

6 From 1740 to 1748, in Moldavia, Constantinople, and Wallachia

6.1 Moldavia

In several of his letters sent in the early 1740s, Sylvester repeatedly expressed the wish to visit Wallachia. In December 1741, while in Damascus, Sylvester wrote to Michael Rakovitzas (Mihail Racoviță) to congratulate him on obtaining the throne of Wallachia (Fig. 10).¹ He also expressed his wish to visit the country, “as we have long treasured and preserved it in our soul”.² In another letter written at the same time to the grand *logothetes* Constantine Dudescu (Ντουτέσκογλου in the text), the patriarch asked him to intervene in order to obtain from Michael Rakovitzas the permission to visit the country. Sylvester seems to remember even more vividly the earlier visit to Wallachia, when results were seemingly not the expected ones in terms of the financial aid. The patriarch wrote that the visit would be useful “in order for us to receive some relief and comfort for the debt, by going to Moldavia, because your excellency knows well that in the time of the blessed *voivod* Nikolaos we were not given any spiritual comfort, only just [to cover] the trouble we took [to go there]”.³

It is not clear whether during Sylvester’s visit in 1730 Mavrokordatos issued an official document (Gr. *χρυσόβουλλος*, Rom. *hrisov*) granting an annual donation to the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch. He had done this previously for patriarch Athanasios III Dabbās. In 1739, in a letter addressed to Iōannikios of Stavroupolis, who was in Bucharest, Sylvester asked for the three *chrysoboulloi* that he had left with the metropolitan to be sent to him. A renewal of the earlier annual grants was obtained only in 1741, during the reign of Michael Rakovitzas in Wallachia.

In this period, before what was probably his second visit to Wallachia and Moldavia, sources attest to Sylvester’s actions required by his pastoral mission as patriarch of Antioch. Several documents preserved in the Ottoman archives reveal

1 This was Michael Rakovitzas’s second reign in Wallachia, from September 5/16, 1741, to July/August 1744. See M. Țipău, *Domnii fanarioți în Țările Române*, p. 155–160.

2 Letter of Sylvester to Michael Rakovitzas, prince of Wallachia, December 15, 1741, from Damascus, in MS 210 Ḥarīṣā, f. 166r–166v: “καθὼς πρὸ πολλοῦ τὸ εἶχμεν τεταμειμένον, καὶ πεφυλαγμένον εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν”.

3 Letter of Sylvester to the great *logothetes* Constantine Dudescu (Ντουτέσκογλου in text), December 15, 1741, in MS 210 Ḥarīṣā, f. 166bisr–166bisv: “διὰ τὰ τύχῳμεν καὶ καμίας ἀνέσεως, καὶ παραμυθίας τοῦ χρέους, διερχόμενοι εἰς Μολδοβίαν, ἐπειδὴ ἐγνωρίζει καλῶς ἡ ἐνδοξότης της ὅτι εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τοῦ μακαρίτου Νικολάου βοεβόνδα, δὲν μᾶς ἔγινε καμμία ψυχαγωγία, τόσον μόνον ὅπου ἐπήραμεν τὸν κόπον”.

that he appointed Nikēphoros as metropolitan of Paiasios (Payas) in 1741.⁴ Later on, in 1746, the same Nikephoros of Paiasios was appointed as Sylvester's representative in Damascus, replacing Mikhā'il ibn Ṭūmā.⁵

In February or March 1742, Sylvester was still in Damascus, where he intended to stay and celebrate Holy Easter at the request of most of the local Orthodox population.⁶ In April 1744, Sylvester was in Adrianople, preparing to travel to Bucharest. He wrote to Vasily Barsky to send his letters to him to the capital of Wallachia.⁷ We have no information on how the patriarch travelled from Adrianople, but it was probably by land. It is also unclear whether he also went to Bucharest, and if so, if he remained there for some time. The prince of Wallachia was the same Michael Rakovitzas whom Sylvester had intended to visit since 1741. On his way to Moldavia, the patriarch either passed through the capital of Wallachia, or took another route.

On June 24, 1744, he was already in Iași, from where he wrote letters to the patriarchs of Constantinople and Jerusalem and the Metropolitan Ananias of Cyzicus (Kyzikos),⁸ mentioning that he was well received by the prince. At the time, the prince of Moldavia was John Mavrokordatos, son of Nikolaos (Fig. 6).⁹ Presumably, he had invited Sylvester to Moldavia, thus fulfilling his wish to visit the Romanian lands to secure financial aid for his Patriarchate. It is possible that Sylvester already had in mind his project to print Arabic books. A proof in this direction could be a manuscript of the Arabic *Book of the Divine Liturgies* published in Iași in 1745. The manuscript belongs to the library of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch in Damascus (MS 251) and is available in digital format on the website of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (vHML).¹⁰ It contains the text of the printed book, and the foreword is dated 1744.¹¹ A comparison we made

4 Çolak, *Relations between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchates*, p. 208.

