



Notes on the  
Dialect of Zhèrveni,  
Kostur Region,  
as Spoken by Their  
Descendants in  
Mustafapaşa and  
Cemilköy, Turkey

Заметки о  
диалекте с. Жёрвени  
(район Костура)  
у переселенцев  
в Мустафаше  
и Джемилькёй  
(Турция)

**Larry Labro Koroloff**

Independent researcher,  
Canada

**Ларри Лабро Королов**

Независимый исследователь,  
Канада

Abstract

The article dwells upon the dialect of the people of Bulgarian origin in Mustafapaşa and Cemilköy, Turkey, descending from the village of Zhèrveni in Kostur region (Aegean Macedonia). The general outline of some peculiarities of the dialect's phonology is presented as well as some lexical differences between the Christian dialect in the neighbouring villages and the Muslim dialect of Zhèrveni. Three songs in Zhèrveni dialect are published for the first time.

Keywords

Slavic dialects in Greece, dialects of Muslim Slavs, South-Slavic dialectal phonology

## Резюме

В статье рассматривается диалект болгарских переселенцев в Мустафаше и Джемилькёй (Турция), которые происходят из с. Жервени в районе Костура (Эгейская Македония). Представлен очерк некоторых фонологических особенностей диалекта, а также описание лексических различий между диалектом мусульман из Жервени и христиан из соседних сёл. Впервые публикуются три песни на жервенском диалекте.

## Ключевые слова

славянские диалекты в Греции, диалекты славян-мусульман, южнославянская диалектная фонология

The village of Zhèrveni is located in the valley of the Bàbchor River north of Kostur (Καστοριά in Greek) on the eastern edge of the Korèshcha, the district northwest of Kòstur. The villages of Chèrnòvishcha and Drenòveni are found to the southwest of Zhèrveni, Pozdivishcha to the west, and Konòmladi to the north. All of these villages are also in the Korèshcha. To the south lies the village of Shestèvo, to the southwest is Visheni and to the northeast is Babchor. These latter villages belong to the district of the Popòleto. Since 1912, Zhèrveni has been in Greece. In 1927 Zhèrveni was renamed Agios Antonios by the Greek government.

The only linguist who has dealt with the Zhèrveni dialect is André Mazon, who visited Zhèrveni after the end of World War 1 and published some observations and three folk tales [MAZON 1923: 140–148 et passim].

The residents of Zhèrveni converted to Islam in about 1800 [КЪНЧОВ 1970: 342]. Their word for the *Virgin Mary* is *Городица* (< *Богородица*). This one term alone speaks volumes about their Christian origins. While in Zhèrveni, except for some of the men, they did not speak Turkish. In 1924, according to the Lausanne Treaty there was a population exchange between Greece and Turkey. Large groups of Orthodox Christians in Turkey, whether Greek speaking or not were expelled to Greece and large groups of Muslims in Greece, Turkish speaking or not, were expelled to Turkey. Thus the people of Zhèrveni left their native village en masse and began their arduous journey to the village of Sinasos, later renamed Mustafapaşa, four kilometers to the south of the town of Ürgüp in Cappadocia, Turkey. A few Zhèrveni families settled in Cemilköy, eight kilometers to the south of Mustafapaşa.

The younger generation no longer speaks the Zhèrveni dialect. However, an interest has developed in their Zhèrveni heritage and in 2007 the community activist Süreyya Aytaş<sup>1</sup> published the book “Bitmeyen Muhacirlik” (‘Unending Emigration’). In it she records the memories of the older generation about their grueling journey to a place where they did not know the language and received a less than a friendly welcome from the local population. The

<sup>1</sup> Süreyya Aytaş is the first woman of Zhèrveni heritage to receive a university degree.

book is in Turkish, but there are some songs and proverbs in the Zhèrveni dialect transcribed in Turkish orthography. They are heavily influenced by the Turkish language, i. e. lack of agreement of the genders of the nouns and adjectives and the interference in the transcription of the dialect by Turkish vowel harmony. But by their inclusion in the book, they will remain as a memorial of the Zhèrveni folklore which will soon disappear.

The observations below were made during my visit to Mustafapaşa in July of 2007.

I was also able to record two songs from Cevdet Resùlov (Gümüşsoy) of Cemilköy, one of the last living Zhervèntsi. He still has memories of his old neighbourhood in Zhèrveni or as he expressed it: *Ѐа помётвам м̀алата!* 'I remember the neighbourhood!' The songs are at the end of the article along with one sung by the men at the coffeehouse.

