Vol. 16, No. 1/2026

Journal of Danubian Studies and Research

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

1. Introduction

The South Danube Slavs were generically called Serbs by the Romanians, even though most of them were Bulgarians. They migrated due to Ottoman oppression

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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 Ploiesti, 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 Popeștii Pavlicheni, Dobroiesti, Chiajna, Giulesti 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 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 (Velichi, 1958). 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 Baraţia, 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" (Giurescu, 1966), and there was also a locality founded by Bulgarian craftsmen who made postcards, called Postavari, located between Popești-Leordeni and Frumusani (Giurescu, 1966). 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 (Velichi, 1958).

2. 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 (Gabor (a), 2007). As a 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", even going so far as to identify a certain closeness with Islam (Grigore, 2007a).

Iconoclasts, they repudiated the cross (Dulciu, 2001), but converted to Catholicism between the 16th and 17th centuries. The Paulician Bulgarians would come to venerate the cross (Gabor, 2007a). Following the war waged by the Holy League against the Ottoman Empire in 1687-1688, and the Catholic uprising in Chiprovtsi (Oanță, 2017), 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 (Gabor, 2007a). 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 (Gabor, 2007a). 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", and another part "settled on an estate called Mora (Moara), at a distance of three hours" (Iacob, 2007a).

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 (Gabor, 2007a). 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..." (Gabor, 2007a).

3. 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, 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" (Gabor, 2007b).

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, 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 (Mazăre-Dobrescu, 2016).

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 (Gabor, 2007b). 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 (Gabor, 2007b). 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 (...)" (Gabor, 2007b). 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 "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 were 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 (Gabor, 2007b).

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 Mărcuța, situated one hour from the city, and another six families settled on an estate called Mora [Mill], at a distance of three hours" (Iacob, 2007b). It is very possible that the six Bulgarian families settled at Mărcuța 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 (Iacob, 2007b). 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 (Dorojan, 2007b). However, even before this date, on the 26th of January 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 (Butnaru, 2007b). 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 (Butnaru, 2007b). 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 (Butnaru, 2007b).

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 (Dorojan, 2007b). 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 (Dorojan, 2007b).

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 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 (Gabor, 2007b).

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 Dobroiești, 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 (Grigore, 2007b).

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" (Dorojan, 2007).

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: "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" (Giurescu, 1966). 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 (Dorojan, 2007b). As for the Bulgarians being similar to Serbs, we have our own theory. So, we can consider 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 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 (Grigore, 2007b; Giurescu, 1966).

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 (Grigore, 2007). 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 (Grigore, 2010). 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 (Mitu & Oanță, 2011-2012).

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

4. 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 Soculuі 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 (Ispas & Oanță, 2012). The data collected in 2021, on the occasion of the consecration of the houses, included information about the parish, which "consists of 759 whole families and 483 half-families, with 2,080 souls" (*Sfânta Cruce*, n.d., para. X). 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 (Larionescu, 2006, p. 47). 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 was as follows: 524 whole families and 348 half-families, comprising 1,785 people (Ispas & Oanță, 2012, p. 14). 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.

5. 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, consecrated by His Eminence Alexandru Cisar, and renovated in 1984 (Archdiocese of Bucharest, n.d.).

6. The Bulgarians of Popești

Having left because of the Russian-Turkish war of 1828-1829, 20 families of Catholic Paulician Bulgarians from the villages of Vreși, Trancevicza and most of Beleni settled on the estate of Alexander Condurat, in the village of Popești-Condurat, between Cioplea, Dudești and Sântești. This is how the demarcation between the already existing village appeared: Popești-Romani and the new village Popești-Pavlicheni or Popești-Bulgari (Gabor, 2007a). There is also a variant according to which the Bulgarian families settled in Popești would have come from Cioplea, from where Alexandru Condurat would have paid for 14 families to come, in order to complete the deficient labour force on his estate (Gabor, 2007a). Ieronim Iacob states that on July 1st 1832 70 families from 55 houses in Cioplea left the village and settled in Popești Condurat, an estate in the vicinity of Cioplea, on the other bank of the Dambovița River. The reason why they moved from Cioplea was the disagreements with the owner, Hagi Moscu, with whom they had a contract, but which was not respected by him (Iacob, 2007a). However, the statement seems to be erroneous, considering that such a move would have meant the disappearance of Cioplea village, which had 71 families in 1819 (Oanţă, 2017).

