

## Preface

On July 13, 1724, Patriarch Athanasios III Dabbās of Antioch died; he had advised that his young protosynkellos, Sylvester the Cypriot, succeed him. Athanasios's supporters in Aleppo immediately sent envoys and funds to Constantinople to secure a *berat* for Sylvester. Meanwhile, the Capuchins and the Jesuits in Damascus rallied 400 signatories behind Sārūfīm Ṭānās, whom they consecrated as patriarch under the name “Cyril” on October 1, 1724. Concerned about “Latin deviation”, the Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremias III had already petitioned the grand vizier; on August 18/29, 1724, the Porte issued a *berat* instructing that the See of Antioch be given only to “an imperially trusted person who follows the ancient rite”, and expressly forbidding any local Syrian candidate. As a result, Sylvester, then residing on Mount Athos, was elected in Constantinople on September 24, 1724.<sup>1</sup>

Sylvester stayed in the capital to secure French goodwill. During an audience on October 22, 1724, he assured Ambassador Jean-Baptiste Louis d'Andrezel that he would maintain peace if Latin missionaries ceased proselytizing among the Rūm.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, he sent Bishop Timotheos of Ḥamā as vicar (*wakīl*) to Aleppo and a *qabī* (kapıcı) to take control of Damascus.<sup>3</sup> Cyril Ṭānās and his allies fled to Mount Lebanon.<sup>4</sup> Gerasimus, bishop of Aleppo, was captured and exiled to Lemnos, and later to Mount Athos.

After arriving in Aleppo on November 9, 1725, Sylvester was welcomed as Athanasios's designated successor.<sup>5</sup> However, his strictness quickly caused him to

---

1 These events are documented in various sources and recounted in different studies. Most recently, they were retold in B. Heyberger, “La division de l'Église d'Antioche dans son contexte local et global”, in B. Heyberger, Ž. Pasha, R. el Gemayel (eds.), *La division du patriarcat grec d'Antioche en 1724 et la construction des identités confessionnelles orthodoxe et catholique*, Rome, 2024 (henceforth Heyberger, “La division”), p. 49–61; M. Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch. Life and Achievements of an 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Christian Orthodox Patriarch*, Berlin/Boston, 2024 (henceforth Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*), p. 42–45.

2 The detailed story of this meeting was retold by Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 54–57.

3 Sylvester of Antioch, *Acts of the Church Synods Held in Constantinople*, București (Bucharest), Monastery of St Spyridon, 1747 (Vienna, Austrian National Library 30439-A ALT MAG), f. 109r; see <http://data.onb.ac.at/rec/AC10320457>.

4 See M. Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām (1720–1782)*, ed. Q. al-Bāshā, Harisa (Lebanon), 1930, p. 5; ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Ṭrād, *Mukhtaṣar tārīkh al-asāqifa allaḡīna ruqqū ri’āsāt al-kahanūt al-jalīla fī madīnat Bayrūt fī al-qarnayn al-thāmin ‘ashar wa-l-tāsi ‘ashar*, ed. N. Qā’idbay, Beirut, 2002 (henceforth Ibn Ṭrād, *Mukhtaṣar tārīkh*), p. 55.

5 Regarding the arrival of Patriarch Sylvester to Aleppo, see Ni’ma ibn Tūmā, *‘Ujālat rākīb al-tarīq li-man raḡīya bi-taqlīd al-talīq*. This work was partially edited in Q. al-Bāshā, *Tārīkh ṭā’ifat al-rūm al-malakīya wa-al-ruhbānīya al-mukhalīṣīya*, vol. 2, Ṣaydā, 1939 (henceforth Ibn Tūmā, *‘Ujālat*

become estranged from the city. In eight months, he issued about fifty excommunications, compelled clergy to sign an anti-Latin profession of faith, prohibited the consumption of fish at Lenten banquets, and dispatched çavuşes to record which Orthodox individuals had attended the Corpus Christi service at the chapel of the Friars Minor on June 20, 1726.<sup>6</sup>

