

**CALINIC MICLESCU: A CONSERVATIVE CLERIC
IN THE SERVICE OF THE EMANCIPATE FATHERLAND
(1857-1885)**

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Rezumat: *Calinic Miclescu: un cleric conservator în serviciul patriei emancipate (1857-1886)*

Articolul pune în evidență participarea lui Calinic Miclescu (1822-1886), cleric cu ascendență nobiliară, la principalele acțiuni și decizii politice și religioase din viața statului modern român (1858-1885), în calitate de episcop, mitropolit al Moldovei și Sucevei și Mitropolit Primat al României. Încununarea activității sale politice și religioase a fost dată de obținerea recunoașterii de către Patriarhia Ecumenică de Constantinopol, după o luptă diplomatică îndelungată (1878-1885), a autocefaliei Mitropoliei României.

Abstract: *The article highlights the participation of Calinic Miclescu (1822-1886), cleric of noble descent, to the main action, and political and religious decisions of Romanian modern state (1858-1885), as a bishop, Metropolitan of Moldova and Suceava, and Metropolitan primate of Romania. Crowning his political and religious activities was given, after a long diplomatic struggle (1878-1885), by the recognition of the Romanian Metropolitan autocephaly from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.*

Résumé: *Calinic Miclescu: un cleric conservateur au service de la patrie moderne (1857-1886)*

L'article ci-joint met en évidence la participation de Calinic Miclescu (1822-1886), cleric avec ascendance noble, aux principales actions et décisions politiques et religieuses de l'existence de l'Etat moderne roumain (1858-1885), en qualité d'évêque, métropolitain de la Moldavie et de Suceava et Métropolitain Primat de la Roumanie. Le couronnement de son activité politique et religieuse s'identifia avec l'obtention de la reconnaissance de la part du Patriarcat Œcuménique de Constantinople, après une longue lutte diplomatique (1878-1885), de l'autocéphalie de l'Eglise Métropolitaine de la Roumanie.

Keywords: *Calinic Miclescu, Metropolitan, Moldavia, Romania, 19th Century, political activity, religious activity*

Introduction

Since the foundation of the Romanian medieval states Moldavia and Wallachia, the rulers of Christian clerics had a significant influence on their religious and political evolution. Most of them were conservative in matters related to religion and not interested (or poorly interested) in the socio-economic, political or cultural progress of their country. Starting especially with the 3rd quarter of the 18th century, things significantly changed: many influential Romanian clergymen are really interested in progress of their countries, especially after beginning of French Revolution. In the 19th century, this kind of clerics gave up their traditionalist point of view about religion becoming “liberal” in religious terms. Also, they actively participated at the most important historical events such as the Union of 1859 and the War of Independence (1877).

Few Romanian clergymen in the 19th century were “conservative” in matters of religion and Church organization and “liberal” in matters concerning the organization of the state. Among clergymen placed in this special category was undoubtedly Calinic Miclescu.

Synopsis of Political and religious activity of Calinic Miclescu

Calinic Miclescu (1822-1886) was a monk of noble descent, the ancestors of this family being recorded in 1436¹. During the events that set the union of Moldavia and Wallachia (1858-1859), Calinic Miclescu, as lieutenant (i.e. *locum tenens*) of the Huși diocese received order from Metropolitan Sofronie to represent him in the affairs of the Moldavia’s Mitropolity. Entitled in this position, he took an active part in the unionist movement. Conservative in matter of religion and Church organization but liberal in matter of political principles and devoted to the Union of the Romanian Principalities, he acted with all his powers against Caimacam (i.e. *locum tenens* of Moldavia’s Hospodar) Vogoride’s activity, which was a stubborn adversary of this union. By its unionist actions, Calinic drew everyone’s admiration, even the attention of High European Commissioners, who came and took note of the wishes of the country in 1858².

Regarding the political activity of Calinic Miclescu³ we could say it was a rich

¹ Constantin Rezachevici, *Enciclopedia domnilor români. Cronologia critică a domnilor din Țara Românească și Moldova* [Encyclopedia of the Romanian rulers. Critical chronology of the rulers in Wallachia and Moldavia], vol. I, *Secolele XIV-XVI* [14th-16th Centuries], Bucharest, Albatros Printing House, 2001, p. 804.

