



BABEŞ – BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF GEOGRAPHY
DEPARTMENT OF REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY



THE LAND OF VRANCEA.
A STUDY OF REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

PHD THESIS

SUMMARY

Scientific advisor:
Prof. Pompei COCEAN, PhD

PhD Candidate:
Alexandru MUREŞAN

Cluj-Napoca
2012

Table of contents

Introduction

I. METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL ASPECTS

- I.1. Purpose and objectives of the thesis
- I.2. Research principles and methods
- I.3. Theories applicable in Regional Geography
- I.4. Using models in Regional Geography
- I.5. The 5 rules of spatial analysis
- I.6. Interdisciplinary elements within a study of Regional Geography
- I.7. Geographical region
- I.8. The definition of the “land” concept, as a typical geographical region
 - I.8.1. The meanings of “land”
 - I.8.2. The Land of Vrancea and the French “lands”
- I.9. The history of the scientific researches of the Land of Vrancea

II. IDENTITY ELEMENTS OF THE REGION

- II.1. The Land of Vrancea denomination
- II.2. The Land of Vrancea positioning
- II.3. The Land of Vrancea limits
- II.4. The Land of Vrancea mental space
 - II.4.1. The structure of the mental space
 - II.4.2. The components of the mental space
 - II.4.3. The current mental space of Vrancea

III. THE NATURAL COMPONENT OF THE VRANCEA TERRITORIAL SYSTEM

- III.1. The role of the relief in the individuality of the territorial system
 - III.1.1. Subdivisions
 - III.1.2. The geologic support of the Vrancea relief
 - III.1.3. The structural relief
 - III.1.4. The petrography relief
 - III.1.5. The morphological evolution. The fluvial relief
 - III.1.6. Present-day geomorphologic processes
 - III.1.7. Morphometrical elements
 - III.1.8. Earthquakes in Vrancea
 - III.1.9. The functions of the relief
 - III.1.10. The regionalization of the relief by functional criteria
- III.2. The climatic potential and the associated risks
 - III.2.1. Climatic parameters
 - III.2.2. Climatic risks
- III.3. The hydrographical potential
 - III.3.1. Putna catchment basin
 - III.3.2. Șușița catchment basin
 - III.3.3. Lakes and underground waters within the Land of Vrancea
 - III.3.4. Hydrological risks
- III.4. The bio-geographical potential
 - III.4.1. Vegetal associations
 - III.4.1.1 The factors that influence the development of the vegetal associations
 - III.4.1.2. The historical evolution of the forestry found
 - III.4.1.3. Forestry resources
 - III.4.1.4. Herbal vegetal associations
 - III.4.2. The fauna

- III.5. The soils potential
 - III.5.1. Classes and types of soils within the Land of Vrancea
- III.6. The Vranceas protection of the natural components network
 - III.6.1. The creation of the protection network legislation
 - III.6.2. Protected vegetal associations
 - III.6.3. The large carnivores' protection
- IV. THE ANTHROPIC COMPONENT OF THE VRANCEA SYSTEM
 - IV.1. Firsts proves of habitation in the Land of Vrancea
 - IV.2. The evolution in number of the population
 - IV.3. Spatial distribution of population
 - IV.3.1. Density of the population
 - IV.4. The dymanic of the population
 - IV.4.1. Natural growth of the population
 - IV.4.2. The territorial mobility of the population
 - IV.5. Demographical structures
 - IV.5.1. Male / female structure of population
 - IV.5.2. The structure of population by age groups
 - IV.5.3. The structure of population by types of habitat
 - IV.5.4. The matrimonial structure of population
 - IV.5.5. The ethnic structure of population
 - IV.5.6. The ethnic structure of population
 - IV.5.7. The occupational structure of population
 - IV.6. The evolution of the settlements network
 - IV.7. Demographical size and territorial repartition of settlements
 - IV.8. The settlements' typology
- V. INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENTS OF THE VRANCEA TERRITORY
 - V.1. The locative fund of the Land of Vrancea
 - V.2. The water supply and the sewerage systems
 - V.3. The electricity supply network
 - V.4. The natural gas supply and thermal energy networks
 - V.5. The communication infrastructure
 - V.6. The telecommunication infrastructure
 - V.7. The educational and cultural infrastructure
 - V.8. The sanitary infrastructure
 - V.9. The development index of the communes
- VI. THE LAND OF VRANCEA ECONOMY
 - VI.1. Agriculture
 - VI.1.1 The agricultural fund
 - VI.1.2. Animal breeding
 - VI.1.3. Types of crops
 - VI.2. Industrial activities
 - VI.3. Tourism
 - VI.4. Other aspects of the Vrancea economy
- VII. THE SYNTHESIS OF THE VRANCEA TERRITORIAL SYSTEM
 - VII.1. The Chorema
 - VII.2. SWOT Analysis
- Conclusions
- Annexes
- References

Key words: *The Land of Vrancea, region, land, limits, mental space, obști, systemic components, functions, relations.*

Introduction

The PhD thesis „The Land of Vrancea. A study regional geography” has as purpose the detailed study of the region. The Land of Vrancea is an ancient hearth of population, whose distinctive structure of the communities influenced the evolution of the territory throughout time. Named *obști*, these communities, organized by the principle of joint property and the *protimisis* rights, have kept almost unspoiled their territory and rights since the dacian period. In addition to that, we mention the ethno-cultural valences of the mental space, its spirituality and ancient customs.

The study of the natural component of the Vrancea system highlights the great extension of the mountain areas, whose main resource is the forest, followed by the hilly ones, with consequences in the regionalization of the other natural components. The calculation of the diverse parameters was done by using both bibliography formulas and our own algorithms. The economy is dominated by the agricultural activities, followed by the forest exploitation. The regions infrastructure shows rural characteristics, having a moderate degree of modernism.

This study was realized thanks to the guidance and constant support from the scientific advisor, prof. Pompei Cocean, who offered me the possibility of studying a wide range of phenomena within the studied region, guiding me every time that was necessary.

METHODOLOGICAL AND THEORETICAL ASPECTS

Purpose and objectives of the thesis

The first step in realizing a scientific research is to choose an original subject and to analyze it in detail. This papers purpose is to study the Mountains, Depression and Subcarpathians of Vrancea in order to indentify the elements of specificity that make this land a unique region of Romania.

The emplacement of the Land of Vrancea at the intersection of the three great Romanian provinces, the relief that resembles to a natural fortress, although periodically affected by seismic movements, the forest, as a blessing and a curse, the richness of language and traditions of the region, the anthropic component with its advantages and disadvantages, gives us a wide range of research directions and the reason to consider our study as a necessity to comprehend the inner details of the region.

Research principles and methods

The regional geography is a science that benefits of an exhaustive methodology, determined by P. Cocean (2002). The methods used by the researcher to analyze the reality gather a series of research strategies, based on a theoretical foundation. The regional geography uses the same methods as the other geographical sciences, but also has to use inter-disciplinary methods, due to the complexity of a certain region.

To study a genuine mental space, as the Vrancea one, is mandatory to have ethnographic and toponymy knowledge. A population's way of life, its activities and culture are determinant to the evolution of the habitat and the economic activities. The toponymy certifies the presence of some wild fauna elements or how certain settlements were established.

Interdisciplinary elements within a study of Regional Geography

The regional geography studies the physico-geographical, socio-demographical, cultural and economical aspects of a territory and the way that the human society is using it, by adapting to its conditionings, exploiting its resources, improving its surface and optimizing its components functions. Every geographical study starts from the postulate that "there are multiple and complexes relations"¹ between the components of a region, natural or anthropic, depending of the time. To choose the genuine elements of a region, to observe the apparition and repetition rules of a phenomenon and to establish the laws that they obey is possible only through an interdisciplinary study.

Geographical region

The regional geography, as a science, has three basic concepts: the landscape (that includes the ecological, biological and anthropical potentials), the geosystem (as functional structure of the landscapes elements) and the geographical region. This one is a greatest complexity territorial entity, which functionally associates a wide range of landscapes and geosystems.