Sylvester's cultural policy was equally militant. He invited a master from Patmos, Kyr Iakobos, to establish a Greek school and enforced a strict anti-Latin profession of faith among the clergy, punishing those who resisted. He proscribed the veneration of saints promoted by the Latin missionaries, including Saint Joseph and Saint Elijah. He introduced theological reforms, including a more explicit affirmation of the Holy Spirit's role in the Eucharistic transformation.<sup>7</sup> Muslim notables joined over 400 Rûm in suing him for extortion, and Timotheos, the bishop of Ḥamā, was subjected to corporal punishment for pawning an ecclesiastical plate. On August 19, 1726, Sylvester secretly escaped at night to Latakia, then to Tripoli, and clandestinely returned to Constantinople.<sup>8</sup> The Aleppians likely emphasized that Athanasios Dabbās had showed greater tolerance in these specific areas, which fueled increased hostility in Sylvester. As a result, before leaving Aleppo, Sylvester proceeded to anathematize Athanasios Dabbās, a move that worsened the fervor among the Aleppians.<sup>9</sup>

Leaving Syrian land, Sylvester endured six long years, which included traveling to raise funds and provide support. The first three years were marked by confusion: the Patriarch could not return to his See because of the trial against him, yet the Catholics could not install Ṭanās because Sylvester had not been deposed. In this precarious situation, Sylvester appears to have stayed in Constantinople. In 1730, Sylvester began a series of journeys in preparation for his return, primarily to raise funds to repay the debts incurred during his dispute with the Catholics.

After wintering in Ioannina until February 1730, he traveled to the Romanian Principalities, where Prince Nikolaos Mavrokordatos of Wallachia hosted him and provided the urgent funds he needed. As the former first dragoman of the Ottoman Porte, the prince may have sent him back to Constantinople with strong letters of recommendation and pressed for the reopening of his case. These efforts appear to have influenced the Porte and facilitated Sylvester's return.<sup>10</sup>

---

*rākib al-ṭariq*, the part edited by Bāshā), p. 162. See also Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 5–6; Ibn Ṭrād, *Mukhtaṣar tārīkh*, p. 60–61.

6 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 58; Heyberger, “La division”, p. 53–54.

7 See Heyberger, “La division”, p. 53.

8 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 64–65.

9 Nī'ma ibn Tūmā reminds Patriarch Sylvester of this incident in a reconciliation letter sent to him through Payas in 1751. See Ibn Tūmā, *Ujālat rākib al-ṭariq*, p. 166.

10 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 78–82.

Meanwhile, the Aleppians petitioned to leave the Antiochene jurisdiction.<sup>11</sup> A firman of January 1727 transferred the city to the Ecumenical Patriarch and appointed a new bishop, Gregory, who arrived on June 16, 1727. Gregory withdrew in April 1730. The Aleppians petitioned to reinstate Gerasimos. In November 1732, an agreement was reached, Gerasimos was released, and the bishopric was transferred to Maximus Ḥakīm.<sup>12</sup>

This move came too late, as Sylvester entered Syria again toward the end of November that year and succeeded in reinstating a *wakīl*, Ḥabīb al-Aʿwar, in July 1733. From the correspondence we are publishing, we learn about the strategy he devised to ensure the necessary pastoral care for his widely spread patriarchate. He sent a deputation of deacons and laypeople – named in Letter 1 – probably led by his former secretary Sophronios of Kilis through Lebanon and Syria up to Adana (1733–1735); he himself led another group, accompanied by his newly appointed secretary Mūsā Ṭrabulsī, across Anatolia to Erzurum, Trebizond, the Georgian border, and Cappadocia (1735–1739).<sup>13</sup> Afterwards, in 1740, they visited Mount Lebanon and Beirut, and established relations with the emirs Miḥim and Najm. In this way, Sylvester sought to reduce the influence of the Catholics who had found refuge on Mount Lebanon. In letters sent to the emirs the following year, he stressed how honored he was to have visited them and placed his *wakīl*, Miḥāʾil Tūmā, at their disposal.<sup>14</sup> Sylvester remained at least until 1742 in Damascus, where he intended to celebrate Easter that year.<sup>15</sup>

