

7 Back to Constantinople and “Arabia”

On October 25, 1748, Sylvester secured from the new patriarch of Constantinople, Kyrillos V, the permission to travel to the Ottoman capital.¹ It was, as the patriarch of Antioch noted, “the first letter we received when we came from Wallachia” (“πρώτη ἐπιστολή ποῦ ἐλάβαμε ἐρχόμενοι ἀπὸ τὴν Βλαχία”).² In a letter to Kyrillos V in October 1748, Gregory II Ghikas, the prince of Wallachia, acknowledged the efforts made by Sylvester, who had just left the country, to defend the Orthodox faith and print Arabic books.

[...] ὅπου νὰ εἰρηνεύσῃ Θεία τῇ βοήθειά ὁ ἀποστολικὸς ἐκεῖνος θρόνος ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τῆς μακαριότητός του, οὕτινος τὸν περὶ τοῦτου ἀγῶνα καὶ κηδεμονίαν καὶ ἐνταῦθα εἶδομεν, ἐπειδὴ καὶ ὧδε δὲν ἔπαυσεν ὑπεραγωνιζόμενος τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου, ἀλλὰ δι’ οὐκ ὀλίγων ἐξόδων ἐτύπωσε τὰς ἐκκλησιαστικὰς βίβλους ἀραβιστὶ πρὸς κήρυξιν τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ σύστασιν τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου ἡμῶν πίστεως.³

[...] until that Apostolic throne is pacified by the Divine help in the presence of his Beatitude, whose struggle and concern for it we also saw here, because even here he did not stop fighting for the right path [i.e., Orthodoxy], and with no small expense he printed church books in Arabic for the proclamation of the truth and the support of our Orthodox faith.

After his arrival in Constantinople in late October or November 1748, Sylvester visited the island of Chalki, where he met Paisios II, the former patriarch of Constantinople, and Kōnstantinos Dapontes, who had recently been released from prison. Sylvester knew Dapontes from Moldavia, where the latter held the office of *grand căminar* (senior official, member of the Divan, the state council). The patriarch took an interest in Dapontes’s work, as witnessed by the fact that he copied one of his compositions, a *kanon* written in 1741 at the Moldavian court.⁴ Sylvester and Paisios also convinced Dapontes to get married.⁵ Dapontes recalls Sylvester vividly in several of his writings, including the *Garden of Graces* and the *Historical*

1 Paisios II resigned on September 30, 1748. See M. D. Chamoudopoulos, “Πατριαρχικαὶ πινακίδες”, *Εκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια*, 2, 1882, 15, p. 230.

2 Letter of Kyrillos V of Constantinople to Sylvester, October 25, 1748, in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτιεὶος Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 168, no. ΣΤ’ α/2 (MS Damascus).

3 Letter of Grigorios II Ghikas of Moldavia to Kyrillos V of Constantinople, October 1748. See Arampatzoglou, *Φωτιεὶος Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 166–169; Beza, “Biblioteci mănăstirești în Siria, Atena și Insula Hios”, p. 11–12.

4 The *kanon* is dated December 12, 1741, “at the court of Moldavia”, cf. MS 210 Hârîșă, f. 9r–10v.

5 C. Dapontès, *Éphémérides Daces ou Chronique de la guerre de quatre ans (1736–1739)*, ed. by É. Legrand, vol. III, Paris, 1888, p. XXX.

Catalogue. The “Kōnstantinos *meḡas kaminaris*”, recipient of a letter written by Sylvester on August 9, 1746, might well be Dapontes. Sylvester replied to a letter written by this Constantine on July 2.⁶

The reason for Sylvester’s visit to Constantinople was the attempt to solve the question of Aleppo and to calm the “scandals” there “by the force of the powerful empire” (“μὲ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς κραταιᾶς βασιλείας”). In the Ottoman capital, with written permit from the patriarch of Constantinople, Sylvester officiated marriages such as the one of Anastasis and Zoitsa.⁷ Sylvester resided for a while in the palace of Gregory II Ghikas. In September 1749, he decided to head to his See in Damascus, so, he informed the prince about his departure. He moved to Kadıköy, where he “took *konakion*” (found a host) and prepared to travel to Damascus by land. From the known sources it is difficult to say when Sylvester left Constantinople. Apparently, in March 1750 the patriarch was still in the capital. In July 1751, he was in Smyrna.