The definition of the "land" concept, as a typical geographical region

The *land* is "an ethnographic mental space great originality and authenticity"², characteristic to define the territorial identity of some Romanian regions, including the historical Vrancea. The formation of the *lands* as Romanian mental spaces started in the middle Ages, the documents from that time mentioning the *terra* as a *political territory belonging to a feudal lord*. These territories were independent and equal with the neighbors and among them. The first factor that generated the creation of the *lands* was the socio-political and administrative one, which grew more important, without dissociating, than the natural one.

The Land of Vrancea evolved in a rural region, as a closed mental space, being generated by the restrictive relief, as a natural barrier, a weak movement of the population outside the regions borders, the great difficulty for the outlanders to establish and be accepted on the Vrancea territory (with very few exceptions), and the social structures dominated by the local communities (*obști*) with administrative, legal, social and spiritual attributes, capable to solve any individual or community problem at the local level.

¹ Marconis R., 2000, *Introduction à la géographie*, p.83

² Cocean P., Cocean R., 2003, *Regiunea de Nod-Vest a României – entitate sistemică program*, Studia UBB, Geographia, nr.2, p. 21

Studying a *land* from a geographical perspective can be different from the idea that a local person has about his region. The solution is to analyze the region both as a polarized and a perceived space.

The meanings of “land”

From the historical point of view the *land* represents the first organization form of the Romanian society. The *lands* that existed on the Romanian territory have benefited from a certain local autonomy, having their own political, military, administrative and legal structures in the Middle Ages. Some researchers consider that the Great community of Vrancea (Obșteea cea Mare a Vrancei), as a centralized form of organization and administration of the region, during until the creation of the modern Romanian state, has the origins directly in the organization of the dacian populations that lived on this territory. The features that give this region the statute of *land* are the common history, which created the social bonds and customs, and also gave the individuals the feeling of belonging to the community, the crystallization of a cultural area, characterized by a specific folk culture, which created, in a long temporal process, a genuine mental space and the specialized institutions meant to guarantee the privileges the inhabitants were entitled to.

The history of the scientific researches of the Land of Vrancea

A current radiography of a geographical region has more chances to be accurate if observed its evolution in time. The old sources (maps, toponyms, ethnography and literature) are valuable information for the one who tries to understand the becoming of that region.

The first erudite that wrote about Vrancea was Dimitrie Cantemir in his *Descriptio Moldaviae* (written in 1714 honoring the demand of the Royal Academy of Berlin and published in the Netherlands in 1737).

Starting with the twentieth century the studies concerning Vrancea territory, totally or partially, or its demographic and economic elements are more common. From the series of general studies, but comprising references to Vrancea, we are mentioning only *The Geography of Romania*, 4 volumes, (1983, 1984, 1987, 1992), realized by a team lead by L. Badea and D. Oancea, *Regional geography of Romania* (2008), P. Cocean and S. Filip, *Physical geography of Romania*, 2 volumes (2005 and 2007), by M. Ielenicz, *Carpathians and Subcarpathians of Romania* (2006), Gr. P. Pop, *The relief of Romania* (1974), by Gr. Posea, N. Popescu and M. Ielenicz, *Physical geography of Romania* (1980), Al. Roșu, *Geotectonic of Romania* (1984), M. Săndulescu, *Contributions to the study of Romanian joint property villages* (1998), 3 volumes, by H.H. Stahl, *Romania* (1974), V. Tufescu, *The geography of the Romania's waters* (1972), I. Ujvari, *The geography of Romanian Carpathians and Subcarpathians* (1982) by Valeria Velcea and Al. Savu etc.

IDENTITY ELEMENTS OF THE REGION

The Land of Vrancea denomination

The first documentary attestation of Vrancea, under the name of Varancha, was on July 2, 1431, during the reign of Alexander the Good, in a letter written "in Latin by the

Voivode of Transylvania, Ladislau Apor, by which it informed the jude of Braşov that Alexander the Good concentrated troops to Putna ... He heard the news from some Transylvanians who went on the road to Vrancea (*per viam Varanča*)."³

Since the popular name of a region needs a long time to settle, we can say that Vrancea, both as a toponym but also as a confederation of Carpathian village communities (called *obşti*), as N. Iorga called it, had already existed for quite a long time before being written down. The origin of the strange name Vrancea had been discussed by many researchers and explained in various ways.

The Land of Vrancea positioning

Occupying an area of approximately 1,407 km², the region which is the subject of this study is located between 45°37' and 46°02' parallels north, respectively between 26°22' and 27°00' meridians east.

Its position outside the Carpathian Curvature, stretching from the highest peaks forming the drainage divide between Olt and Siret river basins, up to the second row of sub-Carpathian hills, gives the landscape an altitudinal distance of 1596 m, thus influencing all other natural components of the territorial system.

From the socio-historical view, the Land of Vrancea is the meeting point of the three Romanian historical provinces, namely Moldova (to which it is integrated), Transylvania and Vallachia. The current administrative division includes the land of Vrancea into Vrancea County which, in its turn, is part the South-East Development Region.

The Land of Vrancea limits

When establishing limits to a geographical region called *land*, such as the Land of Vrancea, we must consider a very complex matter which includes both theoretical and practical aspects. The institutional limits of the Land of Vrancea were established by stakeholders interested during history in its economic resources and its strategic position. The political factors had also a saying in the regional delimitation of the Land of Vrancea, namely that certain interests and territorial claims outside the region were supported by political decision makers against local communities (*obşti*). Relevant to this end are the Szeklers' territorial claims supported by the Habsburg Empire, but also those of the Moldavian boyars. The natural environment of the region strengthened but at the same time enclosed the Land of Vrancea. Depressions were suitable for living and the surrounding mountains and hills provided resources, shelter and natural borders from the neighbouring regions. The social limits of the Land of Vrancea can be established on various criteria. Given the ethnic structure of the population, made up of 99.85% Romanians, the delimitation from the Land of Bârsa, on the west, becomes clear. The same goes for the delimitation based on the religious structure of the population, which is almost entirely (96.58%) orthodox. From the cultural perspective, by highlighting the divisions that traditional communities have imagined, the net limits, the clear oppositions, correspond to basic human needs: to invent places or territories in terms of which it is easier to be identified with, to claim membership to a particular community and at the same time to be distinguished from others. Intra-regional limits we

³ Conea I., 1993, *Vrancea*, p.41

have adopted in the cartographic representations in this paper correspond to the limits of administrative divisions currently existing in the region under discussion.

Considering all the above criteria, we propose as the limit of the the Land of Vrancea a line which follows the next reference points: Zboina Neagră Peak, the drainage divide with Transylvania (including Lepșei Peak, Musat Peak, Lăcăuți Peak, Plaiul Giurgiului Peak), Furul Mare Peak, Monteoru Peak, interfluve between Zăbala Basin and Râmnicul Sărat, Reghiu and Milcov basins, respectively Răchitașu hill (867m) – Răiuț Hill – Odobești Hill alignment, Putna river bed east of Vidra, interfluve between Putna and Șușița up to Răchitașu Hill (892m), Șușița river bed east of Soveja and interfluve between Șușița and Cașin basins.

The Land of Vrancea mental space

A group of people is adjusting to the natural conditions it is living through its way of life. The environment can influence the life of a community, but not exclusively. The Vrancea community assimilated and assumed the territory it had settled, inhabited and integrated in its own scale of values. The traditional Vrancea mental map defines features of the highly particular and confined ethnographic space. The sheltered position between the Carpathians and the Sub-Carpathians of the depression where Țara Vrancei dwells was one of the main reasons why the village communities united and isolated themselves from outside influences. The legal and administrative body governing the specific pre-state form of *land* is Obștea cea Mare a Vrancei. We cannot overlook the importance of privileges that the Vrancea inhabitants enjoyed (pastoral, commercial, fiscal, military) in consolidating their mental space.

