

The Neointerpretative methodology. The levels of field analysis.

Research report on the Lippovan community in Dobruja

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I. Methodology

The research was conducted by students of the Master in Security Studies and by second year Sociology undergraduate students, with the support of the Romanian Academy's European Center for Ethnic Studies (ECES). The field research took place during the 28th of August and the 4th of September in the area of the villages Sarichioi – Slava Rusă – Slava Cercheză – Jurilovca pertaining to Tulcea County.

In this material we will make some considerations on the neointerpretative methodology, especially on the levels of analysis. We will seek to observe how the three levels, equally valid in regards to their own truth, compose the investigated reality. Using the theoretical support of the methodology we will attempt to elaborate a short synthesis regarding the Lippovan community of Dobruja.

The methodology used is the neointerpretative one, centered on *identifying the infrastructure* of the investigated community, *both symbolic and objective* (statistics). The instruments used were the participative observation (observation sheet), semi structured interview, sociological photography, village sheet. The investigated population was comprised of the persons (personalities) with a *direct role in administrating the community* (mayor, medic, engineer, school principle), the ones with *symbolic power* (priest, medic, professor/tutor), with *economic strength* (entrepreneurs), or *simple people* with access to the symbolic order of things ('povestariu'), regardless of age. We define 'povestariu' as being the shared common law of the local order, with symbolic power, which especially refers to the founding myths of the community. Beside with the *symbolic infrastructure*, a series of written or digitally recorded information regarding the objective issues (statistical data on economy, education, culture, demography, etc.) were documented and analyzed as well.

The neointerpretative methodology has the objective of *recording reality* as it is stored and shared (through stories) by *significant actors*, where significant is defined by the local representatives themselves. One of the starting points (premises) of the methodology postulates that we can understand the field data *if* we manage to harmonize them with a sense, which is provided firstly by the investigated community. The objective data will also be brought under the *light of the significant* in relation with *the problems of the community*. Hence, the data regarding health or demographic fluctuations will be of interest to us in relation with the community's general *path of evolution*, with

the factors that impact the human component of development; economic data (i.e. capital accumulation, land and means of production ownership) are to be gathered and analyzed against the development of multiple layers such as social network, demographics, cultural advances and human ecology..

Through the neointerpretative methodology we gain access to *significant ensembles* without claiming to identify *the whole*, the latter being approximated in time, through successive studies. The researcher does not *rewrite* the interpretative pattern, nor create hierarchies; he only *interlinks* the facts revealed. The significant is developed as a series of events and facts by the *symbolically relevant persons* within the community. The symbolic chain of documentation is partially accessed through the instrumentality of a few contact persons – *facilitators* of the research, usually intellectuals who are visible to the initiator of the research (recommended by the communities that have representatives in Bucharest, by persons who have connections in the area of study etc.) but, as a rule, these persons coincide with the acknowledged leaders of the area to be investigated¹.

I. I. The levels of field analysis

The investigated reality has three levels of manifestation, each rounding up ‘its own truth’.

1. **The level of the local truth** – of local convictions, which pertain to the ‘objective’ order of the local reality. This is the level of the *local realities*, arranged by the power of local symbolistics. Those who best describe this ‘level of local truth’ are especially the ‘representative personalities’, those who keep and, to a certain extent, define the identity direction (seniors to whom the community listens of, teachers, councilmen, or intellectuals *respected* by the community). Moreover, it consists of *definitions regarding the component elements of the community*. For example, what is ‘normal’, *what are the symbolic coordinates of the local order* – all regarding the *center* of the community (‘the settlement core’), family, faith and Church, or tradition matters.

From an ‘objective’ point of view we have the statistical data of the community – regarding the demography (health), economy and culture (education), including the ‘ecosystem’ of the community (the integration between various occupations, habitation and natural order). Simultaneously, we were also able to record the *availability to communicate with strangers*. The open attitude of the community regarding its

¹ We must not necessarily subsume the relevant people of the place and the local elite, because there is a risk of the latter being disconnected from the area’s urgent matters, being alienated from the area’s spirit. It is, therefore, possible, that the living elements of the local dynamic density may have lost their meaning to the local elite which, given that it may prove to be the exponent of a *delocalized* perception, may lead the researcher on a wrong path. For us, relevant people are the experts that Malcom Gladwell mentions in his book, entitled *The Tipping Point* (in Romanian *Punct Critic*). *How small things might provoke substantial changes*. That is, the persons who function as data bases, those that, in a cultural, economic, social, political etc. meaning, know the place ‘like the back of their hands’. They may be part of the elite, but not necessarily. They are key-informers the researcher finds either in a direct manner, or through trial-and-error, by successive discussions.

investigation by external elements is conditioned by the limits of *normality* which pertain to each component of the community. The community members' *availability to communicate* with the researcher is conditioned by *prescriptions, by the normal*, as it is etched in the collective mental conceptions, regardless of the personal availabilities of the interviewed person or the researcher's ability to 'break the ice'.

2. **The level of local insights into the general view** encompasses the ideology projected over the world (*the conception about the world*) which the local community has no power to change, but which is a part of the local symbolic. Part of the 'povestariu', these *local insights* submit to a *referential* and to the conceptions regarding the world, in general. The concrete order of the community stands under a *symbolic umbrella*. It encloses generalizations reaching beyond *the immediate usefulness*, and composes a general view based on which the respondents (the local community) judge *outsiders*. Oftentimes this level has normative components, ordaining what is and what is not desirable.

It is fundamental not to perceive the research as opposite to the level of local insights into the general view, the latter further conditioning the more elaborate access to the first level of reality enunciated earlier. This level usually comprises *the self esteem* of the community in relation to other communities. In the case of particular ethnic groups, the self esteem is associated with a certain superiority complex directed towards their neighbors, or towards the rest of society.

The level of local projections represents the *self consciousness of the community in relation to the Other*. Its most vivid manifestation can be observed within the leaders of the community's speeches about themselves: priests, professors, leaders of the local cultural-ethnic organizations. Concretely, the level of local insights comes into play after 'the collocutor warms up' (usually intellectuals or elderly persons, who possess *wisdom* and/or *history knowledge*), to the extent that he is willing to talk. The moment this threshold is breached can be considered *a critical point* to the logic of the study, as the person being interviewed may emit biased opinions which may determine the researcher to react in a *personal manner*. Such reactions must be avoided and suppressed in order to give way to the 'flow' of the discussion, encouraging the 'story-teller' to take his 'discourse' – the target of the research, after all – from start to finish, with minimal corrections regarding the strictly necessary clarifications.

3. **The ideal type level** – 'the world as seen from Bucharest', the order from which the researcher proceeds from. Although we must grant *autonomy* to the object to be known, which thusly becomes *a subject*², the *initiative of first contact* belongs to the researcher. This means that the researcher *already* has a reference point in relation to which he will further analyze the local order. Local truths and their insights into the world will be *decomposed into levels of analysis and reassembled*, in order to make *sense*

² The subject to be investigated has the same importance as the knowledgeable subject, he himself being a knowledgeable entity.

to the paradigm of the research. Therefore, a researcher must assert his paradigmatic provenience and describe it in a concise manner.

In our case, the adopted paradigm is the neointerpretative one, bordering the monographic research of Dimitrie Gusti³ and the weberian concept of ideal type comprehensive understanding⁴, to which we add the *noologic* perspective, stressing out the importance of personal commitment in the research *by living it* as an *experience* in relation to the grand coordinates of the symbolic axes of the world⁵. The ideal type level establishes the *details to be investigated* and how *the research adapts itself under way*, depending on what are the local truths and their insights into the world, what are the axes in relation to which the details are being researched.

I. II. Observations regarding gathering data

The neointerpretative methodology gathers data *through extraction* – by sending limited teams of researchers to contact, identify and observe/interview *the relevant people of the place*, in areas of interest *indicated beforehand* by these persons themselves. In turn, the significant persons are identified through exploratory field discussions, by recommendations. The gathered data is structured based on a *monographic thematic* (economy, spirituality, organization and administration etc.) from *significant locations* (churches, schools, meeting grounds, artistically or socially representative homes, workplaces – spiritual, economic and social frames). These become *facts*, and if they possess symbolic charge they become part of the '*povestariu*' (the infrastructure of order). The *rapid integration*⁶ of the researcher in the space to be investigated is stressed through the *appropriation of the problematic told by the investigated population* – the method is of the comprehensive – interpretative type. The methodology implies: exploratory observation (establishing the relevant persons and locations), direct observation, interview, focus-group, gathering and storing/tracing

³ Through the belief that reality is a delicate complexity described best through 'the parallelism law'.

⁴ Reality is understood through *commitment from the perspective of its own meanings, as they are stated by the actors*, but they are *ordered through a process of subsequent abstraction*, so that the multitude of particular meanings may gain a coherent sense and direction of analysis; synthesizing through abstraction of the field data is used as a guide mark in the *logical-rational* interpretation of local significations.

⁵ The *metanarrative* which pertains to the 'order of the world': faith, communion, the great tradition, etc.

⁶ A characteristic of the methodology through extraction is the rapid gathering of the data and then the distribution of it to the other teams in such a way that every stage of the research is better oriented in the field. Towards this end, each team writes a daily research report which is then used as the basis for establishing the priorities of the next day of documentation – research. Living, understanding and expressing, in a word *meeting* the subjects of the investigation, usually requires time, the rarest resource of the researcher who uses our method. Thus, the neointerpretative approach, constantly in danger of 'missing the encounter', will only give the occasion of superficial access to the important data of the location, but not necessarily. Firstly, any person who uses the neointerpretative approach in the field is driven by an intention: that of meeting the locals through experiencing and deciphering their typifications. Secondly, he who utilizes neointerpretativism, although he lacks the time, may win time so long as he is oriented towards areas of interest indicated beforehand by the relevant people of the land. In other words, he has access to the exponents of the significant density of an area, which is filled with significations. We are not referring only to people, but to places, as well, that are transformed into social moments, such as churches, historical monuments, legendary places etc. Last but not least, the empathic capabilities of the researcher are the ones that truly make a difference. The better developed his ability to empathize is, and the researcher's sensitivity being responsible of its dimension(ing), the more the meeting between the researcher and the area of the investigated subject becomes possible.

(gathering *on the spot*) on multimedia support (photography, film, audio recording) the *relevant gestures* pertaining to the area to be studied, collecting the objective data and classifying it in observation sheets – data bases regarding the economy, culture, health, and so on.

I. III. Observations regarding the validity of the data

Verifying ‘the objectivity of subjectivity’ of the collocutor is done through *crossing sources* (confronting the information from more transmitters with the categories of sources, confronting the oral information with the written) and on the level of marker validity – of logical coherence. The objectivity of subjective markers is used to observe the nodal points of an argumentation, which may verify or certify the discourse’s level of inconsistency. As a rule, these markers are linked to sensitive subjects, related to collective identity, personal integrity (businesses, relationships with very close people, important relationships in the work place, faith values). The interviewer must ‘distribute’ within the discussed problematic elements that reach aspects of personal and ethnic identity. In connection to the answers received, the objectivity (even relevance) of the interviewed subject might be validated. On the other hand, regardless of what answers (whether they are consistent or not) the collocutor offers, if he is considered an important actor of the community, his answers remain important in relation to the internal logic of the subjective order pertaining to the investigated community. Thus, for example, the subjects which ‘flare up’ the collocutor are those most predisposed to have a negative effect on the coherence of the argument and on ‘objectivity’ and, subsequently, on the veracity of the story or of the information. A person who asserts to ‘know’ or ‘is savvy about’ a certain subject loses credibility the moment he or she, instead of backing up his arguments, claims to be the sole owner of the truth simply because his position, or the community to which he pertains, is ‘superior’. Possessing a superiority complex as well as the unconditional support of a certain fact may be markers of inconsistency.

