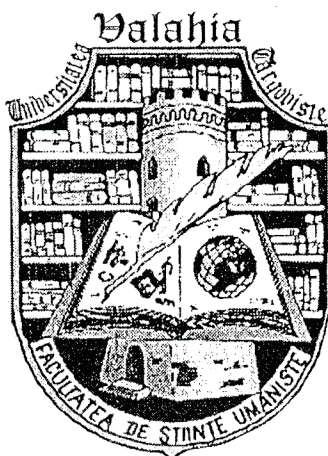


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INTERNAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONDITIONS FOR THE ESTABLISHING OF THE ROMANIAN PATRIARCHATE

*Ciprian Șarpe**

Forword

The second half of the 19th century registers essential events for the history of the Orthodox Romanian Church: in 1859, the Romanian principalities of Moldova and Wallachia formed the modern state of Romania. The hierarchy of the Orthodox churches tends to follow the structure of the state. Therefore, shortly afterwards, in 1872, the Orthodox churches of the former principalities (the Metropolitanate of Ungrovlahia and the Metropolitanate of Moldova) decided to unite, to form the Romanian Orthodox Church (Serada 1950: 330). In the process, they canonically separated from the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Romanian Orthodox Church declared autocephaly.

The Patriarchate of Constantinople only recognized the autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1885. First organized with the rank of Metropolitanate, the Romanian Orthodox Church became a Patriarchate in 1925, when the ranks of the Romanian Orthodox Church grew following the formation of Greater Romania.

Other Orthodox Churches declared Patriarchate long time ago, while at the beginning of the 20th century two Orthodox Churches had already reestablished their Patriarchate, the Russian Church, in 1917 and the Serbian Church, in 1920.

Though, the Romanian Church was always well organized. On the Romanian soil, Christianity penetrated in Apostolic times. In Dobrudja - the ancient Scythia Minor - the Word of the Gospel was preached by Saint Apostol Andrew - in the second half of the first century A.D. After the Roman Empire had conquered Dacia (106 AD), the number of the faithful increased either by settling here the followers of the new faith who had left the Romanized populations in the Lower Danube or by those who came in this place together with the colonists, the army, the miners and the merchants who were sent by the Roman Empire in its new province. Therefore, when the Romanian people appeared in history as a Latin nation it was already Christian. Thus, the Romanian people is one of the few nations that, without having a fixed date of its Christianization, was born Christian and this is how it has remained up to the present, being the only Orthodox Latin people, and at the same time, the oldest Christian people in this part of Europe. Moreover, as a preacher of the Gospel, it prepared the Bulgarians and the Slaves for Christianization.

In the 14th century, after the formation of the Romanian feudal States in the South and East of the Carpathians - Wallachia and Moldavia - as a proof of their complete political independence, they started organizing the Church. In 1359, a Metropolitan see was founded in Wallachia, at Curtea de Arges, and in 1401, in Moldavia, the Metropolitan see of Suceava was confirmed by the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

In 1370, another metropolitan Church is founded in Wallachia with its centre at Severin, and at the beginning of the 16th century, the bishopric sees in Ramnicu Valcea and Buzau. In the East of the Carpathians there came into being the bishoprics of Roman and Radauti, in the 15th century, in the 16th century the bishopric of Husi, and in 1864 the bishopric of the Lower Danube.

In Transilvania there were orthodox bishopric centres, too: at first at Dabaca, then at Vad, Feleac Geoagiu, Balgrad (Alba Iulia) Ienopolea, Caransebes, Arad, Oradea and Sighetu Marmatiei. The Metropolitan Church of Transilvania was abolished in 1701 and reactivated as a new bishopric in 1761. In 1864 it became a Metropolitan Church as it is today.