When problems related to compulsory labour arose, the Bulgarians turned to the Austrian consul to intervene in solving the problems. A few poor years for agriculture followed. Lacking the protection of the Austrian consul, the Bulgarians appealed to the Russian administration in the application of the Organic Regulations, then to the Russian consulate, but to no avail.

With the settlement here of the Bulgarians in what can be called the second wave of the Paulician emigration, Popești became the second most important Catholic town after Bucharest, appearing in the church scriptures as “Popesct grande” (large Popești), to distinguish it from “Popesct piccolo” (small Popești) from Câmpulung in Argeș. In 1833 in Popești there were 600 believers, while in Cioplea only 300 remained. A decade later in Popești there were 430 inhabitants, and in Cioplea 150 (Iacob, 2007a). The year 1843 is mentioned as the year in which the unification of the two Bulgarian communities, from Cioplea and Popești, was attempted, through the acquisition of a part of the Hagi Moscu estate, which was put up for sale at that time. The initiative did not materialize, probably because of the large amount of

money needed for this action, but this attempt to reunite the Bulgarians in a single locality is noteworthy (Popescu, 2020, pp. 49–50). Subsequently, those who guided them and took care of representing and defending the interests of the Bulgarian Paulicians were the priests who served in their churches.

The Bulgarians who settled here were given agricultural land, a place for their house and church. In 1845 there were 72 families with 250 members (Gabor, 2007a). To the difficult situation of the Bulgarians was added that of discrimination during the impropriation of 1864 when the owners of the land declared them – a situation that also occurred in Cioplea – as "tocmaşi" (i.e. occasional workers) and not "clăcaşi" (permanent labourers) as they were, a status that gave them the right to impropriation. Following the judgement, the Bulgarians of Popești received a total of 500 acres, and the church 17. In 1902, the 714 inhabitants owned 305 ha of land, 157 large cattle and 800 small cattle. Then followed the impropriation of land in 1922 and housing places in 1927, which led to the growth of village possessions, which in 1928 totalled 2.037 inhabitants, 2864 acres, 634 cows, 220 horses, 260 sheep. There are 42 milkmen who sold milk in Bucharest, 45 who transported milk to the capital. And 128 pavers and day labourers worked in Bucharest (Gabor, 2007a). Other values are published following the censuses carried out for Popești-Leordeni commune as follows: 2.592 (1912), 3.489 (1930), 6.700 (1956), 8.926 (1966), 9.675 (1968), 14.830 (1977) and about 18.000 inhabitants in 2002 (Dulciu, 2001).

Today's Popești-Leordeni had a complicated make-up, the component villages having different names over time. This is identified by Alina Dorojan in her study on the administrative and social-economic evolution of this locality. The commune of Popești Conduratu consists of the villages of Popeștii lui Costaforu and Popeștii lui Suţu. The first was the estate of Al. Condurat and corresponded to the village of Popești-Pavlicheni, later known as Popești Bulgari, and the second, the Suţu family estate, was the correspondent of the village of Popești Romani. They became the commune of Popești-Condurat, later the locality of Popești, part of the commune of Popești-Leordeni. In the second part of the 19th century, the commune of Leordeni was made up of the villages of Leordeni-Români and Leordeni-Sârbi, meaning Bulgarians (Dorojan, 2007a).

For several years, the Catholics of Popești-Pavlicheni went to the church in Cioplea, until they built their own church in their village. Started in 1836, it was finished three years later and was a small one without a steeple or spire. In 1845 the Popești-Condurat parish was founded, when the priest Nicolae Penov from Cioplea came

here. The increase of the population to 172 families, totalizing 800 believers in 1884, made it necessary to build a bigger church. So, between 1885 and 1903 the new church was built, through the effort of the inhabitants, helped by priests who donated and made collections in various places (Gabor, 2007a). Because in Popești-Condurat the children spoke Bulgarian in their families, the construction of a place to house the village kindergarten began in 1901 (Gabor, 2007a). In 1895 the number of believers had increased to 1000 (Doboș, 2007a). By the size of the communities, the parish of Popești-Pavlicheni became the second Catholic locality of the Wallachian Vicariate, after Bucharest (Iacob, 2007a). The new church was built between 1886 and 1903, with funds collected by the parish priests. King Carol I also contributed. The design of the new church was made by the architect Villiers "after the model of the church in the native village of the parish priest Paterok", and the construction of the church was supervised and coordinated by the architect Suber (Doboș, 2007a). There was even a parochial doctrinal school in Popești in the second part of the 19th century. The old monastery "St. Agnes", abolished by the communist regime, was revived in 1995. And also, in Popești there are the Oratory "St. Murialdi" and the House "St. Gabriel" (Doboș, 2007a).