Communication with the local communities

The local communities that were investigated (Sarichioi, Slava Cercheză and Slava Rusă, Jurilovca) have manifested different degrees of permeability in what regards the facilitation of data gathering. The Russian Lippovans form a community that has not only a particular ethnic profile, but is also an *archaic* community from a religious point of view (‘old rite followers’). Taking this into account, they manifested an ambivalent attitude towards the researchers: they wished to be better known by the outside world, to make ‘themselves better understood’, but, especially regarding the clerics and the religious leaders, they had great reserves. On the other side, given *the weak communication link between the priests and the community* (as was revealed in almost all of the interviews), we may understand that the limited openness of the old rite church’s servants was a problem of a communicational background, and not just a reaction to

outsiders (towards the researchers). At the same time, there have been some reserves in the areas where *the economic plane interfered with the difficult conditions of quotidian living, possibly situating itself on the edge of the law*, especially in the locations where fishing activities are more intense (Sarichioi and Jurilovca).

II. Origins. The documentary version

After consulting the bibliography centered on the problematic of the Lippovans residing in Romania⁷ we have noticed *the lack of a consensus* in what regards the issue of their origin. The absence of historical sources of information that could certify the existing versions, along with the imprecise defining of the terms through which this minority is referred to (Lippovans, Starovers, Cossacks, Nekrasovites), proves the process of clarifying their identity a more difficult one.

Alexandr Verona considers that one of the most serious controversies regards ‘the role and importance of the Cossack factor in the forming and the development of the Lippovan communities, especially those from Dobruja and Bessarabia, but also of those from Bukovina, as this is linked to the presence of the Nekrasovite Cossacks in the Lower Danube, a community which had splintered from the great Cossack army. It then resided in the Don river area as a result of the suppressed upheaval led by the ataman Kondrati Bulavin during 1707-1708 (Varona, *s.a.*, 19)’. Hence, we reach another problem, that of ‘the reciprocal integration and assimilation between the Cossacks and the other Starovers within the Lippovan communities’ (ibidem). ‘As the Russian borders expanded towards the Danube, they migrated, no later than 1814-1815, towards the Marmara Sea and the Aegean Sea.’ (Idem, 20). The second supposition alleges that there has been an uninterrupted presence of the Cossacks in the area beginning with the year of 1740.

Another controversy presented by Alexandr Verona is that of ‘the time lapse of the Cossack communities’ presence in Dobruja’, on which there are two scenarios. One of these, originating since the XIXth Century, states that the Nekrasovites ‘have settled in the Danube area at the end of the 1770’s – beginning of the 1780’s and that they did not mix with the other Starovers in the area’ (ibidem).

In his book, *The Russian Lippovans of Romania* (2001), Filip Ipatiov presents two hypotheses on the origin of the Lippovans in Romania. According to this, a first hypothesis would be that the Starovers have settled within the Romanian territory before Patriarch Nikon’s reform. A supporter of this hypothesis, Fenoghen Sevastian (1998, 2004), in order to validate his claims, makes reference to the writings of the traveler Evlia Celebi, who between 1641 and 1667 visited Babadag and wrote about the presence of ‘giaours (of Christian religion) and some Russians’ (Ipatiov, 2001, 99). The second supposition is that of the Starovers immigrating to Romania from the Don and Kuban areas, after the Nikonian reform. These Starovers were Cossacks from the areas

⁷ The books are cited in the bibliographic section of the present study.

mentioned earlier who moved to Dobruja during 1740 – 1741. During the Russian – Turkish war (1806 – 1812) the Zaporozhye Cossacks (of Ukrainian origin) destroyed the village of Sarichioi (the center of Dobrujan Cossacks), forcing the inhabitants to retreat to the south, in Bulgaria.

Still, if we follow the evolution of the Russian element from a cartographic point of view, with the aid of history atlases, we may better understand the historical and geopolitical context of the XIV – XVI centuries. As an example, according to the *Historical Atlas* edited by the Romanian Academy (see *ANNEX I*), the borders of Russia reached the Don area only during the reign of Ivan the IVth and, after that, under Feodor. In other words, conquering new territories and extending the Principality of Moscow were not possible earlier than the year 1550, the population here being comprised especially of Mongolian – Tatar origin, on one hand, or of population under the direct influence of the powerful kingdom of Poland. The firm revolt towards Nikon's reform of 1645, correlated with the late expansion of the Principality of Moscow in the region, therefore, reinforces the hypothesis of a preponderantly fiscal disagreement between the revolted inhabitants and the Russian principality.

III. Dobruja, the Lippovan communities – August 2009, the level of local reality (1)

The intellectuals who were interviewed stated, almost with no exception, that, although they arrived in Dobruja starting the XVIIIth century, after *Nikon's Reform* in Russia, the land they found was devoid of any human colonization. Their mental paradigm situates the Romanians in the 'area of outsiders', who were politically colonized, especially after 1877 (when Romania regained Dobruja after approximately 500 years of Turkish rule). *None of the collocutors have made the connection between the Roman-Greek and Protoromanian⁸ settlements, out of which some are even larger than the Lippovan villages they include* (see Slava Rusă, situated within the Roman fort of Ibida – **the largest Byzantine – Roman defensive complex of III – VII century Dobruja**) and the Romanic context, respectively the Protoromanian – Byzantine, and subsequently the Romanian context (Mircea the Elder) and even less so with the peasant migrations from Wallachia to Dobruja before 1600 where the Cossacks, the Russians from the Don river area, had settled later, around the dawn of the modern era. We have linked this *lack of mental correlation* with a superiority complex, which is necessary in defining a personal identity and is part of a projection on the general through which Lippovan intellectuals try to situate themselves as 'somewhat above' the surrounding historical and cultural circumstances. These substratum elements, even though they no

⁸ Through the density of its fortifications, basilicas, Episcopal churches, roads, Dobruja is among the most well endowed latin areas of South - East Europe. It had continually been under the rule of the Roman Empire, starting from the Ist century up until the VIth century. It is recovered for another two hundred years by the Byzantine Empire during the X - XII centuries. Forefront for emigrants, Dobruja faces early on the pressure of Turkish tribes, later Tatar tribes, but during the XIVth century it is integrated in the Romanian state (Wallachia) by Mircea the Elder, only to become, in a short matter of time, an integral part of the Ottoman Empire (with the collapse of the Balkans under ottoman pressure).

longer have populations to keep them alive – the Circassians left in the XIXth century, the Tatar population have started to decrease in number around the same time – are, despite this, sufficiently powerful to *maintain even today the namesake of Lippovan settlements*, (see Slava Cercheză), some of which *are considered centers of cultural irradiancy for Lippovan communities* (Sarichioi).

Almost with no exception, our collocutors have agreed that the Lippovans are a Russophone community *that found shelter in Dobruja* after the forced Reform of the Patriarch Nikon, at the end of the XVIIth century. Wandering around southern Russia through Caucasia, they were given permission by the Ottoman Empire to settle in Dobruja. There are ‘Russian Lippovan’ communities in Moldavia, too, originating, probably, from Bukovina, where (in Fântâna Albă – White Fountain, ed.) one of their religious centers is based. There is no data on the subject of their ethnic origin and no information which would help to pinpoint their exact origin. If they were Cossacks, who are not a Russian ethnic entity per se, then the name of Russian Lippovans is more of a geographical – historical label than a strict, ethnical one: Russophones – or subjects of the Tsarist Empire who emigrated to the Ottoman Empire starting from the XVIIIth century. It is a fact that they were part of the elite military units of the Ottoman Empire until these were disbanded around the half of the XIXth century, with Sarichioi acting as their military center.

The landmarks of the local order seem to be, primarily, the *family* and the *language*. Most people who were subject to our investigation agree on the importance of faith – the old rite orthodoxy, but at the same time they cannot grasp the role of their own church institution in this complex. The relative disjunction between the institution itself (lack of trust in the church and the priest) and the level of faith exhibited probably indicates a still unsettled symbolic foundation, 300 years after the apparition of the Lippovans in the Romanian space. The situation is even more serious if we take into account the fact that not even until the present day the Lippovan elites have not reached an agreement concerning *their historical origins*, that the bulk of the folklore present in their school manuals is mainly made up of Russian imports and that their founding stories are almost completely lost. Moreover, the language of their own rite’s faith, old Slavonic, is inaccessible to the majority of the community, indicating additional difficulties in establishing an archaic identity (through rite, priest ranks, language), and at the same time is insufficiently crystallized.

The historical dimension is a component of the collective identity, part of the *cultural frame* through which manifestations materialize, including the day-by-day manifestations. The historical frame is part of the *order*, of what a community considers to be *normal*.

‘Unwrapping the past’ can be done by relating to the level of local truth and to that of the local projections on the general. The local elite’s impossibility to reach a consensus regarding the historical identity of the Lippovans and the many other ‘blank pages of history’ this minority has made the process of understanding and defining the

historical frame of this community quite difficult. We will subsequently present the historical versions we have observed.

III. I. Historical dimension

III. I. I. First version

The first version we came across endorses the ethnical self-identification of the Lippovans with the Cossacks from ‘the Don valley’. Our collocutors have emphasized how important it is that we understand the difference between a Cossack and a Kazak. While Kazaks are a population of Tatar – Mongol origin, settled in Kazakhstan, the exact origin of the Cossacks is still under debate, as they are considered to be an ethnic element of the Slavic peoples. In what regards the etymology of the word Cossack, the sources from the field state that ‘nobody established it, as it cannot be established for Lippovans themselves’. One possible etymology derives from the old language of the Tatars (the second language of Cossacks), in which the word ‘Cossack’ means ‘I am’.

Cossacks are an ethnically heterogeneous population, which has always lived *on the outskirts of the Russian Empire*, and, because of this, ‘they were not boyars and the emperor could not impose his will upon them, they were free people, they fought sometimes for, sometimes against the Tatars’⁹. As proof, during the reign of Ivan the Terrible, the sultans repeatedly requested him to ‘discipline the Cossacks’. During the reign of Alexei Mihilovici a religious reform was issued, continued in time by Peter the First. Because of the disagreements with the tsar and the religious schism, the Cossack lead by the ataman Ignat Nekrasov passed over to Kuban (a territory situated between the Azov Sea and the Caspian Sea), a region under the control of the ‘Crimean Tatars’.

A few years after the death of the ataman Ignat Necrasov a new exodus takes place within the Cossacks’ population. They faced the necessity to leave the territories of Kuban, towards the Ottoman Empire, finally settling in Dobruja. In this version, the reasons for which the Cossacks left Kuban are primarily of a socio-economic nature, because the tsar would not accept ‘the free regime of living’ the Cossacks felt were entitled to. There are two versions regarding how the Cossacks might have settled in Dobruja: in one of them they sailed their ships across the Black Sea, and in the other, they made a halt by way of a detour through the Ottoman Empire’s territory. Thus, they would have sailed across the Black Sea with their boats, a part of them entering through Gura Portiței, settling on the bank of the Razim Lake. The other part of the Cossacks went up the Danube, entering through the Saint George arm and settling in Dunavăț, where they allegedly built a military fort. The Cossacks bought terrain in the area directly from the Turks, because during that time Dobruja was under ottoman rule.

Furthermore, we may draw a first distinctive line between the Cossacks who had military obligations and those who ‘did not risk their lives’. Those who had military

⁹ A collocutor from Sarichioi

obligations towards the Turks received, alongside their pay, the right to pillage, because ‘wars are for pillaging’. Those Cossacks were obligated to deposit one third of the loot to the Cossack vault. In contrast to them, those who had no military obligations dedicated themselves to agriculture and fishing, being obligated to pay taxes to the Turks. A great part of the old rite churches built in Dobruja have been built with the money the community took out of their vault, a short while before the Sultan disbanded the military order of the Cossacks in 1864.

