

THE EPISCOPAL ELECTIONS IN ARAD 1873, AS REFLECTED BY THE ROMANIAN PRESS

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Moise by his Christian name, Miron Romanul, the future bishop of Arad and metropolitan bishop of Transylvania, was born at Mezieș, Bihor, on the 23rd of August 1828 in a well-to-do villager family. He studied the local elementary school, the secondary school at Beiuș, and then he followed theological studies in Arad between 1846 and 1849. In 1857 he took the habit at Hodoș-Bodrog Monastery and he was given the name of Miron. He was a secretary and than an eparchial counselor, so to say two administrative positions within Arad Bishopric in the days of Bishop Gherasim Raș, but also he staid in Arad bishopric service at the time of Bishop Procopie Ivașcoviçi; between 1857 and 1869 he was a teacher at the Theological-Pedagogic Institute. He concomitantly got a lift up in the clerical hierarchy, from deacon (1857), proto-deacon, singhel, proto-singhel, and president-dean of Oradea Orthodox Consistory, between 1870 and 1873¹. In August 1871 he was appointed to the archimandrite position and in January the next year he received the dignity of a dean of the whole Arad diocese.

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¹ Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul teologilor români*, București, 1996, p. 385; Pavel Vesa, *Episcopia Aradului. Istorie. Cultură. Mentalități (1706-1918)*, Cluj-Napoca, 2006, p. 139-141.

He became conspicuous within the national movement, namely the actions that started in 1861², the moment the Romanians began to organize themselves in the new political circumstances. The national identity consciousness development had a crucial role in the nation forming. If speaking about the Romanian society, such a phenomenon became a general one by the 1848 Revolution time, the liberal government set after 1860 having encouraged the national movement. Sibiu Diet meeting in 1863³ represented the legislative acknowledgement of the Romanian nation, language and confessions among the Empire political nations. But the Romanian legislative forum functioning was just for a time as the Court would have a new arrangement by accepting the collaboration with the Magyars. Franz Joseph I dissolved the Diet of Sibiu on the 1st of September 1865, and asked for a new diet election that would meet in Cluj on the 19th of November. The tax for exerting the electoral franchise became restrictive for the Romanian electors as the most of them were not in position to pay it so the majority was assured for the Magyars. Miron Romanul, an unyielding supporter of the national interests involved himself in the electoral campaign for Diet elections in 1865, 5 deputies being elected then in Arad region⁴.

On the 8th of June 1867 as a result of his debates with the Magyar political class representatives, Austrian emperor crowned himself as king of Hungary, the dual monarchy being settled thus. So the Magyar nobles found the way to complete their ambitions of hegemony as they had worked during the feudal kingdom. Transylvania was included under Budapest control and subordination area within that dual political structure. The dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary installing changed the national movement direction. Fully aware of the peril that the new state formula would be for the Romanians, the political leaders of those ones looked for solutions to go with the moment. But to find a common denominator proved to be the great difficulty. As a result of the divergent opinions, two political diametrically opposite directions crystallized within the Romanian national movement,

² Keith Hitchins, *Studii privind istoria modernă a Transilvaniei*, Cluj, 1970, p. 63-64; Dumitru Suci, *Studii privind mișcarea națională a românilor din Transilvania în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea*, Cluj-Napoca, 2004, p. 61-76.

³ Simion Retegan, *Dieta românească a Transilvaniei (1863-1864)*, Cluj-Napoca, 1979, *passim*.

⁴ Pavel Vesa, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

the passivism and the activism⁵ which divided the political and intellectual Romanian elite and caused prejudices to their common cause.

Miron Romanul was one of the initiators of the meeting from 14/26 November 1867, together with Nicolae Filimon and Lazăr Ionescu. As a candidate in Chişineu-Criş electoral circle in the 1869 elections, and a deputy in Budapest Parliament after, he had a national program to present to his electors, together with his own opinions on the political and national situation of his people. The fraction belonging to passivism within the national movement criticized him for involving in such a political activity. In the biography that he dedicated to him⁶, Miron Cristea, the future metropolitan bishop, explained Miron Romanul's gesture by motivating that he had had Şaguna's accord⁷. With the approval of the same one, Miron Romanul was a royal school inspector in 1869 in Caraş-Severin County, but only for 1 year, afterwards his adversaries reproaching him also with that function⁸.

