

4 Sylvester as Patriarch of Antioch and All the East

4.1 The Election of 1724 and a Neglected Document

In 1904, in the second volume of his book dedicated to the documents of the patriarchs of Constantinople, Kallinikos Delikanēs published an interesting document that reports on the metropolitans of the Synod of 1724 in Constantinople, who, at the request and with the permission of Patriarch Jeremias III, proceeded to elect a new patriarch of Antioch.¹ The motive was the urgent need of an intervention from the Ecumenical See as “first before the other (patriarchal thrones)” (“ὡς τῶν λοιπῶν προκαθήμενος”),² because the Patriarchate of Antioch was threatened by the “erroneous Latin beliefs”. The person elected, among the three candidates, was Joachim, former metropolitan of Drama. The other two candidates are not mentioned in the document.

Joachim is also mentioned in other documents. In August 1723, he signed the ruling of Jeremias III of Constantinople against Methodios Anthrakitis (the document was also signed by Athanasios III Dabbās, the patriarch of Antioch).³ As a former metropolitan without an eparchy, Joachim probably resided in Constantinople in 1724 and was thus available to be elected as patriarch of Antioch.

The document might be a draft, written after news of the vacancy of the Antiochian throne had reached Constantinople. Nevertheless, it illustrates the fact that Sylvester’s election in September 1724 was not something unusual. It also demonstrates that the Patriarchate of Constantinople was determined to enforce its solutions and assert its authority when it came to Antiochian matters. Delikanēs believes that Athanasios’s letters recommending Sylvester as successor had reached the Ottoman capital in the meantime, and that Joachim’s election did not take place after all. Sylvester’s arrival in person in Constantinople, perhaps from Mount Athos, as some sources suggest, and the initial support he received from the inhabitants of Aleppo were probably instrumental in his election.

The document draft concerning the election of another candidate as patriarch of Antioch was neglected by the researchers who discussed the events of

1 Delikanēs, *Tà én toĩs kṓdixi tou Patriarxikou Archiepoφyλακείου σωζόμενα ἐπίσημα ἐκκλησιαστικά ἔγγραφα*, p. 185–188, from *Codex Kritiου*, [f.] 34, Library of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople. The document was also published in K. Delikanēs, “Αντιοχικά”, *Ἐκκλησιαστική Αλήθεια*, 26, 1906, 8, p. 95–96 (8, p. 93–101; 9, p. 115–120; 10, p. 127–134).

2 Delikanēs, *Tà én toĩs kṓdixi tou Patriarxikou Archiepoφyλακείου σωζόμενα ἐπίσημα ἐκκλησιαστικά ἔγγραφα*, p. 188.

3 Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, vol. 37, col. 231–246, and “Ο πρώην Δράμας Ἰωακείμ”, col. 245.

1724. Although corrected in the errata of the book, the wrong date (1732–1733) in Delikanēs’s edition was an important deterrent for researchers to seriously consider the information provided by the document. The error, as the editor remarked in the *Errata*, came from the confusion between Patriarch Jeremias III’s first term in office (1716–1726) and the second (1732–1733).⁴ From the document itself, it is clear that it was written at some point after July 1724 and before Sylvester’s election later that year (in September 24), and even before August 29, when a *berat* was issued for Sylvester. The absence of a reference to Kyrillos Tanās’s election by the Latin party does not necessarily mean that it preceded it, as the document refers to the “Latin” influence in the area.

The document mentioning the election of Joachim provides information that is not repeated in the one about Sylvester and offers new insight into the involvement of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the Antiochian election. The document reveals that the Ottoman state became aware of the overt “deviation” of the Christians in the Patriarchate of Antioch towards the Latin creed. The result was that the “supreme *epitropos*” (i.e., the grand vizier) issued “a formidable, powerful and obligatory commandment”, by a “written decree”. The order required the Patriarchate of Constantinople to elect, “exactly and literally”, a person from their circles, an authentic supporter of the “old and ancestral dogmas of the Eastern Church”, “not having any involvement whatsoever with the Latin erroneous belief”. The order also sternly prohibited the election as patriarch of Antioch of any person from the area, even if he would be proposed, requested, and supported by the people under the jurisdiction of that See. Any resident of the Patriarchate of Antioch was considered dubious and without guaranties as to the correctness of his opinions, because of the wrong Latin beliefs spread among much of the common people and the nobles in the area.

[...] φανεράς γενομένης τῆς εἰς λατινισμόν ἐκτροπῆς τῶν Χριστιανῶν τῷ ὑπερτάτῳ Ἐπιτρόπῳ, ἐπροστάχθημεν προσταγῇ φοβερά τε καὶ ἰσχυρᾷ καὶ ἀπαραιτήτῳ διὰ θεσπίσματος ἐγγράφου ἐπὶ βασιλικοῦ λευκώματος ῥητῶς ἐπὶ λέξεως διοριζομένου καὶ κελεύοντος ἡμᾶς, εὐρεῖν καὶ ἐκλέξεσθαι ἐντεῦθεν ἐκ τοῦ ἡμετέρου κλίματος ἄξιον καὶ ἀρμόδιον πρόσωπον ἐπὶ τὸ ἀναλαβεῖν τὴν Πατριαρχικὴν προστασίαν τοῦ Θρόνου τῆς Ἀντιοχείας, ἀντεχόμενον μὲν γνησίως τῶν ἀρχαίων καὶ πατρίων δογμάτων τῆς Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, ἀμέτοχον δὲ εἰς τὸ παντελὲς τῆς λατινικῆς κακοδοξίας, καὶ ἀπαγορεύοντος σφοδρῶς μηδένα προχειρίσασθαι ἐκ τοῦ ἐκεῖσε τῆς Ἀντιοχείας κλίματος, κἂν ὅτι μάλιστα εἴη ὑπὸ τοῦ Θρόνου ἐκείνου Χριστιανῶν προβεβλημένος, ζητούμενος τε καὶ στεργόμενος, ἅτε παντὸς οὐτινοσοῦν τῶν ἐκεῖθεν προβληθισμένου καὶ ζητηθισμένου ὑπόπτου τυγχάνοντος, καὶ τὸ ἐχέγγυον καὶ γνωστὸν περὶ τῶν δογμάτων

4 Delikanēs, *Tὰ ἐν τοῖς κώδιξι τοῦ Πατριαρχικοῦ Ἀρχιεποφυλακείου σωζόμενα ἐπίσημα ἐκκλησιαστικά ἔγγραφα*, p. 668–669.

ὁρθότητα οὐκ ἔχοντος διὰ τὴν πλεονάσασαν ἤδη καὶ σχεδὸν τὸ πλεῖστον τῶν ἐκεῖ ἀρχόντων διαφθείρασαν λατινικὴν κακοδοξίαν.⁵

[...] Since the deviation of the Christians into Latinism has become manifest to the grand vizier, we have been instructed by a formidable, powerful and obligatory commandment, by a written decree in the imperial register, which word for word ordered and commanded us to find and to elect here a worthy and competent person from our eparchy to take up the patriarchal protection of the Throne of Antioch, truly supporting the ancient and ancestral doctrines of the Eastern Church, but not involved at all in the Latin erroneous opinion, and strictly forbidding to promote anyone from that eparchy of Antioch, even if it was put forward, asked for, and desired by the Christians of that Throne, because everyone put forward and asked for from there is suspect and lacks the guarantee and the assurance of the righteousness of his doctrines, because of the now wide-spread Latin erroneous opinion that corrupted almost the majority of the nobles there.

The information provided by this document offers a new basis for understanding the involvement of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the election of the patriarchs of Antioch. The Ottoman imperial order, even if solicited by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, provided the official endorsement of the election by the central authority. As had often been the case, the Ottoman administration's decision to issue this order was motivated by the intention to avoid any disturbance of the established order. As we mentioned above, if part of the *Rûm* or Greek Orthodox population became "Latins" (Catholics), the traditional order would have been disrupted, and the status of these converts would have been unclear, because they would have been neither technically nor administratively "Franks" (Western Europeans) but remained Ottoman subjects.

Once established, the election of the patriarchs of Antioch in Constantinople became a rule. This had already happened in the case of other patriarchal elections. The patriarch of Alexandria had also been elected in the imperial city on certain occasions. For example, on September 14, 1723, Kosmas II was elected patriarch of Alexandria in Constantinople. The document is also signed by the grand dragoman Gregory Ghikas (Fig. 8).⁶ In 1746, Matthaïos, the metropolitan of Libya, was elected patriarch of Alexandria in Constantinople while he was travelling in Wallachia.

Although the Patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch were autocephalous (i.e., independent), they became over time more and more dependent on the Ecumenical See. The "Ecumenical" ("universal") dimension was even more strongly asserted

⁵ Delikanēs, *Τὰ ἐν τοῖς κώδιξι τοῦ Πατριαρχικοῦ Ἀρχιεπισκοπικοῦ σωζόμενα ἐπίσημα ἐκκλησιαστικὰ ἐγγράφα*, p. 187–188.

⁶ A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, "Σημειώσεις περὶ τοῦ πατριάρχου Ἀλεξανδρείας Σαμουὴλ Καπασούλη", *Δελτίον τῆς Ἱστορικῆς καὶ Ἐθνολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας τῆς Ἑλλάδος*, 3, 1889, p. 512–517; Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, vol. 37, col. 245–246.

with the annexation of the former autocephalous Patriarchates of Ohrid and Peć (functioning since the time of the Bulgarian and the Serbian medieval states) in the second half of the 18th century.⁷

Sylvester's election becomes clearer considering the information provided by this document. In fact, Sylvester did not exactly match the profile of the person requested by the Ottomans. He was not from the circle of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, he was suggested by and was the *protosynkellos* of Athanasios III, and, according to some sources, he was his nephew (or a more distant relative). Moreover, at the time he belonged to the Patriarchate of Antioch (even if he was born in Cyprus). However, the Ottoman authorities were apparently convinced that he will observe the Orthodox path. Sylvester's subsequent actions should be understood in this light. If upon his election in 1724 he was reminded that as patriarch he would have to strictly observe Orthodox faith, he certainly did so during the four decades of his patriarchate.

The document of 1724, published in 1904 but neglected by historians, provides a new basis for understanding Sylvester's election and the attitude of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Ottoman central authorities in matters related to the Church of Antioch. Far from being uninterested in the situation in the field, in the eparchy of Antioch, the Ottoman authorities were actively involved in these issues. This concern is in line with their general anti-Latin attitude at the time, also noticeable in other imperial decrees. The extent to which the Ottoman authorities' decisions were influenced by the Patriarchate of Constantinople is a topic that needs further research, particularly in the Ottoman archives.

The information of the Greek document of 1724 is confirmed by an Ottoman source, the *berat* issued the same year for Sylvester of Antioch. After a petition made by the Patriarch Jeremias III of Constantinople about the "Frankish" influence in Antioch, Damascus, and Aleppo, the sultan issued an order about the election of a new patriarch of Antioch. The *berat* states:

My order was that, if the aforementioned ones who follow the Frankish rite demand the Patriarchate by sending petitions with a plan to make someone from those places a patriarch, their rite shall never be allowed, their petitions shall be presented to my Gate of Felicity, and you shall give the Patriarchate to an imperially-trusted person who follows the ancient rite.⁸

7 P. M. Kitromilides, "Orthodox Culture and Collective Identity in the Ottoman Balkans during the Eighteenth Century", *Oriente Moderno*, 79, 1999, 1, p. 129–145; Kitromilides, "An Orthodox Commonwealth", Study II, p. 131–145.