The metropolitans of Wallachia and Moldavia together with their Church have always been in a canonical relationship with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and they have always enjoyed a special honor in the Orthodox world. If the metropolitans of Ungrovlahia had followed the example of the church leaders of Bulgaria or Serbia, they could have proceeded to the establishing of the Romanian Patriarchate already from the end of the 16th century, when Michael the Brave had created the necessary political conditions for the realization of the national unity, while the ecclesiastical ones were already a long time before consolidated, at least between the Muntenia and Ardeal Church.

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All the same, after many discussions and proposals, the establishing of the Romanian Patriarchate took place only in 1925. In 1925, the Romanian Orthodox Church was raised at the rank of a Patriarchate, the Prime Metropolitan Miron Cristea becoming the first patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

I. Internal conditions for the establishing of the Romanian Patriarchate

1. The declaration and the recognition of the autocephaly of the Orthodox Romanian Church

The first step was made by the "Organic Decree for the Establishment of a Central Synodal Authority for the Affairs of the Romanian Religion", from 3 December 1864, that provided in its first article that: "The Orthodox Romanian Church is and remains independent from any other foreign ecclesiastical authority, regarding its organization and discipline" (Șerbănescu 1970: 401).

There was for the first time in the history of the Romanian Church and State, that a law provided officially the autocephaly or the canonical independence of the Orthodox Romanian Church to the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

It followed the Organic Law for the election of the metropolitans and the bishops, as well as the law for the establishment of the Saint Synod of the orthodox Autocephalous Romanian Church, from 1872, which provided the autocephaly of the Church.

Afterwards there was established The Saint Synod, in relation with the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the other Orthodox Sister Churches, regarding the unity of the dogmas and the canons, and the metropolitan of Ungrovlahia was declared Romania's "Primat". After the Independence War. From 1877-1878 and the proclamation of the state independence, on 9 May 1877, which was recognized by the Peace Congress from Berlin (1878), took place the recognition of the autocephaly of the Orthodox Romanian Church. In 1885, the ecumenical patriarch Joachim IV signed the tomos recognizing the autonomy of the Romanian Orthodox Church which granted it complete equality in rights with the other sister - Orthodox Churches, and also maintained dogmatically, canonically and liturgically, a relation of interdependence to them. The patriarchal tomos, also signed by the other members of the Ecumenical Holy Synod, was the third document of this kind, after those in 1850 (promulgated for the Church of Greece) and in 1873 (for the Serbian Church).

2. Proposals made in the Romanian Parliament, in 1882, regarding the foundation of the Romanian Patriarchate

In the extraordinary session of the Deputies Chamber from 9 (22) march 1882, there has been read a document undersigned by 9 deputies (more than the necessary number of 7 deputies who by the law could present to the Assembly any project of law or proposal), that proposed the raising of the Romanian Orthodox Church at the rank of a Patriarchate. The document consisted in an *Exposition of reasons* and *A project of law for the modification of the Synodal Law from 1872*. This latter document showed that in the passed centuries, because of the invasion of the migratory populations, of the fight for defending the borders and the rights of the Romanian people, thereafter because of the fanariot rules, we did not have the necessary delay and the needful conditions for organizing our Church in Patriarchate. But, in the 19th century, after the unification of the principalities, by the laws of Cuza Vodă, and especially, by the Synodal Law from 1872, the Church can receive the highest rank, the Patriarchate (*Anteproiect de Lege*, 1920).

In the project of law advanced by the deputies it was provided the elevation of the Prime Metropolitan of Romania to the rank of Patriarch and besides, the establishing of a new Metropolitan, in Oltenia (Vornicescu 1975: 828).

While in the deputies Chamber was discussed the proposal of the establishing of the Romanian Patriarchate, there were made preparations for the consecration, in Bucharest, of the Saint and Great Myrrh. The Saint and Great Myrrh, brought until then from Constantinople, was consecrated in Bucharest on 25 March (6 April) 1882.

Unlike the initiative of the consecration in our country of the Saint and Great Myrrh, that was fulfilled, the proposal for the establishing the patriarchate did not have the same success, because the *Exposition of reasons* and the *Project of law* didn't follow the right legal course.

