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ЯЗЫКОВАЯ ПОЛИТИКА И ЯЗЫКОВАЯ СИТУАЦИЯ В ДИНАМИКЕ: БОЛГАРЫ-МУСУЛЬМАНЕ СЕВЕРНОЙ ГРЕЦИИ

Аннотация: Статья посвящена синхронно-диахронному анализу языковой ситуации в одном из изолированных культурно-языковых анклавов Балканского полуострова: округа Ксанти в области Фракия в Северной Греции, на болгарско-греческом пограничье. Здесь в труднодоступной горной местности проживают славяне-мусульмане, этнические болгары, представляющие собой миноритарную этноязыковую и культурно-конфессиональную группу, существующую в течение длительного времени в иноязычном и ином религиозном окружении среди православных греков. В историческом прошлом это сообщество составляло единое целое с болгарскими мусульманами, живущими ныне в пределах Республики Болгария. Это меньшинство является объектом языковой и культурной политики трех государств: Греции, Турции и Болгарии. Отметим, что власти Греции долгое время 1920–1990-е гг. (исключая период болгарского управления в 1941–1944 гг.) вели политику деболгаризации данного населения. В результате, сегодня степень его отуречивания достаточно высока. Авторы опираются как на опубликованные источники, так и на собственные полевые материалы, собранные во время трех этнолингвистических экспедиций, осуществленных в 2018 и 2019 гг., а также он-лайн в 2021 г.

Ключевые слова: языковая ситуация, языковая политика, славяне-мусульмане, болгарские диалекты, межъязыковая коммуникация, Северная Греция.

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LANGUAGE POLICY AND LANGUAGE SITUATION IN DYNAMICS: POMAKS OF NORTHERN GREECE

Abstract: The paper comes up with a synchronous-diachronic analysis of the linguistic situation in one of the isolated cultural and linguistic enclaves of the Balkan Peninsula: the district of Xanthi in the region of Thrace in Northern Greece, on the Bulgarian-Greek border. Here, in a remote mountainous area, live Muslim Slavs, ethnic Bulgarians, representing a minority ethnolinguistic and cultural-confessional group that has existed for a long time in a foreign language and other religious environment among Orthodox Greeks. In the historical past, this community formed a single whole with the Muslim Bulgarians who now live within the boundaries of the Republic of Bulgaria. This minority is the object of the language and cultural policy of three states: Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria. Note that the Greek authorities for a long time 1920s–1990s (excluding the period of Bulgarian rule in 1941–1944) pursued a policy of de-Bulgarization of this population. As a result, today the degree of its Turkicization (due to the influence of Islam, the study of the Koran in Turkish and the active position of Turkey) is quite high. It should be noted that the Bulgarian-speaking communities in Northern Greece are not the object of the Bulgarian language policy, which is carried out by disinterested officials and politicians who ignore the opinions and assessments of Bulgarian dialectologists and sociolinguists. The study focuses on ethnonyms and exonyms as important factors in the formation of the Pomaks' linguistic identity: the self-name of the speakers of these dialects is Pomaks, Ahryans. The ethnonym Pomaks was introduced and continues to be actively used to discuss the new Greek policy towards the Bulgarian-speaking population of Greece; the linguonym Pomaks was also formed from it. Earlier in Greece, the term Slavophones ('speakers of the Slavic language') was used, cf. new pomakophones. In

the 90s of the 20th century and early 21st century a number of scientists (V. Friedman, A. D. Dulichenko, A. Ioannidou, K. Voss, M. Nomati, M. Henzelmann, K. Steinke) considered Pomak to be one of the literary microlanguages of the southern Slavia, noting that it is characterized by the diversity of the script used and poor functionality. There were appropriate grounds for this (codification, publication of dictionaries and grammar, textbooks, etc.). But the impetus for the “creation” of the literary language of the Pomaks was the political task of the country's leadership. At present, Pomak (Southern Rodhopian, Bulgarian) dialects in Greece have an unwritten character (they are used exclusively for oral communication in the family and village, microcommunity). Despite the presence of certain signs of the formation of the literary language among the Pomaks, the modern language situation and language policy do not contribute to its existence and functioning. We rely on both published sources and our own field materials collected during two ethnolinguistic expeditions carried out in 2018 and 2019, as well as online in 2021, and will try to present preliminary results of the study of the current state of the language and language policy. Let us note the importance of modern interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the phenomenon of intercultural communication, which are based on the dialogue of languages and cultures, and which necessitated the description of new linguistic conditions and consideration of the importance of not so much Greek as Turkish as a means of intra — and interethnic communication in the specific geopolitical conditions prevailing in this region.