Besides priest Penov, priest Iosif Petre, born in Cioplea, came to serve in Popești. So was the priest Iosif Bonov, also born in Cioplea and who served in Popești between 1918 and 1919 (Doboș, 2007a, p. 65). Priest Petru Nicolae Morosiewicz served first in Popești, between 1940 and 1941. Between 1945 and 1951 he served in Cioplea (Doboș, 2007b). The fact that the priests from Cioplea also served in Popești (Dorojan, 2007) and vice versa is another element underlining the closeness of the two communities.

The extent of the closeness between the two communities is also given by the visits they made to each other at the community level. One such example is that of October 4th 1936, which we learn from the memoirs of the priest Gustav Muller in the "History of the Roman Catholic Community Popești Leordeni": he recalls that a compact group of believers from Cioplea, led by priest A. Horn, came to the church of Popești, singing religious songs at the entrance to the village and participating in the liturgy. Just a week later, on the occasion of the feast day of the church in Cioplea, a group of about 150 people visited the neighbouring village, singing in turn at the entrance to the village and participating in the liturgy. At the end, they were received in the houses of the people of Cioplea where they spent the evening, returning home after Vespers (Gabor, 2007). At the same time, from the centralization of the family names of the Bulgarians from Ciolpea and Popești carried out by Cătălin Grigore for

the period between 1813 and 1850, it results that out of 29 family names in Cioplea, a number of 16 are identical in Popești. Moreover, a number of families left Cioplea for good with the formation of the village of Popești-Pavlicheni, four families being identified (Grigore, 2010).

An important event was Archbishop Netzhammer's visit to Popești on the 16th of April 1911, when he was accompanied by the Crown Prince and future King of Great Romania – Ferdinand, together with Prince Karl Anton of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, who came with his wife Josephine and daughters Stephanie and Marie (Doboș, 2007a). The importance of the Catholic community in Popești is also shown in a letter that Archbishop Alexandru Theodor Cisar sent to the priest Gustav Muller in August 1826 when he announced that he was going to be transferred from Pitești to "the large and important parish of Popești-Leordeni (...) I look with confidence and serenity into the future when I know that the two thousand souls of Popești will be guided towards virtue and holiness, towards work and honesty, towards culture and progress by a worthy and conscientious pastor" (Doboș (a), 2007). And in terms of extension, the same archbishop established the following dimensions for the Popești-Leordeni parish in 1943: "From the communal slaughterhouse, Calea Văcărești, Șoseaua Olteniței through Plasa Pantelimon and Plasa Budești to the limit of Plasa Budești and Plasa Oltenița, then to the CFR Oltenița-București route, following the CFR railroad route to the crossing over the Dâmbovița River, and from there the Dâmbovița route to Splaiul Unirii and the slaughterhouse" (Doboș, 2007a).

With the growth of the community, the need to build a new church in Popești was felt. For this purpose, the "Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary" Church was assigned a land in 1927 under the Agrarian Law of 1921. The land was located in Olteniţei Road and had a surface of 3553 m^2. Eleven years later, this land was removed from the possession of the church and given back to the local administration in view of the construction of a market here. Following the steps taken by the priest Gustav Muller, including in court, the local authorities would recognize, by a decision issued in 1946, the right of the church on the land. Thus, although reduced in size compared to its initial surface, the land returned to the possession of the church in 1947. Doboș states that, a year later, this land was subject to nationalization and was again confiscated (Doboș, 2007a), but Dan Toma Dulciu exposes another theory, according to which the land was claimed by the local administration in order to build a "Popular Athenaeum", in fact a cultural camp. Thus, the president of the People's Council at that time, Florea Ianculescu, addressed in April 1951 to the People's Council of the "Nicolae Bălcescu" District a memorial

in which he requested the land for the construction of the cultural centre, taking into account the fact that until that date the construction of the church had not started and that the lot was adjacent to "a series of buildings (dispensary and communal bathroom), buildings that are part of a set of works, which are of direct public utility and necessity" (Dulciu, 2001).