Meanwhile, have occurred more events that impeded the resumption of the proposal of the establishing of the Patriarchate. On 10 July 1882, the Ecumenical Patriarch had sent to the Romanian Prime Metropolitan a letter by which he announced his dissatisfaction with the discussions regarding the establishing of the Romanian Patriarchate. On 1 August 1882, the Minister of Cults, V. A. Urechia was replaced by His Grace Aurelian, and on 21 October the same year, Dimitrie Brătianu, resigned from the place of the president of the Chamber (Teodorean-Carada 1920: 257).

The prime Metropolitan Calinic Miculescu, after having lived the joy of seeing the recognition of the autocephaly of the Romanian Church by the Ecumenical Patriarchy, in 1882, passed away in 1886. The following leaders of the Orthodox Romanian Church, Iosif Gheorghian (1829-1909), Ghenadie Petrescu (1836-1918), Atanasie Mironescu (1858-1931) și Conon Arămescu-Donici, as well as the deputies and the ministers

from that period have been occupied with various problems (Păcurariu 1994: 131-141), so that the problem of the Patriarchy will be rediscussed just in 1919, under more favorable circumstances.

3. The Great Unification

On 1 December 1918 took place in Alba Iulia, The Great National Assembly, that expressed the conscience of unity of the Romanian people, of constructing one single state, that would comprise in its borders all the Romanians. In an atmosphere of a deep popular enthusiasm, through the agency of Vasile Goldiș, The Great National Assembly proclaimed the unification with Romania of "those Romanians and of all the territories populated by them" (Bărbulescu 1998: 382).

At Alba Iulia has been formed also, on the occasion of the national Great Assembly, the Big Romanian National Council, which comprised 200 elected members and other 50 cooptated ones. This Council has named a provisory Government, called the Dirigent government of Transilvania, with Iuliu Maniu as its head. The Council has sent a delegation to Bucharest, headed by the Bishop of Caransebeș, miron Cristea (the future patriarch of Romania), who, on 1/14 december handed out to the king Ferdinand I, the declaration from Alba Iulia. On 11/24 december, the King Ferdinand promulgated the decree for the enforcement of the union.

The act from 1 december 1918, which sanctioned the union of transilvania with Romania, has brought many changes not only in the life of the unitary romanian state, but also in the live of the romanian Orthodox Church. The first duty of the Church, with its new political status, was that of the its unitary reorganization, under the direction of the Saint Synod from Bucharest.

At the end of the year 1918, because of the political circumstances, on the Romanian ground there were many Orthodox Churches, some of them forced to develop their live under foreign ruling. Thus existed the Orthodox Romanian Church from the since 1859 United Principalities, the autonomous Romanian Metropolitan of Bucovina and the Archbishopric of Chișinău and Hotin.

After 1918 the ecclesiastical unification was necessary and it imposed itself in behalf of the Church, as well as of the State, because the way the ecclesiastical affairs were administered was different from one province to the others (Păcurariu 1975: 512). Thus, in the Romanian Church there has been a really hierarchical absolutism, as well as an almost total dependence towards the State. Under these circumstances, with this lack of a precise definition of the atributions and the position of the State towards the Church and reverse, the ecclestial life was suffering a continuous fluster.

In this period there have been given tries to the ecclestial unification in the politically already united Romania. The discussions regarding the Church unification were deploying in parallel with the discussions for the establishing of the Romanian Patriarchate.

4. Proposals between 1919-1924. Proposals made at the Clerical Congress from Sibiu, 6-8 march 1919

Beginning from 1919 and until 1924 there have been formulated many proposals and many discussions have taken place until the Romanian Orthodox Church was elevated on 25 February 1925 to the rank of Patriarchate.

The first assembly of the priests, after the unification of the nation took place in Sibiu, between 6 and 8 march 1919. there have participated over 700 priests from Transilvania and delegates from the other Romanian provinces, in the presence of the bishop Miron Cristea of Caransebeș - while the metropolitan seat of Transilvania was vacant, and the bishop of Arad couldn't have come to Sibiu - and of the minister Vasile Goldiș.