Vrancea mental space is based on the land (the main asset under possession), namely the mountains, forests and pastures, of greatest economic importance, the house (which, due to the specific form of organization of Vrancea communities, it could very well be one and the same with the village) and the people (family, ethnicity). The joint property, the migration, the use of the country's main resource (the forest) took place differently and subject to customs, personified by the village communities representing the upper level of the mental space and the main form of organization of Vrancea community. Myths and legends have an important place in the mind of its inhabitants. Well known are the legends of the eponymous hero settling villages and the Miorița hero. Any incomprehensible phenomena have become myths, bringing a touch of human to this mental space. Everything is subordinated to the Deity, who is above everything in the mental hierarchy, as proof of keeping alive the ancient belief. In the rural area, the dwelling zone represented by villages is usually limited as territory but relevant as importance. The Christian faith has been and remains the centre of Vrancea spirituality, as evidenced nowadays by the great attendance of the church-goers to services and Orthodox holidays.

Vrancea mental space was designed with the help of its defining traits, such as: occupations, social structure and the specific type of joint property, traditions and customs over time, the folk culture and spiritual elements that governed the daily life of inhabitants. The main occupations by which the inhabitants of the Land of Vrancea exploited its natural

environment were shepherding and working in the forest, and the secondary occupations were harvesting, beekeeping, fishing and mining, represented by salt mining activity.

Shepherding, one of the oldest agricultural occupations specific to the Carpatho-Danubian-Pontic space, left significant traces in the structure and economic life of the settlements and the mentality of inhabitants (Mureșan Al., Pop Ana-Maria, 2010). The origin of most villages in Vrancea is strictly linked to the main occupations of the population, and the formation of villages due to pastoral occupations is a certain fact. Other ways of forming new villages are: settlement of secluded places, differences between villagers, occupying strategic places (Tulnici, Bodești). A peculiarity of the living and therefore of the way the agricultural land is used is the presence of seasonal dwellings called "târle". Another type of seasonal dwelling, determined by the pastoral characteristic of the region, is the sheepfold. Inside this territory, the sheepfolds occupy mountain pastures with vegetation rich in nutrients necessary for the flocks of sheep. Transhumant grazing in Romania has been subject to many researches. In Vrancea, most people practice this type of grazing. This does not exclude the fact that important herders, such as the people in Negrilești or Soveja, moved their flocks on the pastures of Vrancea Mountains during summer and for the winter period outside the Carpathian areas with a milder climate. The migration axes of the flocks of sheep in the Eastern Carpathians bend zone shows the identification of a pastoral area highly concentrated around pastoral centers, while the physical and geographical factors (location, mountain peaks with extended platforms, large pastures and hayfields but also mountain passes) offer an environment favourable for extensive sheep farming. On the one hand, there is an increased intensity of sheep movement from the Land of Bârsa to the Land of Vrancea and, on the other hand, an extra-strong pastoral concentration, as reflected in the local economy of the area under study (Mureșan Al., Pop Ana - Maria, 2010). Movement of herds has represented a way of preserving folk customs and beliefs, during the famous "country fairs", respectively the traditional holidays known as "*nedei*" where everybody gathered to spend time and to socialize, but also to sell their products.

Peasant crafts which have been preserved and refined over the centuries included: wood and leather manufacturing, ceramics, textiles and decoration of various objects. Egg decorating (known in the region as worked eggs) is another traditional craft in Vrancea which usually takes place during Easter holidays, with an exceptional artistic value. For processing raw products obtained from activities conducted in the region, craftsmen have created a variety of technical facilities which processed especially the inexpensive and non-polluting energy of the water courses. Among them we mention the mills, which processed the agricultural production (both grains grown in the region and those obtained by selling pastoral products), and the milling machines called *piva* and *dârsta* with the help of which textile fibres were obtained, as well as the saws and sawmills for woodworking. The social life, influenced by the collective organization of the communities (*obști*), used to entail participation of the people living in these communities (called *obșteni*) to all artistic events. The folk dances performed by all members of the community were a good opportunity to socialize, having both cultural and social functions as well as symbolic meaning. We must not forget the old tradition of the masks dances that symbolizes the fight between the Old Year and the New Year. In Vrancea, birth in the rural community was more than a simple

biological fact, meaning the coming of a new member of the community. The family and close relatives celebrated the christening both by a religious service and a party afterwards, and through a traditional bathing of the new born by the godmother. Marriage was a very special moment in the lives of the young people, both by changing their social status and duties and by its compulsoriness. Celibacy was stigmatized, and spells were often performed to avoid it. Customs during death of a member of the community are considered by the researchers as the oldest preserved in the region. Their specificity lies in the fact that the great passing is seen as a natural phenomenon and is even seen as a reason of joy for the person who no longer endured the hardships of life. Money lending in Vrancea took place only at night, without witnesses, in the attic of the person lending money (money was saved up in the attic), and only the lender and the borrower were present. The amount was marked on the tally and the date of reimbursement was established from which no deviation was accepted. The amount was reimbursed in the same way, with the involvement of only the two relevant parties. As interesting was the customs of writing the will, which took place as follows: feeling that the end was near, the head of the family would call his heirs and leaves to each one of them what he would think fit. No disputes were allowed, even though the girls would usually receive less inheritance and the youngest son would get the house.

Vrancea mythology includes a wide range of natural phenomena and spiritual experiences projected into the collective mentality. Based on elements of Dacian mythology, it is closely related to the living environment, mainly represented by mountains and forests. Space is not more abstract and more neutral than time, each element being assigned supernatural characteristics. The well-known legend of the old woman Vrâncioaia may be, in the opinion of H.H. Stahl, not just a fable, but have a real foundation based on a historical fact. This legend would be a literary interpretation of the gesture of gratitude of Stephen the Great for the support of Vrancea people in conquering Crăciuna fortress on Milcov Valley. The privileges granted on this occasion is also the reward given by the great Moldavian prince, but also an incentive for their further dedication. "The most important Romanian lyrical ballad, called Miorița, whose origin cannot be separated from the Carpathian lands" (P. Cocean, 2004) represents the transposition into mythology of the direct connection between man and the living and working environment.

Folk culture and civilization, which reflects the resilience of the social system in Vrancea, survived and adapted continuously to changes occurred during its multimillenary existence, whether talking about changes to the natural elements, or changes in the social-economic and political conditions. The artistic and architectural heritage, which is an integral part of the culture, stands proof. Traditional architecture is reflected in the traditional single-storey houses in Vrancea area. As regards the number of rooms, it can vary from one to four rooms (the room, the guest room, the porch and the store room / kitchen). Every house usually has an enclosed porch, called *târnaș*, which in summertime was used even for sleeping. The main construction materials were: stone (for foundations), wood having the most important role, because it was used to erect the house from the foundation to the roof and the clay, used for exterior and interior plastering. Decorative elements of the traditional architecture of Vrancea, with clear aesthetic properties, include the carved railings, rounded roofs, decorated well-sized gates, and especially carved outer pillars that support the roof and

the porch. The main manufacturing techniques for the decorative elements were the carving and notch (Cherciu I., 2004). The interior of the traditional home is designed based on two elementary principles: functionality and aesthetics. The unity and efficiency of space is striking in the resulting interior design. A specific element of the household was the yard, defined as vital space with own particularity, separated by the neighbours by fences.

The traditional costumes depict a discreet ornamentation but successfully manage to highlight the cut lines. Embroidery applied to various parts of the costume, either for male or female, shows mastery of those who manufactured them, but could be an indicator of the social status. The female costume is made up of three main parts: shirt, skirt and towel. A specific element is the twisted sleeve shirt. The tire on women's head had a double purpose. On the one side it was a necessity because it was considered to be a great shame for women to be seen uncovered by foreigners, on the other hand the tire would indicate the social status and the age of women. Only girls wore their hair uncovered, braided and / or decorated as a sign of virginity. The head towel is one of the most representative and traditional part of a female's costume in Vrancea. Men wore elegant, long, wide sleeves and high-collared shirts, provided with black buttons. The ornaments were discrete, arranged as points of colour on the collar, cuffs and joints of the component parts (Bănăţeanu T., Stoica Georgeta, 1988). Lamb fur hat was a mandatory accessory of the traditionally male attire, due to local customs. The trousers without the front element (*işarii fără faţă*), a unique element of the local attire, were very practical. They were generally longer and worn with wrinkles on the legs. In the cold season, they wore thicker coats, *sumanul* and *sarica*, or leather coats and breastplate, worn both by women and men. The most specific element of the Vrancean attire is *gluga ciobanului* (the shepherd's hood). Even if the use of the item of clothing is evidenced by the name it bears, the hood was also worn by women in bad weather. The shepherd's hood was made from a rectangular piece of wool fabric folded at one end and sewn to a specific form of cap. Since it was so useful it became a necessary accessory, being used both as a protective coat against the cold, snow and rain, but also as scrip in good weather. Traditional shoes for both genders were the raw pig hide sandals, worn over wool foot wraps called *obiele* or *călţuni*, tied with *ojiţe* made of hemp or horsehair, as found in most mountainous regions in Romania.