In 1749, the issue around who was the rightful patriarch of Antioch could have surfaced again, as Pope Benedict XIV (1730–1748) demanded for Kyrillos to be reinstated, but the French diplomats chose not to act further in this matter.⁸

The situation in Aleppo did not develop as established in the new *berat* that reinstated Sylvester in 1745. In a letter of Count des Alleurs, the French ambassador in Constantinople, dated October 10, 1749, he mentions secret negotiations to detach Aleppo from the patriarchate of Antioch, to reestablish the privileges of the Metropolis of Aleppo lost five years before, and the return of Metropolitan Maximos of Aleppo, exiled in the Kesruwān.⁹

Later, news was spread from Damascus and Aleppo that there were troubles because of the schism. This is attested, for example, in a letter from Metropolitan Dionysios of Santorini to the Patriarch of Constantinople dated July 13, 1750. The metropolitan asked the patriarch to provide his help and support for “these small

⁶ MS 210 Ḥarīṣā, f. 66. If Sylvester’s correspondent is Dapontes, he was already in Crimea, seeking refuge in Bakhchysarai, at the court of Khan Selim II Giray, who received him on July 31, 1746. See K. K. Dapontes, *Κατρέπτης γυναικῶν*, vol. II, Leipzig, 1766, p. 290.

⁷ Permit of April 6, 1749, issued by the patriarch of Constantinople [Kyrillos V]. See Arampatzoglou, *Φωτεινός Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 170, no. ΣΤ’ α/4.

⁸ Letter of Roland Puchot, Count des Alleurs, French ambassador in Constantinople, to Jean Frédéric Phélypeaux, Count de Maurepas, state secretary of the Navy, May 16, 1749, ANF, MS AE/B/1/428, f. 73r–74v. See also the Pope Benedict XIV’s letter dated January 27, 1749, ANF, MS AE/B/1/423, f. 160–161v.

⁹ Letter of Roland Puchot, Count des Alleurs, to Antoine Louis Rouillé, October 10, 1749, ANF, MS AE/B/1/428, f. 150r–153v.

remainders of Orthodoxy” in the Patriarchate of Antioch.¹⁰ Other requests for support were addressed to Kyrillos V of Constantinople at about the same time by the Metropolitan Nikēphoros of Paiasios (letter of July 15, 1750).¹¹

In 1750, Kyrillos V of Constantinople elected Sophronios of Ptolemais (also known as Sophronios of Kilis) as metropolitan of Aleppo, replacing the *Latinophron* Maximos, after deliberating in the Synod and with Sylvester of Antioch to find a “worthy and capable and competent person” (“πρόσωπον ἄξιον καὶ ἱκανὸν καὶ ἀρμόδιον”). Kyrillos V wrote to the Aleppo residents to accept Sophronios, “who is also familiar to you by being from the neighboring parts of your city, and he is almost your compatriot, and he knows your manners and your condition, and your Arabic language” (“ὁ ὅποιος εἶναι γνώριμος καὶ εἰς ἑσᾶς μὲ τὸ νὰ εἶναι ἀπὸ τὰ πλησιόχωρα μέρη τῆς πολιτείας σας καὶ σχεδὸν συμπατριότης σας, καὶ ὅπου ἡξεύρει τὰ ἥθη σας καὶ τὴν κατάστασίν σας, καὶ τὴν διάλεκτόν σας τὴν Ἀραβικὴν”).¹² Sergios Makraios mentions that Sylvester sent from Jerusalem to Aleppo, as metropolitan, “ἄνδρα αὐτόχθονα τὸν ὁσιότητι καὶ σοφία λαμπρὸν κύρ Σωφρόνιον” (“kyr Sophronios, a native, outstanding in holiness and wisdom”).¹³ The election of Sophronios was also approved by the Ottoman authorities following a joint petition of Kyrillos V of Constantinople and Sylvester of Antioch recorded on April 17, 1750.¹⁴

