

# 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  $\kappa \rightarrow a$ ,  $\nu \rightarrow a$ ,  $\Lambda \rightarrow 'a$ ,  $\nu \rightarrow 'a$ ; the traces from the Old Bulgarian nasal vowels; the use of a definite article from the Old Bulgarian demonstrative pronoun  $\tau\zeta$  “this” unlike most of the other Rhodopian dialects where a triple article derived from the demonstrative pronouns  $\tau\zeta$ ,  $\epsilon\zeta$ ,  $\sigma\mu\zeta$  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).<sup>1</sup> 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 Lozengradtzi, Strizhba, Tzarinovo, and Orlitza (called Protogerovo at that time): the transition  $\kappa \rightarrow a$ , the traces of nasal vowels, the rare change  $o \rightarrow a$ , the prefixal change  $nup- \rightarrow nru-$ .

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 каици* “Lower Houses”—the transition  $\kappa \rightarrow a$  can be seen here, *Мра̀шнà па̀дина* “The Dark River”, *Гяур кушу* “The Bulgarian Bird”, *Колибите* “The Huts”, *Баревица*, *Юкът*, *Тикла*, *Зеленко*, *Пожарище*, *Трѐбището*, *Потурското*, *Солаковското*, *Баба Мария*, *Кòстовица*); as well as clan names (*Солучкови*, *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 (*нанти* “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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<sup>1</sup> 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), *кампo* “which” (demonstrative, masculine singular), *кампа* “which” (feminine singular), *кампу* “which” (plural), *компомo* “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 *ô* there, alongside with *ê*).

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.

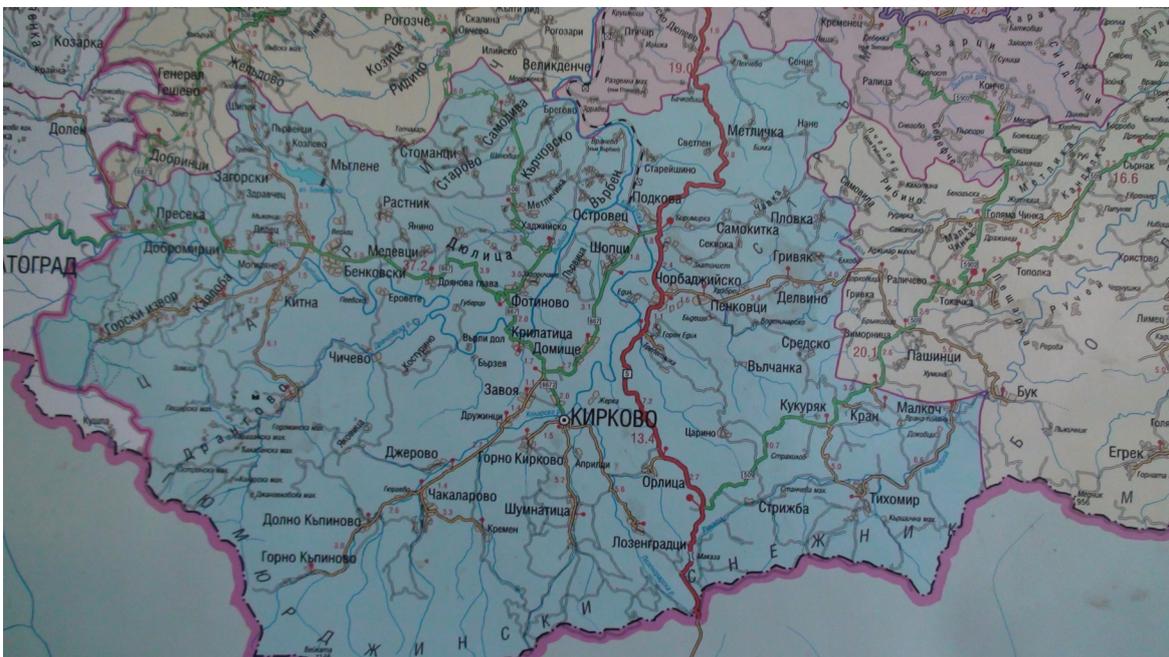


Figure 1. The map of the region, showing the municipal center Kirkovo (Кирково) and Orlytsa (Орлиця) to the South-East, near the highway, shown in red on the map (Source: Administrativna karta na oblast Kardzhali).