---

11 See Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 6.

12 On November 9, according to two documents preserved in the archives of the Propaganda Fide. See C. Walbiner, “An Internal Strife within the Early Melkite Catholic Church of Antioch: Ignatios of Homs Against Cyril Ṭānās and Maximos Ḥakīm”, in Heyberger, Pasha, el Gemayel (eds.), *La division du patriarcat*, p. 250–251. Niʿma ibn Tūmā believes that Sylvester is indirectly the reason for electing Maximus as bishop of Aleppo. The community desired the return of their Bishop Gerasimus, who had been exiled to Mount Athos. In response, a letter was sent from Constantinople, stating that Gerasimus would be released if they accepted the appointment of Maximus as their new bishop. Despite that, the Aleppians did not consider Maximus to be their legitimate bishop until Gerasimus officially resigned. Cf. Ibn Tūmā, *ʿUjālat rākib al-ṭarīq*, p. 163.

13 Miḥāʾil Brayk recounts that after Patriarch Sylvester stayed in Damascus for a while, he fell into conflict with the Damascenes. A period of hostility, setbacks, and mutual complaints followed, with both the Catholic and Orthodox sides appealing to authorities and spending large sums of money. The situation resulted in no benefit; it did not improve, and hostility grew. This forced him to leave Damascus and travel through the territories of his patriarchate for a time until issues were resolved. He then returned to Damascus, where order was restored and his tenure proceeded peacefully. Cf. Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 8.

14 See the letters in Appendix 3.

15 See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 88.

In 1744, Sylvester headed north again. In April, he was in Edirne on his way to Bucharest, capital of Wallachia.<sup>16</sup> Prince Michael Racoviță welcomed him in Bucharest and Prince Ioan Mavrokordatos in Iași, capital of Moldavia, in June. He spent over a year in Moldavia, established an Arabic press at the Monastery of St Sabbas in Iași, and cleared long-standing loans (including 1,500 groschen to “sinior Lukakis” on February 11, 1745).<sup>17</sup>

While Sylvester was collecting funds in Iași, his rival Cyril Țănăs unexpectedly obtained an Ottoman *berat* in February 1745.<sup>18</sup> Sylvester hurried to Constantinople from Galați; with the support of the grand dragoman, the Porte canceled Cyril’s patent by August 1745 and restored his status. He assigned Damascus to Metropolitan Nicephorus in 1746. He sent a *statikon* to Gennadius, bishop of Aleppo, who had allowed Catholics to pray in the Cathedral after the Orthodox, forbidding this practice.<sup>19</sup>

He then traveled across Wallachia from 1746 to 1748.<sup>20</sup> Sylvester succeeded in securing the Monastery of Saint Spyridon in Bucharest, establishing it as an endowment. It was there that genuine efforts were made to develop new type for the printing press.<sup>21</sup> In letters and in the prefaces of the books printed in Iași and Bucharest, he insisted on the importance of this effort for pastoral care; some books were to be distributed free of charge, and others were to be sold at a low price, affordable to all the faithful. Technical issues were encountered, and new typefaces were cast.<sup>22</sup> While awaiting the completion of this work, in October 1748, Sylvester left for Constantinople (Letter 64).

---

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 88.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 90.