After the Great War, in 1926, some of the communes around the city received the status of suburban communes, being incorporated into the administrative capital. These were: Șerban Vodă, Lupeasca, Militari, Dudești-Cioplea, Principele Nicolae, Colentina, Grivița, Popești-Leordeni, Băneasa, Pantelimon and Roșu, in a hierarchy based on the number of inhabitants in 1930. In 1939 it was decided by legal framework that 7 urban communes were under the administration of Bucharest: Băneasa, Colentina, Fundeni, Dudești-Cioplea, Marele Voievod Mihai, Militari and Principele Nicolae, and 6 rural communes: Chiajna, Dobroiești, Pantelimon, Popești-Leordeni, Roșu, Tudor Vladimirescu, all of which were located within the city beltline, territory established to be part of the "suburban region" of the Capital. In 1943 Crângași, Șerban-Vodă, Tudor Vladimirescu and Herăstrău became districts of Bucharest, being incorporated into the Capital. In 1950 the communes of Dudești-Cioplea and 30 Decembrie were in turn incorporated into the city (Dulciu, 2001).

Of the 9.675 inhabitants of the commune in 1968, 2.136 worked in enterprises located in Popești-Leordeni or in Bucharest and 1.250 worked at C.A.P. The establishment of the Popești Greenhouses by I.A.S. led to the need for new housing for the employees of the unit, for which the first blocks were built in the commune. In 1968 in Popești-Leordeni there were no less than 20 departments and workshops of large industrial enterprises, as well as the large factories – the "Danubiana" Tyre Plant and the "Viscofil" Factory – where about 6.200 labourers worked, most of them coming from the locality. But "Danubiana" had 2.700 employees. So, this real industrial platform attracted many workers from the local population, from Bucharest and from the neighbouring towns (Dulciu, 2001).

In 1979, the Catholic population of Popești Leordeni was 1.700 families totalling 5.500 believers (Doboș, 2007a). Nine hundred whole and half families, he estimated a percentage of about 70-80% with Bulgarian origins, mentioning the fact that in the parish registers all the parishioners are listed as Romanians, putting the difference of 20-30% on mobility. The priest Fabian Măriuţ from the parish of Cioplea, who was parish priest in Popești Leordeni until 2015, estimates the number of parishioners here at 5.000, which suggests the community is declining.

Over time, Bulgarian settlers decided to return to Bulgarian territory for various reasons: some returned immediately after the end of the Russian-Turkish conflict (Iacob, 2007b), others due to various problems related to land fertility, epidemics of livestock, the invasion of locusts etc. (Grigore, 2010). One such moment was at the beginning of the last century, when Bulgaria, once it gained independence, called upon the ethnic Bulgarians settled north of the Danube to return to the new state. Settled in Dragomirna, those who returned from the Banat area established the "Mahalaua banatelor" neighbourhood, those who came from the Capital area formed the "Mahalaua bucureștenilor" neighbourhood (Dulciu, 20019).

7. Community Problems with the Romanian Authorities

We have shown above what were the problems related to the right to land, then the situation of the land of the church in Popești, but the problems of the Paulicians were not limited to these issues. The Bulgarian ethnicity and the Catholic religion created a series of problems for the Bulgarian community of Pavliceni since the beginning of the last century. The priest A. Kuczka, from Cioplea, was accused by the "Patriotul" newspaper on the 2nd of February 1902 that by distributing a brochure in Bulgarian he was guilty of anti-Romanianism (Doboș, 2007b). Archbishop Hornstein was also accused of Bulgarian propaganda (Doboș, 2007b). Over time the priests of this community suffered from the ethnic discrimination of the community they were pastoring. Thus, the priests W. Kaluza and Franz Schinzielorz were arrested in August 1916 by the Romanian authorities and released at the end of the year due to Romania's participation in WWI (Doboș, 2007b). The priest Franz Schindzielorza was also arrested and interned in a camp and released a few months later (Doboș, 2007b). The parish priest of Ciolpea was also arrested in the same year and interned in Delenii de Sus from where he was released in December 1917. These arrests left Ciolpea without a priest and Masses were held extremely rarely. In their turn, old men from Cioplea as well as from Popești-Leordeni or Malcoci and "all those who did not have sons in the Romanian army" were interned in the camps in Moldova (Doboș, 2007b). Between August 1916 and March 1918, the priest Iosif Bonov was interned in the camp (Doboș, 2007b).

