

THE BULGARIAN VILLAGE OF LIPNITSA, NORTHERN DOBRUJA, AND ITS INHABITANTS DURING THE PERIOD 1822-18.11.1878 (ACCORDING TO PUBLICATIONS AND ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS)

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Abstract: The article summarizes the information about the village of Lipnitsa and its inhabitants during the Renaissance until the passing of Northern Dobrudja under Romanian rule. The contribution is the inclusion of new documents from Bulgarian and Romanian archives.

Keywords: Keywords: Lipnitsa, Northern Dobrudja, Russo-Turkish War, Bulgarian Revival, Treaty of Berlin (1878)

JEL Codes: L29

INTRODUCTION

Lipnitsa is an old Bulgarian settlement that is located about 25 km east of Silistra [see figure 1] in the Lipnitsa valley—on an old dry stream bed, which leads to Lake Oltina and the Danube. The Silistra-Constanța road passes through the village. Mounds and traces of human presence from ancient times are found in the land surrounding Lipnitsa. In the notes to the inventory of the Silistra Sanjak from 1569, Lipnitsa was marked as a village of Voynuks, more precisely—of Dervendjis (Dimitrov, Zhechev, Tonev 1988: 53). The likely reason for its inhabitants to be listed as Dervendjis was because they maintained and guarded an existing bridge nearby. The fate of the old population of Lipnitsa is unknown, but by 1820 the village was completely deserted.

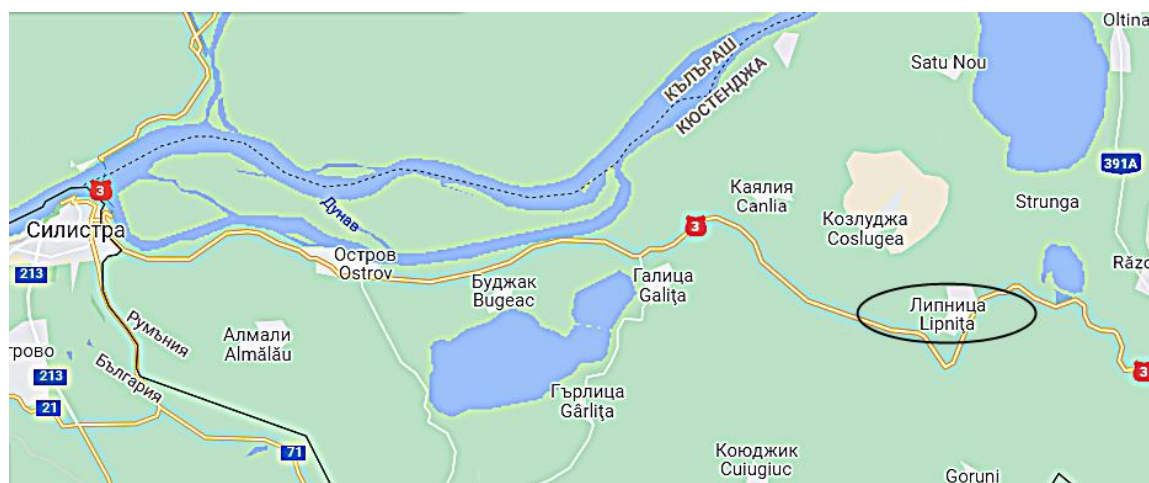


Figure 1, The location of the village of Lipnitsa, source Google maps.

EXPOSITION

Resettlement of Lipnitsa and the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-1829

The exact date of the resettlement by several families from the Edirne region (according to family legends) after their short stay in the Russian Empire is also unknown. It is believed that this happened in the years 1822–1825 (Chilingirov 1917: 192). Two versions about the specific origins of the new settlers in Lipnitsa exist, and they emerged from the field survey conducted by the scientific expedition of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Dobruja in 1917.

Thirteen families were the first to arrive, as 86-year-old Tasho Kralyov testified before M. Arnaudov. But their exact origin is not clear, due to the ambiguity in Arnaudov's published work.

Here is the exact quote: *"His father went off around 1820, because of the kirdzhalis, with other refugees from the Edirne region (the villages of Lalkovo and Ambarlia)"* (Arnaudov 1923: 36). This can be interpreted as that these 13 families were from the villages of Lalkovo (formerly Malak Dervent) and Hambarliy (now Malomirovo, Elhovo region) or that they were from an unspecified settlement, but left together with other families from Lalkovo and Hambarliy.