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 Orlytsa), according to their dialectal peculiarities, can be divided in two groups; and those of the East part of the municipality, including Orlytsa, form a third group:

(1) The West Kirkovo dialect, where the Old Bulgarian *ь*, *Ѧ* → *e* (with several exceptions); whose most peculiar dialectal feature is the use of *юдк* 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.

б. ъ-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 ѡ, **А** → '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 Chorbadzhiysko (mostly a Turkish village). Information about the dialects of Strizhba and Tzarinovo can be found in the *Bulgarski Dialecten 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 *üðk* “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<sup>2</sup>

### Phonetic Features

As it was mentioned before, the Old Bulgarian vowel **ѡ** (nasal *o*) has been replaced by *a* (with exception of the cases in which **ѡ** has been replaced by *a*<sup>h</sup>): *zàn* “tooth” (in the standard Bulgarian language—*зѡб*), *kàumta* “house”, “room”, *vàže* “rope”, *nàt* “road”, etc. The Old Bulgarian **А** (nasal *e*) → 'a (with exception of the cases in which it has been replaced by *e*<sup>h</sup>): *m'àco* “meat” (in the standard Bulgarian language—*месо*), *gl'àdam* “I look (at something)”, *zov'àda* “cattle”, *z'àt* “son-in-law”, *m'àшко* “heavy”. The Old Bulgarian vowel **ѣ** → *a*: *vànka* “outside”, *sàn* “dream”, *nusàt* “the nose”, *dàска* “plank”, *dàно* “bottom”. The same goes for the Old Bulgarian **ѣ** → 'a: *màгла* “mist”, *m'àнко* “thin”, *l'àснатo* “shining”. The vowel *é*, designated as **ѣ** in Old Bulgarian → 'a: *l'àn* “bread”, *tr'àва* “grass”, *p'àка* “river”—*p'àки* “rivers”, *p'àката* “the river”, *c'àно* “hay”, *zul'àмите* “the gig (ones)”, *ц'àл* “whole” (masculine singular)—*ц'àли* “whole (plural)”. The syllabic and etymological *рѣ*, *рѣ*, *лѣ*, *лѣ* change into *ар*, *ал*, *âp*, *âл*: *nâpст* “finger”, *kâpф* “blood”, *zâpn* “back”, *bâpзам* “I

<sup>2</sup> A sample of the Orlitza dialect can be heard on the internet at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psZSWqcrMNI> (or: [www.youtube.com](https://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 Sadakova (born in 1955), Orfey Yuriev Moskov (48-years old), Rositza Hristova (born in 1963), Sevda Bankova (born in 1950), Selim Hasanov Ibryamov (born in 1943), Fatma Halilova Kichukova (born in 1946), Yusein Hasanov Ibryamov (born in 1936), Shadie Hasanova Shekirova.

hurry up”, *вълк* “wolf”, *жълто* “yellow”, *вълна* “wool”, but: *търсем* “I look for”, *търси* “he looks for”.

In the dialect under discussion, only isolated uses of the Old Bulgarian *ы* are attested (in non-etymological places): *рибы* “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: *ка̀зваа̀* “they were saying”, *стрѐл’аа̀* “they were shooting”, *бѝше* “I was”, *им’а̀ше* “I had”.

As in other Rhodopian dialects, traces of accented long vowels can be seen, too: *ба̀ли* “flees”, *мнѐго* “a lot of”, as well as of soft final consonants (*сѐл’* “salt”). The word for “star” is pronounced with an initial *ц* (*цув’азди* “stars” instead of *звезди*).

### Morphological Features

In the Orlitza dialect, the category of definiteness lacks the triple definite article (*-ьт*, *-ьн*, *-ьс* for masculine singular nouns; *-та* for feminine singular; *-то* for neuter singular; *-те* for plural), derived from the Old Bulgarian demonstrative pronouns *тъ* “this”, *сь* “this one here”, *онъ* “that one overthere”, and only the first of the three kinds is in use (with different variants): *п’а̀ката* “the river” (feminine singular), *но̀гата* “the leg” (feminine singular), *гул’а̀мите* “the big ones” (plural), *нуса̀т* “the nose” (masculine singular), *вара̀т* “the peak” (masculine singular), *брега̀т* “the river-bank” (masculine singular), *града̀т* “the town” (masculine singular), but: *патѐт* “the road” (masculine singular), *з’атѐт* “the son in law” (masculine singular). The feminine singular nouns take a double article only in rare cases: *заповедта̀та* “the order”—literally “the the order”. Proper nouns can also take a definite article: *И Асѐнът итѐи да до̀йде*, *итѐи да нуседи ма̀лко* “(The) Asen was going to come and stay for a while”.