Because he visited Bulgaria in 1906, the parish priest of the church in Popești-Condurat, I. Petre was accused of having made Bulgarian propaganda in Popești. This accusation was formulated, as Dănuţ Doboș states, "on behalf of the Romanian Royal House and the prefect of Ilfov County, Niculescu-Dorobanţu", who declared

to Archbishop R. Netzhammer in 1908 that it was "inadmissible that these people do not allow themselves to be called Romanians, despite the fact that they are Romanian citizens". The priest I. Petre did not escape the accusations of propaganda even later in 1910 and 1913. The priest's guilt was that of being of Bulgarian ethnicity himself, but was also related to the tensions between Romania and Bulgaria around the Balkan Wars and the First World War. In addition to accusations against the priest, including reminding the faithful that they were Bulgarian and using a Bulgarian prayer book, the Bulgarians were suspected of "political connections and espionage" in favour of Bulgaria. In 1916 the priest was forbidden to serve, and was even arrested on two occasions on charges of "praying for the victory of the enemy armies of Romania" and violating the ban on preaching. Not only the priest was in the sights of the authorities, but also male parishioners whose sons were not enlisted in the Romanian army, who were interned in camps in Moldova (Doboș (a), 2007), as we will see below. Despite these accusations, the sons of Popești and Cioplea fell on the battlefields of the First World War for the realization of the Romanian national ideal. As proof of this sacrifice we have the monuments built in the two localities presented above.

The orphanage in Cioplea, which was run by the nuns of the "St. Vincent de Paul" Congregation since the beginning of the 20th century, was closed in 1916 when Romania entered the Great War (Doboș, 2007b).

Even within the community some extremely tense situations arose, as it was after the war, when the priest Gustav Muller was accused in 1947 by a group of disgruntled Popeștinians that he continued to serve, being labelled as a negative element, using his German ethnicity to accuse him of anti-Romanianism. With the help of local authorities and parishioners, the priest managed to prove his innocence. Another event that took place at that time, two years later, was the organization of the sacrament of the Holy Myrrh for 650 children by the bishop of Iași and apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Bucharest, Anton Durcovici. Security wanted to prevent this event and surrounded the archbishop's palace. However, the bishop decided to go and offer the sacrament to the 650 confirmands, and left on foot together with the theology professor Friedrich. After the tram ride to the terminus of Bellu Cemetery, they continued their journey to Popești on foot. When they arrived in the open field, they were forcibly loaded into a security car. This is how Bishop Durcovici was kidnapped on the 26th of June 1949, meeting his end in the State Security dungeons of Sighet on December 10th 1951 (Doboș, 2007a).

With the total takeover of power by the communist regime, the persecution against Christianity reached unimaginable heights, and in this assault against religion, the Catholic cult suffered greatly, with many priests being arrested. The Catholic confession was seen by the communist Romanian state as a resistance movement against the new regime. On July 19th 1948 the regime denounced the 1929 Concordat with the Vatican. This meant the abolition of confessional education and the banning of religious orders, "the expulsion of members of the diplomatic corps of the Nuntiature in Bucharest and the reduction of the Catholic dioceses in Romania to two" and a series of many pressures on religious leaders. Not even three months later, the Department of Religious Affairs asked the Catholic Church leadership to organise the church in such a way that it would be in line with the laws of the new communist state. At the same time, Bishops Augustin Pacha and Alexander Theodor Cisar were removed from the scene, then Bishops Márton Áron and Anton Durcovici were arrested, as well as other high-ranking prelates in an attempt by the Communist regime to take control of the Church. At the end of 1952, another group of priests was arrested (Oanță, 2018) and later also priests who worked at Cioplea. This is the case of the priest Andrei Despina who was arrested by the State Security on June 14th 1959, accused of taking a stand against the regime and killed on July 22nd 1959 in Predeal – a staged suicide (Doboș, 2007b). The priest Franz Keil was arrested by NKVD officers on the 6th of January 1945 and deported to the USSR where he carried out "reconstruction" work for the Soviet state and from where he returned four years later (Doboș, 2007b). In 1952 the priest Francisc Augustin was arrested and convicted in the "Ghika-Menges" trial and released in 1956 (Doboș, 2007b). In the same batch the priest Iosif Gunciu was arrested and tried. He was released later in 1958, only to be arrested again one day after his release on charges of "legionary (fascism) activity" for which he served another five years of detention (Doboș, 2007b).