The political and cultural center of the Cossacks from the Ottoman Empire was established at Sarichioi, bearing the name *krug* (Cossack circle), and was commanded by an *ataman*. The last ataman of the Cossacks was Iosif Ganceav who, until the liquidation of the ‘krug’, fought to maintain the privileges of the Ignat – Cossacks. The presence of the Nekrasovite Cossacks¹⁰ on dobrojan territory is attested by a *Viziral order of Pasha Mehmed Said from the 15th of December 1834*, issued from Silistra, in which the following is stated:

‘Viziral order through which Pasha Mehmed Said, vali of Silistra, addressing the Qazii, the Ayans (local notables) and the civil servants makes it known that the Ignat – Cossacks, located within their counties, being for a long time obsequious to the faithful and the high devlet, should not be hindered or attacked by any means.’¹¹

Also, our collocutor put a ‘firman’ (dated around 1856-1857) and its loose translation to our disposal, in which the building of another church in Barikiyesi (Sarichioi) gained authorization, as well as establishing the temporary ceasing of hostilities between the two ‘religious camps’¹² - ‘churches with priest’ and ‘priestless churches’:

‘The aforementioned church being unique has become a source of discord for them, being constantly forcefully occupied by one or by the other. No solution has been found for this problem to satisfy both sides, each side claiming either the church, or the cult objects within it.’

The Lippovans who now inhabit Sarichoi are ‘old rite believers, especially all of those around the Don River, they are all of Cossack origins, they did not know serf ownership, they were not boyars’. Despite this, until the Crimean war, the Cossack inhabited villages from Dobruja were repeatedly set ablaze and destroyed by the Russian troops engaged in the Russian – Turk wars.

¹⁰ The name of Nekrasov/Necrasov Cossacks or Ignat – Cossacks comes from the name of the Cossack’s greatest ataman, Ignat Necrasov/Nekrasov, the one who held the title of ataman for almost 30 years.

¹¹ The manuscript was showed to us by a retired Romanian language teacher from Sarichioi.

¹² For more details regarding the two confessional trends of the old rite religion, see *the religious dimension* pages 29-30.

III. I. II. The second version

According to this version, the historical dimension which interests us has its origins in the reform that took place in the Russian Orthodox Church during the middle of the XVIIth century (1654), enforced by the Patriarch Nikon.

The reform changes certain practices, but not the dogma, therefore constituting itself as ‘a formal reform’ that was actually started by the tsar, the political authority of that time, with the purpose of ‘aligning the Russian orthodox cult with the rest of orthodoxy’, but the result was ‘a scission within Russian society’. The post-1684 repressive measures enforced by the tsar and the patriarch against the schismatics determined waves of emigration in direct proportionality to the expansion of the Empire. In fact, the reason why the believers of the old rite emigrated was their desire to be ‘outside the reach of the authority of the Empire and the Church’. A part of these arrived in Dobruja. Therefore, *Lippovans would be Russians from an ethnic point of view, and in what regards their confession, they would be Starovers or Staroobredeți*, improperly named ‘old rite followers’¹³. It appears that the dobroujan Lippovans, even those from northern Moldavia, have, in their travels, stopped by the Nekrasovit Cossacks of the Kuban peninsula¹⁴ and have, in fact, reached the mouth of the Danube. The hypothesis is that they more accurately settled in northern Bessarabia, north of the Danube, along the river. Later, ‘a part, those from Bessarabia, the Lippovans, those who have constantly avoided living in the Tsarist Empire, have migrated towards Dobruja and Bukovina the moment the Tsarist Empire’s borders expanded towards the south’. The migration towards a Hapsburg-ruled Bukovina is attested in a 1784 document, when ‘the Lippovans from southern Bessarabia were invited to *colonize* Bukovina..., receiving various facilitations’.

III. I. III. The third version

In the third version regarding their ethnical and historical origins, it is stated that the name *Lippovan* is encountered only in Romania and that it, in fact, represents a nickname used by Romanians¹⁵ for the Starover Russians who are living in Danube Delta. The term *Lippovan*, from this point of view, has the role of establishing a distinction between the Russophones who arrived here *prior to 1860* (the true *Lippovans*) and the ones who arrived in Romania *after the Second World War* (who are *Russians*). According to this version, the arrival of the Lippovans in this space took place in two numerically different waves.

¹³ [It is] Improper in the sense that, actually, the Starovers are the ones who brought about innovations within the Russian orthodox cult, thus estranging it from the acknowledged ancient religious scriptures.

¹⁴ ‘They are not from the Don river, they are from the Kuban peninsula. But from a social point of view they have many similarities...they resembled those of the Don river area, in what regards their relation between serving in the Russian military and their social and economic freedom and it seems that this had perpetuated (collocutor from Jurilovca)’

¹⁵ This is contradicted by the bibliographical sources consulted (see Merchisedek, 1871) who states that the name Lippovans can be observed in other countries as well, such as Turkey, Poland (where they are also called *Philiphones*).

According to the intellectuals we interviewed, upon their arrival, during the first wave of migration, there were no other populations here, except those that had been completely engulfed by Turkic people, proof of this being the numerous mosques built in Dobruja and the names of the villages in the area (all of them possessing a Turkish root, with the exception of Jurilovca): Enisala, Sarichioi, Sarmangia, Caramanchioi (present day Sălcioara), Pașacâșla, Calamugeac, Hamangia, Razim Lake (from the Cossack Pan Razin), Golovița (in Russian, Golala – ‘head’), Sinoe (Sinea – ‘blue’), or words out of the Lippovan inhabitants of Jurilovca’s vocabulary: Zmeica (in Russian Zmea – ‘snake’), Recika (‘river’), Ozâr (‘lake’), sernik (in Turkish – ‘friction match’, used only in Jurilovca), chengera, serai (‘stable’) etc. The first Christian churches of Dobruja would have been the Lippovan ones, and Jurilovca would have been the center of the Lippovan community, and not Sarichioi.

This first wave had no connection to the religious repression which took place further along, somewhere around the end of the XVIIIth century (1780). According to this version, during the first wave a small number of *Cossacks* migrated, who were actually military reinforcements for the Turks in their struggle to defend the Dobrujan territories against the Slavic people who crossed the Prut and the Danube during the wars against the Ottoman Empire. Therefore, the first Cossacks of the Don Valley¹⁶ are presented as being different from those of the second wave who, in the mean time, came under Mongolian influence, settling in villages such as Sarichioi, Slava Rusă or Cercheză.

The settling of the Lippovans in Dobruja was encouraged by the Turkish state. In exchange for their economic and military support, the Turks offered them protection, including the monetary aid to build churches, fields for agriculture, the right to fish on the Razim Lake and in the Black Sea and the possibility of maintaining the Russian name for their village. In time, Jurilovca became an important fishing center, which developed even more after the military order of the Cossacks was disbanded, supplying the entire Romanian country with fish, after the reintegration of Dobruja in the Romanian state.

The second wave of the migration started in 1860 when, as a result of religious repressions in Russia, a great number of Starover Russians found refuge in Dobruja, Bukovina or Moldavia. This is the official theory of the arrival of the Lippovans in Dobruja according to the Russian-Lippovan Community in Romania.

On the other hand, Russian Lippovans have had two waves of emigration from Dobruja. The first, towards Russia, of smaller dimensions, took place in 1912, somewhat associated (in an unclear way) with the King Carol visit to Dobruja. The second wave was a more substantial one, in 1947, and it consisted of the departure of over 300 Lippovans. A part of these settled permanently in Czechia where they enjoyed better living conditions. The other part was swayed by Russian promises of ‘returning home after the war’, near the Azov Sea, on the Don. The unsuitable living conditions they encountered in Russia (they slept in trenches, they had nothing to eat etc.), along with the

¹⁶ Present in the collective memory through the saying ‘go to the river to wash [clothes] as the women’ – the only river they could have referred to, according to informers, was the Don.

fact that they were labeled as being *Romanians* determined a few of them to want to return to Dobruja. During the Stalinist period, though, abandoning your domicile would be punished severely, by being shot or deported to Siberia.

The **general characteristic** of the Lippovan communities is that they are a **relatively dynamic ethnic entity**, with a **dwindling demographic, caused by migration**, whose **economic infrastructure is centered outwards** (the resource derives from money earned working abroad or in other parts of Romania; where most of the property is owned by people who are *strangers to the place*; the community has lost control over the economic resource). **The internal coherence of the community is ensured primarily by their language**: the old Slavonic language *modernized on Dobrujan land* and permeated with many Romanian words, by some of the common holidays and events and less so by the Church. There is a certain separation between the role of the Church and that of faith. The Russian Lippovans are united by their *orthodox old rite*¹⁷ belief, but, without exception, manifest a visible distrust of the institutional capabilities of the Church, and especially of the priest body, to knit together and develop the community. Although some churches have so-called ‘convents’ around them – welfare houses for those in need, the clergy is not involved in these social projects, and their position is frowned upon by the political and intellectual leaders of the communities. For the local elites the old rite church, especially its clergy, is considered an archaic factor, even one of historical set-back. The problem seems to be that the local elites offer no other *symbolic projection* instead, the local communities thus being deprived of medium and long term guidance in what regards promoting their own identity. *The Russian Lippovan community does not yet possess a founding myth* albeit they are in search of one, based on the exceptional bravery and honor of the Cossacks from the Don. The elites dispute their *origins story* with sufficient briskness, a fact which may deprive the young generation of their *great guiding stories*, the coherency of the community being insured by language and customs, which are more or less ‘respected’. The fact is that Lippovans have no idea where their name comes from, and they do not know well who their founding fathers are. More so, the unity of local communities is affected almost to the brink of rupture by dissensions between the local elites and the degradation/outward centering of their economic support (through massive migration and the leasing – selling of the land to outside entities)

¹⁷ Time is measured through the Julian calendar, the masses are held in old Slavonic, the sign of the cross is done using two fingers – omitting the stance of the Holy Spirit, the cross has eight extremities and not six

IV. The Economy

IV. I. Professions and their social context

The dominant occupations in the studied area, according to the data collected from the town halls are, in this order, commercial fishing, agriculture, apiculture, constructions and silviculture. Still, if we establish the level of analysis to the local level (village), a series of economic particularities may be observed. Thus, because of its opening to Razim Lake, Jurilovca and Sarichioi have had, along the decades, fishing as their primary occupation. In present days, Jurilovca houses a fishing base and a fish canning factory which, up until not so long ago, managed to involve most of the working male population. In the case of Slava Cercheză, though, agriculture is the main domain which absorbs most of the working force, a great part of the fertile land being divided between four large agricultural co-operative societies.

Almost half of the inhabitants of the investigated area have agriculture as their main occupation, with constructions following it as the second main occupation (*the subjective feeling of the collocutors* was that the ‘villages have been vacated because the men have left to work in constructions’ – abroad and in the country, although, statistically, their presence in some places is estimated at around 20%).

The Lippovans are known as skilled craftsmen in the domains of utilities and constructions – during the communist era, they were called ‘bearded excavators’. For the villages that have openings to the Danube Delta or to significant water pools, the preeminent occupation has been, up until not long ago, *fishing*.

Agriculture, in the villages where the leasing system is predominant, is practiced individually only on *personal* levels (in the yard) or where the land has not been bought by a large owner.

