

# The Palace or the Metropolitan Residence House of Iași at the Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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## **Abstract:**

*The palace or metropolitan residence house from the Diocesan Centre of Iași was built in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, from its foundations, on the site of an older residential house, during the term of Metropolitan Partenie Clinceni service as a shepherd of the local flock of Christian believers. Documents that have survived the passage of time highlight the generous project and the meandering trajectory of the efforts to construct and open a new building, the analysis being susceptible to demonstrate that the ultimate goal was to refurbish, modernise and embellish the entire architectural complex from the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Iasi. The historical circumstances also highlight the important role of the Church in organising and running significant events for the community in that period.*

**Keywords:** *Partenie Clinceni, Metropolitan Archdiocese, metropolitan palace, Haret, Băicoianu, Mihăescu*

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The palace metropolitan or residential house from Iași was constructed in the vicinity of the church/Cathedral, within the “spiritual fortress” that the architectural ensemble of a Diocesan Centre was to signify. Obviously, in this case too, the construction considered rules and an order that had to do with the naturalness of things, i.e. the Archbishop was to live close to the Mother of Churches from his Metropolitan Archdiocese, and his residence, close to the shrine of the church, was to last not only throughout his entire life, sacrificed for the sake of spreading the news of the *Gospel* and for the sake of pastoral care, but also after his transition into the after life, as he was waiting from here, or from near the “place of the shrine of divine glory”, the second coming and the “common judgment” of the Fair Judge. On the other hand, the rule of

order from the Holy Altar expresses and orders in the best manner both the Church hierarchy and, where possible, the order in the city.

As the Archbishop and Metropolitanis the *protos* among the celebrating priests of the Cathedral and presides over the *Holy Liturgy* (see Branște 1993: 302-303), according to a rule of order that is spiritual and easy to understand, there is also the habit of constructing his residence in the vicinity of the Cathedral and of the buildings where parish administration is conducted (in the past, the neighbouring area also included the other representative institutions, such as the princely palace).

Such could have been the case right from the moment when the Metropolitan See was transferred to Iasi (by intention and according to the affordances available), and the news about the successive changes of the headquarters of the Cathedral is almost always accompanied by references to the Archbishop's residence (notable exceptions are transfers due to war, fire or epidemic, when the Metropolitan's residence is moved further away from the Cathedral).

As for the current metropolitan residence house, the first building that precedes it, having this special destination from the beginning, is built by Metropolitan Iacov Stamati near St. George Church (also known as the Old Cathedral; Ciurea 1946: 160; Păcurariu 2006: 391). The house, whose construction was completed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 1798, also had a Chapel, dedicated to the commemoration of All Saints (similar to the Bishop's Iasi foundation, from 1800, according to the plans of architect "Her Leopold" and entrusted to the guild of beggars, or the city's poor or hoboos).

The building was restored after the fire of 1827; it was renovated and consolidated, maintained and modernised, and it functioned throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century on its original site. The modernisation of the buildings and the re-landscaping of the enclosed area of the Eparchial Centre, as well as the rebuilding and the consecration of the new Cathedral in 1887, pave the way for the not too distant future project for the construction of a new metropolitan residence in Iasi (Porcescu 1977: 112; and the photography of the consecration stone from 1897, which recorded that: "the old dependencies of the old metropolitan palace being now demolished, in 1897, on their site, the building of these houses began again, from foundations and they include rooms for those who serve in

the church and in this house, as well as other rooms necessary for the economy of the house and of the church, such as the kitchen and the bakery for bread used to be sanctified during the service”. During this period, an office building, on the southwestern side, is built inside the Metropolitan complex.

The person who will commit his skill and full range of effort and influence for the completion of this goal will be the successor of Holy Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu, Metropolitan Partenie Clinceni (1902-1908).

### **A new Archpriest in the seat of St. Joseph the Merciful and his achievements**

Upon his archpastoral appointment in Iasi, Partenie Clinceni had already acquired the reputation of a worthy shepherd, well acquainted with the pastoral realities of his time; he was a faithful preserver of the church’s rule of order and a cultural promoter, as well as a monk devoted to energetic, skillful and assiduous work, irrespective of the task entrusted to him. These latter qualities, in particular, had made him stand out during the special circumstances following the Independence War, the proclamation of the Kingdom and the recognition of the Autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

In 1886, he had been appointed bishop of Galați, and in this capacity he distinguished himself through his exceptional cultural-missionary and edilitarian activity. Thus, he contributed to the renewal of church life in Dobrogea (he initiated the construction of dozens of churches). He was the renewing founder of the church dedicated to Saint Nicholas, the Cathedral of Tulcea city (Cotovu 1926: 10-11); he built the imposing episcopal residence in Galați (D. 1901: 554-570; during the previous year he had moved in the great and new episcopal palace, “built [...] by our Romanian State”) and had constantly cultivated cultural patronage (see, for instance, the letter addressed by him, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1901, to the Dean of the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, Dr. Const. Chiricescu, published in the “Romanian Orthodox Church” – 1901: 664-666, a document that shows that he was noted and respected).

Indeed, his life had been exceptional until that date. He was born on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1847 in Clinceni (Ilfov), in a priest’s family; upon

baptism he was given the name Petre (Stancu). He attended the “Central” Seminary and the Faculty of Letters in Bucharest (1861-1872; there was no Faculty of Theology in Romania at the time), then he was a student of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Athens (1873-1877; subsequently, this institution granted him the title of *Doctor Honoris Causa*).