Folk literature was significant and was achieved by passing the epic, lyrical and dramatic works by word of mouth, both inside and outside the region. Dissemination of texts was facilitated by such factors as the main fairs, the *nedeia*, and the practice of transhumance. External creations entered the region, but also "exports" of literary texts took place. The most important, both regionally and nationally, is Mioriţa. The Land of Vrancea was the heart of the popular creative spirit which produced the masterpiece of the Romanian literature, Mioriţa ballad.

Socio-economic community (*obşte*) structures are the basis of the establishment and the resilience of mental space of Vrancea area, under the joint property over land which created very strong connections between community members. Organization of people's communities is rooted back to the primeval era. The main right guaranteed by membership to the community was the use of land (mountain pastures and forests) in joint property. But membership to the community not only guaranteed rights but also imposed obligations,

among which the most important was to make people aware of their place within the community, and to better understand what he/she needs to do to be a human.

The current mental space of Vrancea was influenced by modernization that naturally penetrated the places where invading populations had no chance, ever since the early twentieth century. Over time, Vrancea mental space developed in a way that many researchers consider it unfortunate. The survey carried out on the site showed that the alteration of the traditional mental map occurred more aggressively in Vidra, Vizantea-Livezi and Soveja villages compared with the rest of Vrancea communes. A greater number of elements of modernity penetrated Vidra and Soveja villages. Vizantea-Livezi depends more on the concentration of the supra-communal centre Vidra than other communes. To determine the values currently governing Vrancea mental space, we applied a questionnaire on site. 90% of the respondents questioned were inhabitants of the region, but we also questioned people from neighbouring localities (Reghiu, Andreiașu, Câmpuri) or those frequently travelling to the Land of Vrancea from the urban area (Focșani, Galați). Male respondents were slightly higher in number, with age ranges between 19 and 74 years old. The main feature of the Vrancea inhabitants is their attachment to ancestral mountains (according to S. Mehedinți they were blessed mountains, where life was lapsing smoothly as the stars on the sky), which gave them a great sense of freedom and for which they fought fearlessly against foreign powers, included empires. The relationship between man and earth is still very strong. Wisdom and respect were also equally answered and they refer to the good breeding of the inhabitants of the region. Hospitality is another quality often mentioned by respondents, which we could personally appreciate in the region. However, we emphasize that in order to appreciate this quality at its true value, it is advisable to leave aside the main roads, where modernism has a more intense presence. Diligence is often mentioned in the context of carrying out heavy work in harsh conditions, on an abrupt terrain and a changing climate that challenged and strengthened the personality of character Vrancea inhabitants.

THE NATURAL COMPONENT OF THE VRANCEA TERRITORIAL SYSTEM

The role of the relief in the individuality of the territorial system

The morphology of the studied area gives us the reason to say that The Land of Vrancea is almost perfectly isolated by the nearby relief units. This was concluded by all who studied The Carpathians and Subcarpathians of Curvature. The existence of Vrancea Depression is hard being seen by the viewer from the Siret Valley and so it offered the necessary place for the layout of the population who was to develop its own traditions and habits, in this way giving birth to the very genuine mental space: The Land of Vrancea.

Subdivisions

The main units of Vrancea's relief are Vrancea Mountains (which were subdivided by D. Bălțeanu and Ioana Ștefănescu (1987) in several subdivisions, among which are, in the area we analyze: Lăcăuți – Goru, Lepșa Mountains, Zboina Neagră, Coza, Zboina Frumoașă, Furu, Vrancea and Soveja Depressions (Soveja Depression, on Șușița; Leadova – Vășui

Depression, on Putna; Năruja Depression, at the confluence of Năruja and Zăbala; Nereju Depression, on Zăbala), Vrancea Subcarpathians (which close at the east side the sub-mountainous depressionary area and forms a series of hogbacks: Răchitașul Mare – 937m; Răiuțul – 966m; Răchitașul Mic – 870m) and Vidra interacolinary Depression (limited by Momâia Hill and Odobești Knoll – 996m).

The geologic support of the Vrancea relief

At the exterior of Carpathians' curvature, The Land of Vrancea has a double structure. The sub layer of the mountain area is dominated by the folded flysch deposits and in the east area is a sequence of Paleocene and Neocene deposits (in Vrancea and Soveja Depressions and in the internal Subcarpathians) as well as Quaternary deposits in the eastern part of the region. The geologic units in the studied territory may be presented in two individual areas: Moldavidae Area (the subarea of the external flysch) and Avanfossa Area.

The structural relief

The alignment of the Mountain Catenaries as well as of Vrancea Mountains, their epirogenetic movements, the depressionary alignments and the conservation of the flat levels depend a great deal of the structural or tectonic – structural condition of the mountain units. In this way many of the development alignments have been conserved, the actual relief being the result of these alignments and it often borrows these alignments, molding them in different cycles of erosion.

The petrography relief

The mountain area of the studied region is dominated by the presence of brownstone which compacted or in layer with other stones with similar properties (cemented marlstones, micro conglomerates) form long rounded heights separated by deep valleys having slope ruptures due to lithology. The erosion trials are extremely frequent especially on the slopes where the rocks' dissolutions and their alteration may bring along processes of movement. In the areas where different rocks with different attributes appear may result spectacular forms of relief: gorges, waterfalls, towers.

The morphological evolution. The fluvial relief

A very important feature of the Land of Vrancea relief is the cross-cut character of its main valleys, as an entire (Năruja) or as sectors (Putna, Zăbala, Șușița). This is a result of their installation on fault lines or on geological discontinuities.

In the depressionary area we will take into consideration the levels of terraces as a result of the morphological evolution under the rivers' molding.

Present-day geo-morphological processes

According to the antagonism principle, the relief is the result of two main categories of processes: interior and exterior ones. As the interior ones create the great units of relief, the exterior ones shape them giving them individual characters. The most important shaping agents are: air, water, plants, animals and mankind.

Morphometrical elements

The *altitudinal amplitude* of the Land of Vrancea is of 1575 m, and it is the difference from the highest point (Goru Peak, 1875 m) and the flattest one (Putna river bed at the external limit of the Vidra commune).

The *fragmentation depth* of the relief is between 50 – 100 m/km² in the depressionary area but may be 300 – 400 m/km² in the mountain area.

The *fragmentation density* of relief is the greatest, even of 4,5 km/km², in the springs area of the main rivers (Putna, Coza, Năruja, Zăbala, Șușița), due to the local gathering of the rivers as well as of the multiple gatherings.

The *declivity of the slopes* has a wide range of values, from the plain territories with declivity close to zero, to values of 80° in the structural or petrographic peaks. (Tișița Gorges, Pig's Stone etc.)

The *aspect of the slopes* is in close connection with the hydrographic network, having multiple implications in lands' usage, due to the discrepancy of the solar energy.

The *overlapping* of the relief in The Land of Vrancea may be realized in four main steps: the high mountains, the low mountains, the subcarpathian hills and the depressionary area.

Earthquakes in Vrancea

Vrancea is by far the most important region in the entire Carpathian system, from the point of view of earthquakes' activity, their area of maximum activity and their persistent character. Earthquakes are the result of the movement and collision of micro-plates in the area.

The implications are multiples at a regional and extraregional level. At a regional level the impact of the seismic instability is felt in the slopes' degree of stability, causing erosion and landslides. These movements may affect other natural components, such as the hydrographic network, and the human activity through the alterations brought to the agricultural land or affecting the infrastructure in the area.

