

18 Glimpses of Sylvester of Antioch's Patriarchal Activities

18.1 Preparation of the Myrrh

One of the patriarchal prerogatives was the preparation and consecration of the Myrrh, or Holy Chrism. The whole procedure was quite elaborate; many ingredients were needed, and the resulting composition had to boil for a long time.¹ For the Patriarchate of Antioch, we know, for example, how patriarch Makarios III ibn al-Za'im prepared and consecrated the Holy Myrrh in 1660.²

According to the 18th-century historian Michael Brayk, Patriarch Sylvester prepared the Holy Chrism in 1754 in Damascus in the presence of two bishops, 17 priests, and nine deacons.³

Evidence in one of Sylvester's manuscript codices (MS 124 in the Patriarchal Library in Jerusalem) suggests that he had searched for information about the preparation of the Holy Chrism earlier, in the 1730s. He recorded the necessary ingredients, mostly spices and aromatic herbs, in Greek and Arabic (with Greek letters). He also transcribed from the *Holy Codex of the Great Church* (the Patriarchate of Constantinople) a procedure for preparing the Holy Chrism dating from 1709. Most likely, Sylvester prepared Holy Chrism in the 1730s, probably in Damascus. This is demonstrated by his statement that his presents to the metropolitans of Cyprus in 1735 included Holy Chrism (Ἁγίον Μύρον).⁴

1 For a description of the preparation and consecration of the Holy Myrrh in the Patriarchate of Constantinople, see <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-sanctification-of-the-holy-chrism>; Archim. P. Menevisoglou, *Tò Ἅγιον Μύρον ἐν τῇ Ὁρθοδόξῳ Ανατολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ*, Thessaloniki, 1971; Metropolitan P. Menevisoglou, *Μελετήματα περὶ Ἁγίου Μύρου*, Athens, 1999; A. Nikiforova, "The Consecration of Holy Myron in the Near East. A Reconstruction Attempt of the Greek-Melkite Rite (with the edition of Sinai Greek NF/ E 55 + Fragment E sine numero, A.D. 1156)", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 85, 2019, 1, p. 167–216.

2 Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLÉM* IV.2, p. 103. A text about this event is also recorded by Paul of Aleppo in his *Journal*. See Feodorov, *Paul of Aleppo's Journal. Syria, Constantinople, Moldavia, Wallachia and the Cossacks' Lands*, p. 68.

3 Panchenko, *Антология литературы православных арабов*, 1, Moscow, 2020, p. 345; Panchenko, *Arab Orthodox Christians under the Ottomans*, p. 95–96.

4 Ms. 124 Jerusalem, f. 8 v.

18.2 The *Sakkos* in the Benaki Museum

Among the exhibits in the Benaki Museum of Greek Culture in Athens there is a *sakkos* that has been associated with Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch. The liturgical garment was part of the Church items and archives brought to Greece after the exchange of population with Turkey in 1924, following the treaty of Lausanne. At first, the cultural objects which the Greeks from Asia Minor had brought with them were managed by a special institution, the Exchangeable [Items] Fund (Ταμείο Ανταλλάξιμων). Later, the items were distributed among various Greek institutions.

The *sakkos* in question belonged to the Metropolitan See of Argypopolis in Pontos (in the north-west of Asia Minor). According to the description on the museum's website, the vestment is made of "Persian silk woven with gold thread".⁵ Pieces of an older ecclesiastic garment, identified as a *phelonion*, were reused in making the *sakkos*. They bear an iconographic representation of the *Deisis* with Christ, the Holy Mother of God, and a winged Saint John the Baptist, as well as other figures of saints, mostly hierarchs. It also has an inscription in Georgian dated 1701–1702, which mentions that the *phelonion* was donated to the Georgian monastery of Saint John the Baptist in the desert of Sagarejo.⁶

The connection with Sylvester is more complex to prove, as no inscription on the *sakkos* mentions the patriarch. The Benaki Museum's website assures the visitor that it "belonged to Silvestros, patriarch of Antioch, who donated it to the archiepiscopal church of Saint George at Argypopolis in the Pontos in 1736". The source of this information is indicated in the exhibition catalogue published in English and French in 2011: it is the "codex or church register from Saint George in Argypopolis" where it is apparently mentioned that "the *sakkos* was dedicated to the church in 1737 by Sylvester Patriarch of Antioch". The same publication adds that: "In the same year he signed the inauguration document together with the metropolitan of Trebizond and the archbishop of Chaldia, creating the

5 https://www.benaki.org/index.php?option=com_collectionitems&view=collectionitem&id=143087&lang=en. The museum inventory number of the *sakkos* is 33708.