Before 1750, while Sylvester was in Constantinople, a dispute broke out in the capital concerning the re-baptism of Roman Catholics and Armenians who became Orthodox. The events are presented by Sergios Makraios, but Sylvester’s part in them is unclear. Most likely, he kept himself outside the dispute. The conflict became quite serious, leading to street protests and the Ottoman authorities’ intervention.¹⁵

Sylvester was involved in another dispute, this one between the metropolitan of Amida, under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Antioch, and the metropolitan of Chaldia, dependent on the Patriarchate of Constantinople (with the see in Argyroupolis/Gümüşhane). It apparently concerned the boundaries of the two eparchies, and Sylvester defended the rights of his Patriarchate. He also asked for the help of two members of the local synod in Constantinople, the metropolitan

10 Arampatzoglou, *Φωτεινός Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 170–171, no. ΣΤ’ α/5.

11 Arampatzoglou, *Φωτεινός Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 171–172, no. ΣΤ’ α/6.

12 Delikanēs, “Ἀντιοχικά”, p. 98, and the entire document on p. 97–99.

13 Makraios, “Ὑπομνήματα ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱστορίας”, p. 217.

14 See Çolak, *Relations between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchates*, p. 202.

15 Makraios, “Ὑπομνήματα ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱστορίας”, p. 203–212.

of Nicomedia¹⁶ and the metropolitan of Cyzicus.¹⁷ This issue of jurisdiction was later solved in favor of the metropolitan of Chaldia, who obtained an imperial *berat* attaching the province to his eparchy. Sylvester turned again to the metropolitan of Nicomedia, asking him to obtain at least a decision that the metropolitan of Chaldia, now that he controlled most of his eparchy, paid the debt of the metropolitan of Amida, amounting to eight “purses”. If the revenues of the eparchy had been distributed equally to each metropolitan, the situation would have been different. But with the new arrangement, the metropolitan of Amida could not pay his share from the “ten houses” he still had in his eparchy. Sylvester also called the new arrangement illegal (“παράνομον”) and mentioned that the empire does not like the oldest records to be annulled (“εις τὴν κραταιοτάτην βασιλείαν δὲν στέργεται νὰ παραγραφοῦν τὰ ἀρχαιότατα κιοιτούκια”).¹⁸

In July 1751, at the time of the dispute between these two metropolitans, Sylvester was in Smyrna. After spending some time there, he went to the island of Chios, from where he wrote in February 1752 to the *megas spatharis* Manolakis, in Wallachia or Moldavia, asking about the princely donations for the monastery dedicated to the patriarchate of Antioch.¹⁹ Sylvester’s relations with the island of Chios are attested by a number of letters written or addressed to him in 1751–1753, conserved in the Damascus manuscript.²⁰ He wrote letters to the *didaskaloi* (teachers) of the island: Meletios, Theodosios [Skylitzis], and Kyrillos.²¹ The patriarch was also acknowledged as a member of the brotherhood of Saint Victor in Chios.²² The brotherhoods (ἀδελφάτα) were a form of local organization representing the quarters of the main city on the island.

In November 1752, Sylvester was in Adana, where he had arrived from Smyrna. In a letter sent from this city he appointed a new representative in Constantinople (*καπουκεχαγιάς*, *kapikehaya*), the *protopsaltis* Ioannis.²³

16 Letter of Sylvester to the metropolitan of Nicomedia, July 13, 1751, [Smyrna], in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειός Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 185–186, no. ΣΤ’ γ/1.

17 Mention of a letter sent to the metropolitan of Cyzicus on July 13, 1751, similar in content to the letter sent to the metropolitan of Nicomedia. See Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειός Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 186.

