lastly, the type rather than the frequency of contact with outsiders seems to be relevant for language maintenance or shift. For instance, language maintenance occurs both among Pomaks and Roma, although only a small number of Pomaks have one-to-one contacts with Greek- or Turkish-speaking co-workers, while on the contrary, practically all Roma have this sort of everyday interaction with outsiders.

### **Muslim Pomak Communities in Greek Thrace**

Pomak is a Balkan Slavic vernacular spoken by Muslim inhabitants of the Rhodope Mountains in Greece, who often migrated to other cities or countries during the second half of the 20th century. During the Ottoman period, the Pomak speech communities were composed of a majority of monolingual speakers with little contact with Turkish, mainly through Koranic schools. This strong Muslim culture is reflected in the type of borrowings to be found, as Pomak speakers make use of a large number of religious terms for greetings and expressing thanks, which are either borrowings from Turkish or terms used broadly in Muslim-Arabic culture and borrowed through Turkish:

Greetings: *salam alekum* (Arabic); *meraba* ‘hello’ (Turkish < Arabic); *hoš geldin* ‘welcome’; *igjedželer* ‘good night’. Expressing thanks: *allah kabulele* (Arabic); *bereket vārsin*.

Pomaks were traditionally semi-sedentary cattle-breeders and farmers, living in the Rhodope Mountains. Some of those mountainous areas remain hard to access even today, especially in winter. Pomaks would practice seasonal grazing, spending winters in the winter settlements (which correspond to present-day villages) and migrating in summer to nearby summer settlements, along with their families and cattle. This way of living involved little contact with outsiders, and effective bilingualism with Turkish was limited to the elites and those few who for professional reasons were part of Turkish-speaking networks. This relative isolation was accentuated by the borders of the Greek state, which relegated the Rhodope Mountains to the periphery. Moreover, during the second half of the twentieth century, the area had the special status of the so-called *epitirumeni zoni* (Gr.), ‘surveillance zone’, implying military control of the areas bordered by the neighboring Communist countries (Bulgaria in this area). In practice, this meant limited access to the closest Greek cities, while the border with Bulgaria restricted any mobility to the north.

Today, the situation has considerably changed, and contacts between the Pomak villages and the closest Greek Thrace cities have intensified, making it possible in many cases for men to commute to the city for work. Owing to the reopening of the roads, it has also become possible to cross the border to neighboring Bulgaria on a daily basis. Visits to neighboring Turkey are equally common, for shopping or tourism, facilitated by the Egnatia freeway.

Within the Greek state, contact with Turkish takes place through primary school (the most common school type in the villages), mass media, and increasing contact situations due to travel, migration, and urbanization. Religious life remains at the center of the Pomak communities, and boys and girls attend the Koranic School, *kuran kursu*. Even though Koranic Arabic is taught, Turkish is the classroom language.

Contact with Greek also takes place at both bilingual and monolingual primary schools the latter being found more frequently in urban zones. Greek is not only the state institutional language but also the language of the local high schools that most of the young Pomaks attend.

A significant distinction has to be pointed out between Pomak women and men with regard to language contact. It is important to keep in mind that until very recently, only a small part of the community had access to high school education and that up until the early 1990s, girls did not pursue their studies beyond primary school. Moreover, women did not usually have working activities outside the village, nor did they have any sustained contacts outside the Pomak-speaking area (for instance, they would rarely go to the closest city market). It was possible even during the time of my research to meet old women who were still monolingual, and most of the Pomak women over 50 only have basic communication skills in Greek and Turkish. For men, the situation has been different because of military service (obligatory in Greece until recently for a period of two years) or for employment reasons, and of course given their better access to education, either public (in Turkish and Greek) or religious (Koranic school, involving Turkish and Koranic Arabic).

Greek and Turkish television and music are both present in village life. In everyday interactions Turkish is the most important communication language for the traditional markets, *bazaar*, in the cities. Turkish is also the language of communication in several social events, such as wedding parties and other religious ceremonies involving Muslim communities in general.

Another source of contact with Turkish is the migration for work and education to Turkey and Germany. In the 1980s Pomak migrants would

settle in Germany with their families, become integrated in the immigrant Turkish communities, and would frequently shift to Turkish. Contact between relatives would remain intense, either by telephone or visits. In the last decade, reorganization in working migration politics has made it rare for entire Pomak families to migrate to Germany. Today, young men (the so-called *Gastarbeiter*) have temporary working contracts limited to a few months, after which they return to their original villages and take up other sorts of professional activities.

I will now take a close look at the current sociolinguistic situation in a Pomak village in the Xanthi prefecture in which Pomak is still transmitted to the younger generations.

Even though the Turkish influence was and remains important, nowadays Greek seems to have become the main contact language in the villages that still transmit Pomak. One can note the frequent code-switching to Greek as well as an increasing number of lexical borrowings from Greek. A very interesting example demonstrating the importance gained by Greek in the village is the adversative marker, correctly claimed by Matras (1998) to be one of the grammatical markers most susceptible to borrowing. In this variety of Pomak, the main adversative marker is nowadays the Greek *ala* 'but', which has replaced the Arabic and Turkish *ama*, acquired by most Balkan Slavic languages. In contrast, in the Pomak vernaculars whose speakers shifted to Turkish, *ama* is well preserved by the older speakers (Adamou, fieldwork notes 2006). This case confirms the tendency that Matras (1998, 295) described in the Romani dialects, which in a first contact situation acquired one adversative marker and then, following migration, abandoned the older adversative marker in favor of the new contact language marker. For Pomak, it was not migration that determined this change but a change in everyday language contact.

Table 2 shows the profiles of five female speakers from local elite families in a Pomak-speaking village in the Xanthi prefecture. As observed earlier in this paper, Pomak female speakers had little access to a second language until very recently. This effect is balanced for the speakers described below by the fact that as members of one of the wealthiest families, they had better access to education than average Pomak females and thus also had better access to the contact languages. This table shows that the eldest female Pomak speaker of the family, born soon after the integration of the area with Greece, is monolingual. The 55 year old female speaker has some basic communicational skills in Greek and Turkish, but

Pomak remains her everyday communication language. The 33 year old female speaker, who has attended a bilingual Greek-Turkish primary school, has a better knowledge of these languages, even though everyday contact with Greek or Turkish speakers is rare. This context is significantly modified for the 14 year old female speaker, who has not only attended a bilingual primary school but also pursues secondary school studies in a local Greek high school. She has more frequent access to the closest town, and her network includes more trilingual speakers (owing to intermarriages in the family with members of the Greek and Turkish monolingual communities). The youngest generation includes children who are now residing in the closest town because of their parents' professional activities but who maintain close contact to the Pomak village community.

