The Main Characteristic Features of the Bulgarian Orlitza Dialect (From the East Rhodopes)

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This article describes the main characteristic features of the dialect spoken by Muslim Bulgarians inhabiting the East Rhodopian Bulgarian village of Orlitza. The dialect features phonetic changes ж → a, з → a, л → 'a, б → 'a; the traces from the Old Bulgarian nasal vowels; the use of a definite article from the Old Bulgarian demonstrative pronoun та “this” unlike most of the other Rhodopian dialects where a triple article derived from the demonstrative pronouns та, а, иа is in use; as well as interesting lexemes, often from Turkish origin.

Keywords: Bulgarian language, Bulgarian dialectology, East Rhodopes

Introduction

The village of Orlitza, within the municipality of Kirkovo, is situated near the Greek-Bulgarian border, not far from the Makaza pass (and the border check point with the same name). The inhabitants of the village are Muslim Bulgarians (Pomaks).1 Their dialect is almost unknown. In his book on the Tihomir dialect, Kabasanov (1963) mentions in passing several basic characteristic features of the dialectal varieties spoken in the villages of Lozengradzi, Strizhba, Tzarinovo, and Orlitza (called Protogerovo at that time): the transition ж → a, the traces of nasal vowels, the rare change о → a, the prefixal change пир → при.

So far, only short articles concerning the examined here dialect of Orlitza have been published in local newspapers (Kostovska, 1971; Avdzhiev, 1988). In them, alongside the real facts, misleading information can be seen, too. In the first of the two articles, several toponyms are mentioned (Старото гробе “The Old Cemetery”, Орехчето “The Small Walnut Tree”, Долни кащи “Lower Houses”—the transition ж → a can be seen here, Мрдната падина “The Dark River”, Гяур кушу “The Bulgarian Bird”, Колибито “The Huts”, Баревица, Юкът, Тыла, Зеленко, Пожарашце, Требището, Потурското, Солаковското, Баба Мария, Костовица); as well as clan names (Солачкови, Ходжеви, Адемови, Шекирови, Реджепови); names of the winds (акел “the south wind”, поряз “the north wind”, карайел “the east and west wind”); and several words (панти “brigands”, деврие “watchmen”). In the second article, a sketchy and misleading attempt for explanation of some of the phonetic and morphological features of the local dialect is made. Alongside with mentioning the pronouns сай

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1 Regarding the so-called “Pomak” language in Northern Greece, one can see the works of Kochev and Henzelmann (Kochev 1996; Henzelmann, 2012a; Henzelmann, 2012b; Henzelmann, 2012c).
“this” (masculine singular), сая “this” (feminine singular), сва “this” (neuter singular), катро “which” (demonstrative, masculine singular), катра “which” (feminine singular), катри “which” (plural), котрото “which” (relative, neuter singular), which are typical for all dialects in the region; the vocal system of the dialect is analyzed (the author notices the traces of nasal vowels in the local speech but he is mistaken when talking about the presence of the vowel ŏ there, alongside with ē.

So far, an attempt for thorough classification of the local dialects has not been made, with the exception of a single article by Iliev (2006). However, that article states what has to be done in future rather than making conclusions about the present dialectal situation in the region. But on the basis of personally collected and still unpublished information, as well as of the information shown in the Balgarski Dialekten Atlas (Bulgarian Dialectal Atlas) (1964), and several short articles (Kidikova, 1977; Mitrinov, 1991), the dialects in the region can be outlined comparatively well.

Figure 1. The map of the region, showing the municipal center Kirkovo (Кирково) and Orlitza (Орлица) to the South-East, near the highway, shown in red on the map (Source: Administrativna karta na oblast Kardzhali).

So, the Pomak villages in the Western part of Kirkovo municipality (Shumnatitza, Chakalarovo, Kirkovo, Dolno Kapinovo, etc. See Figure 1), designated by Kabasanov (1963) as Turkish on his map, which is not shown here (unlike Strizhba, Tzarino, Lozengradtzi, and Orlitza), according to their dialectal peculiarities, can be divided in two groups; and those of the East part of the municipality, including Orlitza, form a third group:

1. The West Kirkovo dialect, where the Old Bulgarian ъо instead of не “don’t” (see also Mitrinov, 1991, p. 116); this dialect is divided in two subgroups:
   a. a-subdialect—in Domishte, the depopulated Zherka whose former inhabitants now live in the newly formed Kirkovo; also in Gorno Kirkovo, Apriltzi, Zavoya, Druzhintzi, and Shumnatitza.
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6. т-Subdialect—in Dzherovo, Kremen, Dolno Kapinovo, Gorno Kapinovo, and Chakalarovo (in the upper neighbourhood of the latter, the population is bilingual—Turkish is spoken as a native language, although the villagers consider themselves to be Pomaks, and not Turks).