18 Letter of Sylvester to the metropolitan of Nicomedia, undated (perhaps after July 1753), in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειός Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 186–187, no. ΣΤ’ γ/2.

19 Letter of Sylvester to the *megas spatharis* Manolakis, February 1, 1752, Chios, in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειός Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 189, no. ΣΤ’ δ/2.

20 G. Hēlioupoleōs, “Επιστολαὶ τοῦ Πατριάρχου Ἀντιοχείας Σιλβέστρου (1752–1753)”, *Ἑλληνικά*, 8, 1935, p. 239–245. For the Damascus manuscript, see Ch. 2.1 above.

21 Hēlioupoleōs, “Επιστολαὶ”, p. 242–243.

22 Hēlioupoleōs, “Επιστολαὶ”, p. 244.

23 Letter by Sylvester to Kyrillos V of Constantinople, November 1752, Adana, in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειός Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 172–173, no. ΣΤ’ α/7.

In April 1753, Sylvester was “εἰς τὸν θρόνον μας” (“at our throne”), probably meaning in his eparchy, in the broad sense, or in Antioch, the historical See of the patriarchate, but he had not reached Damascus yet. He wrote to Kyrillos V of Constantinople to ask for help for Sophronios of Ptolemais in the event that he went to the capital to try to solve the issue of Aleppo.²⁴ Sylvester’s new representative in Constantinople, the *protopsaltis* Ioannis, kept the patriarch informed of the news in the capital by sending him letters. He sent them in different ways, to keep them safe. More news came from travelers such as the *protosynkellos* Makarios, who travelled from Constantinople to Damascus. The patriarch and the synod in Constantinople asked for Sylvester’s presence in the city to solve the problem of Aleppo, because the pro-Latin faction was trying to reinstate Maximos as metropolitan.²⁵

Another letter sent to Patriarch Sylvester by the *protopsaltis* Ioannis with a Tartar envoy reveals more details. It confirms that the presence of the patriarch of Antioch was needed to solve the issue of Aleppo. The supporters of Maximos were trying to establish him as an autocephalous metropolitan, independent from both Antioch and Constantinople. The pro-Latin metropolitan was supported by his brother “Mehmet effendi” and the French ambassador (“ὁ ἐλτζής τοῦ Φράντζα”).

Sophronios of Ptolemais also came to Constantinople to solve the issue with the document of his debt. He was encouraged by Ioannis, who told him that the whole story of the debt was created to make him leave Aleppo, and he should not be afraid. Apparently, the patriarch’s new representative was an active person who took care of many unsolved issues of the patriarchate. He repaid debts and interests, recovered pawned items belonging to the See of Antioch, and took care of the miter ordered in the city, most likely for the patriarch. He also informed the patriarch that the *protosynkellos* Makarios, who travelled by sea, will bring a sum of money, financial aid from the “αὐθέντης” (*authentēs*), one of the ruling princes of Wallachia or Moldavia, either Constantine Rakovitzas or Matthaïos Ghikas. He also wrote about the metropolitan of Amida, who was trying to solve the dispute he had with the metropolitan of Chaldia.²⁶ Ioannis also mentioned that he had enlisted the help of a certain *mullah* Mustafa (“ὁ Μουλλᾶ Μουσταφᾶς”), who was influential at the Ottoman court.

²⁴ Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειὸς Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 172–173, no. ΣΤ΄ α/7.

²⁵ Letter of the *protopsaltis* Ioannis to Patriarch Sylvester, June 9, 1753, [Constantinople], in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειὸς Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 174, no. ΣΤ΄ β/1.

²⁶ Letter of the *protopsaltis* Ioannis to Sylvester, June 28, 1753, [Constantinople], in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειὸς Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 175–176, no. ΣΤ΄ β/2. See another letter from Ioannis to Sylvester, dated July 14, 1753, in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειὸς Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 176–177, no. ΣΤ΄ β/3.