Keywords: Language Situation, Language Policy, Muslim Slavs, Bulgarian Dialects, Interlingual Communication, Northern Greece.

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The paper is to analyze the language situation and politics in one of the linguistic and cultural enclaves of the Balkan Peninsula: the region of Thrace in Northern Greece, on the Bulgarian–Greek border, inhabited by the Muslim Slavs, Pomaks (ethnic Bulgarians), which are a minority ethno-linguistic and cultural–confessional group, which has existed for a long

time in a foreign language and other religious environment among the Orthodox Greeks. In the historical past, this community formed a single whole with the Muslim Bulgarians who now live within the boundaries of the Republic of Bulgaria.

The Slavic-speaking Muslim population is compactly settled on the southern slopes of the Rhodope Mountains, which belong to the territory of Greece. Their villages are located next to the cities of Xanthi, Gyumyurdzhina (Komotini) and Didimotiko. However, a significant part of this population, for economic reasons, descended into the riverine and plain regions of the Xanthi, Rhodopes and Evros. The other part moved to Turkey, where in definite settlements there are entire neighborhoods of migrants from one or several southern Rhodope villages [7, c. 180]. The Pomaks in Turkey mostly has shifted to the Turkish language (see: [16]).

Slavic-speaking populations arrived in the Balkans as early as the sixth and seventh centuries, but as to the Pomaks there is a debate among Greek scholars as to whether they are descendants of Slavic origin or non-Slavic populations who shifted to Slavic (see: [14]). However a part of the Slavic-speaking Christians, the Pomaks as well, converted to Islam during the Ottoman period in 17th century during the process of the Islamization of the local Slavic population. After the period of the Balkan wars, in 1913, as a result of the Treaty of Bucharest, the territories where the Pomaks live went under the jurisdiction of Greece. In 1922 hard border between Greece and Bulgaria appeared and after the World War II, in 1945 the isolation of the Greece Pomak villages from Bulgaria was completed. In 2007 the borders between Greece and Bulgaria as countries-members of the European Union opened, that fact made the process of free communication between the Pomaks possible again (see: [15]).

The ethnonym Pomaks, although being of the Bulgarian origin [1, c. 508], is not accepted in the public discourse in Bulgaria due to its pejorative nature. It was introduced and continues to be actively used to discuss the new Greek policy towards the Bulgarian-speaking population of Greece, and the linguonym was also formed from it — the Pomak language.

The self-name of the speakers of these dialects is the *Pomaks*, the local Rhodope name *Akhryane* is less used. The name Pomaks entered the speech of the local Muslim Slavic-speaking population relatively recently. Earlier in Greece, the term *Slavophones* ('speakers of the Slavic language') was used. Note that the authorities for a long time 1920s – 1990s (excluding the period of Bulgarian rule in 1941–1944) pursued a policy of de-Bulgarization of this population. As a result, today the degree of its Turkization (turkification) is quite high [10]. N. Kokkas [27] wrote in detail about the serious influence of Islam on changing the everyday life of the Pomaks and their identity (see also: [34]).

The Slavophones as a community and their language were the object of close attention both by the Greek scientists (M. G. Varvounis, O. Demetriou, N. Kokkas, A. Roggo, Chr. Markou, etc.) and the foreign ones (K. Steinke, Kr. Foss, A. Joanidou, E. Adamu, A. Dulichenko, M. Henzelman and others).

In recent decades, within the framework of a number of scientific projects led by prof. M. G. Varvounis and prof. Chr. Marku from the University of Komotini studied both the dialects themselves and the folklore heritage of the Pomaks. As a result of the fruitful work of scientists from different countries, under the editorship of the staff of the University of Thrace, in 2020 a fundamental collective monograph was published on the language and culture of the Pomaks of Greece [31]. Many materials are digitalized and available online (URL: <http://zagalisa.gr/>).

For the Bulgarian scholars, the study of the Southern Rhodopean Bulgarian dialects in the districts of Xanthi and Gyumyurdzhiny (Northern Greece) became possible after Bulgaria's accession to the EU in 2007 and the opening of several checkpoints on the Bulgarian-Greek border. In recent years, there have been several significant publications in this area by G. Mitrinov and L. Antonova-Vasileva, Iliev, Mikhailov, E. Kanevska-Nikolova, who considered the identity of the Pomaks of the Southern Rhodopes, convincingly showing that these dialects belong to the Rhodope dialects of the Bulgarian language [3].