In this Congress was provided for the first time after 1918, the establishing of the Romanian patriarchate (Ciuhandu 1919), having as base the well documented paper made by the protopresbyter Gheorghe Ciuhandu, from Arad and written by Rev. D. Borcea, from Săliște, because the author was not able then to come to Sibiu. In this paper it was projected the future organization of the Orthodox Romanian Church from the unified Romania, stating that we already have a good internal order and according to the apostolic canon no. 34, it was proper all our hierarchs to recognize one among them as "protos" (head). There was also mentioned that orthodox eastern nations already had the patriarchal dignity, as were the Bulgarians, the Russians and the Serbs.

Thereafter followed a significant act, realized on 23 April 1919, when the synod of the Metropolitan of Ardeal (formed then only by the bishops Ioan Papp of Arad and Dr. Miron E. Cristea of Caransebeș) decided to be part of the Holy Synod from Bucharest, the Orthodox Church from Ardeal, Banat, Crișana and Maramureș becoming integrant part of the mother Church from the united Romania (Păcurariu 1994: 408).

The clerical assembly from Sinaia, 12-15 June 1919

In May 1919, the superior Church Consistory, composed by the members of the Holy Synod, representatives of the Theological Faculties (from Bucharest and Cernăuți), of the seminars, monasteries and

the clergy, began the preparatory sessions for the ecclesiastical unification. There has been formed a comity of the delegates from the provinces that composed the new Romanian state. This comity worked at Sinaia between 12 and 15 June 1919, under the leadership of the Metropolitan of Moldavia, Pimen Georgescu, then president of the Holy Synod (Moldovan 1921: 4). It has been stated that for the future organization of the Church should serve as a base the Statute of Şaguna and there was continued the discussion of the idea formulated at Sibiu, that our Church should be crowned with the rank of the Patriarchate (Lupaş 1925).

The ecclesiastical assembly (Constituanta bisericăscă) from Bucharest, 1920-1921

On 13 (20) December 1919, all the metropolitans, bishops and assistant bishops have gathered in common session of the Holy Synod. In the synodal session has been taken the decision that at the base of the new law of organization of the Orthodox Romanian Church should stay the Statute of Şaguna.

On 18 (31) December 1919 dr. Miron Cristea, the bishop of Caransebeş was elected in the seat of prime metropolitan, vacant from 1 January 1919, after the resigning of Conon – Arămescu Donici. The second day, 19 December 1919 (1 January 1920) was invested and enthroned in his new dignity. Under his rule the preparatory sessions for the ecclesiastical unification continued.

Thus on 18 September 1920, the so – called “ecclesiastical assembly” was gathered and have been elected 15 members (bishops, theology professors and believers), having as head the prime Metropolitan Miron, in order to compose a project of the Statute for the organization and functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church (Dosar nr. 151, 1920: 351).

This project was sent to the metropolitans and the archbishops for study and completing. It was expected, after the discussions and the last formulations, the Statute to obtain legal character, but the unfavorable political circumstances haven't allowed the realization of this desiderate (Gârboviceanu 1925: 18-19).

Other proposals and discussions held between 1920-1924

An interesting intervention regarding the problem of the Romanian Patriarchate was the apparition in a newspaper from 1920, of a brochure undersigned in a cryptographic manner, with the name, “Protosyngel Agathon Otmenedec”: *The Unification of the Church. The Autonomous and Canonical Organization*. In comparison with the former proposals, this paper was bringing new elements. It provided that the Church should be represented by a patriarch, assisted by an assistant bishop, with the title of archbishop. Also, the Holy Synod should propose, in accord with the Ministry of Cults, the election as patriarch of a person not belonging to the rank of bishop. In time, some of these proposals made by the humble “monk Agathon Otmenedec” became reality (Vornicescu 1975: 135-136).