5 Çolak, *Relations between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchates*, p. 208–210.

6 Letter of Sylvester to Paisios II of Constantinople, February 9, 1742, from Damascus, in MS 210 Ḥarīṣā, f. 171r–171v.

7 Sylvester's letter to Vasily Barsky, April 6, 1744, [Adrianople], in N. Barsukov (ed.), *Странствования Василия Григоровича-Барского по святым местам Востока с 1723 по 1747 г.*, vol. 4, Saint Petersburg, 1887, p. 56–59 (Greek text and Russian translation).

8 Sylvester's letter to the Metropolitan Ananias of Cyzicus, June 24, 1744, from Iași, in MS 210 Ḥarīṣā, f. 93r–93v.

9 For John Mavrokordatos, prince of Moldavia from July 20/31, 1743, to April 1747, see Țipău, *Domniî fanarioți în Țările Române*, p. 125–127.

10 <https://w3id.org/vhml/readingRoom/view/607542>.

11 For the manuscript, see also I. Jubāra, *Al-makhṭūṭāt al-'arabiya fī maktabat Baṭriyarkīyat Anṭākiya wa-sā'ir al-Mashriq li-l-Rūm al-Urthūdhuks*, Beirut, 1988, p. 43.

of the text of the foreword in the manuscript with that in the printed book revealed one single difference: the reference to John Mavrokordatos's assistance is missing from the manuscript.¹² The manuscript could have been the prototype used when printing the book, or the copy of a prototype.

Sylvester traveled to Iași with a retinue of several people, but only a few of them are known with any degree of certainty. His travel companions may have included Mūsā Ṭrābulī, Buṭrus Nawfal, and Yūsuf Mark. The patriarch also brought with him several books, both printed texts and manuscripts, such as the one of 1744 mentioned above, or other manuscripts intended for printing. He may have had with him MS 210, now in Ḥariṣā, in which he transcribed some texts that he read during his stay in Moldavia. The twelve *Menologia* printed in Venice that he donated in 1745 to the Saint Sabbas Monastery in Iași were either brought over by him or acquired in Moldavia.¹³

In the foreword of a book published in 1746, Patriarch Sylvester states that he entered the land of *Bughdān*¹⁴ in the Christian year 1745:¹⁵

دخلنا بلاد البغدان في سنة ١٧٤٥ مسيحيه

The same year was mentioned in other sources, such as Sylvester's notes on the Greek *Menologia* donated to the Saint Sabbas Monastery in Iași and the patriarch's Greek letters. However, Sylvester was already in Iași in June 1744, as revealed by his letters addressed from Iași to Patriarch Parthenios of Jerusalem and Patriarch Paisios II of Constantinople.¹⁶

A Greek chronicle written in the Romanian Principalities recorded Sylvester's visit in Moldavia during the reign of John Mavrokordatos:

Τοῦτον τὸν καιρὸν ἦλθεν εἰς Μπογδανίαν καὶ ὁ Ἀντιοχείας Σύλβεστρος, ἀγιώτατος πατριάρχης καὶ εὐλαβείας ἄγιος. Ὅστις διατρίψας ἱκανὸν καιρὸν ἐνταῦθα, ἔλαβεν ἱκανὴν βοήθειαν, τόσον παρὰ τοῦ Ἰῶν βόδα, ὅσον καὶ παρὰ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ὅπου προσέτρεχον πρὸς αὐτόν

12 On the foreword of the printed edition, see I. Feodorov, "The Arabic Book of the Divine Liturgies Printed in 1745 in Iași by Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch", *Scrinium*, 16, 2020, 1, p. 170.

13 For these *Menologia*, see Arhim. P. Chițulescu, "Patriarhul Silvestru al Antiochiei și dania sa de carte către mănăstirea Sfântul Sava din Iași. O reevaluare necesară", in M. Lazăr (ed.), *Mărturii de istorie și cultură românească*, vol. I, Bucharest, 2022, p. 53–64.

14 *Bughdān* was the name of Moldavia in Arabic and Ottoman sources, derived from its second founder, prince Bogdan I (14th c.).

15 And not in 1735, as has been perpetuated in certain Romanian academic publications. The error was due to the unusual script of the Arabic numeral 4 in the printed text: ١٧٤٥ instead of ١٧٤٥.

16 Sylvester's letter to Patriarch Parthenios of Jerusalem, June 23, 1744 (Iași), in MS Ḥariṣā 210, f. 93r; and from Sylvester to Patriarch Paisios II of Constantinople, June 23, 1744 (Iași), in MS Ḥariṣā 210, f. 93-93v.