<sup>18</sup> Mikhā’il Brayk asserts that Țănăs spent 32 days in the patriarchal See in Damascus. Contradicting him, the editor, in a footnote, adds that this is an “illusion” of the author because Țănăs did not have the time to reach Damascus. See Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 12. It seems, though, that Brayk’s information is accurate because the *berat* of Țănăs was valid for almost six months, which we believe allowed him to reach Damascus. This is also confirmed by a letter of Fr. Rousset, September 15, 1750. See Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 93. For the date of the *berat*, see H. Çolak, “Speaking the Ottoman Language: The Schism of 1724 and the Ottoman Central Administration”, in Heyberger, Pasha, el Gemayel (eds.), *La division du patriarcat*, p. 122–124.

<sup>19</sup> Regarding this *statikon*, Ni’ma ibn Tūmā sent a first letter, which is no longer preserved, to Sylvester in Constantinople. Later, he sent a second letter to Wallachia, likely around 1746/7, in which he described the effects of this *statikon* as being similar to the one sent with Timotheos, “which became the cause of hostility between you and the parishioners, who, because of him, were fined [by the governor]”. Cf. MS Beirut, Bibliothèque orientale Ar. 1825, f. 2v.

<sup>20</sup> See Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 97–100.

<sup>21</sup> New insights on the history of this monastery were provided in Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 98–99.

<sup>22</sup> This was an attempt to engrave new type by Abū Sha’r, as mentioned in the Letters 27 and 52.

Sylvester's proximity to the Ottoman administration in Constantinople initially secured him an advantage over the Catholics. However, a series of events left him outmaneuvered, pushed him back to Syria, and forced a change of strategy. Sophronios, formerly his deacon and secretary and, since 1741, bishop of Acre, charged with countering the growing Catholic influence in Sidon and Acre, was sent by Sylvester to Aleppo in 1750, but the Catholics forced him out of his See. Wary of polemics after nearly twenty years, Sophronios left for Constantinople in search of a quieter monastic life. Mūsā, Sylvester's secretary, then married and caring for his family in Damascus, was unwilling to undertake further travels. Yūsuf Mark was needed in Beirut, where Sylvester wanted to establish a printing press, in a city witnessing a marked growth in silk production in the 1750s. Therefore, the decision was made in September 1749 to head to his See.<sup>23</sup>

Deeming it wise to make peace with the Aleppians before entering his See, Sylvester relied on the mediation of Mūsā Abusṭūlī (Apostoli?) of Payas; Aleppo was reconciled with the patriarch on May 30, 1751.<sup>24</sup> Sylvester re-entered Damascus in 1753.<sup>25</sup> Later, he visited Tripoli, where he remained at least until January 1754. According to Ibn Ṭrād, author of the Chronicle of the Beirut Orthodox Bishopric, this visit made the *Latinophrones* in Beirut “tremble”, and they abandoned the church that they had previously held.<sup>26</sup>

Between 1754 and 1766, Sylvester's mobility appears to be limited, first by his desire to stay within his patriarchate and his See, and second, by two unfortunate events: the earthquake of 1759 and the plague of 1760.<sup>27</sup> In 1754, he prepared the Holy Chrism in Damascus, with two bishops, seventeen priests, and nine deacons present for the celebration. In May, he sent a letter to the bishop of Sidon providing instructions; the bishop promised to visit the patriarch as soon as he recovered (Letter 29). Sylvester seems to have been actively involved in rebuilding and embellishing churches. In 1756, he painted two or three large icons for the Orthodox Cathedral of Saint George in Beirut.<sup>28</sup> According to contemporary accounts, in 1757, he reconstructed the church entrance of the patriarchal residence in Damascus, which had been low and cave-like, raising and widening it and paving the area in front of the entrance. He renovated the outer church dedicated to Saints Cyprian

---

<sup>23</sup> See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 102.

<sup>24</sup> The details of the peace are retold in three letters from Ni'ma ibn Tūmā to Sylvester and Mūsā Abusṭūlī preserved in his work *ʿUjālat rākib al-ṭarīq*.

<sup>25</sup> See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 105.

<sup>26</sup> See Ibn Ṭrād, *Mukhtaṣar tārikh*, p. 63-65.

