

Transfer of the Art of Printing from the Romanian Principalities to the Arabic-Speaking Christians in the Early 18th Century*

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The beginnings of printing in Arabic, with Arabic type, in the Middle East was the focus of the TYPARABIC project, funded by an Advanced Grant from the European Research Council since 2021. The international team hosted by the Romanian Academy in Bucharest and led by Ioana Feodorov, as Principal Investigator, has been studying the first Arabic books printed beyond the borders of Western and Central Europe, in Wallachia (1701–1702), the transfer of the printing technology and implements from Bucharest to a new printing press that worked in Aleppo by care of Athanasios Dabbās (1706–1711), and the printing works of Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch in Moldavia, Wallachia, and Greater Syria. This contribution traces the progress of the TYPARABIC project, with a special focus on its unexpected outcomes and the benefits – and beneficiaries – of the team's research work during this ERC-funded project, completed on June 30, 2026.

Keywords: *Arabic Printing, Moldavia, Wallachia, Syria, Lebanon, Liturgical Texts, Arabic Language, 18th Century*

1. Overview of the TYPARABIC Project Research of 18th-Century Arabic Printing in the East

The objective of the TYPARABIC project started from the works of the Hieromartyr Antim the Iberian, who crafted and used Arabic type in 1701 for the first time in the East, that is, beyond Western Europe, where Arabic printing had begun much earlier, in 1514. Our project principally addressed the beginnings of Arabic printing in Eastern Europe and Ottoman Syria with help from the Romanian Principalities. The printing

*This research is part of a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (Grant Agreement No. 883219-AdG-2019 – Project TYPARABIC). The following text reflects only the author's views. The ERC is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

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presses that produced the corpus of 54 Arabic books that we surveyed are as follows:

- In Moldavia and Wallachia: Snagov (1701), Bucharest (1702), Iași (1745–1746), and Bucharest again (1747)

- In Greater Syria: Aleppo (1706–1711), Deyr el-Shuweyr (1734–1798), and Beirut (1750–1753)

- In Ottoman Lebanon, Qozhāya, in 1610, in Arabic and Syriac, with Syriac type (two scripts).

- In Istanbul, from 1729, in Turkish, with Arabic type.

Born around 1650 in Georgia, Antim “the Iberian” (in Georgian, Antimoz Iverieli) was baptized Andrei at birth. He called himself “Antim the Iberian”¹ in the books he printed, to acknowledge and celebrate his roots. Coming to the Romanian Principalities after a period of captivity in the Ottoman Empire, he became a skilled master of printing and engraving, well-known for his erudition and knowledge of Greek, Slavonic, and Romanian. Abbot of the Monastery of Snagov near Bucharest since 1697, where he set up his first printing-press, he was appointed in 1705 bishop of Râmnic, a large city west of Bucharest. He continued to print there until 1708, when he was elected metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia and returned to Bucharest. In 1715, Antim finished building his own church and printing press within the present-day Monastery of Antim, his foundation.² He supervised the printing of 59 books and personally printed 42: 27 in Greek, 8 in Romanian, 3 in Romanian and Slavonic, 2 in Arabic and Greek, 1 in Greek and Romanian, and 1 in Slavonic.³

As for the Greek and Arabic texts, this was a joint venture, helped by the long residence of Athanasios Dabbās at prince Constantin Brâncoveanu’s court, while he was metropolitan of Aleppo, after his first tenure as Patriarch of the Church of Antioch (1685–1694). His second tenure would cover the period 1720–1724, the last somewhat peaceful years before the split in this Church. In its aftermath, the Church of

¹ *i.e.*, from “Iberia,” Gr. Ἰβηρία, Rom. “Ivir.” “Ivireanul” is an exonym for the Georgian kingdom of Kartli, not to be confused with the Spanish and Portuguese peninsula called “Iberia.” The Georgian “Iberia” gave its name to the monastery of Iviron on Mount Athos.

² He died as a martyr in 1716, at the hands of the Ottomans. He was canonized a Hieromartyr in 1992 by the Romanian Orthodox Church, with the Feast Day on September 27. See Ioana Feodorov, “*Beginnings of Arabic Printing in Ottoman Syria (1706–1711). The Romanians’ Part in Athanasius Dabbas’s Achievements*,” *ARAM*, no. 1–2 (2013): especially 239–42.

³ Arhim. Policarp Chițulescu (coord. ed.), Doru Bădără, Ion Marin Croitoru, Gabriela Dumitrescu and Ioana Feodorov, *Antim Ivireanul. Opera tipografică* (Bucharest: ICR, 2016), especially 31–34.

Antioch divided into a Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and a Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarchate, which have remained so to this day.