Chilingirov did not note where the first resettlers came from. He reported that *"In 1828 it [the village of Lipnitsa—note Sn. G.] had 13 houses. After this year, it had an immediate population growth as peasants from the Edirne villages of Lalkovo and Hambarliy came to settle in it"* (Chilingirov 1917: 192).

An adoption document from a later date (dated 22nd November 1872) of a boy from Lipnitsa, mentioned that his father came from the Edirne kaza—again without specifying the exact settlement name (Declaration 1872).

Shortly after the Edirne Peace Treaty of September 2/14, 1829, the great migration to the Russian Empire and the subsequent return to the Ottoman Empire of thousands of Bulgarians, Lipnitsa's population began to grow rapidly. In 1830 several families came here from Fakia, Lozengrad region (now Burgas region), and from Burgujikyoy / Burgujiköy (now the village of Polyana, Yambol region). Later, families from the Devnya's village of Vizier Kozludzha (now Suvorovo, Varna region) and from Airankyoy / Airanköy, Old Dobruja (now Dumbraveni, Constanța region), also settled (Arnaudov 1923:36). In the middle and the second half of the 19th century, people settled from Bulgaria's interior lands to Lipnitsa. The newcomers were from the regions of Lovech, Tarnovo, Gabrovo, Sliven, and Panagyurishte. There were also registered migrations from Northern Dobruja—Dolna Chamurlia, Babadag region (Regisrtu 1901).

The settlers felt so different from the local Bulgarians in the surrounding villages that they prohibited marriages between their daughters with the sons of the natives (the ethnographic group grebentsi). The marriage ban stayed until 1916, as the Lipnitsa settlers thought that the grebentsi boys were not from good families (Arnaudov 1923:38).

The Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829 was devastating for Dobruja. Even in 1836, when a German general, Moltke, passed through, the whole area was: *"A real desert that amazes everyone that it can be found in the middle of Europe. The villages are nothing but piles from rubble. Constanța has only 40 inhabitants, Harsovo counts up 30 houses, a third of the villages marked on the map are completely missing"* (Phoenix 1917).

Lipnitsa in the Crimean war

During the Crimean War, the Russian Empire took military action against the Ottoman Empire and the lands south of the Danube. On March 15th, 1854, the Russian army captured the village of Frecăței and the town of Babadag. Military detachments reached the northern Dobruja's villages of Beidaud, Ceamurlia, Kara Su. Constanța and Mangalia were attacked by a sea fleet, where the Russians had a landing operation and invaded southern Dobruja (Reports 1854:1). On April 28th, general Alexander von Lüders led a flank march of Russian troops from Kara Su (now Cherna Voda) to Silistra on the Danube bank. The flank maneuver included splitting the army in three and sending them to different locations. The main forces and the convoy moved along the coast—between the Danube and the lakes Oltina and Garlitsa. The vanguard moved through Uzun Amat, Polokcha, Kuzgun, and Kozludzha. The side detachment passed through Mahmut, Koisu, Malchevo, and Polokcha, and then continued on the path of the vanguard. On May 3rd, the main forces reached the river that connects lake Garlitsa with the Danube, the vanguard was in Kanlia, and the side detachment—in Lipnitsa (Zayonchikovskiy 2002:259, 260).

The siege of Silistra lasted more than a month. During this time, the surrounding villages including Lipnitsa supplied the victuals for the 100,000-strong Russian army (Zayonchikovskiy 2002:267).

Early in the morning of June 12th, 1854, the Russian command began withdrawing troops to the seven bridges built earlier in the offensive. The bridges were destroyed in succession from west to east. The bridge near lake Garlitsa was destroyed last—on June 14th, after thousands of

Bulgarian families from the surrounding villages crossed and went north of the Danube. The army rearguard crossed last (Zayonchikovskiy 2002:317, 318).

The Bulgarian Revival in Lipnitsa

A marked community interest in schooling, church attendance, and reading printed materials that was in the spirit of the Bulgarian Revival was seen in Lipnitsa. In 1855 in the village of Lipnitsa there was already a school with its own building, which was attended by 20-30 children. In 1864 Tsvyatko Stanchev from the village of Zheleznik, Lovech region, and Petar Popov from Veliko Tarnovo region were teaching classes there. Their names are known from the list of contributors to the book "Introduction to General History with a short addition to the old Bulgarian history". Five copies of this book were bought by Tsvyatko Stanchev and Petar Popov, and by their students Georgi Draganov, Georgi Zhelev and Ivan Valkov (Blaskov 1864:III).