After he married he was ordained deacon (1868). He became a widower and his children died, he was tonsured in 1877, the following year he was ordained a hieromonah (by Metropolitan Calinic Miclescu), and later he was ordained a protosinghelos and archimandrite (Păcurariu 2002: *sub voce*; see also Constantinescu 1906: 162-169; Dragoi 1990: 34-37). He distinguishes himself as the superior father of the Romanian Chapel in Leipzig (1878-1880; Pocitan 1927: 459; here, for two years, he is credited to have “attended university programmes of Theology and Philosophy” – Constantinescu 1906: 168) and, between 1880 and 1886, he was the superior father of the Romanian chapel in Paris [in 1882, during his service, the Romanian state bought the actual chapel in Paris, on rue Jean de Beauvais, next to which a presbytery was built for its celebrating priests] (Pocitan 1913: 18-19; Pocitan 1941: 122).

In 1885 he was called to join the ranks of bishops (he was ordained the following year, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February, to serve in the Lower Danube Bishopric), and after 16 years of service in Galati, he was promoted, in 1902, after the repose of Holy Metropolitan Iosif the Merciful, to the archbishop’s See from Iasi. There was a unanimous belief that until then, the new metropolitan “had carried on a relentless activity, from which the most beautiful fruits were harvested” (in *Popular Sheet* 1902: 1).

Going from “the beautiful and important Bishopric of the Lower Danube” to “the old and venerable Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Suceava”, the newly elected archbishop promised that “from here on, as well, I will work with all my powers in the vineyard of the Lord that is entrusted to me again, with all my zeal, with all my faith and with all my love” (D. 1902: 1051; in Husi, Conon Arămescu Donici had been elected, and in Galați, Pimen Georgescu, the latter succeeding Metropolitan Partenielater, in 1909, on the Metropolitan Seat of Iasi). In the Appointment *Speech*, King Carol I reminded him that:

you are replacing a shepherd who, for more than a quarter of a century, held the Metropolitan staff of Moldova with dignity and, deeply moved by his high calling, did not cease until the end of his life to dedicate his strength to the good of the Church. In the times of his service he had the happiness to sanctify the Metropolitan church from the old capital of Moldavia and to witness the completion of the work initiated by Metropolitan Veniamin of blessed memory, after it had remained in a state of ruin, a body without soul, for a long time, as I then said in my speech. Thus, the name of Veniamin will, however, remain indistinguishable from this holy place, as well as from his Seminary (...). You can be proud that you are called to the head of such a large Diocese, which includes lands well endowed by God, where ancestral piety has raised so many holy shrines, reminiscent of great deeds (King Carol I 1939: 272-273; see also Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 115, 1902 - File of His Eminence Partenie Clinceni, named Metropolitan Lieutenant and files 113, 1902 – File of His Excellence Partenie Clinceni, elected Metropolitan of Moldavia).

### **The new metropolitan palace of Iași - from project to edification and inauguration**

The new Metropolitan did have connections with Iași before. Thus, in 1880, while he was an archimandrite, Partenie had been one of the three candidates for the vacant position of Vicar Bishop of Iași (Giosan 2016: 34; for other data *see* Șuțu 1923: 44). His arrival in Iași, accommodation and official appointment in the new Cathedral (sanctified on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1887), from whose archbishop's seat no one else had given blessings for several decades but its renewing founder, Holy Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu, whose modesty, wisdom, clean life and mercy the faithful flock would always have wanted to be present in the work of his successors, will have been swiftly undergone by the new *Vladika*, accustomed to a different pace of events. The archived documents show the new state of mind set in the Eparchial Center after the appointment of Metropolitan Partenie in Iași and his taking up office.

#### **1. The project to restore the metropolitan residential house proves to be one to renovate, modernise and beautify the entire architectural Metropolitan complex from Iași**

A practical man, capable of achieving above all, with affordances and connections verified over time, Partenie finds it appropriate that, first and foremost, the eparchial administration should be more thoroughly

organised. With regard to the state of affairs of the Eparchial Center, as well as the practical possibilities to carry out the highest service entrusted to him, what captures his attention – and the observations are recorded in writing –, is the following situation: “the Metropolitan residence of this God-safeguarded Diocese (...) is completely ruined.” Therefore, he will seek the help of Spiru Haret, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction, to whom he shows that, “the day after my arrival as Metropolitan lieutenant, soon to replace my blessed predecessor, when I visited you in hotel Traian, I asked you to urgently take the necessary measures for its radical transformation” (the draft of the letter, dated 18 March 1902, in Bucharest, is preserved in the Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 48, 1902), and the Minister appears to have already been updated on the issue, because, describing the situation, Vladika adds: “as you know”).

Metropolitan Partenie will mention later, on different occasions, “the state of ruin in which everything was in the Metropolitan complex” upon his arrival (Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 48, 1902 – letter of 16 February 1904) and about “the old, the old and the ruined Metropolitan Palace of Iasi” (Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bucovina, file 48, 1902 – letter dated 12 June 1903). In the first year of his stay in Iași, the situation must have been quite embarrassing for the hierarch, as he was forced to stay in a house inside the Eparchial Centre, which had been inhabited until then by lawyer Osvald Teodoreanu (the latter was married to Sofia, the daughter of Gavriil Musicescu, the leader of the Metropolitan Cathedral’s Choir and the Director of the Conservatory of Iasi; on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1902, from the Ministry, P. Garboviceanu asks Metropolitan Partenie to “dispatch the necessary orders” so that the apartment in the yeard of the Metropolitan ensemble of Iași could “remain free (...) and be made available to the Ministry’s Architect, Băicoianu”). Dissatisfied, Osvald Teodoreanu asks the Minister, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 1902, for compensation for the investments made by him there, and finally the disagreements incurred over the year are overcome.