(2) The East Kirkovo dialect, where the Old Bulgarian ъ, ҝ → 'a (with some exceptions)—in Lozengradtzi, Orlitza, and Strizhba where the population is mixed—Muslim Bulgarians and Turks (Kabasanov, 1963), as well as the deserted Tzarino whose also bilingual inhabitants have moved to the village of Chorbadoshiysko (mostly a Turkish village). Information about the dialects of Strizhba and Tzarino can be found in the Bulgarski Dialekten Atlas (1964), as well as in Stoykov (2008). The dialects in Orlitza and Strizhba are transitional between the East Kirkovo and the West Kirkovo dialects because, in these two villages, the Turkish loanword ñok “don’t” is used instead of the Bulgarian не.

To the North, the group of Muslim-Bulgarian villages, among which is Orlitza, is closely surrounded by villages where Turkish is spoken as a native language; to the South, this group of villages reaches the Greek-Bulgarian border; to the East, the Tihomir dialect is located; and to the West is the Drangovo dialect (still unknown to dialectologists).

Main Phonetic, Grammatical, and Lexical Features of the Orlitza Dialect

Phonetic Features

As it was mentioned before, the Old Bulgarian vowel ж (nasal o) has been replaced by a (with exception of the cases in which ж has been replaced by a й): зън “tooth” (in the standard Bulgarian language—зъб), кънта “house”, “room”, вълче “rope”, нат “road”, etc. The Old Bulgarian Ѣ (nasal e) → й (with exception of the cases in which it has been replaced by e): мъчко “meat” (in the standard Bulgarian language—месо), глъдам “I look (at something)”, говърда “cattle”, зът “son-in-low”, тънко “heavy”. The Old Bulgarian vowel а → й: вънка “outside”, сън “dream”, нусът “the nose”, дъска “plank”, дъно “bottom”. The same goes for the Old Bulgarian ъ → 'a: мъгла “mist”, тънко “thin”, лъснато “shining”. The vowel е, designated as ъ in Old Bulgarian → 'a: лъп “bread”, пръва “grass”, пръка “river”—ръка “rivers”, ръката “the river”, съно “hay”, гул’амите “the gig (ones)”, ълаз “whole” (masculine singular)—ълази “whole (plural)”. The syllabic and etymological ръ, ръ, лъ, лъ change into ар, ал, ғъ, ғъ: парст “finger”, кърф “blood”, гарп “back”, бързам “I

A sample of the Orlitza dialect can be heard on the internet at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psZSWqcrMNI (or: www.youtube.com Българска диалектология—Орлица, Момчилградско). The persons from which the information was collected are: Albena Kichekova (born in 1953), Desislav Metodiev Chakarov (22-year-old student), Emine Mustafova (born in 1939), Emine Sadaqova (born in 1955), Orfey Yuriev Moskov (48-years old), Rosita Hristova (born in 1963), Sevda Bankova (born in 1950), Selim Hasanov Ibrayamov (born in 1943), Fatma Halilova Kichukova (born in 1946), Yusein Hasanov Ibrayamov (born in 1936), Shadie Hasanova Shekirova.
hurry up”, вълк “wolf”, жълто “yellow”, вълна “wool”, but: працем “I look for”, праца “he looks for”.

In the dialect under discussion, only isolated uses of the Old Bulgarian is are attested (in non-etymological places): рибът “fish (plural)”, “fishes”. As in the dialects of the villages Tihomir, Lozengradtzi, and of the other villages in the region of Kirkovo, in Orlitza, there are a lot of traces of nasalism, too (including in non-etymological places)—in the place of the old nasal vowels, one can hear a combination of a vowel and a nasal consonant: сърба “they were saying”, стрелът “they were shooting”, бийте “I was”, имаште “I had”.