μέ προθυμίαν μεγαλωτάτην, κατὰ μίμησιν τοῦ αὐθέντου ὁποῦ εἶχε πολλήν εὐλάβειαν εἰς τὸ ιερατεῖον.¹⁷

At this time, Sylvester of Antioch, a most holy patriarch and worthy of reverence, also came to Bogdania [= Moldavia]. He spent a sufficient time here, received sufficient help both from the voivod Ioan and from the Christians, who ran to him with great eagerness, in imitation of the prince, who treated the clergy with deep respect.

The fact that he received financial support for settling some of the debts can be illustrated with several examples. On February 11, 1745, while he was still in Moldavia, the patriarch sent the final installment of a loan contracted in 1737, or even earlier, to “*sinior* Lukakis”, one of his creditors.¹⁸ The amount was 1,500 *groschen* in coins of various denominations and it was sent with the former (great) *komisos* Constantine Fakas.¹⁹ On the same date, Sylvester sent via the same Constantine Fakas the amount of 500 *groschen* (also in various denominations) “for the expenses of our Markos” (“διὰ τὰ ἔξοδα τοῦ ἡμετέρου Μάρκου”), probably Yūsuf Mark, one of his disciples involved in his printing projects.²⁰

Sylvester stayed in Moldavia until August or September 1745, when the issue of Kyrillos Țanās’s appointment as patriarch of Antioch forced him to go to Constantinople, to be reinstated as patriarch, based on a new *berat*.

6.2 Constantinople

In September 1745, Sylvester was already in Constantinople, where he had arrived from Galați, a port city on the Danube River, as indicated by a letter he received from the *spatharios* Aristarchos.²¹ Most likely, he did not pass through Wallachia and travelled to the Ottoman capital either by sea or by land. The event that forced him to leave Moldavia was an important one and his presence in Constantinople was certainly mandatory. This event was the greatest challenge to Sylvester’s position as patriarch. From his refuge in Mount Lebanon, his adversary Kyrillos Țanās had

17 See N. Camariano, A. Camariano-Cioran (eds.), *Cronica Ghiculeștilor. Istoria Moldovei între anii 1695–1754*, Bucharest, 1965, p. 602.

18 MS 124 Jerusalem, f. 32r.

19 Maybe the same as Constantine (of Zagora), attested as great *komisos* (Rom. *comis*) in Moldavia on November 30, 1743, and in 1745; see M.-B. Atanasiu, “Lista marilor dregători din Moldova veacului al XVIII-lea”, in M.-B. Atanasiu, M. Mîrza (eds.), *Mari familii boierești din Moldova în veacurile XVII–XIX. Referințe identitare și manifestări de putere*, Iași, 2020, p. 449.

20 MS 124 Jerusalem, f. 31v.

21 Letter of the *spatharios* Aristarchos to Sylvester of Antioch, September 1745, in MS Țarișă 210, f. 26v.

somehow succeeded in obtaining what he had desired for more than two decades: the official confirmation of the Ottoman authorities as patriarch of Antioch. It came in the form of a *berat*, the imperial document allowing him to act in this capacity.

The *berat* appointing Kyrillos as patriarch of Antioch was issued in May or June 1745. A translation was sent by the French ambassador to Count de Maurepas.²² In July 1745, Sylvester had already been reinstated, and the Porte had issued an order against Kyrillos.²³ The French ambassador in Constantinople provided details about Kyrillos's appointment and Sylvester's reinstatement in a letter to Count de Maurepas dated August 17 of the same year. Count de Castellane obtained Kyrillos's appointment and the exile of Sylvester's representative. The ambassador also mentioned that Sylvester, after he arrived in Constantinople, succeeded in obtaining Kyrillos's dismissal as a "Frank and a subject of the pope". De Castellane blamed Rome entirely for this failure caused by its obstinacy in trying to restore Patriarch Kyrillos to the throne and pushing Patriarch Sylvester, "whom we had always spared", to the limit.²⁴

Another letter from the French ambassador to the same addressee provides even more details, reflecting his disappointment in the rushed actions. He announced that in future he will await the king's orders before dealing with the Porte. He acted "out of a spirit of circumspection" in helping the execution of the Jesuits' project to restore Kyrillos as patriarch of Antioch and to obtain Sylvester's exile. The Jesuits conveyed to the pope and the king of France insults allegedly uttered by the opposite party, thus making it a matter of state. He also mentioned the actions he took alongside two agents of Rome, "Dom Salomon" and the Greek "Sibrail Guberni", to obtain Kyrillos's *berat*. De Castellane acted in accordance with his orders and not based on Kyrillos's merits. He also tried to defend himself regarding the issue of the expenses incurred in this matter.²⁵ Addressing Count de Maurepas again, de Castellane wrote about the support Sylvester had received from the grand dragoman and "the Greek nation".²⁶

²² ANF, MS AE/B/I/422, f. 171r–174v.

