THE PAULICIAN BULGARIANS – AN ETHNO-RELIGIOUS AND ENDOGAMOUS COMMUNITY IN SOUTH-EASTERN BUCHAREST

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ABSTRACT

This study traces the two-century history of the Paulician Bulgarians (Pavlicians), a Catholic ethnic-religious community that settled on Bucharest's outskirts – in Cioplea and Popești, on either side of the Dâmbovița River – after fleeing Russian-Turkish conflicts. It examines their role in shaping Bucharest's urban consumption habits and situates them within the city's broader ethnic diversity and "ethno-business" landscape. Renowned as skilled gardeners and cattle breeders, the Pavlicians became the capital's main suppliers of vegetables and dairy, securing a lasting presence in its markets and even altering local eating habits by monopolizing certain products, such as okra. As a closed community, they preserved their language, Catholic faith, and endogamous marriage practices far longer than Orthodox Bulgarians, who assimilated more rapidly. Their agrarian way of life - dependent on open land and the Dâmbovița – was disrupted by forced industrialization and collectivization: their lands were absorbed into agricultural cooperatives (C.A.P.s), and much of Cioplea was demolished to build housing blocks for workers of the new industrial platforms in eastern and southern Bucharest. Today, the Paulician Bulgarian population has dwindled, with Cioplea and Popești now absorbed into new real estate development and inhabited largely by outsiders. Few descendants remain in traditional market occupations, most having transitioned to industrial work under communism and, later, market-economy activities.

Keywords: Paulician Bulgarians, ethnic identity, religious community, urban transformation.

The South Danube Slavs were generically called Serbs by the Romanians, even though most of them were Bulgarians. They migrated due to Ottoman oppression and settled in the vicinity of Bucharest and are mentioned in a statistic from 1830 as follows: "Census of how many Serbs are based here, in the city of Ploieşti, all Bulgarians". During the reign of Michael, the Brave, between 12.000 and 16.000 Bulgarians and Serbs were in Muntenia, from where the name of "Sârbi" comes from. Bulgarians also settled near the capital in Cioplea, Popești-Leordeni or Popești Pavlicheni, Dobroieşti, Chiajna, Giuleşti and in other Ilfov localities, where there was a massive grouping, considering that out of 7.779 South Slavs registered in 1815, 2.232 were in Ilfov. They did not come all at once, but settled here over time, in successive waves, in the time of Matei Basarab, Constantin Brâncoveanu, Alexandru Moruzzi (1793–1798), then in the time of the 1804 Serbian Uprising (1804–1812), the Russo-Turkish war of 1806–1812 and the one that ended in 1828–1829. The latter war was

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followed by a massive emigration wave, unheard of until then, of 16.565 families from the Sliven region in the southern Balkans, of which 6.283 initially chose to settle in Romania[274]. The Bulgarians actively participated in the economic life of the capital, this mention being made of the merchants from Reguz, Chiprovic, Arnautchioi and Gabroven. The Raguzans, originally from Raguza or Dubrovnik, a Slav-Italian mixture, are mentioned since the 16th century, with trade being their main occupation. The Chiprovicans, merchants and silversmiths themselves, were descended from the villages of Chiprovat and Cobilovat, and were the ones who took part in the restoration of the Catholic Church of Bărăţia, destroyed by the Turks in 1659. Arnautchioils were originally from Arnautchioi or Arbănasi, a village destroyed during the Russian-Turkish battles of 1810. The merchants of Gabrovo will later give the name to the street Gabroveni, found in Bucharest. The main occupation of the Bulgarians settled at the gates of Bucharest was agriculture. Being recognized as good gardeners and cattle breeders, the Bulgarians had their own place in the "big market", namely the "Serbs' market"[275], and there was also a locality founded by Bulgarian craftsmen who made postcards, called Postăvari, located between Popești-Leordeni and Frumuşani[276]. While Russian troops were stationed in the Principality, Bulgarian emigrants turned to military leaders to defend their interests. Their complaints were well received, and in 1830 General Kiseleff submitted to the approval of the Moldovan and Wallachian diwans a series of measures designed to protect the Bulgarian communities. Approved first in Moldavia and then, in a more restricted version, in Wallachia, the measures included exemption from taxes for a period of 3 years and payment of half the taxes for the next 6, the conditions under which the colonists could settle in a particular place, their rights and obligations, including the privilege of founding new towns[277].

1. THE PAULICIANS

The Paulicians were part of a heretical sect that appeared between the 6th and 7th centuries in Armenia and were deported to various parts of the Byzantine Empire by Emperor John I Tzimisces (969–975) in order to suppress this group of heretics. But the action had the opposite effect: the Paulicians created strong communities in the places where they were removed, influencing the locals. A similar thing happened in Thrace, where some of the Bulgarians adopted the heresy[278]. As a

[274] Constantin Velichi, „Aşezămintele coloniştilor bulgari din 1830" ["The Settlements of the Bulgarian Colonists of 1830"], in *Romanoslavica*, Vol. III, 1958, p. 118.