<sup>27</sup> One last trip to Constantinople may have taken place in 1765, as Ṭipāu has demonstrated. See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 114.

<sup>28</sup> See Ṭipāu, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 191.

and Justina, replacing its roof, adding seven stone arches, and raising the ceiling to make it more spacious, which transformed it into a beautiful church.<sup>29</sup> In the same period, he also built three arches for the church of Saints Cosmas and Damian.<sup>30</sup> Because these works were undertaken without permission, he was imprisoned along with his *wakīl* a year later.<sup>31</sup> In 1759, he painted the mosaic of the church of the Forty Martyrs of Homs.<sup>32</sup>

Lessons learned: to avoid new troubles and likely fatigue from travel, in 1757, Sylvester suggested that Aleppo be placed back under the Constantinopolitan jurisdiction, and at his recommendation, Philemon became its bishop.<sup>33</sup> Sylvester probably spent 1760 and 1761 in Damascus during the plague, as citizens were advised not to travel. In late March 1762, he consecrated Makarios Ṣadaqa as bishop of Sidon and Tyre, preparing him to succeed him. The shared desire of Sylvester and the Damascenes to establish an Arab patriarch was not realized, since the other bishops refused Sadaqa's candidate.

In February 1765, at the church of the Most Holy Mother of God in Damascus, Sylvester of Antioch, along with Makarios of Tyre and Sidon and Ierotheos of Ṣaydnāyā, consecrated Archimandrite Anthimos as bishop of Eirenoupolis.<sup>34</sup> Sylvester died on March 13, 1766, and a Greek bishop, Philemon of Aleppo, succeeded him. Aware of the bishops' refusal to consecrate Makarios Ṣadaqa as patriarch, the Damascenes decided to ask the Constantinopolitan synod to install Sophronios of Kilis, an Arab, who was then in Constantinople.<sup>35</sup> The bishops asked Sophronios to become patriarch of Antioch, but he refused and preferred to remain "in quiet places".

Governing largely from abroad, Sylvester relied on a multilingual circle. Along with the well-known Ilyās Fakhr, at least six other collaborators helped him administer the Apostolic See both when he was absent and present. He needed a *kātib* in Arabic and Ottoman Turkish (initially Sophronios of Kilis, then Mūsā Trābulṣī), a *kātib* in Greek (Basil); a *wakīl* (mainly Mikhā'il Tūmā); a *tarjumān* (Ilyās Fakhr); a Greek teacher (Iakobos of Patmos); and an Arabic teacher who also supervised the printing press (Yūsuf Mark). All are featured in Mūsā's correspondence that we are

29 See Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 47.

30 *Ibidem*, p. 48.

31 *Ibidem*, p. 65. Even though Brayk indicates that this happened a year later, he places it in 1759.

32 See below, Ch. 1.2.4.

33 See A. Rustum, *The Church of the City of God Great Antioch*, vol. 3, 1453–1928 A.D., Beirut-Jounieh, 1988 (henceforth Rustum, *The Church of the City of God*), p. 155.

34 See Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 112–113.

35 According to Mikhā'il Brayk, before the Damascenes officially made their request on June 10, they received letters from the three patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Jerusalem, stating that Philemon was consecrated patriarch. See Brayk, *Tārīkh al-Shām*, p. 81–82.

publishing here from a *unicum* preserved in the collection of the Syriac Orthodox Patriarchate, call number 300.<sup>36</sup> The collection offers new insights into the essential roles they played during Sylvester's time as patriarch.<sup>37</sup> These letters reveal how Sylvester and his collaborators governed the bishoprics listed in the *berat*: Antakya, Şam, Haleb, Trablusşam, Sayda, Beyrut, Ladikya, Payas, Adana, Ḥamā, Homs, Baalbek, Diyarbakır, Erzurum, Ahıska, Çıldır, and their dependencies (*tevâbi'i*).<sup>38</sup>

Drawing upon the correspondence and a wide range of manuscripts, we produce the first comprehensive biographical account of this important yet overlooked figure of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Orthodox intellectual elite. Our study significantly expands and refines the information provided by Ḥaddād regarding both Sophronios and Yūsuf Mark by examining manuscripts preserved in various libraries. This allows us to correct inaccuracies, contextualize their careers more fully, and uncover new aspects of their intellectual and ecclesiastical activity.