8 H. Çolak, E. Bayraktar-Tellan, *The Orthodox Church as an Ottoman Institution. A Study of Early Modern Patriarchal Berats*, Istanbul, 2019, p. 92 (transcribed Ottoman text), 218 (English translation).

4.2 Sylvester in Constantinople, Aleppo, Tripoli, and the Balkans, 1724–1730

After a brief period of confusion concerning the election, or only the projected election of Joachim, the former metropolitan of Drama, as patriarch of the Church of Antioch, the Ecumenical Patriarchate decided to act according to the wishes of the late patriarch Athanasios III Dabbās. In December 1724, a patriarchal and synodal letter was issued by Patriarch Jeremias III mentioning the election of Sylvester as patriarch of Antioch. It also reported in detail on the way Seraphim/Kyrillos Ṭanās had been ordained and appointed to the same position by the Latin party.⁹ This detailed report included references to the *kathēresis* (defrocking) of the clerics responsible for Ṭanās's ordination, as well as to the excommunication of some of the laymen that played a part in it. Among them was 'Abdallāh Zākhir, one of the scholars of the Greek Catholic community, a former collaborator of Athanasios III and, later, his adversary.¹⁰

On an ideological level, Zākhir provided an input to the pro-Latin faction, unexpectedly substantial, since it was the work of a single individual. This individual was, however, particularly active. Apart from his polemical writings, such as the one against the decision of the 1722 synod of Constantinople, 'Abdallāh Zākhir introduced a new and “revolutionary” way to promote aspects of the Latin beliefs to the Arabic-speaking population: the printing press.¹¹ From the late 1720s, he was engaged in establishing a private press, eventually located in the Saint John the Baptist Monastery in Ḍūr al-Shuwayr, village of Khinshāra (Mount Lebanon). The origin of the type and the initial funding of the new printing press were subject to much debate between Zākhir and his contemporaries, and in later scholarship.¹²

⁹ MS 124 Jerusalem, f. 1r–2r. See Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς Σταχυολογίας*, 2, p. 385–389.

¹⁰ Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς Σταχυολογίας*, 2, p. 388. For the biography of 'Abdallāh Zākhir, see P. Bacer, “Abdallah Zakher. Ses premiers travaux (1680–1722)”, *Échos d'Orient*, 11, 1908, 71, p. 218–226; P. Bacer, “Abdallah Zakher et son imprimerie arabe”, *Échos d'Orient*, 11, 1908, 72, p. 281–287; P. Bacer, “Dernières années d'Abdallah Zakher”, *Échos d'Orient*, 11, 1908, 73, p. 363–372; J. Nasrallah, “Les imprimeries melchites au XVIII^e siècle”, *Proche-Orient Chrétien*, XXXVI, 1986, fasc. III–IV, p. 231–241; Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 111–137.

¹¹ For 'Abdallāh Zākhir's epistle against the document of the synod of 1722, see Haddad, “Sources hellènes de la controverse dans l'Église melkite”, p. 505.

¹² Bacer, “Abdallah Zakher et son imprimerie arabe”, p. 281–287. For Abdallāh Zākhir's press, see E. Conidi, *Arabic Type in Europe and the Middle East, 1514–1924: Challenges in the Adaptation of the Arabic Script from Written to Printed Form*, unpublished PhD thesis, Reading, 2018, p. 489–499; E. Conidi, “An approach to the study of Arabic foundry type”, in T. Nemeth (ed.), *Arabic Typography. History and Practice*, Sallenstein, 2023, p. 42–43; Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians*,

He printed the first book there in 1734, and the press remained active for more than a century, publishing a great number of books, some in several editions.¹³

The news of Sylvester's election as patriarch of Antioch was conveyed by the Viscount d'Andrezel, the French ambassador in Constantinople, to Jean Frédéric Phélypeaux, Count de Maurepas,¹⁴ on October 22, 1724. The letter contained interesting information about Sylvester, who had seemingly contacted the ambassador to announce his election:

As the former patriarch of Antioch had died, the Great Lord appointed in his place Sylvester, whom the departed had designated as his successor. The latter announced me of his nomination and assured me that he was inclined to ensure the peace with the Catholics, to follow the example left to him by the late patriarch, his relative, close to whom he had been raised.¹⁵

This excerpt of d'Andrezel's letter refers to Sylvester's nomination as patriarch and his appointment by the sultan. This seems to indicate that he wrote it after Sylvester's *berat* had been issued. D'Andrezel's letter contains several interesting details, not found in other sources, on the new patriarch, whom he calls "Silvestrio". He describes his intention to follow the conciliatory policy of his predecessor and to maintain a relationship with the ambassador. The fact that the appointment was recommended by Athanasios also featured in the patriarchal letter mentioned above. Interesting enough, the French ambassador does not refer to the election of Seraphim/Kyrillos in Damascus. For him, the situation was clear: the rightful patriarch was the one recommended by Athanasios III Dabbās and later confirmed by the Ottomans.

p. 209–226; Heyberger, "Réseaux de collaboration et enjeux de pouvoir", in Girard, Heyberger, Kontouma (eds.), *Livres et confessions chrétiennes orientales*, p. 408–409.

13 For the books published in al-Shuwayr in the 18th and early 19th century, see *Bibliothèque de M. le Baron Silvestre de Sacy*, vol. I, *Imprimés. Philosophie, Théologie, Sciences Naturelles*, Paris, 1842, p. 412–414. The press started its activity in 1733 and the printing of the first book was finished on February 26, 1734. See C. Walbinder, "The appearance of Nieremberg's *De la diferencia entre lo temporal y eterno* in Arabic (1734): A turning point in the history of printing and publication in the Arab world?", in Girard, Heyberger, Kontouma (eds.), *Livres et confessions chrétiennes orientales*, p. 427–440.

14 Count de Maurepas was minister of the royal household ("ministre de la maison du roi").

15 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 566: "L'ancien patriarche d'Antioche, Athanase, étant mort, le Grand Seigneur a nommé à sa place Silvestrio, que le défunt avait désigné pour son successeur. Ce dernier m'a fait donner part de sa nomination et assurer qu'il était porté à assurer la paix avec les catholiques, pour suivre l'exemple que lui avait laissé le feu patriarche, son parent, auprès duquel il avait été élevé".

According to Ottoman archival sources, Sylvester's *berat* was issued on August 18/29, 1724,¹⁶ a little over a month after Athanasios Dabbās had died. The discovery of a copy of this document shows clearly that the moves, by Sylvester and his supporters, to secure his official appointment by the sultan preceded any action taken by Seraphim Ṭanās. Also, the *berat* was obtained nearly a month before Sylvester's ecclesiastical ordination on September 24, 1724. According to its text, Sylvester of Antioch's *berat* was requested by Patriarch Jeremias III of Constantinople, who mentioned the danger that the Latin clergymen in the Patriarchate of Antioch will attract the sultan's subjects into the "Frankish" rite (*Efrenc*, in the Ottoman text).

Sylvester's *berat* of 1724 provides a highly interesting detail, as it reveals that the recipient was the "chief warden" of Athanasios, and that he resided at the time on Mount Athos, confirming thus the information available from other sources. The cities under Sylvester's authority mentioned in the *berat* were "Antioch, Damascus, Aleppo, Adana,¹⁷ Çıldır,¹⁸ Ahiska,¹⁹ Erzurum and their dependencies."²⁰ Compared with the *berat* granted to Athanasios Dabbās on February 17, 1720, Sylvester's *berat* is more detailed. Athanasios's *berat* does not mention the patriarch of Constantinople. Instead, it explains that the patriarch of Antioch was appointed at the request of the inhabitants of Damascus. It does not mention the Latin influence either.²¹

French officials were informed of the events in Damascus by letters and reports sent by missionaries. One of these letters, written in Latin by a Capuchin of Damascus on October 30, 1724, was sent to France five months later, attached to a letter of the consul in Aleppo dated April 5, 1725.²² Among other topics, it describes the patriarchal election of Seraphim Ṭanās, who had recently arrived in Damascus. The pasha of Damascus, who intended to obtain financial gains from the situation, was eventually appeased. A letter signed by more than 400 persons was presented to him in support of Seraphim. As most of the bishops had been summoned to a synod in Aleppo by the late patriarch, Ṭanās's ordination posed a new challenge for his supporters. The only bishop who was not in Aleppo at the time was "in the mountains" and reluctant to come. As known from other sources, this was Basilios (Vasileios) Fynān, metropolitan of Caesarea Philippi (Banyas). Any delay could

16 Sylvester's *berat* of 1724 was published in Çolak, Bayraktar-Tellan, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 92–93 (transcribed Ottoman text), 218–220 (English translation).

17 Adana (in Greek, Ἀδανα) is a city in Southern Turkey, in the historical province of Cilicia.

18 Çıldır is a town in the Ardahan Province of north-eastern Turkey.

19 Spelled Ahisha in the *berat*, this is Akhaltsikhe, a city in south-west Georgia.

20 Çolak, Bayraktar-Tellan, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 92, 218.

21 See Athanasios's *berat* of 1720 in Çolak, Bayraktar-Tellan, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 91 (transcribed Ottoman text), 217 (English translation).

22 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 566–569.

undermine the objective of the pro-Latin faction. Finally, the letter of the Capuchin reveals, the bishop (metropolitan) of Şaydnāyā²³ returned from Aleppo to his See. Together, the two bishops ordained a third one and the three of them ordained Seraphim as patriarch and named him Kyrillos, on October 1, 1724.²⁴ Then, continued the Capuchin's letter, the new patriarch pronounced a profession of faith mentioning the pope as the head of all the Church.²⁵ The account of these events is broadly the same in the Greek letter of the patriarch and the synod.²⁶

The events and the election of Seraphim/Kyrillos and Sylvester are presented in a memorandum written in 1731 by a French diplomat in Sidon, Jean-André du Bellis. He remarks that Sylvester was appointed in Constantinople only eleven days after Cyril's election in Damascus.²⁷

Another letter, written in December 1724 by Ambroise de Rennes, *supérieur* (superior) of the Capuchins in Damascus, presents the situation after Sylvester's election.²⁸ Assemblies were held in Aleppo in favor of Sylvester, while the validity of Kyrillos's ordination was contested. Kyrillos was also accused of changing the rite (i.e., from the Greek to the Latin one). According to Ambroise de Rennes, the residents of Aleppo (and presumably some of the missionaries) were in favor of Sylvester. He wonders how this could be possible, as he was a known "heretic", although he assured the "ambassadors" of the opposite, while Kyrillos was a "good Catholic". The idea that Osman, the pasha of Damascus, will soon depart the city, leaving Kyrillos without support, was also wrong, according to the superior of the Capuchins. This letter also offers some insight into a lesser-known aspect of Kyrillos's attempt to obtain the Ottoman endorsement of his election, namely his *defter*, or record of the money spent to attain his goal. Up to that date, Kyrillos had already spent 43 "purses". Twenty of them had been presented by a French merchant, who had also offered to give the remaining sum required for Kyrillos's confirmation.²⁹ As the value of a "purse" was 500 *piasters* (a large silver coin like the

23 His name, not mentioned in the Capuchin's letter, was Neophytos.

24 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 566. The date is rendered in the Latin text "kal. Octobris", corresponding to October 1, according to the Gregorian calendar.