It all started in one of the Romanian Principalities, Wallachia (now, in Romania), in 1701–1702, when Athanasios Dabbās printed two Arabic liturgical texts that he distributed freely to the eparchies of Greater Syria, where no presses existed. In Eastern Europe and the Middle East, Arabic printing began due to the work of Antim the Iberian and Athanasios Dabbās. It was a time when the benefits of printing were widely acknowledged and sought after. Being able to print and disseminate knowledge, religious and secular, was an aspiration of all the enlightened minds of the Middle East, often in contact with Europe, where Arabic printing had been done since the early 16th century.

In Wallachia, the first book was printed in 1508. In the 18th century, printers in the Romanian Principalities produced books in Church Slavonic, Romanian, Serbian, Bulgarian, and Karamanlidika (Turkish with Greek script). Although printing was done extensively in the Romanian Principalities at the end of the 17th century, there was no printing in Arabic when Athanasios Dabbās reached Bucharest. This project was enabled by the prince Constantin Brâncoveanu (1698–1714) and his master printer Antim the Iberian.

After 1694, Athanasios Dabbās journeyed to Constantinople and from there to Wallachia, in search of financial and political help for the Syrian Christians. He convinced the prince Constantin Brâncoveanu to finance his Arabic printing project, and thus, Antim the Iberian, the Wallachian court printer, cast the Arabic type necessary for printing two books in Greek and Arabic: in 1701, the *Book of the Divine Liturgies*, at Snagov, and in 1702, the *Book of Hours*, at Bucharest. The Arabic texts were reviewed by Dabbās himself from old Arabic translations, as proven by the expressions *bi-ltimās wa-mushārafā*, “at the entreaty and under the supervision of [Athanasios].” The book ornaments – frontispieces, icons of saints, Christian symbols, borders, and vignettes – were created by Antim and his apprentices at Snagov and Bucharest. The Arabic type and the woodcuts manufactured in Antim’s press were presented to Dabbās when he left Wallachia for good in 1704.

Dabbās set up the first Arabic press in the Ottoman territories, at Aleppo in Syria, and printed 11 titles by 1711. The press started working in 1706 with the *Psalter*, *Kitāb al-zabūr al-sharīf*, selected as a natural continuance of the editorial plan of an Orthodox press, as witnessed by Dabbās in Wallachia. The *Psalter* held a special place among the books required by a Christian readership: used by the clergy daily, it was also

the ordinary reading book in monasteries and homes, a manual for teaching and individual learning, the choice spiritual guide for any Christian, from an early age. After the *Psalter*, the first Arabic Gospel was printed in Aleppo. A liturgical Gospel was then printed, i.e., a Gospel book with a double-sized content, comprising commentaries for each pericope, and the Evangelists' icons. After the Melkite Greek Catholic Church separated themselves from the main body of the Church of Antioch in 1724, the Christians of Greater Syria continued to celebrate the Divine Liturgy for another century using Dabbās's editions. While leading the way to Arabic book printing in the East, Athanasios Dabbās was also instrumental in establishing Arabic as the liturgical language in the Church of Antioch, a feat also accomplished by the Romanians under the rule of Constantin Brâncoveanu, in their own Church, establishing Romanian as the liturgical language. Dabbās's gratitude to the Wallachian prince is expressed in the prefaces to his Aleppo books.⁴

Sylvester, his successor on the Antiochian See for the long interval 1724 to 1766, resumed printing in the Romanian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1745. The division in the Church of Antioch had generated a wave of hostility between the Greek Orthodox and the Melkite Greek Catholic Church. One of the most efficient weapons in this battle was the printed word. Sylvester secured the approval of the prince of Moldavia Ioan Mavrocordat to print several Arabic books at the Monastery of Saint Sava in Iași: a reedition of the *Book of the Divine Liturgies* (1745), followed, the next year, by two anti-Latin works of Patriarch Nectarios of Jerusalem and Eustratios Argenti, in Arabic translation. In 1746, Patriarch Sylvester received from the Prince of Wallachia Constantin Mavrocordat the Monastery of Saint Spyridon in Bucharest as a *metochion* of the Patriarchate of Antioch. Yūsuf Mark, one of Sylvester's disciples, travelled in 1747 from Damascus to Bucharest, where he remained for two years and manufactured Arabic type. Considering the commemoration of the 1724 schism in the Church of Antioch in 2024, the books published by Sylvester of Antioch must be placed in the context of the fight for his Church and the Orthodox path he was trying to conserve. This is an important chapter in the history of the Eastern Churches, enlightened by the printing of Arabic books by their patriarchs and scholars.

⁴ These texts will be published by Yulia Petrova in the De Gruyter series *Early Arabic Printing in the East*, Volume 9: *Prefaces of 18th-Century Christian Arabic Books. Texts and Translations*, forthcoming in September 2026.

