

STUDII DE ATELIER. CERCETAREA MINORITĂȚILOR NAȚIONALE DIN ROMÂNIA
WORKING PAPERS IN ROMANIAN MINORITY STUDIES
MŰHELYTANULMÁNYOK A ROMÁNIAI KISEBBSÉGEKRŐL

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Sorin Gog

**CEMETERIES AND DYING
IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS
AND MULTI-ETHNIC VILLAGE
OF THE DANUBE DELTA**



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Abstract

■ This paper focuses on the way the new post-socialist cosmology is restructuring religion, shaping the religious mentalities of contemporary Romania. I am trying to investigate this by analyzing the ways the different local politics of ethnic and cultural identities remodel the perspectives on after-life and burial practices. My research aims at analyzing the symbolic architecture of the discourse that surrounds and penetrates the dead body. It focuses also on the way the cemetery is transformed into a micro-world that reflects the religious, ethnic and cultural struggles of the new post-socialist world.

Along this line of reasoning I chose for research the multi-ethnic and multi-religious village of *Sch.*, situated in the south-eastern part of Romania. Old-Orthodox Lipovenians (divided into two antagonistic religious communities, *popovtsi* and *bezopopovtsi*) and their eternal rivals, Orthodox Romanians, have to co-habit the village and share the local resources with the newly emerged community of Lipovenian-Romanian Adventists. What seems even harder to do is to share the after-life and cemetery space, where the borderlines between these four communities become even stronger. The instrumentalization of the symbolic architecture of after-life that penetrates the dead body and the fragmentation of the cemetery space that accompanied this process mirror the important transformations of the Romanian social system and the struggle to enact the different post-socialist politics of ethnic and cultural identities.

■ Această lucrare analizează modalitatea în care noile cosmologii postsocialiste restructurează religia și modelează mentalitățile religioase în România contemporană. Lucrarea investighează aceste lucruri analizând modurile în care diversele politici locale de identități culturale și etnice remodelează perspectivele asupra vieții-de-apoi și practicile funerare. Cercetarea mea vizează analizarea arhitecturii simbolice a discursului privind trupurile moarte. De asemenea analizează modul în care cimitirele sunt transformate în micro-lumi ce reflectă tensiunile religioase, etnice și culturale ale noii lumi postsocialiste.

În vederea analizării acestor lucruri cercetarea se desfășoară în *Sch.*, un sat multiethnic și multireligios, situat în sud-estul României. Ortodocșii de rit vechi lipoveni (divizați în două comunități religioase antagonice: *popovtsi* și *bezopopovtsi*) și rivalii lor eterni, ortodocșii români, trebuie locuiască în același sat, și drept urmare să împartă resursele locale cu recent apăruta comunitate de adventiști lipoveni. Ce este și mai greu de realizat este împărțirea cimitirului și a vieții de apoi, unde granițele dintre aceste comunități devin mai puternice. Instrumentalizarea arhitecturii simbolice a vieții de apoi ce configurează trupurile moarte și fragmentarea spațiului cimitirului ce însoțește acest proces, oglindește transformările sociale importante ale sistemului social din România precum și tensiunile produse de implementarea diferitelor politici postsocialiste de identități etnice și culturale.



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CEMETERIES AND DYING IN A MULTI-RELIGIOUS AND MULTI-ETHNIC VILLAGE OF THE DANUBE DELTA

Introduction

■ The many new religious movements that appeared in Romania after the fall of communism were the manifestation of a distinct form of social pluralism that in some segments of the society unleashed great tensions. I am trying to analyze the way these tensions have been reflected within the cemeteries and the distinct meanings of dying that have been set in motion by them. By organizing these meanings of death and politics of after-life cemeteries become micro-worlds that reflect the religious, ethnic and cultural struggles of the new post-socialist world.

By “politics of after-life” I understand those strategies employed by the traditional religious powers that manage to integrate the dead body, the intimate community of the deceased person and the death-related practices into a meaningful complex entity. The politics of afterlife materializes itself in the re-organization of cemeteries through the way they are adjusted to the existing social changes (Hallam–Hockey 2001; Field et alii 1997). The cemeteries are far from being quiet places of eternal rest, they are theatres of what happens in their worldly afterlife. Along this train of thought I try to conceptualize the way the category of the impure dead body is being constructed in a local community, and draw attention to the alternative cosmologies of afterlife that post-socialist religious movements articulate as a response to the traditional religious powers.

My research focuses upon the town of *Sch.* situated in the south-eastern part of Romania, within the Danube Delta. Here the Old Orthodox Lipovenians (divided into two antagonistic religious communities, *Popovtsi* and *Bezopovvtsi*) and their eternal rivals, the Orthodox Romanians, have to co-habit the village with the newly emerged community of Lipovenian-Romanian Adventists. What seems even harder to do is to share the afterlife and cemetery space where the borderlines between these four communities become even stronger. The town of *Sch.* is far from being a typical Romanian town, but its multi-ethnic and multi-religious community allows for the construction of an ideal type of dealing with death and cemeteries (that is being reproduced at various degrees in other parts of rural Romania).

Let me subscribe to Verdery’s program of studying post-socialism not as an economical-political transformation but as a dramatic change of the meaningful life-world (Verdery 2006). In *The political life of death bodies* she is following this program but from the perspective of how the macro-political discourses are structured by the post-socialist changes. In this sense Verdery’s dead bodies are only illustrative accessories of these political discourses. She is interested in how these dead bodies are able to lend themselves to a great spectrum of post-socialist political projects, thus becoming political instruments in the reconstruction of the social world. In doing this she has to select a specific type of dead body: someone who during his/her lifetime achieved a great historical and cultural status. Therefore these are not ordinary dead bodies, but extraordinary ones. They are able to symbolically crystallize



widespread political meanings that are able to mobilize masses. Verdery's dead bodies are stripped off their particular death and of the intimate community that experienced this death. Due to this aspect the dead bodies are further emptied of a concrete cosmos into which the intimate community is projecting a strategy to deal with death and dying. According to my mind the cemetery is the embodiment of all these strategies. The dead bodies I am concerned with are ordinary bodies, and the concrete strategies of dealing with the death of those close to the deceased are important insofar they can throw a light on how the post-socialist life-world is changing. The cemetery is the social projection (Francis et alii 2005: 7) of all the discourses that surround these "ordinary" dead bodies. Therefore it can be read as a "mirror" of the transformations taking place in the post-socialist world.

The historical background of the Old-Believers in the village of *Sch*.

■ The Lipovenians arrived in *Sch*.¹ several centuries ago as a result of the religious persecution to which they had been subjected by the political and religious leaders from Russia. Along the centuries they managed to maintain a strong ethnic identity that was backed up by their distinctive religious belonging and developed a closed community that was hard to assimilate by the surrounding ethnic majorities (these majorities changed over time with the change of political and military supremacy over Dobrogea²). Religion played a special role in the formation of their ethnic and social identity; it was a persecution of their faith that forced them to migrate and search for a safe-haven where they could preserve their specific religious practice. Their short settlements (always on the run from the Russian State that aimed at completely annihilating this religious movement) gave them the necessary respite to organize their entire community life around religious beliefs.

The historical details of their arrival in *Sch*. and the nature of the religious persecution are very important for the contextualization of the issue at stake because the villagers constantly retell this story and employ this narrative as a legitimation of their life-style and of the particular conflicts that emerged within the community. Of course, the narration of this foundational narrative fulfills different functions and it has a heterogeneous meaning structure for the different local groups and agendas (the local Lipovenian intelligentsia and the defense of their ethnic distinctiveness in relation with the Romanians, the believers and the communist atheists that want to eradicate their alleged fundamentalism, the religious leaders and their struggles with the post-socialist heretics, etc.). Nevertheless this also appears constantly on the surface: all of them - be old or young, educated or uneducated, religious or non-religious - employ it in different forms.