While on his tour in the eparchies of the Patriarchate of Antioch, Sylvester continued the correspondence with his contacts in the Romanian Principalities. On July 9, 1753, probably from Homs or on his way to this city, he wrote to the *megas spatharis* Nikolaos Rossetos (Nikolakis Rossetis), who had moved from Wallachia to Moldavia alongside the prince Matthaïos Ghikas (Fig. 9). The letter mentions the Monastery of Saint Nicholas in Botoșani (Popăuți), dedicated to the Patriarchate of Antioch, and its *hegumenos* Anthimos.²⁷

Sylvester of Antioch wanted to solve the problem of Sophronios of Ptolemais and was ready to spend as much money as necessary to save him from the calumnies of the residents of Aleppo. Sophronios's actions after he left Aleppo can be traced from one of Sylvester's letters addressed to Kyrillos V of Constantinople. He went to Patmos instead of joining Sylvester in Smyrna, as the patriarch wished. In the same letter, Sylvester mentioned a peace offer from the residents of Aleppo, who sent messengers while the patriarch was in Païasios and Antioch. They offered to give him presents if he would appoint Maximos as metropolitan of Aleppo, but Sylvester replied asking them to return to the faith of their ancestors.²⁸

The patriarch of Antioch also replied to a letter from Kyrillos V of Constantinople and the synod asking again for their support in the issue of Aleppo. He explained that he could not return to the capital because all the eparchies of the Antiochian See required his presence, and especially Damascus. The letter was sent from Homs (“ἀπὸ Ἑμέσσης”) on July 13, 1753.²⁹

The correspondence with the *protopsaltis* Ioannis reveals the efforts made by the patriarch in solving the question of Aleppo. To leave Damascus, he needed an order from the grand vizier mentioning that his presence was required in the capital for matters pertaining to the *Rhomaioi*. He also tried to obtain the exile of Maximos from Aleppo and to regain the control of the city through a representative.³⁰

Sylvester's correspondence also provides insight into how the distribution of letters functioned at the time. It often took months for a letter to reach their recipient, and in some cases they were lost. Sometimes duplicate letters were sent. This was the standard practice, for example, for the French embassy in Constantinople.

²⁷ Letter of Sylvester to *megas spatharis* Nikolaos Rossetos (Rossetis), July 9, 1753, in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειὸς Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 189–190, no. ΣΤ' δ/3. See also Iorga, *Textes post-byzantins*, p. 47–48.

²⁸ Letter of Sylvester to Kyrillos V of Constantinople, July 10, 1753, in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειὸς Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 177–178, no. ΣΤ' β/4.

²⁹ Letter of Sylvester to Kyrillos V and the synod of Constantinople, July 10, 1753, from Homs, in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειὸς Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 178–180, no. ΣΤ' β/4.

³⁰ Letter of Sylvester to Giannakis (most likely the *protopsaltis* Ioannis), July 14, 1753, from Homs (“ἀπὸ Ἑμέσσης”), in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειὸς Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 180–181, no. ΣΤ' β/6.

In the letter to his representative in Constantinople, Patriarch Sylvester mentioned three ways for the correspondence to be delivered safely: in Paiasios, to Hotza Mūsā Apostolis, in Antioch, to kyr Anastasis *sarafis*, and in Tripoli, to kyr Ilias, *kiatipi* of the pasha.³¹ The letters for the ruling prince of Wallachia and the boyars were also sent through the *protopsaltis* Ioannis.

The patriarch received news from his representative in Constantinople again in a letter written on August 28, 1753.³² The conflict between the metropolitans of Amida (dependent on the patriarchate of Antioch) and Chaldia (dependent on the patriarchate of Constantinople) ended with a settlement. The metropolitan of Amida (Diyarbakır) even received a permit to travel in the entire eparchy of Chaldia to obtain alms so he could repay his debts. The dispute between the metropolitan of Chaldia and the metropolitan of Amida left a paper trail in the Ottoman archives as well.³³

As for Sophronios of Ptolemais, he was at the time together with the patriarch of Alexandria, Matthaios, in Mega Revma, near Constantinople. They took refuge in the mansion of Constantine Mavrokordatos (“εις τοῦ Κωνσταντίνου Βόδα”) due to an epidemic that was ravaging the region.