²³ Letter of Count de Castellane to Count de Maurepas, July 1745, ANF, MS AE/B/I/423, f. 9r–13v.

²⁴ "[...] fermeté à vouloir rétablir absolument le patriarche Cyrille et à pousser à bout le patriarche Sylvestre qu'on avoit toujours ménagé". Letter of ambassador de Castellane to Count de Maurepas, August 17, 1745, ANF, MS AE/B/I/423, f. 82r–92v.

²⁵ Letter of ambassador de Castellane to Count de Maurepas, March 26, 1746, ANF, MS AE/B/I/424, f. 146r–153v.

²⁶ Letter of ambassador de Castellane to Count de Maurepas, January 24, 1747, ANF, MS AE/B/I/426, f. 56r–63v.

More details on the events of 1745 are provided in a letter written in 1752 by the new French ambassador in Constantinople, Roland Puchot, Count des Alleurs.²⁷ The names of the two emissaries from Rome are rendered as “Dom Salomon” and “Giabbour Koubeïrsi”, the latter a former representative of the Greek Catholic “nation” in Aleppo. With the support of Count de Castellane and a money payment, they secured a *berat* in favor of Kyrillos. After the revocation of the *berat* by the grand vizier, Kyrillos found refuge in the Druze Mountains.²⁸

Another account of the events is provided by Giovanni Battista Bavestrelli, apostolic vicar in Constantinople. He mentions that the following people were involved in obtaining a “firman” (i.e., a *berat*) for Kyrillos: “a certain Salomon Ruma, Melkite Greek”, the French ambassador Count de Castellane, the apostolic vicar in Constantinople, Francesco Girolamo Bona,²⁹ and “two very influent Greeks, renowned for their acumen”. According to Bavestrelli, the sum at their disposal was 15,000 *piasters*, offered in part by the congregation and in part by Kyrillos himself. The *berat* was secured but remained in force for only forty days. After that, as the “Greek” patriarch was reestablished, an order was issued for Kyrillos to be arrested and sent into exile.³⁰ In reality, both the sum of money spent and the theoretical validity of the *berat* were different. However, the actual number of days Kyrillos’s representative controlled the See in Damascus was close to the figure reported by Bavestrelli.

Officially, Kyrillos was the Orthodox (*Rûm*) patriarch. Did the Ottoman authorities know that he acted for the last two decades as a Catholic? The answer can only be affirmative. And even if they wished to “forget” it, there were petitions from the other Orthodox Patriarchs and even orders issued to apprehend Kyrillos. Then why was he appointed? Maybe the authorities yielded to a French request, or they only intended to show good will towards it. Besides, it was the incentive of money, difficult to refuse. Most likely, the Ottomans expected Sylvester’s counteroffer to decide who would finally be patriarch. Such an oscillating attitude was sometimes applied in appointing patriarchs of Constantinople or *beys* (ruling princes) in Wallachia and Moldavia. It is also possible that the Ottoman authorities had no intention to allow Kyrillos to be patriarch of Antioch for a long period of time.

27 Roland Puchot, Count des Alleurs, was ambassador of France in Constantinople between 1747 and 1754.

28 Letter of Roland Puchot, Count des Alleurs, to Antoine Louis Rouillé, state secretary of the Navy, September 15, 1752, ANF, MS AE/B/I/430, f. 328r–335v.

29 For Francesco Girolamo Bona, see Frazee, *Catholics and Sultans*, p. 158, 187.

30 D’Avril, “Les Grecs Melkites”, 3, 1898, 1, p. 11–12.

Kyrillos took control of the See of Damascus, although not in person, but through a representative. His tenure as officially recognized patriarch of Antioch lasted only a little over a month.³¹ After its failure, it became increasingly clear that Kyrillos was not able to occupy the patriarchal see in Damascus. He would only be the head of a Greek Catholic or Uniate Church, like the ones of Eastern Europe. This was Kyrillos's request in his letters to the king of France and to the Dauphin in 1750.³² He asked for an intervention before the Ottoman authorities to be recognized as patriarch of the Catholic *Rûm*, independent of the "Greek" patriarch of Antioch.

How did Sylvester succeed in fighting back? He returned at once from Moldavia, probably by sea (since a letter testifies to his presence in Galați) and asked the support of his friends and allies in Constantinople. With their help and the right sums of money, he succeeded in reversing the decision and obtaining his reinstatement as patriarch of Antioch. As mentioned above (see Ch. 6.2), Sylvester moved quickly. He also had to borrow huge amounts of money. In trying to obtain the most favorable terms, the patriarch strove to enlist all the help he could get. Two issues especially needed to be solved in a satisfactory manner.