During my fieldwork I encountered excerpts of this narrative deployed many times in different contexts, and embedded into different types of arguments. But this was especially eye-catching since this was the narrative along which they contextualized the importance of dying in the religion into which they had been born, and the religion that had been handed down to them by their ancestors. According to these narratives their forefathers gave up their life to protect the "pure faith" and the "true religion" from its "diabolic enemies"; a religion that still impregnates the fabrics of their daily living strongly. The cemetery is the sacred space of these heroic ancestors and it bridges the living community not only with its historical past and kinship ties but with the after-life and the eschatological fulfillment of their religiosity as well.

The Old Believers (Raskol, Staroveri) appeared as the result of a great schism in the Russian Orthodox Church in the 17th century, caused by their refusal to accept the reforms introduced by Patriarch Nikon. The Moscow Patriarch Nikon embodied the dream of Tsar Alexis of transforming Moscow into the third

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- 1 *Sch*. is a town situated in south-eastern part of Romania, close to the Danube Delta. It has approximately 4000 inhabitants, almost 90% of them being Lipovenians and 10% Romanians. Since the interviews often reveal very sensitive issues, neither the name of the village nor the name of the people I interviewed will be disclosed in this paper.
 - 2 Dobrogea is an historical region of Romania situated between the lower Danube River and the Black Sea, and is divided into two counties: Constanta and Tulcea. Over the time the region was alternatively under the rule of Bulgaria, Russia, Turkey and Romania.

Rome in which the Russian Church would play the most important role. The fall of Constantinople led to a growing popular belief that this was the result of God's Judgment on the Greek-Orthodox Church for trying to reunite Eastern and Western Christianity and bring under one Church the Orthodox and the Catholic "heretics" (Hastings 2003: 324).

The emergent power of the state led to the rise of ethno-nationalistic feeling and therefore to a growing dissent towards the Greeks (Hastings 2003: 333). The "apostasy" of the Greeks who tried to reconcile the Eastern Church with the "heathen" Catholics, and the subsequent fall of Constantinople strengthened the popular inner view that the Russian Orthodoxy was the genuine Christian Religion and the Moscow Patriarch the right full heir of Christ and the leader of the entire Christian Church.

An important obstacle in spreading this view was the cultic dissimilarities found across Russia that never went through a dogmatical and liturgical reformation in the sense of a canonical uniformization of faith. Moreover all these variations were also dissonant with the aspirations of the neighboring Orthodox Churches, and especially with the Greek Orthodox Church that spiritually gave birth to the Ukrainian and Russian Church. The ecclesiastical apparatus of Nikon managed to gather vast information on liturgical practice from across the Orthodox cultural area and proceeded to the reformation of liturgy in order to adjust it to the prevailing Orthodox practice. The "Third Rome" could not have a different religious practice from the provinces it would lead.

This reformation might appear minor to a modern reader, but within a ritualistic religion that lacks the ethical rationalization through which Western religiosity underwent these changes were considered of great importance. Basically the liturgical reforms consisted of: a. the purification of the creeds of all non-orthodox forms (i.e. all the elements which did not correspond to the "original" religious practice of all Greek Orthodox Churches); b. the replacements of the cross sign done with two fingers (symbolizing the two equal natures of Christ: human and divine) with the one done with three fingers (symbolizing the Trinity); c. the abolition of the rule of re-baptizing through full immersion of those who had been baptized only by sprinkling (Hastings 2003: 336).

Although these reforms were supported by the state and generalized by the high clerics, some could not accept it; to many of the lower-level clerics (led by a handful of bishops) and regular believers these changes seemed to affect the core of their ritualistic religious rituals. All previous attempts to operate such reforms had been declared by legal synods as heresies, and the heretics were sentenced to death (Hastings 2003: 336). The reforms introduced by Patriarch Nikon stood at odds with the entire Russian tradition and with all previous professions of faith. This is why popular piety regarded Nikon as a heretic that was running the Church. Later these circumstances triggered a whole range of Antichrist symbolism and the apocalyptic belief that the end of the world was near.

Patriarch Nikon quickly eliminated all opposition (by means of imprisonment, deportation, public execution) and pronounced an anathema on all those who would not accept the reforms. The cruelty of his reform attempts, backed by the persecution of the state, created a strong popular resistance and an even stronger will to keep the old faith unchanged. Keeping "true" Orthodoxy alive was considered the duty of a good Christian³ and - in times of apocalyptic apostasy - giving up one's life as a martyr was thought to be a sign of deep faith (Hastings 2003: 336).

This led to an open struggle between the State Church and all the believers who would not give up their faith, starting a long-lasting cruel persecution of all Old-Believers. The harassment of these religious communities was also due to the expanding state power that needed a single unifying religious ideology. This persecution and vexation continued in one form or another up till the end of the 19th century. It is in this context that the great migration of Old Believers started and reached historical Sweden, Australia, United States, Alaska, Romania, Poland, Bulgaria, Austria, Turkey, etc.

The State Church eradicated especially the bishops and priests of the Old Believers so that the continuity of these communities would be ceased and the religious movement would confront itself with a serious absence of clergy. The disappearance of all episcopates led to vital questions of community formation: how could the Old Believers constitute a Church and who had the right to ordain ministers and priests in the local congregations? This absence of priests led to different schisms within this religious movement and the absence of a clerical hierarchy allowed for the institutionalization of self-made

3 "It is the duty of all of us, as Orthodox Christians to die for a single A (in the liturgical texts)" Deacon Feodor, leader of the Raskol movement, quoted in Hastings 2003: 335.



popular rules of faith. The many denominations that arose out of this popular piety (the common root of which is the allegiance to the Old Rituals) can be subsumed into two main branches: *bezopovtsti* (without priests) and *popovtsti* (with priests).

The *Bezopovtsti* was the most radical group of Old Believers and solved the issue of priesthood by allowing regular members to perform themselves the sacraments, making the clerical hierarchy unnecessary. This was legitimized by the general conviction that the time of Antichrist had come and he corrupted the official State Church and the clerical hierarch. (This rhetoric bears a resemblance with Luther's admonishment of Papacy and the millenarist view of post-Lutheran religious movements that the Antichrist was running the official Church, but we cannot establish any internal connection between these religious ideas: no ethical rationalization and no religious disenchantment followed from the *Bezopovtsti* abolition of ecclesial hierarchy).

The numerous *Bezopovtsti* groups (*the Pomortsi, the Feodossejevtsi, the Philipovtsti, the Sirdnniski, the Netovtsti, etc.*) had different perspectives on the issue of celibacy, the necessity of re-baptizing of those abandoning the official Church and on the state-imposed obligation to pray for the tsar. Many of these religious groups gradually ceased to exist, others merged with the more popular groups. Today the *Bezopovtsti* are scattered over the globe and their communities are on the verge of disappearance.

The *Popovtsti* on the other hand acknowledged the necessity of a clerical hierarchy and when the number of their priests decreased, they accepted the runaway Nikonian clerics (these priests were leaving the official Church not always for religious reasons) that would return to the Old Rituals and deny the apostasies of Nikon. For this reason the *Popovtsti* were termed also *Beglopopovtsti* (i.e. the ones that accept fugitive priests). Since the good priests were a scarce resource, the religious community continued to exercise an important control over church matters. In the absence of the priests, members could assume the performance of the sacraments, this being validated by a cleric later.