The Arabic type manufactured in Bucharest was then transferred to Beirut, where Patriarch Sylvester established the first printing press of present-day Lebanon, at the Orthodox Monastery of Saint George, where three, or possibly four Arabic liturgical books were printed in 1752–1753.⁵

Many other roads were travelled by the 20 members of the TYPARABIC team, half from Romania, half from Lebanon, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Turkey, France, and the USA. The developments over almost five years since the project started, on July 1, 2021, have been presented by the project team in many articles, essays, and book chapters, all available in Open Access. The main source for the progress we have made together in surveying the beginning of Arabic printing in the East can be accessed by downloading the eight already released volumes of the series *Early Arabic Printing in the East (EAPE)* from the De Gruyter website.⁶ Two more volumes are scheduled to be released in the second half of 2026.

In my contribution to this special issue of the *Review of Ecumenical Studies*, focusing on *Multi-Confessional Aspects of Eastern European Printing in the Pre-Modern Era: Actors, Texts, and Iconography*, I have no intention of reporting on *all* the outcomes that the team members are responsible for. They will be made public when the final scientific report is delivered and adapted for online posting (via CORDIS). I would like to present henceforth the outcomes we have achieved *in addition* to what we have declared as our main tasks in the project's Description of the Action, part of the Grant Agreement signed with the European Research Council in 2020.

2. Outcomes that we have not foreseen

My book *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands. The East-European Connection*, published in 2023 by De Gruyter (now, De Gruyter Brill) as volume 1 of the *EAPE* series, encompasses a great deal of the previous research on Arabic printing, in the 19th and 20th centuries, and my own findings on the Romanian side of the story, mostly based on

⁵ See Feodorov, "New Data on the Early Arabic Printing in the Levant and Its Connections to the Romanian Presses," *Revue des études sud-est européennes*, no. 1–4 (2018): 197–223; Mihai Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch. Life and Achievements of an 18th-Century Christian Orthodox Patriarch* (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2024), 190–92, 224–27.

⁶ Online in open access at: <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/serial/EAPE-b/html>, accessed June 20, 2026.

the books held by the Library of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest.⁷ This body of information was substantially expanded afterwards through the team's work – and mine. Several of our tasks have been fully – and masterfully – completed, such as Antim the Iberian's contribution to the beginnings of printing in Arabic in Eastern Europe and Aleppo, the survey of the legal and cultural circumstances of the Istanbul society at the onset of printing in Turkish, with Arabic type, Dabbās's books printed at Aleppo in 1706–1711, the in-depth theological survey of the first Arabic printed liturgical texts, the Armenian side of the story, and Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch's major contribution to Arabic printing in 1745–1747, in Iași and Bucharest.

At an early stage, I have drawn a table of titles of the Arabic books that form the corpus we surveyed, helped by my Lebanese colleagues. This table contained the essential data necessary to the entire team in order to locate copies of the books in the libraries they would visit, at home and abroad: title in the original Arabic, transliterated in Latin alphabet and in the Arabic script, the English translation, the author/editor/translator, printing press, year/precise date, and worldwide libraries where I knew that copies were held. This information has continuously been expanded and improved by all the team, due to our exploratory trips and strenuous search for new published and unpublished sources. By locating copies of these books, a lot of details about their content and decoration, their provenance and transfer from Europe to the Near East, and vice versa, enriched our knowledge and engaged us on various paths of research. Here is a non-definitive version of the list of collections that were surveyed, which has been finalized for the Volume 8 of the *EAPE* series, to be discussed below. This list explains the abbreviations of their names, which provide a fair picture of the effort that the team has made and the ERC grant has allowed by funding numerous exploration trips.

AGCCD = Melkite Greek-Catholic Archbishopric, Cathedral of the Dormition of the Virgin, Damascus, Syria

ANL = Austrian National Library, Vienna, Austria

Arcadian Library = The Arcadian Library, London, UK

BA = Biblioteca Angelica, Rome, Italy

Balamand = Monastery of Our Lady of Balamand, Lebanon

⁷ Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands. The East-European Connection* (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2023), online at: <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783110786996/html>, accessed June 20, 2026.