That time professor Onisifor Ghibu was proposing too, in a personal conception, the establishing of the Romanian Patriarchate, wishing to see through the foundation of the Patriarchate the fulfilling of the spiritual union of the Romanians, even of all the Christians living in the united Romania (Macaveiu 1924: 98).

Unfortunately, during these years, neither the ecclesiastical life, nor the political one were stable. Ministers of Cults and entire governments were often changed. The ecclesiastical politics of the State was not quite precise and consequent, varying from a government to the other (Lupaş 1925: 98).

But in the second half of the year 1924, when the problem of the foundation of the Patriarchate seemed to be forgotten, appeared once again and this time successfully.

II. The international conditions for the establishing of the Romanian Patriarchate

I. The status of the other Orthodox sister-Churches

Although the special role of the Romanian Church had for centuries, defending and protecting the orthodox Christians from the Orient, sustaining them moral and material, we were “the single orthodox people having as head of an autonomous Church, a simple prime metropolitan”, as was expressing himself professor Nicolae Iorga (Iorga 1924: 7). An important reason that claimed the establishing of the Patriarchate were thus the numerical, as well as the moral superiority of the Orthodox Romanian Church, in comparison with the other sister – Churches, which were already constituted in Patriarchates.

For a long time, there had existed only five Patriarchates (of Jerusalem, Antiochy, Alexandria, Constantinople and Rome). In time have gained this title other Churches too, as were the Georgian, the Bulgarian, the Serb or the Russian Patriarchate.

According to the tradition, the *Georgian Patriarchate* would be the oldest one in the eastern European space. The Georgian Patriarch was having the title of “catholicos”, the name of the heads of the autonomous Churches outside the eastern borders of the Byzantine Empire (Norocel 1967: 582-585).

Also, according to the tradition, the *Bulgarian Church* had Patriarchate already since the 10th century. The historical known data confirm that the Bulgarian Church was organized as Patriarchate during the 13th

century, when it received also the recognition of this status by the Ecumenical Patriarch Ghermanos from Nicea (Pocitan 1926: 48). In 1325, Ioachim, the Archbishop of Târnovo was recognized by the other oriental patriarchs as patriarch of Târnovo. At the end of the 14th century, under the Turkish occupation, had disappeared as well the Patriarchate of Târnovo. Thereafter, beginning from 1410 until 1766, the bishops from Ohrida were naming themselves Patriarchs, while the independence of the Bulgarian Church was regained only in the second half of the 19th century.

In 1346, after the king Dušan was proclaimed Emperor, the Archbishop Ioachim of Ypek was raised to the rank of Patriarch, while the Ecumenical patriarchate from Constantinople recognized the Serbian Patriarchate in 1375. The Serbian Patriarchate resisted until 1459, when Serbia became a Turkish province and the Serbian Patriarchate was then abolished, reestablishing in 1557. The new Serbian Patriarchate resisted until 1776. In 1920, when the old borders of the country were reestablished, the Serbs reorganized their Patriarchate at Belgrade (Anania 1966: 308).

In 1917 was reestablished also the Russian Patriarchate, that appeared in the 16th century. The Russian Church was autocephalous in 1448, and in 1589 it was raised at the rank of Patriarchate. The Russian Patriarchate, founded in 1589 ceased its existence in 1721, during the reign of Peter the Great (Boroianu 1925: 114). After gaining the independence, in 1918, the prestige of our country has raised. The Romanian Orthodox Church counted then over 14 million believers, having 5 metropolitans and 18 bishoprics. The other Patriarchates, excepting the Russian one, were totally inferior from this point of view. The Serbian Orthodox patriarchate had around 7 mill. believers, while the "Apostolic Patriarchates" (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antiochy and Jerusalem) were numbering only few tens thousands of believers.

We should mention also that the Romano-catholic Church had already an Archbishopric in Bucharest, and the Greek-Catholic Church was organized as a "metropolitan province" (Păcurariu 1994: 410).