They were following more lenient rules regarding the necessity of re-baptism, the possible role of the State, the status of the official church, and marriage. This group managed to organize itself and establish several episcopates. Not all of them recognized the different episcopates and this led to a new sequence of religious differentiation among them, and therefore to the emergence of different *Popovtsti* denomination. We can classify them in regards to the hierarchy they belong: the Belokrinitskaya hierarchy and the Novozybkovskaya hierarchy being the two dominant ones, all the others gradually having disappeared. The struggles in matters of ecclesial hierarchy within the Old Believers community needs to be understood as a most serious concern on behalf of the faithful with the issue of apostolic lineage and the transmission of grace through the priests ordained by the primary Church fathers. The *Popovtsti* continued to struggle with this issue everywhere they have settled.

Old and New Cemeteries in the village of Sch.

■ In *Sch.* the first community of Old Believers was recorded around 1740 (Fenoghen 1998: 120). They shared the space with neighbouring Tatars in a time when Dobrogea, controlled by the Ottoman Empire, acted as a buffer zone between the Turks and the Russians. Here they received the right to organize themselves and keep their religion in exchange for participation alongside the Turks in military campaigns (this solution being a current practice in the Ottoman Empire).

The branch of Old Believers that settled in Dobrogea was the *Beglopopovtsti* (the one that accepted the fugitive priests). They managed to establish an important religious center here. With its opening to the Black Sea, *Sch.* became soon an operative base of the Old Believers and from here they migrated further to Bucovina (then belonging to the Austrian Empire), Bulgaria, Turkey, etc. Not far from here, at Slava Rusa they founded later an important Old Rite monastery.

Since Dobrogea was a buffer zone between the Ottoman Empire and Russia the Old-Believers were easily exposed to the Russian military force that often aimed at exterminating the Old Believers dwelling these realms (Fenoghen 1998: 133). During the Crimean war (1853-1856) the Russian Army imprisoned most of the Old-Orthodox hierarchs from Dobrogea and never released them (as they did with all other prisoners, once the war was over) (Fenoghen 1998:141). In spite of this vexation the religious

communities managed to survive, and the different documents record the existence of one wooden church in *Sch*. (This burned down in 1862.) The people I interviewed talked about the cemetery situated in the eastern part of the village as being the *first Old Believers cemetery*.

Nowadays the cemetery looks as a forsaken garden, only the recent graves have a cross sign. The modesty and humbleness of the community is expressed in the way they organize the mortuary space. An old priest from *Sch*. mentions that their tradition is “not to have an outstanding burial place” and that “luxury is not allowed” because “we do not need a grave, what we need is a liturgical soul (suflet de slujbă)”. This cemetery contrasts with the usual Orthodox cemetery space and the modern ones where each grave is clearly delimited from others and where the burial grounds are strongly individualized.

It would be wrong to see this as a mass grave and even more wrong to think of this space as a homogenous piece of land that has no demarcations. As we will see, what seems a barren land is in fact overlapped and crossed by many important borders: several intricate conceptual schemes are projected over the space that resembles a wasteland. In the cemetery sometimes the coffins are placed on top of each other (they are accidentally discovered when the graves are dug). This seems to bother no one since the entire space is conceptualized as “the home” of their ancestors. When a precious icon becomes out of use, it gets buried here as well; the icon is not only a distinctive sacred symbol of faith but also the expression of a kinship tie. Taken as the home of ancestors and icons the cemetery is thought to express the humbleness of the living and their pure spirituality.

An important historical figure that is constantly brought up in our discussions and interviews is Ambrosie. He is always characterized in a vivid and colourful manner by my informants; this almost gives the impression that they are talking about someone they knew well. Ambrosie is the reason of a deep schism within the community of *Sch*. and he is at the origins of the emergence of *the second cemetery* located at the western end of the village. This schism dates more than 150 years back but for my informants construct is a present-day, living and palpable reality.

The different attempts of *Popovtsi* to establish a hierarchy of their own and to find bishops that were part of the apostolic line of succession (and willing to embrace their cause and faith) led them to a Bosnian metropolitan from Sarajevo, named Ambrosie. He was secretly brought to Dobrogea and according to local traditions he visited *Sch*. as well. Some disliked him because of his Greek origin and for not speaking any Russian (Fenoghen 1998: 144). The new eparchy was established at the Balta Alba monastery in Bucovina under the jurisdiction of the Austrian Empire (who gave the Old Believers the right to freely follow their faith and establish a religious order). Today it is part of Ukraine and close to the Romanian border.

In 1846 the Old Believers from Dobrogea met not very far from *Sch*. at the Slava Rusa monastery to decide whether or not they will accept the newly established hierarchy at Balta Alba (Belokrinskaya hierarchy). The villagers from *Sch*. have a whole range of anecdotes regarding this meeting and how some got drunk on the way, and never made it to the local synod. Upset by this they would refuse to accept Ambrosie as their bishop. People from the other, struggling and contesting part of the community refer to Ambrosie as being a fugitive priest with a dubious past that made their forefathers decide against him. This would lead to a great and painful schism in *Sch*. and later to the emergence of two different churches.

The Belokrinskaya hierarchy founded in 1846 would later become the largest *Popovtsi* group with its headquarter in Balta Alba (Ukraine) and incorporates now the Old Ritualist Orthodox of Romania who are led by a metropolitan from Brăila (Romania) (Melton 2002: 965)⁴. The second largest hierarchy, the one from Novozybkovskaya, would be established more than a century later in 1963. The communist period made almost impossible their affiliation to a Russian hierarchy so the other people from *Sch*. that did not follow Ambrosie would wait until the post-socialist period to be integrated into an ecclesiastical hierarchy⁵. Until then they continued to accept fugitive priests from Russia, while the other part of the village had a steady priest ordained by the newly established hierarchy.

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- 4 This means that presently those that embrace this hierarchy in *Sch*. have their religion recognized by the state as a cult and that the local church receives financial assistance from the Romanian state. This relationship with the state is perceived by the other side as a sign of loss of faith.
- 5 They are recognized by the state as a religious association and not as a cult so they do not receive any financial aid and their clergy depends solely on the contribution of their members.



Within the village the groups would refer to each other as *Popovtsi* (those that accepted the Belokrinitskaya hierarchy) and the *Bezopovovtsi* (those that refused it)⁶ and for more than fifteen years they would alternatively share a single wooden church. This did not go without any troubles: in 1857 a judge from Silistra (in present-day Bulgaria) ruled that the two religious communities in *Sch.* should not exert any pressure on the believers. The latter were to decide freely to which of the two religions they wish to belong (Fenoghen 1998: 145).

It is superfluous to mention that there are no liturgical or dogmatical differences between these two Old Believers communities. They are perpetuating the same tradition, have the same history, speak the same language, and they are related to each other even through blood ties. But the acceptance of a particular hierarchy was considered a departure from the faith of their ancestors and this meant an unacceptable difference. Soon they became two hostile communities that mock and openly despise each other even today. It is of particular significance that this internal schism eventually would lead in 1862 to the appearance of two different church buildings (the two churches that still exist today) and two separate religious communities. Around this time we have to date the appearance of the second cemetery at the other (the Western) end of the village.

There are specific rules stating that no marriage is possible among the members of the two religious communities. If such a marriage occurs, a re-consecration of the bride or groom must follow it. Inter-religious marriage is not rare since there is a strong internal prohibition not to marry people belonging up to the fourth generation of relatives. After the baptism of the children the god-fathers become blood-kin to which the fourth generation rule applies as well. Of course, this drastically limits the marriage options.