The climatic potential and the associated risks

The geographic location of the Land of Vrancea makes it part of a continental temperate climate, with influences from the northern part of Europe. In this way there are four seasons, with great amplitude of temperature between winter and summer. The position in the exterior of the Carpathians and the morphology of the region are the factors that generates the temperature inversions within the depressionary area and the formation of foehn winds on the south-eastern slopes, resulting the presence of certain vegetal elements as presented in the vegetation chapter. The altitudinal amplitude makes 3 climatic zones: mountain, hill and plain. The general atmospheric movements are influenced by the orientation of slopes, which very often are a barrier for the air circulation.

A specific character of the Land of Vrancea is that, from an aeolian point of view, this region is the most important in the manifestation of foehn, at Carpathians' exterior and The Subcarpathians of Camber. Another specific element is the presence of many days of calm in the depressionary area, as mentioned.

The hydrographical potential

The Land of Vrancea is an exoreic region, being drained by Putna and its tributaries. The main direction of draining is from west to east, emphasizing the „ring” created by the

local rivers, Putna and Zăbala having the source in Goru – Lăcăuți Peak, the main mountainous range of the Land of Vrancea.

The main valleys (Putna, Zăbala, Tișița, Coza or Năruja) have an aspect of valleys with contrasting sectors. The most important convergent area is the Grumaz depressionary basin that represents the lowest erosional level for the rivers confluent here Putna, Zăbala and Văsui.

As regarding the economical value of the mineral springs, the most important locations as for therapeutic springs are: Soveja (also due to the infrastructure), Lepșa – Putna Valley (due to the recent touristic infrastructure and also to the morphetic presence near Putna spring, at the interaction of Tarcău depisots and Marginal Unit) and most of all Vizantea, with a great natural potential, but still unused. Associated to the mineral springs are the therapeutic muds.

The hydrological risks are represented by the high floods. The most frequent they occur in spring, from the rains. They bring along the slopes erosion, land movements or alluvial deposits.

The bio-geographical potential

The main type of vegetation in The Land of Vrancea is the *forest*, exception of few areas in the Vidra intercolinary depression, part of forest steppe. Man's contribution changed the main component of the vegetation, especially in the depressionary areas, where the lands are used for the agriculture, and many of the terraces became human settlements. The forests in the mountain area, being the most important vegetal association of the region, have suffered alterations both in composition and in spreading.

The fauna in Vrancea Mountains is very diverse, especially in the Putna-Vrancea Natural Park, which is the second area in the country as density of big carnivores: bear, wolf and lynx. The presence of large populations of these species that are in the top of the trophic pyramid is an indicator of the richness both in quality and in quantity of the studied area. The otter (*Lutra lutra*), next to big carnivores, is a species of maximum importance in the creation of the Putna – Vrancea Natural Park as it represents an important population at the European level. The black goat (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) re-appeared in Vrancea Mountains after bringing 13 individuals to Tișița Valley, between 1982 – 1984 from Bucegi and Retezat Mountains

The soils potential

The factors created proper conditions for 13 types of soil in the Land of Vrancea, which were integrated in 8 classes according to the new soil classification system. The most spread are districambosols (where the rocks are acid: brownstone, schysts) followed by eutricambosols (on basic rocks: limestones, lime conglomerates) and preluvosols (on loess and sand deposits).

The Vranceas protection of the natural components network

The existence of an area that has been declared the second in Romania as density of big carnivores (bear, wolf, lynks), the presence of certain compact forest habitats, of some other species as the black goat, the otter, the wild cat, the mountain eagle, as well as

preserving some local habits and craft traditions are the arguments of the foundation of The Putna – Vrancea Natural Park.

THE ANTHROPIC COMPONENT OF THE VRANCEA SYSTEM

Firsts proves of habitation in the Land of Vrancea

The nucleus of the population in Vrancea was closely related to the accessibility in the territory, the natural protection and the resources the Carpathian space offered. One of these old populations who descended since the Superior Paleolithic occupied the most auspicious lands on the upper Putna, Zăbala and Șușița rivers. The archeological discoveries from Bârsești and Tichiriș are testimonials that the fire, bone tools, stone and silex were used.

The evolution in number of the population

Regarding the number of the population, the Land of Vrancea, being a mountain region, is more like other village regions in Romania (the Land of the Moți, the Land of Zarand and the Land of Beiuș) regions that represented real basins of populations and of work force. The maximum number of population was in 1970 - 48.957 inhabitants. In the following years this number decreased as a result of the industrialization promoted by the communism.

Spatial distribution of population

From the degree of occupancy of the region, there are two categories of territories: oecumene – the depressionary areas Vrancea, Soveja and Vidra, the mountain sectors of the main valleys (Șușița, Putna, Lepșa, Năruja, Zăbala) and the inferior parts of the versants and suboecumene the high regions, the superior part of the forest level, where the human presence is felt only through the grazing activities, the touristic element being extremely weak.

The dynamic of the population

The population in the Land of Vrancea is an open system, in which the entrances are represented by births and immigration and the exits by deceases and emigrations. Also, this system integrated, by hierarchy, superior demographical systems, which influences it.

The *natural growth* of the population in the studied region has values that descend in time, first of all because of the birth decrease (43,99%) but also due to the increase of the mortality (11,11%).

The *migration balance* has negative values in all of the villages within the Land of Vrancea, most obvious being Nistorești commune – with the greatest loss of population in the studied period (1990 – 2009). The lowest difference between immigration and emigration is in Soveja, which is among the villages with greatest migration balance, even if the value is negative.

Demographical structures

The *average age* of the population shows that the superior catchment basin of Zăbala is an important source of younger population, Nereju commune having the highest demographic potential. The north – central part of the Land of Vrancea has an older population. Soveja has a value with 4 years bigger than the other communes of the region.

The Land of Vrancea, old hearth of Romanian population, with active and selective community, kept its own *mono-ethnic structure* along the centuries. In 2002 99,85 % of the population were Romanians. There are 4 communes entirely Romanian (Nereju, Paltin, Valea Sării and Vrâncioaia).

The *religious structure* proves the tight bond between the Romanian people and Christianity, which probably is the result of overlapping the Romanian people genesis with the Christianity in this part of Europe. In 2002 orthodox Christians were the most important religious community of the analyzed land: 96,58%.

The evolution of the settlements network

The Vrancea settlements formed in a millennial process, starting in Paleolithic. From the first inhabitations, influenced by the sheltering conditions of the territory and the water sources it evolved throughout a complex process to the present forms of habitation. Typological, the most complex evolution of the Vrancea villages starts with the sheepfold stage to reach a complex spatial and functional form.

Settlements' typology was influenced by the morphological diversity of the Land of Vrancea, which was the base of the different forms of the built area that had to adapt to the local conditions.

INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENTS OF THE VRANCEA TERRITORY

The locative found of the Land of Vrancea

The numeric evolution of the houses was positive in the latest 20 years. Regionally speaking, Tulnici commune distinguishes by a high rate of real-estate progress, especially Lepșa and Greșu villages. The touristic potential of the upper Putna Valley tempted investments in construction of holiday houses or boarding houses that brought along investments in infrastructure.

The water supply and the sewerage system became a necessity along with the economical growth of the region and the modernization of the rural life, including the electronic equipments. Even if the centralized water supply and the sewerage system is not present in all communes within the Land of Vrancea, most of the houses managed to solve the problem individually.

The electricity supply network is based on the infrastructure of producing, transforming and transporting electric energy in the Land of Vrancea. It had its advantages

and disadvantages. Among the last ones we mention Lepşa village, where a great amount of holiday houses and boarding houses were built, the consumption grew and it showed a deficit of 5 MW installed power on the cable. (PATJ Vrancea, 2007, Alexandra Tătaru, 2008).

The communication infrastructure is represented only by the road system. Even since the Middle Ages the Land of Vrancea was crossed by one of the most important communication routes between the intra and extra Carpathian regions - *Via Varanča*, that gave the name of the region. Nowadays the most important road that crosses the region is DN2D, and it joins Focşani (situated on DN 2, E85) and Târgu Secuiesc (situated on DN 11, E574), crossing the Camber Carpathians: Tulnici – Lepşa – Greşu – Ojdula.