25 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 566. The letter adds that Seraphim/Kyrillos was "a disciple of Rome, a student of the Holy Congregation" (*discipulum Romae, Sanctae Congregationis alumnum*).

26 Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς Σταχυολογίας*, 2, p. 385–389.

27 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 592.

28 Letter of Ambroise de Rennes to a Capuchin priest of Aleppo, December 1724, Damascus, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 569–571.

29 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 571.

European *thaler*), the amount was around 21,500 *piasters*.³⁰ Du Bellis mentions this merchant's name: François Porry from Sidon, who was at the time in Damascus. The account refers to only ten "purses", provided as a loan to Seraphim by Porry and paid in nature (fabrics and other goods).³¹

Sylvester's letters often mention the large sums of money needed for obtaining or renewing *berats*. Most of them were directed towards unofficial payments to the Ottoman dignitaries. The additional information about Kyrillos's spending confirms this practice.

The situation of the two factions (Sylvester's and Kyrillos's) was objectively evaluated by the French consul in Aleppo in a letter of April 5, 1725, addressed to the king's minister.³² According to the consul, the "Greeks" of "Syria" were divided, some of them supporting Sylvester, while others, Seraphim. Sylvester had the patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem, the grand dragoman and "almost all" the "Greeks" of Aleppo on his side. In turn, Seraphim was only supported by the "Greeks" of Damascus and the Catholic missionaries. The pasha of Damascus took 5,000 *piasters* from Seraphim's supporters and promised to obtain the *berat* that confirmed him as patriarch of Antioch. Sylvester, with the help of the ecumenical patriarch and of the grand dragoman, was in a better position in Constantinople to secure his position. A *kapıcıbaşı*³³ was sent to find Seraphim and escort him to the capital. The latter left Damascus and found refuge in Kesruwān. According to the French consul's letter, Seraphim/Kyrillos was extremely critical towards the missionaries. He blamed them for placing him in a difficult position, as in his view, they exhorted him to borrow and spend large sums. The letter confirms the information from other sources that Ṭanās borrowed 10,000 *écus*³⁴ from a French merchant in Sidon.

The consul's report also blamed the missionaries for taking Seraphim's side too actively and inconsiderately, which led to a hostile attitude towards Sylvester. Certain missionaries had even wanted to declare Sylvester and all who acknowledged him as patriarch as heretics.³⁵

Even without considering the Latin missionaries' zeal, Seraphim Ṭanās's position was delicate. Elected and ordained patriarch in a questionable manner, he and

30 For the value of a "purse", see Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 571, n. 2.

31 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 593.

32 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 573–574.

33 In the 18th century, a *kapıcıbaşı* ("chief of the gatekeepers") was a court official whose mission was to convey messages and orders, and execute orders issued by the sultan or the Divan.

34 At the time, the *écu* was a large French silver coin equivalent to a *thaler* or an Ottoman *piaster*. The 10,000 *écus* correspond to the 20 "purses" mentioned by Ambroise de Rennes.

35 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 574.

the bishops who ordained him, and some of their followers, were condemned by the ecumenical patriarch and the Synod in Constantinople, the highest authority in the Orthodox Church. Also, for the Ottoman central authorities, the legitimate patriarch of Antioch, holder of an imperial *berat*, was Sylvester. Thus, the sultan declared the election in Constantinople valid and the one in Damascus null and void.

In the following years, Kyrillos/Seraphim was compelled to find refuge in remote areas, difficult to reach by Ottoman officials. Nevertheless, his faction succeeded in maintaining an important voice and surprisingly became stronger in Aleppo, formerly the stronghold of Athanasios and Sylvester, than in Damascus. This was due to events in Aleppo after Sylvester's arrival.

In 1726, a certain “Jean Abdalia, député des Grecs de Syrie”, named in another document “Jean Abdoulla Faad, natif de Seyde, depute du patriarche et de la nation Melchite”, was sent by the pro-Latin party to Rome, and from there to France, to ask for the reinstatement of Kyrillos as patriarch instead of Sylvester.

Well informed by his diplomats about the situation in the field, Louis XV could not promise to the envoy anything except that he would write to his ambassador to do his best and try to reinstate Kyrillos, or at least to stop the persecutions against the pro-Catholic party. The French, however, put no pressure on their ambassador to achieve the first goal, and asked for prudence and non-interference in the measures he took for reconciliation. The king was unwilling to grant the financial assistance to Kyrillos that the envoy asked for. Jean Abdalla received only a small sum from the French king, as “gratification”, because there were doubts about his mission, which had not been announced by any of the French consuls.³⁶ Later, Abdalla asked to go to Constantinople instead of Syria and requested the French ambassador's protection.³⁷ The reply of the French consul in Aleppo proved that he had not been informed of Abdalla's mission.³⁸

The missionaries continued to support Kyrillos Ṭanās despite the hesitations of the French diplomatic representatives and even those of the pope, who delayed Kyrillos's recognition for years. Despite this delay, the Greek Catholic faction became a new Church, with its own hierarchy. However, the history of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church of Antioch, as it was later called, exceeds the scope of this book.

³⁶ Letter of Count de Maurepas to the French ambassador in Constantinople, May 27, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 353–354.

³⁷ Letter of Count de Maurepas to the French ambassador in Constantinople, July 31, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 364–365.

³⁸ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 375.

In 1745, Kyrillos, who had received the *pallium* a year before with his supporters' financial help, succeeded in obtaining a *berat* that appointed him patriarch of Antioch. Yet, he never tried to go to Constantinople, where he could potentially face arrest, based on previously issued official orders. He remained on Mount Lebanon, in the Saint Saviour Monastery (Dayr al-Mukhalliṣ) near Jūn (Joun).

Some historians accused Sylvester of mishandling the situation in Aleppo, where many of the "Greeks", although initially his supporters, were strongly influenced by the Latin propaganda. The new patriarch had no other choice but to continue following the Orthodox path, aligned with his allies, the patriarchs Paisios II of Constantinople and Chrysanthos of Jerusalem. Sylvester could not afford to lose their support on suspicion that he was leaning towards Catholicism. Since the contradictions between the two parties had deepened, Sylvester was not in a position to continue the strategy of moderation of his predecessor Athanasios III Dabbās. He had to choose sides and demanded his followers to do the same. Claiming, or pretending to be a Catholic would have served nothing. As far as the missionaries were concerned, in this respect, Kyrillos was a far better candidate than Sylvester.

In the meantime, the Viscount d'Andrezel, the French ambassador, had to face a new issue. The missionaries, already threatened by the imperial decree of 1722 that prohibited them from making proselytes among the sultan's subjects, openly supported Ṭanās's election. "By the power of money", they had obtained his confirmation from Osman, the pasha of Damascus.

The ambassador presented again the circumstances of Seraphim's patriarchal election in a letter to the king's minister on May 6, 1725.³⁹ D'Andrezel wrote that he did not play any part in Seraphim's election and that the recent events disturbed the agreements he had made with the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Antioch. He added that he had only learned about the Damascus election after the Porte had appointed Sylvester as patriarch of Antioch. As for the decree of 1722, the French ambassador thought that it was not opposed to the capitulations, which gave the right to Catholic priests to officiate in their ancient places of worship but not to visit the houses of the sultan's subjects, to convince them to change their religion. However, d'Andrezel appealed the order concerning Seraphim's arrest and that of his followers because it specified that the persons named should be surveyed until "the destruction of the Frankish religion" ("jusqu'à la destruction de la religion franque"). This provision could have been interpreted as contravening to the capitulations. He added that he would try to obtain a meeting with Sylvester, the new patriarch, via the dragoman of the Porte. Also, the French ambassador was

³⁹ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 574–577. The following comments are all based on this part of the report.

informed that Osman pasha of Damascus had been deposed because he had supported the election of Seraphim without the Ottoman court's approval.

While in Constantinople, Sylvester of Antioch took part in the decisions of the local synod. In 1725, there were two important decisions taken by the Patriarch Jeremias III. The documents in which these decisions were expressed were also signed by Sylvester. One of these, in June 1725, is a document restoring Methodios Anthrakitēs as a member of the clergy. In 1723, he had been judged by the synod for ideas deviating from the Orthodox faith, which he had formulated in some of his philosophical writings. With this document, the patriarch of Constantinople and the synod notified the patriarch of Nea Justiniana Ohrid and the *proedros* of Sisanion (former patriarch of Ohrid), as well as other metropolitans in the region, that Methodios Anthrakitēs was restored in his previous position after admitting his errors. The document also contained the signatures of both the current and the former patriarch of Ohrid.⁴⁰

The events that followed in Aleppo and Damascus, but also in Constantinople, can be traced with a fair amount of accuracy in the French diplomatic correspondence.

The *kapıcıbaşı* sent to seize Seraphim and his supporters returned to the capital only with the metropolitan of Aleppo Gerasimos, whom the envoy had taken by surprise. Gerasimos was subsequently exiled on the island of Lemnos. Viscount d'Andrezel mentions that the "bishop of Aleppo" was "a Greek of Latin rite" ("Grec du rite Latin"), meaning perhaps that he had Catholic tendencies, even if he did not take part in the ordination of Seraphim.

The ambassador had the intention to visit Sylvester, the Orthodox patriarch of Antioch. He had learned from the grand dragoman that for such a meeting to take place, Sylvester had to ask for the permission of the grand vizier.⁴¹ The grand dragoman of the Porte was Gregory Ghikas, who held this office between 1717 and 1726.⁴²

⁴⁰ The text is preserved in the MS no. 2753 of the National Library of Greece, the Codex of the Metropolis of Kastoria. See E. Pelagidēs, "Η συνοδική απόφαση για την όριστική «ἀποκατάσταση» του Μεθοδίου Ἀνθρακίτη", *Μακεδονικά*, 23, 1983, p. 134–147; E. Pelagidēs, *Ὁ κώδικας τῆς Μητροπόλεως Καστοριάς, 1665–1769 Ἐθνικῆς Βιβλιοθήκης Ἑλλάδος* 2753, Thessaloniki, 1990, p. 43, 71–73. See also the mentions in Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, vol. 37, col. 1021–1022; A. P. Péchayre, "Zosime d'Ochrida et de Sisanion. Ses relations avec l'Autriche et ses différents séjours à Ochrida", *Échos d'Orient*, 37, 1938, 189–190, p. 152.

⁴¹ Letter of d'Andrezel to the king's minister, June 26, 1725, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 578.