The request submitted by Metropolitan Parteni to Spiru Haret is immediately acted upon; on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March 1902, he mentions that

the day after my enthronement as Metropolitan of Moldova, Mr. Băicoianu, the architect of this Honor. Minister, came and also drafted the situation plan of this House, which he has sent to me these days, to see and give my approval for the changes that should be made and introduced in the final plan, which I have also done (from the wording of this record it appears that the understanding regarding the “radical transformation” of the Metropolitan palace in Iași may have preceded even Partenie’s arrival and enthronement in Iași).

As the expectations were so promising, and the beginning was good, the Vladika finds it appropriate, after the departure of the architect and after the “close investigation of the walls of this house”, to approach the Minister again, requesting that with respect to the metropolitan building,

upon its transformation, the current shape of the outside walls should be preserved as much as possible, touching, of course, the inside walls, so that they could be used in the intimate economy of the general plan, which will be drawn by the architect ( ...). The shape of the windows and doors, as well as the other decoration, should be in the Byzantine style. The main staircase should be out of marble and the other stairs should be made of oak.

He also expresses “the desire to preserve ancient things, when they are good and less costly than new ones”. In addition, he wishes “works to start as quickly as possible”, so that they could be completed in the autumn, because “as you know, I have no other houses there, around the Cathedral Church, where I can stay for a long time” (regarding the walls of the building, the Metropolitan found that “they are resilient; the outside part of the floor is of stone cut on the edge, and the ground floor is made of boulders out of which an all too beautiful mosaic could be made, if the joining points were straightened”; Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 48, 1902).

It should be noted that at this planning stage, the concern of the new Metropolitan was, on the one hand, to expedite the works, and on the other hand, what was most important and significant, to find the most suitable solutions for the *restoration* of the metropolitan palace, to the extent that this was possible. We understand, from his considerations regarding the elaboration and execution of the plan for the renovation of the building, that he did not completely agree to the working method, applied in Iași, by the French architect André Lecompte de Noüy, which involved the demolition and then reconstruction of the edifice. It should also be noted that, over the years, new proposals are added to improve

what was initially established, and this leaves the impression that the building site of the Eparchial Centre remains open during the entire pastoral service of Metropolitan Partenie (and even after that). Also, in time, some partial works will be inaugurated (it is also significant that there are several such ceremonies), the project will be expanded and diversified, new solutions will be proposed, or others will be abandoned, which had been under way until then, so that the general impression is that the metropolitan residential house was a starting point, which spurred a desire to initiate a *process*, which could only be long-lasting, in order to renew, modernise and beautify the entire architectural ensemble from the Metropolitan Church of Iasi.

## **2. From the foundation stone to the opening ceremony**

Works start in the autumn, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of September 1902, when the foundation stone laying ceremony is organised. On this occasion, an official document was drawn, which states:

May God, venerated and glorified in Trinity, be praised forever, for he paid heed to my prayers and strife, and found me worthy to see the onset of the rebuilding of the old and ruined metropolitan palace which, as shown by the commemorative stone above the entrance door of the palace's chapel, was completed in 1798, with the expense and efforts of Metropolitan Iacob Stamati of blessed memory, in the days of His Majesty Alixandru Ioan Calimach. Now, in the year of salvation one thousand nine hundred and two, the thirty sixth of the glorious dynasty and reign of the lover of Christ, His Majesty, our great and wise King Carol I (...), Minister of Cults and Public Instruction (being) Mr. Spiru Haret, who proved to be very much in favour of this building, we have blessed the water under the chapel of this palace, in whose entrance wall, now made again, the commemorative stone for its reconstruction was placed in the north corner, in the presence of Iasi county and city authorities, Iasi being the second capital of the Kingdom and the residence of the God-safeguarded Diocese of the Holy Metropolitan Bishopric of Moldavia and Suceava, of the clergy of the Metropolitan Cathedral, of Mr. Ioan Băicoianu, the Architect of the Ministry of Cults and of Public Instruction, who drew out the plan according to my draft, of Mr. Virgiliu Em. Hălăceanu, the entrepreneur of the work and of several notable Christians, who signed this act, in order for it to be and to remain known by future generations and for the praise of our Romanian nation, now and for ever and onto the ages, Amin (Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bucovina, file. 48, 1902).



The “hasty” (as the Metropolitan writes in his *Memoirs* dated 27 March 1903) completion of construction works under the watchful eye of the Metropolitan and at a rate that will be maintained constant even during the cold season, will enable their rapid progression; in the autumn of the following year, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1903, the “roof was finished” (and the interior furnishings - “staircase, vestibule, illuminator” were to follow next, together with the provision of appropriate furniture).