**Sophronios of Kilis**, who began his career as Sylvester's deacon and secretary, was among the most active figures in the Antiochian revival. Fluent in both Arabic and Greek, he was instrumental in translating key theological texts, correcting liturgical books, and circulating Orthodox apologetic works throughout the region. His collaboration with Iakobos was formative, and he eventually became one of the main channels through which Greek Orthodox teachings were transmitted into Arabic. In addition to his linguistic work, Sophronios was entrusted with extensive pastoral missions. He was dispatched across the patriarchate – especially to Sidon, Acre, and Aleppo – to consolidate the Orthodox presence and oppose the increasing influence of the Latin missionaries. His appointment as bishop of Acre and later as

---

36 See R. Haddad, "La correspondance de Trābulṣī, secrétaire du patriarche d'Antioche Sylvestre de Chypre", in P. Canivet, J.-P. Rey-Coquais (eds.), *Mémorial Monseigneur Joseph Nasrallah*, Damascus, 2006, p. 257–288 (henceforth Haddad, "La correspondance"). Recently, Ioana Feodorov re-examined the collection of letters to highlight two essential topics addressed within: the establishment of the Christian Orthodox Arabic press in Bucharest under the care of Patriarch Sylvester and his collaborators, and the cultural exchanges in which these Levantine Christians engaged both in learning foreign languages and in teaching Arabic in Bucharest. See I. Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands. The East-European Connection*, Berlin/Boston, 2023 (henceforth Feodorov, *Arabic Printing*), p. 235–254.

37 A missing topic in the *Correspondence* is icon painting. Sylvester himself was an icon painter who donated more than twenty of his icons to churches in Lebanon and Syria after 1759. See Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, p. 249–270. An active painter during Sylvester's patriarchate was Ḥannā al-Qudṣī, who painted between 1734 and 1744 in Latakia. See Ray Jabre Mouawad, *İcônes et églises de Tripoli-Liban*, [Beirut], 2023. This was the same time and place where Yūsuf was active. For a list of the icons he painted, preserved in Latakia, see <https://home.balamand.edu.lb/english/ARPOA.asp?id=6743&fid=270&strPageName=Peintres> (last consulted 01.08.2025)

38 For a comparison between the places mentioned in the *berat* and the *Notitia* of Chrysanthos Notaras, see Çolak, *Relations*, p. 206.

patriarch of Constantinople (as Sophronios II) marked the culmination of a career rooted in intellectual discipline, church diplomacy, and personal asceticism.

**Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī**, the patriarch's longest-serving secretary and the central figure in this volume, was more than a scribe: he was a grammarian, a translator, and an administrator whose extensive correspondence reveals the internal workings of the Antiochian Church. His collection of letters and his works reflect a cultivated mastery of Arabic, deep familiarity with Ottoman Turkish, and a refined literary style, shaped by classical models. Mūsā traveled with Sylvester on arduous journeys across Anatolia and the Levant, collecting alms and consolidating ecclesiastical authority. He also translated complex texts – most notably the Arabic version of Judasz Tadeusz Krusiński, *Tārīkh al-suyyāh* – and compiled a handbook on Arabic epistolography.<sup>39</sup> In the 1750s, he was actively involved in the Beirut press and may have overseen its operations alongside Yūsuf Mark. After Sylvester died in 1766, Mūsā remained a respected elder in Damascus, engaged in ecclesiastical correspondence, manuscript endowment, and the supervision of younger clerics. The group of letters received by his literate friends – preserved quasi uniquely in the collection edited here – constitutes one of the most valuable surviving documentary records of the Antiochian Patriarchate in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