[275] Constantin C. Giurescu, *Istoria Bucureştilor din cele mai vechi timpuri până în zilele noastre [The History of Bucharest from the Earliest Times to the Present Day]*, Bucharest, Publishing House for Literature, 1966, pp. 267–269.

[276] *Ibidem*, p. 111.

[277] Constantin Velichi, *op. cit.*, pp. 119–130.

[278] Iosif Gabor, „Din istoria parohiei Popești-Condurat (Leordeni)" ["From the History of the Popești-Condurat (Leordeni) Parish"], in Dănuț Doboș (coord.), *Catolicii din Popeşti-Leordeni: Istorie şi credinţă [Catholics in Popești-Leordeni: History and Faith]*, Bucharest, Roman Catholic Archdiocese Publishing House, 2007a, p. 12.

doctrine they denied the importance of the Old Testament and affirmed the existence of two gods: The evil God of the Old Testament, the Creator of the world and matter, and the good God, the Creator of soul and spirit, the only one worthy of worship. They rejected the Eucharist, the cult of the Virgin Mary, the saints and the incarnation of Jesus, whom they considered an angel. But even in this religious group there were doctrinal currents, at least two identified:

> "some believe in a docetic and dualistic doctrine, and others accept the unity of God but deny the divinity of Christ"[279],

even going so far as to identify a certain closeness with Islam[280]. Iconoclasts, they repudiated the cross[281] but converted to Catholicism between the 16th and 17th centuries. The Paulician Bulgarians would come to venerate the cross[282]. Following the war waged by the Holy League against the Ottoman Empire in 1687–1688, and the Catholic uprising in Chiprovtsi[283], Bulgarian Catholics fell prey to Ottoman vengeance, being massacred, and those who survived emigrated north of the Danube, settling in three centres temporarily under Austrian rule: Craiova, Râmnicu Vâlcea and Brădiceni. Once the Austrians withdrew from Oltenia, the Bulgarians relocated to Banat and Transylvania. Those who settled at the beginning of the 19th century in the south-eastern area of Bucharest found their links with the Bulgarian Catholics in Banat, some even finding close relatives among them[284]. Thirty-five families are mentioned since 1721 in Flămânda (the old name of the village of Moșteni in Teleorman), as well as in Zimnicea or Roșiorii de Vede, but also in Slobozia, today a suburban commune of Giurgiu[285]. In 1806 it is recorded that 16 families settled near Bucharest, part of them

> "on the estate of a Basilian monastery in Marcuța, situated one hour from the city"[286],

and another part

> "settled on an estate called Mora (Moara), at a distance of three hours"[287].

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[279] „unii cred într-o doctrină docetică și dualistă, iar alții care acceptă unitatea lui Dumnezeu, dar neagă divinitatea lui Cristos", in Ilie-Cătălin Grigore, „Controverse şi concordanţe în sursele greceşti şi armeneşti cu privire la erezia paulicienilor" ["Controversies and Convergences in Greek and Armenian Sources Concerning the Paulician Heresy"], in *Pro Memoria*, No. 6/2007, pp. 253–256, p. 260 and p. 262.

[280] *Ibidem*.

[281] Dan Toma Dulciu, *Popeşti-Leordeni. File de istorie. Trecut – Prezent – Perspective, [Popeşti-Leordeni. Pages of history. Past – Present – Perspectives]*, Popeşti-Leordeni, International Publishing House, 2001, p. 46.

[282] Iosif Gabor, *op. cit.*, 2007a, pp. 12–13.

[283] Marius Oanță, *Cioplea, reşedinţă a episcopilor pasionişti (1806–1847). O serie de comunicări [Cioplea, the Residence of the Passionist Bishops (1806–1847): A Series of Papers]*, Craiova, Sitech Publishing House, 2017, p. 46.

[284] Iosif Gabor, *op. cit.*, 2007a, pp. 14–16.

[285] *Ibidem*, p. 19.

[286] „pe moșia unei mănăstiri bazilitane de la Mărcuța, situată la o oră de oraș", in Ieronim Iacob, „Despre începuturile prezenţei catolice în Popești-Condurat" ["On the Beginnings of the Catholic Presence in Popești-Condurat"], in Dănuț Doboș (coord.), *Catolicii din Popeşti-Leordeni: Istorie şi credinţă [Catholics in Popeşti-Leordeni: History and Faith]*, Bucharest, Publishing House of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese, 2007, pp. 43–44.

[287] *Ibidem*.