- BAR = Biblioteca Academiei Române (Library of the Romanian Academy), Bucharest, Romania
BAV = Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Città del Vaticano
BCU Iași = Biblioteca Centrală Universitară “M. Eminescu” (Central University Library), Iași, Romania
BDSP = Biblioteca diocesana S. Paolino, Nola, Italy
Bethlehem = Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God, Bethlehem, West Bank, Palestine
BL = British Library, London, UK
BO = Bibliothèque Orientale – Université Catholique, Beirut, Lebanon
Bodleian = Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK
Bolivar, PA = Antiochian Heritage Library in Bolivar, PA, USA
BnF = Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France
BSA = Biblioteca del Seminario Arcivescovile, Torino, Italy
BULAC = Paris, Bibliothèque universitaire des langues et civilisations, Paris, France
Bzummār = Our Lady of Bzummār Convent, Lebanon
CCO = Christ Church, Oxford
CUL = Cambridge University Library, Cambridge, UK
Edelby = Collection of Neophitos Edelby, Aleppo
GCR = Greek College of Rome, Italy
Gennadios Library = Gennadios Vivliothikī, Athens, Greece
GOPD = Greek-Orthodox Patriarcate of Damascus, Syria
Gotha = Forschungsbibliothek Erfurt, Gotha Branch, Germany
IMO = Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Saint-Petersburg, Russia
Joun = Monastère Saint-Sauveur (Ordre Basilien Salvatorien), Joun, Lebanon
LCW = Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., USA
LPJ = Library of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem (Bibliothikī tou Patriarcheiou Ierosolymōn), Jerusalem, Israel
MUL = Mainz University Library, Mainz, Germany
Munich = Bayerische Stadtische Bibliothek, Munich, Germany
NLBuc = National Library of Romania, Bucharest, Romania
NLM = National Library, Madrid, Spain
NLR = National Library of Russia, Saint-Petersburg, Russia
NLU = Vernadskyi National Library of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine
Patriarchate of Alexandria = Patriarcheio Alexandreias, Livyīs, Pentapoleōs, Aithiopias kai Pasīs Afrikīs, Alexandria, Egypt
Qatar = National Museum of Qatar, Doha
Raboueh = Résidence Patriarcale Melkite, Raboueh, Lebanon
RGADA = State Archives of Russia of the Ancient Acts, Moscow, Russia
RPM = Résidence Patriarcale Melkite, Raboueh, Lebanon
Şarba = Church of the Holy Savior (Ordre Basilien Alépin), Şarba, Lebanon

Ṣaydnāyā = Dayr Sayyidat Ṣaydnāyā al-Baṭriyarkīyy, Syria

Shuwayr = Monastery of Saint John the Baptist (Ordre Basilien Choueirite),

Ḍūr al-Shuwayr, Khinshāra, Lebanon

SK = Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Istanbul, Turkey

USEK = Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik, Lebanon

UUL = Uppsala University Library, Sweden

YUL = Yale University Library, New Haven, CT, USA

Zahlé = Greek-Orthodox Church of the Theotokos, Zahlé, Lebanon

As an example, here are two of the titles in the TYPARABIC project record, where the number of copies is also mentioned. For the two books listed below, the information we started from was:

Original Title, Transcribed	Original Title, Arabic Script	Translation	Author/Editor/Press/Year	Libraries that Hold Copies of the Book (see Abbreviations)
Kitāb al-sa‘āt / Al-Ūrūlūjiyūn	كتاب الساعات الاورولوجيون	Book of Hours/ Horologion	Antim the Iberian & Athanasios Dabbās/ Bucharest/ 1702	BAR/ BnF/ ANL/ LPJ/ Edelby/ GOPD/ Ṣarba / Shuwayr / 2 ex./ RPM/ USEK / BCU Iași, 3 ex./ BL/ Bodleian
Kitāb al-Zābūr al-Ilāhī li-Dāwūd al-Nabī	كتاب الزبور الإلهي لداود النبي	The Divine Psalter of David the Prophet	‘Abdallāh Zākhīr, editor, printer/ Shuwayr/ 1735/ 1739/ 1740, 1747, 1753, 1764, 1770, 1780, 1797, 1780	BULAC (1735)/ ANL (1739/1740) / Gotha (2 eds.)/ SK (1764)/ BL/ CCO

By studying each and every copy of a book in the project corpus, most times *de visu* but also based on good scans, freely available online, or provided by numerous colleagues in various countries, we were able to create, in a more reliable order and detail than before, the first comprehensive list

of books printed by Athanasios Dabbās at Aleppo from 1706 to 1711.⁸ When leaving Bucharest for good in 1704, Dabbās received from Antim the Iberian, by order of the prince of Wallachia Constantin Brâncoveanu, the Arabic type and woodblocks for the ornamental elements in the books they had printed in Arabic and Greek in Snagov (*Book of the Divine Liturgies*, 1701) and Bucharest (*Book of Hours*, 1702). He pursued his editorial program in Aleppo, in a new press installed at the Metropolitan residence, with the *Psalter*, the *Gospels*, the *Oktoechos*, the *Apostolos*, homilies, and one of Dabbās's own compositions. Here is how the record of titles printed at Dabbās's press in Aleppo appears now.