In the article, we rely on both published sources and our own field materials collected during three ethnolinguistic expeditions carried out in 2018 and 2019, on-line in 2021, and we will try to present preliminary results of the study of the current state of the language. In total, the following points were examined: Xanthi and Komotini, 13 villages, 35 informants aged 18 to 75 were interviewed, about 30 hours of audio recordings were made.

The Expeditions to Greece were planned mainly as ethnolinguistic ones, therefore, during the collecting work, its participants used questionnaires created to study traditional folk culture. However, E. S. Uzeneva also relied on her field experience among Muslims in Bulgaria, whom she had interviewed based on the materials of the questionnaire developed by A. A. Plotnikova to study the folk culture of the Balkan Slavic area [8]. In addition, the members of the expedition set themselves the task of sociolinguistic survey of the selected villages, identifying the features of the dialect, specific dialect vocabulary, facts of interlingual interference and identity markers.

Identity. Our research has shown that the speakers of the local Slavic dialects have a multiple, multi-layered, “fluctuating”, “shimmering” identity, which is associated with the special conditions of their residence [28]. Pomaks use different identification models depending on the communication situation: Greek citizens (based on the citizenship), Macedonians or Thracians (based on the region they live), Turks (based on the common language they speak), Muslims or Sunnis (religiously-based) and finally, the most common, Pomaks (or Slavic-speaking Muslims, Slavophones, based on the language).

Language. According to the Bulgarian dialectologists, the dialects of this region go back to the Rhodope and Central Rup dialects of the Bulgarian language [6, c. 175]. To a greater extent, the dialects were preserved in the villages of the Xanthi region, but in addition to the six villages of the Xanthi district, the language was also used in eight districts of the Rhodope region (Gyumyurdzhiny district) and in two districts of the Evros region, in the Didimotiko district. According to our information, at present, the inhabitants of the villages located east of Xanthi have almost completely switched to Turkish, only the older generation remembers the dialect, the middle aged understands it, but cannot speak fluently, the younger generation does not speak it at all.

The local Slavic population uses various names to designate their language / dialect: *potanski, ours, our speaking* (помацки, наши, наше думенье). Note that the dialect does not contain the concept of a language as a linguistic category. The lexeme *ezik* means ‘human anatomical organ’.

Pomak Internet resources demonstrate different language choices: the websites *Pomakohoria* and *Zagalisa* are Greek-based, while the site of the *Pomak Institute* has switched into Turkish (<http://pomaklar.com>, <http://pomaknews.com>) [21; 24; 25].

Sociolinguistic situation. According to our field research data, the local dialect is best preserved in the speech of the older generation. Most of them, except of women, are trilinguals. Older women often do not speak any other idiom except their native dialect, and mostly are practically illiterate. The Bulgarian-speaking Muslims need to be proficient in

Greek and Turkish in order to adapt to modern conditions. 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. So children at school learn the official Greek language, as well as Turkish. In fact, the language of their education at primary school level at local schools in rural area is obligatory Turkish. Often the teachers are the ethnic Turks who came to the villages to work with the support of the Turkish government. To study at the middle and the high school children have to go to Xanthi and the main language of their education becomes Greek.

In the communication with each other, schoolchildren use a special, “mixed” language, a mix of Pomak, Greek, Turkish and English words. It should be noted that during our conversations with the informants, we often had to switch to Greek to clarify the meaning of the questions we asked, as well as for discussions on philosophical and abstract topics, because, according to the informants themselves, they lack such vocabulary in the native tongue. For the religious needs, there is a need to study and read the Koran, which is present in the Arabic version here. The dialect is used exclusively for family communication. Attempts to introduce an optional study of the Pomak language in local schools were unsuccessful.

Switching codes. The use of this or that language code was largely determined by the language the researchers spoke (Greek and Bulgarian). Many other factors also influence the choice of the Greek language by informants: the age of the informant, education, place of residence, complexity and abstractness of the topic under discussion, etc. As far as one can judge from interviews with the young Pomaks, high school students and university students, in everyday communication, modern youth prefers to use either modern Greek with an admixture of Turkish and Pomak words and expressions, or Turkish (for the Turkish-speaking villages of Thrace), while the Pomak language can be used as a “secret language” to exchange a couple of phrases — so that others do not understand.