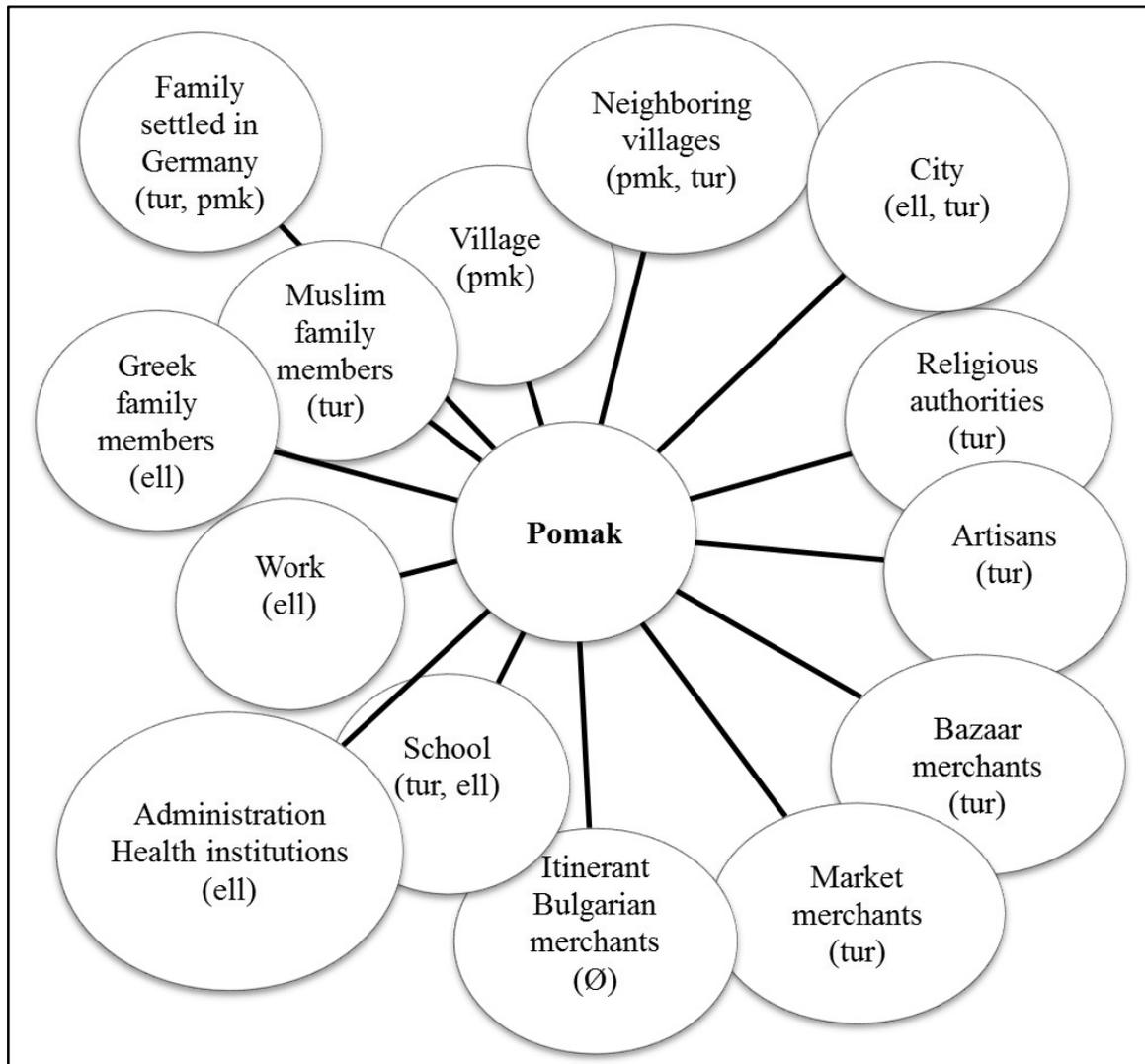
Speaker	Languages	Education	Mobility
F, 80	Pomak		
F, 55	Pomak: first language Turkish, Greek: basic communication skills	Koranic school (Turkish, Arabic)	
F, 33	Pomak: first language Turkish, Greek: good communication skills	Primary school (Turkish, Greek) Koranic school (Turkish, Arabic)	Sometimes visits the nearest town's market (Xanthi) Rarely visits other Greek towns
F, 14	Pomak: first language Greek: fluent (code-switching) Turkish: fluent English: a few hours in school	Primary school (Turkish, Greek) Currently in high school (Greek) Koranic school (Turkish, Arabic)	Frequent visits to the nearest town, Xanthi Rarely other Greek towns Trilingual social network
F, 7	Pomak: first language Greek: fluent Turkish: Koranic school English: private courses	Currently in primary school (Greek) Koranic school (Turkish, Arabic)	Living in Xanthi; frequent visits to the village Bilingual social network

**Table 2: Transgenerational sociolinguistic profiles of female Pomak speakers in a village in the Xanthi prefecture.**

Contact with speakers of Bulgarian has been increasing in the area since the early 90s, mainly with Bulgarian itinerant merchants and seasonal workers. In many cases Bulgarian speakers come from the neighboring Bulgarian Rhodope Mountains, often sharing a common dialectal background with the Pomak varieties of Greece. They may also share the same contact language (Turkish), an equally dynamic minority language in Bulgaria in Muslim communities. During my fieldwork I had the opportunity to observe how communication takes place between Pomak speakers and Bulgarian merchants, and it is worth mentioning that any verbal exchange was minimal. Turkish numerals, which have replaced the inherited Pomak numerals after four, are used among Pomak speakers when discussing prices. These uses were strongly stigmatized by the Bulgarian speakers, who corrected the Pomak speakers by using Bulgarian numerals. Social interaction between the female Pomak population (which forms the majority in the village since Pomak men are usually working abroad) and the male seasonal workers is extremely rare. The workers, mostly employed in wood exploitation, are considered to be economically inferior and seen as not respecting the local, Muslim customs as far as clothing or alcohol consumption is concerned.

Figure 1 illustrates a domain-based approach to the network of an average adult Pomak speaker residing in a Pomak-speaking village in the Xanthi prefecture. The Pomak speaker, in the center of the figure, entertains contacts with a number of individuals who have been classified according to the type of interaction they have (village, work, city, etc.). The length of the connecting line roughly indicates the frequency of interaction: a short line signals frequent contact, and a long line more casual contact. The main communication languages in the interactions are indicated in parentheses (pmk standing for Pomak, tur for Turkish, ell for Greek, Ø for minimal verbal interaction). This figure shows that the Pomak speaker has everyday contact within the village community (mainly in Pomak) as well as with Turkish-speaking Muslim family members. Contacts with the neighboring villages are also relatively frequent: Pomaks from the area intermarry, and given that the communities are patrilocal, Pomak couples settle in the husband's community. The wife's family and friends maintain contact and therefore extend their village's network. Contacts with the urban network are placed on the same level, being mainly Greek-speaking (most shops, administration, and health institutions, but also contacts with the neighbors of the Pomak families who are settled in the city). The Turkish-speaking

network is also important (through the traditional market and religious authorities, but also through contacts with artisans). Contacts at work often take place in Greek, while both Greek and Turkish are school languages. Contacts with Turkish-speaking family members settled in Germany or with Greek-speaking members due to intermarriage are much rarer because of geographical distance.