The first issue was the so-called *miri*, the tax Kyrillos had promised to pay to the public treasury yearly.³³ As this tax was a recent invention, Sylvester wanted it annulled. However, the new yearly tax could not be avoided. His counselors recommended him to accept it in order not to jeopardize the success of the whole endeavor. This implied, of course, new expenses for the already very limited budget of the Patriarchate. Sylvester used all his influence at the Ottoman court to discontinue this payment obligation but, according to his letters, it was all useless, and he was forced to accept the new tax, to avoid bigger troubles. This tax was only a part of his debts, which he had incurred during his attempts to counter the influence of the Latinizing party, to secure his throne, and to regain it in 1745.

31 Letter of Fr. Rousset, September 15, 1750, Antoura, in *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, p. 169: "[...] de nos jours, nous avons vu le patriarche catholique s'emparer du siège patriarcal de Damas, par un commandement de la Porte, qui excluait le schismatique appelé Sylvestre; mais il ne tint le siège qu'un mois, encore fut-ce par procureur" ("[...] in our days, we have seen the Catholic patriarch seize the patriarchal See of Damascus, by order of the Porte, which excluded the schismatic called Sylvester; but he only held the See for a month, and even that by procurator". Rousset was the superior of the Jesuits in Damascus; see the letter of Roland Puchot, Count des Alleurs, to Jean Frédéric Phélypeaux, Count de Maurepas, state secretary of the Navy, May 16, 1749, ANF, MS AE/B/I/428, f. 73r–74v.

32 See Ch. 7 below.

33 For the name of the tax in Ottoman and Arabic sources (*mâl-i maktû* and *mâl mirî*, respectively), see Çolak, "When a Catholic is invested as the Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch", p. 36.

The second issue was the status of the Aleppo eparchy. The patriarch wanted to take advantage of the situation and obtain the reattachment of the Metropolis of Aleppo to the Patriarchate of Antioch. In the new *berat*, Sylvester succeeded in including Aleppo as one as the eparchies of the Patriarchate. In the beginning of December 1745, the question of Aleppo was favorably solved: the Metropolis was reattached to the Patriarchate of Antioch. He certainly was very proud of the restoration of Aleppo to the jurisdiction of the See of Antioch, as he mentioned it in at least three letters to his prominent supporters Constantine Mavrokordatos, then the prince of Wallachia, Parthenios of Jerusalem, and the *megas postelnikos* Constantine Sulutzaroglou (Sulutziaris). The patriarch of Jerusalem had signed a petition addressed to the Ottoman authorities in support of Sylvester on December 5, 1745, alongside Patriarch Paisios II of Constantinople.³⁴

An important element in this process was that, acting wisely, Kyrilos did not dare show up in Constantinople, nor in Damascus. Thus, the Orthodox patriarch of Antioch succeeded in reversing the situation in his favor. In less than a month, Kyrillos's *berat* was revoked and a new document was formulated for Sylvester.

Having thus secured his position, there is no evidence that Sylvester returned to Moldavia in 1746. He stayed in Constantinople and supervised the printing activity in Iași from a distance. A colligated volume of two polemical treaties was printed there in 1746, containing Arabic translations by Mas'ad Nashū and Sophronios of Kilis, with a total of 600 pages. The activity of the press in Iași continued in early 1747 with the publication of another polemical book, an Arabic translation of the *Lord's Supper* by Eustratios Argentis. Its printing was completed in February 1747, while Sylvester was still in Constantinople.

The patriarch's letters to John and Constantine Mavrokordatos reveal that Sylvester's new *berat* had been written by September 1745. The text of this document has not yet been located in the Ottoman archives, but the fact that it was issued is supported by several Greek sources.

In December 1745, Sylvester ordained new metropolitans to several Sees in the Patriarchate of Antioch: Aleppo, Tyre and Sidon, Emesa (Homs) and Hēlioupolis (Baalbek). The new metropolitan of Aleppo was Gennadios, who had been a teacher in the house of the *megas postelnikos* Constantine Sulutzaroglou (Sulutziaris). For each ordination, Sylvester secured a written permit from the patriarch of Constantinople. The new metropolitan of Aleppo was ordained in the church of Saint Nicholas in Agia, Constantinople, on December 2, 1745, as mentioned in the permit issued to Sylvester by the Patriarch of Constantinople. Jeremias of Tyre

34 Çolak, *Relations between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchates*, p. 152; Çolak, *The Orthodox Church in the Early Modern Middle East*, p. 149.

and Sidon was ordained on December 7 in the church of Saint Nicholas in Agia,³⁵ and Philotheos of Edessa on December 9 in the church of Saint John Prodromos in Palatas.³⁶ Seraphim was ordained as metropolitan of Hēlioupolis on December 17 in the church of Saint George of the *metochion* of Panagios Taphos.³⁷

A look at the list of new metropolitans shows that Sylvester ordained them for some of the eparchies where the Greek Catholics also had a parallel metropolitan. For example, the existence of Greek Catholic metropolitans of Tyre and Sidon and of Hēlioupolis was attested based on their signatures on a letter addressed in 1751 to the king of France.