In the transcription the use of a colon after a vowel indicates a long vowel, which occurs where the consonant /h/ has been dropped: i. e. *вл̀а:* < *влах*, *сна̀а:* < *снаха*.

In most of its features, the dialect of Zhèrveni agrees with the dialect spoken in the Korèshcha villages to its west. For example like the other Korèshcha villages, the Zhèrveni dialect preserves the older form of the third person singular of the present tense of the verb 'to be' *ести*, the more archaic forms of the clusters /чрь, чръ/, as ч̀р̀но, чер̀во, as well as a modified form of the Old Bulgarian nasal vowels in certain circumstances as shown below. It differs from its neighbours in the Popole to the east, whose village dialects all lack the forms *ести* and all use *ц̀р̀но, чер̀во*.

However, being located on the eastern edge of the Korèshcha, Zhèrveni speech does show a few features of the neighbouring Popole region. The most recognizable feature is the use of *̀рно* instead of *̀бре* used by the Korèshcha villages<sup>2</sup>.

With no intermarriages with its neighbouring Christian villages, the dialect of Zhèrveni no longer developed in tandem with that of its Christian neighbours. It has been frozen in time in some respects and has preserved archaic features lost by its neighbours. In other respects, it has diverged from its neighbours by developing a few new features independently.

The most notable differences are the independent developments of the Old Bulgarian back nasal vowel /ɲ/ and the groups /рь, ръ/ and /ль, лъ/.

1. Whereas in all the other Korèshcha and Popole villages /ɲ/ has developed into /ъ/, in the Zhèrveni dialect it has developed into a labial /ò<sup>3</sup> or /òн/ be-

2 With the exception of Konòmladi and Stàtitsa, which are also on the periphery of the Korèshcha.

3 The vowel / / is described by Blagoy Shklifov as a "middle vowel, with the lips lightly rounded and the jaw tensed" [Шклифов 1973: 18–19].

fore voiced dental stop /ð/ or /ðm/ before voiced bilabial stop /b/ [Шклифов 1973: 18–19]: *пòт, зòмби, дòмбйа, ке-та испòнда, ке-ме-бие мòжо, шòшто* [‘също’].

Mazon noted both /ɤ/ and /o/ (not /ò/) as developments of the back nasal vowel, with no rule as to when one was used or the other [MAZON 1923: 18]. Even the same root words could use one of these two vowels in the singular and the other in the plural. He also notes that /рь, рɤ/ and /ль, лɤ/ had developed into /ор/ and /ол/ and not /òр/ and /òл/. Perhaps at that time of Mazon’s visit, a process of the replacement of the phoneme /ɤ/ by /ò/ was underway and was only completed in their new home in Turkey. An /ap/ instead of /òр/ is noted in one of Cevdet’s folksongs: *царква* instead of *цòрква*. This suggests that the above hypothesis may be true. But we may not be certain, as folksongs travel from place to place and may contain outside influences. Or perhaps Mazon’s informants who were all men who had more contact with the neighbouring villages had been influenced by their speech.

Zhèrveni is the only village in the entire northern part of the Kostur region to have developed a labial /ò/. However this feature is found in some villages in the southernmost part of the region – Nèstram and the Kosternariya (Èzerets, Snicheni, Zhùzheltsi and others) [Шклифов 1973: 28]. Farther afield, this development occurs in some Dolna Prespa villages (Gèrman, Nìvitsi, Dòlno Dùpeni and others), in the Debar Region as well as in the Rhodopes of southern Bulgaria.

2. The Old Bulgarian front nasal vowel /ɤ/ has developed into /a/ in short form personal pronouns: *Ма фàти, та ўдри, са стòри*.

This is a feature also found in much of the Popole region. But with regard to Zhèrveni’s immediate Popole neighbours, this development is found only in Vìsheni, but not in Shestèvo or Babchor.

In the lexeme *антòрва* (sister-in-law), the front nasal vowel /ɤ/ has changed to /an/. The nasality of the vowel /ɤ/ is preserved, having changed into the phoneme /n/. In the neighbouring Korèshcha villages the nasality of the vowel in this lexeme has been lost and the form is *етòрва*. This is an example of Zhèrveni preserving archaic traits lost by their Christian neighbours.