6 For a description of the Georgian component of the *sakkos*, the iconography, the inscription, and the context, see I. Nikoleishvili, E. Akhveldiani, "A Medieval Georgian Textile in the Benaki Museum (Athens): the *sakkos* of the Antiochene Patriarch with Georgian Embroidery", in C. Gilles, M.-L. B. Nosch (eds.), *Ancient Textiles. Production, Craft and Society. Proceedings of the First International Conference on Ancient Textiles, Held at Lund, Sweden, and Copenhagen, Denmark, on March 19–23, 2003*, Oxford, 2007, p. 150–157. See also A. Ballian (ed.), *Relics of the Past. Treasures of the Greek Orthodox Church and the Population Exchange. The Benaki Museum Collections*, Milan, 2011, p. 112.

Archbishopric of Ahiska (Akhaltseke) in Georgia (...)”.⁷ The catalogue also offers additional bibliography about the *sakkos*.⁸ While the first data provides an important clue (to be checked), for the second piece of information there is no source provided.

Ahiska was a Metropolis and not an Archbishopric; it had existed well before 1737, and at the time it was under Ottoman rule. The codex mentioned is the official register of the Metropolitan church of Saint George in Argyroupolis, covering the period from 1723 to approximately 1906.⁹ The manuscript currently belongs to the Benaki Museum in Athens, after it was held for a period by the Exchangeable [Items] Fund. Among others, it provides information on the *sakkos* offered by Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch to the Church of Saint George in Argyroupolis. From a document issued by Sylvester and recorded in the manuscript, the reader learns that the patriarch offered to the church “an archieratic *sakkos*, sewn with gold thread, with a neck piece also embroidered with gold thread” (“ἐν σάκκον ἀρχιερατικόν, χρυσοῦφαντον, ἔχων καὶ τραχηλίαν χρυσοκέντητην”).¹⁰

From the description in Sylvester's document and the provenance note of the Benaki Museum's *sakkos*, i.e., the same church in Argyroupolis, it is safe to identify this item with the one dedicated by the patriarch of Antioch to this church. At the same time, Sylvester gave to the church the sum of 250 *groschen*.¹¹ The church of Saint George in Argyroupolis in Pontos was the Cathedral of the Archbishopric (later, the Metropolitan See) of Chaldia. The region was under the canonical jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, but there was a close connection with the Patriarchate of Antioch's nearby Metropolis of Ahiska, because many residents of the eparchy of Ahiska were working in the silver mines of Argyroupolis (which gave the city its Greek name).

The *sakkos* from Argyroupolis, now in the Benaki Museum, seems to be the one donated by Sylvester to the main church of the Archbishopric of Chaldia. It was mentioned and studied in several scholarly publications, and it may be considered, even in its reworked condition, one of the important church vestments surviving from the 18th century. The earlier Georgian inscription preserved on the *sakkos*, which contains information on the older *phelonion*, even if unrelated to

⁷ Ballian (ed.), *Relics of the Past*, p. 112.

⁸ D. Fōtopoulos, A. Delēvorias, *Η Ελλάδα του Μουσείου Μπενάκη*, Athens, 1997, p. 312–313, ill. 510–512.

⁹ V. Chatzopoulou, *Κατάλογος ελληνικών χειρογράφων του Μουσείου Μπενάκη (16ος-20ος αιώνας)*, Athens, 2017, p. 669–671, no. 373 (TA 327). For the manuscript, see also Ballian (ed.), *Relics of the Past*, p. 102–103.

¹⁰ Papadopoulos, “Ιστορικά σημειώματα”, p. 34 (18–58).

¹¹ Papadopoulos, “Ιστορικά σημειώματα”, p. 33–34.