The separation of the living had to be followed by the separation of the dead people. The communities had to make sure that their dead would be buried only next to people of the same faith. The cemetery in *Sch.* not only sustains the social memory of the community (Kellehear 2007: 215), functioning as emotional valve to receive closure in the grief for the departed, but actively organizes the afterlife of the deceased in the sense that the priests and the family recurrently come to the grave to spiritually sustain and pray for the departed soul.

Due to these "afterlife strategies" embodied into the cemetery two different spaces emerged that allowed an autonomous control over the dead people (and more important, over those to die). The cemeteries contributed to the objectivation of religious differentiations by allowing them to reverberate into eternity (an eternity which was projected here on earth, the cemetery being transformed into an open map of what was going on in the afterlife).

Twenty years later when Dobrogea became part of the Romanian Old Kingdom the migration of Turks, Mongols and Tatars followed. Soon the region became the object of a Romanian colonization process organized by the state. The lands in Dobrogea were given to Romanian veterans of war. Part of the land from *Sch.* was given to 76 families recruited from all over Romania (Fenoghen 1998). Only 16 families decided to accept the offer and it took twenty more years (1905) until a small Romanian community was established here (Fenoghen 1998: 159). The Romanians that I interviewed still remember the stories told by their forefathers about their arrival. They have settled in the Western part of the village where they built the third church of the village: a Romanian Orthodox one. Because they regarded the *Bezopovovtsi* (without priests) as more friendly and spiritual than the *Popovtsi* (with priests), according to my informants they decided to have their cemetery next to the one of this religious community, in the other side of the village.

This symbolized a closer relationship between the two ethno-religious communities (confirmed by the *Bezopovovtsi* as well), but the two cemeteries (Romanian Orthodox and Russian *Bezopovovtsi*) were still separated by a fence and were functioning as two entirely separate spaces with their own rules and practices. The religious demarcation of cemeteries still prevailed, this being not complicated by the eth-

6 There is a strong shift of meaning in this terminology that occurred in *Sch.* *Popovtsi* (with priests) refers now **not** to those accepting fugitive priest, **but** to those that belonged to an Old Believers ecclesiastical hierarchy. At the time being *Bezopovovtsi* (without Priests) refers **not** to the people refusing any kind of clergy and the performance of the sacraments solely by the believers, **but** to those that could not accept the Belokrinitskaya hierarchy and accepted only Russian fugitive priests instead. Although inaccurate, this terminology is so strongly impregnated into the local usage that even today the *Bezopovovtsi* (who affiliated themselves to the Novozybkovskaya hierarchy and became "with priests") are still referred to and refer to themselves as "without Priests" *Bezopovovtsi*. Due to this I will restrict the semantic usage of these two words to the one used by the villagers themselves.

nic factor and by inter-ethnic marriage: under the rule one-family-one-religion-in-each-household, the three Churches could easily divide the flock and manage the death and living.

This religious effervescence was abruptly put to an end in the early 50's with the instauration of the communist regime. The forced collectivization and the novel conception of the labour force were accompanied by the new atheistic ideology. Some priests from *Sch.* were imprisoned and the religious life was strongly regulated. During the communist regime the religious life of the village was disturbed, the churches were shut down for a while. The communities could not sound the church bells and were allowed to celebrate only a specific number of religious holidays. Specific religious practices around which the social life of the Old Believers gravitated were forbidden. The communists wanted to modernize the social structure of the people from *Sch.* and disenchant the overall religious-magical orientation toward life. The school played an important role and people I have interviewed recall how teachers offered them chocolate during feast time so that they would sin. They were taught by them "that not God is the one giving us rain".

Communist atheism managed to impose secularism as a political medium so that it was able to transcend the different practices of the self that were articulated through religion, but this secularism operated only through the bureaucratic networks and acted as an official ideology. It tried to constitute a humanistic discourse that regarded the religious practice of the Old-Believers as fundamentalist and obscure. This minor discourse can still be heard today within the community. The *Bezopovovtsi* could not receive Russian fugitive priests anymore and this brought several decades without priests. This religious community gradually decreased, a lot of the believers were attracted by the other *Popovovtsi* church that had a hierarchy and could function within the restriction imposed by the local authorities.

The post-socialist period brought important changes within the community, especially in matters of organization of the Lipovenians as an ethnic minority, the political conquering of the local institutions and the revitalization of religious life. This period marks the establishment of two further cemeteries in the village of *Sch.* The early 90's brought a novel and shocking problem for Old Believers: the forsaking of the ancestors' religion and the conversion to Neo-Protestant religious movements. The religious pluralism to which they were exposed until then, and which was still very hard to handle, was all a variation of a basic ritualistic religiosity. This was perceivable through the dominant inter-religious correspondents (religious practice, icons, calendar, saints, liturgy, dogma, rituals, etc). Adventism, Baptism and Pentecostalism were "alien" new religions for them. When they claimed the loyalty of their own relatives this unleashed great troubles. The new religious converts were expelled in the *fourth cemetery* of the village, specially set up for them. It had its own rules of functioning and was materializing a distinct social meaning. This space was thought to be the palpable sign of the advent of the "dark side" of social pluralism and a new unimaginable "corruption of the faith" that exceeded that "danger" of the vanished atheism.

The *fifth cemetery* of the village was created with great bureaucratic struggles by the decreasing Romanian community that was gradually losing the control of the public space and of the local institutions. The Romanian Orthodox priest, serving here every other two week, recalls that this was a strong wish of the Romanians. They wanted to have their cemetery much closer to them. The Romanians explained to me that it was important for them that the cemetery was within reach for them, therefore the cemetery was established in the church-yard. This was unusual because the Romanian Orthodox Church is located in the centre of the town (initially, at the beginning of the 19th century, it was at the Western end, but the village expanded). That is why some of the villagers did not agree with having a cemetery so close to the economical and administrative centre of the town district.

The creation of this cemetery in downtown of *Sch.* in spite of the many bureaucratic paperwork and approvals, sanitary dangers and liturgical difficulties⁷ underlies the post-socialist trend of re-affirming the community through specific inclusion and exclusion rules (Verdery 2006: 171) and the re-ordering of worlds. The cemetery reflects these arrangements and - especially for ethnic minorities in Romania whose cultural and social identity was strongly re-structured in the early 90's - it acts as an important tool to reshape the past and the social memory. The ethnic post-socialist struggles in Romania involved the cemeteries as well. This reveals that the death ancestors are closer to us than we think, and their eternal peace is often troubled by their offspring's earthly struggles. The cemetery, like all the other

7 The Romanian Orthodox priest that does not live here and pastors other churches from the neighbouring villages of *Sch.* informed me that this is not very convenient for him either because the funeral rituals (that have to be canonically performed) take a while. The road from the church to the cemetery gave him the proper time span to perform them, but now he has to shorten the ceremony and speed up the ritual performance.



spaces, is part of the new emerging epistemic scheme that institutes new rules for the social production of space: this can be easily seen in some parts of Transylvania where the Hungarians are the ethnic minority, here in *Sch.* this is the role played by the Romanians.

Usually this process does not lead to a relocation of the cemetery or to the creation of new ones. The new ethnic politics of meanings have existing cemeteries as their target. These old spaces undergo a process of social consecration and are crossed by new imaginary, but painful real borderlines. In this sense the fifth cemetery from *Sch.* is a statistical anomaly, but which is nevertheless part of a wider ethnic enclavisation of cemeteries and of the post-socialist cultural identity management.