⁴² E. I. Stamatiadēs, *Βιογραφίαι τῶν Ἑλλήνων μεγάλων διερμηνέων τοῦ Ὀθωμανικοῦ Κράτους*, Athens, 1865, p. 117–121, 191 (see also the Romanian translation: E. I. Stamatiade, *Biografiile marilor dragomani (interpreți) greci din Imperiul Otoman*, trans. C. Erbiceanu, Bucharest, 1897, p. 67–70, 109); C. M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire. Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution*, Berkley/Los Angeles/London, 2011, p. 183. The two books give the period in office as 1717–1727, but as Gregory

The meeting between Viscount d'Andrezel and Sylvester of Antioch finally took place on July 23, 1725. The account of the meeting conveyed by d'Andrezel to the French king's minister, Count de Maurepas, is a very important source for the beginning of Sylvester's patriarchate and his ideas at the time. The ambassador also added a memorandum to the letter, presenting the main points of the conversation and the topics the two agreed on.⁴³ The value of this source, dating from the day on which the meeting took place, is given by the fact that it is written by one of the participants and it is contemporary with the events.⁴⁴ We have commented on the relevance of this information in the previous chapter dealing with Sylvester's origin and family. Other insights provided in the ambassador's letter and memorandum are no less significant. It reveals that the two men were aware of the situation on the ground, in Aleppo and Damascus, and although they were compelled by their position to defend their ideas, they were willing to reach an agreement favorable to both parties.

Sylvester came to the meeting accompanied by a metropolitan and eight to ten priests. This is an indication that he was already surrounded by some of the clergy of the Church of Antioch while he was still in Constantinople. For the ambassador, an agreement of some sort needed to be made with Sylvester to enable him to continue his interventions to the Ottoman officials on behalf of the missionaries, who were threatened by the previous anti-Latin decrees and the recent troubles surrounding Kyrillos's election. D'Andrezel asserted in the letter that he had asked the grand dragoman in the meantime not to tell Sylvester that the missionaries of Damascus, after two days of imprisonment by the pasha of the city, had succeeded in reversing the order that prohibited them from visiting the Christians' houses. They had even publicized the new order, favorable to them, by means of a herald. The news had reached the metropolitan Leontios ("l'évêque Léondios" in the letter), who had requested a copy of the 1722 decree of the sultan. Leontios, metropolitan of Hama, was Sylvester's representative in Damascus, defined in the text as "grand vicaire".⁴⁵

Ghikas was appointed prince of Moldavia on September 26/October 7, 1726 and entered Iași on December 18/29, 1726, the position of great dragoman, requiring his presence in Constantinople, was probably occupied by someone else. For Gregory Ghikas, see also M. Țipău, *Domnii fanarioți în Țările Române. Mică enciclopedie*, Bucharest, 2008, p. 70–74.

⁴³ For the letter, or the memorandum ("mémoire"), see Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 579–581, p. 581–586.

⁴⁴ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 584. In previous letters, written before the meeting, Sylvester is defined as Athanasios's "relative".

⁴⁵ For Leontios (Ar. Lāwundiyyūs), see Walbiner, "Die Bischofs- und Metropolitensitze", p. 64.

The memorandum of the meeting between the French ambassador and Sylvester presents the main points of their discussion, giving the utmost attention to the topic of the Latin missionaries and their activities. The ambassador presented the privileges the missionaries in Syria and Palestine had been granted by the sultans, mentioning that the French missionaries were under the protection of the king of France. An intense persecution of the missionaries had started after Sylvester's election, when the "Greek" bishops and priests used the 1722 Ottoman decree to irritate the French missionaries in Damascus. Metropolitan Leontios had called a *kapıcı*⁴⁶ in Damascus who, persuaded by the metropolitan, applied harsh treatments to the French monks. The ambassador knew at that point that the monks' imprisonment had only lasted for two days and that the measures against them had already been reversed. He added that the *rayas* embracing the Latin rite do not become subjects of the pope, but remain subjects of the Grand Lord, continuing to dully pay the *haraç*. D'Andrezel also mentioned that among the Christians, excommunication and public criticism had to be avoided, in order not to give unbelievers the opportunity to destroy one community by means of the other. He added that it was not fair to prohibit the French missionaries from visiting local Christians and from having schools where they teach children for free. He recognized that the Greek patriarchs had the right to forbid their own nationals to go to Latin chapels, but it would be unjust to place the responsibility for this on the Latin clergy. He also stated that he had written and asked the Roman Catholic superiors in Pera to write to the monks in Syria and Palestine to abstain from acid speeches against the Greek religion or the Greek Orthodox patriarchs, bishops, and priests.

D'Andrezel asked Sylvester to present his objections in a memorandum, for them to be solved. He also demanded the patriarch to take measures against those who created enmity by calling the pope an idolater, as in the "libel of 1723" (most likely, the letter of the Synod of Constantinople) and in daily sermons.

The ambassador let Sylvester know that he did not support Seraphim in any way and reminded him that he had been the first to congratulate him after his appointment as patriarch of Antioch by the Porte. He added that if Sylvester had refused the meeting, he would have appealed to the sultan, in the name of the king, to send another *kapıcı* in the field, to investigate the facts. The patriarchs of Antioch, Constantinople, and Jerusalem needed to work together with the ambassador to reestablish peace and punish the troublemakers.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ For the term *kapıcı*, see E. V. Gatenby, "Material for a Study of Turkish Words in English", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi*, XII, 1954, 3–4, p. 91.

⁴⁷ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 581–584.

The Sylvester's key ideas were recorded in the memorandum in a concise manner. He asserted that the troubles in Damascus were caused by the Latin monks who supported Seraphim when they realized that Sylvester was appointed to succeed his uncle Athanasios. According to the patriarch, the Latin missionaries were spreading their beliefs through their schools and by visiting Christians' homes.

In the order received by the *kapıcıbaşı* sent to Damascus there was no mention of the "destruction of the religion of Franks". Likewise, the Ottoman decree of 1723 was issued to prevent the French monks from visiting the houses of the sultan's subjects (*rayas*), not to expel or dismiss them.⁴⁸

Sylvester also assured that he wanted to be on good terms with the ambassador, as his predecessor had been with de Bonnac. This was his primary motivation for attending this meeting, overcoming all obstacles in his way.

The patriarch of Antioch stressed that the Greeks uphold the conviction that they are as Orthodox as the Latins, following the primary Church and its dogmas, and that no council had condemned or disapproved of their rite. The missionaries could exercise their zeal on the Armenians, Nestorians, Copts, Maronites, and others who were on a wrong path. As for the education the missionaries provided, he mentioned that there were Greek priests in Palestine equally skilled and enlightened who could teach Greek children, so that they did not have to attend the schools of the Catholic missionaries.

The patriarch added that he was compelled to defend his people, and if a conflict burst out, the Latin monks would be responsible. Sylvester mentioned that he had the authority to forbid the Greeks to go to the missionary schools. In case of disobedience, extreme punishments could be ordered, but he preferred to avoid them. He asked the ambassador to prohibit the missionaries from receiving Greeks in their schools as the simplest way for securing the Christians' tranquility.⁴⁹

As a result of the meeting, promises were made by both parts. The ambassador promised to write to the monks not to visit the Greeks' houses anymore and to make clear to them not to receive Greeks in their schools until they had met with Patriarch Sylvester himself, when he arrived in Damascus. On his side, Sylvester promised to prohibit Metropolitan Leontios and others from bothering the missionaries, provided they did not visit the Greeks' houses and did not admit Greek children in their schools. The ambassador's meeting with Sylvester ended "after the

⁴⁸ The decree is most likely the same as the one issued in 1722, which appears in some sources as issued in 1723.

⁴⁹ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 584–586.

sorbet and perfume, with a lot of demonstrations of mutual esteem and the wish to live together well”.⁵⁰

As presented in this source, Sylvester’s attitude in the conversation with Viscount d’Andrezel reflects a person well prepared for his position, ready to defend his ideas but willing to maintain good relations with the opposite side, on condition that they would also make steps in this direction.

The king’s minister, Count de Maurepas, approved d’Andrezel’s initiative to meet the patriarch and commented that the ambassador will see in future if Sylvester acts in good faith.⁵¹ At the same time, he recommended the French consul in Aleppo to act according to the lines agreed upon in the patriarch’s meeting with the ambassador, to secure tranquility.⁵²

Patriarch Sylvester arrived in Aleppo from Constantinople on November 9, 1725.⁵³ Thus, after leaving Constantinople, he first went to the city that Athanasios had chosen as his preferred residence, a city he was also familiar with. Details of the events which followed his arrival are provided in a primary source, a letter of the French consul of Aleppo to the king’s minister, de Maurepas, dated December 20, 1725.⁵⁴

There is also an Arabic source which sheds light on this early stage of his patriarchal office. It is preserved in two manuscripts of the 20th century, recorded with the shelfmarks MS 1133 and MS 1175 in the library of the Basilian Order of Aleppo (Ordre Basilien Alepin) in Şarbā (Jūniya).⁵⁵ They contain “A statement of the conditions and persecutions that the Catholic Rūm community in Aleppo was faced with, and the crimes they suffered only to protect the sacred Catholic faith”. The Arabic title of this text is:

بيان المواقع والاضطهادات التي جرت على طائفة الروم الكاثوليكين بحلب والجرايم التي وزنها
لأجل حماية الايمان الكاثوليكي المقدس فقط

50 “La visite a fini, après le sorbet et le parfum, par beaucoup de démonstrations d’estime réciproque et d’envie de bien vivre ensemble de part et d’autre”; cf. Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 586.

51 Letter of Maurepas to d’Andrezel, November 17, 1725, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 335. On April 10, 1726, Maurepas wrote to the ambassador that his meeting with Sylvester was also approved by the king. See Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 333–334.

52 Letter of Maurepas to Péleran, consul in Aleppo, November 14, 1725, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 336.

53 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 586.

54 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 587–589.

55 The manuscripts are accessible in digital format on the vHMLL: MS 1133, HMLL Project Number OBA 01152 (<https://w3id.org/vhml/readingRoom/view/506167>), and MS 1175, HMLL Project Number OBA 01170 (<https://w3id.org/vhml/readingRoom/view/506186>).

There are also later Greek accounts, such as that of Athanasios Komnēnos Hypsēlantēs in his *Political and Ecclesiastical Events in Twelve Books*.⁵⁶ Another source is a 19th-century text of Neophytos of Cyprus (Νεόφυτος Κύπριος), *Περὶ Αραβοκατολίκων ἢ Οὐνίτων* (*About the Catholic Arabs or Uniates*). Neophytos's text is preserved in MS 297 of the Library of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem (on f. 253–287). The text was written in 1844, more than a century after the 1725 events involving Sylvester of Antioch. Although it is presumably based on earlier sources and it was used by later researchers such as Klēmēs Karnapas, its information should be considered with caution. The chronology of the events in this account, especially, is predominantly inaccurate.⁵⁷

The consul's letter has the advantage of being a contemporary source, based on accounts from the same city and, although not entirely objective, composed, at least, by someone not directly involved in the events.

Consul Péleran reports from hearsay that on Sunday, the day after his arrival in Aleppo,⁵⁸ Sylvester pronounced forty or fifty excommunications against “four Catholic priests of his nation from Aleppo, against an entire monastery of Greek monks called Belmend,⁵⁹ near Tripoli of Syria, against all those who wear the scapular or the cord of Saint Francis, or who are from the brotherhood of the Rosary among the Maronites, against his entire diocese of Damascus and all those of his nation who, everywhere else, would recognize as patriarch Seraphim, whom he himself excommunicated, etc.”⁶⁰

The consul's information seems to come from a source in conflict with the Orthodox patriarch, such as a Latin convert or a missionary. In this text, as elsewhere in the sources, “Greek” should be read “Orthodox”, in a confessional, not an ethnic meaning.