**Yūsuf Mark**, a priest from Tripoli and a leading figure in the Antiochian literary revival, combined grammatical accuracy with pastoral engagement. Initially trained in Arabic grammar and rhetoric, he worked under the guidance of Ilyās Fakhr and collaborated with Sophronios to revise and refine Arabic translations of Greek texts. His ordination in 1743 marked his transition from scribe to priest. Between 1747 and 1749, he was stationed in Bucharest, where he supervised the typesetting and editing of several works at Sylvester's press. Later, in Beirut, he helped establish the third Orthodox printing press in the Levant and opened a school for Arabic and theological studies. His role in preparing the Psalter and the Horologion for publication demonstrates his concern for doctrinal accuracy and linguistic elegance. His letters – elegant, expressive, and rich in literary color – reveal a writer deeply dedicated to improving the quality and clarity of Orthodox

39 For *Tārīkh al-suyyāh*, see Judasz Tadeusz Krusiński, *Tārīkh-i seyyāh der beyân-ı zuhūr-i Aghvāniyân ve sebeb-i inhidām-ı binâ-i devlet-i şāhân-ı Şāfeviyân / A History of the Traveler Describing the Emergence of the Afghans and the Reasons for the Destruction of the Foundations of the State of the Safavid Shahs*, translated by Ibrahim Müteferrika, Istanbul, 1142/1729. For the identification of the work, see Falāḥ Zayd Thwīnī Al-Mṭirī, “Kitāb *Mir’āt al-‘ibra fī ‘ajā’ib al-qudra li-Mūsā bin Jirjis abī Nawfal al-naḥawī al-Ṭrābulṣī* (1139 H/1727 M– t. ba’d 1186 H/1772 M)”, Master dissertation, Jordan: Jāmi’at al-bayt, 2019. For a description of the printed book, see O. Sabev, *The Müteferrika Press. Arabic Typography in an Ottoman Context*, Berlin/Boston, 2025, p. 94–98. The Arabic epistolography is examined in the present volume for the first time. See below, Ch. 1.1.1.2.

Arabic expression. Yūsuf was also a sought-after preacher and teacher, praised in contemporary sources as “the teacher of bibliophiles” and “glory of Arab writers”.

**Kyr Iakobos of Patmos**, often called the *Daskalos*, played a key role in the intellectual revival led by Sylvester. A learned monk from Patmos, Iakobos was invited to the Levant to teach Greek and serve as a spiritual guide for aspiring Orthodox clergy. More than just a grammarian, he was a liturgist and a preacher whose sermons, teachings, and translations helped reaffirm Orthodox identity in the face of Latin encroachment. His close collaboration with Sophronios introduced a method of carefully comparing Greek originals with Arabic translations – an approach that reshaped Antiochian textual practice. During his time in Tripoli and Damascus, he formed a circle of disciples and left a lasting influence on the emerging generation of Arabophone Orthodox scholars.

**Ilyās Fakhr**, the patriarch’s *tarjumān* and Mūsā’s maternal uncle, was crucial to the operation of Sylvester’s administration. A polyglot fluent in Arabic, Greek, and Ottoman Turkish, Ilyās combined political skill with literary expertise. As a dragoman, he acted as a liaison between the Patriarchate and the Ottoman authorities. He also served as a proofreader and adviser in preparing Arabic polemical and liturgical texts. He made sure that translations from Greek were not only doctrinally accurate but also idiomatically elegant – qualities especially important in a setting of interconfessional polemic. His editorial influence is clear in several polemical works written under his supervision and proofreading. Beyond texts, he provided theological guidance and logistical support to clergy across the Patriarchate. Ilyās’s roles as author, canonist, editor, educator, and strategist were vital in shaping the Orthodox literary and doctrinal stance during one of its most challenging times.