It is the fourth cemetery from *Sch.* (the Adventist one) that constitutes a specific mark of the post-socialist period. A wide spread of religious conversions followed after the fall of communism and this led to the appearance of new religious communities and soon to the appearance of new cemeteries everywhere in Romania.

These newly emerged cemeteries do not constitute the expressed wish of these "sectarian" Neo-Protestant movements to signal a distinct religious identity by creating a pure ground where the few chosen would wait for the Final Judgment. This space does not come into existence as a materialization of a distinct politics of afterlife and as an objectivation of a specific ideology that entitles the Church authorities to exert social control over the mortuary spaces. The Pentecostals, Baptists, Adventists, Evangelical Christians, Jehovah Witnesses etc. institute a de-ritualized, de-spatialized religion in which the exterior signs of salvation are of small importance and the afterlife of the dead body is utterly non-significant. The soul of the living is the one that becomes the object of religious power and discourse, the body of the dead is of very little value and so is the cemetery.

This new post-socialist space is rather the product of the dominant religious groups and originates from a hegemonic relationship between them and the new religious minorities. The new cemetery is the byproduct of a power struggle and the material sign of exclusion instituted unilaterally by the dominant religious groups and the result of a spatial embodiment of a conceptual scheme that could express itself unrestrained by an atheistic political medium.

The four other cemetery spaces of *Sch.* are perceived as normal manifestations of their daily life. They do not trouble anyone, and their peaceful co-existence shows that the social projections behind the cemetery, the regulatory power forces that give "life" to these spaces have long accommodated themselves to each other. It is the Adventist cemetery that people take issue with and this space would be represented on an intricate mental map as one of the most dark, evil, impure space that exists in *Sch.*

An analysis of the production of these new cemetery spaces could reveal an important chapter of the post-socialist struggles with the pluralization of life-worlds and with the growing insecurity triggered by the emergence of new religious identities. The post-socialist religious pluralization and the religious conversion that are increasingly taking place in Romania led to the generalization of a new type of dead body: *the heretic dead body*. In what follows I will be looking at how this impure dead body is constructed, and at the ways the cosmologies of afterlife are set in motion.

The dead body, the intimate community of the deceased person and the death-related practices that are embodied in a cemetery are integrated into a meaningful complex. I would like to explore how this complex lends itself to the different post-socialist survival strategies in coping with social and religious change and finally with death. By organizing these meanings of death and the politics of afterlife cemeteries become micro-worlds that reflect the religious, ethnic and cultural struggles of the new post-socialist world.

The issue of religious pluralism: a new faith against the old rituals

■ In the early '90s the religious freedom of the new post-socialist world led to the emergence of a Neo-Protestant movement in *Sch.* This clashed with the post-socialist revival of Old Orthodoxy in the village and its claim of being the sole expression of the true religion of Lipovenians. A contribution to this was brought by the local NGOs that regarded the Old-Orthodox religion (an abstract denominator of the antagonistic *Popovtsi* and *Bezopopovtsi*) as an important means to consolidate the distinctive ethnic claim of the Lipovenians.

The first family of the Adventists appeared in the village in the early 90's and they all were important members of the Old Believers' churches. They were more than regular believers; they had specific responsibilities in the Church and took actively part in the religious service. The women - who are not allowed to enter the central part of the church that is kept for the men to perform the liturgical roles - were helping out with the administrative issues (cooking, cleaning, etc). They were not non-believers or non-belonging believers (Davie 2000), but very religious people that decided to leave the Old Faith. Soon more converts followed and gradually they managed to establish a religious community that had its own church.

The Adventist movement appealed to the villagers because it challenged the over-ritualized religion of both *Popovtsi* and *Bezopovtsi* and the priesthood monopolization of the sacred. In the Old Believers church only the priests are allowed to read and interpret the Bible and the mass is still presented in Slavonic, an old language that almost nobody understands today. The Lipovenian Adventists challenged this by institutionalizing a Romanian religious service and giving people access to Romanian and Russian bibles that led to the formation of genuine local religious counter-culture.

There is a Slavonic school in the town, which most of the children attend, but this is not enough for them to master the language used in the church. Besides, a believer has to understand when and how to perform the rituals: the elaborate religious meanings and the theological justification of them is up to the priest to know.

Every time when I went to the Church (Popovtsi) I saw this man painted on the walls that was building a boat and was trying to escape from a danger. I always asked myself in my deep soul: did he manage to escape? After I became an Adventist and started reading the Bible I found out about the story of Noah, and about the flood, and how he escaped. (A. P. 50-year-old woman, one of the first people converted to Adventism, wife of S. P.)

For the Adventists the Bible is the ultimate guidebook and therefore everything has to be "filtered" through it. This has strong implications for the outline of a religious ethic and the hermeneutical principle of the Word of God (that can be easily understood by the spiritually enlightened Adventist believer) clashes with the principle of tradition handed down through the Church from generation to generation: "In our tradition the Bible is not given to every pagan or unbeliever, it is given to priests and to the servants of God (...) that are called and chosen by God" (F.P. religious teacher, Bezopovtsi) "we have taken the gold out of the Bible and left the mud" (Old Believer Popovtsi Priest referring to the tradition of the Church as quoted by an Adventist that was judged in the church for forsaking the faith).

If a Lipovenian custom or holiday is not found in the Bible and it is not legitimized by it, they renounce to it. This has a strong potential for contesting the traditional establishment and determines them to question all Lipovenian traditional knowledge, lifestyle, customs, habits, holidays and values. The (Old and New) Orthodox sense of time is strongly attuned to the rhythm of cyclic holidays, feasting, days of specific saints and socially prescribed rituals. Since the New Testament Church has not practiced all these, the Adventists feel themselves compelled to renounce to them. The Lord's Day is celebrated on Saturday (the Sabbatical day) and not on Sunday as in the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Christian traditions and each day has to be a uniform day of praying, searching and witnessing of Christ to the "heathen" Old Believers. To the Adventists all the rituals appear as cold forms without any spiritual content and "Jesus Christ said not to do all these. He said that only the pagans are doing them" (S.P. 50 years old, the first Adventist in *Sch.*, leader of the local Church)

The specific religious Lipovenian dress codes are given up ("Have you not read the Scriptures? What did Jesus say? He says: Come to me **as you are.**" – S.P referring to why Adventists gave up the specific popular costume and all the other religious symbols: crosses, talismans, icons). Giving up icons was particularly troublesome to the Old Believers. One of the major reasons of their persecution in Russia was due to their icons depicting the sign of cross done with two fingers. The religious icon fulfills many important functions in the community of the Old Believers and sometimes fulfills even the role of a spiritual alter-ego of the owner.

The icon is commissioned by parents for children and its fate is intimately intertwined to its owner during the whole lifetime of the latter. The icon can be easily recognized as belonging to an Old-Believer. Besides the main saint figure, on a small scale it contains sometimes the saint of the person who commissioned the icon. These icons are treated by the believers with a special care; they are not just



simple objects of worship. They mark a kinship tie in the sense that they were received from a blood-kin or from a godfather (who became a blood-kin as well and falls under the prohibition of marriage rules). These icons are passed from one generation to another.

The two icons of the persons getting married are led in a procession to the Church ahead of the bride and groom (the icon of the groom enters the church always first, and both are blessed). An icon has to be on site when a house is being built. Each and every house must have a room with a rood screen orientated towards east and the main icon present. All the other rooms should contain an icon (it is forbidden to have one in the bathroom). When the owner dies his icon is allowed to be placed in the Church: "for the good sake of the deceased person" (L., the icon painter of *Sch.*)⁸.