Also, the new patriarch asked every priest to sign a *statikon* containing the profession of faith composed by the Synod of Constantinople (presumably, the text

56 Komnēnos Hypsēlantēs, *Εκκλησιαστικῶν καὶ Πολιτικῶν*, p. 326.

57 N. Kyprios, “Περὶ Αραβοκατολίκων ἢ Οὐνίτων”, in Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Ανάλεκτα Ἱεροσολυμιτικῆς Σταχυολογίας*, 2, p. 464–478.

58 November 10, 1725, however, was a Saturday, according to the Gregorian calendar.

59 The Monastery of Balamand.

60 “[...] quatre prêtres catholiques de sa nation à Alep, contre tout un couvent de Religieux Grecs, appelé Belmend, près de Tripoli de Syrie, contre tous ceux qui porteraient le scapulaire, le cordon de St. François, ou qui seraient de la confrérie du Rosaire chez les Maronites, contre tout son diocèse de Damas et tous ceux de sa nation qui, partout ailleurs, reconnaîtraient pour patriarche Séraphim, qu’il a excommunié lui-même, etc.”; cf. Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 586–587.

issued in 1723). This profession of faith is also mentioned by the French consul in Aleppo in a letter to Count de Maurepas.⁶¹

The so-called “Besserné”, a community of “fierce villagers” who had allegedly embraced Catholicism, strongly reacted against the patriarch. One of their priests was imprisoned by the *mutasalle*m⁶² who governed Aleppo in the absence of the pasha, because he refused to sign the above-mentioned document. As a result, Sylvester was compelled to take measures for his personal security, and he was always accompanied on his way to church by eight to ten janissaries.

Péleran writes that he assembled the missionaries and recommended them to keep a low profile. While promising to maintain a neutral stance in the conflict within the “Greek” community, the missionaries did not hide their opposition to the patriarch.

The French consul also tried to meet Sylvester, and so did one of the missionaries, the superior of the Franciscan Fathers of the Holy Land (*Custodia Terrae Sanctae*). The patriarch answered that he considered all the missionaries his brothers but requested that they come not all together to see him. As a result, none of the missionaries went to visit the patriarch.

Sylvester sent the metropolitan of Hama, his patriarchal vicar, the metropolitan of Laodicea (Latakia) and three priests to the consul, assuring him that he wanted to be on good terms with the French, as he had promised to the ambassador in Constantinople. In the meantime, Péleran wrote that he had learned that the patriarch had registered with the *qadi* four orders against “Greeks” accused to be “Franks”. Péleran immediately summoned the missionaries, presenting to them the dangers for the Greek Catholics and asking them to stop any visits to them for the time being.⁶³

A *kapıcı* arrived in Aleppo from the Porte with an order for the pasha and the *qadi* to identify the people who had embraced “the religion of the Franks”. The pasha of Aleppo ordered the patriarch of the “Greeks”, the patriarch of the Syrians, the bishop of the Armenians, and the archbishop of the Maronites to find these individuals.⁶⁴ The incident ended with the temporary imprisonment of a few members of the Greek and Syrian communities, accused to be “Franks”.

⁶¹ Letter of the French consul in Aleppo to Maurepas, the king’s minister, April 16, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 345–346. A translation of the profession of faith was annexed to the letter.

⁶² For the word *mutasalle*m, from the Arabic مُتَسَلِّم, “lieutenant of a pasha”, see H. Lammens, S. J., *Remarques sur les mots français dérivés de l’arabe*, Beirut, 1890, p. 171.

⁶³ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 589.

⁶⁴ Letter of the French consul in Aleppo to Maurepas, the king’s minister, March 26, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 341–342.

An interesting document preserved in the French archives in an Italian translation (the original written most likely in Greek) reveals the Orthodox party's perspective on these events. This is a letter dated April 3, 1726, from the metropolitan Leontios, vicar of the Patriarchate of Antioch, to the grand dragoman of the Porte, Gregory Ghikas. Leontios describes the situation in Damascus, where there were mixed families with some members following the Latin rite and others the Greek. The metropolitan also wrote that the missionaries who were temporarily imprisoned were freed with the Greeks' help. He mentions the conditions for peaceful relations with the Latin missionaries: not to accept ("Greek") Christians in their churches, not to visit their houses, and not to teach their children.⁶⁵

Claude Gerin, a Jesuit priest in Damascus, mentioned in a letter in 1726 that whereas in Aleppo the "schismatic" patriarch decidedly acted against the "Catholics", the situation in Damascus was somehow better for them.⁶⁶

On May 22, 1726, Count de Maurepas noted in a letter to the French consul in Aleppo that Patriarch Sylvester was not keeping his promises to act mercifully and moderately towards the missionaries and those who followed their rite.⁶⁷ The same remarks were made about Sylvester a few days later by the king's minister in a letter to the French ambassador in Constantinople.⁶⁸ The answer of the French consul in Aleppo to Count de Maurepas was along the same lines: Sylvester did not keep his promise to ensure peace among the Christians of the region, and he was "vigorously acting against the missionaries".⁶⁹

From the mountains of Kesruwān, 'Abdallāh Zākhīr continued his writing activity for the benefit of the pro-Latin party. He composed a response to the profession of faith publicized by Patriarch Sylvester.⁷⁰ Using one of the Catholic missionaries as an intermediary, Zākhīr even asked the French consul to dispatch the text to Sylvester with a dragoman and to ask him for a reply. The consul refused this

65 Letter of Metropolitan Leontios to the dragoman of the Porte (fragments), April 3, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 342–343.

66 Letter of May 17, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 350.

67 Letter of Maurepas, the king's minister, to the French consul in Aleppo, May 22, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 352–353.

68 Letter of Count de Maurepas to the French ambassador in Constantinople, May 27, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 354.

69 Letter of the French consul in Aleppo to the king's minister, June 6, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 355.

70 A. Girard, "Quand les 'Grecs-Catholiques' dénonçaient les 'Grecs-Orthodoxes': la controverse confessionnelle au Proche-Orient Arabe après le schisme de 1724", in C. Bernat, H. Bost (eds.), *Énoncer/dénoncer l'autre. Discours et représentations du différend confessionnel à l'époque moderne*, Turnhout, 2012, p. 157–170, especially p. 160–162.

request, to avoid any conflict with the Orthodox patriarch. Without even reading it, it was clear to him that the text composed by ‘Abdallāh Zākhīr, who had condemned in strong words even the more moderate patriarch Athanasios, was undoubtedly extremely critical towards Sylvester. The consul characterized the “chammas”⁷¹ ‘Abdallāh ibn Zākhīr as “quite a good Catholic, but utterly zealous” (“assez bon catholique, mais fort empressé”).⁷²

In Constantinople, with the approval of the grand vizier, Viscount d’Andrezel obtained a meeting with Chrysanthos, the patriarch of Jerusalem.⁷³ The patriarch had returned to the city after two years of absence. According to the French ambassador, one of the main topics of conversation was the patriarch of Antioch and the measures he was taking against the “Catholics”. In d’Andrezel’s opinion, Sylvester was following the “bad advice” of a “certain Léondios”, referring of course to Metropolitan Leontios, Sylvester’s vicar in Damascus. It is interesting to note that the ambassador avoided making direct accusations against the patriarch of Antioch, blaming Leontios instead. This was in line with the policy of conciliation agreed upon in the meeting with Sylvester.

Chrysanthos of Jerusalem replied by presenting to the ambassador a memorandum drafted in Italian by the missionaries of Aleppo. This document was delivered to the patriarch by the grand dragoman and contained accusations against Sylvester. Chrysanthos expressed his conviction that accusations such as the one that Sylvester publicly excommunicated the pope were false. In d’Andrezel’s opinion, if the Greeks refused to recognize the pope as head of the Universal Church, they should at least respect him as a pontiff and a prince. Chrysanthos agreed and stated that in his view, although the Churches were divided, he viewed them as one, and he made no difference between the primary Church and the present one. He also mentioned that he did not know exactly Patriarch Sylvester’s opinion, but he did not consider him capable of talking about the pope the way he was accused to have done.⁷⁴

In Aleppo, Patriarch Sylvester was held responsible by the French consul for having sent a *chaoush* to the door of the Latin church to identify the “Greeks” who attended the Catholic service. The fact was reported by the French consul to the pasha of Aleppo, who summoned the patriarch and the *chaoush*. Sylvester denied

71 From the Arabic شماس, “deacon”. Apparently, Abdallāh Zākhīr was not a deacon, but remained a layman to his death.

72 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 355.

73 Letter of the ambassador of France to the king’s minister, June 26, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 357–360.

74 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 359.

any knowledge of the *chaoush's* actions, and the latter invoked in his defense the orders he had received from the Porte. The pasha imprisoned the *chaoush* for a short time, while the French consul reported the rumor that the patriarch had to pay six thousand *écus* to avoid being imprisoned himself.⁷⁵

The event is also recorded in another letter of consul Péleran to the minister of the king of France, dated July 2, 1726. The consul's conflict with the patriarch continued, while the *chaoush* of the Porte left Aleppo for Constantinople. The pasha asked the consul for proof in support of his claims. Witnesses of the events at the Latin church testified in the presence of the pasha and the patriarch. Sylvester defended himself by saying that the *chaoush* acted without his knowledge. But the dragoman of the French consulate, named Drapery, produced eight "Greek" witnesses who testified that the patriarch employed a "spy" who had told him about the celebration of the "Franks" the next day at their church, which would possibly also be attended by "Greeks". According to them, Sylvester sent the same man to announce this to the *chaoush* and give him the patriarch's order to intervene. Sylvester denied the accusations and said the witnesses were "Franks", a fact he could prove by a hundred witnesses. A report with all the findings of the enquiry was prepared by the pasha, to be sent to the grand vizier, but it was not immediately sent. According to Péleran, Sylvester secured the delay by offering some "purses" of money to the *kehaya* and the pasha. After that, according to the consul's account, the patriarch obtained a document from the *qadi* containing testimonies that the consul's witnesses were thieves, and they followed the religion of the "Franks". According to Péleran, the *qadi* received one thousand *écus* for this service. When he found out about this, the pasha allegedly asked for more money from Sylvester, as he pretended that his appeal to the *qadi* was an offence to his authority. The French consul estimated that the patriarch spent overall twelve thousand *piasters*.⁷⁶ The French consul's account must be read keeping in mind that it came from a source representing one of the two sides involved in the conflict.

A very similar report of the events was presented by the French ambassador in Constantinople in a letter to Count de Maurepas. He added that the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Constantinople intervened to rally the grand dragoman to their cause. They also requested to have Drapery, the dragoman of the French consulate

⁷⁵ Letter of the consul of Aleppo to the king's minister, June 27, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 360–362.