The situation of the Metropolitan See of Aleppo turned again in favor of Maximos, who was officially appointed as metropolitan with the help of his brother, a renegade named Mehmet *effendi*, and of the French ambassador (“μὲ τὸ μέσον τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ του Μεχμέτ ἐφέντη καὶ ἐλτζῇ τοῦ Φράνζα”). Even the Patriarchate of Antioch’s influential man in the Ottoman system received a payment of a thousand *groschen*, according to his own statement.³⁴

In a reply to the *kapikihaya* Ioannis written in October 1753,³⁵ Sylvester insisted on two main issues. The first was solving the problem of Sophronios of Ptolemais, who had to be released from prison, as he had been forced to acknowledge in writing a fictitious debt and had been forced to flee Aleppo. The second issue was that of the control of the Metropolitan See of Aleppo. Sylvester insisted to enlist the help of the patriarch of Constantinople on both issues, offering to cover any necessary expenses. For the moment, the *berat* confirming Maximos could not be recorded in Aleppo. The new governor of the city, who had served in Egypt and

31 Arampatzoglou, *Φωτεῖος Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 181.

32 Letter of *protopsaltis* Ioannis to Sylvester, August 28, 1753, [Constantinople], in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτεῖος Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 181–182, no. ΣΤ’ β/7.

33 See the discussion and the references to the documents of 1749–1753 in Çolak, *Relations between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchates*, p. 211–212.

34 Arampatzoglou, *Φωτεῖος Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 182.

35 Letter of Sylvester to the *protopsaltis* Ioannis, October 1753, [Tripoli], in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτεῖος Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 182–184, no. ΣΤ’ β/8.

opposed the Latin-minded there (“τοὺς Λατινοφρονοῦντας”), was favorable to the Orthodox position.

In October 1753, Sylvester was in Tripoli and intended to reach Damascus to spend Christmas there. The patriarch was pleased by his tour of the eparchies of the Church of Antioch, as he found the people there were Orthodox and peaceful, and only very few had become Catholics (“τοὺς βρήκαμεν ὀρθοδοξοῦντας καὶ ἡρεμοῦντας καθὼς ἀγαποῦσαμε καὶ ὀλίγους τοὺς ἐν αὐταῖς ἅπαξ φθάσαντες γένεσθαι κακολύκους”).³⁶ The patriarch estimated that a third of the Christians of Aleppo were Orthodox, while the rest were Catholics. He also mentioned that they expected him and met him in Idlib (“εἰς Ἰτλίπιον”), near Aleppo. The patriarch asked Ioannis to send him the silver items that had been pawned. He also asked that the miter be decorated with multicolored glass instead of precious stones.

The two major issues, that of Sophronios and that of Aleppo, also featured in Sylvester’s letter to Kyrillos V of Constantinople of October 1753. He explained that it was impossible to return to Constantinople at the time and asked the ecumenical patriarch’s help in solving these issues.³⁷

In January 1754, Patriarch Sylvester was still in Tripoli, from where he sent letters to Dionysios, the metropolitan of Chios,³⁸ and to Neophytos, the metropolitan of Smyrna.³⁹

By 1750, the crisis provoked by the appointment of Kyrillos Ṭanās in 1745 as patriarch by the Ottoman authorities was largely over. Ṭanās, who had in practice been patriarch only for a month or so, although officially a little longer,⁴⁰ posed no longer a real threat to Sylvester’s position, confined as he was in his headquarters on Mount Lebanon. Although acknowledged by the pope and supported by numerically consistent and economically influent communities, especially in Aleppo, as well as by Western missionaries, Kyrillos Ṭanās succeeded only in creating a Greek

³⁶ The text contains a pun, as it refers to “κακολύκους” (“bad wolves”) instead of “Καθολικούς” (“Catholics”). Many Orthodox texts of the period avoided the use of the term “καθολικός” (“universal”) in connection with the Roman Catholic Church, thus rejecting its universal dimension.