Although they renounced the Paulician heresy, they were still called so by the others, who still considered them heretics, even though they had converted to Catholicism[288]. The situation in which the Bulgarian Catholics found themselves in their own country is described by a Passionist missionary monk in Bulgaria in his letter to the Emperor of Austria of March 26th 1822, in which he shows that, although they had renounced the Paulician heresy, they were considered heretics, and were forbidden to worship

> "as the Catholics in Turkey are allowed to worship. A stable serves as a disguised church; if it breaks down it is not allowed to be repaired. They are not allowed to have bells in the disguised church, lamps, decorations, crosses, candlesticks, icons, church vestments made even of simple cloth, etc. It is required that cattle be kept in the church, and missionaries are forced to keep the cooking machine here, degrading the house of God into a kitchen and a place of dishonesty. (...) The Turks and Orthodox count and treat them as heretics, they have no authorization for the public exercise of worship, for which reason they are forced to buy this permission temporarily and with gifts to evade the vexations of state officials, but even this is not enough. Holy Liturgy, rosary, religious instruction, visiting the dying sick, prayer, all are done in secret. People are threatened with beatings and often beaten when they come to church, and the priest is threatened with a gun in hand when he is performing his church duties, he is mistreated and the ugliest words are spoken to him. If in one place people riot, the priest is considered the head of the rioters and he too ends up being robbed of everything. No one defends him and he is calumniated without restraint and false pretexts are made to impose exorbitant fines. It is claimed that he attends invalidated weddings because of destructive impediments, especially where the bride is kidnapped. It is claimed that the priest is responsible for the conduct of the people, is threatened with death for every trifle and is regarded as a slave (...)"[289].

2. THE BULGARIANS OF CIOPLEA

Next the attention will be focused on the Bulgarians who settled in the south-east of Bucharest, namely in the localities of Dudești-Cioplea and Popești-Leordeni,

[288] Iosif Gabor, *op. cit.*, 2007a, p. 17.

[289] „așa cum (se) permite exercițiul catolicilor din Turcia. Un grajd servește de biserică deghizată; dacă se strică nu este permis a fi reparată. Nu au voie să aibe clopote, dușumea în bisericuțele deghizate, lămpi, curățenie, decor, cruci, sfeșnice, icoane, odăjdii bisericești confecționate chiar din pânză simplă etc. Se cere ca în biserica să fie ținute vitele la adăpost, iar misionarii sunt siliți să țină aici și mașina de gătit, degradând casa lui Dumnezeu în bucătărie și loc de necinste. (...) Turcii și ortodocșii îi socotesc și îi tratează ca pe eretici, n-au autorizație pentru exercițiul public al cultului, din care cauză sunt nevoiți să cumpere temporar această permisiune și cu cadouri să se sustragă de la vexațiunile funcționarilor de stat, însă nici aceasta nu ajunge. Sf. Litughie, rozariul, instrucția religioasă, vizitarea bolnavilor ce trag de moarte, rugăciunile, toate se fac într-ascuns. Se amenință cu bătaie și de multe ori poporul este lovit atunci când vine la biserică, iar preotul când îndeplinește funcțiunile bisericești este amenințat cu pistolul în mână, este maltratat și i se spun cuvintele cele mai urate. Dacă într-un loc lumea se răscoală, preotul este socotit capul răsculaților și și acesta ajunge că să fie jefuit de toate. Nimeni nu-i ia apărarea și este calomniat fără stingherire și i se aduc pretexte mincinoase pentru a i se impune amenzi exorbitante. Se pretinde că asista la căsătorii invalide din cauza unor piedici distrugătoare, mai ales la care mireasa este răpită. Se susține că preotul este răspunzător de conduita poporului, e amenințat cu moartea pentru orice fleac și e considerat ca un sclav (...)", in *Ibidem*, pp. 17–18.

Catholic Bulgarians also known as Paulician or Pavlician Bulgarians. This attribution of the name Pavlician to the Catholic Bulgarians is used mainly to differentiate them from the Orthodox and not because they assumed the Paulician heresy, considering them (the two attributes) synonymous: Pavlician = Catholic.

The reason why the Bulgarians leave their native lands are the Russian-Turkish war and its aftermath as well as the plague epidemic coming from the Ottoman Empire. This happened immediately after the signing of the Russo-Turkish peace, when the Bulgarians crossed the Danube with Russian troops and settled at the gates of Bucharest, because there was a Catholic church there. The one who had this initiative and who shepherded the Bulgarians all this way was the Passionist missionary Fortunato Ercolani, who is considered the founder of the village of Cioplea on the Dudești estate, the place where the Bulgarians eventually settled and whose name comes most likely from a craft of the population, that of wood or stone carvers. Important details about this emigration are given by the Passionist priest Filippo Squarcia, missionary in Bulgaria and then parish priest in Cioplea between 1827 and 1830, who wrote that

> "one of the Catholic missionaries – wishing to free the Bulgarian Catholics from the tyranny of the Turks – came up with the idea of moving them to Wallachia, where there was religious freedom, and as the territory was unpopulated, they could easily settle there. He raised the problem to the Russian army generals, and this was enough to get all the Bulgarian Catholics to cross with all their cattle to Wallachia. Many of them joined the 200 or so people who had fled there before because of the Bulgars (the Bulgars who were active in Bulgaria, Serbia and Oltenia) and a large number of them settled near Bucharest, where they founded a village called Ciople, which the Russians, having occupied Wallachia, gave to the Catholic bishop who was staying in Bucharest. To this bishop the Russians gave ownership of the village and – as a sign of obedience – the people paid the bishop a small annual tax – until 1828, when the state ownership passed, together with all the Bulgarian settlements, to the ruler in Bucharest"[290].