The telecommunication infrastructure grew along with the implementation of digital and mobile telephony and the communication possibilities increased a lot. The main mobile phone networks cover the communes territory but with lacking areas. Internet became easier to access with the nowadays technologies.

The educational and cultural infrastructure is acceptable, although the birth rate decreased in the 90's and also did the pupils' number. This brought along the decrease of the educational units. In most villages the highest educational level is gymnasium. Highschool and posthighschool education is done within the „Simion Mehedinţi” High School in Vidra. The cultural infrastructure is represented by public and private libraries, museum collections, monuments with archeological, historical and architectural value.

The sanitary infrastructure is represented by a communal hospital, public or private medical units (specialists, family and dentists), pharmacies and pharmaceutical nodes.

The development index of the communes

From this point of view the most developed commune is Tulnici, the only one with maximum score. In the developed class are included the communes Vidra, Bârseşti and Năruja. Fortunately, no commune is included in the class of poor communes.

THE LAND OF VRANCEA ECONOMY

Agriculture

In the Land of Vrancea the agriculture type is one of subsistence, because of the natural conditions which are not auspicious for agriculture but also because of the technological factors which are insufficient in the region. The work character is at home for everyday living.

The agricultural fund in Vrancea is more extended in Negrileşti and Vrâncioaia communes, where predominant are the hayfields. In the mountain areas where the agricultural fund represents less than a quarter of the communes' surface, the most surface is the pastures and the hayfields due to the mountain meadows. The commune with the most extended areas

for pastures is Nistorești, and with hayfields is Vrâncioaia. The most extended arable areas are in Vidra and Vizantea-Livezi, due to the less sharp relief in the Vidra depression. Restrictions in practicing the agriculture are imposed in the areas near to the water courses (with floods risks) or on the highest mountains. On the versants having slopes of 5-15°, very extended at the contact between the Vrancea Mountains and the Vrancea Depression agriculture may be practiced.

The natural vegetation influences the agricultural development and also the extension of the plots of land included in the agricultural fund. The role of the forest is not only restrictive in the extension of the agricultural land, but can be also good for the culture of the plants by protecting against specific climatic factors (strong wind, snow) and by keeping the humidity in the soil and releasing it gradually. The areas with severe erosion and severe sliding are a problem in the depressionary area. Measurements for reintroducing these plots of land in the agricultural circuit must be taken, and efforts for making them steady must be done.

In what concerns the technological factors of the agricultural development, in Zăbala basin they are less evolved. We are not talking only from the local or individual economy point of view but also from the agricultural lands that are not proper for mechanical activities.

Concluding all of the above, the agricultural areas are situated mostly on the terraces and on the less inclined slopes. The embankments and the activities made for increasing lands' optimization may create new agricultural areas, with high capacity for the region, but there is also the risk of seismic activity to be taken into consideration.

Animal breeding is the main part of the agriculture in the region. The relief, the climate and the vegetation have dictated the way of living of the people. The pastoral way of living in the Land of Vrancea is a cause and a consequence of the agricultural land use. This part of the agriculture is developed in the region due to the presence of extended grazing areas. Even if the transhumant migrations are no longer practiced in the region, the summer grazing on the high altitude pastures is one of the most common activities in the region. In numbers, the cattle are predominant in Vidra, Nereju and Vrâncioaia communes, and the sheep are predominant in Negrileşti and Paltin. Cattle's breeding, as part of the economy, is based on the pastures and hayfields near the settlements but it is also preferred due to the higher productivity (daily milk quantity) and better efficiency. The swine number is bigger in Vidra, Paltin and Nereju, and the poultry are more common in Vizantea-Livezi, Paltin and Soveja.

Milk production (counting here the cattle and the sheep milk) is higher in the villages with cattle breeding as the cattle produce more milk than sheep. Milk production brought a great development of the region, the main goal being increasing this part of the economy. The communes with the more poultry in the region (Vizantea – Livezi și Paltin) are the most important producers of eggs. The meat producers are Nereju and Spulber communes, and the wool producers are the traditional pastoral communes Negrileşti and Paltin.

In conclusion, Vrancea region is among the most important regions for the formation and development of the transhumant grazing, even if nowadays it decreased or became more individual. The authorities and the local community are trying to develop breeding respecting

the european standards and also trying to maintain the local breeding tradition (Mureșan Al., Pop Ana-Maria, 2010).

The representatives agricultural *crops* are corn (in 10 of the 14 villages the corn represents 50% of the arable land), wheat (the most extended plots being within Soveja commune) sun flower (in Vizantea – Livezi), rape (Valea Sării), forage plants (over 75% of the arable land in Tulnici), potatoes and vegetables (reduced in the region and met in Vidra and Nereju). Analyzing the data concerning the surfaces of different types of crops, we concluded that in the period 2000 – 2009 the plots of lands with potatoes plantations have extended continuously, as a consequence of this plant's great adaptability, which generates increased productivity.

Industrial activities

The natural resources in the Land of Vrancea are pretty diverse, but their capitalization is quite weak. The main resources are vegetal, agricultural but in a small amount there are ground resources too. These cannot be exploited because of the relief conditions and of the low efficiency for the region. It may be exploited sand, ghips – in Soveja, brownstone in Năruja, limestones in Putna Valley – Lepsa, and clay – Vidra. Some believe there is oil and natural gas in the area, on the upper Putna and Zabala rivers. Electric energy is being produced in Greșu, Zăbala and Năruja.

Vegetal outgrowths (fruits of the local plants, mushrooms, honey plants or medical plants) and the agricultural ones (plants, milk, meat, wool, skins) could develop the local producers no matter if they are supply producers, textile or skin producers, but the investments are minimum. There are local producers of alcohol made from fruits. One of the main activities is the wood exploitation. This developed from the traditional work in the woods to forest societies that brought along the forest plunder. The new politics of re-forestation and sustainable forest exploitation, based on a modern legislation, have as a result the recovering, even if it is only partial, of region's forestry resources.

The local artisans and use the local resources, especially wood, wool and skins. They create in a series of traditional shops a wide variety of traditional products for both local consumption and extra-regional commerce.

Tourism

The touristic potential is a premise for the region. The infrastructure development as well as the development of touristic activities may be made according to the present laws of protecting the environment. The touristic potential is a great one in the region. The relief (peaks, table lands, lawns, different erosion elements) offers an attractive element for the touristic activity. The great number of protected areas is a warranty for the perseveration of the natural elements.

Human pollution is very low in the region, making this area highly attractive. The air quality is very high and, in addition to the natural conditions of the region, is the most important factor of in the development of the balneo-therapeutical centers. The climate is gentle, especially in the depressionary areas, offering great part of the year for the touristic activities. We are talking about a microclimate totally different from the urban one, with a

great number of sunny days. The mountains have a great potential for the development of the infrastructure required to practice the winter sports.

The hydrologic touristic resources are spectacular, like the valley of Putna and Mişuna, gorges and defiles (Tişiţa Gorges, Zăbala Gorges) but also the lake basins and the therapeutical value of the natural springs. The touristic vegetal resources are represented by special elements like the pines in The Pine Hole Reservation, the juniper-tree associations in the Goru Mountain Reservation, the yew which is protected within Tişiţa Natural Reservation. On the other hand, the diversity and the great number of the wild animals is another touristic attraction. Some of them are protected by the law like the black goat. The great value of the deer and bear trophies obtained by the hunters in the The Land of Vrancea is another trump for this region. The rich animal fund fascinates the tourists with important incomes interested in hunting, but also encouraging the animal watching tourism. There are places for animal watching in Putna – Vrancea Natural Park. Among the most important species of fish is the trout, especially the rainbow trout and the silvery one. These can be found in Lepşa trout farm, one of the biggest in Romania, which has 18 tanks and two incubators.