³⁷ Letter of Sylvester to Kyrillos V of Constantinople, October 1753, in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειός Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 184–185, no. ΣΤ’ β/9.

³⁸ Letter of Sylvester to Dionysios, metropolitan of Chios, January 1753, [Tripoli], in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειός Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 187, no. ΣΤ’ γ/3. Before the letter is the title “1753, μηνὶ Ἰανουαρίῳ ἐπέμψαμεν τὰ παρόντα γράμματα ἀπὸ Τρίπολιν εἰς Χίον καὶ εἰς Σμύρνην” (“In the month of January 1753, we sent the present letters from Tripoli to Chios and Smyrna”). Because the second letter is dated January 31, 1754, the year 1753 must be a mistake.

³⁹ Sylvester to Neophytos, metropolitan of Smyrna, January 31, 1754, in Arampatzoglou, *Φωτειός Βιβλιοθήκη*, 2, p. 187–188, no. ΣΤ’ γ/4.

⁴⁰ See Çolak, “When a Catholic is invested as the Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch”, p. 29–55.

Catholic dissident Church, instead of securing the full control over the Church of Antioch, as Rome had wished.

In 1751, Kyrillos apparently changed his tactics. He seemed to renounce his claim to become the only patriarch of Antioch. Instead, he demanded to be recognized as patriarch of Antioch for the Catholics in Syria. He expressed his intention in a letter addressed that same year to the king of France and signed by metropolitans and other clerics and notables.⁴¹ He asked the king to secure a *berat* for him (*brévet*, in the text of the old French translation), which would establish him as Catholic patriarch of Antioch, different from the patriarch of the "schismatic Greeks" and independent of him. He added that securing such a document from the sultan would be an easy task for the king, through his ambassador.

Kyrillos's original letters and French translations of them are preserved in two manuscripts in the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris (henceforth, BnF), MS Arabe 6100⁴² and MS Arabe 6635.⁴³ MS Arabe 6635 also contains a "Mémoire de la députation de Cyrille VI Patriarche d'Antioche et des Églises de Syrie" composed by "Jean Agemi" (Yūḥannā al-ʿUjaymī) in May 1752. In MS Arabe 6100, there is also a letter addressed by Kyrillos VI to the Dauphin, son of Louis XV, dated 1751.⁴⁴

This new attitude meant, at least in theory, that Kyrillos, now styled Kyrillos VI, no longer contested Sylvester's position, recognizing him as the patriarch of the "schismatic Greeks". The two Churches within the Patriarchate of Antioch were established, in theory, as the Melkite Greek Catholic and the Greek Orthodox. In practice, the king of France would not or could not grant Kyrillos's request. The position of a Greek Catholic patriarch was not recognized by the Ottoman state at the time.

Echoes of Kyrillos's interventions to the king of France are present in a 1752 letter of the French ambassador in Constantinople, Count des Alleurs. He reviewed all the events of the 1745 appointment of Kyrillos and expressed his conviction that new efforts in this direction would only disturb the peace. Kyrillos's interventions to the court of France would only endanger the present situation. His request for a portrait of the French king to be placed in the monastery where he resided, replacing an older one, was also initially deemed as inopportune, as it

41 MS Arabe 6100, BnF, accessible online at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52501251z>. The translation is in MS Arabe 6635, BnF, accessible online at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10030487j>.

42 <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc33125n>.

43 <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc33591t>.