However, this was not the first emigration of Bulgarian Catholics north of the Danube, this had happened, as mentioned, in successive waves before. 12,000 Bulgarians were settled by Michael the Brave in the Wallachian countryside on the expedition of 1598. A century later, during Constantin Brâncoveanu's time,

[290] „unuia dintre misionarii catolici – în dorința de a-i scăpa pe bulgarii catolici de tirania turcilor – i-a venit ideea să-i treacă în Valahia, unde era libertate religioasă, și cum teritoriul era lipsit de populație, puteau să se așeze cu ușurință acolo. A pus problema generalilor armatei rusești, și acest lucru a fost de ajuns ca toți bulgarii catolici să treacă cu toate vitele lor în Valahia. Mulți s-au unit cu ce cam 200 de inși care fugiseră acolo mai înainte din cauza cârjalilor (tâlhari care acționau în Bulgaria, Serbia dar și Oltenia) și o mare parte din ei s-au stabilit lângă București, unde au întemeiat un sat pe nume Ciople, pe care rușii, ce au ocupat Valahia, l-au dat episcopului catolic care stătea la București. Acestui episcop i-au dat rușii stăpânirea satului și – ca semn al supunerii – oamenii îi plăteau episcopului o mică taxă anuală – până în 1828, când stăpânirea statului a trecut, împreună cu toate așezările bulgărești, la domnitorul din București", in *Idem*, „Parohia Cioplea în veacul al XIX-lea" ["The Cioplea Parish in the Nineteenth Century"], in Dănuț Doboș (coord.), *Cioplea: două veacuri de istorie [Cioplea: Two Centuries of History]*, Bucharest, Roman Catholic Archdiocese Publishing House, 2007b, pp. 15–17.

Bulgarian Catholics emigrated from Chiprovăț to Banat and Muntenia, creating strong communities in Craiova, Câmpulung, Râmnic, Brădiceni, Târgoviște and, probably, Bucharest, where a small community with a small church is recorded since the mid-17th century[291].

The newcomers around Bucharest received a place to live and to build a church from the owner of the estate land. The village was located 1,5 km from the village of Dudești and was set up in 1813, one year after the arrival of 33 families, numbering about 230 inhabitants. In less than ten years there were 300 inhabitants, and in 1884-1885 the village counted 502 villagers[292]. The village, completely inhabited by Paulician Bulgarians, had its own administration, consisting of a representative of the Bishop of Bucharest, assisted by four to six councillors. The Dudescu estate, which also gave the name to the village of Dudești, was sold in 1815 by the owner to Ioan Hagi Moscu, who in turn, around 1828, sold it to Baron Simon de Sina[293]. In the descriptions of the Catholic rulers, the Paulician Bulgarians were stubborn, "stubborn to the point of hatred and revenge", dissatisfied, considered themselves wretched, and were accused by the clergy of having taken over from the native population pagan customs and rituals, such as witchcraft, superstitions and charms, mostly in order to get rid of evils and diseases. One of their characterizations sounds as follows:

> "(...) Bulgarians are humiliated when they are in trouble; then they run to the priest and fulfil all their wishes, but then, when the danger is over, they speak ill of him or, at least, they are stubborn or disobedient to what they are told for their own good and indelicate in their strange ways (...)"[294].

One problem that Ferreri noted was that the parents refused to marry their daughters so that they could stay and help them in the household, which is why they were stolen by the lads and lived without a religious marriage, or by the Turks "who mocked them or kept them for themselves". Any Christian community was defined by the church in its midst. So the religious service was initially held in one of the rooms of the parish house which served as a chapel, so that, a year after their arrival here, the Bulgarians built their own church. So on May 18th 1813 the foundation stone of the first church in Cioplea was consecrated. Its construction began during the Russian occupation, which had given its consent for this, and on August 29th 1813, it was possible to obtain the approval of the ruler Ioan Caragea for the

[291] Carmen Mazăre-Dobrescu, „Aspecte privind dezvoltarea comunității bulgare catolice din Dudești-Cioplea" ["Aspects Regarding the Development of the Bulgarian Catholic Community in Dudești-Cioplea"], in *Materiale de Istorie şi Muzeografie [Materials of History and Museography]*, Vol. XXX, 2016, pp. 267–268.

[292] Iosif Gabor, *op. cit.*, 2007b, pp. 19–21 and p. 53.

[293] *Ibidem*, pp. 17–19.

[294] „(...) Bulgarii sunt umiliți când au necazuri; atunci aleargă la preot și-i împlinesc toate dorințele, dar apoi, trecând primejdia, îl vorbesc de rău sau, cel puțin, sunt încăpățânați sau neascultători la ceea ce li se spune pentru binele lor și îndărătnici în apucăturile lor cele strâmbe (...)", in *Ibidem*, pp. 21–22.

"renovation" of the church. The church was built of wood with clay, had two steeples and was covered with reeds. The church was ruined after a storm on July 5th 1821, followed by a strong earthquake. Thus one of the two Catholic churches of Bucharest disappeared. After more than two years the parish residence and the church was rebuilt by public subscription in which ruler Grigore Ghika himself participated. In Cioplea, the parish house was also the residence of the Bishop of Nicopolis ad Istrum who was also the apostolic administrator of Wallachia, Bulgaria and Serbia[295].