**Figure 1: A Pomak speaker's interactions based on language domains.**

Although the everyday Pomak-speaking network remains significant in community life, a closer look at the language domains points to a reduction in the traditional domains of use of Pomak. An example of this is the domain of oral tradition. Folktales were traditionally narrated in late afternoon reunions combined with collective work. Those “working sessions” were frequently organized in the villages and were named *mezje* or *poprjelka*. The Pomaks still recall singing and storytelling sessions that took

place during those reunions. In spite of the active social life in today's villages, such reunions are not very common nowadays. Until 2010 tobacco-related activities gave occasions to such formal or informal sessions, where any friend or family member could join in the working group for a while and help out with tobacco needling. In 2010 the tobacco culture in the Rhodope Mountains, no longer subsidized by the European Union, diminished if not completely ceased. Owing to the scarcity of these working sessions, no oral transmission occurs any longer, and the tales' stylistic register is not transmitted to the youngest inhabitants by other means, either.

The loss of oral tradition has an effect on the language and is, for example, a main explanatory factor for the loss of the specialized grammatical forms of fictional narratives (Adamou 2008). Older Pomak speakers use a specialized verbal form for evidentiality, that is, to indicate the source of information (Aikhenvald 2004), while the younger ones have replaced it with the perfect form. The formal difference between the two lies in the presence (for the perfect form) or absence (for the evidential form, known as "renarrative" in Slavic studies) of the auxiliary, which distinction is also the typical expression of evidentiality in other Balkan Slavic languages. Thus the older speakers say:

(1)

na <sup>1</sup> aniš	ima-l-o	sfadba
once	have-EVID-3SG.N	marriage

'Once upon a time there was (-AUX) a marriage...'

[Adamou 2008]

Though grandparents are still in charge of storytelling, the forms used by older people, marked for indirect evidentiality, are reinterpreted as perfect forms by children (in my study, the children were 7 to 14 years old). The younger ones used the perfect form with the auxiliary 'be', even in the stereotypical introductory formula:

(2)

najanuš	je	ima-l-o	jano	aiše
once	AUX(be).3SG	have-APTCP-N	one	Aishe
	{ _____ PRF _____ }			

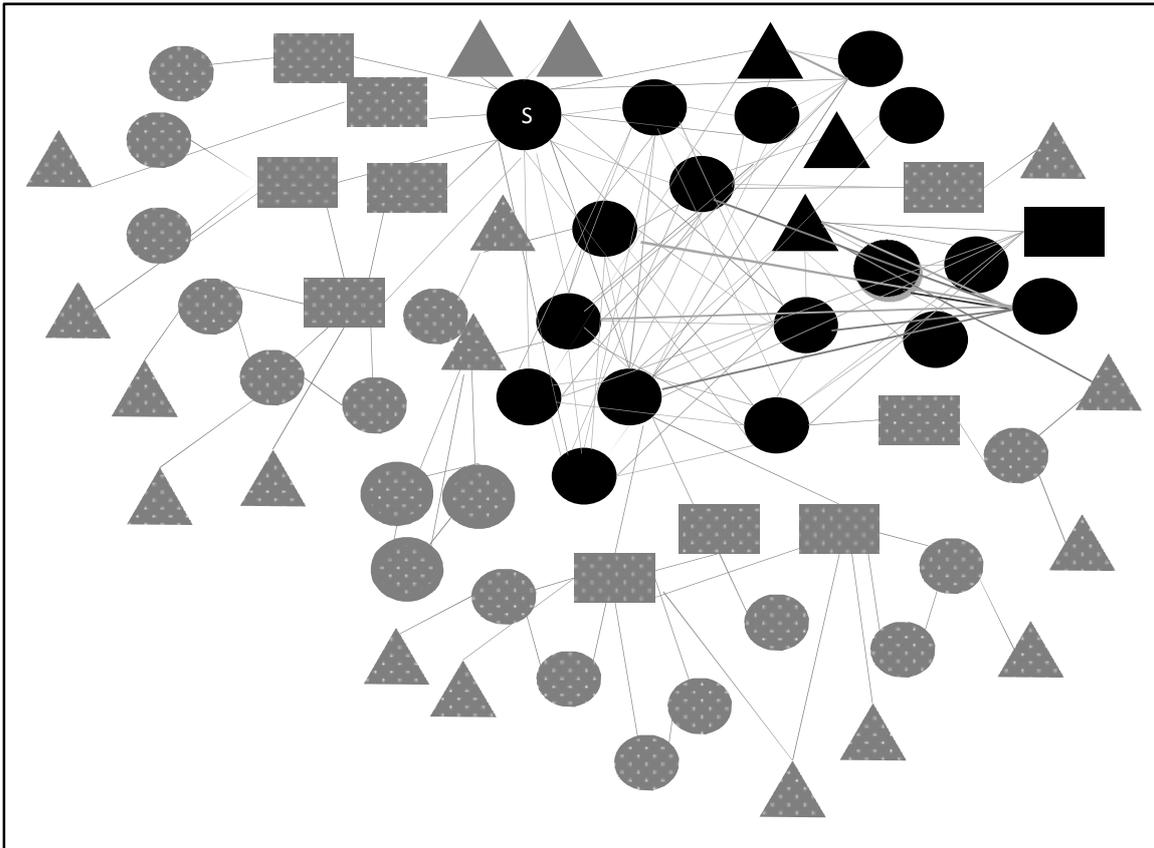
'Once upon a time there was (+AUX) a certain Aishe...'

[Adamou 2008]

This change goes through a short stage of variation between the old specialized indirect evidential and the perfect form, which is therefore age related (concerning speakers aged 30 to 40). The speakers in their forties, who recall and are willing to transmit a folktale or one of the famous Nasreddin Hodja stories, can be described as “storytellers”: although it is not an explicit status in the community, people who have this gift are recognized. Those speakers are particularly attentive to stylistic effects and to the linguistic specificities of the oral tradition, such as indirect evidentiality and its use in different contexts according to syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic criteria (Adamou 2008).