⁷⁶ Letter of the consul of Aleppo to the king's minister, July 2, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 362–364. In a letter to the Metropolitan Dionysios of Kition, Sylvester wrote about spending fifteen "purses" (7,500 *piasters*) because of the pasha. Δ[ε]μ[ε]τράκοπουλος, "Σίλβεστρος πατριάρχης Αντιοχείας", p. 371.

in Aleppo, removed from his position, blaming him for generating the conflict.⁷⁷ The attitude of Péleran, the French consul in Aleppo, was not criticized in the correspondence consulted here. He received a letter from the king's minister in which the king expressed his approval for his actions.⁷⁸

The judicial procedures in Aleppo presented above in detail are interesting because they offer an insight into the sort of challenges the patriarch of Antioch had to face after his arrival in the city. The financial challenge generated by the corruption of the local officials was only one of them. The French consul entered in direct confrontation with the patriarch of Antioch, despite the precise orders he had received from the French ambassador in Constantinople to maintain peaceful relations. It is also interesting to note that the patriarch was talking directly to the pasha and the *kehaya*, presumably in Ottoman Turkish or Arabic.

Another report mentions that Sylvester escaped imprisonment in the Aleppo citadel thanks to the intervention of the English consul and he had to pay 15 “purses” of money.⁷⁹ This course of events is plausible, as Sylvester's good relations with the English consulate have also been attested by other sources. A letter written by Viscount d'Andrezel contains another addition to the events described by the French consul in Aleppo, namely, the role of an individual known for his connections with Sylvester: Rowland Sherman.⁸⁰ Sherman (“Scharmen” in the letter) was held responsible for the patriarch's refusal to be reconciled with the French consul. The viscount also identified Sherman as a declared enemy of the Latin rite, siding with the “Greeks” in their disputes with the French monks.⁸¹

The events in Aleppo are also mentioned briefly in Jean-André du Bellis's memorandum of 1731. Du Bellis wrote about Sylvester: “He was accompanied by a *chaoush* of the Porte. He first went to Aleppo, where the Catholic and heretic Christians were so dissatisfied with the patriarch that they recorded a complaint with the *qadi* about the extortions he was pressing on them, so he would send their complaint to the Porte, and they finally forced him to leave Aleppo”.⁸²

77 Letter of the French ambassador in Constantinople to the king's minister, September 1, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 364–365 (in this edition, the year is 1725).

78 Letter of the king's minister to the consul of Aleppo, December 26, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 377.

79 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 364, n. 1.

80 The English merchant Rowland Sherman had resided in Aleppo from the late 18th century. He was well trained in the Arabic language and had wide-ranging interests, including theology and music. He will feature in more detail in Ch. 9.3.

81 Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 366.

82 “Il était accompagné d'un chaoux de la Porte. Il alla d'abord à Alep, où les chrétiens catholiques et hérétiques furent si mécontents du patriarche qu'ils prirent acte, par devant le Cadi, des

The moment of Patriarch Sylvester's departure from Aleppo was presented in an almost theatrical way in a letter of the French consul Péleran to the king's minister.⁸³ The patriarch left the city "stealthily" ("furtivement", in Péleran's words) on August 19, at nightfall. In this account, Sylvester decided to leave Aleppo after receiving letters from the patriarch of Jerusalem, who was then in Constantinople. Presumably, the letters had informed him that reports from the pasha of Aleppo had reached the Porte. Péleran's account goes as follows:

In any case, on the 19th of last month, while visiting a garden near the city with two or three of his friends under the pretext of having supper there, Patriarch Sylvester disguised himself and quietly left through a gate that opened towards the countryside, where he found horses and an escort, which an English merchant named Sherman, his zealous supporter, or rather a chimeric enemy of the pope, had sent to take him to Latakia, from whence he went to Tripoli.⁸⁴

Again, we need to consider that the account is not impartial, and the author belongs to one of the parties involved in the conflict with the patriarch. Sylvester's own account of the events can be found in some brief notes written in 1735 or 1736, possibly based on earlier records:

Καὶ τῷ ,αψκς' ἐορτάσαμεν τὴν Ἀγίαν Λαμπρὰν εἰς Χαλέπιον. Καὶ διὰ τὰς ἀνωμαλίας καὶ τὰς καταδρομὰς τῶν ἐκεῖσε Λατινοφρόνων Χριστιανῶν (συννυπουργούντων αὐτῶν καὶ τὸν ἐν Χαλεπίῳ ὅτε κόνσολος τῶν Γάλλων, καὶ οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν φρατόρες), ἐξήλθομεν τῇ ς' Αὐγούστου ἐσπέρας καὶ ἤλθομεν εἰς Λαοδίκειαν, καὶ εἰς τὰς δ' τοῦ Δεκεμβρίου πάλιν ἐπεστρέψαμεν εἰς Βασιλεύουσαν.⁸⁵

And in 1726 we celebrated Holy Easter in Aleppo. And because of the irregularities and the attacks of the Latin-minded Christians there (in collaboration with the then consul of the French in Aleppo and the friars around him), we went out on August 6 in the evening and went to Laodicea, and on December 4 we returned to the Imperial [City].

concussions qu'il exerçait sur eux, afin d'en porter leurs plaintes à la Porte, et l'obligèrent enfin de sortir d'Alep"; cf. Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 593.

⁸³ Letter of the consul of Aleppo to the king's minister, September 6, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 367–371 (in this edition, the year is 1725).

⁸⁴ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 367–368: "Quoiqu'il en soit, le 19 du mois passé, le patriarche Sylvestre ayant été dans un jardin près de la ville avec deux ou trois de ses amis sous prétexte d'y souper, s'y travestit et sortit sans bruit par une porte de derrière qui donnait dans la campagne, où il trouva des chevaux et une escorte qu'un marchand Anglais, nommé Sherman, son zélé partisan, ou plutôt ennemi chimérique du Pape, y avait envoyés pour le prendre et le conduire à Lattaquié, d'où il s'est rendu à Tripoli". On these events, see also Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 86.

⁸⁵ MS 124 Jerusalem, f. 19v. See also N. S. Phirippides, "Ἐπίσκεψις τῶν Ἰωαννίνων ὑπὸ τοῦ πατριάρχου Ἀντιοχείας Σιλβέστρου", *Ἡπειρωτικά Χρονικά*, 5, 1930, p. 118.

The patriarch's account largely confirms the general information in the French consul's letter. Sylvester left Aleppo in the evening (there is an error somewhere in the date of August 6 in the Julian calendar, corresponding to August 17 and not 19 in the Gregorian), and the main reason were the troubles stirred by the consul and the missionaries.

After the patriarch left the city, four to five hundred inhabitants went to the *qadi* asking to testify against Sylvester and accusing him of the extortion of large sums of money and other injustices. The *qadi* wrote a document signed by 48 Turks and 13 "Greek" priests. They also accused "the metropolitan of Damascus" Timothy, appointed vicar by Sylvester a few days earlier, who allegedly embezzled from the church treasury items and vessels amounting to 9,000 *piasters*. According to other sources, this vicar was in fact the metropolitan of Hama.⁸⁶ Summoned by the pasha, he testified that he had taken the items and handed them to the patriarch, who in turn delivered them to "Mister Sherman", an English merchant, as collateral for some money he had borrowed from him, allegedly for personal needs. The pasha sentenced the metropolitan to prison, alongside 20 individuals from the Orthodox party.⁸⁷ The pasha and the *qadi* sent documents to Constantinople asking that Patriarch Sylvester be punished. Three representatives of the "Greeks" were also chosen to go to the capital and ask for another patriarch to be appointed, one who would be elected by them, or Sylvester go to Damascus and the metropolitan of Aleppo Gerasimos be recalled from exile.

The French consul's account of Sylvester's itinerary after leaving Aleppo is based on information sent from Tripoli, and it is no less "theatrical" than his presentation of how Sylvester fled from Aleppo, cited earlier.

[...] Reaching Latakia on August 25, Patriarch Sylvester rented a boat there to take him to Cyprus, which a privateer, after chasing him half through the canal, had taken and then returned with it, landing at Gebely (Jabāli), from where the patriarch, escorted by four horsemen, arrived in Tripoli three days ago, and took lodgings with the English Consul.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 369, n. 1.

⁸⁷ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 369.

⁸⁸ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 371: "(...) le Patriarche Sylvestre, étant arrivé à Lattaquié le 25 août, y avait nolisé un bateau pour le passer à Chypre, qu'un corsaire lui ayant donné chasse à demi-canal, il l'avait pris et ensuite renvoyé avec le bateau qui avait abordé à Gebely, d'où le patriarche, escorté par quatre cavaliers, était arrivé à Tripoli depuis trois jours, et avait été loger chez Monsieur le Consul d'Angleterre".

In the same account, the French consul mentioned that Sylvester appeared in public in Tripoli and preached in the “Greek” church, and he intended to go to Sidon, but was prohibited by the city’s authorities to do so without a bail.

According to a different source, the memorandum written by du Bellis in 1731, which we have cited several times in this chapter, Sylvester went from Aleppo to Tripoli, intending to go to Sidon to present Osman Pasha with the official order to arrest Kyrillos Ṭanās, the metropolitan of Sidon, and other supporters of his, as well as orders for limiting the missionaries’ actions.⁸⁹ Du Bellis also revealed that at the time “Kyrillos, who was at the monastery of Saint Saviour”, built by Euthymios of Tyre and Sidon, “located in the land of the Druses, three hours away from Sidon, was secretly followed and hid in the mountains”.⁹⁰ The metropolitan of Sidon sought refuge with the French consul. The pasha of Sidon sent the *chaoush* back to Constantinople with letters describing Sylvester as a troublemaker. After meeting the *chaoush*, Sylvester changed his plans of going to Sidon and went to Constantinople instead.

The French ambassador was planning to take advantage of the situation in Aleppo by obtaining the appointment of a “Catholic” patriarch of the Church of Antioch. In a letter to Maurepas, Viscount d’Andrezel remarked that such appointments were made only by the sultan, or the grand vizier, and those positions were always given to the person who was the last to offer the highest sum of money. He added that “the schismatics” (i.e., the Orthodox) had the advantage of having “infinitely more money” than the Catholics. By Catholics, he most likely meant the converts to the Latin Church from among the Orthodox.⁹¹ The remark was that of an outsider; of course, and the reality was somehow different. Even a partial reading of Sylvester’s correspondence shows the efforts he made to cover the financial expenses for securing and renewing his *berat* as patriarch of Antioch. He had to borrow money from different individuals and then try to obtain the necessary funds to repay the debts and interests.

The fact that replacing Sylvester with Seraphim in 1726 was almost an impossible task was mentioned in a letter of the French consul in Aleppo to the king’s minister.⁹² Seraphim’s character was deemed “too haughty and violent”, and he was not at all suited for conciliating and calming the situation. The consul added

⁸⁹ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 593.

⁹⁰ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. I, p. 594.

⁹¹ Letter of the French ambassador in Constantinople to the king’s minister, October 17, 1726 (fragment), in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 374.

⁹² Letter of the French consul in Aleppo to the king’s minister, November 20, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 375–376.

that Seraphim was even more vehement than his uncle Euthymios, the metropolitan of Şaydā (Tyre and Sidon), who had brought about “the troubles which still reign among the Greeks”.⁹³ Péleran added that Seraphim was known at the Porte for having been a student in Rome, and the orders sent against him obliged him to stay in hiding in the mountains of Kesruwān, while the French envoys could not support him without endangering the missionaries. He also mentioned that Sylvester’s party had the sultan’s orders on its side and was still the strongest.