The new metropolitans, especially Gennadios of Aleppo, had to obtain the necessary official documents before heading to their respective eparchies. In his letters, Sylvester mentioned that he prepared the new metropolitan for his departure to Aleppo by providing him with all he needed. The patriarch also expressed his fear that the new metropolitan would be rejected in Aleppo. Information from the city mentioned that the *Latinophrones* were collecting money and were writing petitions to reject Gennadios. The efforts to obtain from the central and local administrations the documents required for the new metropolitans can be traced in the Ottoman archives. Several documents are related to new metropolitans appointed in 1745, such as a document of March 8, 1746, related to Jeremias of Tyre and Sidon (Şaydā),³⁸ and a document of May 2, 1746, which mentions Seraphim of Hēlioupolis.³⁹

For Aleppo, there were well founded concerns that the new Orthodox metropolitan would encounter a certain opposition from the pro-Catholic party in the city. Sylvester had to enlist all the help he could get to ensure Gennadios's success in Aleppo. Several letters illustrate this effort. For example, on April 20, 1746, Sylvester wrote to John Mavrokordatos⁴⁰ and his brother Constantine, as well as to Parthenios of Jerusalem,⁴¹ about the fact that the *Latinophrones* of Aleppo asked for Maximos Ḥakīm to be their metropolitan. Sylvester wrote to Constantine Mavrokordatos, the prince of Wallachia, that he will try to prevent this from happening by the power of

35 MS 210 Ḥariṣā, f. 69v.

36 MS 210 Ḥariṣā, f. 70r.

37 MS 210 Ḥariṣā, f. 70v.

38 Çolak, *Relations between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchates*, p. 208–209.

39 Çolak, *Relations between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchates*, p. 209.

40 April 20, 1746, Sylvester to John Mavrokordatos, in MS 210 Ḥariṣā, f. 62r.

41 April 20, 1746, Sylvester to Parthenios of Jerusalem, in MS 210 Ḥariṣā, f. 62v.

money.⁴² On February 9 [1746 or 1747], he addressed a letter to prince Constantine asking his help against the *Latinophrones* in the form of recommendations to the patriarch of Constantinople, the archpriests, and the *archontes*.⁴³ In the *pittakion* (a short message attached to a letter) of the same letter, the patriarch mentioned that the people of Aleppo were not willing to accept the new metropolitan. They were collecting money and writing reports (*arzia*) to stop him.⁴⁴ He also asked for financial support from the prince, as the creditors were pressuring him, and he appealed to the patriarch of Constantinople to allow him collect *ziteia* (alms) in the city and elsewhere.

On March 1, 1746, Sylvester sent to Constantine Mavrokordatos a letter in Turkish addressed to the Ottoman court by the patriarch's enemies in Constantinople, to help Mavrokordatos better understand the plots devised against him. Also, he warned him that it was necessary to be careful, lest the enemies attain their goal by paying money. Sylvester also asked the prince to write to the *archontes* and his friends to take care of the patriarch of Antioch's situation, for the sake of their faith.⁴⁵ He was also asking him to intervene to the patriarch of Constantinople to counter the attacks of the *Latinophrones*.

Paisios II of Constantinople wrote at least twice to the inhabitants of Aleppo.⁴⁶ In the second letter, sent on June 26, 1746, after Gennadios's arrival in the city, Paisios wrote that Metropolitan Gennadios had informed him about their return to Orthodoxy. The Patriarch asked that the *fermanlides* not be harmed. The *fermanlides* were supposedly the inhabitants of Aleppo expressly mentioned in a *firman* so that measures would be taken against them. The new metropolitan asked the inhabitants of Aleppo to pardon these *fermanlides*, to reestablish peace in the city. Paisios II of Constantinople asked the city residents for a written profession of faith, signed by all clerics and lay *archontes*, and stamped with their seals.