Priest Ieronim Iacob launches the hypothesis that the Bulgarian Pavlicians founded the village of Ciolpea earlier than 1812, namely in 1806, at the beginning of the Russian-Turkish conflict, when he identifies a mention of Monsignor Francesco Ferreri and about which the priest notes that the Bulgarians crossed the Danube and settled in the villages of Slobosia, Flămânda and Cakanova near the river. But at the same time

> "at last, 16 families came to the suburbs of Bucharest, six on the estate of a Basilian monastery at Mărcuţa, situated one hour from the city, and another six families settled on an estate called Mora [Mill], at a distance of three hours"[296].

It is very possible that the six Bulgarian families settled at Mărcuţa were the founders of the village of Dobroieşti. Further, Iacob considers that in 1806 the nucleus of Cioplea village was laid by the settlement here of 16 families, with a number of approximately 90–100 members and that later other families came, reaching a number of approximately 30 families. By the settling of other families, the composition of Cioplea village would be somewhat finalized and will reach somewhere around 120 families totalizing about 700 people. The subsequent decrease in this number is attributed to the return of some of the emigrants to their places of origin and to the ravages of the plague epidemic of 1912–1913. So the author proposes that the period between 1806 and 1812 should be considered as the founding period of the town[297]. The places from where the Bulgarians left for Wallachia are Pleven, Lovec, Sevlievo, Dobric and Ruse. They settled in Muntenia and Oltenia, and those settled in Muntenia are grouped mainly in Ilfov County in the villages of Glina, Chirnogi, Odăile, Ciorogârla, Cățelu, Brănești, Fundulea, Dudești, and those from Dudești, Cioplea, Epurești and Chiajna came from the Ruse area. Although most historians who have studied this community state that the name of Cioplea is given by the Bulgarian Pavlicians who came here, Cioplea, in the form Ceplea, is mentioned in a document issued on the 2nd of June 1707 in the time of Constantin Brâncoveanu[298]. However, even before this date, on the 26th of January

[295] *Ibidem,* pp. 22–26 and p. 33.

[296] „în sfârșit, 16 familii au venit în suburbiile Bucureștiului, șase pe moșia unei mănăstiri bazilitane de la Mărcuța, situată la o ora de oraș, și alte șase familii s-au așezat pe o moșie numită Mora [Moara], la o distanță de trei ore", in Ieronim Iacob, „La o nouă lectură Cioplea – sat de bulgari catolici, întemeiat în anul 1806 la porțile Bucureștiului de ep. Francesco Maria Ferreri" ["A New Reading of Cioplea – a Village of Catholic Bulgarians Founded in 1806 at the Gates of Bucharest by Bishop Francesco Maria Ferreri"], in Dănuț Doboș, *op. cit.*, 2007b, pp. 176–177.

[297] *Ibidem,* pp. 178–180.

[298] Alina Dorojan, „Evoluția administrativă" ["Administrative Evolution"], in *Ibidem,* pp. 189–190.

1621, the "land from Cioplea, which is around the village of Dudești" is mentioned, then on the 7th of April 1623 a deed of purchase of two parts of the same land by the Abbot Gligorie is recorded[299]. Over time the name of the village was spelled differently according to phonetics in Catholic documents written in different languages. Thus in German Cioplea takes the forms Ciopli, Csiöpli, Csiopli, Csople, Csoplu, Tschoplu, Tsöpli, Tsöplu, and in Latin and Italian Ciopple, and in French Tsoplia[300]. The fact that the village has been mentioned since before the arrival of the Bulgarian Pavlicians leads the author to consider erroneous the theory that the village got its name from one of the occupations of these foreigners[301].

As for the two Bulgarian communities in Dudești and Cioplea, they have different origins, so that those living in Ciolpea are originally from the village of Svestov in northern Bulgaria, while those in Dudești were from the villages of Sliven and Karnabat, a region in the centre of the neighbouring country. So, the two communities in such close proximity came from different areas and had different confessions, which is why there were no marriages between members of the two Bulgarian communities[302]. The similarities between the two communities were not only the language they spoke but also the occupations they practiced, namely gardening and raising cattle for the purpose of supplying Bucharest with vegetables and dairy products[303].

A series of negative events in the first half of the 19th century that befell Cioplea village endangered its very existence. The plague epidemics of 1828–1829, the locust invasion of 1830, the cholera epidemic of 1831 (during which 44 inhabitants of Cioplea died) and the great disease that affected cattle the following year. In addition to these there were the complaints about the compulsory work, which would increase from 12 days to 56 days following the implementation of the Organic Regulations. These issues threatened the existence of the village and even made some people leave it. On November 1st 1853 the entire parish complex, which included both the church and the parish house with its outbuildings, was destroyed in a fire that left a pile of ashes in its wake. The church was rebuilt by Catharina Cardini, born Timotei, widow of the Italian merchant Ieronim Cardini-Momolo, who died on February 27th 1859, being buried in the cemetery of Cioplea.