² *** *Cronica* [The Chronicle], in “Candela – Foaie bisericească-literară” [The Candle – Literary ecclesiastic paper], Year V, no. 9, Cernăuți, 1886, p. 589.

³ Niculae Șerbănescu, *Calinic Miclescu*, in „Biserica Ortodoxă Română” [Romanian Orthodox Church], Year LXXVII, no. 7-10, July-October 1959, p. 816.

and fruitful one, with deserved results according to his efforts, for giving the Romanian society the best economic, social and religious reforms and progress. During the turmoil's of 1857-1858, as Abbot (Rom. *stare ț*) of Slatina, he disseminated among people unionist manifests, which brought to his uncle Sofronie Miclescu reproofs of the government.⁴

In 1857 he was elected deputy of the Ad-Hoc Divan, defending very skillfully the idea of unifying Moldavia and Wallachia. Having the quality of Lieutenant of the Huși diocese, he was also commissioned by Metropolitan Sofronie – who was sick – to lead the destinies of the Mitropoly of Moldova. Calinic used this prestigious position to support again, actively, the Union⁵.

He served as lieutenant of Moldavia's Metropolitan until December 1860, when he resigned. He took this decision in order to protest against the punishment with exile of his uncle, Metropolitan Sofronie Miclescu, followed by his removal from the top of Moldavian Church. These penalties were imposed by the prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza, with the assistance of Prime Minister Mihail Kogălniceanu, because Metropolitan Sofronie opposed to secularization of the monasteries estates, made without giving any warranty to the Church⁶.

On 15 of January 1861 Calinic Miclescu returns as abbot at Slatina to be close to his uncle, who was old and sick. He remains here until 7 May 1863⁷. In January 1863, the government entitled the Archimandrite Melchisedec Ștefănescu to manage temporary the diocese of Huși⁸.

On 7 May 1863, following the death of his uncle Sofronie, bishop Calinic is appointed lieutenant of the Metropolitan seat of Moldavia in Iași, being favoured by government of prince Cuza, who saw him as a man of faith, devoted to the country and to the Church⁹. He was included in the secularization committee, completing his tasks with all responsibility. On 10 May 1865 the prince and the government¹⁰, seeing that Metropolitan Calinic Miclescu is a faithful servant of the Church, appointed him as Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava Mitropoly. This appointment was done by Alexandru Ioan Cuza according to the law for appointment of metropolitans and diocesan bishops in Romania.

Calinic Miclescu's appointment by decree as titular Metropolitan of Moldavia has caused him much displeasure in the battle for canonicity fought legally with the

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *** *Cronica*, p. 589.

⁶ Florin Țuscanu, *Sofronie Vârnav*, Iași, Saint Mina Publishing House, 2002, p. 64.

⁷ ****Cronica*, p. 589.

⁸ Mircea Păcurariu, *Mitropolia Moldovei și Episcopiile ei până în 1918* [The Metropolis of Moldavia and its Bishoprics until 1918], Bucharest, The Publishing House of Biblical Institute and Mission of Romanian Orthodox Church, 1981, p. 168.

⁹ ****Cronica*, p. 589

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 590.

Ecumenical Patriarchate. In 1866 he was still writing to the Patriarch of Constantinople to recognize him as Metropolitan. In 1872, through the canon law, his situation as head of the Moldavian Church legalizes, being recognized as canonical the appointment made in 1865¹¹.

As Metropolitan of Moldavia, Calinic Miculescu was concerned about strengthening discipline among the secular and monastic clergy¹². He was interested especially in the good results get by students and teachers of the Faculty of Theology, conferring awards to deserving students. Between 1863 and 1864 he ordered that 30 poor students of this faculty, with good school results, to be accommodated free of any charge in monasteries¹³.