In 1869, with the help of community sponsorship, four copies of the book "Mineinik" (Liturgical Book) by Angel Ioanov, Sevlievetsa, were purchased in the village. The sponsors were, as it is written in the attached list, the church "St. Georgi", the verbal teachers Tsvyatko Stanchov and Georgi Draganov, and the students Georgi and Atanas Zhelevi (Ioanov 1869:327-328). On the title page of this book, under the title, a phoenix is depicted reviving from the flames under the sun. Immediately after the last troparion in this book, a large Bulgarian coat of arms was published with a mantle, above which there is a closed crown with a base of a circle, consisting of crosses, and a cross with concave patibulum. In the center of the mantle is a square shield with an inscribed isosceles cross. This shield is supported on each side by an upright crowned lion facing the cross. Below the lions, there are two lilies, whose flowers look down, connected by a chain with a cross with concave patibulum under them, which is positioned at the base of the mantle (Ioanov 1869:314) [see figure 2].

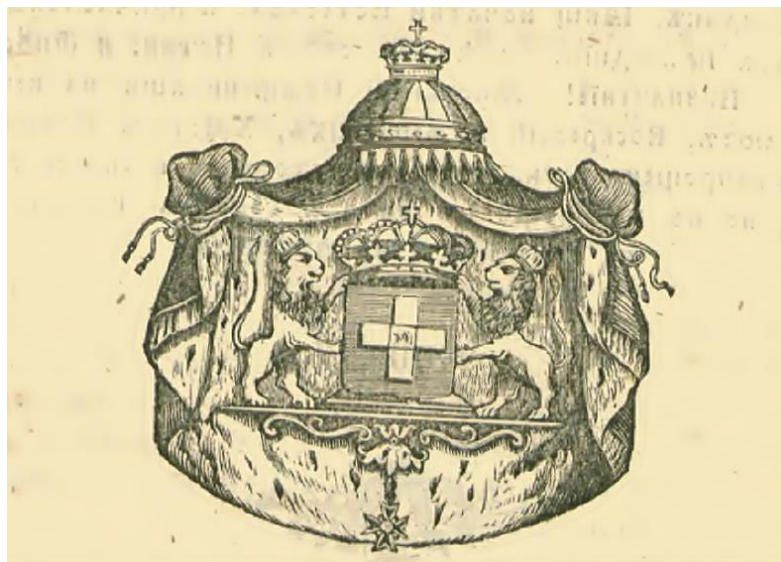


Figure 2, The coat of arms of Bulgaria found in Liturgical book (Ioanov 1869:314)

The inhabitants of Lipnitsa were interested in the current events, as they were following the published press. For example, the magazine "Slava" that was published in Ruse was also received in Lipnitsa (Stoyanov 1957:548).

On August 29th, 1866, the Bulgarian municipality in Silistra issued a district letter, addressing the inhabitants of the town and the nearby villages for financial assistance for the opening of a national Bulgarian school in the town. It said: "*...you will do good... to whom as much as God has given, provide help for the school and God will return it to you a hundredfold...*" (Tonev 2001:31). The sakellarios priest Hristo Avramov, Ivancho Dimitrov, and the headmaster

of Silistra Todor Peev went canvassing following with the letter to raise awareness of the initiative in the community. The people of Lipnitsa responded to the demand by providing "5 kilos of wheat"—this is known as the Balchik kilo, which was then equal to 160 bushels of wheat (Tonev 2001:31, 91).

There was a chapel in Lipnitsa since the mid-40s of the XIX century. Later, the church "St. George" was built in 1858. With the rising population demanding more space for prayers and religious rituals, in the period 1899–1902 a new, larger church was built, dedicated to St. Constantine and Helena (Chilingirov 1917: 193).