The language shift and the language maintenance in the Pomak society in Greece were studied in detail by E. Adamou [11]. The actual situation of trilingualism in Pomaks’ community in Greece leads to the formation of complex processes that influence the conscious or unconscious language code-switching and code-mixing during the process of everyday communication (see: [29]).

Writing. We can state that one small linguistic community has three writing options: based on the Greek alphabet (the state language of the country of residence), Latin (due to the study of Turkish, now based on the Latin alphabet) and Cyrillic (examples are rare and are associated with knowledge of the Bulgarian literary language).

Dictionaries and grammars. The brothers Ridvan and Sebaidin Karakhodza, representatives of the local Pomak intellectuals, who do a lot to preserve their language, published in Xanthi a description of the grammar of the Pomak language [17], syntax [23], and a study of the everyday language of the Pomaks [20], and R. Karahodza compiled dictionaries, Pomak–Greek and Greek–Pomak [18; 19]. At the same time, a grammar and a Pomak–Greek dictionary by Theoharidis [32; 33] were published in Thessaloniki. Later, in 2013, a generalizing three-volume edition of individual sections of the grammar of the Pomak dialect was published by the linguist P. Papadimitriou [30].

Pomak morphological dictionary. In the recent years, R. Karahodza has been working on a morphological dictionary of the Pomak language [22], which aims to include, according to the author's intention, all word forms present in the Pomak language. R. Karakhodza, who independently mastered the literary Bulgarian language, also uses the Cyrillic alphabet in his writings.

Textbooks. For the optional teaching of the Pomak language at school, at least two textbooks were written and published: native speakers of the Pomak language M. Aidin and O. Hamdi [13] and an English teacher in the Pomak villages, an ethnic Greek, N. Kokkas, who published along with the textbook [25], an anthology of texts of Pomak folklore collected by himself [26]. Both textbooks use Latin and Greek script for interpretations and explanations.

Pomak literary microlanguage. The publication in 1996 of the “Pomak-Greek Dictionary” and “Pomak Grammar” by P. Theoharidis, caused a negative reaction of the Bulgarian scientists in the form of the publication of the Department of Bulgarian Dialectology and Linguistic Geography of the Institute of the Bulgarian Language of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences regarding the so-called “Pomak language”. It categorically stated that the dialects of the Xanthi and Gyumyurdzhiny regions are “a continuation of the dialects of the Smolyan region and villages in the Krumovgrad region and have their features at various linguistic levels” [9, c. 2]. Having singled out a number of the most characteristic features of these Bulgarian dialects and noted the presence of many mistakes — the fruits of “philological incompetence”, — the authors came to the conclusion that “linguistic facts and scientific arguments are the most indisputable proof of the Bulgarian origin of the “Pomak language” composed in Greece” [9, c. 8].

The opinion of the dialect speakers themselves about the Pomak-Greek dictionary published in 1996 seems to us indicative: “It was not created by a team of philologists, teachers, experts. It contains few original Pomak words, many words were taken from Greek and Turkish” [4, c. 124].

The majority of the foreign Slavic scholars (A. A. Dulichenko, A. Yoanidu, Kr. Fos, Motoki Nomati, K. Steinke) are unanimous in their opinion about the existence of a Pomak literary microlanguage. A. D. Dulichenko classifies Pomak as one of the literary microlanguages of southern Slavia, classifying it as a peripheral insular language serving an ethnic minority that is cut off from its ethno-linguistic space, noting that such microlanguages are characterized by a variegated script and poor functionality [2, c. 336].

Formally, the main signs of the existence of such a language are obvious: in the 90s. 20th century an attempt was made to codify the Pomak language: grammars were written [17; 32] and an explanatory dictionary [33; 22, based on the Greek alphabet], textbooks, anthologies of dialect texts (in Latin script with Greek interpretations) were written and published, in some villages, optional language teaching was conducted, the media functioned in Pomak, certain works of world classics were translated, in particular W. Shakespeare, and attempts were made to create their own fiction, poetry [21].

However, a serious factor is the motive for the birth of a microlanguage — in this case it was not a movement from below, an expressed desire of speakers to “formalize” their native dialect to the level of a literary language, or the creative activity of one of the outstanding representatives of the minority. It should be recognized that in this case, the political tasks of the country's leadership served as such an incentive/motive. More important, from our point of view, is another thing — how the speakers themselves assess the nature of the language they speak. But in this respect, as shown above, there is no unity either.