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1904, the Ministry requests the “list of furniture items needed for the new palace” (registered under no. 13889; Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 48, 1902). For the manufacture of furniture, local artists, craftsmen and suppliers will be requested, among whom professors and students from the School of Arts and Crafts (the payment notice “for the works carried out under the 571 order is preserved in the Iași metropolitan palace”). There are also benefactors, among whom Elena Mârzescu, who offered, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 1904, “two bookcases made of solid, carved oak” (the palace library also had its own book collection).

The Metropolitan got personally involved in this activity; documents record, among other things, instructions made by him, such as:

the (furniture) of the living room (should be) of oak combined with fir, lime or elm wood, according to the sketches made (...). The sculptures on the panels will represent fruit, game or fish; a mirror-cupboard mirror and two crystal windows in the church; a table, two serving tables, chairs, armchairs, gallery, curtains, hangers (Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 48, 1902).

Among the initiatives of Metropolitan Partenie during the last months of 1902, archive documents mention the effort to beautify the garden with “a plantation of wild and fruit trees” – request submitted to the Iași Municipality on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1902 (the garden was in a “deserted state, so as not to say wildness”). On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1903, another request is submitted to build an artesian fountain (“water play”) in the “garden” of Ștefan cel Mare street, but the Municipality disproves of this plan (and the Vladika insists on its completion; Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 48, 1902).

To this is added the effort to consolidate the fence and the surrounding wall and to repair the roof of the Old Cathedral (which “was rotten”), dedicated to St. George, in the proximity of the metropolitan

residence. To landscape the Metropolitan Park, the Metropolitan requested on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1902, shrubs from the Ciurea tree farm (*tuia pyramidalis*, *rosa canina*, white maples and other tree species; the discount was 50%, and on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September he himself went to the tree farm, where he had bought trees before).

Vladika would also have liked to “build a surrounding wall that would support the metropolitan palace of Iasi, towards Baston Street” (currently Colonel Langa Street, *our note*), which would replace and complement the “old and ruined” wall; for this purpose, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 1903, a request and a quotation were submitted to the Ministry (an outline is attached). The then situation of the Diocesan Centre in Iasi is described by the Metropolitan as these terms: “this is why jobless people, children, cattle, pigs, poultry and dogs come in as they please and they destroy hour by hour what has been done with much expense and effort” (the Minister does not approve – decision no. 18367 from the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 1903; Archive of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova and Bukovina, file 48, 1902).

In the summer of 1903 the works to “rebuild the ruined metropolitan palace in this second capital of the Kingdom” are brought again to the attention of the Minister of Cults and Public Instruction. Metropolitan Partenie addresses him from Karlsbad on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, with the request to improve the project (the building was already up “above the ground floor” and a “solid, good and praiseworthy” thing was being done).

He mentioned that during the construction works, “all the walls of the so-called palace, which were considered as good and strong, had to be demolished, in order to be replaced with new ones” (“because it was obvious that it was not possible to build something new on top of them, or to connected them to the new walls”), so one could say that the edifice “is almost built all over again”. He then adds that “he, who follows [the works], according to his custom, *unflinchingly* (our highlight)”, suggests not to keep some of the old interior walls of the building, that were damaged by the weather or made of improper materials (he was referring to the “dining room”), because they involve high costs, both for restoration and maintenance (and “the procedure is very harmful to the

State”) and, more than that, they can endanger parts of the new construction.

Finally, the document expresses the hierarch’s “warm wish”:

the need for a large house, such as the metropolitan palace, where, according to the holy and ancient tradition, hospitality is always given to His Majesty the King, to the Most Reverend Primate Metropolitan, to their Graces and Excellences, Bishops and Archbishops, as well as to other clerics and lay persons, when they come to the second capital of the Kingdom and arrive in this palace.

That is why he is asking (and he has made an “additional draft” beforehand, submitted to architect Băicoianu) for the approval of the following compartmentalization:

*on the groundfloor*, rooms needed for the metropolitan chancellery and its respective consistory; *above* them, the dining room, placed parallel to the Chapel and next to a room for the changing of the table, about 3-4 guest rooms and a small staircase where the dishes can be brought easily and conveniently from downstairs, from the kitchen.

The hope expressed in the end, for the completion of works by “the autumn, or within a year at the most” (for this it was necessary, however, for the Minister to “issue an order accordingly” to the architect) is followed by the emphasis on the need to expedite works. Thus, the necessary preparation had to be ensured,

so that we could begin to receive in it many of the above-mentioned guests, who will come to Iași next year, in 1904, for the consecration of the church of the Three Hierarchs and the celebration of 100 years since the establishment of the Seminary by the great Hierarch of our Holy Church, Veniamin Costache, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava.

Unfortunately, the hierarch's intentions could not be actualised, or maybe there was no desire for them to become actual, as he had conceived them. However, in 1904, the remarkable guests who came to Iași will be shown the works of the palace, as well; in his speech delivered in the “Veniamin” Seminary, Minister Spiru Haret will also remind us of “the modest dwelling built by Jacob Stamate, *which we all knew (our highlight)*, and which, small and poor as it was, sheltered so much greatness for 35 years” (in the time of Metropolitan Veniamin – *our highlight*) (P.G. 1904: 807).

As the support from the Ministry and the pace of work on the site are not as expected, Metropolitan Partenie submits new requests to the authorities, such as the report from the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 1903, or the one from the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 1904, finally showing that “we want to have the metropolitan palace ready and bright, with all its dependencies” (however, the request for approval of the estimate is rejected by the ministry).