On 23 February 1866, Alexandru Ioan Cuza abdicates and the political situation of the United Principalities was not clear at all¹⁴. In Iași had started a separatist movement (with small popular support) which wanted the installation of Nunuță Roznovanu as ruler of Moldavia, just when in the country was taking place the plebiscite for the election of Carol of Hohenzollern as prince of Romania (2/14-8/20 April 1866). Thus the plebiscite for election of Carol had been disrupted by the emergence of social movements, especially among peasants, scared by a hypothetical abolition of Rural Law of 1864.

Because of this tense situation, European Powers (especially Russia, Austria and Turkey) were openly expressing hostility regarding the idea of bringing a foreign prince on the vacant throne, encouraging even a separatist movement between Moldavia and Wallachia. The movement of Iași was also rushed by the announcement of the plebiscite between 2/14 and 8/20 April 1866, for the election of Prince Carol, the new candidate to Romanian rule. In a contemporary writing of a Moldavian separatist it is said that was a “forced referendum, with governmental agents and bayonets behind them”¹⁵.

In Iași, the separatists have resumed their activity and tried to put Mr. N. Rosetti Roznovanu as ruler, supported by Prince Constantine Moruzi, head of the conspiracy, and by Metropolitan Calinic Miculescu. For this purpose, it was planned a popular riot on a 3/15 of April 1866, for whose suppression was needed the intervention of two infantry battalions. This riot was unsuccessful, for not being supported by the masses, but only by a heterogeneous band, which was drunk by

¹¹ Niculae Șerbănescu, *Calinic Miculescu*, p. 816.

¹² Mircea Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

¹³ T. G. Bulat, *Acte privitoare la Facultatea de Teologie din Iași* [Documents concerning the Faculty of Theology in Iași], in “Viitorul” [The Future], Year XIII (1911), no. 17-18, p. 13.

¹⁴ Florin Țuscanu, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

¹⁵ Ion Moraru, *Ecspunire situațiunii Moldaviei de la 1859 și 1866, tristele evenimente din Iași de la 3/15 april anul corent 1866, preluat după adivăr* [The exposure of Moldavia’s situation from 1859 and 1866, the sad events from Iași in 3/15 of April current year 866, taken after the truth], Iași, 1866, p. 12.

separatists. There were, however, dead and wounded. Separatist lords have submitted a petition to the Ottoman Court, in which they proclaimed the Moldavians' right to choose its own ruler, according to the Paris Convention (1858)¹⁶.

During the course of the uprising in Iasi, Calinic Miclescu was injured by a military man from the troops. The Metropolitan, masked with a Jewish kaftan, being more frightened than hurt, has been hidden by his deacon Ion Creangă (an important Romanian writer) in the basement of a nearby house. Here came the influential literary critic and politician Titus Maiorescu, who convinced him to surrender¹⁷.

Metropolitan Calinic with other participants in the rebellion were arrested and imprisoned at the Monastery of Saint Spiridon and his apartments from Iași were sealed. For the trial was appointed a Church Court. This formed a consistory composed of a titular bishop as President and two of the ablest priests from Iași as members¹⁸ which should judge and condemn Calinic Miclescu. This was not possible because the beginning of the reign of Carol of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen in Moldavia.

The first act signed by the new prince Carol on 10th of May 1866, was related to the amnesty of those arrested because of the above-mentioned popular uprising, the first of them being Metropolitan Calinic Miclescu¹⁹. Therefore, he kept his position of Metropolitan of Moldavia. In this capacity, Calinic Miclescu continued and developed his activity for the prosperity of the Mitropoly, claiming with dignity and strength the rights of the Moldavian Church.

A significant episode occurred in the fall of 1872, when the Metropolitan Calinic of Moldova showed a „fraternally and friendly” interest for a priest who had left the church life. Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu has described the situation to the priest, and that made the Metropolitan Calinic to send an epistle to that priest on 29th of October 1872. After this epistle was known, bishop Ștefănescu show the following: “If all the brothers bishops would care for such principles both the country and the clergy in general would flourish”²⁰.

¹⁶ ****Formarea și consolidarea orânduirii capitaliste 1848-1878* [The forming and consolidation of capitalist system 1848-1878], in *Istoria României* [The History of Romania], vol. IV, Bucharest, Romanian Academy's Publishing House, 1964, pp. 525-526.