8. Monuments

The monuments built in Dudești-Cioplea and Popești Leordeni in eternal memory of the sons of these communities who perished for the realization of the Romanian national ideal stand as witnesses of the sacrifice of the Bulgarians Pavlicians on the battlefield of WWI.

The monument of the Ciopleni heroes was built in the cemetery of the community, at the initiative of the priest Augustin Kucza, with the financial support of the

Dudești-Cioplea Town Hall (Doboș, 2007b). The consecration of the monument took place on November 23rd, 1936. At the end of the Mass, a procession took place, attended by Archbishop Alexander Th. Cisar, the priests Julius Hering, St. Tr. Jovanelli, Augustin Kuczka and Andrei "Horn" Despina, and with them the mayor Gheorghe Ștefănescu, who financed the work, along with the entire body of the Communal Council. The architect of the monument that pays homage to the 32 heroes of Ciopleni is Carol Kortobius (Doboș, 2007b). The monument, located at the entrance to the cemetery in Cioplea, consists of three crosses, with the main cross made of wrought iron, joined together by a wall with a place of remembrance, having placed on the pedestal in the centre a plaque on which is carved the insignia of the Bringing of the Memories: a military helmet set on olive branches and two crossed crosses and the inscription "In remembrance of the heroes of Cioplea who fell for the Nation and the King in the war of the nation 1916-1919 Rest in peace!" The names of those who fell in the First World War are inscribed on the plinths on the sides. On the main plinth at the bottom a plaque with the fallen heroes of the Second World War was later mounted.

In Dudești there is also the Monument to the fallen heroes of the two World Wars in the locality of Dudești-Cioplea, popularly known as "the Statue of Sălăjean", located at the intersection of Nicolae Grigorescu (former Leontin Sălăjean), Camil Ressu and Theodor Pallady avenues. The bronze monument, depicting a WWI Romanian soldier with a weapon in his hand, in attack position, was made by the sculptor Spiridon Georgescu in 1932. On the front side of the plinth is mounted a bas-relief showing a war scene, and on the other three sides of the plinth are mentioned, also on bronze plaques, the names of the heroes of the commune of Dudești-Cioplea (Buiumaci, 2014). However, this monument is only for the heroes of Dudești, and was constructed at the initiative of mayor Dumitru Brânzoi, and at the time of its location marked the centre of Dudești (Larionescu, 2006). It is worth noting that the individuals commemorated on one monument are not commemorated on the other; instead, their names appear only in the street names of the communities from which they originate (Concept M8, 2013). The fact that there are two distinct monuments, one for the heroes of Cioplea and another for those of Dudești reveals once again the closed society character of the two Bulgarian communities in the locality: the Catholic and the Orthodox.

In Popești-Leordeni, a monument to the heroes was unveiled on October 9th 1938 in the centre of the commune. The ceremony took place after the 9 o'clock mass, when the villagers left the church in an organized way, led by the Catholic clergy. Arriving

at the monument, the widows laid wreaths, while other participants sang the royal anthem. After the prayers for the souls of the lost and the words of the priest Gustav Muller, the military, the pre-military and the pupils of the town marched. They honoured the 60 sons of the village who had served for the victory of Romania, leaving behind 40 widows and many orphans (Doboș (a), 2007). In the middle of the second decade of the last century, the village had about 2.500 inhabitants, of whom 300 men were mobilised (Dulciu, 2001). The tall monument, consisting of an obelisk-like pedestal ending at the tip with a bronze statue of an eagle with open wings and carrying a cross in its beak. The pedestal, set at the top of a four-step pyramidal post, is in the form of a cross, with the inscription "1916-1919" at the intersection of the arms. Below this, on an attached plinth, there is a bust statue of a soldier who seems to be emerging from the main plinth. On this small plinth is the inscription "Heroes of Popești-Leordeni. Grateful community". On the sides there are white marble plaques with the names of the heroes.