Lipnitsa in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878

During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, the Silistra region was a frontline for a long time, and Lipnitsa fell into the arena of military actions (Collection 1907:12, 19, 31-32, 35-36, 49, 55, 60, 61-62, 70, 75, 77, 114). This had a detrimental effect on the local population, similarly to any war previously waged in this area. Lipnitsa was of strategic importance and was of interest to the Russian headquarters. In a multi-volume Russian collection of materials about this war, for the village of Lipnitsa it was written that it is not shown on the map, but it is located where the Silistra's road intersected with the one from Kozludzha to Golyam Garvan (Collection 1907:12). At the beginning of October 1877, the Don Cossack's 15th, 16th, and 17th regiments were concentrated in the area of Lipnitsa, together with cannons from the Don Cossack's 11th and 17th batteries. They were joined on October 6th by two hundred men of the Don Cossack's 18th regiment. Also, two Ottoman army cavalry squadrons were spotted three versts (around three kilometers) away from Lipnitsa. They were later driven out by the Cossacks (Collection 1907:35, 49). A report by the commander of the Don 18th Cossack's regiment to the commander of the First Don Cossack's division apprised that on October 7th, 1877, at 11 a.m., he and four hundred men of his entrusted regiment and a platoon of the 17th battery were stationed in Karaorman/Karaorman, where they come across about 100 Bulgarian families from the villages of Kranovo, Lipnitsa and Kozludzha with large convoys and livestock, fleeing from the Ottomans (Collection 1907:50). Historical research, published almost fifty years ago, explained that the Bulgarians fled from the Ottomans, and with the help of the Russian army they were transferred north of the line Cherna Voda – Constanța, controlled by the Russians (Tonev 1973:249). But Karaorman/Karaorman in the Russian publication in present days is probably the village Răzoarele near the Lake of Oltina and Suha reka (translated as Dry river) that is positioned to the south of the Ottoman bank of Danube and nearby the Romanian bank.

The same report noticed, that part of people from the region transferred in Romania (Collection 1907:114). Although this might appear strange at first glance, we should be reminded that the founders of the newly settled Lipnitsa, and many of those who later came there and in the villages of Kranovo and Kozludzha, were re-emigrants. These were people who once resided in the Russian Empire, but left in order to return to the Ottoman Empire. Their escape was probably provoked by the actions of the Russians in the surrounding Bulgarian villages, which were mentioned in a telegram of the kaymakam to the vilayet's governance in Ruse and to the vilayet's vicarage in Shumen sent on October 7th, 1877. It was reported that Russian detachments entered the purely Bulgarian villages of Galitsa, Garlitsa, Kanlia, and Kozludzha and took the Bulgarians with their livestock and household goods to their own zone (Hristov 1973: 342, 347).

The Berlin Congress stipulated that Romania should receive Northern Dobruja. Article 2 of the Treaty of Berlin of 1/13 July 1878 defined the borders of the Principality of Bulgaria and stated that to the north the border following the right bank of the Danube "...to a point to be determined by the European Commission, east of Silistra and from there it will go to the Black Sea south of Mangalia, that territory joins Romania..." (Martens 1878:643). During the meetings of European Commission in Silistra, the authorised representative of the Russian Empire, Captain A. Bogolyubov, submitted a memorandum indicating the predominantly Bulgarian ethnicity of the villages 25-30 kilometers in the eastern and southeastern direction of Silistra. He pointed out that Lipnitsa consisted of 60 houses with an entirely Bulgarian population. He proposed that the border point between Bulgaria and Romania along the Danube River should be set 1 1/4 km from the

village of Projovo (now probably Izvoarele, Constanța region), with the border crossing the dividing line between the land of the villages of Kozludzha and Lipnitsa, the former remaining Romanian, and the second—on Bulgarian territory (Samwer, Hopf 1880:521). This was not accepted and the border between the two countries started 200 meters from the last yards and gardens of Silistra.

On November 18th, 1878, after the Russian occupation troops left Dobruja, the area was occupied by the Romanian army (Anonymous 1917:293). On this day, Romania entered into its right, obtained by the decisions of the Berlin Congress, to rule Northern Dobruja. And the Bulgarians from the village of Lipnitsa were forced to become citizens of the Kingdom of Romania.

CONCLUSION

The examined publications and documents testify to the Bulgarian affiliation of the inhabitants of Lipnitsa and to the interrelation of this village with the city of Silistra. They show additional details to the ethno-demographic, socio-political and economic processes and events in Dobruja during the period 1822-18.11.1878. Coincidentally, the documents concerning Lipnitsa and its inhabitants are now stored in the archives of seven countries. Further scientific analyses of these documents will shed light on the historical development not only of the village of Lipnitsa, but also of the region and the Balkans.

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