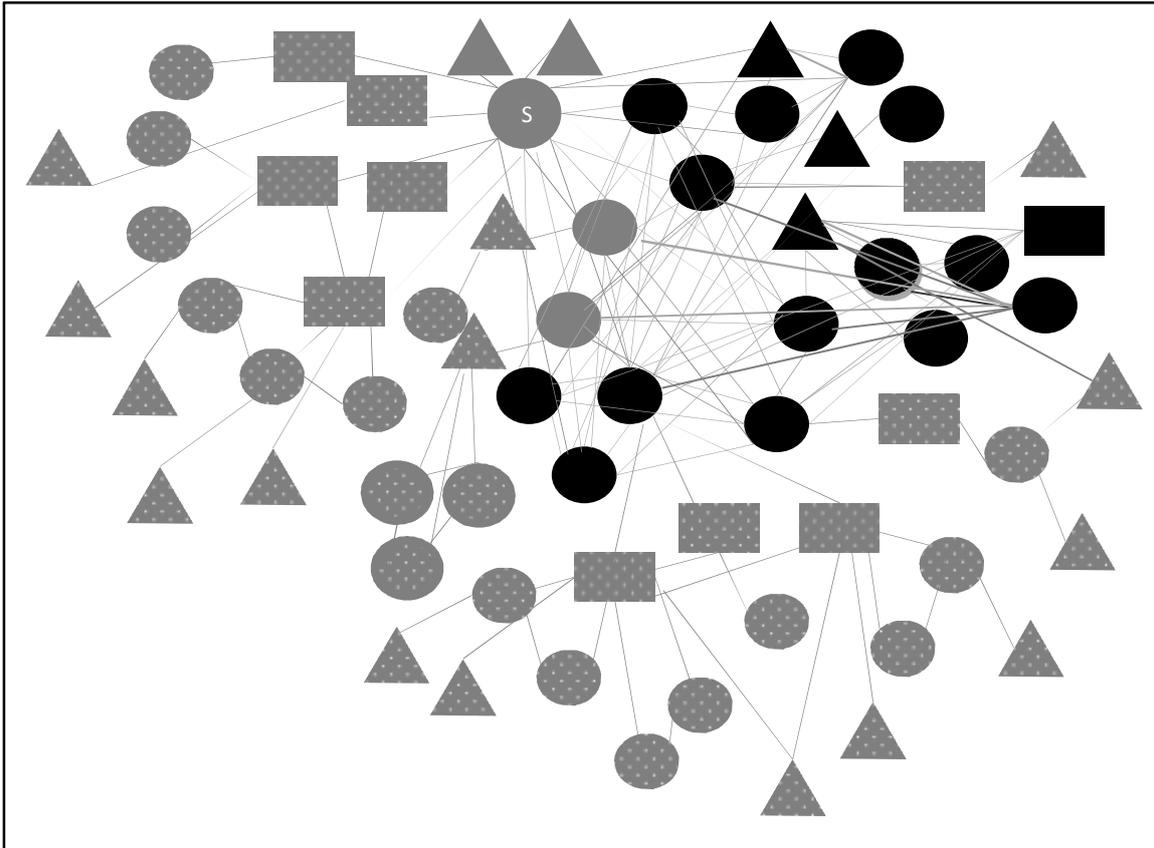
I will now present the social network structure of a female Pomak speaker in her thirties living in a village in the Xanthi prefecture. Figure 2 illustrates her social network, including family members (parents, spouses, children, and siblings), close friends, and coworkers. The female speaker, dubbed S, is 34 years old; she lives in the city of Xanthi while working in a nearby Pomak-speaking village where most of her family members, live. She speaks three languages fluently: Pomak, which is her first language (L1), and Greek and Turkish, which are her second (L2) and third (L3) languages, respectively. As can be seen in Figure 2, her Pomak-speaking network is characterized by a high transitivity, that is, most of her contacts also have contact with one another. Moreover, the Pomak speaker S has strong ties (that is, intense lifelong ties) with the Pomak-speaking members of her network, who are family and close friends. In contrast, she has weak ties (casual, ephemeral) with the Greek speakers, who are mainly her coworkers. Indeed, connections with the Greek-speaking network are one-to-one and do not have high transitivity. S is also fluent in Turkish, a language that she has everyday contact with at work and through TV, tourism, or in the traditional market, among others.

This type of network is quite typical in this Pomak community, which still transmits Pomak and uses it in everyday interactions. Even though Greek and Turkish are the languages dominating work places and parts of public space, this does not seem to be a strong enough factor to initiate a shifting process. Ideological factors and representations are underlying these uses, namely a complex identity combining the Pomak language, Greek citizenship, and the Muslim religion.



**Figure 2: A female trilingual (Pomak, Greek, Turkish) speaker's (S) social network: coworkers in rectangles, family in circles, and close friends in triangles. The lines represent ties between two persons and the color represents the dominant language in everyday interactions between them. Black stands for Pomak, gray with white dots stands for Greek, gray for Turkish.**

Now, let us observe what would happen if the female Pomak speaker decided to shift to one of the two contact languages, namely Turkish or Greek. As can be seen in Figure 3, a shift to Turkish or Greek could take place in this community quite rapidly if some of the members of the highly connected Pomak-speaking network decided to shift. If one highly connected speaker shifts, the whole network is affected. First this change takes place in direct, one-to-one interactions with other individuals. A female speaker who shifts has a more dramatic impact on the offspring to whom she transmits the language. The two children in turn will have direct interactions in their new L1, in this case Turkish, and therefore increase the number of exchanges in Turkish within the previously homogenous Pomak-speaking network. They may acquire a passive knowledge of Pomak, since Pomak will still be in use in the rest of the community.



**Figure 3: Female speaker S shifting to Turkish: coworkers in rectangles, family in circles, and close friends in triangles. The lines represent ties between two persons, and the color represents the dominant language in everyday interactions between them. Black stands for Pomak, gray with white dots stands for Greek, and gray for Turkish.**