Constructions are connected with the *general cycle of the working force migration*, more prominent in villages that have no other potential (such as those from Dobruja), having associated, especially lately, both a sub cycle of *returning*, in which a small part of the youth who have left the village return and invest in *personal assets*, and some open *businesses*. From a demographic viewpoint, external migration involves entire families (husband-wife, along with their children), so no problems arise from leaving children home alone in their village (with 2-3 exceptions in each of the investigated villages).

Likewise, especially in the localities situated within Dobruja, *apiculture* is also practiced, which brings acceptable revenues (Slava Cercheză and Slava Rusă from the villages investigated). All professions are dependent on the general social context, but fishing seems to be the most affected of them all. Sarichioi and Jurilovca are villages in which the social infrastructure of the community is seriously suffering from the collapse of this occupation, to less than a tenth than in the communist era (which, in turn, was more prolific than the one up to 1944, by organizing fishing on rational – industrial bases on Razim and Sinoe Lake). Fishing as a profession registered a spectacular resurgence –

according to locals – through the rebuilding of the fish industry in Jurilovca, in 2000, when they ‘gave way for concessions’ – entrepreneurs had all the interest to ‘populate the lake’ and invest in processing – Jurilovca owning one of the most modern factories in Eastern Europe. After 2004, when the concessions were canceled, no one invested in the lake anymore and from then on, the number of fishermen (authorized physical persons) has drastically reduced from nearly a thousand persons to 150-200, the quantity of fish decreasing considerably.

‘Deregulation as a result of overregulation and oversight’ – in the Danube there are approximately six control authorities, including police authorities which led, in the end, to an increase in poaching, asserted our collocutors with no exception. Through the drastic decrease of the main economic resource – fish, the social order is subject to visible tensions: the community of Jurilovca, for example, is divided in what regards the leadership of the organization, established upon ethnic criteria, and most of the persons we interviewed considered themselves abandoned in relation to the pressing matter of restoring the lakes’ biodiversity. Because of the destruction of the ecosystem fishing alone can no longer economically support the community. A large portion of the former fishermen emigrate abroad, and the **excessive consumption of alcohol affects up to 80%** of the population in these areas (according to the interviews with the doctors¹⁸).

On the other hand, fishing represents a special component in the area’s economy. Part of local traditions, becoming a defining element for the communities close to the Danube Delta, fishing has recently become part of the problem in the decline of the communities and not of their growth. For example, in Jurilovca, the main economic activity is on the brink of disappearing and with it goes the old social order. It is here that we register one of the most dramatic changes, both socially and economically, through the collapse of the fishing industries’ activity, a fact which could overthrow the premises of a social and cultural order that goes back for more than 150 years. Between the years 2001 and 2005 the commune has known its most prosper economical situation of the past 20 years through developing the fishing branch, as a result of taking the fishing base into grant (opening one of the most modern fish canning factory in Central and Eastern Europe, maintaining a fishery station according to international standards, establishing a tourist port). At that time, more than 60% of *the entire population* (not just the active one) was hired with an employment contract, having over 1000 registered fishermen, with incomes that surpassed the national salary’s medium value. In other words, Jurilovca was a fishing center which exhibited both economic stability and a good potential for development (if we refer only to the factory, it had delivery points in the entire country and was almost ready to breach the export market). Although Razim Lake is the only one in Europe where industrial fishing is possible in a *protected area* (it is part of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reservation), the national exploitation regime insured fish supplies for a large part of Romania and the prosperity of the local communities’ inhabitants. After

¹⁸ ‘If we were to abide by the definition of alcoholism issued by the WHO, that would mean that well over 99,9% of the population in Jurilovca is alcoholic.’ (Medic from Jurilovca)

losing the grant right, the great investors have drastically reduced their activities: the lake was no longer cleaned or repopulated with young fish, the reproductive canals of the lake have no longer been dredged, nor guarded. As a consequence, poaching has increased massively ('in direct proportion' to the number of local authorities, today surpassing six authorities), 80% of the fishermen have been fired, the fish catch is almost gone (roughly 30% of the amount caught before 2005). The Jurilovca commune, *from a model of development*, is about to become a *disadvantaged area*. In other words, when investments were being made in the fishing base, the fishing potential was harnessed in accordance with its ecological dimension and the community was thus enrolled within the lines of a good 'social health' (balanced demography, low to nil crime rate etc.).

At the time the study was made, the fishermen juxtaposed the worries of the future upon the occupational plan, through the concerns towards the gradual disappearance of fishing ('I don't know what tomorrow will bring. Nothing is certain these days'¹⁹). Fishing, which was once the predominant occupation in Jurilovca, is now looked upon only as a means for survival ('the fisherman does not live, he survives'²⁰). The phenomenon can be associated with the possible debut of a mental state along the lines of a 'culture of poverty', which associates to the lack of faith for the near future, to their personal strength of straightening things out, to the authorities' ability of taking action etc., fact which may bring about the 'internal weakening' of the community. The local elites are perceived as lacking a sense of communitarian 'direction', are devoid of any sort of vision, preoccupying themselves with petty squabbles and disputes which uselessly weather their energy. This blockage can be observed on the level of discussing the collective identity of the Lippovans, a subject on which the local elites have points of view which may come in contradiction with one another, giving off the impression of a weak historical grounding.

Returning to the fishing problem we noticed that it primarily consists of the diminishing of the fish catch as a result of not populating the lake and poaching. Firstly, 'the canals are not cleaned, so the fish cannot reproduce naturally'²¹, the incubation stations no longer fulfill their role of populating the lake and there is no institution ('commission') to verify their functionality. Moreover, there are six control authorities for 'discipline' and 'order' on the lake, in other words, six institutions²² 'to be sustained' by the fishermen. All that the institutions are doing is further complicating the

¹⁹ Fisherman in Jurilovca.

²⁰ Idem.

²¹ Idem.

²² Here we find all of the state's protection institutions, for poaching, laws, and so on. There's the police, right? There's the frontier police, the headquarters...of the rangers; Ecology, also here... the Biosphere Reservation's Ecological Police, and now there's a new police, the Danube Police. There are five of these institutions, which must mean they don't do their job, right? Well why don't they do their job? Well a month ago the Danube police appeared, aside from the police we had (...) The Rural Police, but we're not counting that one. Amassed in this village. Well you tell me, what nerve they have to poach when here...Ah, and not only that, but we have the NAPA here, which is the National Agency for Pisciculture and Aquaculture, and this one has its representative here who supervises the whole deal. So six state institutions. It's just impossible...so six institutions (collocutor Jurilovca).

bureaucratic apparatus, encouraging the phenomenon of corruption, speculation and poaching.

The decline of an important economic branch such as that of fishing has determined contradictory effects in the three villages. In Sarichioi, a commune with a population of 7684, 7 new construction firms have emerged within 8 years. These firms represented the decisive factor in halting the emigration phenomena (they offered an alternative for the massive emigration towards better jobs abroad). On the other hand, Jurilovca couldn't manage to redirect its economic climate to new domains of development, even though it has a lot of potential²³. This is most likely the reason for which the highest percent of the work force's emigration has been registered in Jurilovca (roughly 25% of it, from the data offered by the town hall). From a touristic point of view there is only one board and lodging in the locality, the roads to the main tourist attraction points are almost impracticable, and the professional reorientation courses offered by the town hall are inefficient.

IV. II. Infrastructure

We may enounce here a *paradox of the irrigation systems*: the commune *specialized* in agriculture, we are talking here about Slava Cercheză, *does not possess* an irrigation system, while Jurilovca, a locality historically associated with the pisciculture branch, has an almost intact irrigation system, built in the communist era (and harnessed only at around 40% of its capabilities because of the high costs of maintaining it). However, it must be mentioned that, in Slava Cercheză, 'if Ceaușescu would have lived longer, the irrigation system would have started working, because he expanded it up to us', as one of our collocutors stated. A similar phenomenon can be observed in Sarichioi, where only roughly 15% of the entire fertile soil has a functional irrigation system.

Regarding the awful condition the roads are in and the reaction of local and county authorities which is considered inadequate by the villagers, it is worth mentioning that the villagers took matters into their own hands: the road to Sarichioi and Jurilovca, which has not been repaired for over 20 years, has been doubled by a parallel road that passes through the wheat lanes.

The infrastructure is an actual discouragement to the business plans of investors 'and so he came to invest here. And he bumped into the horrible infrastructure', tells one of our collocutors. On the other hand, in Jurilovca for example, there are two projects that aim to modernize the roads by accessing European funds, with one of these projects already underway. Thus, the road that leads to the Greek-Roman fortress Orgame/Argamum is being asphalted through a European project. It is worth mentioning that while Jurilovca does not possess the necessary infrastructure, it is none the less viewed by some of our collocutors as a tourist resort. Also in Jurilovca, at the time the

²³ Even though Jurilovca commune has an irrigation system it is not harnessed as it is financially inaccessible not only to the villagers, but to the commune's administration as well.

study was taking place, the water network's pipelines were being changed, from the old asbestos ones to PVC pipes. For close to 10 years, accessing water was only possible during certain hours – for example two hours Monday morning, two hours Tuesday evening, none at all on Wednesday, and the cycle would just repeat itself from Thursday on. In fact, the actual mayor, the leader of the commune during two legislatures, has been berated for the fact that the only notable thing he did during his 10 year rule is ‘the two hour schedule for drinking water’. The situation of drinking water along with the condition of the roads is among the most serious shortcomings of the Jurilovca commune.

In Slava Cercheză (2006) and Slava Rusă(2007) two projects have been drawn for the extension and modernization of the local water system and both received approval and have since been finalized, while in Sarichioi three out of four villages are connected to the local water system. Apart from these, the wastewater system is considered the next top priority for the authorities of Slava Cercheză, who already have a project in order to achieve the expansion of the system. In Sarichioi the wastewater system is in expansion, and in Jurilovca it spans well over half of the 27 km of the local water system.

Therefore, in what regards the infrastructure, local wastewater and water systems exist or are in the process of being built, while the road infrastructure is still in a critical state. Among lack of funding, both inhabitants and authorities invoke the political disagreements between them and the county officials as being the main cause of the inefficient management of the road network.

Most of the Lippovan households (75%) have access to electricity, cable TV or telephone lines. In what regards this last aspect, the telephone lines (signal coverage of ‘over 80 %’) represent an alternative to mobile communication, because of the lack of signal for mobile companies and their curious unwillingness to extend their infrastructure into this area. Access to the internet is almost inexistent or insignificant (in Sarichioi 5% of the households have an internet connection, in Slava Cercheză none, while Jurilovca has acces to the internet through its Tourist Information Center). Also, although the gas pipe between Isaccea and Bulgaria passes nearby, there is no local natural gas network, the villagers obtaining the necessary natural gas through centers for refilling gas cylinders, which exist in each of the communes investigated.

IV. III. The property regime

The property regime is an essential point when we refer to the rural area. The rural law no. 18/1991 is the one that unleashed both economic chaos (the destruction of the great co-operative ownerships, together with the technical structures: irrigations, systems for supplying electricity, built spaces) as well as social chaos through pushing peasants into the practice of an agriculture of subsistence. Currently, though, *with the arrival of foreign investors* who bought large areas of land, the property regime was *rationalized*. The land became economically efficient through the unification of the properties and their incorporation within the new capital's sphere of interest. This is the

reason for which we can assert that, in the investigated localities, property per se *does not have a scattered characteristic*. From a social standpoint, though, the land has become *exterior* to the village, through the *outward centering* of the property regime, being taken out of the local peasantry's hands. Thus, there is the problem of *its social efficiency*, of the effects this has on the local community. The investments the large owners or leaseholders have brought in the area have managed to *rationaly organize* the agricultural space, in order to attain a better output per hectare, but the *new economic rationality* is exterior to the village, being engaged in economic and financial circuits foreign to the village. The large property presently occupies over 90% of the total fertile soil divided into 4 large associations in Slava Cercheză (and which comprises 40% of the total economic activity), approximately 70% in Jurilovca's case and over 95% in Sarichioi.