From that moment on, the Metropolitan Archdiocese will face an increasingly acute lack of funds (a situation that was clearly described in the Metropolitan's letter of 16 February 1904; the Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file no. 48, 1902), and this is likely to show how generous initiatives and legitimate projects can be overshadowed, taken over by others or ruined. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 1905, a report of Metropolitan Partenie submitted to the Ministry shows that “the new metropolitan palace (...) is, in the opinion of the entrepreneurs, almost completed and may soon require its handing over”. However, he wants to specify that, “considering that this palace is not really finished, we hasten to let you know that in its current state there are many defects and shortcomings” (Archive of the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 32, 1905, no. 5).

However, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January, the Ministry of Cults and Public Instruction appoints the commission for the reception of works (made up of architects N.C. Mihăescu and M. Gabrielescu). The provisional reception is followed by the final one, recorded in the minutes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1905, in which its members found that the works, “are *generally (our highlight)* executed according to the project”, soon to be “completed and some of them to be improved” (Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, files 32, 1905, no. 252; the field research was conducted on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1905; with no. 32 on the same year, the *Inventory of new and repaired furniture located in the metropolitan palace of Iasi in 1905* is recorded).

The inauguration ceremony of the metropolitan residence – which actually concluded a first stage of the construction works – will be held only between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of February 1905. The *Commemorative Act* and *Minutes* (both drafted on the 8<sup>th</sup> of February) have been preserved. It is recorded that, upon the Metropolitan's “celebration of three years of

holy and hard church servicing”, with “God's help, the new metropolitan palace, rebuilt on the old foundation, in Iasi, was ready for housing (...), through the boldness and great zeal of His Eminence”.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, the Metropolitan's name's day as well, a service was celebrated in the Cathedral; in the evening, a contrite vigil was celebrated, and the next day, after the *Holy Liturgy*, when a *Te Deum* of gratitude was also celebrated in the Cathedral,

he bowed to the sound of the bells, in procession to the new palace, where the sanctification of the water was performed and where His Eminence remained, with the blessing of the Almighty, to live in this beautiful and humble church house, to the comfort and peace of mind of us all, for the strengthening of our holy Orthodox Christian faith in the people and for the praise of our Romanian nation, which God may bless for ever and ever.

The ceremonies are led by the Metropolitan, “aided by the Bishop of Huși, Conon Arănescu Donici, and the vicar Archbishop Ghenadie Georgescu”, surrounded by a numerous cohort of priests (Archive of the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 32, 1905). In the report, in addition to what had already been recorded in the Commemorative Act, Metropolitan Partenie notes that:

the lower floor was built almost from old stone, the top one from very good bricks from Ciurea; lime and sand have been mixed with the remaining debris from the demolition of the old walls, hence the damage at the slightest rubbing or touch. The woodwork and the ironworks were made (...) in bad conditions and out of bad raw materials. All my complaints and protests were futile, because architect Baicoianu was highly esteemed. The furniture was commissioned by me only, according to my desire. The timber in the metropolitan hall remained the old one, while the other rooms have new timber (Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 32, 1905; on this occasion telegrams are sent to King Carol I, the Minister of State, Mihai Vlădescu and to other political figures, including Spiru Haret, former Minister of Cults and Public Instruction).

Later, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1908, Metropolitan Partenie notes that:

today (...) when I turned 61 and I am heading towards my 62<sup>nd</sup> year, God, in His mercy, has found me worthy of serving the Holy Liturgy in the chapel of the Metropolitan Palace of Iasi, accompanied by the most Reverend Administrator and Stavrophoroi Fathers Pavel Savin and Ștefan Ionescu, by Archdeacon Vasile Martian, deacon Varlaam Arghirescu, protopsaltis Gh. Grigoriu and psaltis N. Oșlobanu. During the Holy Liturgy I ordained deacon the Theology graduate C.

Bobulescu, to serve henceforth in the Annunciation parish church in Iasi town. The Creed and the Lord's Prayer were uttered by His Excellency Archbishop Ghenadie Băcăoanul, Vicar of the Holy Metropolitan Archdiocese (the event is recorded in Minutes no. 1824 - Archive of the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 26, 1908. Later, as shown on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1907, supporting documents were submitted to the Ministry regarding the amount of 650 lei, approved "for the expenses incurred by the sanctification of the chapel from the metropolitan palace of Iasi", no. 698 of the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1908).

The chapel from the old palace, now transferred to the floor of the building (but retaining its old feast day, the Sunday of All Saints), had been restored and embellished, and became representative for the town of Iasi of that era and unique "in the church painting of the country" (Bogdan 2004: 321; Bobulescu 1931: 44-51). A new votive inscription records its older and more recent history, and in the votive painting Metropolitan Partenie is next to the first founder of the palace, the worthy and hard-working Metropolitan of yore, Iacob Stamati. The mural painting, as well as some paintings preserved in the art gallery of the Metropolitan Archdiocese, is made by painter Gheorghe Popovici, professor at the School of Fine Arts in Iași.