The patriarch wrote again about this issue. He obtained an order (*igzari*) for the *fermanlides* to be pardoned.⁴⁷ They had to sign the confession "to clear themselves from the slander that they were 'Franks' and show that they were *Romaioi*, subject to the dogmas of the Eastern Church, and to its four Patriarchates" ("διὰ τὰ ἁθωώσιν

42 April 20, 1746, Sylvester to Constantine Mavrokordatos, prince of Wallachia, in MS 210 Ḥarīṣā, f. 63r.

43 MS 210 Ḥarīṣā, f. 32v.

44 MS 210 Ḥarīṣā, f. 32v–33r.

45 MS 210 Ḥarīṣā, f. 34r.

46 First letter in MS 210 Ḥarīṣā, f. 125r–127r.

47 For the term "ἑγξάρι φερμάνι", explained as "προσκλητική προσταγή" ("invitation order", "summons"), see D. Phôteinos, *Ιστορία τῆς πάλαι Δακίας τὰ νῦν Τρανσυλβανίας, Βλαχίας, καὶ Μολδαβίας*, vol. 3, Vienna, 1819, p. 372.

ἐαυτοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς συκοφαντίας ἐκείνης πῶς εἶναι Φράγγοι, καὶ νὰ φανερωθῶσι πῶς εἶναι Ῥωμαῖοι, ὑποκείμενοι εἰς τὰ δόγματα τῆς Ἀνατολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας, καὶ εἰς τοὺς τέσσαρας αὐτῆς π(ατ)ριάρχας”⁴⁸.

In July–August 1746, while he was in Constantinople, Sylvester was involved in the election of Matthaios of Libya as patriarch of Alexandria. Matthaios was at the time in Bucharest.

The patriarch also continued to exchange letters with Prince John Mavrokordatos, who entrusted him with a sum of money to be distributed to all the churches of Constantinople. In January 1746, Sylvester drafted a list of the churches in the Ottoman capital, an interesting document that provides rare information on the 18th century Constantinople.⁴⁹

The prince also sent gifts to Sylvester and asked him to buy gold foil (βαράκι) for him, which he needed for the works on a church (probably Frumoasa, in Iași), and to ask his representatives in the Ottoman capital to send a courier especially for that purpose.

Sylvester also mediated in the relation of John Mavrokordatos with Parthenios of Jerusalem, who was expecting the annual aid from Moldavia, which apparently was delayed, for some reason. In several letters exchanged with Mavrokordatos, Sylvester and Parthenios deal with this issue. In the meantime, in January 1746, Parthenios of Jerusalem was in Wallachia and intended to travel to Moldavia. Eventually, John Mavrokordatos was deposed and replaced by Gregory II Ghikas as prince of Moldavia in May 1747. Under these circumstances of political instability, Sylvester, who was in Constantinople, decided to travel to Wallachia.

6.3 Wallachia

In August 1746, Sylvester received an invitation from Prince Constantine Mavrokordatos to visit Wallachia. He wrote to him that because he had received the message on short notice, he could only leave five or six days after the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, August 15. He also needed an imperial permit to travel to Wallachia and asked for the prince’s representatives (*kapıkehaya*) to facilitate his access to the Porte. Sylvester probably left Constantinople after the end of August 1746.

In a letter Sylvester sent to the prince of Moldavia John Mavrokordatos, dated August 6, 1746, the patriarch mentioned that Constantine Mavrokordatos had

⁴⁸ MS 210 Șarișă, f. 6v-7r.

⁴⁹ MS 210 Șarișă, f. 62-62v.

invited him to visit Wallachia. The invitation was unexpected and found the patriarch unprepared, as he needed an imperial order for traveling. In the same letter, he thanked the prince for the aid provided to the patriarchal See and informed him that he had sent the requested gold foil (βαράκιον), but also mentioned the unrelenting creditors and the great debts of the Patriarchate.⁵⁰

A request for a permit to travel to Wallachia to collect alms without any hindrance was submitted to the Ottoman authorities on October 20, 1746.⁵¹ It is possible that Sylvester's journey to Wallachia began after this date.

The first clear indication that Sylvester had reached Bucharest is a letter dated February 10, 1747, addressed to Patriarch Paisios II of Constantinople, mentioning that the former was with the prince of Wallachia (Constantine Mavrokordatos).

Sylvester's presence and activity in Wallachia is documented by several sources. Mavrokordatos offered him financial support and, most importantly, endowed the Patriarchate of Antioch with a *metochion*. The official document dedicating the Monastery of Saint Spyridon in Bucharest to the patriarchate of Antioch dates from December 8, 1746.⁵² It might prove that at this date the patriarch was already in Wallachia. The monastery was renovated, and its church and buildings were rebuilt under Sylvester's supervision, in 1746 or 1747. The monastery also owned land and real estate, which provided annual revenue. Most of the documents about the monastery that are preserved in Romanian archives concern real estate transactions. Also, most of them are dated later, in the second half of the 18th and 19th centuries. Only a few documents date from the time of Patriarch Sylvester.⁵³