Sylvester or the Patriarchate of Antioch, is of special interest. It is not known how it came into Sylvester's possession, how it was transformed into a *sakkos*, and who donated it to the church in Argypoupolis. Maybe it was part of the old archbishop's objects that had belonged to the metropolitan of Ahiska and were recovered by the Patriarchate of Antioch after 1733. The list of these objects includes "a *sakkos*" ("σάκκος ἔν") but it is not possible to identify it with the goldthread *sakkos* now in the Benaki Museum. No additional information can be obtained from the remark that the items of the former metropolitan of Ahiska were "all old (used) objects" ("ὅλα πεπαλαιωμένα πράγματα").¹²

Of the objects associated with Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch, the *sakkos* from Argypoupolis in Pontos, currently in the Benaki Museum, is one of the items which have received the most attention from scholars.¹³

Another vestment associated with Sylvester of Antioch was much less known and studied: an *omophorion* ("ὠμοφόριον") signed by Sophia, Sophronia "μοναχή", and Maria "μοναχή", embroidery masters of the 18th century, probably in Constantinople. The item is now preserved in the collections of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul.¹⁴

18.3 Sylvester of Antioch's Portraits, Painted and Literary

No painted portrait of Sylvester is known to survive. However, it is possible that a physical portrait of the patriarch did exist. Many of the churches in the Patriarchate of Antioch were renovated or reconstructed, and thus, most of the old frescoes were lost. Collections of books and other historical items were damaged by earthquakes, fires, and wars in the region. In the more remote areas of Syria, churches and monasteries were affected by conflicts even in the 21st century. Old artefacts, among them icons painted by Sylvester, were destroyed or damaged as recently as the 2010s, as were Sylvester's icons in the church of Saint George al-Ḥamidiya in Homs and the icons in the monastery of Saint Thekla in Ma'lūla, damaged because of the Syrian War. So, if a portrait existed in a church mural or as a painting, it could have been destroyed.

¹² See the list in Papadopoulos-Kerameus, "Συμβολαὶ εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τοῦ Ὁρους Σινῶ", p. 250.

¹³ For illustrations of the *sakkos*, see Fōtopoulos, Delēvorias, *Ἡ Ελλάδα του Μουσείου Μπενάκη*, p. 312–313, ill. 510–512; Nikoleishvili, Akhveldiani, "A Medieval Georgian Textile", p. 151–153; Ballian (ed.), *Relics of the Past*, p. 113.

¹⁴ M. S. Theochare, "Ἐκ τῶν μεταβυζαντινῶν ἐργαστηρίων τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως. Ἡ κεντήτρια Εὐσεβία", *Ἐπετηρίς Ἐταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν*, 35, 1966–1967, p. 241.

It is even possible that during the four decades of Sylvester's patriarchate, in Constantinople or elsewhere, a Western artist depicted him and the painting or drawing still exists somewhere in a private or public collection. Sylvester of Antioch arrived in Moldavia three years after the visit of the famous Swiss painter Jean-Étienne Liotard who, while he was in Iași, painted portraits of several prominent individuals, among them Constantine Mavrokordatos (Fig. 7).¹⁵ In Moldavia, according to the biographical account written by his son, Liotard also painted a portrait of the patriarch of Jerusalem, most likely Parthenios (1737–1766).¹⁶ The surprises in finding unknown documents and manuscripts related to Sylvester of Antioch and the state of the research of his biography prove that further discoveries are possible. So, the quest for a painted portrait of Sylvester of Antioch is not over, considering the existence of portraits of other Church personalities of the time.

In Wallachia, portraits of metropolitans of Ungro-Wallachia were painted. An example is Neophytos of Crete, who met Sylvester. Portraits of several successive Patriarchs of Jerusalem from the 18th century have been preserved: Dositheos, Chrysanthos, Ephraim, and Avramios. In contrast, there are only a few portraits of Patriarchs of Constantinople dated in the 18th century. Some of these are engravings, others are frescoes. Portrayed patriarchs include Seraphim and Samuel. There are also some portraits of Patriarchs of Constantinople in books published in Western Europe, without mentioning their name (see, e.g., Fig. 1 and 2). No portraits of 18th-century Orthodox Patriarchs of Antioch have been preserved, for the above-mentioned reasons. It is worth noting that several portraits of clerics of the Greek Catholic Melkite Church, including abbots, were painted, revealing the influence of Western models. There is even a mention of a portrait of Kyrillos VI Țanās, the claimant to the patriarchal throne of Antioch.¹⁷ A portrait of Euthymios Șayfî, the metropolitan of Tyre and Sidon, is also known, though

15 For Liotard's activity in Moldavia, see R. Niculescu, "Jean-Étienne Liotard à Jassy 1742–1743", *Genava. Revue d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie*, 30, 1982, p. 127–166; R. Niculescu, "Portretul unui domn din Epoca Luminilor. Constantin Mavrocordat văzut de Jean-Étienne Liotard", *Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei. Seria Artă Plastică*, XLI, 1994, p. 43–54.