There are rigid rules regarding the disposal of old icons and any damages done involuntary to the icons have to be reported immediately. This is why all icons need to be painted on wood: "this is a law for us – we do not paint an icon on glass, ceramic or anything that can be broken" (L., the icon painter of *Sch.*). Every time the priests visit the house of a believer, s/he has to re-consecrate the icon. Sometimes it looks like the icons have a life of their own and as *mana*-laden objects they come to an end in the cemetery as well.

The Adventist's "heresy" could not be expressed clearer than in her/his renouncement to icons: they remove it from all private spaces completely. The icons are treated as false worshipping idols, as small gods that replace the true worship of the only living God:

...the Orthodox creed says that we believe in one God, but when we enter the church there are so many Gods that we do not know anymore in front of which we should light up the candle. (S.P. Adventist)

People commenting on the issue reckoned that giving up the icon is the hardest part to do. Although they "receive the Word", they say that giving up the icons is unthinkable: this is why they do not convert. Their relationship to the icons makes the Adventists the worst of worse in the eyes of the others:

there are no Lipovenians who do not have an icon in their homes. Even the alcoholics that sell their house still keep one icon for themselves. (F.T. priest from Bezopopovtsi Church)

The Adventists sold their icons which are rare and expensive items on the art market. This is considered a severely punished sin in the Old Believers Church. Nay, the Adventists taught everyone how sinful it is to worship the icons:

During many centuries we were accustomed to icons (...) and now suddenly a semi-literate (referring to S.P. the leader of the local Adventist Church), please, pardon the expression, mingles in the Church dogma - which is none of our business, there are trained people for that – and dares to condemn the people that worship the icons. (...) This has upset many people. I wonder that their reaction to this was not much harsher. The Romanian Orthodox have reacted much harsher to the Greek Catholics (S.F. retired history teacher, an important local intellectual, attends the Popovtsi Church).

A few years after the conversion, the Adventists decided to build a small community house where their religious meeting will take place (at the Western end of the village, not far from the Romanian Orthodox Church). They strongly believe that it is their duty to tell others about the true faith: "I told to my brothers: Jesus Christ wants the light to shine in our village as well. We shouldn't hide the candlestick under the bushel!" (S. P.) The religious service would be held in Romanian ("God says this clearly: it is the language of the country in which you were born in which you should pray, and preach in that lan-

8 It is interesting to see that the icon painter of the town and some of the priests talk about the generational shift that takes place in *Sch.* regarding the young Old Orthodox attitude towards icons. When they build houses (a lot of them after returning from the Western countries where they have worked) they do not assign a central place to the icon. The icon is usually smaller and becomes a decorative object (in comparison with the religious ones) and it is placed among many other secular decorative objects.

guage"). Attending both the Old Rituals and Adventist churches I could notice the differences between them. The Slavonic liturgy and the performance of the repetitive rituals are replaced by Romanian songs that objectify important theological statements, community building, faith encouragements etc. The Slavonic sermon is replaced by public Bible studies (questions and answers) and motivational sermons since a lot of the villagers, according to what they say, simply do not understand the Slavonic sermons anymore. For the young Slavonic is a foreign language: "what do we understand by going to church? Here in our village the religious service is in Slavonic and nobody understands it." (20 year old female student, from the *Popovtsi* Church, talking about young people going to Church).

The bible study represents a daily Christian obligation and a lot of Old Ritual believers admire them for their discursive biblical knowledge. For instance, a fifty-year-old Adventist woman, with just four years of education, could very easily explain to me what the sophisticated concept of *theodicy* means and the different philosophical questions raised by non-believers. Besides this, they quote passages from the Bible by heart, and they employ these in very various argumentative contexts.

There is a definite shift taking place in the religious field: a magical-ritual religion is replaced by a rationalized one and an ethical feeling of conviction. Not the outside religious events are the ones that count, but the daily ethical actions, not the forms, but the spiritual contents, not the different mediators (priests, saints, icons, etc.), but the individual religious redeemed conscience: "God said that he is not dwelling in the houses made by the human hands, but in the souls of the people" (S. P.).

In many ways the Adventists blur the traditionally positioned narrow gender roles existing in the Old Believers community. The socialization of these roles begins from birth (only boys are baptized in the altar, girls are forbidden to enter this part of the church), during the religious service men sit in the front of the church and the women in the back, only men fulfill religious functions, etc. In the Adventist church they are all equal. Families can sit together, they study together the Bible and the women are allowed to have major religious functions (though they cannot become pastors).

The religious fellowship that they have leads to strong bonds between their members and therefore the feeling of a strong community in which they all are equally part of. The emergent community is an egalitarian one where all status and kinship differences are levelled: the new bonds are based on the emergence of a new self. This new religious self is admired by some of the villagers. The puritan life that they practice draws a lot of attention and when this means losing their jobs (some jobs require working Saturdays which is forbidden for them) this is done with the conviction that following God's commandments is much more important than this world. Some people secretly (since they are afraid of their priests) or openly admire their moral rectitude: "They were all one and one. Before, they were degraded people. If this cult manages to change them, than this is a praiseworthy thing." (Romanian from *Sch.* talking about some Adventists that were alcoholics before the conversion)

This religious ethic is amplified by the church community that strongly regulates the life of its members. The church and their gatherings help them to institutionalize a specific social combatant identity for which telling others the Truth, persuading others to be saved, evangelizing them, etc. is of high importance. This creates a new type of religious field that the Old Orthodox priests find very annoying: its dynamic discursive character contrasts with the self-implied, static religious truth of Old Believers. We should not think of these Adventists as propaganda agents that try to increase the number of their sect members. The religious issues at hand are recognized by their opponents as well and their honesty and sincerity in "preaching the Word" is manifested in their attempt of creating a local new meaningful world-view capable of integrating their particular experience. "Mother, this is not the Truth: going to the Church and tormenting yourself and performing the rituals. God wants us to love each other, to teach each other (the Scriptures)" (Adventist women that managed to convert her mother).

This discursive religiosity leads to the formation of a Lipovenian religious counter-culture that questions the established Lipovenian tradition and the status quo of the local leaders. The Adventists are convinced that the priests do not want their believers to know the truth and this is why they don't allow them to have access to Bibles. "The priests from here are like greedy dogs" (Adventist referring to priests that charge a lot of money for the performance of the religious rituals). Most of the Old Believers that I have interviewed are dissatisfied with the easy way the priests got rich. According to them this has to do with the money believers have to pay for the religious services. On the other hand clerics label all critiques toward them as having an Adventist origin. This goes hand in hand with an implicit charge that the believer in question talked to the Adventists, although this is strongly forbidden.

Lately a lot of villagers have gradually learned to tolerate the new-post socialist religious diversity (some families converted in the meantime to Pentecostalism or Baptism), but in the early 90's this caused



a lot of turmoil and was perceived by the entire community as a shocking heretic movement. This was probably due to the fact that it was religion that brought the Old Believers in *Sch.* in the first place: they fled Russia where had been religiously persecuted. It was also religion that kept their ethnic identity alive for centuries in midst of the sea of Romanians surrounding them. The forsaking of the ancestors' religion was something unconceivable by the other three religious-ethnic communities. The collective memory of the Adventist community recalls the strong symbolic violence that they were subjected to and how everyone hated them.

The religious conversion meant sometimes that their own families would start to despise them ("my own brothers and sisters started to hate me", Adventist believer), and that the relatives, encouraged by the Old Believer priests, broke all relationships with them: "My father told me that I should not come to his house anymore or touch the door handle, because he would have to call the priests to re-sanctify it and this because I am a pagan now." (S. P.)