From the statistical data attained²⁴, property, in its majority, is owned by agricultural associations (Slava Cercheză) or the large ownership (Jurilovca), alongside the peasant's collective properties (Sarichioi). Individual properties *represent only 4%* (Sarichioi), *10%* (Slava Cercheză) and *14%* (Jurilovca) of the fertile soil. Thus, the first impression would be that the property regime is well organized, in dimensions that harness the soil's resources to the maximum. But, from the output per hectare we get a better understanding that the property is, in two of the three communes²⁵, not organized in order to attain a higher productivity. Both in Jurilovca, and in Slava Cercheză, the output per hectare sometimes represents only a third of the average productivity for that respective culture, reported nationally, as is the case of the potato or vegetable cultures. At the same time, though, Sarichioi has an output per hectare which surpasses the national average, even though, for example, the surface cultivated with potatoes does not exceed 100 hectares. Thusly, in Sarichioi the total production of potatoes in 2003 can be estimated at 1500 tones (so an output of 15 000 kg/ha). This output can be correlated with the means of production²⁶ - in Sarichioi for one potato planting equipment there are, on average, 25 hectares allotted for work. Also in Sarichioi the level of vegetable production for 2003 reached an output of 16 000 kg/ha and, despite this, the total area cultivated with vegetables does not exceed 405 hectares, approximately 4% of the total fertile land. As can be seen in the following graphic, the other communes also have a better output for potatoes and vegetables than for corn or sunflower²⁷, but well below the national average for 2003, of 14 000 kg/ha for potatoes and vegetables.

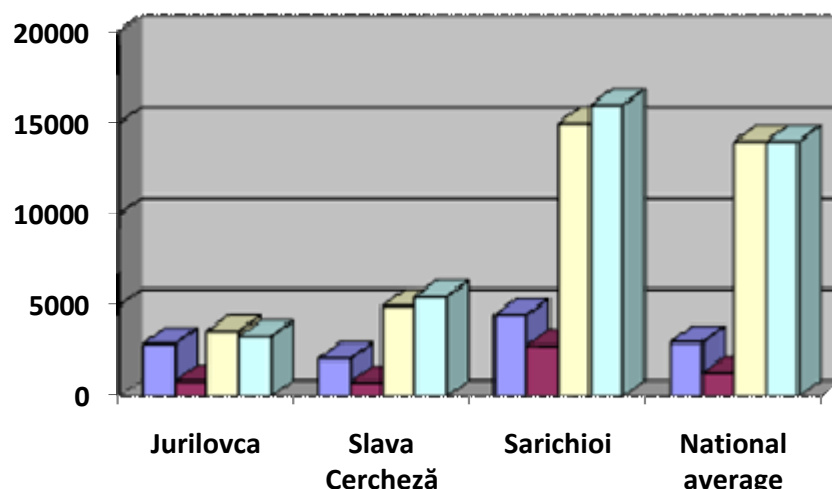
²⁴ Both from the National Institute of Statistics in Tulcea as well as from the Communes' town halls.

²⁵ In Slava Cercheză and Jurilovca the output per hectare is well under the national average.

²⁶ Although the national average for potato production (approximately 14 000 kg/ha) is close to the one registered in Sarichioi, the levels registered in the other two communes (Jurilovca and Slava Cercheză) are below one third of the output per ha of potatoes attained in Sarichioi.

²⁷ **Jurilovca**, output per ha (2003): 2900 kg corn, 3600 kg potatoes (30 ha), 850 kg sunflower, 3300 kg of vegetables (65 ha); **Slava Cercheză**, output per ha (2003): 2100 kg corn, 5000 kg potatoes (90 ha), 800 kg sunflower, 5500 kg vegetables (50 ha).

Graphic 1 – Hectare Production



The average for 2006²⁸ indicates a level of pay of only 6,3% of the total working force engaged in agriculture (along with hunting and silviculture), while 42% is represented by unpaid family workers²⁹, and the largest percent, of 51,4% is represented by freelance workers³⁰. It seems that a significant part of the population in the rural area makes a living of unpaid family work. Thus, the local economy is not engaged in the national economic circuit – by lack of pay we understand, primarily, the peasant’s lack of implication on the level of merchandise circulation³¹ and, therefore, an underdevelopment of the rural market.

The same thing occurs in the three investigated communes where the majority of the working force in the agricultural domain is unpaid. In other words, the employer-employee relationship is not also directed *towards* organizing the work force, *towards* raising the number of paid work. But performance in agriculture cannot be realized without technology and organizational force.

Thus, even though the land is rationalized in what regards its organization (the ownership is not scattered), it does not generate rural development, but is *externalized* through the fact that the production does not lead to the consolidation of the social space. We, therefore, at the level of the three communes we investigated, cannot speak of a *positive property regime* – with the exception of the rationally organized large properties, the work is not organized on capitalist bases, and even where it is, the property is not

²⁸ According to the Romanian National Institute of Statistics, Annual Statistic 2007, chapter 3, <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/pdf/ro/cap3.pdf>

²⁹ An *unpaid family worker* is the person who exerts his activity in a family economic unit lead by a family member or a relative, for which he does not receive pay in the form of a salary or payment in nature. The peasant household (agricultural) is considered such a unit.

³⁰ If more members of a household work in their own agricultural household, one of these – usually the head of the house – is considered a *freelance worker*, and the others, *unpaid family workers*.

³¹ The peasant is only a worker, not a buyer; therefore he does not have access to the results of his work.

organized from a capitalist point of view as it does not produce benefits for the local community seeing as the property is engaged in circuits exterior to the community. The accumulation of capital and ownership of land and production means does not lead to the development of a local market and therefore does not encourage social growth [material, demographical³²], a fact which contributes to the exodus of the local workforce³³. More so, in the three communes, efficiency in the agricultural domain is directly influenced by the insufficient means of production³⁴ and by the poor condition these are in. For the national average of 2006, each tractor would have to work 54 hectares³⁵. For the three communes investigated, the smallest number of hectares to be worked by a tractor was registered in Slava Cercheză – 166 ha, while in Jurilovca there is a tractor for every 212 ha, and in Sarichioi for every 396 ha.

We therefore reckon, taking into account the national average, that the rationalization of the capital is insufficient. The high-performing equipments of the large owners who have amassed terrains are probably registered in other localities, but the fact is that the motorization of local agriculture is not under the local community's control. Until now we have not noticed *the appearance of new occupations and activities-industries* associated with the presence of high-performing agricultural equipments. Most of the income still comes from those who work abroad, the pensions of those who were once wage earners within the communist industrial environment and salaries (for clerks and other public sector employees of the village or of the neighboring cities).

Therefore, in the investigated communities, agricultural property is for the most part *rationaly harnessed* on agro-industrial grounds, by *owners from outside the community* who purchased it (with few exceptions, these persons can be entrepreneurs who have settled in the village). From this point of view, the private sector has rationalized the property by its own initiative, amassing it, thus allowing for larger industrial exploitation of the lands. The problem is that the land, as a main possession of the local communities, has been *outwardly centered*, being almost excluded from the needs of the locals, producing for a market which is external to the village, strictly linked with the owner's personal interests.

IV. IV. Animals

The Lippovan communities possess only a limited number of sheep and goats, as well as donkeys. In the past few years, 'the pig from the yard has become more expensive than the meat you buy from grocery stores', so in the investigated communities, *large*

³² The population is in gradual decline during the interval of 2003 – 2008. The birthrate is, in some cases, 6 times smaller than the mortality (Slava Cercheză, 2008 – birthrate 9, mortality 60).

³³ Workforce migration: Sarichioi 4% of the total population, Jurilovca 25% and Slava Cercheză 23%.

³⁴ The hectare average to be worked by a tractor, in the three communes, is of one tractor per every 258 hectares.

³⁵ According to the Romanian National Institute of Statistics, Annual Statistic 2007, chapter 14, <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/pdf/ro/cap14.pdf>

animals which provide meat and milk can no longer be found within the households, except on occasions. The village has fully integrated itself in the meat and milk trade, oftentimes imported.

One of the main problems indicated by local authorities is the drastic reduction of the number of bovines and caprines in the last 7 years³⁶. The reduction of the zootechnical sector is associated with the decline in the households' ability to self-sustain, through an *agriculture of subsistence* and, at the same time, *with the stagnation of the industrial development of this sector in the rural area*: at least in the investigated area, even raising large animals 'in your own front yard' is not profitable anymore, and we did not record the appearance of capital associated with centers for producing and processing the meat. As we have observed during the field research, peasants give away their *income* (obtained from leasing–selling the land to the large developers–owners) *on agricultural products from outside sources*, usually by imports (taking into account the fact that, on a national scale, the meat contents of salamis and sausages are largely from imports, even if they are produced in Romania).

IV. V. The local potential for development

Regarding agriculture, the cultivating of plants is already included in a program for the rationalization of production, through land merging by large owners. The mention we make is that the agricultural terrain is directly connected to the international economy (maybe national, too) instead of the village's economy, because of the property regime and because of the lack of local industrialization – processing of production.

Fishing, as we have already mentioned earlier, is on the brink of disappearing as a large scale activity. However, through the return of investors in the fishing domain, it would be possible to revitalize the local economy ('in 3 or 4 years there will be so much fish, they won't know what to do with it'³⁷).

The integration of Dobruja, of the Babadag passage (where most of the villages with Lippovan population are situated) in the area of interest for *Aeolian energy* (in which the Czech from CEZ are investing approximately 1.1 billion dollars³⁸) can change, on a medium and long term basis, the economical and social, maybe even the cultural configuration of the area, through attracting specialists in order to maintain the 'energetic farms' in Dobruja and other areas of Romania.

³⁶ This phenomenon when correlated with the image of peasants standing in line in front of an ambulatory butchery at a Sunday fair can cause confusion to the researcher regarding the new statute of the peasants.

³⁷ Fisherman, Jurilovca.

³⁸ According to Mediafax, 27th August 2008, 'CEZ will develop two Aeolian energy products in Dobruja'.

V. Health

Health is one of the most important dimensions of the local potential for development a community possesses. Together with the economic and cultural dimensions, health has a crucial value for the understanding of how communities evolve. The state of ‘being healthy’ can be a good indicator of the ‘success of a community’, the conclusive expression of the quality of social life. In other words, health is relevant both to the individual and to the community in its entirety. Thus the dimension of health embodies the chances of a subsequent evolution in terms of bio-psychological validity of the human factor in a social context.

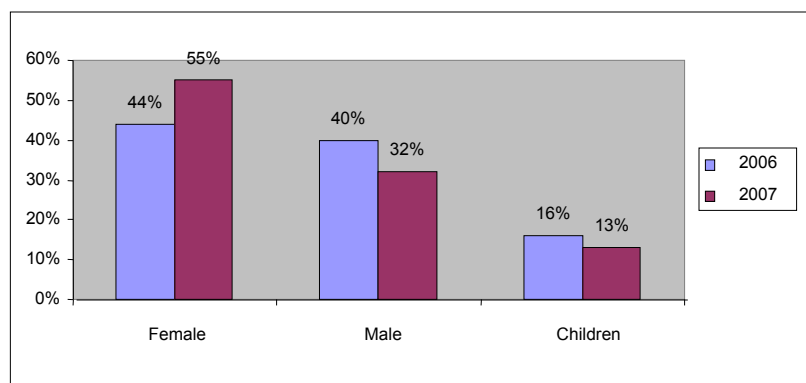
There are two relevant aspects we will take into account in this case: the general health condition of the population and the access to medical services.