The metropolitan bishop Şaguna demise – a complex personality who marked an era in the Romanian Orthodox Church history – was a lost for the whole Romanian society in Transylvania. The problem of a successor election appeared in the same time, so that one to continue the great hierarch's way. Thanks to Şaguna the Orthodox Church had its Organic Rule, so the constitutional basis for election worked. According to 156, 161, and 170 paragraphs, the convening circular letter was emitted for the metropolitan consistory meeting in order to unleash the elective procedure. By N^o 8 Metrop. 1873 act, that forum established the Romanian Orthodox Church electoral Congress on the 16th of August/ 7th of September⁹.

⁵ Liviu Maior, *Mişcarea naţională românească din Transilvania. 1900-1914*, Cluj-Napoca, 1986, p. 8-19.

⁶ Ilie Dinurseni, *Arhiepiscopul şi metropolitul Miron Romanul*, Sibiu, 1898.

⁷ Andrei Şaguna named Miron Romanul as one of the candidates, beside the favorite Ioan Popasu and Nicolae Popea, in 1865 for Caransebeş Bishopric elections; see: Ioan Lupaş, *Din corespondenţa mitropolitului Miron Roman*, în *Omagiu Înalt Prea Sfinţiei Sale Dr. Nicolae Bălan mitropolitul Ardealului. La douăzeci de ani de arhipăstorire*, Sibiu, 1940, p. 500.

⁸ Antonie Plămădeală, *Lupta împotriva deznaţionalizării românilor din Transilvania în timpul dualismului austro-ungar în vremea lui Miron Romanul 1874-1898 după acte, documente şi corespondenţe inedite*, Sibiu, 1986, p. 27.

⁹ *Telegraful român*, 21, 1873, nr. 56, 12/24 iulie, p. 1; *Lumina*, 2, 1873, nr. 41, 15/27 iulie, p. 1; *Federaţiunea*, 6, 1873, nr. 55, 19/31 iulie, p. 2; *Albina*, 8, 1873, nr. 53, 15/27 iulie, p. 2.

As a result of Ivaşcovici election for the metropolitan chair, the name of Arad dean Miron Romanul was brought into relief. As the elective procedure from Sibiu might be followed by the imperial recognition, during the 5th session of the Congress, on the 30th of August/ 11th of September, V. Babeş read the project of the official letter which was to be send to the Court to be sanctioned. The Congress forum elected a deputation of five persons¹⁰ to hand urgently the voted document to the emperor. The official body of representatives – Iacob Bologna, Ioan cavaler de Puşcariu, Ioan P. Deseanu and George Floca – was led by Miron Romanul.

The newspaper of Sibiu¹¹, and *Lumina*¹² from Arad were the only papers that published Miron Romanul's discourse before the face of the emperor on the 17th of September the date of the Romanian Orthodox delegation audience. The news on the imperial audience was published in the Magyar official paper *Budapesti Közlöny*, 20th of September, and was taken over by *Federaţiunea*¹³.

When installing on the metropolitan chair Procopiu wrote a letter¹⁴ to clergy and to the faithful people from Arad diocese to depart from them. He let them know after 20 years of pastorship that the diocese Consistory and archimandrite Miron Romanul were entrusted to lead the diocese till the vacant chair would be occupied, but under his fatherly supervision all that period of transition. As Miron Romanul had been the Procopie's right hand in the diocese, such a choice was not at all a surprise. In January 1872, while he had some healthy problems, Ivaşcovici appointed Romanul the dean of the whole bishopric on the basis of paragraph 118 of the Organic Rule¹⁵, as he motivated his decision.

Procopie Ivaşcovici election for the metropolitan position during the Congress of August 1873 called for elections within Arad bishopric, the bishop of which he had been.