This master was among the artists appreciated by Metropolitan Partenie, from the time of his service in Galați, where the professor from Iasi had helped to beautify the chapel (whose feast day was the *Presentation of the Lord to the Temple*) built there by the future Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava (D. 1901: 556; Constantinescu 1906: 278). On the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 1908, on the day of the Feast, the Holy Liturgy is served with an impressive gathering of priests on the altar of the Chapel of the Metropolitan Palace in Iași; since the new founder cannot be present, he was informed, in Bucharest, that "warm prayers for health and the long life of Your Eminence, *the founder of this great divine place*, have been raised" (Archive of the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia and Bukovina, file no. 1258). Therefore, services were celebrated there before the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1908. This fact is also apparent from the reply received on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 1908, given to the address from the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1907, when the Administration of the Church House sends a message to Metropolitan Partenie, to deliver from Bucharest to Iași, "two complete sets of ritual books, necessary for the

divine services that are celebrated in the *chapel* from the palace of the Holy Metropolitan Archdiocese”).

Thanks to the efforts of Metropolitan Partenie, a library was established inside the metropolitan palace. The book fund was amassed gradually, after 1905, and it consisted of “the few books I found” and those that the Metropolitan manages to find through great personal efforts and various institutional collaborations (a copy of the *File of the Metropolitan Palace Library of Moldavia and Suceava, 1905* is in “Dumitru Stăniloae” Library of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina; we are grateful to Ms. Virginia Popa, the director of the Library, for kindly providing details regarding this document).

From the request submitted to the Minister of Cults by Vicar Archbishop Ghenadie Băcăuanul (in his capacity as a deputy Metropolitan, at that time) on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1909, we find out about

the books given by Your Lordship to this metropolitan palace, as well as other books, which were offered by different donors to the *Palace library* (*our highlight*) and which were bound and entrusted to the custody of the binder;

there is a request to approve the amount necessary to pay the “cost of the bookbinding” and “to bring the books to the Holy Metropolitan Archdiocese” (Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 26, 1908). The Ministry approves, but makes it known that “in the future, we will not incur any unauthorised expenses”, and a *Marginal Note* states that “the books will all be listed in an inventory” (Archive of the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 26, 1908; the official document is signed by P. Gârboviceanu).

### **3. Some thoughts regarding the festivities organised in Iași in 1904**

In 1904 large festivals are planned throughout the country, especially since the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the holy Voivode Stephen the Great could not be celebrated, as would be desired, in Bukovina, under foreign rule. Therefore, significant events had to be organised (and were planned in advance) in Iași, and the Church participates in their preparation and smooth unfolding (Archive of the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 36, 1904).

In the autumn, the Royal Family of Romania, the President and many of the members of the Council of Ministers, as well as numerous officials from abroad, come to Iasi to attend the new sanctification, after restoration (carried out under the guidance and using the methods recommended by André Lecompte de Noüy), of the churches of St. Nicholas the Princely, commissioned and built under the rule of Saint Stephen the Great (2<sup>nd</sup> of October) and Holy Three Hierarchs, Vasile Lupu's foundation (3<sup>rd</sup> of October). On the following day, the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1904, the centenary of the "Veniamin Costachi" Seminary was celebrated (the church chronicler wrote that "the virtues of the ancestors, the fruit of love and devotion to the Church and the Nation were celebrated and the unwavering faith in everything that is good, true and beautiful was affirmed" (P.G. 1904: 783-811). The list of attending hierarchs includes the Bishop of Argeș, Gherasim Timuș, the Bishop of the Low Danube, Pimen Georgescu, the Bishop of Huși, Conon Arănescu Donis and Dionisie Climescu of Buzău, as well as "their Graces Calistrat Bârlădeanul, Meletie Gălățeanul and Ghenadie Băcăuanul"; see also the Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 106, 1904).

At the Metropolitan Cathedral, after the memorial service, Rev. Pavel Savin, the Director of the Theological Seminary, "as a humble servant of the Church, sent here by my bishop and fellow teachers", pays homage to Metropolitan Veniamin, "the worthy hierarch", who laid his soul for his sheep, "the founder and protector of "our first national school", from whom we learn "the love of the law and the nation". Then, there was a procession, from the Cathedral to the Seminary: "headed by flags, the relics of Saint Parascheva, the icon of Metropolitan Veniamin"; the procession passes in between two rows of soldiers who "separated the huge crowd".

In the guest room of the "Veniamin Costachi" Seminary (located in Mihail Sturdza's former royal palace, now belonging to the Church), water was blessed, speeches were delivered (by the King, by the Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, and by the Minister of Cults and Public Instruction), and then the Centenary Commemorative Act was read and signed. In his *Speech*, the Metropolitan does not forget, when addressing the Sovereign, to state the following: "Your Majesty has



decided to start the one-hundred-year celebration of the Seminary, established by this great hierarch in 1803-1804” (P.G. 1904: 799). He also says that, at that moment,

Veniamin’s seminary, once abandoned and in ruins, experiences and celebrates with splendour its one hundred year jubilee, in precisely the palace buildings of former ruler Mihail Sturdza, who received Metropolitan Veniamin’s resignation;

20 years earlier, in Paris, he, the “humblest heir” to Veniamin's chair, had been his confessor, had given him the Eucharist and had taken him “to his place of eternal repose with a pious and glamorous ceremony” (P.G. 1904: 802).

Minister Spiru Haret shows that

the dark cells of the school are gone, and in their place, a former royal palace, enlarged and beautified, hosts the Veniamin Seminary. For today, unlike in his time, it is considered that the Princely Palaces are not inappropriate for their Majesty, sciences.

He also recalls the “modest dwelling built by Iacob Stamate, which we all knew, and which, small and poor as it was, sheltered for 35 years (under Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi – *out note*) so much greatness” (P.G. 1904: 807-808).