1706

- *Kitāb al-Zabūr al-sharīf al-manṭūq bi-hi min al-rūḥ al-Quds ‘alā famm al-Nabiyy wa-l-Malik Dāwūd / The Noble Psalter Received from the Holy Spirit through the Mouth of the Prophet and King David*
- *Kitāb al-Injīl al-sharīf al-ṭāhir wa-l-miṣbāḥ al-munīr al-zāhir / Book of the Noble Gospel or the Bright Shining Lamp*; 2nd release, 1708, supported by the Cossack Hetman Ivan Mazepa (from Ukraine)⁹
- *Kitāb al-Injīl al-sharīf al-ṭāhir wa-l-miṣbāḥ al-munīr al-zāhir / Book of the Noble Gospel or the Bright Shining Lamp*, with comments extracted from works of the Holy Fathers; 2nd release, 1708, supported by the Cossack Colonel Daniel Apostol (from Ukraine)

1707

- *Kitāb al-Rasā'il al-mushtamil alā 'amal al-Rusul al-Qiddīsīn wa-rasā'il Būlos al-Rasūl / Apostolos, Containing the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles of the Holy Apostle Paul*

⁸ For incomplete and partially incorrect records of the books printed by Athanasios Dabbās and Sylvester of Antioch in Snagov, Bucharest, Iași, Aleppo, and Beirut, see: Joseph Nasrallah, *L'imprimerie au Liban* (Beirut – Harissa: Imprimerie St. Paul, 1949), 14–15, 23, 25, 46; Josée Balagna, *L'imprimerie arabe en Occident* (Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose 1984), 134, 141; Wahid Gdoura, *Le Début de l'imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie: Évolution de l'Environnement Culturel (1706–1787)* (Tunis: Institut Supérieur de Documentation, 1985). The first comprehensive record based on the survey of this corpus was published by Feodorov, "Livres arabes chrétiens imprimés par l'aide des Principautés Roumaines au début du XVIII^e siècle. Répertoire commenté," *Chronos. Revue d'Histoire de l'Université de Balamand*, no. 34 (2016): 7–49.

⁹ A liturgical book presenting the pericopes necessary for worship.

- *Al-durr al-muntakhab li-Yūhannā famm al-Dhahab / The Book of the Chosen Pearls [from the homilies] of St John Chrysostom*

1708

- *Kitāb al-Nubū'āt al-sharīf / Holy Book of the Paremia*

1709

- *Kitāb al-Zabūr al-Ilāhiyy / The Psalter, 2nd edition*

1711

- *Mawā'iz Athanāsiyūs (al-Baṭriyark al-'Urushlīmiyy) & Maqālat li-l-Qiddis Yūhannā Famm al-Dhahab fī 'id al-Fiṣḥ / Homilies of Athanasios & A Homily of John Chrysostom for Easter*
- *Kitāb Al-Bāraklītīkī, ayy al-Mu'azzī / The Oktoechos, or the Comforter*
- *Athanasios Dabbās, Risāla wajīza tūdiḥu kayfiyyat al-tawba wa-l-i'tirāf / Brief Epistle on Repentance and Confession*

This is the first time all these books have been listed together, with the accurate record of their titles, editor, and printing dates. Among the first to discuss Dabbās's interest in printing was Christian Friedrich von Schnur-
rer (1742–1822), a theologian, Oriental scholar, and historian of early printing, chancellor of the University of Tübingen, whose annotated catalogue *Bibliotheca Arabica* (Hale, 1811) became an essential resource for the field (in spite of certain shortcomings and lacunae). Another such bibliographer was Alexander George Ellis (1858–1942), curator with the British Museum in the Department of Oriental Books and Manuscripts (before the transfer of the book collections to the British Library), who composed, together with Alexander S. Fulton a.o., the *Catalogue of Arabic Printed Books in the British Museum*. A third was Émile Picot, a French scholar and bibliophile (1844–1918),¹⁰ who achieved a thorough presentation of Antim the Iberian's works, including the Arabic-type books, in his article "Notice biographique et bibliographique sur l'imprimeur Anthime d'Ivir, Métropolitain de Valachie."¹¹

¹⁰ Picot worked as a secretary for Charles I, the king of Romania, in 1866–1867, then as vice-consul of France in Timișoara (South-Western Romania). An expert in Latin and Romanian studies, he was a professor at the Institut national des langues et civilisations Orientales (INALCO) in Paris between 1875 and 1909.