2. The position of some foreign hierarchs towards the establishing of the Romanian Patriarchate

After 1918 the Romanian Church came in touch with many Orthodox sister-Churches, it was visited by foreign hierarchs and theologians, many Romanian theologians took part to various religious meetings outside the country and has intermediated for the calming the tensions between some Churches.

Many foreign hierarchs have expressed their wish the Romanian Orthodox Church become Patriarchate. The Metropolitan Antony of Kiev was seeing "in the establishing of the Patriarchate from Bucharest, the sign of a great future destined to the local Romanian Church" (Vornicescu 1975: 843). The Metropolitan Dorotei of Brusa, vicarius of the ecumenical Patriarch was asking prof. Dragomir Demetrescu, during a discussion held in Constantinople, in 1921: "Now, when Romania had freed all his sons and became a big orthodox state, aren't you going to establish Patriarchate?" (Ghibu 1926: 2).

III. The foundation of the Romanian Patriarchate

The period until 1924, in the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church, constituted the epoch of limited possibilities, discussions and proposals for the establishing of the Patriarchate. Between 1920 and 1924 many proposals have been made, but the political instability have not allowed the realization of the national ecclesiastical wish, the foundation of the Romanian Patriarchate. 1925 will open but the epoch of the great realizations of the Romanian Orthodox Church, by the establishing of the Patriarchate. That fact was required by th moral and numerical superiority of the Romanian Orthodox Church, towards the other sister Orthodox Churches. Other Curches, except the „Apostolic Patriarchates" (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antiochy, Jerusalem), were already from centuries costituted in Patriarchates, as the Georgian, the Bulgarian, the Serbian or the Russian Church.

In 1925 it was projected a panorthodox synod in Jerusalem, for celebrating 1600 years from the first ecumenical synod. In the newspapers was insistently requested the participation of the Romanian Orthodox Church to this projected synod.

After so many delays, the Romanian Orthodox Church saw in 1925 its dream come true. In the session of the Holy Synod from 4 February 1925 was decided the establishing of the Romanian Patriarchate, by the elevation of the metropolitan seat of Ungrovlachia to the patriarchal rank. On 30 July 1925 the Ecumenical Patriarchy emited the "tomos" for the recognition of the Romanian Patriarchate. The "tomos" undersigned by the Ecumenical Patriarch Basile the 3rd was handed to the Patriarch Miron on 27 September 1925, by a delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchy. This religious event was the consequence of the state unification on the 1st of December 1918, as well as a natural illustration of the role of the Church in the history of the Romanian people. It's a unanimously recognized fact that at the crucial moments of the Romanians' history, the Orthodox Church has been a primordial factor in preserving and affirming our national identity. The first patriarch, Miron Cristea was enthroned on the 1st of November 1925.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Im Jahre 1885 hatte die Ökumenische Patriarchie die Autocephalie der Rumänischen Kirche anerkannt. Danach aber die politischen Bedingungen haben der Rumänischen Kirche nicht erlaubt, Patriarchie zu entstehen, so dass dieses Thema nur in 1919, unter besseren Bedingungen aufgenommen wurde. Vom Jahre 1919 bis zum Jahre 1924 haben sich viele Vorschläge für die Entstehung der Rumänischen Patriarchie gemacht. Die erste Vorschläge vom 9. März 1919, hatten keinen Erfolg. Der nächste Schritt wurde im Jahre 1919 gemacht, als der priesterliche Kongress am 6-8 März in Sibiu stattgefunden ist. Andere Schritte wurden durch zwei andere Geschehen verwirklicht: die Kirchenberatung vom 12-15 Juni 1919, und die Kirchenkonstituante, vom Bukarest, 1920-1921. Der Heilige Synod hat am 4. Februar 1925 die Entstehung der Rumänischen Patriarchie entschieden, danach wird diese Realität auch von der Ökumenischen Patriarchie am 30. Juli 1925 anerkannt.

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