After Sylvester reached Constantinople in December 1726, there were rumors that he was deposed by the sultan. This information (later proven false) was offered by the French ambassador to the king’s minister.⁹⁴ The delegation from Aleppo also arrived in the capital and requested for their eparchy to be detached from the Patriarchate of Antioch, or at least for an independent metropolitan to be appointed for it. At the same time, d’Andrezel conveyed the information that the patriarch of Constantinople was also deposed and had died in prison. The usually well-informed ambassador was wrong again, at least partially. There had been changes on the patriarchal throne of Constantinople in November 1726, Jeremias III was deposed and exiled on November 19, and his successor Kallinikos III died after only one day as patriarch, but not in prison. Kallinikos III was succeeded by Paisios II on November 20. These dates are only indicative, because the process of election and obtaining the official appointment by a *berat* usually took time. Perhaps the lack of accuracy in the French ambassador’s information at this time was related to the absence from Constantinople of Gregory Ghikas, the former grand dragoman, who had just become prince of Moldavia in October 1726.⁹⁵

The news about Sylvester’s deposition was repeated by the French consul in Aleppo, apparently provided to him by one of the delegates returning from the capital. Péleran’s information about the changes of patriarchs in Constantinople was more accurate. He also added that when the grand vizier asked the delegates from Aleppo to nominate a successor for Sylvester as patriarch of Antioch, they answered that it is a question for the inhabitants of Damascus, where the See of the Patriarchate was. The vizier had approved the autonomy of the metropolitan of Aleppo from the Patriarchate of Antioch.⁹⁶ According to Ottoman sources, Aleppo

⁹³ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 376.

⁹⁴ Letter of the French ambassador to the king’s minister, December 20, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 376–377.

⁹⁵ See Țipău, *Domnii fanarioți în Țările Române*, p. 71.

⁹⁶ Letter of the French consul in Aleppo to the king’s minister, December 21, 1726, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 378–379.

was attached to the Patriarchate of Constantinople by an official order dated January 10, 1727.⁹⁷

While seemingly an easy administrative decision for the Ottoman authorities, the issue of the ecclesiastical “autonomy” of Aleppo was not so easily applicable, according to the canon laws of the Orthodox Church. Detaching Aleppo from Antioch and making it an “autonomous” metropolitan see, or “autocephalous”, in Church terminology, was almost impossible. After they were explained the facts, the Ottomans settled for the transfer of Aleppo to the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople. From the ecumenical patriarch’s point of view, this measure also secured him a more direct control of an eparchy disturbed by the Latin influence.

Viscount d’Andrezel was better informed two months later. He maintained that Sylvester was deposed but noted the efforts of the patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem to reestablish him. According to the ambassador, rumors had Sylvester hiding in the imperial capital. As for the Aleppo eparchy, it was transferred to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. A solution had also been found for the economical requests of the inhabitants of Aleppo. The church items and vessels were to be returned, and in three years’ time Sylvester would pay everything he owed to the inhabitants of Aleppo. The agreement was guaranteed by “important Greeks of Constantinople”, presumably from the Phanariot élite.

In the same report, d’Andrezel provides interesting information about Sylvester. The patriarch of Antioch could easily succeed in collecting the money needed to repay the debts by travelling for alms in Wallachia and Moldavia. The ambassador also expressed the concern that Sylvester would be installed in Damascus and would become a source of new “troubles and persecutions”. The English connection that allegedly helped Sylvester escape from Aleppo was also presented by the French ambassador to the minister. The patriarch was supported by the English consul in Tripoli, a good friend of the English consul in Aleppo, acting in concert with the merchant Sherman, “who had lent money to Sylvester”. Sherman was considered a threat to the Catholic party, as he was allied to the “schismatic Greeks”. Forcing him to return to England would be a “big success” (“un grand coup”).⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Çolak, Bayraktar-Tellan, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 99 (transcribed Ottoman text), p. 226 (English translation).

⁹⁸ Letter of the French ambassador to the king’s minister, February 18, 1727, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 379–380.

Sherman wrote to England about Sylvester in April 1727, mentioning the difficulties caused to the patriarch by the “Romanists”, the pro-Latin party.⁹⁹

The change in the status of Aleppo was also reported by the French consul there. He added that a new bishop was appointed, who by a *statikon* (“a sort of pastoral letter”) reinstated the priests demoted by Sylvester and suspended those ordained by him.¹⁰⁰

By June 1727, the French diplomats finally renounced to pursue any action in support of Seraphim, admitting that he “has none of the real means that his competitor Sylvester employed to maintain himself as patriarch of Damascus”.¹⁰¹

The situation of Sylvester, who remained patriarch of Antioch, also became clear for the French as the time passed. However, they did not foster any illusions for a more favorable attitude of the patriarch towards the missionaries.¹⁰²

Meanwhile, an attempt was made to reconcile the inhabitants of Aleppo with Sylvester. An Orthodox priest wrote to the patriarch of Constantinople that all the “Greeks” of Aleppo, except for a few “papists”, were ready to make peace with the patriarch of Antioch if he would return the church items and repay what he owed them. The patriarch of Constantinople also tried to mediate in favor of Sylvester.¹⁰³

It took almost a year for the French diplomats to realize that Sylvester was never deposed and that he had remained patriarch of Antioch. If the situation were different, someone else would have replaced him and a new *berat* would have been issued. There are no archival traces of the appointment of another patriarch for the See of Antioch. The only consequence of the incidents of Damascus in 1726 was the attachment of the eparchy of Aleppo to the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Consul Péleran described the situation in Aleppo in a letter to Maurepas, the French king’s minister. According to him, the new metropolitan of Aleppo sent from Constantinople brought with him a profession of faith given by the patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem by request of the patriarch of Antioch. The order was to convince ten to twelve “Catholic” priests named by Sylvester to sign the

99 S. Mills, *A Commerce of Knowledge: Trade, Religion, and Scholarship between England and the Ottoman Empire, c. 1600–1760*, Oxford, 2020, p. 241.

100 Letter of the French consul in Aleppo to the king’s minister, March 24, 1727, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 380.

101 Letter of Fontenu, manager (gérant) of the embassy, to the king’s minister, June 19, 1727, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 381: “... il n’a aucun des moyens réels qu’a employé son compétiteur Sylvestre pour se maintenir dans le patriarcat de Damas”.

102 Letter of the king’s minister to Fontenu, manager (gérant) of the embassy, July 2, 1727, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 381–382.

103 Letter of the French consul in Aleppo to the king’s minister, August 2, 1727, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 383.

profession of faith. Apparently, the metropolitan, wishing to appease the situation, made them read an earlier profession of faith formulated by the patriarch Athanasios III Dabbās. When he was requested to obtain their signatures on the text itself, the metropolitan proposed another compromise, asking them to only write and sign a general statement. The priests consulted the Maronite bishop of Aleppo and then the Catholic missionaries. As their advice differed, divisions appeared in the Catholic-oriented party.¹⁰⁴ However, the moderate attitude of the new Orthodox metropolitan of Aleppo attracted a very low office attendance and an increase in numbers of the “Greek Catholic” party. Many of its supporters attended the services at the Maronite church, where they could listen to the sermons of the famous Maronite bishop Germanos Farḥāt. Nonetheless, they were duly paying their taxes to the “Greek” metropolitan.¹⁰⁵

The concessions made to the Catholics by the new metropolitan sent by the patriarch of Antioch, such as the suppression of the celebration of Saint Gregory Palamas, generated the vehement reaction of the great scholar Ilyās Fakhr.¹⁰⁶ He subsequently proved to be one of Sylvester’s supporters and collaborators in both administrative and spiritual matters. In 1728, he was dragoman of the consul of England in Aleppo. According to Péleran, missionaries in Tripoli thought that Fakhr was a Catholic and he had even received a distinction, the Order of the Golden Spur, from Pope Clement XI.¹⁰⁷

The instructions on religious issues that the new ambassador to Constantinople, Louis-Sauveur de Villeneuve, Marquis de Forcalqueiret and baron de Saint-Anastaze, received on August 11, 1728, are of great importance for understanding the official attitude of the French crown in matters related to the Ottoman Empire. The objectives were the conversion of the Turks, the reunion of the Greek and Armenian Churches, and the removal of the “errors” in the beliefs of these communities, deriving from “ignorance”. While converting the Turks was deemed almost impossible, and the pope had prohibited the missionaries even from talking to them, the attitude towards the Greeks and the Armenians was to be different.

104 Letter of the French consul in Aleppo to the king’s minister, October 20, 1727, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 383–385.

105 Letter of the French consul in Aleppo to the king’s minister, March 19, 1728, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 386–387.

106 For Fakhr, see Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 202–215, and Heyberger, “Security and Insecurity”, in Heyberger, *Middle Eastern and European Christianity*, p. 105–123 (especially 109–116). Richard Pococke met Ilyās Fakhr in Antioch. See R. Finnegan (ed.), *Richard Pococke’s Letters from the East (1737–1740)*, Leiden/Boston, 2020, p. 216.

107 Letter of the French consul in Aleppo to the king’s minister, April 1, 1728, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 387–388.

There were two recommended measures: to appeal to the Porte, and to win over the leaders of these Churches to the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁰⁸ These instructions are interesting, as they explain certain of the French diplomats' attitudes during Sylvester's lifetime.

Meanwhile, Kyrillos's election was examined by a commission in Rome, and on August 13, 1729, Pope Benedict XIII (1724–1730) recognized Kyrillos's election as patriarch. A papal legate was sent to get the patriarch's signature on the profession of faith and to confirm his promise that he would not change the rite. The legate officially recognized Kyrillos as patriarch on the pope's behalf on April 25, 1730.¹⁰⁹

Confronted with Rome's insistence on obtaining the Porte's recognition of Kyrillos as patriarch of Antioch, Marquis de Villeneuve, the new French ambassador in Constantinople, wrote a rather long letter to the king's minister on January 15, 1730, offering a realistic presentation of the situation.¹¹⁰ The ambassador pointed out that the right to appoint a patriarch for Antioch belonged to the patriarch of Constantinople (which was not totally accurate), but the sultan had to confirm such nominations in order for them to be considered valid.¹¹¹ De Villeneuve mentioned that after the Aleppo troubles, the sultan deposed Sylvester and ordered him to repay the money he allegedly took. His friends in Constantinople succeeded in reestablishing him as patriarch by offering money to the Porte's ministers. Given these circumstances, any effort to establish Kyrillos as patriarch would be hopeless.

Even if Sylvester was an enemy of the Latins and Kyrillos a "good Catholic", his zeal for the religion was known among the "schismatic Greeks" and it would always remain a reason for them to oppose him. Also, the Orthodox, supported by the patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem, could easily collect thirty or forty thousand *écus* to distribute (most likely to the Turkish officials), while the Latins were lacking such resources. Moreover, there was always the danger that the Porte would issue orders against the missionaries, as it had done in the past.¹¹²

The French ambassador makes an interesting remark about Chrysanthos Notaras. According to Marquis de Villeneuve, although the patriarch of Constantinople was the first in rank, the prestige acquired by the patriarch of

¹⁰⁸ Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 388–389.