¹⁰ *Telegraful român*, 21, 1873, nr. 71, 2/14 septembrie, p. 1; *Albina*, 8, 1873, nr. 67, 2/14 septembrie, p. 1. For *Albina*, that information was offered by V. Babeş.

¹¹ *Telegraful român*, 21, 1873, nr. 74, 13/25 septembrie, p. 1.

¹² *Lumina*, 2, 1873, nr. 56, 13/25 septembrie, p. 1.

¹³ *Federaţiunea*, 6, 1873, nr. 63, 10/21 septembrie, p. 1.

¹⁴ Nr. 202 A.E.M. din 16/28 septembrie 1873. See: *Lumina*, 2, 1873, nr. 58, 23 septembrie/5 octombrie, p. 1; *Albina*, 8, 1873, nr. 75, 30 septembrie/12 octombrie, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Speranţa*, 3, 1872, nr. 3, 1 februarie, p. 21.

By the form letter of Arad eparchial Consistory all the parochial units received the metropolitan edict¹⁶ through which the hierarch announced his election for the Sibiu metropolitan chair¹⁷ and regulated how the bishop vacancy would be substituted for in Arad bishopric, according to the 98th paragraph of the Organic Rule.

From the viewpoint of canonic-jurisdiction and administration Arad diocese had 18 ranks subordinated to, 11 belonging to Arad bishopric and 7 under Oradea¹⁸ consistory leading.

The metropolitan letter was followed by a circular one of Arad eparchial Consistory¹⁹ which was sanctioned in the session on the 4th/16th of October 1873; through that letter the proto-presbyteries offices and parishes, and the school inspectorates were let know about the change within the bishopric, and the priests about the new bishop's name to be used in the ritual prayers.

Being not very present in media, the event was present in press in full progress, during the preparative moments and then as an elective moment. In distinction from other elections within the Orthodox Church, there were more papers to refer to, information, even succinct being spread by more newspapers.

The most details were found as was but natural in the local paper *Lumina*, the official newspaper of Arad eparchy. Even interested in the subject the paper had not an ample approaching, a relating in detail, in other words that kind of electoral serial discussions in consecutive paper issues as it had happened in the case of the metropolitan elections. Only the steps before the election and the elective moment with the electoral synod meeting were punctually related.

The initiative for Arad bishop election belonged to the eparchial Consistory Presidium, which took notice of the metropolitan election and announced on the 26th of September 1873 (Julian calendar), the plenary

¹⁶ It is about the letter N^o. 202 A.E.M. from 16th/28th of Septembrie 1873. See: *Albina*, 8, 1873, nr. 78, 11/23 octombrie, p. 2.

¹⁷ *Lumina*, 2, 1873, nr. 61, 7/19 octombrie, p. 1. News from *Lumina* were taken over by the metropolitan paper, with an emphasis on letter N^o. 202 A.E.M. and on the date of electoral synod, the 11th of November. See: *Telegraful român*, 21, 1873, nr. 82, 11/23 octombrie, p. 1.

¹⁸ Pavel Cherescu, *Episcopia Aradului în anul 1867*, Oradea, 2008, p. 201.

¹⁹ Document N^o. 1277 Plen./1873, approved in the session of 4th/16th of October 1873. *Lumina*, 2, 1873, nr. 61, 7/19 octombrie, p. 1.

session of Arad eparchial Consistory meeting to decide the first measures in order to prepare the election moment²⁰.

Only a single desertion was mentioned by that paper, concerning the representatives for synod. It was the case of circumscription (circle) XII Lipova where a new poll had to be organized after the former lay deputy George Berariu's resignation. The eparchial Consistory of Arad emitted a form letter²¹ according to which the Sunday of the 21st of October each church community would be the parish synod meeting to elect the deputy, so that the next Sunday "the faithful men" produce the vote result in a shape of sealed up election protocol to George Fogorași, the electoral commissar in Lipova. The elected one had a seat of 3 years, 1873–1875.

The term as established by Consistory for Arad synod was 11-12/23-24 November 1873²².