3. The groups /ль, лɤ/ and /рь, рɤ/ have developed into /òл/ and /òр/: *дòлго, вòлк; сòлза, вòлна; дòрво, вòрни, зòрми, вòрви; чòрно*. Zhèrveni is the only village in southwestern Macedonia to develop /рь, рɤ/ > /òр/. It is only found far to the northwest in certain villages between Struga and Debar in the Republic of Macedonia, in Golo Bordo (most of Golo Bordo is found on Albanian territory), and even farther away, in some Rhodope dialects in southern Bulgaria.

4. The religious separation of Zhèrveni from the neighbouring Christian villages of the Korèshcha has caused Zhèrveni to develop a number of lexical differences unique to that village. The chart below shows some lexical differences between Zhèrveni and the neighbouring Korèshcha villages.

In Ottoman Turkish times, most children of Zhèrveni's neighbouring villages attended Bulgarian schools. Before Bulgarian schools opened, education was in Greek, although education in Greek affected relatively few students. It is not unusual that the Bulgarians of the Kostur region adopted a few loanwords from literary Bulgarian, as well as earlier loanwords dealing with education from Greek. These loanwords are missing in the Zhèrveni dialect:

Zhèrveni	Korèshcha	
<i>кòмпир</i>	<i>къртùльа</i>	'potato'
<i>шефтелія</i>	<i>пràска</i>	'peach'
<i>бїрян</i>	<i>кòкòшка со òрис</i>	'chicken and rice'
<i>бїрек</i>	<i>б̀уреk</i>	'pie' (both are different modifications of the Turkish <i>börek</i> )
<i>нòна</i> ( <i>мàйка</i> occurs in a folksong)	<i>мàйка</i>	'mother'
<i>пòкер</i>	<i>пòвеке</i>	'more'
<i>мèтеп</i>	<i>скòлийе</i>	'school' ( <i>mekteп</i> comes from Arabic via Turkish)
<i>кїтап</i>	<i>кнїга</i>	'book' (in Zhèrveni, <i>kniga</i> means a 'letter')
<i>мàльум</i>	<i>дàскал</i>	'teacher' ( <i>мàльум</i> comes from the Arabic <i>muallim</i> 'learned'. The only school in Zhèrveni was a Koranic school which only boys attended)

The past tense of the verb to say/tell has evolved into the forms *йас кàжи*, *ниє кàжї:ме*. This is transcribed in one of Mazon's folktales [MAZON 1923: 141]. This development is unique in the whole of southwestern Macedonia (Kostur and Lerin regions). There, the form is *Яс кàза*, *ния кàзà:ме*.

## Songs in the Zhèrveni dialect

1

Олеле, леле, полеле  
Шо да го чиниме татко ни?  
Да го пушчиме за дорва.  
Да го изеде мѣчките.  
Пулите грѣди татко ни,  
Кожа на рамо, дорва на коно,

Олеле, леле, полеле

2

Чупичина душичина  
Остаймете (sic) да помина  
Да помина, да размина  
Нешто завал не ви чина  
Рочичина по джепчина  
Пблни рамни шекерчина  
Шекерчина, све джумчина.

3

Ка не ти е жально, мари Станко,  
За лепата царква ?  
Ич не ми е жально за лепата царква;  
Селим ке го зѣвам, туркина ке бида!  
Ка не ти е жально, мори Станко,  
За твојта майка?  
Ич не ми е жально за моятта майка,  
Селим ке го зѣвам, туркина ке бида!

*Translation:*

Oh my, oh my and more oh my!  
What are we to do with our father?  
Let's send him to get some firewood  
Let the bears devour him  
Look! Our father is returning,  
With a bear skin over his shoulder and  
firewood on the horse,  
Oh my, oh my and more oh my!

Dear little girls, dear little souls,  
Let me pass by and let me continue,  
I won't do anything bad to you,  
My little hands are in my pockets,  
Chock full of little candies,  
Little candies, all little lumps.

Don't you miss, oh Stanka,  
The beautiful church?  
I don't miss the beautiful church in the least,  
I will marry Selim and become a Turk!  
Don't you miss, oh Stanka,  
Your mother?  
I don't miss my mother in the least,  
I will marry Selim and become a Turk!

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Larry Koroloff, B.A., B. Ed. University of Toronto  
228B Floyd Ave.,  
Toronto, ON  
Canada M4J 2J1  
dreno@sympatico.ca