Completed in 1859, the church keeps in a niche the epitaph that recalls the donation that made possible the reconstruction of the church. The parish house was rebuilt a little earlier, between 1856 and 1857, via public subscription and with the help of the congregation "De Propaganda Fide". Over time, both the church and the parish house underwent modifications and additions that allowed the creation of a crypt for the remains of the founder and the priests and the creation of a social

[299] Daniela Butnaru, „Toponimia satului Cioplea" ["The Toponymy of the Village of Cioplea"], in *Ibidem*, p. 203.
[300] *Ibidem*, p. 204.
[301] *Ibidem*, pp. 204–205.
[302] Alina Dorojan, *op. cit.*, pp. 192–193.
[303] *Ibidem*, p. 201.

settlement that included an orphanage and a home for the elderly. It is worth mentioning that at the end of the renovation works in 1931 a statue of St. Francis of Assisi with the Wolf of Gubbio was placed in front of the entrance to the church. The Passionist monks who took care of the parish were also based here. The seminary that had been in the bishop's house in Bucharest was moved here in 1874 and functioned here until 1893 when it received a new building, next to St. Joseph's Cathedral. A parish school also functioned here[304].

The community of Pavlician Bulgarians managed to survive for almost two centuries because it was a closed society for outsiders even in Wallachia, where they found a tolerant environment compared to the Muslim one in Bulgaria. Relationships with outsiders were purely commercial and marriages with outsiders were excluded. Even with the nearby Orthodox Bulgarians such as those from Dudești or Dobroieşti, the Pavlicians did not interfere. The only possible marriages were with Bulgarians from Popești or with Bulgarians of the Catholic rite. A characteristic of the community was the stealing of fiancées when the parents did not agree with the marriage or keeping the girls too long in the household in order to help with field work[305].

By establishing the episcopal residence of the Bulgarian-Wallachian Diocese in Cioplea, the locality became

> "the religious centre of Catholicism in the Danube area, on both sides of the river"[306].

The main occupations of the Pavlician Bulgarians were gardening and raising cattle. The good knowledge of these skills quickly gave them the status of the main supply source for Bucharest. Moreover, by cultivating certain types of vegetables, they managed to modify some of the gastronomic habits of the locals, such as okra consumption. Thus, the Bulgarians from Pavlich managed to establish themselves in this segment, even getting a special place in the market, namely the "Serbian market", a generic name given by the locals to the Bulgarians. Even if it is not a local farmer's market, the "Serbian" market defined the ethnicity of those who sold there. We mentioned earlier that Romanians called the Bulgarians by the name of Serbs, along with those who were of Serbian origin. C. Giurescu writes about this in *The History of Bucharest*:

> "Others have South Slavic, Serbian or Bulgarian blood. For centuries, the capital of Wallachia saw the arrival of refugees from across the Danube, who left their native lands to escape from Turkish oppression. We called them all 'Serbs', whether they were really Serbs or Bulgarians. And this name was used by peasants and city dwellers alike, who until the mid-20th century knew of the 'Serbs with vegetables', although they were dealing with Bulgarians. In a statistic from September 1st 1830, we read:

[304] Iosif Gabor, *op. cit.*, 2007b, pp. 28–35 and p. 51.

[305] „centrul religios al catolicismului din spațiul danubian, de ambele părți ale fluviului", in Ilie Cătălin Grigore, „Repere etnografice" ["Ethnographic Landmarks"], in Dănuț Doboș, *op. cit.*, 2007b, pp. 216–218.

[306] „centrul religios al catolicismului din spațiul danubian, de ambele părți ale fluviului", in Alina Dorojan, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

> 'Census of how many Serbs are staying here, in the city of Ploiești, *all Bulgarians*'. (...) The settlement of Cioplea, founded in 1812 by Bulgarian Catholics from the villages near Nicopol, on the Danube, is also due to the colonists; their descendants have preserved their language to this day. Other colonists settled in Popeștii-Pavlicheni, which still bears the adjective 'Serbs', others in Dobroiești, near Fundenii-Doamnei, becoming gardeners and dairymen – the two specialities of the South Slavic colonists – others in Chiajna and Giulești, at the opposite end of the Bucharest area, others, finally, in various villages in Ilfov, closer or further away from the Capital. Of the 7.799 families of South Slavs, noted in the 1815 census in the whole of Muntenia, 2.232 are in the former county of Ilfov, therefore near Bucharest and, this time, are listed as 'Bulgarians'"[307].

Another theory was found by Alina Dorojan, who presents the fact that the road to Serbia – "the road to the Serbs" or "the road of the Serbs" – that is to say Calea Văcărești, passed through the vicinity of the properties of the nobles who owned the villages of Dudești-Cioplea or Popești-Leordeni[308]. As for the Bulgarians being similar to Serbs, we have our own theory. So we can take into account that there are several elements that have played a part in the construction of this name: the similarity of language – both are Slavic languages, so for the Romanians they spoke the same language; the proximity – both peoples came from south of the Danube; the similarity of occupations, namely gardening. Another reason could be that the Romanians considered the Serbs as friends, since there was no conflict between the Romanians and the Serbs throughout the centuries (with small exceptions that reinforce the rule). Thus, it may be a hypothesis that the Romanians preferred to consider Serbs, *i.e*. friends, the Bulgarians settled around them and that they tolerated and finally accepted them. This last theory I also put down to the tolerance and hospitality of the Romanian people who lived for centuries with different nationalities in their neighbourhood without coming into conflict with them. Another common point is the Ottoman oppression of both peoples.