The Adventists were declared religiously impure and the social interaction with them was considered a religious taboo. Sometimes families were completely separated (parents refused to talk with their converted children and to receive them into their homes) and where this was not possible, as in the case of married couples, the priest regularly visited their house to purify and re-sanctify the entire house and the Orthodox members of the family.

There was even a local church council that had the clear intention of sounding the church bells and throwing the family forever outside the village. When they started to spread the Gospel around and attract young people to their church, there were even complains addressed to the mayor and to the police officers, but they could do nothing because of the legal rights the Adventists had to share their beliefs and contest the existing religious order.

The politics of after-life: regulating the cemetery space

■ The main problem actually appeared when one of the Adventist believers died. "They did not think that they will die as well" – comments upon the mayor in office at that time. Since before his conversion the dead person was an important member of the Old Orthodox (*Popovtsi*) community, his family though it natural to bury their death in one of the two cemeteries where all the Lipovenians were buried. They were surprised to find out that this was not possible because they had forsaken the ancestors' religion, and it was regarded inappropriate to bury their dead next to them. The Adventist dead body was thought to defile and spiritually pollute the entire cemetery and this way the afterlife of ancestors would be endangered.

A strong resistance of the Old Orthodox community followed to protect their cemeteries from the Adventist "heretics". I have made several interviews with people involved in this process (Old Orthodox priests, important leaders of the religious community, local political authorities, family of the deceased, etc.) in order to reconstruct the symbolic architecture of the discourse regarding dead bodies, their appropriate place within the graveyard and the specific religious narratives and cosmology that stipulates the social implications of afterlife.

For the Old Believers priest that had to deal with this issue things were very clear right from the start and no ambiguities could hinder him to do what he believed to be right: "if they did not come to our church, how could they be buried with **our** Christians?" (M. R., Popovtsi retired priest). He was reading the Adventists and knew what their intentions were. They were "trying to create a path there; more Adventists would follow him (in the cemetery)" (M. R.). The Old Believers priest understands the stake of this *first* burial and the social consequences of it, long before the Adventists do.

For the Adventists burying their death was a practical issue: the corpse needed to be buried (and four days passed until this could finally take place – that created a big scandal due to sanitary reasons). They thought it natural to do this in the cemetery where the relatives (grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters) of the deceased rested. Besides, there was not other cemetery available. Each of the three cemeteries available (the second Romanian Orthodox cemetery was to be created much later) have a distinct cultural fingerprint: Romanian, Popovtsi Lipovenian and Bezopovtsi Lipovenian, and the Adventist would wanted to see the cemeteries not as religious categories, but as cultural ones. For them there was no doubt that they were Lipovenians that had a natural right to be in that cemetery.

To prevent any surprises the priest decided to implement some safety measures: "I have set up a committee and organized a watch guard that should not allow them to dig in the cemetery" (M. R.) He was not doing this because he wanted to take a revenge on them: most of all it was a serious spiritual issue that could defile the entire cemetery. Because of that the Old Believers priest mobilized the other priests from the neighbouring Lipovenian village, and the attempts of the Adventists to bury the dead body in another village failed. Soon they found out that not only were they not welcome in the local Popovtsi cemetery, but they are not wanted in the Bezopopovtsi cemetery as well. The rivalries between these two Old Believers denominations faded in front of the common "danger" of a new type of religiosity. The question of the Adventists' ethnicity was raised, because the ethnicity and religion structures are fused and they imply each other. The Lipovenians do not want them anymore.

The cemeteries in *Sch.* are not just spaces of grief that mark the end of a life and the passing into non-existence. Deepening my research I came across a very strong symbolic representation of dying and of the burial place. Dying is a very complicating thing in *Sch.* One could say that when one dies, s(he) becomes a decaying body. In fact the opposite is true in *Sch.* The dead body is just emerging as a symbolic object of religious, social and cultural representation that is penetrated by the different politics of afterlife. This way the cemetery becomes the stage of many different discourses, the religious being the dominant one.

The Old Orthodox community (both *Popovtsi* and *Bezopopovtsi*) makes a very clear distinction between several types of burial grounds: burial grounds that lie in the *sun* and burial grounds that lie in the *shadow*. In order to make a difference between those two, at midday one has to notice those places that are covered by shadows. They are usually close to a fence, or to a natural elevation, behind a building or near anything that shadows the ground. The cemetery space is clearly marked off and the existence of different types of burial plots is part of the general stock of knowledge. Everybody seems to be aware of them.

The burial thumbs that lay in the shadow are most feared by the believers. Here are buried a quite large category of people that were not good friends of the Church: those that did not attend the church, those that lived in concubinage (a sin for which also the parents of the couple can be excommunicated from the church for not fulfilling their duty as spiritual parents), those who commit suicide, those that die in mysterious circumstances (for instance, naked while taking a bath, or drunken), or in situations that are not very clear and where there is the slightest doubt of suicide. If this occurs the priest is not giving to the grieving family the church stretchers to carry the dead body, the flags are denied, nor is he officially taking part at the funeral. The church assigns a shadow plot in the cemetery where that person has to be buried.

For smaller sins and wrongdoings (like for not saying their confession for the past seven years) the Church is allowing the dead body to be buried next to the others in the sun, but no religious service is held and the flags and the church stretchers are not given by the priests. This is an intermediary category, but it fulfills the same function as the first one: the trajectory of the soul in afterlife is clear from what is done (or more exactly not done) to the dead body. The priests refuse the performance of any other rituals and the dead people buried here, just like the one buried in the shadow, are treated the same: their names are not entered in the church books (that brings no future prayers for them in the church). One of the interviewed priests expressed this very clear: "if no religious service is held, he remains forever like that, so everyone forgets him, and it appears as he would have never existed" (M. R.).

The last category comprises those who are buried in the light. These are the pious and religious people who followed the teachings of the church during their lifetime. The cemetery does not appear to be stratified socially, the light and the shadow is everywhere the same. Some say thought, that the priests receive special plots, close to the entrance of the cemetery (the people that commit suicide are not allowed to be brought into the cemetery through the entrance gates, but have to be carried over the fence of the cemetery).

In the last decade the conceptual scheme that enforces these rules is increasingly relativized by those that object to this unmerciful treatment. This is a minor voice of the community, but the more "free" society gets, the more this voice is heard. This is associated by the priests to cable TV, modern lifestyle, the West. Due to this new "resistance" the shadow places are reserved more and more to the "big sinners": those who have sexual intercourse and live together unmarried ("God forbid that a boy and a girl have sexual relationships before marriage", I.V., Popovtsi priest) and those that commit suicide. All the other sinners are buried in the light, but this is just a tricky compromise, because everyone knows (or not?) what happens to these dead bodies and to their souls. For people that are very persuasive a



further compromise can be reached and the priests can give them the church stretchers and the flags. But again this is not followed by any spiritual and ritual consequences and these dead bodies are treated just like the ones buried in shadow. This is only away to save the appearances.

"For the person that has no fear of God, it would have been much better for him not to be born at all." (I. V., Bezopopovtsi priest). For most of the religious villagers from *Sch.* these conceptual schemes that assign the dead body a plot in the cemetery and a specific ritual to the plot make a lot of sense. The priests have no doubt what the afterlife trajectory of each dead body is. Talking about a female artist that recently died in a car accident together with her unmarried partner and was expecting a child the priests say:

the majority of the artists live in concubinage, and God is punishing them for this. People say that they will be in heaven and the Orthodox priest on TV said that only God knows what will happen to them in afterlife, but according to what we know they will never be in heaven because they were not married, and have lived together (Popovtsi priests in a collective interview).