The natural risks, especially the geomorphological ones, are restrictive for the development of the rural tourism, because it affects the infrastructure and bring along conditions for the investments. Regarding the human potential in the touristic development both the material and spiritual elements are attractive. The Land of Vrancea is a traditional hearth of inhabitation, with a great ethnographic, folk and cultural background. Just to emphasize we have the traditional houses still preserved. The cheese models are famous too, made out of wood, along with the wooden bowls, whistlers, shepherd staves and masks that are characteristic for the region. The pottery is still a craftsmanship in the area, well known being Iveşti village in Vidra commune. The potters use a delicate paste, very much alike Cucuteni culture, keeping the original dacic form, like the red or black crockery.

The historical events are important as well, (the archeological discoveries mentioned in chapter IV) and the more recent ones (The Romanian Heroes' Mausoleum in Soveja, the monuments of the heroes who sacrificed themselves for their country) but the most important figure in the history remains Steven the Great. His monument on Dumbrava Hill in Bârseşti, near Vrâncioaia's House is the proof of the care the Vrancea people had for their prince. The museum collections and the cultural bowers also have outdoor Amphitheatre in Năruja is to be mentioned. The spiritual life of the region is another interest for the tourism. Any Romanian appreciates and wants to visit the places that constituted an inspiration for the Romanian literature. It is enough to reach La Scaune to remember Mioriţa. Among the cultural traditions there are: Heroes' Day – Lord's Erection, in May, Sheep Gathering – organized every year for 500 years during Constantin and Elena Celebration (May 21st) in Negrileşti when the sheep are consecrated by the priest and distributed for sheepfolds; The Folk Festival „Vrancea's Treasure” at the beginning of the summer (June) in Năruja; Tojan's Path organized in July in Paltin; „At fir's edge” at the beggining af fall and „ Traditions and winter habits” in Nereju.

Touristic development may be influenced by Vrancea folk characteristics represented by literature and traditional customs. Every visitor is looking for Miorița's path, a masterpiece for the Romanian literature.

The technical part is also important for the touristic activity: infrastructure, accommodation, public alimentation, roadways and services. On Șișița Valley there is Soveja resort but in the present the accommodation and treatment conditions are very poor. The new boarding houses and villas are the region's expectancy for a better tourism. Motels and restaurants have been built as well. There are restaurants in the hotels, motels or boarding houses where tourists can prepare their food or the guest can cook for them traditional food.

The lack of lodges is a problem for the region and so is the reduced number of mountain routes. The presence of big carnivores obliges the tourists to travel in groups and escorted by a travel guide who knows the region. Also they must spend the night in sure places. There are places where the touristic markings are not sufficient or entirely missing.

The tourism of the region is a rural one, especially ecotourism. The tourists are coming in small groups, sometimes organized groups sometimes not. The Land of Vrancea could become one of the most important touristic areas in Romania if a proper political furtherance were made.

Other aspects of the Vrancea economy

The commercial activities in The Land of Vrancea are reduced to the traditional local fairs and the existence of the local shops. Even if the merchants bring miscellaneous merchandise the enquiry that we made shows that the people are shopping at least once a week in the county's residence city. As far as the bank activities, people are going in certain communes (Soveja, Tulnici, Năruja, Vidra) where banks are. Regarding the financial aids the local programs of social assistance are present in every commune.

THE SYNTHESIS OF THE VRANCEA TERRITORY

The Chorema

The bias of the regional system in Vrancea was made in close connection with the main thoroughfares and the main communal centers. At a superregional level Focșani is an important attraction pole, being the district's residence and controlling the main entrances and exits of the Vrancea system. Galați is another important pole and Iași, Bucharest and Brașov are third parties.

The intraregional polarization is represented by Vidra commune who is in top mostly due to its services but also as a regional polarization center. Its influence is not very strong as there are other communal centers highly developed (Tulnici).

The main regional axes in the region are Putna Valley and DN2D that bring energy, information and matter in the regional system. Another important axis is Zăbala Valley.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths:

- ✓ The propitious location on a transcarpathic road;
- ✓ Mountain area with distinctive characteristics;
- ✓ The presence of mineral springs;
- ✓ The forest is 67,84 % of the territory, most of it of high quality;
- ✓ High biodiversity, a great network of protected areas;
- ✓ The quality of the environment is one of the best; the lack of polluting sources;
- ✓ The existence of a great number of cheap work force
- ✓ Great ethnical and religious uniformity that brings low intra-communitary tension.
- ✓ Low range of divorce, homicide or epidemic emergences;
- ✓ Great accessibility in the region: DN2D – national transcarpathic road, many roads across the region including the forest ones;
- ✓ High degree of qualification of the professors that brings a good educational level
- ✓ The existence of traditional aliments highly appreciated (dairies);
- ✓ Special ethnocultural values – traditions – touristic attractiveness;
- ✓ The capacity of organizing trades and fairs;
- ✓ The development of the touristic infrastructure regarding accommodation and public nourishment.

Weaknesses:

- The presence of the degraded lands;
- The need for a better awareness of the people regarding the protection of the environment;
- Weak management of the junks;
- Lack of an urban center highly developed ;
- Long time of transport because of the outlying location in the district and lack of train transportation.
- Poor quality of the county and local roads;
- Economical activities have low productivity and therefore a poor efficiency;
- Poor water supply network and minimum purge centers.
- Low medical assistance and old medical infrastructure;
- Lack of organized programs for the touristic development;
- Lack of Mountain rescue teams.

Opportunities:

- Rehabilitation of degraded lands and timbering.
- The capitalization of wooden junks;
- The furtherance of the traditional produces under local labels;

- The furtherance and financial sustaining of farmers;
- The capitalization of the ethno-cultural potential;
- The development of the rustic tourism;
- The usage of the structural supplies;
- The consolidation of the Local Activity Group the Land of Vrancea.

Threats:

- Seismic risks;
- Flooding and landslides risks;
- The risk of demographic ageing which brings the lack of work force;
- Bad understood modernism by the local inhabitants – high risk for loosing ethnographic traditions;
- The lack of the law setting for protecting the traditional environment;
- Poor managerial ability to appeal investments.

Conclusions

The natural factors created the premises for the early inhabitation of the territory included within the Land of Vrancea. The relief, through its components (massiveness, orientation, slopes, altitude) had a first importance role, especially in the past, in the development of the settlements. The demarcation function of the relief was obvious, being observed by the majority of the researchers. All the natural elements of the environment are disposed in accordance with the altitude.

With a humanization even since the ancient times, the Land of Vrancea sustained over centuries a relative stable population, which knew how to preserve its identity and specificity. The genuine mental space, although submitted to changes, especially starting the twentieth century, proved its resilience by the preservation of the traditional customs.

The economy is passed on the agro-pastoral activities. The second economical branch is the forest exploitation and the wood industry. The tourism can become an important regional income activity, if sustained by investments and promoting activities.

Viewed as a system, the Land of Vrancea is an open and functional one, being the result of the dynamic equilibrium between the population and its environment.

References

- Badea L. și colab.**, (1983, 1984, 19887, 1992), *Geografia României Vol. I-IV*, Editura Academiei RSR, București.
- Bailly A. (dir.)**, (2004), *Les concepts de la géographie humaine*, Ediția a 5-a, Armand Colin, Paris.
- Bailly A., Ferras R., Pumain Denise (dir.)**, (1992), *Encyclopédie de Géographie*, Editura Economica, Paris.