Once starting the elective procedure two sustaining nuclei outlined for the two candidates Miron Romanul and rector Ioan Meșianu²³. Ioan Popovici Deseanu representing the deputies of Arad diocese, and Partenie Cosma, representing Oradea office of locum tenens were the leaders of Miron Romanul's supporting campaign; Partenie Cosma was otherwise a relative of Miron Romanul, as his wife was the future bishop niece of brother²⁴. Ioan Meșianu was strongly supported by the group around Vincențiu Babeș²⁵. The dispute between the two groups was a public one within the Romanian press framework which became the field of the involved ones confrontation. So if Romanul's supporters used *Lumina* to back their candidate, their opponents used *Albina*, a media battle starting between the two newspapers.

²⁰ *Lumina*, 2, 1873, nr. 59, 30 septembrie/12 octombrie, p. 1.

²¹ It is about the document N^o 1333 Plen./1873, from 4th /16th of October 1873 sent to clergy and parish synods from electoral circle Lipova. În *Lumina*, 2, 1873, nr. 61, 7/19 octombrie, p. 1.

²² According to document N^o. 1315 Plen. Of Arad Romanian Orthodox eparchial Consistory, from 4/16 October 1873. See: *Lumina*, 2, 1873, nr. 62, 11/23 octombrie, p. 1; nr 69, 4/16 noiembrie, p. 1; *Albina*, 8, 1873, nr. 78, 11/23 octombrie, p. 3.

²³ Ioan Meșianu was born at Zărnești, in 1828. He climbed the clergy hierarchy, as priest, rector, dean in Oradea, and bishop of Arad from 1875. He would occupy the eparchial chair till 1898 when he was elected as the Ardeal metropolitan bishop. He died in 1916, and was buried in Sibiu.

²⁴ Eusebiu Roșca, *Monografia mitropoliei ortodoxe române a Ardealului începând dela repausarea arhiepiscopului-mitropolit Andreiu baron de Șaguna până astăzi. Contribuții istorice*, Sibiu, 1937, p. 73; Pavel Vesa, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

²⁵ *Lumina*, 2, 1873, nr. 71, 11/23 noiembrie, p. 2-3; Eusebiu Roșca, *op. cit.*, p. 73-75.

Miron Romanul's appointing for Consistory president stirred a dour reaction in *Albina* that called such a gesture for abusive and illegal and considered that position as contrary to the church morality²⁶. The paper editorial board commented upon the whole moment amending Romanul's attitude and giving the readers to understand that that one would use such a situation in his favor during the next electoral episode.

Ioan Slavici, one of Miron Romanul's supporters published an article in *Lumina*²⁷, a portrait of the future bishop according to a frame that the dean perfectly kept on. So Slavici supported a hierarch of an irreproachable morality, whose demeanor was redoubled by a national political direction. Slavici was one of Romanul's intimates since that one was a bishop dean in Oradea. Miron Romanul proposed then Slavici for the eparchial Consistory archivist position and included him in the delegations for his canonic visits in Bihor villages²⁸. The riposte came soon. As a response to Slavici's article, Vincentiu Babeş published in *Albina* an ironical material accusing the dean's accedence, his incompatibilities, thus charging also the diocese synod members who supported him²⁹. Miron Romanul himself retorted repealing all the charges and qualifying the opinion of Babeş as a biased one as he considered that his opponent had a particular aim in view by protecting a candidate who would work ulterior in his favor³⁰.

Babeş attacked also the second Meşianu's opponent, Nicolae Popea even if that one passed for few chances to occupy the eparchial chair.

The strain was prolonged by *Telegraful român* entering the dispute which felt in its duty to retort to the done situation³¹. *Albina* editorial board was accused to support certain candidates for the eparchial chair so being in an illegal position as it encroached the 97th and 153rd paragraphs of the Organic Rule that interdicted such a matter. The newspaper anonymous correspondent³² ascertained "with indignation" that *Albina* was not for the first time in such a position while Miron Romanul's episode seemed to be a

²⁶ *Albina*, 8, 1873, nr. 78, 11/23 octombrie, p. 2-3.