16 "Le prince de Moldavie ayant entendu parler de lui à Constantinople, où il était, s'y fit peindre d'abord par lui et ensuite le fit venir à sa Cour; à Jassi, et lui fit faire son portrait, ceux de sa fille, de sa femme et du patriarche de Jérusalem. Il y était arrivé le 15 octobre 1742; il y resta dix mois et demi, qu'il employa à faire pour le prince les dessins de tous les Vodas qui avaient régné précédemment en Valachie; celui-ci se nommait Constantin Mavrocordato, prince doux et bon; il aimait les sciences", in L. Gielly, "La biographie de Jean-Étienne Liotard écrite par son fils", *Genava. Revue d'histoire de l'art et d'archéologie*, 11, 1933, p. 196. See also Niculescu, "Jean-Étienne Liotard à Jassy", p. 164.

17 See Ch. 1.2.

it may be of a later date. There is also a portrait of ‘Abdallāh Zākhir, believed to have been painted by himself, but there are doubts about this.

No literary portrait of Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch is known either, although there are some reports on his personality and moral features, composed both by his supporters and his opponents.

Eustratios Argentis wrote about “the truly apostolic man and divine father and patriarch *kyrios* Sylvester, whom, if someone names the new Athanasios the Great, or compares him with his predecessor the divine Meletios, will not be wrong in the face of truth” (“ὁ ὄντος ἀποστολικὸς ἀνὴρ καὶ θεῖος πατήρ καὶ πατριάρχης κύριος Σίλβεστρος, τὸν ὅποιον ἂν ὀνομάσῃ τινὰς νέον μέγαν Ἀθανάσιον ἢ αὐτὸν παραβάλλῃ μὲ τὸν ποτε προκάτοχόν του θεῖον Μελέτιον, οὐκ ἂν διαμάρτοι τῆς ἀληθείας”). Argentis draws a literary portrait of Sylvester:

“Ἦλεγξεν, ἐπετίμησεν, παρεκάλεσεν, ἐπέστη εὐκαίρος, ἀκαίρως ἔργον ἐποίσεν, εὐαγγελιστοῦ τὴν διάνοιαν αὐτοῦ πεπληροφόρηκεν, ἔπαθεν, ὑπέμεινεν, ἔφυγεν, ἦλθεν, ἐδιώχθη, ἐζημιώθη, ἐκινδύνευσεν κατὰ πάντα τρόπον, καὶ λόγῳ εἰπεῖν, ἐδοκίμασεν ὅσα περιγράφει ἡ ἐκκλησιαστικὴ ἱστορία περὶ τῶν μεγάλων ἐκείνων πατριάρχων, Ἀθανασίου καὶ Μελετίου.”¹⁸

[...he] admonished, rebuked, prayed, stopped at the right moment, did a work at the right time, set his mind as an Evangelist, suffered, endured, left, returned, was persecuted, was damaged, was in danger in every way, and for the sake of saying it, he experienced what the ecclesiastical history reports about those great patriarchs, Athanasios and Meletios.

Neophytos VI of Constantinople wrote in 1736 about the patriarch of Antioch:

‘Ο πνευματικὸς ποιμὴν καὶ προστάτης τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ αὐτοῦ θρόνου μακαριώτατος καὶ ἀγιώτατος πατριάρχης Ἀντιοχείας κύριος Σίλβεστρος, ὁ ἐν Ἀγίῳ Πνεύματι ἀγαπητὸς καὶ περιπόθητος ἀδελφὸς ἡμῶν καὶ συλλειτουργὸς καὶ περὶ τὸ ὀρθόδοξον σέβας διάπυρος ζηλωτὴς καὶ τῶν ἱερῶν δογμάτων τῆς Ανατολικῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἐκκλησίας δεφεντευτὴς προθυμότητος, μεγάλως ἠγωνίσθη καὶ ἐκοπίασε καὶ ὑπέφερε περιστάσεις καὶ καταδρομὰς καὶ κινδύνους καὶ ἐπροσπάθησε λόγῳ καὶ ἔργῳ νὰ φυλάξῃ καὶ νὰ συστήσῃ ὅσον τὸ δυνατόν ἀνεπιβούλευτον καὶ ἀνόθευτον τὴν ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ποιμαινομένην λογικὴν τῶν προβάτων ποίμνην, καὶ νὰ ὀρθοτομήσῃ τὸν λόγον τῆς εὐσεβείας κατὰ τὸ χρέος τῆς ποιμαντικῆς ἐπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ.”¹⁹

The spiritual shepherd and protector of his patriarchal throne, his Beatitude and Most Holy Patriarch of Antioch *kyrios* Silvestros, our beloved and longed-for brother in the Holy Spirit,

¹⁸ Letter of Eustratios Argentis to *hieromonachos* Eusebios, April 1751, Egypt (“ἀπὸ Μισίρι”); Uspenskii, *Александрійская Патриархия*, p. 342.

¹⁹ Letter of Neophytos VI of Constantinople to two metropolitans, two archbishops, the clergy, and the lay people of their eparchies in north-western Asia Minor, asking for support for the Patriarchate of Antioch, June 10, 1736, in Papadopoulos-Kerameus, “Συμβολαὶ εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τοῦ Ὁρους Σινᾶ”, p. 239.

and zealous for the Orthodox faith and the holy doctrines of the Eastern Church of Christ, most diligent defender, he very much labored and toiled and suffered trials and raids and dangers and endeavored by word and deed to preserve and to reunite as far as possible without treachery and falsification the rational flock shepherded by him, and to rightly speak the word of piety according to the duty of his pastoral mission.

In addition, a contemporary note in MS 187 of the Library of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem declares Sylvester “a confessor of Orthodoxy in our times” (“τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας ἐφ’ ἡμῶν ὁμολογητῆς”).²⁰

During his journeys in the Romanian Principalities, Sylvester of Antioch met two of the major figures of what was to become the “Renaissance” of the Orthodox ascetic movement in the 18th and early 19th century. Sylvester is mentioned in the *Life* of Paisios Velichkovsky (Rom. “Paisie de la Neamț”, 1722–1794),²¹ in the context of efforts made to persuade a group of “Old Believers” to return to Orthodoxy. The event took place during Sylvester’s presence in Moldavia in 1744 or the first half of 1745. Later, in Bucharest, the *starets* (elder) Vasile of Poiana Mărului (1692–1767) met the patriarch of Antioch and asked his advice, as recorded in a book published in the early 19th century.²² The meeting took place in Bucharest, in the presence of prince Constantine Mavrokordatos. The year mentioned in the source, 1749, should be corrected to 1747 or 1748, when Sylvester was still in Wallachia. Mavrokordatos was ruling prince of Wallachia only until April 1748.

On the other hand, Peter IV Jarayjiri’s remarks illustrate how Sylvester was presented by the Greek Catholics. In 1879, before he became patriarch of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, he described Sylvester as “an apostate Latin priest” who “obtained from the Porte, through the protection of the English agents, to be acknowledged as patriarch, and he issued an interdiction for the Sultan’s subjects to embrace the union wherever there was no consul of the

20 Karnapas, “Ο πατριάρχης Ἀντιοχείας Σίλβεστρος”, *Νέα Σιών*, 3, 1906, p. 32.

21 For Paisios Velichkovsky, see A.-A. Tachiaos, *Ο Παΐσιος Βελιτσκόφσκι (1722–1794) και η Ασκητικοφιλολογική σχολή του*, Thessaloniki, 1964; A.-A. Tachiaos, *Ο Όσιος Παΐσιος Βελιτσκόφσκι (1722–1794). Βιογραφικές πηγές*, Thessaloniki, 2009; S. Joantă, *Treasures of Romanian Christianity – Hesychast Tradition and Culture*, Whitby, Ontario, 2013; G. Speake, *A History of the Athonite Commonwealth. The Spiritual and Cultural Diaspora of Mount Athos*, Cambridge, 2018, p. 213–233; H. I. Groza, *Saint Paisius Velichkovsky of Neamts and Paisianism*, Citrus Heights, 2019.