Another point of view, which exists among the Russian and Bulgarian scientists, supports the idea of the existence of an unwritten language (dialect). We are of the opinion that the Pomak dialects are the Southern Rhodope dialects of the southeastern (Rup) dialects of the Bulgarian dialect zone, which, in the main distribution area in the Southern Rhodopes in Greece, are mostly unwritten in nature (used exclusively for communication in the family and village, in the micro-society).

The speakers themselves often cited the fact of the absence of their own alphabet as an argument in favor of the “non-existence” of the Pomak language. The frequent use of the possessive pronoun *our* highlights this community and clearly indicates the cultural and religious attachment to the Muslims of the Bulgarian part of the Rhodopes, where they have still many relatives. However, the Pomaks of Greece believe that their language is different from Urum (Greek), Turkish and Bulgarian [3, c. 138].

Thus, the absence of a single generally accepted alphabet, a single codification, compulsory study of the Pomak language in schools, permanently functioning accredited media (radio, newspapers, magazines), as well as occasional publications of single samples of literature in the local dialect do not give us reason to consider the Pomak language as a microliterary language of the South Slavia. Despite the presence of the certain signs of the formation of such a language among the Pomaks, the current situation does not contribute to its existence and functioning. We adhere to the point of view of the unwritten nature of local Slavic dialects, which are used exclusively for intra-family and intra-village communication.

Language policy. Until recently, in Greece, local Slavophones were not allowed to study at higher educational institutions. And now, when this education is encouraged, its cost is prohibitive for ordinary local residents. The fact that the native dialect is not studied anywhere does not allow even representatives of the local intellectuals to form their own idea of their native language [7, c. 183, 186].

On the one hand, the Greek government pursued a policy of creating a “Pomak language” and supported attempts to teach it as an optional subject in schools. On the other hand, representatives of the Slavic-speaking minority carried out a number of creative projects (published textbooks, dictionaries, made videos, in particular, about the Pomak wedding, collected dialect vocabulary and folklore, recorded CDs with folk songs, celebrated annually traditional holidays not related to Islam, for example St. George's Day).

Realizing the importance of the language as an identification feature, the Greek authorities are making great efforts to show that the so-called Pomak language is a separate language, distinct from Bulgarian. Whether this “composed” language will turn into another experience of codifying the regional written norm of the Bulgarian dialect and further into a separate language will be shown by the language policy of the Balkan states and, first of all, Greece. The creation of the “Pomak language” is a systematic and long-term state policy of Turkey and Greece “with the aim of introducing the southern Rhodope Muslim population of Western Thrace to the Turkish and Greek nation, respectively” [5, c. 19].

The language situation in the state is necessarily the object of the government's language policy — it must be managed and directed. It should be noted that the Bulgarian-speaking communities in Northern Greece are not the object of the Bulgarian language policy, which is carried out by disinterested officials and politicians who ignore the opinions and assessments of the Bulgarian dialectologists and sociolinguists [3, c. 145].

Summarizing what has been said, we can schematically present the dynamics of language policy towards the Pomak minority in Greece:

1945–1990s — the policy of “Turkification” of the Pomaks, teaching in schools in Turkish, a ban on studying at universities, isolation of the Pomaks.

1996–2010s — creation of the Pomak language based on the Greek alphabet, publication of dictionaries and grammars, optional teaching in schools, mass media in the Pomak language, translations — conditions were formed for the formation of a microlanguage.

Late 2010s — present — cessation of teaching Pomak in schools, abolition of the Pomak in the media, demise of the Pomak minority activists, expansion of the Turkish sphere

of influence and use of Turkish in villages east of Xanthi leads to fading of the Pomak language functions, lack of interest among the young people.

As a result of the language policy in Greece in relation to the Pomaks and the low promotion by Pomak communities the probability of the appearance of the literary Pomak language is extremely low, as E. Adamou and Davide Fanciullo also report [12].

Conclusion. Globalization leads to the fact that young people prefer not to teach children their native dialect, considering it unpromising and even dangerous.

Modern Pomaks are building a new identity for themselves, relating themselves, among other things, to other inhabitants of the Greek region of Thrace, and are happy to take part in folklore reconstructions of a regional scale (carnivals for the New Year, Shrovetide).

The attempts of the Greek authorities to create the Pomak language and preserve the Pomak folklore are belated and hardly successful. The inhabitants of the mountain villages of Xanthi still retain their language, traditional way of life and culture. But the speakers are mainly elderly people, illiterate women, while young people leave their homes. So in the long term, there is no hope for the preservation of the local dialect among the Pomaks of Northern Greece.

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