- Bănățeanu T., Stoica Georgeta,** (1988), *Zona etnografică Vrancea*, Editura Sport – Turism, București.
- Bejan V., Bejan V.D., Azoică Doina,** (1997), *Fondul balneo-climatic din județul Vrancea*, Editura BIT, Iași.
- Benedeck J.,** (2004), *Amenajarea teritoriului și dezvoltarea regională*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Boar N., Oncu M.,** (2004), *Pedogeografie și îmbunătățiri funciare*, Manual universitar, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca.
- Bobi V.,** (1999), *Civilizația geto-dacilor de la Curbura Carpaților*, Biblioteca Thracologica, XXIX, Institutul Român de Thracologie, București.
- Boțan C.N.,** (2010), *Țara moșilor. Studiu de geografie regională*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Brunet R., Ferras R., Théry H.,** (2009), *Les mots de la Géographie*, Ediția a 3-a, GIP RECLUS, Paris.
- Cherciu I.,** (2004), *Arta populară din The Land of Vrancea*, Editura Enciclopedică, București.
- Cherciu I.,** (2007), *Tradiții și credințe populare din The Land of Vrancea*, Editura Enciclopedică, București.
- Chiriac S.,** (2009), *Potențialul ecologic și exploatarea biologică a ariilor protejate din județul Vrancea*, Teză de doctorat, Facultatea de Geografie, Universitatea din București.
- Ciangă N.,** (2001), *România. Geografia turismului. Studiu de geografie umană*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Claval P.,** (1995), *Initiation à la Géographie Régionale*, Ediția a 2-a, Éditions Nathan, Paris.
- Claval P.,** (2006), *Géographie régionale. De la région au territoire*, Armand Colin, Paris.
- Cocean P.,** (2002, 2005, 2010), *Geografie regională*, Edițiile I, II și III, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Cocean P.,** (2004-2005), *Carpații ca spațiu mental arhetipal al poporului român*, în Studii și cercetări de geografie, Tom LI-LII, Editura Academiei Române, București.
- Cocean P., Filip S.,** (2008), *Geografia regională a României*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Conea I.,** (1993), *Vrancea. Geografie istorică, toponimie și terminologie geografică*, Editura Academiei Române, București.
- David Nicoleta,** (2010), *Țara Zărandului. Studiu de geografie regională*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Demangeon A.,** (1948), *Géographie universelle*, Armand Colin, Paris.
- Demangeot J.,** (2002), *Les millieux "naturels" du globe*, Ediția a 10-a, Armand Collin, Paris.
- Deszi St.,** (2006), *Țara Lăpușului. Studiu de geografie regională*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Diaconu I.,** (1930), *Păstoritul în Vrancea*, în Grai și suflet, Revista „Institutului de Filologie și Folklor”, coord. Densușianu O., vol. IV, fasc. 2, București.
- Dumitrescu I., Săndulescu M., Brandabur. T.,** (1970), *Harta geologică. Covasna*, Comitetul de stat al geologiei, Institutul geologic, București.
- Durand Y.,** (1984), *Vivre au pays au XVIIIe siècle*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.

- Enăchescu C-tin**, (2007), *Tratat de teoria cercetării științifice*, Polirom, Iași.
- Florea N., Buza M.**, (2004), *Pedogeografie cu noțiuni de pedologie (Compendiu)*, Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga”, Sibiu.
- Frăsineanu Mihaela**, (2008), *Râurile României*, Editura Fundației „România de Măine”, București.
- Frémont A.**, (1976), *La Région, espace vécu*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.
- Ghinoiu I. – coord**, (2003, 2005, 2008), *Atlasul etnografic român Vol I – III*, Editura Academiei Române, București.
- Grigoraș C-tin și colab.**, (2006), *Solurile României*, Vol. I – II, Editura Universitaria, Craiova.
- Grumăzescu H.**, (1973), *Subcarpații dintre Călnău și Șușița. Studiu geomorfologic*, Editura Academiei RSR, București.
- Hârnea S.**, (2007), *Biblioteca populară „Comoara Vrancei”*, Editura Terra, Focșani.
- Ianăș Ana-Nely**, (2009), *Țara Almăjului. Studiu de geografie regională*, Teză de doctorat, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca.
- Ianoș I.**, (2000), *Sisteme teritoriale*, Editura Tehnică, București.
- Ielenicz M.**, (1999), *Dealurile și podișurile României*, Editura Fundației „România de Măine”, București.
- Ielenicz M.**, (2005, 2007), *Geografia fizică a României Vol. I – II*, Editura Universitară, București.
- Ilieș Al., Stașac M.**, (2000), *Studiul geografic al populației*, Editura Universității din Oradea.
- Ilieș Gabriela**, (2007), *Țara Oașului. Studiu de geografie regională*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Ilovan Oana Ramona**, (2009), *Țara Năsăudului. Studiu de geografie regională*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Ion-Bordei Ecaterina**, (2009), *Rolul lanțului alpino-carpatic în evoluția ciclonilor mediteraneeni*, Ediția a 2-a, Editura Printech, București.
- Ion-Bordei N.**, (2008), *Fenomene meteorologice induse de configurația Carpaților în Câmpia Română*, Ediția a 2-a, Editura Academiei Române, București.
- Mac I.**, (2000), *Geografie generală*, Editura Europontic, Cluj-Napoca.
- Mehedinți S.**, (1998), *Premise și concluzii la Terra: amintiri și mărturisiri*, Editura Viața Românească, București.
- Mehedinți S.**, (2001), *La ceas de taină*, Vol. II, Editura Terra, Focșani.
- Nicoară L.**, (1999), *Geografia populației*, Editura "Focul Viu", Cluj-Napoca.
- Oncu M.**, (2002), *Cartografie pedologică*, Manual universitar, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca.
- Paragină A.**, (2002), *Habitatul medieval la curbura exterioară a Carpaților în secolele X – XV*, Editura Istros, Brăila.
- Paulet J.-P.**, (2002), *Les représentations mentales en géographie*, Editura Economica, Paris.
- Pătrașcu I. și colab.**, (1981), *Vrancea – monografie*, Editura Sport – Turism, București.
- Petrea Rodica, Petrea D.**, (2000), *Turism rural*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Pop Ana-Maria**, (2008), *Țara Bârsei. Studiu de geografie regională*, Teză de doctorat, Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca.

- Pop Gr. P.**, (2006), *Carpații și Subcarpații României. Ediția a II-a, revizuită și adăugită*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Posea Gr., Popescu N., Ielenicz M.**, (1974), *Relieful României*, Editura Științifică, București.
- Raboca N., Ciangă N., Păcurar Al.**, (2001), *Geografie economică*, „Vasile Goldiș” University Press, Arad.
- Rădulescu N. Al.**, (2005), *Vrancea. Geografie fizică și umană*, Ediția a II-a, Editura Terra, Focșani.
- Roman F.**, (1989), *Munții Vrancei: Ghid turistic*, Editura Sport – Turism, București.
- Roșu Al.**, (1980), *Geografia fizică a României*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București.
- Sandu D., Voineagu V., Panduru Filofteia**, (2009), *Dezvoltarea comunelor din România*, Institutul Național de Statistică și Universitatea București, Facultatea de Sociologie și Asistență Socială, București.
- Stahl H.H.**, (1998), *Contribuții la studiul satelor devălmașe românești*, Vol. I – III, Ediția a doua, Cartea Românească, București.
- Stahl P.H.**, (2002), *Cum s-a stins Tara Vrancei – Nereju, sat din Vrancea*, Editura Paideia, București.
- Surd V.**, (2003), *Geografia așezărilor*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Surd V., Bold I., Zotic V., Chira Carmen**, (2005), *Amenajarea teritoriului și infrastructuri tehnice*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca.
- Tătaru Alexandra**, (2008), *Organizarea spațiului rural în bazinul Putnei*, Editura Transversal, București.
- Tufescu V.**, (1974), *România*, Editura Științifică, București.
- Ujvari I.**, (1972), *Geografia apelor României*, Editura Științifică, București.
- Vasile Monica**, (2007), *Contribuții la studiul obștilor vrâncene contemporane. Pădurea ca relații sociale de proprietate și de putere*, Teză de doctorat, Universitatea din București.
- Velcea Valeria**, (1967), *Râurile României*, Editura Științifică, București.
- Velcea Valeria**, (2001), *Geografia fizică a României*, Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga”, Sibiu.
- Velcea Valeria, Savu Al.**, (1982), *Geografia Carpaților și a Subcarpaților românești*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București.
- Zaharia Liliana**, (1999), *Resursele de apă din bazinul râului Putna*, Editura Universității din București.
- Zink Anne**, (2000), *Pays ou circonscriptions*, Publications de la Sorbonne, Paris.
- *** (2002), *România. Mediul și rețeaua electrică de transport. Atlas Geografic*, Editura Academiei Române, București.
- *** (2007), *Planul de Amenajare a Teritoriului Județean Vrancea*.