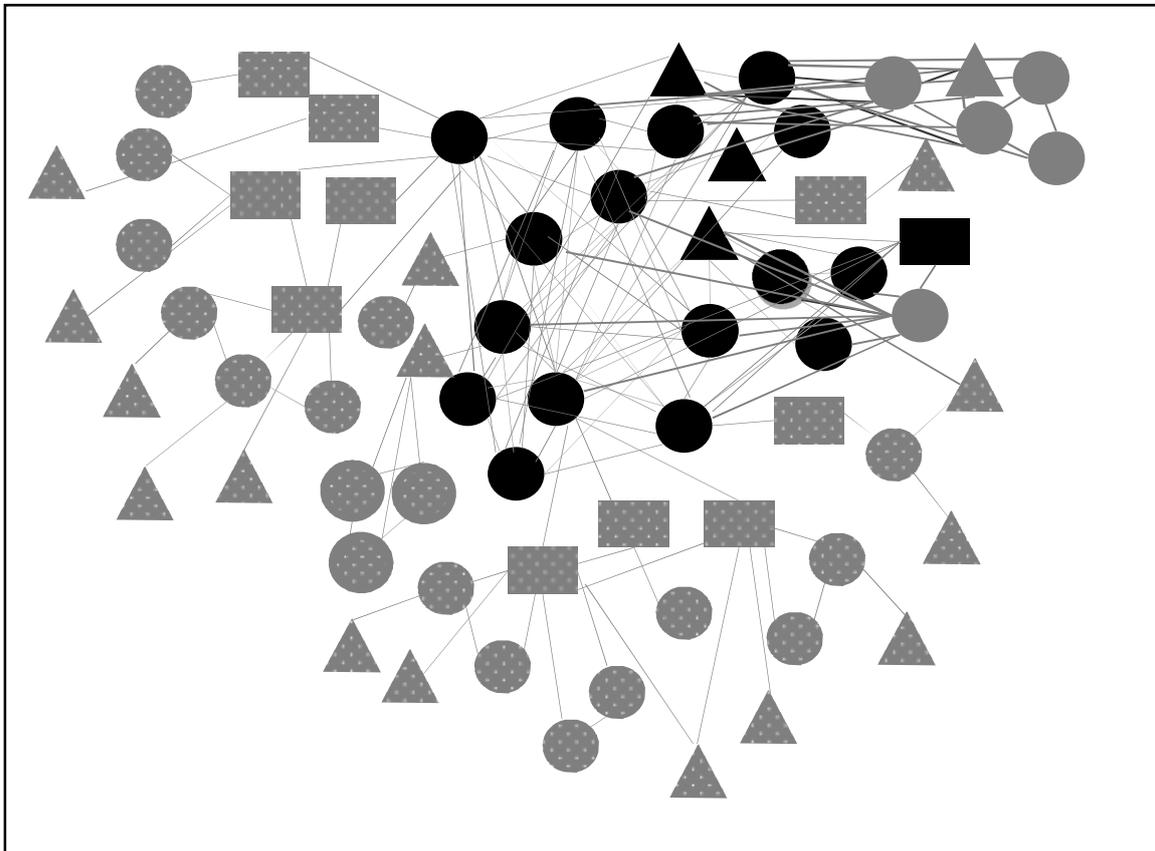
Besides the one-to-one contact that will be altered by this one speaker's shift, in reality this shift will have an even more significant impact than the one shown in Figure 3. According to the so-called Three Degrees of Influence Rule (Christakis & Fowler 2010 and references therein), an individual has an impact within three degrees of relations: for instance, on a family member (one degree), on the family member's friend (two degrees), and on this friend's family member (three degrees). This means that highly connected individuals may influence the network as a whole because of their centrality in the network (they have many ties to members of a network that also have many ties) and propagate language shift through some sort of "contagion". In this language shift, individuals who are peripheral in the network are the least likely to shift: such may be older female speakers, individuals located in the periphery of the village, individuals with small families and few friends, etc.

Although such a shift cannot be documented in real time in this community and for the particular female speaker S, a shift to Turkish actually took place in several Pomak-speaking communities during the second half of the twentieth century. I argue here that this shift was not due to a larger domain reduction of Pomak than the one that took place in the community that did not shift. Neither did the Pomak-speaking members have closer or a higher number of contacts with Turkish speakers: the Pomak networks in the communities that shifted to Turkish were similar to the network shown in Figure 2. Parallel fieldwork in the formerly Pomak-speaking village of the Evros prefecture which had already shifted to Turkish confirms the similarity of the networks of the Pomak speakers in both communities. Then how did the shift take place?

A facilitating factor for a language shift of a Pomak-speaking community as a whole is the pre-existence of bilingual speakers. Even though an individual may decide to reduce her or his practice of two languages to the effective use of only one, this may only be possible if she or he interacts with other bilinguals who are capable of interacting in the new language of communication. In the case of the Pomak communities, this sort of language shift was possible not only because Turkish was a trade and religious language during the Ottoman Empire, but also because of the development of the bilingual Greek-Turkish education system established in 1923. This meant that during the twentieth century, an increasing number of individuals of the Pomak-speaking network had acquired at least some basic knowledge of Turkish, making it possible for the individuals who shifted to Turkish to propagate the shift. This was the case in the Pomak community in the Evros prefecture, whose process of shifting is similar to that in Figure 3, but also in several other previously Pomak-speaking communities (such as the communities located in the Komotini prefecture).

A second facilitating factor for language shift may stem from the increase in marriages between members of different language communities. In networks with high connectivity, when an individual with a different first language enters the core network—in this case the family network—the whole Pomak-speaking network is likely to be affected by the language interaction. For instance, if one member of the Pomak-speaking network has a non-Pomak-speaking spouse, the members within three degrees will be influenced by this fact. If two or three other individuals of the Pomak-speaking network also have this sort of a strong tie, the whole network may eventually be restructured. This is shown in Figure 4, which represents the

cases of two Turkish-speaking spouses entering a Pomak-speaking network and having everyday interactions within three degrees of separation from the spouse in question: for instance, at the first degree with their own spouse, at the second degree with the spouse's sister, and at the third degree of separation with the sister-in-law's spouse.



**Figure 4: A Pomak social network: coworkers in rectangles, family in circles, and close friends in triangles. The lines represent ties between two persons and the color represents the dominant language in everyday interactions between them. Black stands for Pomak, gray with white dots stands for Greek, and gray for Turkish.**

One question that arises is how newcomers will affect and be affected by the Pomak-speaking network. The answer lies not only in each member's language competence (Pomak speakers already know Turkish, but Turkish speakers do not know Pomak) but also on the social value of the languages in contact. Turkish and Greek are highly valued for being languages connected to larger networks, such as urban networks or networks in workplaces. Therefore, although Pomak will have an impact on Turkish-speaking newcomers, the language that further connects most individuals in the most highly valued networks, that is, Turkish, will most likely become the interaction language among the newcomer and the spouse's network.

These are two language shift processes that took and are taking place in the Pomak-speaking communities of Greek Thrace. This analysis of language shift accounts for rural communities which have remained relatively homogeneous and have not undergone a great change in their socio-economic structure. In cases of urban migration or diaspora, the shift model is completely different, since the whole network structure is modified, and new languages are added in everyday interaction. This situation is not examined here.

### **Muslim Romani-speaking Communities in Greek Thrace**

I will now examine the Romani-speaking networks of the Muslim communities settled in Greek Thrace. Romani is an Indo-Aryan language spoken throughout Europe, in the Americas, and in Australia. The migrant Roma, who belonged most probably to service-providing castes (Matras 2002), arrived from India during the Byzantine era, around the 10th century. Romani was considerably influenced by Greek during this period. At the end of the Byzantine era, some groups migrated towards western and northern Europe, and new contact languages were added.

The dialects currently spoken in Greece belong to the Balkan and Vlax Romani branches. The presence of Balkan Romani speakers is documented as early as the 11th century and has been continuous since then. Vlax groups, on the contrary, arrived more recently, mainly in the 1920s following the Lausanne Treaty, from present-day Romania.