The first relevant aspect we will discuss is **the Lippovans’ general health condition**. This analysis is based on: medical records regarding chronic patients registered during the last trimester of the years 2007 and 2008, the number of consultations and treatments for 2006 and 2007, discussions had with nurses, community assistants and family doctors. In order to establish the Lippovans’ general health condition we took into account a number of indicators: the addressability, the incidence of diseases and their determinant factors, the level of personal hygiene, etc.

Addressability is a prime indicator of concern for personal health. Through it we understand the frequency with which the patients visit the doctor. It reflects the number of consults offered and the number of treatments prescribed by the family doctor who activates within the investigated communities.

In the case of Slava Cercheza³⁹, in the year 2007, compared to the year 2006, a rise in women’s attendance for consults can be observed, from 44% to 55%, concomitantly with a decrease in male attendance, from 40% to 32% (see *Evolution of medical consults* graphic). We can therefore observe that women are more concerned with their personal health, turning to the doctor far more often than men do.

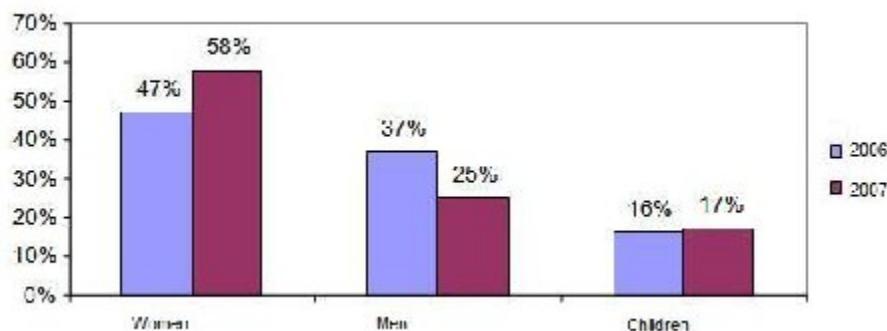
Graphic 2 - Evolution of medical consults



³⁹ In what regards the other villages we could not obtain data or information which could allow us to formulate observations regarding the local people’s degree of addressability.

Regarding the number of treatments prescribed, there is an important increase, of approximately 300 treatments in 2007, as opposed to 2006. Distributed by sex, the increase in treatments prescribed to women seems to be greater (from 47% to 58%) while treatments prescribed to men have decreased from 37% to 25% (see *Evolution of treatment prescription* graphic).

Graphic 3 – Evolution of treatment prescription

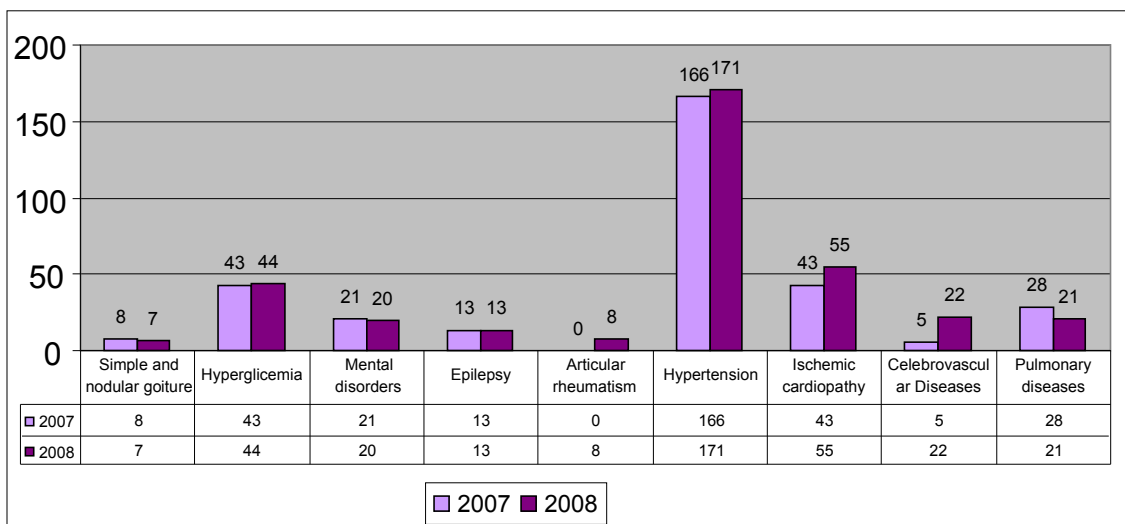


Despite the high degree of addressability, doctors are concerned over the fact that patients show up for consults when their disease is in its final stages, ignoring the symptoms in the early stages. A significant percent of the total patients ignore the incipient symptoms of diseases, believing them to be only the effect of aging or day to day problems.

In regards to the disease incidence, from the data we obtained in Slava Cercheză and from the discussion we had with the medical staff of the other two villages, we observed that, out of all chronic illnesses, the highest incidence of illnesses represent cardio-vascular diseases, followed by nutrition diseases – sugar diabetes, lung diseases, ulcer related diseases, cirrhosis and other chronic hepatitides: ‘the main chronic diseases people suffer from are cardiac diseases: hypertension, ischemic cardiomyopathy ... many have begun to show signs of diabetes, because they are not eating right’. Cancer incidence is very low (below 1%). Compared to the year 2008 there are no significant increases in the number of diseases which affect the Lippovans (see *Evolution of chronic diseases* graphic⁴⁰).

⁴⁰ The chart reproduces the number of chronic diseases for the years 2007 and 2008. Diseases which only had one or two cases of incidence were excluded.

Graphic 4 – Evolution of Chronic diseases



Cardiovascular diseases, along with the aging process, are some of the most important causes of morbidity amongst Lippovans. Life expectancy is around 80 to 90 years, women having a greater life expectancy compared to men (approximately 10 years longer).

The high incidence of cardiovascular and nutritional diseases reveals the fact that a series of transformations have taken place in the social nature of diseases. The gradual *adoption of nutritional behaviors once specifically tied to the urban area* has generated a mutation in what regards the illnesses the people suffer from. The approaching of the village to the city has been achieved through the general deliverances from the city towards the village. If until not long ago the main food resource was fish, nowadays people eat pork meat and other foods rich in fat. *‘Today not everyone can afford to eat fish, because it’s expensive’* told us one of our collocutors.

Concern for personal health is reflected on the level of personal hygiene. On a declarative level, the Lippovans appear to be quite concerned with their own personal hygiene. *‘There is no household without a Lippovan bathroom (sauna)’* – our interlocutors repeatedly declared. As the community assistant from Slava Cercheză told us, wealthy people *have renovated their houses, have modernized them, have built bathrooms within the house with sandstone and faience*, but have remained faithful to the Lippovan baths, which also have the function of *purifying one’s body*.

The problem of alcohol consumption represents a relatively difficult subject to approach because it is a delicate social problem, with profound implications on a community level. According to the persons interviewed, alcoholics are *the shame of the community*. From the discussions we’ve had we can conclude that the spread of alcoholism is determined by the socio-economic context. In what regards gender division,

there seems to be no significant difference between the proportion of women and men. Still, one of the variables that influence the amplitude of this phenomenon is *the season*. During winter, this phenomenon is amplified by the lack of paid activities. There are communities where, because of the unfavorable economic context, *a significant number* of persons irresponsibly consume alcohol any time of day ('over here, where we live, there are a lot of people who drink or are drunk all day long' – representative of the Jurilovcan authorities). This behavior was present even during the communist regime, even in the same proportions. Relating this with the birth, death and marital status registry it can be observed that most persons suffering from alcoholism are predominantly widowers, persons who have remained home alone after the departure of their children to work abroad and those who have no occupation.

Analyzing at *the access to medical services* we have noticed the presence of a medical center and a pharmacy in each commune, while in some localities we have found a dentist's office (Slava Cercheză) and an ambulance station (Jurilovca). But, on the level of technical facilities there are significant discrepancies between the three villages. In Jurilovca there is a medical centre equipped with cutting-edge technology, which offers the villagers a series of medical services comparable to ones received in private medical offices in Bucharest (ambulance station, an echogram machine) while in Slava Cercheză and Sarichioi barely the minimum facilities are supplied for the center to work with. From this point of view we take into note the disproportionate distribution of 'medical resources', to which we add the unequal access to health care services. More so, accessing hospital medical care is conditioned by the relatively big distance between the villages and the first hospital (depending on the locality, 10 to 40 km).

In light of the discussions we have had, the medical staff has shown dissatisfaction towards the lack of pragmatism of 'the people working in the Ministry' who organize the health care system in inefficient ways, ignoring the importance of preventive medicine, a practice which could maintain the society on a level of health far superior to the one in the present.

Not all investigated villages dispose of sufficient medical staff. For example, in Slava Cercheză, because of the migration of the work force, there is an acute lack of qualified medical personnel.

Generally speaking, the collocutors' perception is that 'the Lippovan village is dying' because of the massive immigration abroad, 'even though, recently, more young adults are returning to the village'. Mortality surpasses birth rate, although not necessarily because of medical reasons. It is simply because no more children are being born into the village. This year, in Slava Cercheză, for example, only one child was born, and only in Babadag village.

VI. The ecology of living

Lippovans present their village as being laid out in straight, perpendicular streets, with their houses ‘aligned streetwise, as opposed to everyone else’s’. Beyond this perception, the houses are well cared for, have clean yards and are relatively streetwise aligned. Almost all have a visible shade of blue, likewise to their churches, and all of them ‘should have a sauna’ – an element of comfort ‘which differentiates them from the others’. Most Lippovan villages are not engaged in any conflicts with nature, with the exception of the fishermen’s villages, which do not have fish anymore because of poaching, mishandling of their canals and not populating their pools of water with young fish for the past five years.

Concerning their *positioning within tradition and history* – Lippovan villages *are on the verge of giving up their ubiquitous blue coloring* – already there are houses, churches which are painted in different colors. About the meaning of this color our collocutors could not give us many details, but we surmise that it is part of a tradition which has been powerfully internalized on the level of the collective mentality, at least through its extension. The newer houses are most often built *outside of tradition*, in the sense that they ‘have PVC windows’ and colors which do not respect the Lippovan style anymore, especially in what regards the homes of the persons ‘who have worked abroad’.

VII. Crime rate

In the investigated communities, the most often occurring transgressions are usually related to poaching, robbery, juvenile delinquency. With the decline of the economic climate there has been an increase of infractions, a phenomenon directly linked to the lack of jobs, largely associated with alcohol consumption⁴¹. For example, in Jurilovca, the local police force has to deal with an estimated 300 or 400 cases of law infringement per year, out of which 150 can be considered serious offences.

Police agents consider cases of juvenile delinquency as a direct consequence of the workforce’s first wave of migration abroad. As a result of these cases, some disorganized families have surfaced.

One of the most important problems of the community is poaching. This fact is acknowledged both by fishermen, and by some local authorities. Even though presently there are quite a few criminal case files opened for poaching, justice is inefficiently applied and as a result, none of the cases have been punished according to the law. Moreover, the inefficiency of the justice system generates the weakening of authorities’ supervision on the matter, which further amplifies the proportions of the phenomenon in case.

Poaching affects the economic stability of the area, through the negative impact on the *community’s infrastructure*: social success is conditioned by economic activities situated on the edge of the law or outside of it, behaviors related to corrupting authorities

⁴¹ In Sarichioi alone there are 10 bars, rarely lacking clients (the phenomenon is greatly increased during the winter time).

gain more ground, and authorities, in turn, have the tendency to modify their attitude towards the inhabitants based on the latter's informal 'contributions'. Gradually, the social norm becomes deeply permeated with such 'parasite behaviors', a fact which could unbalance the delicate and undercurrent mechanisms of social unity. The community enters within the semi-darkness of the 'poverty culture': material misery associates with fatalism and lack of perspective for days to come, families lose their ability to organize themselves (they become disorganized), the decline of local authority further encourages the weakening of the community's formal cohesion (neglecting infrastructure, school, the environment's 'health' etc.).