It is also worth noting the tribute that Metropolitan Partenie, the local kyriarch, brings to the teachers of the theological school who,

counting the task of a teacher as a duty and holy calling, linked, with all their heart and life, their fate to the church school, partaking of it for good and for bad. In silence or turmoil, in good or bad weather, with sweat on the forehead or cold in the bones, full of joy or mourning, paid or unpaid, they remained faithful servants to the spiritual treasury, working, each according to his powers, to enlighten the being of young people with the torch of science and righteous faith and to prepare them for the holy and high level of priesthood (P.G. 1904: 801).

The bishop pays tribute to Metropolitan Veniamin by words with which, not long later, he will be able to identify himself, somehow:

Romanian among Romanians (...), deeply familiar with the human nature and the vicissitude of the circumstances, he stood against the difficulties of the task at hand with the strength of his soul; he retorted with Christian love to the intrigues of his brothers in Christ, with his last resources to the greed of those in power in his age; with resistance or exile to the threats of the country's invaders and plunderers; to human passions and orgies with patience and faith in God which,

as the Psalmist says, ‘executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed’ – *Psalm 103, 6*”.

The three days of feasting had been scheduled for the re-blessing of the refurbished “houses of God” (Genesis 28, 17), the ceremonies at the Iasi Cathedral – the “Mother of the Churches” in the Metropolitan Archdiocese – and at the palace of “Veniamin Costachi” Seminary, and they are considered “of high spiritual elevation for all the Romanian nation”, showing respect and love for the elders, whose power of sacrifice, faith and culture, “spirit of order and wisdom”, remained a source of *living and abundant inspiration*, always refreshed by descendants, for “Romania’s prosperity and strengthening” (P.G. 1904: 811).

**“Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house” (Psalm 26: 8); a provisional assessment, optimistic prospects, unforeseen realities and an inheritance that ennobles and obliges**

Later, when things settled down, and the metropolitan residence house became largely functional, in an address sent to the Ministry on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 1906, Metropolitan Partenie gives an evaluation of the years of effort that he had spent for the renovation of the eparchial centre of Iasi:

Upon my mediocrity’s ascension to the historical See of the God-protected Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Suceava, I saw with bitterness at heart that apart from the metropolitan church and some re-built houses, on poor foundations and badly completed, everything had been deserted for centuries and abandoned in complete ruin. May God be praised, for through fervent intercessions and warm prayers, I managed to: 1. rebuild almost 2/3 of the old metropolitan palace, endowing it with the furniture needed for the entire building; 2. radically repair the greenhouse and clean the gardens from dry twigs, replanting and renewing everything, thus contributing to lending the metropolitan residence a new and beautiful appearance (Porcescu 1977: 113).

However, there were many more tasks to accomplish, including

completing the palace building with what is missing and rebuilding the palace’s wing from Baston Street, so that the Chancellery and Consistory could be located on the lower floor, with an exit through the above-mentioned street, and upstairs the dining room and a few pantries were to be completed, to shelter and feed the brethren in Christ who could come to visit the Metropolitan.

The general plan that the Metropolitan is considering (and which he has been trying to improve and complete for so many years) includes: “repairing the old metropolitan church dedicated to Saint George the Great”, “building new cells, to replace the humid and ruined ones, to house the clerics serving in the Holy Metropolitan church”, “building three large halls, where the brilliant metropolitan choir could rehearse”, “pulling down the new houses, in danger of collapsing, because of their initial bad construction (...); this way, light will be given to the palace, too”,

the demolition of old stables, which are on the verge of falling down (...) and its replacement with a new one, as well as the construction of cisterns to collect rainwater needed for gardens (Porcescu 1977: 115; all these plans had been presented verbally to the Minister, along with the Metropolitan’s desire “to have you as founder and at the same time, to say, with the King and Prophet David «so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s»”).

Although the metropolitan residencial house had been inaugurated and it was only natural to record, in documents, the events for which it was intended, in addition to the necessary maintenance, operation and modernisation activities (for example, a logbook registers the “repairing of the electric system, the repairing of two pumps and their installation at the metropolitan palace in Iași during February and March 1909”; the Archive of the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia and Bukovina, files 170, 1908), the emergence of serious problems, whose solution is to resume construction works, is also mentioned in documents. The new construction works will last throughout Metropolitan Partenie’s stay in Iași and they will extend during the spiritual shepherding of his successor, Metropolitan Pimen Georgescu. Thus, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 1908, Metropolitan Partenie notifies the Minister of Cults that:

shortly after the foundation was completed in the metropolitan palace in Iași, there were cracks in the eastern corner of the palace, namely the corner of our office from the top veranda. At first these cracks were attributed by those in charge with the palace’s repair work to the material consequence of setting up new walls. For some time now these cracks have begun to become more pronounced with every passing day and now other gaps have begun to emerge below those cracks, which confirms our belief that the foot (pillar) which supports these walls and the weight of the entire construction of the floor from this side are built above the cellar that spans the palace’s underground; also, its

vault gives in to the unbearable weight that was set above it through the lack of foresight of those in charge with the operation and supervision of this palace's construction works.