Demographic information concerning the Ottoman period is scarce, although the Roma are mentioned in some sources such as the *tahrir* registers. But linguistic and ethnographic evidence seems to indicate that the Vlax Roma living in Greek Thrace were most likely itinerant craftsmen, at least in the late Ottoman times, while their status in earlier times is unclear. It is documented that Vlax Roma were subjugated to serfdom and sometimes slavery while residing in what is now Romania. The elders report traditional occupations similar to those commonly found for the Southern Vlax Roma in general. According to them, their ancestors used to work as horse and donkey traders, comb makers, and makers of sieves. Women would also practice fortune telling.

Matras's (2005, 29) diffusion model of Romani dialect classification shows that itinerant Roma "appear to have traveled within the containment of specific regions" which correspond roughly to the Ottoman and Austrian zones of influence. The change in the political boundaries that resulted from

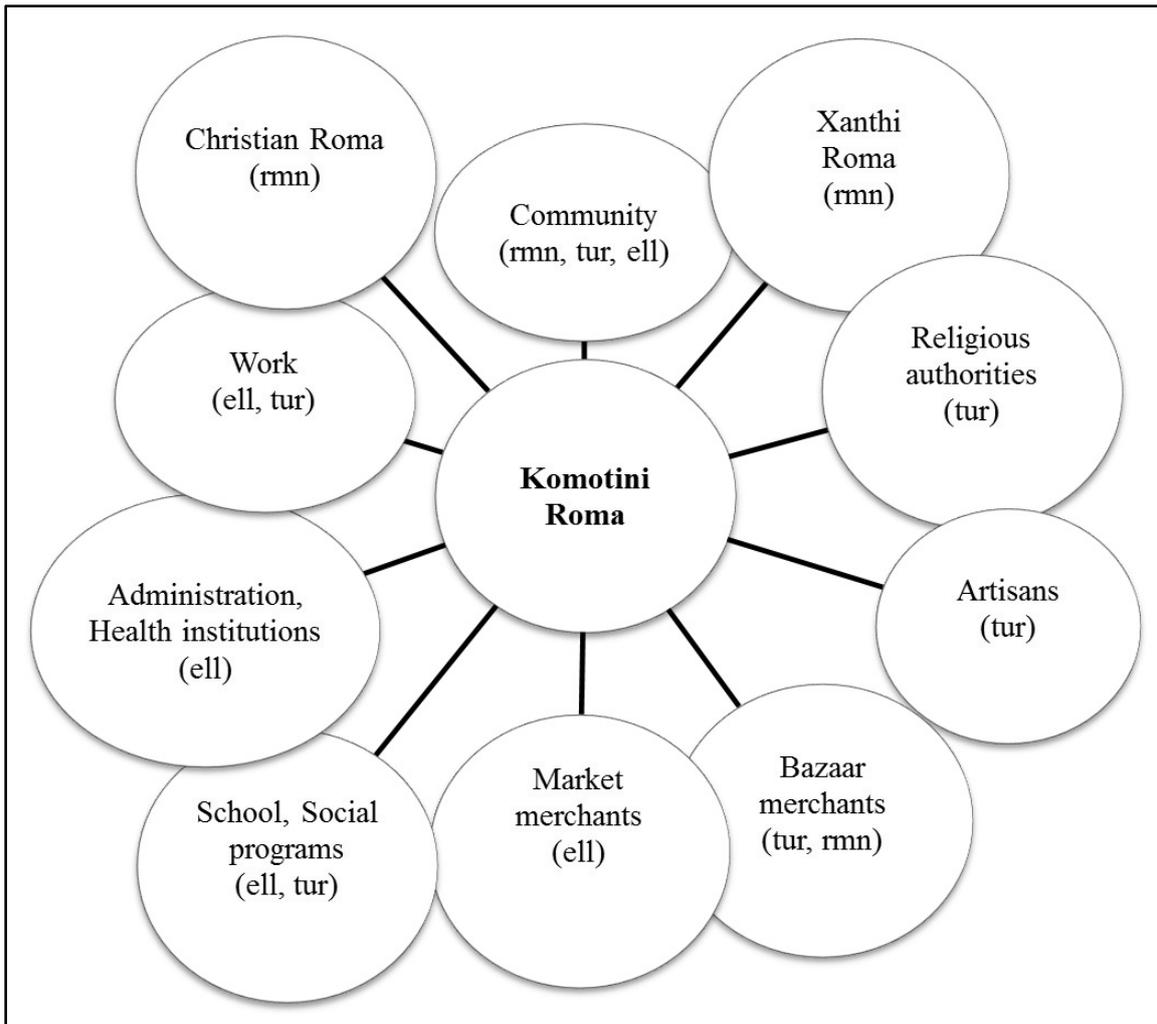
the formation of the modern Greek state had an impact on the Komotini Roma's mobility (as was the case for other nomads, such as the Greek-speaking Sarakatsani shepherds). The Vlax Roma of Thrace became semi-sedentary and adjusted their working activities to the new borders. Modern Greek was added to their linguistic competences, while Turkish remained their trade language in Thrace. Today, the Roma of the Komotini neighborhood work as seasonal workers in agriculture, in trade, or occasionally as cleaning staff for domestic or city services.

In this study I have used data from two Romani varieties of the Vlax branch, spoken in two cities in Greek Thrace: one is spoken by a small Muslim group (of approx. 200 people) settled in the suburbs of the city of Komotini (close to a larger Roma neighborhood, Ifestos, that is not examined here) and the second by a larger Muslim group (of approx. 4,000) settled in the suburbs of the city of Xanthi. Both varieties have been heavily influenced by contact with Turkish ever since the Ottoman times (Adamou 2010). The speakers of these varieties are typically trilingual in Romani, Turkish, and Greek, with differing degrees of competence in the three languages. They use Turkish and Greek for trade and other professional activities, and Romani mainly at home and as the community language. Most of the Komotini Roma have received practically no formal education in any of their languages and are not literate in Romani. The two groups have close links with each other and intermarry. They are among the groups in the Balkans who term themselves *xoraxane roma* 'Muslim, Turkish Roma', as opposed to the *dasikane roma*, which is the name for the 'Christian Roma, Greek Roma' in the area.

Figure 5 illustrates the domains of interaction of a Romani speaker. The length of the lines indicates the frequency of contact, while the interaction languages are marked in parenthesis (rmn standing for Romani, tur for Turkish, ell for Greek). It shows a complex trilingual network involving Romani, Greek, and Turkish. The trilingualism produces interesting effects on the language: besides code-switching, combinations of influences from Turkish and Greek may be observed. This is, for example, the case for the Turkish evidentiality marker, *-miş*, borrowed as a free morpheme, phonetically realized as [muʃ], and either preceding or following the verb, native or Turkish. Interestingly, this Turkish-origin morpheme has the same function as the Greek lexical means and reports on the truth of the statement, rather than on inference and hearsay as it does in Turkish (Adamou 2012):

(3)

phendas      muj            i            fatma  
 said.3SG    allegedly    the        Fatma  
 oti    e            xurd-es    voj    lja            sas      pe-sa  
 that the.OBL child-ACC he    took.3SG    with      herself-INSTR  
 ‘Fatma said, allegedly, that she took the child with her.’