¹¹ Émile Picot, "Notice biographique et bibliographique sur l'imprimeur Anthime d'Ivir, Métropolitain de Valachie," *Nouveaux Mélanges Orientaux* (Paris: 1886, repub-

Two of these books (1701 and 1702) were also surveyed by Fr Cyril Charon (Kiril Karalevsky), a Greek-Catholic monk born in France, professor at the Saint John Chrysostom Patriarchal College in Beirut.¹² He wrote theological comments and bibliographical descriptions of the Arabic books printed together by Antim the Iberian and Athanasius Dabbās in his works *Le rite byzantin dans les Patriarcats melkites, Alexandrie – Antioche – Jérusalem*¹³ and *Histoire des Patriarcats Melkites (Alexandrie, Antioche, Jérusalem) depuis le schisme monophysite du sixième siècle jusqu'à nos jours*, t. III. *Les Institutions. Liturgie, Hiérarchie, Statistique, Organisation, Listes épiscopales*.¹⁴

Based on information gathered from the works of Cyril Charon, Christian Fr. von Schnurrer, Abel Couturier, and descriptions of old Arabic books composed by Louis Cheikho, the German scholar of Oriental studies Georg Graf mentioned some of the books printed in Arabic by Athanasios Dabbās in the first volume of his massive work *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur (GCAL)*,¹⁵ while in volume III, when presenting Dabbās's activities as a patriarch of the Church of Antioch, he included a brief passage on his printing work.¹⁶

Studying this corpus of Arabic books allowed the TYPARABIC project team a few important discoveries. We have ascertained the fact that the 1708 version of the *Gospels* of Aleppo is not a second edition, but the same block of printed sheets bound with financial support from Ivan Mazepa, the Hetman of the Cossacks. Our conclusion, based on one of

lished in Athens: *Bibliothèque istorikon meleton* 54, 1972, *facsimile*), 543–44.

¹² Born on December 16, 1878, in Caen, France (d. April 19, 1959, in Rome), Jean François Joseph Charon adopted the name “Cyril” in Beirut in 1902, when he was ordained priest by the Patriarch Cyril VIII of the Melkite Greek-Catholic Church of Antioch. In 1908, while residing in Rome, he applied to join the Greek-Catholic Church of Ukraine, headed by the Metropolitan Andrei Szepticky, and received the approval on October 20, 1909. Having settled in Rome, he worked at the Vatican Library and was a consultant of the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide. Under the names “Cyrille Charon” and “Kiril Korolevskij”/“Karalevsky”, he published several outstanding works that soon became fundamental sources for the history of the Eastern Churches and Christian Arabic culture. He opposed the idea of the Union and even composed a study called “L’Uniatisme, définition – causes – effets – étendue – dangers – remèdes,” published in *Irénikon – Collection*, no. 5-6 (1927) (signed Cirillo Korolevskij).

¹³ Pr. Cyrille Charon, *Le Rite byzantin dans les Patriarcats melkites, Alexandrie – Antioche – Jérusalem* (Rome: 1908).

¹⁴ Idem, *Histoire des Patriarcats Melkites (Alexandrie, Antioche, Jérusalem) depuis le schisme monophysite du sixième siècle jusqu'à nos jours*, t. III. *Les Institutions. Liturgie, Hiérarchie, Statistique, Organisation, Listes épiscopales*, fasc. I, Rome, 1909; t. II, fasc. I, Rome – Paris, 1910, and fasc. II, Paris, 1911.

¹⁵ Graf, *GCAL* I, 633–38.

¹⁶ Graf, *GCAL* III, 128, with a reference to the first volume of this series.

the two preserved copies, held by the Romanian Academy Library, is that it was a personalized item sent to Brâncoveanu, which comprises new introductory pages containing a long eulogy addressed to Mazepa, his coat of arms, and a hand-written correction of the year on the last page, within the colophon. A visit to Kyiv in the early days of the project allowed me to see Mazepa's coat of arms, very similar to the one printed in this volume, high up on the gate that he financed for the wall surrounding the monastic buildings of the Pechersk Lavra, the Monastery of the Caves.

The most important discoveries that the team has made refer to the Arabic books printed between 1745 and 1753 in Iași, Bucharest, and Beirut, by Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch, who was born in 1680 in Cyprus (he is therefore sometimes referred to as Sylvester the Cypriot, from the Arabic *Qubruṣiyy*). Sylvester succeeded Athanasios III on the patriarchal throne of Damascus, becoming the first patriarch of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch, which retained the Byzantine rite and traditions after the schism of 1724. In 2023, I presented the accessible information on the *metochion* that Constantin Mavrocordat granted to the Church of Antioch in 1746, the Monastery of Saint Spyridon in Bucharest, whose church the prince of Wallachia repaired before its reconsecration by Sylvester in 1747. After I published the outcomes of my research, which had started a decade before, I obtained a scan of the correspondence exchanged by several Syrian disciples of Patriarch Sylvester, while travelling to the Romanian Principalities and back to Damascus, which had been commented on by the great Syrian historian Rachid Haddad in a book chapter.¹⁷ This correspondence was preserved by care of the Deacon Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī, one of Patriarch Sylvester's secretaries, who resided in Bucharest for several years. This manuscript became Volume 6 of the *EAPE* series, authored by Habib Ibrahim, one of the Lebanese members of the TYPARABIC team, who has provided the first edition of the Arabic text accompanied by an English annotated translation.¹⁸ This is the very first Arabic edition of this important corpus of letters, which bring fresh information on the relations between many disciples and collaborators that Sylvester involved in his travels, text compositions, and publishing projects. The rich notes added by Habib Ibrahim in connection with every