The story of the *metochion* is mentioned, among others, by Kōnstantinos (Kaisarios) Dapontes in his *Κατάλογος ιστορικός* (*Historical Catalogue*):

[...] ὁ μὲν Κωνσταντὴν βόδας αὐθέντευσεν εἰς Βλαχίαν καὶ Μπογδανίαν δέκα φοραῖς, ἔκτισε δὲ καὶ τὸ εἰς Βουκουρέστι ἱερὸν μοναστήριον τοῦ Ἁγίου Σπυρίδωνος, ἀφιερῶσας αὐτὸ εἰς τὸν τῆς Ἀντιοχείας θρόνον, διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὸν Σίλβεστρον Ἀντιοχείας εὐλάβειαν, καὶ ἀγάπην, ὁ ὁποῖος ἀπὸ τὸ Γιάσι ὑπῆγεν εἰς Βουκουρέστι.⁵⁴

50 MS 210 Ḥarīṣā, f. 64v-65r.

51 Çolak, *Relations between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchates*, p. 244.

52 V. Gh. Ion, *Actele secției Bunuri Publice – București. Mănăstirile: Slobozia lui Enache și Apostolache, Snagov, Spirea din Deal, Sf. Spiridon Nou și Sf. Spiridon Vechi*, Bucharest, 1954, p. 116, no. 15.

53 National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, Fond Sfântul Spiridon Nou.

54 Dapontes, “Κατάλογος ιστορικός”, p. 164–165.

[...] *Könstantin voivod* ruled in Wallachia and Bogdania [Moldavia] ten times, and he also built the Monastery of Saint Spyridon in Bucharest, dedicating it to the Throne of Antioch, because of the reverence and love he had for Sylvester of Antioch, who from Iași went to Bucharest.

According to recent research, Sylvester relocated the printing activity of Iași to this monastery. The theory is plausible, but it also raises certain questions. When was the typographical material moved from Moldavia to Wallachia? Were there additional implements, such as printing presses, acquired from Wallachia? Could Arabic books have been printed elsewhere in Bucharest, in an already established printing press? While punches, matrices, and even cast typefaces were easier to transfer, moving presses was a more difficult task. New data from the sources offers answers to a part of these questions.

Constantine Mavrokordatos supported Sylvester's printing activity in Bucharest. In 1747, two books were produced in Arabic: *The Book of Psalms* and the *Acts of the Synods of Constantinople*. At the present stage of research, no other Arabic book is known to have been printed in Bucharest. However, an Arabic *Akathistos* recently emerged, without any indication of the printing place or year, which could prove to be a book printed in Bucharest. Based on its illustration and typographical decorations, the book may be attributed to a printing press in Wallachia. For the production of this book, an entirely different type set was used, much different from the one employed for Sylvester's books and the later one used in Beirut. Because no known Arabic book was printed in Bucharest in 1748, when Sylvester's press was still there, it is still possible that one or more additional titles were printed, such as smaller books or booklets. The Arabic *Akathistos* may well be one of them, printed with a new set of typefaces manufactured by Sylvester's collaborators.

As attested by a brief note on a manuscript, during his stay in Wallachia, Sylvester also visited places outside Bucharest. Around the same time, in the summer of 1747, Neophytos, the metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia, traveled for the second time in his eparchy. The patriarch of Antioch also officiated marriage ceremonies for boyars and became immersed in Wallachia's social and religious life.⁵⁵ He may have delivered sermons in the prince's presence, as some texts in his codices suggest, although there is no way to attribute them to him with any degree of certainty. On August 4, 1747, the patriarch was again in Bucharest.

55 G. Diaconu, "Relațiile Patriarhiei din Antiohia cu Țările Române și închinarea Mănăstirii Sfântul Nicolae Domnesc Popăuți (I)", *Teologie și viață*, XXVI (XCII), 2016, 9–12, p. 182. For Sylvester in Wallachia, see Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians*, p. 207.

In 1748, Constantine Mavrokordatos was replaced with an old acquaintance of Sylvester, Prince Gregory II Ghikas. Curiously, the patriarch decided to leave Wallachia after residing there for more than two years. In an undated letter, probably written in the first months of 1748, Sylvester expressed his intention to meet Patriarch Paisios II of Constantinople after Holy Easter that year.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ G. M. Arampatzoglou, *Φωτεινός Βιβλιοθήκη, ήτοι επίσημα καί ιδιοτικά έγγραφα καί άλλα μνημεία σχετικά πρός τήν ιστορίαν του Οικουμενικού Πατριαρχείου μετά γενικών καί ειδικών προλεγόμενων*, 2, Constantinople, 1935, p. 167–168, no. ΣΤ' α/1.