22 *Întrebătoare răspunsuri adunate din Sfințita Scriptură, pentru depărtarea de bucatele ceale oprite făgăduinții călugărești*, [Neamț], 1816, p. [7]–[8] (unnumbered pages in the Foreword). See also V. Radu, “Mănăstirea Sf. Spiridon și patriarhul Silvestru al Antiohiei”, *Revista istorică română*, III, 1933, 1, p. 27; K. Kenneth (ed.), *Lebensbuch des Basil von Moldawien*, Freiburg Switzerland, 2009, p. 15; Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians*, p. 205.

French nation”.²³ As Joseph Nasrallah remarked, the point of view on Sylvester’s personality and achievements depended on the authors’ stance in the Orthodox-Catholic disputes.²⁴

18.4 Sylvester of Antioch’s Seals

There are two seals of Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch that we know about. The first one is small and does not have a figurative element. It only bears the Greek and the Arabic inscription. It was used for the patriarch’s correspondence with the Ottoman authorities (Fig. 61).²⁵

The second seal is larger and bears, in addition to the Greek and Arabic inscriptions, the image of Saint Peter enthroned (Fig. 60). This resembles Patriarch Athanasios Dabbās’s seal, which was probably used as a model.²⁶ Both of Sylvester’s seals indicate in Arabic and Greek numerals the year 1724, when Sylvester was elected patriarch. It is very likely that the seals were manufactured in Constantinople in September 1724, or shortly after, because they were liable to be used immediately for social interactions.

The Greek inscription on the first seal is “Σίλβεστρος ἐλέω Θεοῦ Π(ατ)ριάρχης Ἀντιοχείας, αψκδ ’” (“Sylvester by God’s mercy Patriarch of Antioch 1724”), inscribed in capital letters. It is an abbreviated form of Sylvester’s official title, probably because the space was limited. The Arabic inscription is: *Silfastrūs Baṭriyark al-Anṭākī 1724*, i.e., “Sylvester Patriarch of Antioch 1724”, in Arabic:

سلفستروس بطريك الانطاكي ١٧٢٤

It is interesting to note the form سلفستروس instead of سلبستروس, which occurs more frequently in texts. The small seal resembles Athanasios Dabbās’s equally small seal used on official documents addressed to the Ottoman administration.

On the larger seal, the image of Saint Peter in the center is accompanied by the Greek name Ὁ Ἅγιος Πέτρος (“Saint Peter”). There are also two inscriptions, an Arabic

²³ D’Avril, “Les Grecs Melkites”, p. 11.

²⁴ Nasrallah, Haddad, *HMLEM* IV.2, p. 89.

²⁵ The seal is present on many petitions registered by Sylvester with the Ottoman authorities, sometimes alongside those of other patriarchs.

²⁶ For the image of Athanasios III Dabbās’s seal, see Tchentsova, “Les documents grecs du XVII^e siècle: pièces authentiques et pièces fausses, 4”, p. 173–195, il. 2. Sylvester’s seal is present on a document issued on February 1, 1739, Damascus, in the National Archives of Romania, Bucharest, shelfmark Achiziții Noi, MMMXL/3. For another image of the seal, see Nassour, *Σίλβεστρος πατριάρχης Αντιοχείας*, p. 223–224.

one placed around the image and a Greek one on the outer circle. The two inscriptions render the patriarch's entire title, as there was enough space on the seal.

The Greek inscription is inscribed in capital letters:

“Σίλβεστρος ἐλέω Θεοῦ πατριάρχης τῆς μεγάλης Θεουπόλεως Ἀντιοχείας καὶ πάσης Ἀνατολῆς ,αψκδ´” (“Sylvester with God's mercy Patriarch of Antioch and All the East 1724”).

The Arabic inscription is:

سلفستروس برحمة الله تعالى البطريرك الانطاكي وسائر المشرق ١٧٢٤

Sylvester of Antioch's seals are an important element in researching the patriarch's works. Apparently, they were not changed during his term in office. It was common for patriarchs to keep using the same seal, as this demonstrated reliability and consistency. Documents imprinted with these seals are rare, at least among the letters that were published. They should be studied in the broader context of the Orthodox Patriarchs' seals of the 18th century, a study that could lead to interesting outcomes.