¹⁷ Rachid Haddad, "La Correspondance de Ṭrābulṣī, secrétaire du patriarche d'Antioche Sylvestre de Chypre," in *Mémorial Monseigneur Joseph Nasrallah*, ed. Pierre Canivet and Jean Paul Rey Coquais (Damascus: Institut Français du Proche Orient, 2006), 257–88.

¹⁸ Habib Ibrahim, *The Correspondence of Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī (1732–1787). Critical Edition, English Translation, and Introduction* (Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter, 2025), online at: <https://www.degruyterbrill.com/document/doi/10.1515/9783111649276/html>, accessed June 20, 2026.

person named in the letters allow historians and students alike a much clearer image on their biographies and achievements.

Several letters in Mūsā's collection reveal the efforts made in Iași and Bucharest from 1745 to 1747 to design and manufacture Arabic type, followed by the printing of a larger number of books than was known before. If for Iași a few titles had been mentioned in Arabic-language articles a century ago, and one colligate was held by the Library of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest, the books printed here were quasi-unknown.

Romanian historiography had recorded the fact that in 1746, with Arabic type brought from an undisclosed source, Patriarch Sylvester had printed several works by Nectarios of Jerusalem and Eustratios Argenti. I was informed in 2023 of a *Book of the Divine Liturgies* bound in MS 15 preserved at the Monastery of Balamand in Lebanon, which was scanned and posted on the platform of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library's website (vHMML).¹⁹ This is a 1745 re-edition of the Arabic text in the *Book of the Divine Liturgies* printed in Snagov in 1701. Mentioned a century ago by the Lebanese historian 'Isā Aliskandar Ma'lūf (1869–1956), who had seen a copy in Syria, it later fell into oblivion, in the absence of any accessible copy. The one of the Monastery of Balamand misses a few pages and text fragments, which were copied by hand, presumably from another printed volume.

By studying the letters exchanged by Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī, Yūsuf Mark, Sofronios of Kilis, and their friends, we have learned that the Arabic type used in Iași was deteriorated and new type had to be cast at the Monastery of Saint Spyridon in Bucharest. However, no information on any books or leaves printed there was available until we discovered a few books in 2023 and 2024.

The first was a *Psalter* printed at Bucharest in 1747, held by the Beinecke Library of Yale University, where Samuel Noble located it by browsing the online catalogue. Had there not been a place and year clearly indicated in the colophon, the icon of the Prophet David, identical to the one in books printed in Wallachia, would have given away the connection of this book with the Romanian Principalities. We were therefore able to determine that two editions of the *Psalter* were printed under the care of Patriarch Sylvester: one in Bucharest in 1747, the other in Beirut, in 1752. A copy of the second, held by the Uppsala University Library, was

¹⁹ Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, accessible at: <https://hmml.org/>, and its Virtual Reading Room, or vHMML: <https://www.vhmml.org/>, accessed at June 20, 2026.

brought to my attention in 2021 by the expert bibliographer and historian of printing Geoffrey Roper, as an Arabic book vaguely catalogued.

The second important discovery was made by Radu Dipratu, an expert in Ottoman and Turkish studies, at the National Library of Austria in Vienna (Österreichisches National Bibliothek). Again, the catalogue record was not clear, but as our colleague was surveying all the Arabic books presumably printed in the East before the 19th century, as listed in our project's corpus record, he came back from his exploratory trip with news of this book: *Acts of the Two Church Synods Convened at Constantinople concerning the Advent of the Catholics amidst the Antiochian Christians*. This is a miscellany composed by Sylvester from his early days as Patriarch but only printed in 1747 beyond the Ottoman frontiers, in Wallachia, where he was not afraid of any censorship. He collected all kinds of documents that testified against the Catholic dogmas and supported the validity of the Antiochians' Orthodox beliefs. The book encloses the acts of the Synod of Constantinople convened by Patriarch Jeremiah III in 1722 and the Synod of 1727 presided by Patriarch Paisius, with passages from the acts of a synod in 1725, accompanied by polemic treatises on the contradictions between the Orthodox and the Latin dogmas and a Greek-rite Creed. No copy of this book was known to exist. To explain how far from the present-day knowledge we were, I will only mention that the first time I saw one page of this book was a poor photo published in 1969 in a tourist guide to Lebanon by someone who presumably had a copy in the family library (and who read the year wrong, 1737 instead of 1747). With this book, we became certain that at the Monastery of Saint Spyridon two Arabic books were printed in 1747. Consequently, we were able to place a new Arabic-type printing press on the map of Europe.