VIII. School – education

School is an important agent of socialization for children within the community, as it is the institution which creates the connection between history, identity and the youth's consciousness.

Generally speaking, on the level of the schools in the three communes, the opinion of professors and principals is that their schools are sufficiently equipped, offering details such as the number of books in their libraries, the state of the informational system or their didactic material (for example, in Sarichioi alone the library owns over 11 000 books, computers which have internet access, video projectors and cable T.V., while in Jurilovca there are 4-5 school laboratories – a phonetics lab, an A.E.L.⁴², a maternal language laboratory, and laboratories for biology, physics and chemistry).

The school of Sarichioi managed to attract a lot of European funding and has even participated in regional projects and cultural exchange programs. The Informatics Center was realized through a CDI project (Center for Documentation and Information), in collaboration with the French embassy. As a result of attracting funds from the Rural School Program they have printed a magazine issued by the school members and coordinated by its principal. On top of that, the school has been running a step-by-step program for almost 10 years, and the phenomenon of dropping out of school is practically inexistent, with the few cases occurring because the children come from disorganized or poor families. In order to keep the commune's pupils within the community and maintain the local rate of schooling, the principal admits that the entire staff of teachers, entirely qualified⁴³, is forced to work with numerically larger classes than the law allows. A turning point came in the early 90's when a large number of professors left to work abroad. Regarding schooling, compared to past years, the drop in birth rate and the rise in

⁴² **Advanced eLearning**, a modern studying platform with which pupils may study for various subjects both at school and at home.

⁴³ The statements of one of the interviewed principals referred to the strict rules in what regards his teachers' level of professional training, the only (declared) exception being the French teacher, who is a stand-in ('The madam teaches in this school ever since the communist regime and has taken her teaching tenure exam once or twice... you must achieve a 7 minimum, she failed with 5 and a few points').

the population's natural movement have resulted in the decrease of the number of pupils in the investigated villages⁴⁴. Following this trend, the number of parallel classes has decreased, from four-five parallel classes to only one, which is working with more pupils than the pedagogic norms established by the Ministry of Education.

After a short period (1953 – 1957) which featured teaching in Russian alone, the Sarichioi school reverted, by request of the parents, to teaching primarily in Romanian. The parents' option persisted even after 1990, when the Russian Lippovans' community was granted by law the right to receive education in their maternal language. Although we speak about schools that teach in Romanian, the pupils have the possibility to opt for studying their maternal language and religion during optional classes (which are organized in collaboration with the local old rite church).

In regard to the Olympic students, there are signs of hope: cultural and sports performances are encouraged, and in the matter of the Russian language, there are two international Olympic pupils who have undergone their studies at the same school (Sarichioi).

IV. The level of local projections on the general (2)

Local projections on the general encompass the identity dimension. Its components are: language, traditions, 'povestariu' and religion.

IV. I. The language

Language is the main keeper of the most relevant meanings, symbols of identity and the particularities of a people. It represents one of the most important factors because of the fact that it directly influences both the collective behavioral pattern and the collective mental map.

The mother tongue spoken⁴⁵ by the Lippovans is an archaic version of the Russian language. This is considered by most of the community's intellectuals as the main component of the Lippovan identity. Despite this, as a result of our field research, we have observed a *weakening of the unity of language*. As a result of cutting off all connections to Russia and the hermetic essence of the community, the evolution of the Russian language spoken by the Lippovans has limited itself to borrowing words from the Romanian language and the Turkophone populations of the area. In other words, Lippovans have basically remained at a level of grammar, syntax or complexity of words similar to the one they have had since the XVIIIth century.

⁴⁴ The differences between the main localities and the rest of the components of the communes studied can be quite explanatory. For an example, in Vișina there are approximately 35 pupils registered for school, while in Jurilovca their number surpasses 200.

⁴⁵ 'But we have always spoken Russian, yes sir. It's ours for ages.' (the president of the Russian Lippovan community in Jurilovca)

Along with the community opening towards the Romanian society and the West, the language they traditionally spoke is being gradually replaced by the Romanian language. The positive attitude towards this *first spoken language* is built in time⁴⁶, and amongst the most significant factors lays Nicolae Ceaușescu's decision to grant Lippovan children the chance to undergo free schooling in the Romanian language. With time, however, Russian language became optional. Our field investigations have confirmed that Russian is studied in the majority of the schools as an optional subject from the second grade up, despite the fact that, after 1989, the Lippovan community has been granted the right to study in their maternal language. We therefore ascertain that there is a decreasing interest for studying the Russian language, which, on top of that, has become unattractive as an optional subject. We can observe the same type of attitude manifesting in the pupils' refusal to accept scholarships offered by the Russian state in order to study in their high schools or universities, because of the significant linguistic and cultural differences between the two cultures⁴⁷.

On sight we could identify a linguistic amalgam made up of three levels, each specific to a certain generation: *archaic Russian*, spoken especially by the village elders – the same elders who encourage the young to use the Romanian language, 'because it's best this way'⁴⁸, *Russmanian*⁴⁹ – the active population, while Romanian is spoken by the young generation (0-18). The process of weakening the language's unity is one that continues to unfold, and the 'rupture' has its origin somewhere between the second and the third generations alive.

Despite this, the power of the community seems to restore itself during encounters brought about by important moments in the life of the community (weddings, religious ceremonies, charity events etc.) People rejoice in meeting one another, even though communicating takes place through a linguistic amalgam, individuals are unsure about their own traditions⁵⁰, which thus lose elements with important significations.

IV. II. Traditions

Amongst the local elite, the idea that Lippovans are the true keepers of the Russian language and traditions is deeply rooted. Moreover, amongst some Lippovan intellectuals' speech there is the conviction that the Russian civilization can 'save itself' only by returning to the traditions stored *by* and *within* the Lippovan communities.

⁴⁶ 'We adapt very easy and have always got along with all peoples' (the president of the Russian Lippovan community in Jurilovca)

⁴⁷ Law, the administrative system, legislation etc. are just some of the domains where there are significant differences.

⁴⁸ One of the frequent moments when it was revealed how the locals relate to the adopted language was when a boy, possibly an elementary school pupil, was pretending to be an airplane and was running around reproducing the noises an airplane makes when dropping to the ground, all the while speaking to everyone around him in Romanian. His mother scolded him in *Russmanian* that he should behave and be quiet. As a reply to the mother's scold, an elder nearby stood out from the crowd by stating that 'you should let him speak Romanian, it's best for him that way'.

⁴⁹ A term we forwarded, an intelligible and functional combination between the Russian and Romanian languages.

⁵⁰ This leads to the irrecoverable loss of significant elements regarding their identity, their ethnic or religious dimension. This phenomenon has been identified either in the dominant modern architecture or in the lack of their folk costume, and in what regards their behavior during religious ceremonies or their linguistic amalgam.

Sadly, a great portion of the traditions have lost their meaning, a phenomenon which can be tied to the decrease in number of the people who know what these traditions actually mean. The vitality of their customs and traditions is at a critical point. We were able to notice, however, that a few customs are still preserved, such as those related to the fact that ‘it is not good for two brides to get married at the same time because it brings them bad luck, a custom which is no longer respected by the youth who return from abroad’⁵¹. Another custom of religious origin, for example, is the habit to cross one’s self before eating or drinking anything or the interdiction to eat before or during religious mass.

One of the constant points along the years in the Lippovan community has been *the Sunday fair*, nowadays reduced to a *simple economic activity*. The Sunday fair has confirmed that agriculture, in Sarichioi for example, has lost its traditional role: *peasants stand in an impressive line* in front of an ambulatory butchery, buying pork, chicken or veal meat⁵². But even the cereals and the vegetables (a part of them were brought in from other villages across the country), the cheese and eggs came ‘from the city’, not just the *processed* meat.

Up to this day Lippovans have kept a ritual relating to funerals: Lippovans bury their dead with their feet towards the cross⁵³. Thus, ‘when the moment to arise on Judgement day comes, the first things [the deceased] see is the cross bearing their name, to remind them of who they are and what their faith is’⁵⁴.

Their churches are generally lime washed blue (alternating darker shades with lighter ones), and their sacred images are painted in vivid colors, with many warm earthly hues. One of the most surprising exceptions, that has not sparked any collective unrest yet, is the church in Jurilovca, which, for the first time since it was founded (in the XIXth century) has undergone a chromatic change, replacing the traditional blue with shades of brown and beige.

The traditional Lippovan costume has become a *rare sight*. It has turned into a *costume to be worn only during feasts* – ‘The costume, it actually pertains to the religious life, and the folk costume, as much of it as it has survived, can be seen during the holidays, worn by people who go to church. They wear it. Actually, it’s not necessarily a costume... there are some certain confessional rules how you dress to church’⁵⁵. Furthermore, from the reactions of the elders who have talked to us, we were able to find out that ‘women no longer have pride in wearing the folk costume... it’s as if they’re ashamed to wear the clothes of our forefathers’⁵⁶. Therefore, we presumed that even the

⁵¹ Informer from Slava Cercheză.

⁵² The data obtained from the mayoralty has also confirmed that, in the past few years, there has been a drastic decrease – close to dramatic – of the number of animals present in a household per one thousand inhabitants.

⁵³ One of the differences in traditions between the new rite and the old rite orthodox believers is that the latter’s cross has six ends instead of four.

⁵⁴ Informer from Sarichioi

⁵⁵ History teacher speaking about the folk costume in Jurilovca

⁵⁶ Elder Lippovan, participant to the religious mass held at Uspenia Monastery, on a holiday (The Dormition of the Theotokos, 29th August 2009)

way they relate to their own traditions has been significantly altered along the generations, from taking pride in their Cossack origins to being ashamed of them. Summarizing the evolution of the Lippovan folk costume, we can state that it has gone from being worn on a day-to-day basis ever since the times of ‘the forefathers’ to being worn only during the holidays and furthermore, close to present days, being worn as a *vestimentary compromise*.

IV. III. ‘Povestariu’

As a result of the discussions we’ve had with the members of the Lippovan communities (regardless of their material or social condition) we have been told that there is a *lack of a local ‘povestariu’*⁵⁷. Seemingly people do not know the legends, stories, fairytales, teachings etc. usually passed on from generation to generation within a traditional community. In other words, *there are no more symbolic keepers of the place, and people do not miss the lack of the ‘povestariu’*. In this way, the link between the new members of the community (the children) and the social structure as a whole is insufficiently coagulated.

Despite the fact that the matrix of local social solidarity is affected, the way they relate to the world remains somewhat unchanged. It is because there are far too few frame-elements of identity conscience remaining, that during fieldwork it became easy to observe how the *superiority complex* worked when addressing the way they relate to the *Other/Foreigner*.

The intermixing of memory levels results in the birth of an *identity confusion on the level of the collective mental* – for example the lady who would ‘give her life during times of war’ for Romania, but who is of a Russian nationality; the representatives of the local administration who take pride in the EU flag, but at the same time claim their Russian origins; they apply for European funds as well as for Russian support; the architectural style profoundly modified; the *Russmanian* language; the lack of use of a local folklore; children who no longer have Russian names, but Romanian, Spanish or Italian ones etc.; the problematic of the weakening church authority.