The high production and quality of the Bulgarian products was recognized by their acceptance in the canning factories. Milk and milk products were also appreciated by the people of Bucharest both by consumers and by chefs and

[307] „Alții au sânge sud slavic, sârb sau bulgar. Timp de secole, capitala Țării Românești a văzut sosind refugiați de dincolo de Dunăre, care-și părăseau ținuturile natale pentru a scăpa de opresiunea turcească. Le ziceam la toți «sârbi», indiferent dacă erau intradevar sârbi sau bulgari. Și acest nume se întrebuința nu numai de țărani sau târgoveți, care până în plin veac al XX-lea știu de «sârbul cu zarzavat» și de «sârbărie», deși au de-a face cu bulgari, dar și de oficialitate. Într-o statistică din 1 septembrie 1830 citim: «Catagrafie de cați sârbi se află cu sedererea aici, în orașul Ploiești, toți bulgari». (...) Tot coloniștilor li se datorează și așezarea Cioplea, întemeiată în 1812 de bulgari catolici din satele de lângă Nicopol, pe Dunăre; descendenții lor și-au păstrat până astăzi limba. Alți coloniști s-au stabilit la Popeștii-Pavlicheni, care poartă și acum calificativul de «sârbi», alții la Dobroiești, lângă Fundenii-Doamnei, ajungând grădinari și lăptari cuprinși – cele două specialități ale coloniștilor sud-slavi – alții la Chiajna și Giulești, în extremitatea opusă a ariei bucureștene, alții, în sfârșit, în diverse sate din Ilfov, mai aproape sau mai departe de Capitală. Din cele 7.799 de familii de sud-slavi, constatate în catagrafia din 1815 în întreaga Muntenie, 2.232 se afla în fostul județ al Ilfovului, deci în preajma Bucureștilor și, de data aceasta, sunt trecute sub numele de «bulgare»", in Constantin C. Giurescu, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

[308] Alina Dorojan, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

confectioners. The Bulgarians from Dudești, great breeders of cattle and oxen, were also well known in this branch. In Dudești-Cioplea at the beginning of the last century there were no less than 2.000 cows. In addition to these occupations the Bulgarians of Cioplea were known for making traditional shirts, leather waistcoats, woollen clothing such as stockings, gloves and the like. Another occupation was the transportation of goods and people, first with carts, then with vehicles, carrying products such as agricultural goods from the fields where they were cultivated, sand, gravel and other building materials. The nearby existence of the sand quarry or the fabric factory in Dudești offered new opportunities for the Bulgarians of Cioplea[309].

The inclusion of Dudești-Cioplea in Bucharest subjected the community of Bulgarian Pavlicians to the effects of the development of the city through urbanization called for by the forced industrialization promoted by the communist regime. This urbanization involved the demolition of houses in a large area of the locality's surface, torn down to make way for the housing blocks that were being built. The inhabitants of the demolished houses received housing in other Bucharest neighbourhoods, which contributed to the de-structuring and shrinking of the community[310]. In parallel, Bucharest's industry functioned as a magnet for people from the province, mainly from the rural areas, who settled in the large Titan - Balta-Albă district. Some of these were Catholic believers, mostly from the Moldavian area, who could be more easily accepted into the community through intermarriage as opposed to the Orthodox. As for mixed marriages, those of Greek-Catholic or Protestant confession were preferred, or those coming from Transylvania or Hungary. We note that after 1943 the rate of marriages increased 3 times, and that of mixed marriages 10 times[311]. At the same time, the inclusion of the locality in Bucharest led to an accelerated interaction of the community with the outside, which led to an alteration of the language spoken by the Bulgarians. In her study of the language and folk costume of the Pavlicians from Cioplea, Gabriela Mitu mentions the three component elements that create the identity of an ethnic group: language, dress and objects and mentions that the first one that "came out on stage" was the folk costume, followed by the Pavlician speech[312].

In Ciolpea, the parish priest Fabian Mariut told me on the 18th of October 2022 that there are about 1.500 parishioners who are of Bulgarian origin. In the discussion I had on October 14th 2022 with Dr. Marius Oanţă, researcher of the Cioplea community and author of the book *Cioplea, Residence of the Passionist Bishops (1806–1847). A series of communications and other studies on the community of Cioplea*, he is of the opinion that there are about 800 families of believers in Cioplea, of which only a

[309] Ilie-Cătălin Grigore, *op. cit.*, pp. 219–222 and Constantin C. Giurescu, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

[310] Ilie-Cătălin Grigore, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

[311] *Idem*, „Interpretări demografice pe baza registrelor parohiale din Cioplea" ["Demographic Interpretations Based on the Parish Registers of Cioplea"], in *Pro Memoria*, No. 9, 2010, pp. 98–101.