The document also shows that “from the beginning and then unceasingly, through several addresses from previous years, we have pointed out to the Ministry the construction defects and the faults of this palace”, which had recently been noticed by the architect of the Church House, C. Mihăescu. As the situation “accurately foretells and determines the near collapse of the walls”, the Metropolitan “makes haste” to “warmly ask you to take action so as to prevent the disaster in time, which is, as you can see, threatening and inevitable” (Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 170, 1908, no. 757. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 1908, via address no. 759, the bishop requests the Minister that the works “should start earlier, before autumn sets in, when the weather is bad and hinders their completion in good conditions”).

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, he approaches the Minister with the same request: “Please send the architect to start the works (...); time passes on” (Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 170, 1908, registered under no. 1317). On the 20<sup>th</sup> of June, when C. Mihăescu arrives in Iasi, it is found that he has no “order to carry out reinforcing works on the part of the palace that is under threat of collapsing, as I announced (...)”; as this critical situation is also noted by the architect, the Minister's relevant order is urgently requested (“as the cracks in the respective walls have worrying proportions, as the Architect himself has found today, we strongly ask you, Honourable Minister, to issue an urgent order to reinforce this part of the palace”; Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 170, 1908, no. 1351). The same steps, taken as a result of the telegram sent on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July (Archive of the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia and Bukovina, files 170, 1908, no. 1425) and by the request of the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1908 (“Please send urgently whoever you consider suitable to take the measures necessary to strengthen the walls, for the timely prevention of the danger that threatens us daily”; the Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, files 170, 1908, no. 1855), remain without consequences.

Moreover, the earthquake of September 1908 aggravates the palace's condition, presented in the following terms in the letter sent to Bucharest, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September: "the recent earthquake causing the inevitable fall of the cracked walls of the metropolitan palace, we respectfully ask you to (take) urgent measures" (the letter is signed by Vicar Archbishop Ghenadie Băcăuanul on behalf of the Metropolitan; Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, files 170, 1908, no. 2028). New and necessary works were required for the Cathedral, as well as for the maintenance and beautification of the Cathedral, of the architectural complex of the Metropolitan Centre (we can notice that they were under joined administration). Among others, in a request for support addressed to the city of Iași on the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1908, the commitment to support the execution of some works was underlined, assumed by the latter, in exchange for the large plot of land belonging to the gardens of the Metropolitan Archdiocese for the alignment of Stephen the Great street (Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 170, 1908, no. 795).

Despite the urgency noted by those who witnessed them, interventions were only carried out during the following year, when Metropolitan Partenie was no longer the Metropolitan of Iași. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1909, in his letter to the Minister, the new Metropolitan, Pimen Georgescu, summarises them as follows:

the repair works undertaken this year in the metropolitan palace in Iași *being completed (our highlight)*, please kindly order that Architect Mihăescu come urgently to Iași to make the reception of the completed works (Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, files 170, 1908, no. 2991; however, there were still some "small improvements" to be made).

Other new problems begin to appear, but for the following years no works were done in the palace or the metropolitan house in Iași (Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bukovina, file 26, 1908; file 27, 1917; file 41, 1922 and a.).

From all these inextricable and tense inter-institutional relations during Metropolitan Partenie Clinceni's last years of service as spiritual arch-shepherd in Iași, the following elements can be distinguished: on the one hand, we can notice the roots of an excessively uncomfortable bureaucracy which, cleverly instrumented, could easily become

oppressive, with obstacles or nuisances that were always not only difficult to overcome, but also to understand; on the other hand, there is a special situation, equally embarrassing, confusing and no less compelling, with highly diverse explanations, whose outcome will occur on the last day of 1908. Following an isolation and defamation campaign, which had gathered different interests and writer's plumes and had been hosted by the press, as well (among others, see N. Iorga 1911: *passim*; Haret 1912, *passim*; Diac, [www.historia.ro](http://www.historia.ro)), the Metropolitan withdraws from the See (Resignation of His Grace Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, D.D. Partenie I. *Resignation Text* 1909: 1081-1082; *Royal Decree* is countersigned by Sp. Haret, Minister of Cults and Public Instruction).

Before his final departure from Iasi, he must have thought with love and the pride he was sometimes reproached, of the house he had founded and renewed. And it is telling, perhaps even emotional, that the last document drafted in his official capacity and on the day of the registration of his withdrawal, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 1908, is the donation act through which he gives "the painting of my humbleness, as Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, (...) clad in an archpriest's mantle; (...) I bestow this painting to the metropolitan palace of Iasi" (Archive of the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Moldavia and Bucovina, file 170, 1908, no. 2738. Until the end of his life – the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 1910 – he lives in Bucharest and is subsequently buried in Belu Cemetery; Bezviconi 1972: 213).

Nearly three decades after his death, in 1937, the truth began to come to light, and the press, discovering the injustice that had once been done, conclusively, late but also very suggestively, pleads for *A late rehabilitation of Metropolitan Partenie Clinceni* ("Curentul"/"The Current", 1937: 3).

### Conclusions

At the beginning of the twentieth century, in the years of Metropolitan Partenie Clinceni's (1902-1908) service in Iasi, the Palace or the metropolitan residential house is erected. The history behind the completion of the project, from the laying of the foundation stone to the inauguration ceremony, highlights both the scope of the works envisaged, as well as the committed efforts of the hierarch, who had to face many

unforeseen situations and find the most appropriate solutions. The contribution of the Church is added to important moments in the life of the community (for example, the celebrations organised in Iași in 1904, at the celebration of four hundred years from the Holy Voivode Stephen the Great's passage to the eternal realm).

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