44 MS Arabe 6100, BnF, accessible online at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52501251z>.

would be inconvenient to place the portrait in the hands “of these Asians” (“de ces Asiatiques”).⁴⁵ Eventually, a portrait of Louis XV was sent to him through the French ambassador.⁴⁶

Ṭanās died in 1760, not before attempting to resign his position and impose a candidate of his choice as “Latin” patriarch of the Church of Antioch. He faced strong opposition from his bishops, many of whom were appointed by him, because they wished the new patriarch to be elected by a local synod. Ṭanās tried to impose his will, but the conflicts revealed the weaknesses in the Greek Catholic community.⁴⁷

The printing press established by ‘Abdallāh Zākhir continued to produce new books and editions of the previously published titles, becoming the main instrument in the transmission of Roman Catholic ideas among the Arabic-speaking population. Of course, new books were also provided by the printing press of the Propaganda Fide in Rome.

In Sylvester’s letters from 1750 onwards, he expresses his confidence that the situation was heading into the right direction. He could return to Damascus in a stronger position than before. To counteract the printing activity of the Latinizing party on Mount Lebanon, he planned to establish a new printing press in “Arabia”. This most likely refers to the one that functioned in Beirut in 1751–1753, supported by the *sheikh* Yūnus Nīqūlā.

The latest Greek documents in Sylvester’s codices date from 1753–1754. As a result, direct information is scarce for the last period of his patriarchate. However, an image of events after this date can be formed by supplementing the available texts with Greek documents preserved in other manuscripts, and with other sources.

Around 1756, Sylvester was asked by the Patriarch of Constantinople to take a position on the issue of re-baptism (ἀναβαπτισμός), referring to whether and how Catholics were to be re-baptized when they embraced the Orthodox faith. According to those in favor of re-baptism, the Latin-rite baptism by aspersion was considered invalid, and baptism by immersion was required.

The issue generated widespread controversies in Constantinople, leading to the emergence of rival groups among the Greek Orthodox. The patriarch of Constantinople decided in favor of re-baptism but apparently lacked the support of

⁴⁵ Letter of Roland Puchot, Count des Alleurs, to Antoine Louis Rouillé, September 15, 1752, ANF, MS AE/B/I/430, f. 328–335v. For the request of a portrait, see MS Arabe 6635, BnF, Paris, accessible online at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10030487j>.

⁴⁶ Letter of Roland Puchot, Count des Alleurs, to Antoine Louis Rouillé, January 17, 1753, ANF, MS AE/B/I/431, f. 27r–32v.

⁴⁷ See P. Bachel, “Une période troublée de l’histoire de l’Église melkite (1759–1794)”, *Échos d’Orient*, 14, 1911, 91, p. 340–351.

the metropolitans in the local Synod. Therefore, the ecumenical patriarch secured the support of the patriarchs of Alexandria and Jerusalem.

Sylvester of Antioch wisely took a moderate position and refused to sign the document before it was endorsed by the Synod of Constantinople. On April 28, 1755, a local synod of 18 metropolitans disagreed with the need for re-baptism. The fact is referred to in a letter of Matthaïos of Alexandria to Kyrillos V of Constantinople written on March 22, 1756. It also mentions that Sylvester refused to sign the decision concerning re-baptism.⁴⁸

It seems that before deciding on this issue Sylvester and Parthenios asked the opinion of Iakovos of Patmos, who was in Jerusalem at the time.⁴⁹ It is not clear whether Iakovos advised them not to get openly involved in the matter. Whatever the case was, the choice of the experienced patriarch of Antioch to remain neutral proved to be a good one. As we mentioned, the controversy produced riots in Constantinople, something the Ottoman authorities had tried to avoid. The requirement of re-baptism would also have made it more difficult for the Greek Catholics to return to the Orthodox Church and would also have had a negative effect on the relations between the Orthodox and the Latins.

⁴⁸ The original letter, also mentioning a letter of Sylvester, was offered for sale at an auction in Athens in 2014. See <https://vergosauctions.com/auctions/detail/category/4/auction/283/item/16516>.

⁴⁹ Ch. A. Papadopoulos, “Ανέκδοτος ἀλληλογραφία τοῦ πατριάρχου Ἀλεξανδρίας Ματθαίου Ψάλτου (1746-1166)”, *Εκκλησιαστικὸς Φάρος*, vol. 17, 1918, 142–144, p. 421.