[312] Gabriela Mitu and Marius Oanţă, „Aspecte etnografice şi lingvistice ale bulgarilor pavlicheni din Cioplea" ["Ethnographic and Linguistic Aspects of the Pavlikan Bulgarians of Cioplea"], in *Pro Memoria*, No. 10–11, 2011–2012, pp. 158, p. 168 and p. 172.

quarter are of Bulgarian origin. The total figures are similar: 800 families – 1.500 parishioners, but differ when it comes to ethnic origin.

3. THE HOLY CROSS PARISH (SFÂNTA CRUCE PARISH)

After the establishment of the Holy Cross Parish in Mihai Bravu Boulevard, some of the Catholic parishioners whose houses were demolished during the last communist decade and who were assigned to the Socului Boulevard area (now Chișinău Boulevard), started to attend this church. The Holy Cross Parish was founded by the Archbishop and Metropolitan Bishop of Bucharest, Dr. Ioan Robu, in 1987. Initially, on this place there was a chapel of the Armenian Catholics, which was taken over by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bucharest in 1956, as the religious services of the Armenian parishioners could not be held due to lack of priests. From this date until 1963, the "Holy Cross" Chapel was under the administration of the "Sancta Maria Gratiarum" parish – Bărăția, then it became a branch of the parish of the "Saint Joseph" Cathedral. With the new territorial delimitation in 1975, the chapel became a branch of the Cioplea parish. The construction of the present church started in 1992 and was finalised on May 21st 1998[313]. The data collected in 2021, on the occasion of the consecration of the houses, included the parish which "consists of 759 whole families and 483 half-families, with 2080 souls"[314]. According to the discussion I had on October 9th2022 with the parish priest Florin Bejenaru, out of this total about one third are the Ciopleni faithful. Initially, the parish was composed exclusively of Bulgarian Pavlicians displaced from Cioplea, now their number in the parish is a minority. Moreover, some of those displaced from their homes in Cioplea still attend the Catholic Church in Cioplea. So we cannot speak of a complete migration of those from the Chișinău Boulevard area to the parish in Mihai Bravu. This attachment to the place where they lived and to the church of the community can also be observed among the Orthodox Bulgarians from Dudești, neighbours of those from Ciolpea, who after their houses were demolished and they were moved to other areas of the city, still return to the services held at the Church of Saint Nicholas, where they see their relatives and elders[315]. However, the number of parishioners of this parish has increased since 1998 when there were only 400 families, a number that will quickly increase to 600 families, totalling 1600 parishioners. In 2005 the situation is as

[313] Narcis Ispas and Marius Oanță, *Biserica şi Capela «Sfânta Cruce». Schiță de monografie istorică [The Church and Chapel of the 'Holy Cross': A Historical Monograph]*, s.n., Bucharest, 2012, pp. 11–14.

[314] Parohia Sfânta Cruce, „Istoric" ["History"], in *Sfânta Cruce [The Holy Cross]*, Available at: https://sfantacruce.ro/despre, Accessed on August, 2022.

[315] Sanda Larionescu, „Cartierul Titan-Balta Albă" ["The Titan–Balta Albă District"], in Paula Popoiu (coord.), *Relaţii de vecinătate în localități urbane din sudul ţării [Neighbourhood Relations in Urban Settlements of Southern Romania]*, Bucharest, Paideia Publishing House, 2006, p. 47.

follows: 524 whole families and 348 half families, with 1785 souls[316]. The parish priest, Florin Bejenaru, with whom he had a discussion on this topic on October 9th 2022, estimates, out of the total number of parishioners, a percentage of 30% as believers of Bulgarian origin, coming from Cioplea parish and assigned to Chișinău Boulevard after the demolitions of the 1980s.

4. ST. THERESA PARISH

From the conversation I had on October 18th 2022 with the priest of Cioplea Parish, Fabian Măriuţ about the parishioners, he told me that in addition to those who go to Holy Cross, there are a significant number of parishioners who were part of Cioplea Parish and now attend St. Theresa Church. From the parish priest here, Nicolae Farcaș, we learned that there are about 200 parishioners, out of the 3000 of the parish, who were distributed in two blocks on Olteniței Road, at Piața Sudului (with one Catholic family on each floor) with the demolitions that took place in the last decade of the communist regime. The Church of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus Parish is located on Olteniței Road at no. 3–5 and was founded in 1975. The parish church was built in 1937 and consecrated by His Eminence Alexandru Cisar and repaired in 1984[317].

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[316] Narcis Ispas and Marius Oanță, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

[317] Arhiepiscopia Romano-Catolică din București, „Parohia Sfânta Tereza a Pruncului Isus (București)" ["St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus Parish (Bucharest)"], in *Arhiepiscopia Romano-Catolică din București [Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bucharest]*, Available at: https://arcb.ro/website/arhidieceza/parohiisicler/parohiidiecezane/parohiasfantaterezaapruncului-isus/, Accessed on October 18, 2022.

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