²⁷ *Lumina*, 2, 1873, nr. 64, 18/30 octombrie, p. 1-3.

²⁸ The two ones would become opposites within some years attacking each other. See: Teofil Bugnariu, Ioan Domşa, Dimitrie Vatamaniuc, *Ioan Slavici. 1848-1925. Biobibliografie*, Bucureşti, 1973, p. XXIX-XXX.

²⁹ *Albina*, 8, 1873, nr. 85, 4/16 noiembrie, p. 1-2.

³⁰ *Lumina*, 2, 1873, nr. 70, 8/20 noiembrie, p. 3.

³¹ *Telegraful român*, 21, 1873, nr. 90, 8/20 noiembrie, p. 1-2.

³² *Ibidem*. The article was signed cu "Y".

copy of that one of dean Nicolae Popea, who had had the same destiny as being disparaged within the newspaper from Pesta. The editorial board of *Albina*, far from recognizing its guilt laid stress on accusing the metropolitan semi-official newspaper, and retorted the same charges for its campaign only for certain candidates in the question.

The conflict ended before the electoral synod convening, *Albina* renounced to such a subject so that it would not publish any data on the election result. Such an abrupt carelessness might be associated with the electoral result as the elected bishop was that one the paper had disparaged before.

60 deputies formed the synod meeting in Arad, and their votes were as follows: Miron Romanul – 34 votes, Ioan Mețianu – 25, while for Nicolae Popea a single vote was registered³³. It seems that Mețianu would have obtained more votes very close to be elected if the night before the voting 6 deputies from Bihor hadn't betrayed him. Having been invited to a banquet by that one opponents, they had been persuaded to vote for the "Bihor native" Romanul³⁴.

After Miron Romanul election there were also certain press voices to attack such an option. Nicolae Stravoiu, a member of the metropolitan Congress from 1873 had a courageous attitude and signed a material on that question in *Gazeta Transilvaniei*³⁵. The author chose not accidentally *Gazeta* from Brasov as his material was a critical one concerning the Orthodox elective model. On the electoral process within the Romanian Orthodox Church, Stravoiu approached the case of Arad bishopric pointing that the elective procedure had been erroneously applied. His discourse logic was based on the idea of a "unique body", a unique metropolitan entity. On that basis he thought that candidates from the whole metropolitan province had had to take part in as it had happened in the metropolitan bishop election when a representative of Arad eparchy had been elected and not one of Transylvania eparchy. The deputy demonstration compelled attention that the procedure from Arad spreading could create an undesirable precedent so that any diocese could further elect its hierarch only within the respective bishopric territory, a rule that had to be applied consequently for

³³ *Lumina*, 2, 1873, nr. 72, 18/30 noiembrie, p. 1; I.D. Suciu, Radu Constantinescu, *Documente privitoare la istoria Mitropoliei Banatului*, II, Timișoara, 1980, p. 920.

³⁴ Antonie Plămădeală, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

³⁵ *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, 36, 1873, nr. 91, 29 noiembrie/11 decembrie, p. 1-2.

the metropolitan chair too. So the author concluded that they must abandon to such damaging practice for the Orthodox Church as it puts in question the “agreement and fraternity”. The author was extremely categorical and accused directly Arad synod which could not have separated from “the local interests” by electing an unqualified person, nor a deserved one, with a unique quality that had devolved from his allegiance to the diocese area.

Three of the Romanian newspapers related on the Arad bishop election, but the data were different according to their sources.

If *Familia* related the event as a simple notice³⁶ giving its readers the final result in some lines, *Federațiunea* published an article on its first page together with some commentaries³⁷. That text rather kept track of the adversaries reprimand those for whom the election result was a stung lesson. Fully content with Romanul given trust, the paper board considered the final vote for a great success and greeted him with cheers. Being convict that “the professional intriguers” had machinated till the last moment, the paper journalists saw a diversion even in how late the telegram with the final result had arrived to them as the 6 hours for the telegram covering from Arad to Pesta they took for suspect and too much larger³⁸.