¹⁰⁹ C. A. Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans. The Church and the Ottoman Empire 1453–1923*, London/New York/New Rochelle/Melbourne/Sydney, 1983, p. 202.

¹¹⁰ Letter of Marquis de Villeneuve, the French ambassador in Constantinople, to Germain Louis Chauvelin, garde des sceaux of France, January 15, 1730, in S. Kuneralp (ed.), *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve Ambassadeur du Roi de France auprès de la Sublime Porte Ottomane (1728–1741)*, 1, Istanbul, 2020, p. 210–213.

¹¹¹ Kuneralp (ed.), *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1, p. 211.

¹¹² Kuneralp (ed.), *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1, p. 212.

Jerusalem made him the “absolute master” of the Greek Church. De Villeneuve also mentioned that the patriarch of Jerusalem was a peaceful man and had not caused any trouble to the missionaries during the fifteen months since the arrival of the ambassador. Even in Damascus and in Diyarbakır (ancient Amida), a city dependent of the Patriarchate of Antioch, where there was a metropolitan appointed by Sylvester, the situation was peaceful.¹¹³

New troubles appeared in Aleppo when the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide prohibited the Catholic priests from celebrating alongside their bishop as long as he did not send his profession of faith to Rome, and he kept mentioning the “heretic or schismatic” patriarchs at Mass. At the same time, the Sacra Congregatio declared Kyrillos the true and legitimate Greek patriarch of Antioch, urging all Catholics not to recognize another. The Greek Catholic priests stopped celebrating with the metropolitan. The information reached the pasha of Aleppo, who ordered a few arrests. Then, he summoned the “Greek” metropolitan, asking him if he was the ecclesiastical superior of the “Greeks” in Aleppo. He answered that he had this quality as he had been sent by the patriarch of Constantinople, as mentioned in his *berat* obtained from the Porte. The pasha asked him why he tolerated people attached to the “religion of the Franks” in his “nation”. The metropolitan defended his people, and the situation was partially solved. Some of the priests returned and celebrated with the metropolitan. The French consul assumed that such troubles could help the return of Sylvester, and that the patriarch’s party was fortified day by day.¹¹⁴

The same events were reported by Marquis de Villeneuve in a letter to the king’s minister. He pointed out that Kyrillos, elected patriarch by the “Catholics” of Syria, was rejected by the Porte, and that the “Catholic” priests in Aleppo, whom Rome had prohibited from recognizing their metropolitan, were subjects of the sultan.¹¹⁵ He implied that they had to obey the orders of their sovereign and the persons appointed by him.

¹¹³ Letter of the French ambassador in Constantinople to the king’s minister, June 13, 1730, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 405–406.

¹¹⁴ Letters of the French consul in Aleppo to the French ambassador in Constantinople, June 1, 1730, and June 13, 1730, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 402–404 (the second letter with the wrong year 1733).

¹¹⁵ Letter of the French ambassador in Constantinople to Count de Maurepas, the king’s minister, June 13, 1730, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 409–410. See also the same letter in Kuneralp (ed.), *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1, p. 304–306.

A critical account of the events, reflecting the position of the Latin missionaries, with the title *History of the various persecutions carried out against the Catholics of Aleppo and Damascus*,¹¹⁶ described the situation as follows:

He went to Wallachia, where he found his former protector, Prince Scaltatogli [i.e., Nikolaos Mavrokordatos], son of Mauro Cordato [Alexander Mavrokordatos], first interpreter of the Great Lord. He gave him a vivid and touching picture of his misfortunes, secured the compassion of this prince, and succeeded in ensuring his protection. He sent him back to Constantinople with the most pressing recommendations. There, he began his maneuvers again: he asked for a review of his trial. The prince's protection caused his request to be approved; the Great Lord even issued an order in his favor by which, reversing everything that had been done against him, he reinstated him to all the rights of his patriarchate, resubmitted Aleppo to his jurisdiction, authorized him to appoint a bishop there and to be reimbursed for all the sums he had not received during his seven years of exile. The reinstated patriarch hurried to disseminate this order from the Great Lord. He went to Tripoli and Damascus, and the latter city was chosen, by preference, to be the scene of the new persecution that he conceived.¹¹⁷

In August 1730, the French ambassador Count de Villeneuve warned that the pope's decision to recognize Kyrillos as patriarch and Rome's orders to prohibit any contact between Catholics and Orthodox could have consequences for the missionaries and for the Catholics in general, as the Porte was more likely to support the Orthodox. De Villeneuve wrote:

Il est d'autant plus facile aux Patriarches de l'Église grecque de s'attirer la protection de la Porte en pareilles occasions, qu'outre qu'ils ont un fondement légitime de réclamer l'autorité

116 "Histoire des différentes persécutions exercées contre les catholiques d'Alep et de Damas", in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses, écrites des missions étrangères. Nouvelle édition, ornée de cinquante belles gravures. Mémoires du Levant*, 1, Lyon, 1819, p. 469–480. The account is undated but, based on its content, it must have been written after 1746. It could also be a later report, using information from contemporary sources.

117 "Il alla en Valachie, où il trouva son ancien protecteur, le prince Scaltatogli, fils de Mauro Cordato, premier interprète du Grand-Seigneur. Il lui fit une peinture vive et touchante de ses malheurs, surprit la compassion de ce prince, et parvint jusqu'à s'en assurer la protection. Il le renvoya à Constantinople muni des recommandations les plus pressantes. Là il recommença ses manèges: il demanda la révision de son procès. La protection du prince fit admettre sa requête; le Grand-Seigneur lui donna même un commandement par lequel anéantissant tout ce qui s'étoit fait contre lui, il le rétablissoit dans tous les droits de son patriarcat, soumettoit de nouveau Alep à sa juridiction, l'autorisoit à y nommer un évêque, et à se faire rembourser de toutes les sommes qu'il n'avoit pas touchées pendant les sept années de son exil. Le patriarche rétabli se hâta de notifier cet ordre du Grand-Seigneur. Il vint à Tripoli et à Damas, et cette dernière ville fut choisie de préférence, pour être le théâtre de la persécution nouvelle qu'il méditoit" (the spelling of the original is preserved); cf. "Histoire des différentes persécutions", in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, p. 473.

du Grand Seigneur en qualité de sujets, ils sont d'ailleurs en état de répandre beaucoup d'argent.¹¹⁸

It is all the easier for the Patriarchs of the Greek Church to attract the protection of the Porte on such occasions, because, apart from the fact that they have a legitimate basis for claiming the Great Lord's authority, as subjects, they are also able to spend a lot of money.

Such assertions were true from the perspective of the judicial basis of the Orthodox Patriarchs' authority in the Ottoman state system. As for the sums of money needed to find justice in the Ottoman administration, as Patriarch Sylvester's example proves, they were on many occasions borrowed with high interest rates, and intense efforts and travels were needed in order to repay them. Sylvester's correspondence and his manuscript codices contain numerous examples of the patriarch's efforts to secure the funds required for responding to the attacks of his "Latin-minded" opponents.

In September 1730, in Damascus, Patriarch Sylvester's vicar was a "Greek monk" named Christophoros. At the time, there were troubles in the city, involving the Spanish Franciscan priest Thomas of Campaya, who was asking the Greeks to leave the rite and the vestments of the Greek Church, contrary to the orders of Rome. Thomas of Campaya was acting as "grand vicar" of the patriarch of Antioch, evidently, Kyrillos.¹¹⁹ In a letter of the French ambassador, he is mentioned as "le Sieur Thomas de Campaya, Religieux espagnol qui fait les fonctions de Vicaire du Patriarcat d'Antioche" ("Sir Thomas of Campaya, a Spanish monk who serves as vicar of the Patriarchate of Antioch").¹²⁰ The fact that Thomas served as Kyrillos's "grand vicar" illustrates the extent to which the missionaries were involved in supporting the pro-Latin patriarch's claims.

According to the Greek Catholic patriarch's reports, Thomas of Campaya went further and allowed the "Greek" Catholics to practice the Latin rite, in disregard

118 Letter of Marquis de Villeneuve, the French ambassador in Constantinople, to Germain Louis Chauvelin, garde des sceaux of France, August 2, 1730, in Kuneralp (ed.), *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1, p. 329–330. See also similar ideas in the letter of Marquis de Villeneuve to Count de Maurepas written the same day, August 2, 1730, in Kuneralp (ed.), *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1, p. 330–331.

119 For the events in Damascus, see the letter of the French ambassador in Constantinople to the minister, Cardinal of Fleury, September 30, 1730, in Rabbath, *Documents inédits*, vol. II, p. 412–415. See also the letter of Marquis de Villeneuve, the French ambassador in Constantinople, to Count de Maurepas, state secretary of the Navy, September 15, 1730, in Kuneralp (ed.), *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1, p. 339–345.

120 Kuneralp (ed.), *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1, p. 339.

of Rome's orders. He even tried to usurp Kyrillos's authority.¹²¹ Rome's decisions to recognize Kyrillos and to discipline the Greek Catholic faithful had unpleasant consequences for the Latin missionaries.¹²²

Despite the insistence of Rome before the French court, reports from Constantinople were clear: the Ottomans were not willing to appoint Kyrillos as patriarch.¹²³ The pope's interventions and decrees in favor of Kyrillos and against the Orthodox only made the situation worse for the Latin missionaries. The French ambassador Marquis de Villeneuve wrote to the king's minister:

Le Drogman de la Porte me dit, il y a quelques jours, qu'il était fait des plaintes journellement à la Porte contre nos missionnaires de Syrie et de Palestine au sujet de l'exécution des derniers décrets rendus par le Pape en faveur du Patriarche Cyrille, et contre les Grecs Schismatiques, et qu'il craignait qu'il n'en survint des suites fâcheuses pour la Religion.¹²⁴

The Dragoman of the Porte told me a few days ago that complaints were made daily to the Porte against our missionaries from Syria and Palestine concerning the execution of the latest decrees issued by the pope in favor of the Patriarch Kyrillos and against the Schismatic Greeks, and that he feared that there would be unpleasant consequences for the Religion.

The idea was also mentioned in other French reports from Constantinople: the decrees of the Sacra Congregatio against the Orthodox could not promote the objective of Kyrillos's appointment as patriarch. The French ambassador de Villeneuve considered that Rome showed little caution towards the Orthodox. As for Kyrillos's request to own a boat under French pavilion, this idea was considered against the customs of the kingdom of France and was rejected.¹²⁵

121 Kuneralp (ed.), *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1, p. 341.

122 Letter of Marquis de Villeneuve to count de Maurepas, September 17, 1730, in Kuneralp (ed.), *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1, p. 352.

123 Letter of Marquis de Villeneuve to Germain Louis Chauvelin, garde des sceaux of France, November 11, 1730, in Kuneralp (ed.), *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1, p. 373.

124 Letter of Marquis de Villeneuve, the French ambassador in Constantinople, to Germain Louis Chauvelin, November 11, 1730, in Kuneralp (ed.), *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1, p. 377.

125 Letter of Marquis de Villeneuve to Count de Maurepas, November 16, 1730, in Kuneralp (ed.), *Les rapports de Louis-Sauveur Marquis de Villeneuve*, 1, p. 392.