IV. IV. Religion

Religion is an important part of the identity dimension. Lippovans are orthodox Christians who consider themselves part of ‘the old rite’, also being known as *Starovers*. The old rite is different from the established orthodoxy firstly through the yet unclear role the priest fulfills within the community. For some Lippovans, the priest is something quite new, because up until recent times a part of the churches functioned ‘priestless’. Regardless of this aspect, the priest is a person whose theological education suffers

⁵⁷ As it was aforementioned, the word ‘povestariu’ refers to the shared common law of the local order, with symbolic power, which especially refers to the founding myths of the community.

because of the *principled* lack of the theological college/seminary. On the other hand, there are some differences regarding the religious practice: the sign of the cross is done using two fingers (the index and the middle finger), the cross has eight extremities, the name of the Lord is written with only one ‘i’ – Isus (Jesus), during the processions encircling the church is done from right to left or ‘according to the sun’s movement’, the liturgy is officiated with seven communion breads, the Gregorian calendar was replaced with the Julian calendar, and so on.

According to the information posted on the Ministry of Culture and Cults⁵⁸, the ‘Old Rite Christian Cult of Romania is organized in a metropolitan church in Brăila led by a metropolitan and three vicar bishops.’ In Romania there are almost 38 000 registered Starover believers who are organized in 37 parishes and 57 churches. The old rite church has no formal theological schooling system, the process of priest selection being carried out using simple criteria: knowledge of Slavonic is required, ability to officiate religious services and so on.

Within the old rite religion there are two confessional trends: with priest (Popovți) and without priest (Beglopopovți⁵⁹). The appearance of this disjunction is due to the ‘problem regarding the validity of being ordained in the official Church’ (Varona, 2002, 153). The Popovți are those Starovers which have accepted priests who had left the traditional Orthodox Church, while the Bezpopovți are those who ‘considered that the sacraments done in these Churches are not valid and that their priests are not true priests of Christ, and for this reason they cannot be received in the Starover church’ (ibidem). The Popovți have founded their first religious centre at Irghiz, with permission from Tsarina Ekaterina the IInd. On the 6th of September 1844, the Austrian emperor Ferdinand gave his permission to found the metropolitan church of Fântâna Albă (Northern Bukovine) headed by the Bosnian metropolitan of Sarajevo, Ambrosias (Ipatiov, 2001). In 1940, the religious centre was moved to Brăila because of Romania’s territorial losses, and its official recognition came in 1946.

We present below a few of the elements of the cult, that are still followed today, through excerpts from the ‘observation sheet regarding the holiday of the Saint Mary’s Dormition (28th August) at Uspenia Monastery’ – the only Lippovan Monastery in the world.

The church is perceived by most of our interlocutors in an *ideal* way a frame for communitarian coherence, but the same people consider that it is *an archaic institution* which is *of little use to the community*. The important holidays represent a perfect opportunity and also the proper moment for the restoration of the communitarian link

⁵⁸ <http://www.culte.ro/DocumenteHtml.aspx?id=1737>

⁵⁹ Yes, we don’t have a priest [...] We Bezpopovți! We have church, we go there and we pray alone to God. (And Chiprian amply crossed himself, from the tip of his head down and then lifted his watery eyes to the sacred images) We do not need a priest!’ ... ‘We have the old law. Our liturgy, as it was once officiated, in the old monasteries. Ours – like the old, true Christians. Our law, taken after the books written at the dawn of time!’ ... ‘Then, when he extended his hand to drink his wine, he paused, and with deep piety, rose to his feet and crossed himself, bending from the waist down and dropping one hand to touch the ground, before the sacred images’ (Sadoveanu, 1914, 31-38).

between ordinary people. Barely entering within *the monastery's grounds* we could notice a great number of people, dressed completely or partially (only wearing the 'pois'⁶⁰ around their waist) in folk costume. The church, at least during the holiday, is *the spiritual center of the community*. It acts in the same time as a *playground* for children, a *ground for (re)encountering* for youths or as a *matchmaking territory* for girls and boys, a *place of prayer*, of *socialization and reintegration* of the 'prodigal sons' within the community, or a space to *recollect one's self*, as well as one of *indignation*⁶¹ and *expostulation*⁶² on the part of the few elders who were present, or for *receiving food* for the needy (although it was known that the religious service would end in a repast where holy food was served, our observers have remarked the *absence of beggars*). One of the first things we observed since our arrival was *the state of tranquility* that seemed to reign around the church. The persons present were very serene, calm, polite, and careful to one another, suffused with the importance of the moment. *Although there was no great physical distance (space) between the people, they appeared to not feel invaded by the overlapping of their 'personal space' with another's, behaving as if each of them was part of a whole – 'I am here because everything that relates to my identity can find common ground with any other person, who is standing next to me'*. Even after hours of standing, the atmosphere seemed unaltered, and the people, just as patient as before, awaited the end of service, crossing themselves in unison. The same serenity seemed to be a part of their children, as well. The older children looked after the younger ones, and they would hold them in their arms or hold their hands, straighten out their wrinkled costumes; the children played 'nice' with one another, were obedient to their parents and rarely made their presence felt by crying or screaming.

The presence of families with children of all ages and the constant migration of the youth from their established place towards where the elders of the village were, who told stories of times past, seem to be indicators that would contradict the so-called myth of the 'generation gap', at least at first sight. Still, the constant frustration and reprimand coming from the elders, the clear behavioral differences between the young ones and the adults or between the people of the land and those who had emigrated suggest that there are more complex relationships between different generations in the Lippovan community.

The large number of participants to the service held at the monastery may constitute itself as an *indicator for the high level of religiosity* in the case of the Lippovan community. Still, the community's considerably *low church attendance* during the rest of

⁶⁰ The pois is a knitted or sown at a weaving loom, vividly colored or monochrome, presenting on each of its ends terminations in the form of rich knots, which is tied to the waist and is left to hang, worn by both men and women, as well as children of all ages; the equivalent of girdles. Alongside this they also carry a *lestivca*, an accessory which symbolizes public recognition of past sins, but also serving the penitence by atonement.

⁶¹ Elders present at liturgy: 'the youth no longer see the right tradition of their forefathers' and do not internalize it accordingly, 'women no longer take pride in wearing their folk costume', 'people no longer know how to dress', 'these youths are not at all how we once were, not anymore' etc.

⁶² Lines: 'tie your girdle, you're not in the wilderness here!', 'sit still, don't embarrass us', 'how could you enter inside the Church looking like that?!', 'Get! and lift that table, might wash a few of your sins' etc.

the year, along with the tendency to reject priestly authority - an attitude which was recorded as such during our study⁶³ - indicates a *paradox*. The incomprehensibility of the Slavonic language and the lack of the ending sermon are some of the main causes of the *rupture* between the religious information and the actual influence it has on the day to day life of parishioners. The link between language –identity – religion: one of the causes, at least one of the apparent ones, of the parishioners' estrangement from the church can be found in the hundred years old decision to preach the liturgy in old Slavonic, a language which fewer persons understand nowadays, and most likely, fewer priests still understand – seeing as they *don't have theological studies*.

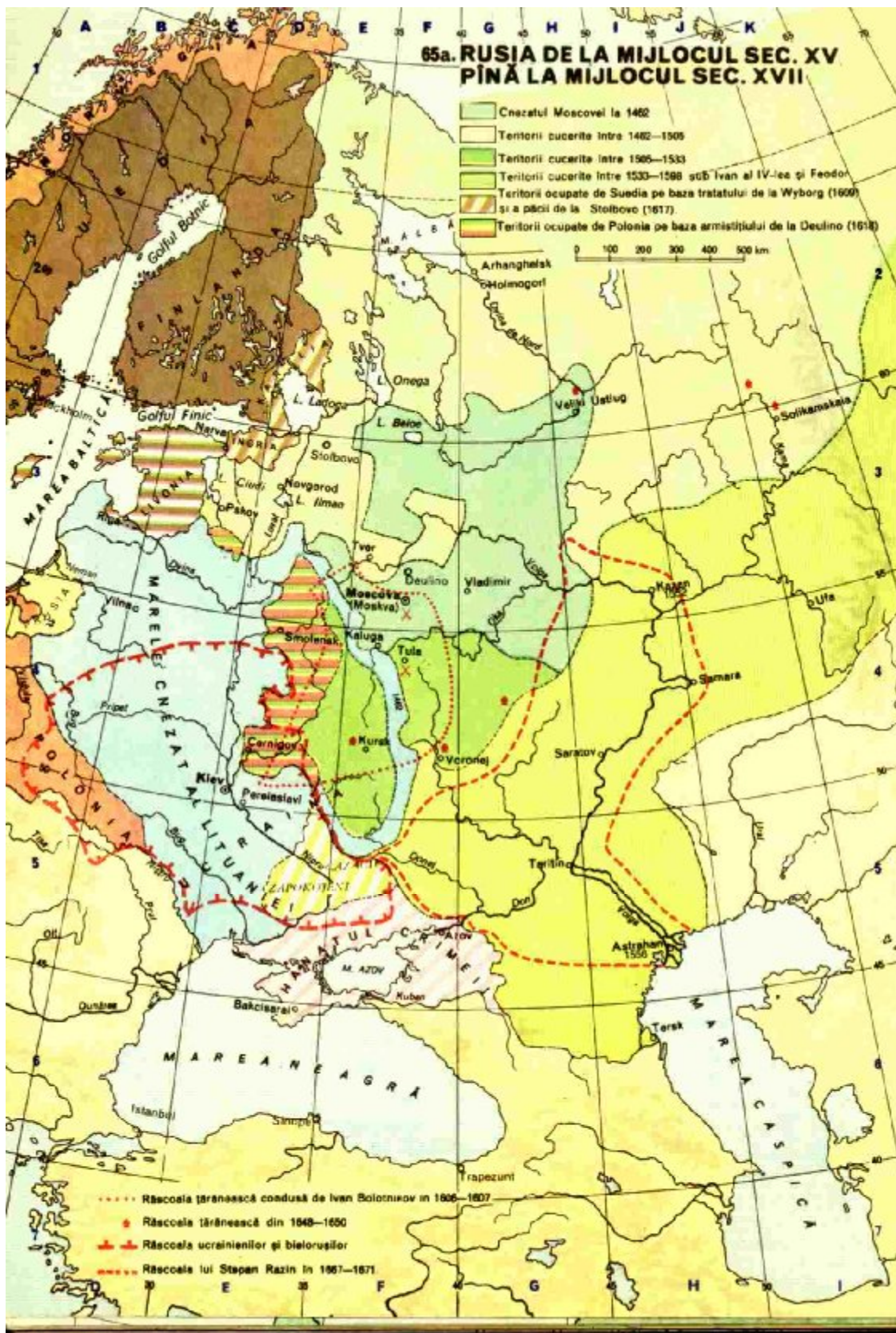
The process of selecting priests encourages promoting deacons who have a low schooling level: they select children who come from poor families, who usually do not attend school (priests usually have undergone no more than 7 years of formal education); acquiring religious knowledge and practice is usually done through *participant observation* and their gradual inclusion within the Church's structures. The absence of religious studies⁶⁴ could compromise their chances to become a long term part of the community (through useful answers to social problems).

The Old Rite Orthodox Church is involved in social assistance activities. For example, in the courtyards of the churches in Jurilovca and Slava Cercheză there are shelter homes. In Jurilovca the shelter is for elderly ladies (also named 'The covenant' by the locals), which does not, however, possess qualified personnel to assist them; the old ladies live and manage by themselves, the Church only granting them accommodation. It would appear that in Lippovan communities the 'village council of elders' has an important role in administering the community. The council is in connection with the priests and acts as the only bond between the community and the religious institution. They make joint decisions regarding the community and the church's problems with the priests.

⁶³ 'Our priests? They're bigots. They haven't evolved at all, it's like they live in the past, not here and now, with the rest of us' - local of Jurilovca

⁶⁴ There are no specialized institutions, as theological seminars, to educate future priests.

ANNEX 1



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