The form of personal pronoun for the 1st person singular is *я̀* “I”, for the 1st person plural is *нѐ* “we”, and for the 2nd person plural is *вѐ* “you”. As oblique plural pronominal forms are used the old dative forms, and not the accusative ones as in the Bulgarian literary language: *уд на̀ми* “from us”, *куд на̀ми* “like us”. A specific summative pronominal form is *вритчекъ̀т* “all of us/you/them”. Interesting indefinite pronouns are *ѐту-когѐ си* “someone”, *н’а̀кана* “something”. With negative pronouns and adverbs, the negative particle can be placed before the preposition in prepositional uses: *нѐма нѝ от къ̀дѐ да до̀йде* “it cannot come from anywhere” instead of *отникъ̀де няма да до̀йде*.

Similar word order can be seen with some prepositions, too: *за линѐйка м’а̀сто* “instead of an ambulance”. Cardinal numbers, borrowed from Turkish, are used often: *икѐ* “two”, *бѐж* “five”.

The plural ending of masculine nouns is usually *-e*: *гѐгал’* “mushroom”—*гѐгал’е* “mushrooms”, *дѐн* “day”—*дѐне* “days”, *са̀н* “dream”—*са̀не* “dreams”, *петѐл* “rooster”—*петѐле* “roosters”, *га̀рп* “back”—*га̀рбве* “backs”, *прѐст* “finger”—*па̀рсте* “fingers”, *вѐлк* “wolf”—*вѐлкве* “wolves”. Suppletive plural forms are in use, too: *чул’а̀к* “a person”, “a man”—*инса̀н* “persons”, “people” (a Turkish loan word).

As in the villages in the Western part of Kirkovo municipality, in Orlitza, too, alongside with *не/ни* as a verbal negative particle is used the Turkish *йѐк*: *йѐк вѝкаме* “we don’t say”, *йѐк ра̀чим* “we don’t want”. The interrogative verbal particle is *ал*. The 1st person singular ending for the present tense is *-м*: *жѝвам* “I live”,

*бързам* “I hurry up”, *върв’ам* “I walk”, *сп’ам* “I sleep”, but: *клуфта* “I peck”. Future tense is formed with the particle *ша*: *ша четам* “I will read”, *ша сп’ам* “I will sleep”, *ша гл’адам* “I will watch”. Future in the Past is formed with the particles *итѐш*, *итѝш*, *шън/шън*: *И Асѐнът итѐш да дѝде*, *итѝш да пуседи малко* “Asen was going to come and stay for a while”; *Ку им’аше” парѝ, мнѝгу пѝ-дубрѝ шън да си живѝйа...шън да живѝам* “if I had money, I could live much better”. The particle *да* in the imperative forms for the 2nd and 3rd person is pronounced accented: *Дѝ ги зѝми Вѝнчето!* “Let Vanya take them!” The negative imperative forms are formed with the particle *нимѝй*: *нимѝй ѝа* “don’t eat!”.

### Lexical Features

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: *ѝлка* “aunt”, *арѝнка* “maize”, *басамѝк* “stairway”, *белезѝк* “bracelet”, *гѝгал* “mushroom”, *г’ув’ѝ/г’увѝ* “son-in-law”, *дернѝк* “Saturday”, *жумѝ г’ун* “Friday”, *клуфта* “I peck”, *к’ург’ул’ѝк* “umbrella”, *сул’ѝци* “snails”, *ѝѝнѝѝнгар* “sunflower”, *камѝш* “beetroot”, *кормина* “gut”, *кумпѝр* “patato(s)”, *м’усефѝре* “guests”, *ал’ѝс* “really”, *бѝѝо* “elder sister” (a vocative form), *вѝзмѝѝжен* “rich”, *сирк’ѝ* “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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