¹⁷ Dumitru Vitcu, *11 februarie 1866: hermeneutica unei pretinse revoluții* [11th of February 1866: hermeneutics of an alleged revolution], in „Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A.D. Xenopol” Iași [Yearbook of the Institute of History ”A. D. Xenopol”], tom XXIX, 1992, p. 175.

¹⁸ Direcția Județeană Iași a Arhivelor Naționale [Iași County Direction of the National Archives] – D.J.A.N. Iași, Fondul Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei [Mitropoly of Moldavia and Suceava Fund], no. of archive 33, file no. 2896/1866, 1v.

¹⁹ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale București [National Central Historical Archives Bucharest] – A.N.I.C., „Casa Regală” [Royal House] Fund, file no. 2/1866, f.1.

²⁰ Paul Mihai, *Din corespondența episcopului Mechisedec* [Bishop Mechisedec's correspondence], in „Biserica Ortodoxă Română” [Romanian Orthodox Church], Year LXXVII, no. 5-6, May-June, 1959.

Calinic Miclescu supported all the time his moral principles even if the Holy Synod didn't accepted them entirely. Exactly those debates led the opponents to acknowledge Metropolitan Calinic as a man devoted to the Church.

He had to face two attacks which threatened his life. One of them was committed by Father Clement, who fired four revolver shots against him. The second attempt was made by a monk, who wanted to strangle the High Priest. Calinic Miclescu escaped safely from both attempts²¹.

In the summer of 1876, Serbia's and Muntenegru's armies joined the action of defending the coreligionists and blood brothers from Bulgaria. These events proved that Eastern Europe was threatened of new military-political convulsions and Romania had to enter later in the war, in order to win its independence²². Danubian provinces Moldavia and Wallachia were vassal lands of Ottoman Empire's until 1877, without being effectively integrated into the empire, as the others south-danubian provinces were. In this case they had a limited autonomy in exchange for a yearly tribute of variable size which could reach, as some sources say, up to two thirds of their total income²³.

At April 1/16, 1877, the Romanian government signed a convention with the Russian government that allowed the passage of Russian troops in Romania, and Russia pledged to respect the integrity of Romanian territory. Romanian Parliament began its work on April 14/26. The Throne speech exposed to the representatives of the Romanian nation the hard times that their country was crossing: "Russian imperial armies entered our territory with no protest from Guarantor Powers. A war that Romanians didn't want, didn't deliberately cause it, burst. Left without any support, they can count now only on themselves"²⁴. This war offered a new occasion to Calinic Miclescu, in order to demonstrate his stable patriotism.

As in other important moments in the history of the Romanians, the orthodox clergy did not remain apart from the rest of the people. Calinic Miclescu was fully aware of the great importance of the historical moment that country was living and he advised the clergy to act as such. In the War of Independence from 1877-1878, military priests accompanied the Romanian troops on the battlefield, as many monks and nuns were at the service of the Army's Medical Service²⁵.

Metropolitan Miclescu sends on 3rd of August 1877 a letter to Carol I to show his dissatisfaction because "one of the greatest military geniuses of our nation [i.e.

²¹ D.J.A.N. Iași, Mitropoly of Moldavia and Suceava Fund, file no. 3448/1871, f. 4-5.

²² T. C. Văcărescu, *Luptele românilor în resbelul din 1877-1878* [Romanians' battles of 1877-1878 war], Bucharest, F. Göbl & Fiii Publishing House, 1887, p. 2-3.

²³ Georges Castellan, *Histoire de la Roumanie*, Paris, PUF, 1994, p. 17.

²⁴ T. C. Văcărescu, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

²⁵ Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church], Bucharest, Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church Publishing House, 1981, p. 132-133.

Carol I himself] recognizes that the Romanians were alienated of the using of weapons because of the Muslim oppression. That sovereignty shorten the most sacred rights of the country”²⁶. Following the letter, the Metropolitan informs the king that all church servants and ordinary citizens were advised to contribute with different “offerings” (Rom. “ofrande”) and the mothers left their sons to the “blood baptism”, so that the national flag will be aroused in the name of God. Calinic Miclescu gives in this letter example of sacrifice made by the queen Elisabeta, Carol’s wife: “and his Highness, successor of ancestral virtues, bandages the wounds of the ones who fight for the country.