9. Conclusions

The Bulgarian Catholics called Pavlicians settled north of the Danube, some of them founding two localities near Bucharest at Cioplea, respectively Popești, the latter even bearing the name Popești Pavlicheni. Their basic occupations, gardening and cattle breeding, helped them establish themselves on the Bucharest market, becoming the main distributors of vegetables and dairy products due to the products' outstanding quality. Coming from a heretical sect and converted to Catholicism, the Pavlician Bulgarians were organized in a closed society, very attached to their church, which allowed them to preserve their culture and traditions for a long time. With the installation of the communist regime in Romania and the implementation of its economic policy based on collectivization and the principle of forced industrialization and accelerated urbanization, the problem of housing space emerged. In the first part of the communist regime housing was built outside the city, including part of the nearby localities within the urban space, in order to allow the expansion of the residential area needed by those who came to work in the new Bucharest enterprises. Thus, the commune of Dudești-Cioplea was included in the city and underwent the process of collectivization whereby their agricultural land and livestock were confiscated and they were forced to move on to new trades, especially to the large industrial platform nearby. Then this area experienced the process of urban systematization, which involved the demolition of the houses in Dudești Cioplea to make way for the large Titan - Balta Albă district, which became

larger than the largest city in the country. Those whose homes were demolished were given housing in newly built apartment blocks, but they continued to attend the church in Cioplea, as well as to two other churches in the vicinity of the new homes. By relocating these families to other areas and to houses with many families, the community connections were broken. The situation of the Bulgarians in Popești is similar in terms of collectivization, but the locality kept its rural character and thus the community managed to resist longer. But the lack of agricultural land made them turn to the newly established industry in their commune, where there were the big factories such as Danubiana or Viscofil, the workshops in the Taberei area, Transcom, as well as the nearby enterprises I.R.A, I.M.G.B. or the industrial area Filaret - Trafic Greu. But they have also experienced rural systematization, the agrarian policy through which Nicolae Ceaușescu wanted to increase the cultivable areas (Tismăneanu, 2006). So, some of the houses in the center of the Popești village were demolished, on their place being built some apartment blocks that were distributed to those whose houses had been demolished. It was only after the December 1989 Revolution that the commune, now a town, experienced an influx of foreigners with the explosion of the real estate market, from which the locality was not spared.

Another element that influenced this community during the communist regime was the schooling in Romanian, an important component in the loss of the ethnic identity, which is why nowadays very few people of Bulgarian origin speak their mother tongue. Their dispersion in different areas and the break from the community where the language was used, the extra-community contacts that involve communication in Romanian is an important factor and has led to assimilation, to the loss of the Bulgarians in the great majority. This may be one of the answers to the non-identification of some with their Paulician origins, of which perhaps even their ancestors were unaware a few generations after their initial emigration.

The mixed marriages between the Bulgarian and the majority population contribute to all this.

It is not known exactly how many Bulgarians there are today in the two communities that settled 200 years ago in the south-east of Bucharest. Local authorities do not have access to such data. According to the 2002 census published by the National Institute of Statistics, Romania had 8,025 Bulgarian residents, of whom 6,194 identified as Roman Catholics. Of these, 370 lived in Bucharest (National Institute of Statistics, 2002). The number of Bulgarians recorded in the

Bucharest area changed over time, from 1,727 in 1930 to 794 in 1956 and 534 in 1966. In 1977, the figure rose to 599, following the inclusion of Ilfov County in the Municipality of Bucharest. Subsequent census data recorded 446 Bulgarians in 1992 and 370 in 2002 (National Institute of Statistics, 2002).

This decrease in the number of Bulgarians living in Bucharest and Ilfov area is explained by the fact that the Bulgarians from Ilfov declared themselves Romanians at the last census, as the officials from Popeşti-Leordeni told me, so we consider the data communicated by the priests. The religious authorities did not respond to requests on this subject and only from direct discussions with the priests we could get an idea in this regard. From the calculations made on the basis of the estimates received from the priests who serve in the churches of Cioplea, Popești, Holy Cross and St. Theresa and presented above, there are more than 6.000 Catholic parishioners, descendants of the Bulgarian Paulicians, but who no longer speak the language, thus losing one of the two elements of identity of this ethno-religious community.

I have thus tried to create a brief history of the bicentennial past of this community that I consider as unitary, having the same origin, language and faith, even if a series of elements that divide it can be identified, such as the year of emigration or the administrative-political situation. This differentiation is felt even in the articles researched on this subject which do not take the community as a whole.

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