**Figure 5: A Romani speaker’s interactions in different language domains**

Despite the increasing influence of Greek on Romani, Turkish is the language which most affects the Romani of the Muslim communities of Greek Thrace. The intensive and extensive contact of Roma speakers with Turkish since Ottoman times has given birth to heavy borrowing, or what Auer (1998) names a *fused lect*, i.e. stabilized code-switching, with a high number of borrowings (verbs, nouns, adverbs, conjunctions) and a variety of borrowing strategies (such as complete verb paradigm transfer, borrowed

inflection for masculine nouns, etc.). Romani is indeed one of a handful of languages that are known to have borrowed the verb together with the TMA (tense, mood, and aspect) and person markers from Turkish, as can be seen in the following example from Komotini Romani in Greece (Turkish in bold type):

**Komotini Romani < Turkish *emret-iyo-lar***

(4)

e     **patišaja**    ep                    **emred-iyo-lar**  
the   kings        all the time    give orders-PROG-3PL

‘The kings, they are giving orders all the time.’

**[Adamou 2010] [Excerpt from the tale “The Louse and the Rom” (Sentence 3); the recordings, annotation and translation of the complete texts are available online: [http://lacito.vjf.cnrs.fr/archivage/languages/Romani\\_fr.htm](http://lacito.vjf.cnrs.fr/archivage/languages/Romani_fr.htm)]**

This is a characteristic of many Romani varieties of the Balkans, though the extent of paradigm transfer varies from one variety to another (e.g. Muzikanta, Nange, Varna Kalajdži; for a more complete list, see Friedman 2010).

Paradigm transfer with Turkish loan verbs is a very frequent strategy in the Komotini and Xanthi Romani varieties. A great number of Turkish verbs are borrowed, among others motion (*koyul-* ‘to approach’) and posture verbs (*uzan-* ‘to lie’), perception-cognition verbs (*düşün-* ‘to think’, *alna-* ‘to understand’, *konus-* ‘to talk’), emotion verbs (*begen-* ‘to like’, *aci-* ‘to pity’), and several action verbs (*oku-* ‘to read’, *yaz-* ‘to write’). The Turkish loan verbs are sometimes used in variation with their inherited Romani equivalents, although no pragmatic or other factors can explain such variation. The variation rather seems to be linked to the speakers’ active knowledge of other, less heavily influenced, Romani varieties.

In Komotini and Xanthi Romani, all Turkish loan verbs are transferred with the entire paradigm of Turkish person markers and, as we will see in detail, with most of the Turkish TMA markers. Turkish phonology is generally respected, including borrowed phonemes accompanying the borrowed item such as /y/, /ø/, and /w/. Phonological adaptation might take place in some cases, e.g. metathesis of /nl/ to /ln/, as in the Turkish verb *anlamayacak* > Komotini Romani [alnamadzak] ‘he will not understand’. Contrary to the Turkish verb-final canonical order, the borrowed verbs follow the Romani verb-initial word order, although object and subject fronting are possible for topicalization and focus (Arvaniti & Adamou 2011).

At the level of nouns, Turkish borrowings generally bear Indic morphology markers:

(5)

o gadžo tumafil-eske pare pakav kaj ni del  
the non.Gypsy car-DAT money believe-1SG that NEG give.PRS.3SG  
'The non-Gypsy, I believe that he doesn't give the **money** for the **car**.'

[Adamou 2010]

However, borrowed masculine nouns generally use borrowed inflection. Such is the case for the Turkish borrowings *ap-ora* 'pills', *dev-ora* 'giants', *eteklik-ora* 'long skirts', etc. that take an older language contact plural, the Romanian *-uri*. This phenomenon is found in many Romani dialects. The nominals bearing foreign morphology (often of Greek origin) are called *xenoclitic* and are distinguished from the oikoclitic names taking native morphology (for a detailed description of this complex system, see Matras 2002).

Despite the intensive contact with Turkish and despite the heavy borrowing affecting predication, a shift did not take place in all Romani-speaking communities. As is the case for the Pomak communities living in Thrace, only some Romani-speaking communities shifted to Turkish, while others maintained language transmission. Among the communities that shifted, we count those that settled in mixed Romani-Turkish neighborhoods, such as Kirnos. In these cases, the Romani-speaking members adopted the most prestigious language, namely Turkish, and interrupted the transmission of Romani to the children. Here is an example of the interactions where Roma of Kirnos who have shifted to Turkish visit Roma of a homogeneous Roma neighborhood and families that still transmit and use Romani. In an interaction that is taking place in the local Turkish-Romani variety, the child calls for the mother in Turkish:

(6a)

Child: ane 'Mom!'

The mother responds in Turkish to the child:

(6b)

Mother: tʃok gyzel 'Very nice!'

After a brief interaction in Turkish, the conversation is restarted in the Turkish-Romani variety by one of the participants who addresses the mother of the child (note the Turkish verb with the Turkish TMA markers):

**(6c)**

tʃe but ʃukar jazijor  
 INTERJ very nice write.PROG.3SG  
 ‘Hey, he writes nicely.’

The use of Turkish or Turkish-Romani is clearly participant related. Here is an example of one female speaker who addresses her friend in Turkish (both women live in Kirnos and have shifted to Turkish) and immediately translates the question to Romani when addressing a child who lives in the neighborhood where Romani is still (at least partly) transmitted:

**(7a)**

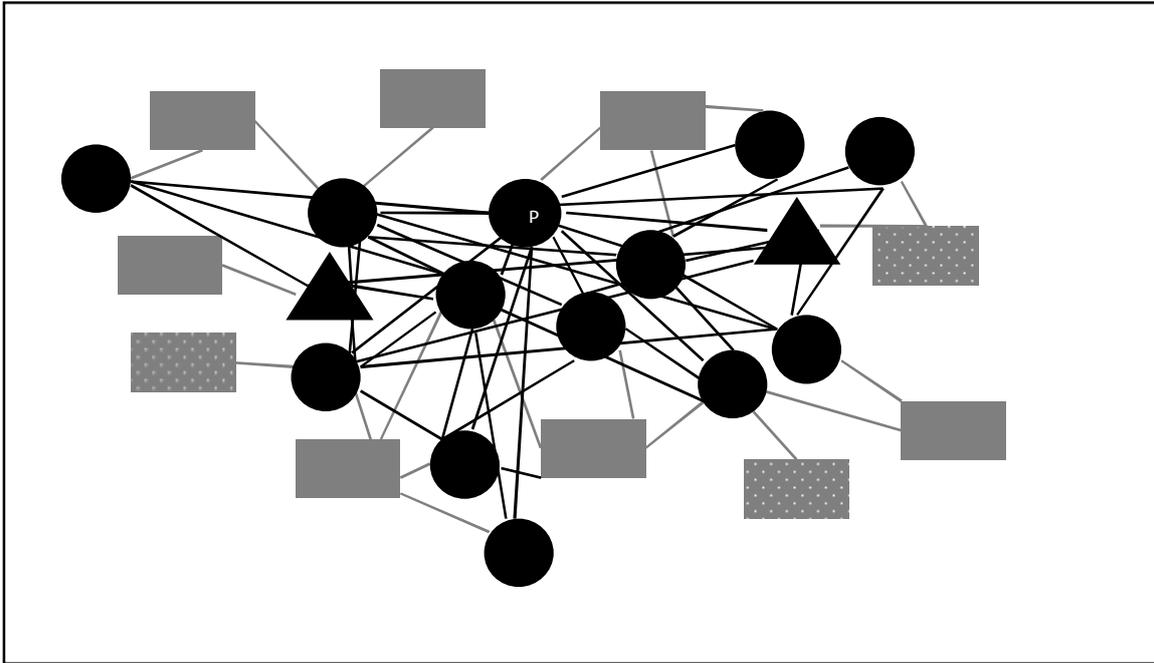
yzgjanən kəzə dilmi bu mar  
 PN.GEN girl.POSS NEG.INTER this INTERJ  
 (To her friend): ‘Hey, isn’t she Yzgjan’s daughter?’

**(7b)**

yzgjanaki i tʃei naj san tʃe  
 PN.GEN the daughter is.NEG is.2SG INTERJ  
 (To the girl): ‘Hey, aren’t you Yzgjan’s daughter?’

Note that, unlike in the Turkish-Romani variety, all the elements in (7a) come from Turkish: the genitive, the possessive, the negative interrogative marker, and the demonstrative. The interjection preferred is a common interjection for Balkan languages in general, from Greek *mori*. On the other hand, in the Romani sentence, the genitive has the Indic form; the Romani article of Greek origin is used. The lexical item, the negative particle, the verb, and the interjection are all Romani.

The social network of a female Romani speaker, P, aged 34 and living in the city of Komotini is presented in Figure 6. As shown, the Romani-speaking community has a high transitivity, similarly to the Pomak network presented in Figure 2. Nevertheless, unlike Pomak speakers, all individuals of the Romani-speaking network have everyday interactions for work purposes with individuals having different interaction languages. Even though these contacts are casual and ephemeral, like those of the Pomak individuals, they affect the Romani-speaking network as a whole.



**Figure 6: A Roma social network: work relations are in rectangles, family in circles, and close friends in triangles. The lines represent ties between two persons, and the color represents the dominant language in everyday interactions between them. Black stands for Romani, gray stands for Turkish, and gray with white dots for Greek.**

As in the Pomak network with high transitivity, if a highly connected community member decides to shift, the whole Romani-speaking community is affected. The decision of this member is closely related to the ideological and political background of the external networks in which this speaker participates.

### **Conclusion: How Does the Shift Start?**

In this paper I argued that the shift to Turkish, the dominant local minority language, did not take place in Pomak- and Romani-speaking communities because of a language domain reduction, as is frequently argued in the literature. In the rural communities, a shift to Turkish rather took place through the individual shifts of highly connected individuals. But if this is so, then why did the shift take place in some Pomak communities and not in others? What motivated some individual speakers to shift and not others? As I have shown, the frequency of contact with outsiders does not seem to be a relevant parameter. Pomak speakers have contacts with outsiders, but these contacts are ephemeral and casual, such as contacts with co-workers. This is also the case for the Romani speakers who are in contact with Greek speakers: the ties are not intense and lifelong.

The reasons for a shift taking place for a given individual are clearly related to identity factors (as *acts of identity* according to Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985). I would also suggest that the social networks of the individuals with the highest centrality in the community network are similarly responsible for the shift. In the case of Greek Thrace, it is well known that political networks strongly correlate with the language shift. Several community representatives (elected or not)<sup>3</sup> developed close links with the Turkish authorities, for instance through the Turkish consulate in Thrace and the Turkish minority representatives. Other community representatives (elected or not) developed close links to the representatives of the Greek authorities, for instance, through the Greek Foreign Affairs Ministry's Department for Political Affairs in Xanthi and through the Greek and Greek-oriented elected representatives. The complexity and significance of these networks are thoroughly described in the work of social anthropologists and journalists (among others Tsibiridou 2000, Demetriou 2006, Kostopoulos 2009, Papanikolaou 2008) and will not be discussed here.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that a decision of the Pomak elites and the political representatives of the Pomak communities to ally with the Turkish or the Greek authorities seems to be coupled with the decision to shift to Turkish or not. Those Pomak representatives who kept close political relations to the Turkish political networks chose a language shift to Turkish, whereas those who entertained relations to the Greek political networks opted for language maintenance. Pomak representatives, for as the most highly connected individuals in Pomak networks, have a great impact on the whole community. When they decide to shift, the whole network is rapidly affected, and a language shift spreads. When they decide to maintain Pomak, the whole network continues with language transmission and adapts to modern communication networks by becoming trilingual.

Even though there are no official political representatives of Roma communities (most being illegal settlements and therefore not fulfilling the requirements to elect official representatives), there are some highly connected individuals who act as the link to the official authorities. This was, for example, the case when the Greek state offered the opportunity to

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<sup>3</sup> The villages traditionally counted on elected representatives, such as the *mihtar*, who were in charge of relations with the outsiders. Nowadays, this function has been replaced by municipal representatives. The role of religious representatives (*hodza*) was and remains equally important.

apply for mortgage loans. As many Muslim Rom are illiterate or have little formal education, filling out the complex administration forms required assistance, which was not provided by the Greek administration. This sort of intermediary role was played by the most educated individuals, who also qualify as being the Romani communities' most highly connected individuals.

To conclude, in language shifts of highly transitive networks, language domain restriction and identity factors, though relevant, do not provide a full account of the shifting process. One has to pay close attention also to the type and the structure of the networks in order to understand the shifting process.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

1,2,3SG – first... person singular	INTERJ – interjection
1,2,3PL – first... person plural	N – neutral
AUX – auxiliary	NEG – negation
APTCP – active participle	OBL – oblique
DAT – dative	PMK – Pomak
EVID – evidentiality	PROG – progressive
GEN – genitive	PRS – present
INSTR – instrumental	TMA – Tense, Mood, Aspect
INTER – interrogative marker	TUR – Turkish

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