Romanian Church, as one who has always had taken part in major events cannot stay indifferent. The clerics are accompanying day and night your Highness and the fighters on battlefield of glory, with their prayers”²⁷.

Finally, the bishop gives his hierarchical blessing to the King, saying that the happiest day of his life will be the one when he will thank God for the success that He rewarded Carol I, speaking the words of the psalmist David who said : “Now we know that the Lord has saved his anointed with His righteous power. He will hear him from his holy heaven”²⁸ (Psalms, 19; 6.7). For those moments, the Metropolitan Calinic Miclescu prepares special prayers for war times, invoking God’s help. Before Carol I was leaving for the battle, Calinic Miclescu “had the honour to bless the sword given by the Romanian army, to its leader” (i.e. Carol I)²⁹.

In 1878, Romania was in a difficult situation after the war. In these circumstances, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople thought that would be the right occasion to claim damages for secularization of the church properties, made by prince Cuza in 1863. Firstly, the Romanian government postponed a clear answer in this matter. Afterwards, this government and Calinic Miclescu personally refused to discuss on this topic with Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The ecumenical patriarch Ioachim III (1878-1884) thought he could force the Romanian government to reconsider its decision, making difficulties in sending documents to recognize the three titular bishops elected by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and starting to show some doubts and criticisms of the organic law of the Romanian Orthodox Church and its claim to become autocephalous³⁰.

²⁶ A.N.I.C. Bucharest, Fond Casa Regală [Regal House Fund], file no. 8/1877, f. 1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 1 f-v, f. 2 f.

²⁸ *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură* [The Bible or Holly Scripture], Bucharest, Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church Publishing House, 1991, p. 573.

²⁹ Raymond Netzhammer, *Le cas du métropolitain Miclescu – Un document longtemps attendu*, Eschenz (Suisse), Typ. Eberhard Kalt-Zehnder Zoug, 1938, p. 3.

³⁰ ****Manual de istorie a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [Handbook of the Romanian Orthodox Church’s History], Bucharest, 1958, p. 528.

In 1879, Calinic Miculescu wrote to the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople: “The principle that things concerning the organization of the Church change themselves after changing of a political situation is recognized in the most obvious way by the Ecumenical Synods, and Church History gives a lot of examples about its compliance”³¹. The Patriarch Ioachim III did not confirm the autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church until his death (1884) despite of the diplomatic struggle carried by Calinic Miculescu for achieving of this ideal. Anyway, the ecumenical patriarch Ioachim IV (1884-1886) decided to validate *de jure* this practical autocephaly in 1885. Therefore, he sent in 25th of April 1885 the patriarchal *tomos* by which the autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church was officially certified by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople³².

Calinic Miculescu died in the following year, at 14th of August 1886, after a live entirely dedicated to his Church and Fatherland. The only wealth left by this clergyman of noble descent consisted in a lot of books and magnificent furniture³³.

Conclusions

Life, religious and political activity of Calinic Miculescu demonstrates that the representatives of the old nobility or princely families of Moldavian and Wallachia entered in the service the country in the second half of 19th century, acting “top-down” for *publico bono*. Without their action, combined with the action of Romanian bourgeoisie *in statu nascendi* and a favourable international context, Romania’s modernization would not have been possible.

³¹ Nestor Vornicescu, *Desăvârșirea unității noastre naționale – Fundament al unității Bisericii străbune* [Accomplishment of our national unity – Foundation of the unity of ancestral Church], Craiova, 1988, p. 8.

³² Nicolae Isar, *Relațiile stat-biserică în România modernă (1821-1914): sinteză și culegere de texte* [Relationships between State and Church in the Modern Romania (1821-1914): synthesis and collection of texts], Bucharest, “România de Măine” Foundation Publishing House, 2007, p. 37.

³³ *** *Manual de istorie a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, p. 530.