Where do the Adventists come in this intricate scheme? "It is much worse to become an Adventist than to commit suicide. They have left our church and gave up our faith" (M. F., Popovtsi priest). Due to it there is no place left in the cemetery for them. In the case I have presented four days passed and the mayor that regarded this as an inhuman treatment ("I don't have anything with the church but I am upset with the priests", Mayor in that period, Romanian Orthodox believer). He called upon the government authorities and solved the issues administratively by creating a new cemetery in *Sch.* This was located next to the Orthodox Romanian cemetery at the Eastern end of the village where the Bezopopovtsi cemetery was located as well. (Since there is another cemetery between the Bezopopovtsi cemetery and the Adventist one, the priests talk about the great distance that separates them, even though this is situated no more than 30-40 meters away.)

This cemetery ground is represented by most of the villagers as a very impure ground, symbolically polluted and they talk about it as a "forsaken garden". Almost all the people that were interviewed were talking about that piece of land as being located somewhere outside the borders, a place that was forgotten and where only weeds were growing. This cosmology of afterlife is not just a simple, socially non-relevant scheme that some socially marginalized priests believe in. It has a wide currency and structures the life of most of the members of the community. Some people informed me that they would like to visit the local Adventist Church to see how they worshipped God, and this the reason they are very impressed by the lives of the people that had converted. The latter are very moral persons, knowing also the Scriptures very well. But they said they were afraid of visiting the Adventists. If the priest had found out about this, then they would not received a proper funeral. According to them there were several ways to demean your self, but this one was the worst for them.

A lot of other people who do not stick to their religion also take care to visit the priests every year to confess so that later they could receive a proper burial. People told me of atheists (not many of them in the village) that are pursued by their families on the dying bed to accept the priest so that they would not be embarrassed by their afterlife. This way the cemetery is transformed by the traditional religious power in an instrument of controlling the lives of the believers and unbelievers alike. Thus the cemetery becomes a micro-world that reflects the religious, ethnic and cultural struggles of the new post-socialist world. Each of the dead bodies has a certain conceivable place within the graveyard. There is a web of meanings attached to each of them and all become objects of different politics of afterlife that the different religious agents issue. Only the Adventists do not have any place in this symbolic universe.

In *Sch.* you cannot escape going to church, breaking all relationships with the church, or even committing suicide; there is always a conceptual place for you in the afterlife along your deeds and relationships to the church. Every year the community has even a special day when the priest is saying a common prayer for all people that are buried in the cemetery, no matter if they are buried in the light or in the shadow, asking for God to have mercy on all of them. But the same thing cannot be said about the Adventists. According to the others there is no chance left in afterlife for them, they are buried somewhere outside the cemetery, in a place that can hardly be conceptualized. Dying as an Adventist is conceived as one of the worst ways of dying when one's body ends buried into the lowest and impure type of grounds.

The presence of the Adventists in Old Believers cemeteries (Popovtsi or Bezopopovtsi) would have meant that the cemetery could not represent anymore a space that materializes a specific way of conceiving the afterlife. Their presence there would have led to the conceptualization of the cemetery as a neutral space that accommodates conflicting views of afterlife. This way the topography of the religious space (light and shadow) would have been relative to the point of views of looking at the same cemetery.

This definitely constitutes a threat to the traditional religious power that wants to be the only sovereign regulation of the ultimate meanings of life. Only by expelling the Adventists out of the cemetery, and classifying this space as a much more darker and impure area than even the spaces that lie in shadow, can this power safeguard its proper conditions of functioning.

After death the body has to undergo a specific trajectory that is strongly dependent on the traditional religious power and on its expertise and consecrating rituals. By negotiating the fluid cemetery categories the religious power obliges the submissive believers to acknowledge its supremacy. As we have seen, the minor humanizing discourse and the small anticlerical rebellions can easily be repressed. It is much harder to handle within the same cemetery an institutionalized counter-religious discourse that challenges not only a single aspect of the traditional religion but its entire foundations.

The Adventists manage to generalize a completely different conception of dying that is not dependent on external markers and symbolic spaces. When a person dies he is dead forever, and he will face the Great Judgment "at the end of times". A good death is a "death in Christ": a renouncement to the world and a death of the sinful nature followed by a spiritual rebirth that takes place here on earth. According to this argumentation one had a good death only if s/he had a good life, a spiritual imitation of Christ. The dead body is worth nothing, and the religious requiems performed by the priests and the family of the deceased cannot add a single thing to what will happen to the soul in the afterlife.

For an Adventist the funeral has an emotional meaning. But too much emotion dominating the funeral is not advised because desperation is considered lack of faith that the deceased will be met again in afterlife. In this framework all people are entitled to a good funeral. The cemetery can become a place of grief at best: it cannot be a theatre of afterlife.

Faced with post-socialist pluralization of religion the traditional religious power was forced to re-enchance the concept of the heretic dead body and establish new borderlines within the cemeteries. I found the same manifestations of traditional religious power while exploring the religious conversion of Gypsies to Pentecostalism. The social segregation of Gypsies is obvious when one looks at how the cemetery space is organized in a village. The ethnic and religious boundaries are prolonged in afterlife, and they are immortalized and portrayed as strong identity borders. Thus the Neo-Protestant Gypsies seem marginalized in a double manner: first as Gypsies and secondly as Neo-protestants. The graveyard of a Romanian village (the same applies to the villages where the Hungarians constitute the majority) is segregated according to ethnic criteria. Usually the Gypsies are buried in their own section of the graveyard. The dead Gypsies are not allowed to be buried along the dead Romanians just like they are not allowed to build a house next to the house of a Romanian fellow, but only at the end of the village.

But after the post-socialist religious pluralization and the massive religious conversion to Pentecostalism among Gypsies, a new type of section emerged in the cemeteries. The Neo-Protestant Gypsies have been buried also in a specially segregated sector within the Orthodox section of the cemetery (Reformed in the Hungarian villages) and have been spatially segregated from the other Orthodox Gypsies. In one case the Neo-Protestant Gypsies that I have interviewed told me that an un-baptized child had been previously buried in the burial plot they were assigned a few years ago when the first of their believers died. Usually when this happens it is a sign that that piece of land is symbolically polluted and lies outside the blessed graveyard. Assigning such a kind of plot to the Gypsies is a social way of associating religious conversion to the betrayal of the religious ethos of the community. This is why they have to be buried outside the cemetery: because they are meant to be perceived outside the community *de facto*. This exclusion is objectified in the afterlife as well, which enforces the current use of such identity-stereotypes even more.

The emergence of new cemeteries in *Sch.* and the re-affirming and re-mastering of the borderlines in the existing cemeteries depicts the social and cultural struggles triggered by the post-socialist pluralization of religion. For some this is considered the only right way to deal with the issue while others feel themselves brutalized by the enforcement of such violent exclusion. Other villagers start to question their own conceptual schemes materialized by the cemeteries, as a Romanian Orthodox priest from *Sch.* sadly noticed: "We can live together, eat together, drink together here in the village, but we have to die separately."



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DESPRE INSTITUTUL PENTRU STUDIAREA PROBLEMELOR MINORITĂȚILOR NAȚIONALE

ABOUT THE ROMANIAN INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON NATIONAL MINORITIES

A NEMZETI KISEBBSÉGKUTATÓ INTÉZETRŐL

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