Naturally the largest relating on Arad election was made by *Lumina*, which published the whole Protocol of the diocese electoral synod sessions from 11-12 November 1873³⁹. The synod meeting respected integrally the specific procedure by following all the necessary steps. The document under president Ivașcovici’s signature and Teodor Pap, Moise Bocșan, and Georgiu Popa as notaries was to confirm the net favorable result for Miron Romanul and remember that the next classified ones, Meșianu and at a very great distance Nicolae Popea had to be mentioned within that Protocol in order to comply with the triad of the first voted ones from whom the bishop was to be confirmed.

If the electoral moment was missed by the metropolitan newspaper that published no information, we find some news on Miron Romanul confirming on the Episcopal chair in the paper from Sibiu. A brief relating of some lines on the first page announced the voting result of Arad electoral synod validation, together with the estimating time of ordainment after

³⁶ *Familia*, 9, 1873, nr. 38, 18/30 noiembrie, p. 441.

³⁷ *Federațiunea*, 6, 1873, nr. 73, 18/30 noiembrie, p. 1.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ *Lumina*, 2, 1873, nr. 72, 18/30 noiembrie, p. 4-5.

Christmas time⁴⁰. The ordainment took place on the 3rd of February 1874, but Miron's pastorship was a short one as on the 21st November the same year he was elected for the metropolitan bishop chair⁴¹ once again replacing Ivașcovici who had occupied the Serbian patriarchate chair.

Gradually noted and in a subjective shape the elective event from Arad, November 1873, was a full of light and shade one in the press pages, certain aspects being stressed according to the involved ones attitude. So if within the pre-electoral time the candidates' vanity and interests but especially their supporters' subjective opinions dominated, once consumed the event wouldn't unleash passionate discourses. The eparchy paper backed the official position promoting the candidate who the former bishop Procopie had wished, while *Albina* took the opposite stand. Not at last, the moment was used to remind the public opinion the subject of the Orthodox Church election and the dissatisfactions which were bound up with the elective procedures.

ALEGERILE EPISCOPALE DE LA ARAD DIN 1873 OGLINDITE ÎN PRESA ROMÂNEASCĂ

Rezumat

Miron Romanul s-a născut în 1828 în Bihor. A urmat teologia la Arad. S-a călugărit la mănăstirea Hodoș-Bodrog în 1857. A ocupat funcții administrative în dieceza Arad, în timpul episcopilor Gherasim Raț și Procopie Ivașcovici. Între 1870-1873 a fost președinte-vicar al consistoriului ortodox din Oradea. În 1871 a ajuns arhimandrit și apoi vicar al întregii episcopii de Arad.

S-a remarcat în mișcarea națională din anul 1861 și în campaniile electorale din 1865 și 1869. Pentru acțiunile politice a fost criticat de opoziția săi politici.

După moartea lui Andrei Șaguna a fost ales mitropolit Procopie Ivașcovici. Astfel, devenea vacant scaunul eparhial de Arad. Consistoriul eparhial a declanșat procedurile electiv. S-au remarcat doi candidați:

⁴⁰ *Telegraful român*, 21, 1873, nr. 98, 6/18 decembrie, p. 1-2.

⁴¹ Păcățianu, T.V., *Două alegeri de mitropolit în Sibiu, în Transilvania. Organul Societății culturale „Astra”*, 60, 1929, nr. 7-8, p. 518-527.

Miron Romanul și Ioan Mețianu. În jurul lor s-au format grupuri de susținere. Disputa dintre acestea s-a purtat în presă, în ziarele *Lumina* și *Albina*.

Cea mai cuprinzătoare relatare despre alegere a aparținut ziarului *Lumina*. Aici s-a publicat Protocolul sinodului electoral desfășurat în 11-12/23-24 noiembrie 1873. Miron Romanul a fost ales episcop cu 34 de voturi din cele 60 exprimate.

Episodul alegerii de la Arad a adus în discuție tema alegerilor în Biserica Ortodoxă Română.