As in other Rhodopian dialects, traces of accented long vowels can be seen, too: бъл “flees”, мъд “a lot of”, as well as of soft final consonants (сол “salt”). The word for “star” is pronounced with an initial м (му̀ в̀ з̀ д̀ “stars” instead of звезди).

**Morphological Features**

In the Orlitza dialect, the category of definiteness lacks the triple definite article (-тъ, -ни, -це for masculine singular nouns; -та for feminine singular; -то for neuter singular; -те for plural), derived from the Old Bulgarian demonstrative pronouns та “this”, а “this one here”, и так “that one overthere”, and only the first of the three kinds is in use (with different variants): р’ката “the river” (feminine singular), н’ката “the leg” (feminine singular), гъл’ките “the big ones” (plural), нуса “the nose” (masculine singular), вар’к “the peak” (masculine singular), брег’т “the river-bank” (masculine singular), град’т “the town” (masculine singular), but: патът “the road” (masculine singular), зъпет “the son in low” (masculine singular). The feminine singular nouns take a double article only in rare cases: заповед’тата “the order”—literally “the the order”. Proper nouns can also take a definite article: И Асенът ишей да дойде, ишъц да пусеши малко “(The) Asen was going to come and stay for a while”.

The form of personal pronoun for the 1st person singular is а̀ “I”, for the 1st person plural is н̀ “we”, and for the 2nd person plural is в̀ “you”. As oblique plural pronominal forms are used the old dative forms, and not the accusative ones as in the Bulgarian literary language: у̀д н̀ми “from us”, ку̀д н̀ми “like us”. A specific summative pronominal form is връцкътъ “all of us/you/Them”. Interesting indefinite pronouns are ѐму-ко̀ си “someone”, н’иката “something”. With negative pronouns and adverbs, the negative can be placed before the preposition in prepositional uses: н̀ма н̀ от къ̀де да дойде “it cannot come from anywhere” instead of отъ̀ т̀еме н̀ма да дойде.

Similar word order can be seen with some prepositions, too: за лѝнкакъ м’̀асто “instead of an ambulance”. Cardinal numbers, borrowed from Turkish, are used often: ик’̀ “two”, б̀еке “five”.

The plural ending of masculine nouns is usually -е: гълът “mushroom”—̀гълът “mushrooms”, дън “day” —̀дено “days”, съ̀н “dream”—̀съ̀не “dreams”, петъ̀л “rooster”—̀пет̀лъ “roosters”, гър̀н “back”—̀гър̀б “backs”, пръ̀ст “finger”—̀пъ̀рстъ “fingers”, в̀лк “wolf”—̀в̀лкъ “wolves”. Suppletive plural forms are in use, too: в̀лък “a person”, “a man”—̀вѐн “persons”, “people” (a Turkish loan word).

As in the villages in the Western part of Kirkovo municipality, in Orlitza, too, alongside with нъ̀ни as a verbal negative particle is used the Turkish ю̀к: ю̀к вѝкаке “we don’t say”, ю̀к ра̀паки “we don’t want”. The interrogative verbal particle is ал. The 1st person singular ending for the present tense is -м: жѝвам “I live”,
In the dialect of Orlitza, there are a lot of interesting words, many of which are borrowed from Turkish or through Turkish from Arabic or Persian: àлъка “aunt”, арънка “maize”, басамак “stairway”, белеznik “bracelet”, гъсал “mushroom”, гъвъд/гъвче “son-in-law”, держек “Saturday”, жуму “Friday”, клуфт “I peck”, кърежълък “umbrella”, сухъхън “snails”, синджибар “sunflower”, камък “beetroot”, кумпир “patato(s)”, мъсъфире “guests”, алъс “really”, бъдо “elder sister” (a vocative form), възможен “rich”, сирък “vinegar”, and many others.

**Conclusion**

After the short information about the dialects of the villages Strizhba and Tzarino, shown in the Bulgarian Dialectal Atlas (Balgarski dialekten atlas), and the more detailed works on the Lozengradtzi dialect (Iliev & Georgieva, 2014; Iliev & Georgieva, 2015), the information about the Orlitza dialect discussed here, is useful for the further examination of the whole East Kirkovo dialect. On the basis of the research done so far, as well as on the basis of future studies of the collected data, a monograph describing in greater detail the East Kirkovo dialect will be published.

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