We have devoted careful attention to the Orthodox printing press of Beirut, which is insufficiently documented both in Lebanon and in European specialized literature. In Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī's correspondence, we found reports on his travels from Bucharest to Damascus and then Beirut, illuminating this moment in the printing history of the East. I have described the copy of the Beirut *Psalter* preserved in Uppsala,²⁰ while Mihai Țipău discovered on EBay information and a few photos of a unique *Abridged Book of Hours* printed at Beirut in 1751,²¹ which was mentioned in earlier literature together with a *Book of the Divine Liturgies*. The HMML Virtual Room offers the scan of a manuscript codex that most probably

²⁰ Feodorov, "New Data on the Early Arabic Printing in the Levant and Its Connections to the Romanian Presses," *RESEE* 56, no. 1–4 (2018): 197–233.

²¹ Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch*, 224–25.

contains the text of this *Abridged Book of Hours*. Consequently, we were able to draw a comprehensive list of Patriarch Sylvester's printed books, which Mihai Țipău has chronologically described in *EAPE*–3.²² Here is the record of the books published under the careful direction and through the relentless efforts of Patriarch Sylvester, which the TYPARABIC team has succeeded in compiling after extensive library work and countless sources consulted.

IAȘI, Monastery of Saint Sava

1745

- 1. *Kitāb al-Qundāq / Book of the Qondaq (The Divine Liturgies, or Kontakion)*, reedition of the Arabic text in the *Book of the Divine Liturgies* of Snagov, 1701

1746

- 2. Patriarch Nektarios of Jerusalem, *Kitāb qaḍā al-ḥaqq wa-naql al-ṣidq / Book of the Rule of Justice and the Transmission of Truth*
- 3. Eustratios Argenti, *Risāla mukhtaṣara fī l-radd ‘alā ‘adam ghalat bābāwāt Rūmiyā / Brief Epistle against the Popes’ Infallibility*

1747

- 4. Eustratios Argenti, *Kitāb al-‘Ashā al-Rabbānī / Book of the Lord’s Supper* (Part Three of *Sintagma kata azymon*)

BUCHAREST, Monastery of Saint Spyridon

1747

- 5. *Kitāb al-Zabūr al-Sharīf / The Noble Book of the Psalms*
- 6. *A‘māl al-majma‘ayn al-kanīsiyayn al-mun‘aqidayn fī-l-Qusṭantīniyya bi-sha’n ḡuhūr al-kāthūlik bayna ṣufūf al-masīhiyyīn al-‘anākiyyīn / Resolutions of the Church Councils Convened at Constantinople Concerning the Catholics’ Advent among the Antiochian Christians.*
- 7. *Tartīb khidmat al-madiḥ alladhī lā yajibu al-julūs fī-hi / The Order of the Hymnal Service that You are not Allowed to Sit through (The Akathist to the Mother of God).*

²² *Ibidem*, 202–27.

BEIRUT, Orthodox Monastery of Saint George

1751

- 8. *Kitāb mukhtaṣar al-sawāʿi* / *Abridged Book of Hours*

1752

- 9. *Kitāb al-Zabūr al-Sharīf* / *The Holy Book of Psalms*
- 10. *Kitāb al-Quddāsāt al-thalātha al-ilāhiyya* / *Book of the Three Divine Liturgies*

Another important breakthrough that supplemented our research opportunities is a copy of the 1776 Gospel of Shuwayr (Mount Lebanon), previously recorded at the Library of the Romanian Academy under “Unknown titles”, which Archimandrite Policarp Chițulescu brought to my attention in 2023. This is the only book printed in ‘Abdallāh Zākhir’s press that we have in Romania, thanks to an acquisition in Venice by Dimitrie Sturdza and his subsequent donation to the library.²³ During our work, we have also studied the cooperation between Ioan Bianu (1856–1935), director of the Library of the Romanian Academy, and Cyrille Charon (Kiril Korolevsky), a good friend of Romania whose portrait is outstandingly presented in his autobiography written in French, masterfully edited in five large volumes by Giuseppe Maria Croce.²⁴

We have consistently used the rich collections of the Virtual Reading Room of Hill Museum and Manuscripts Library (vHML), where I have counted early in the day the following items of interest, by searching for precise keywords (marked below by “...”) relevant for our research purposes.

- 1,794 entries refer to printing < “Printed”.
- Ca. 400 entries mention the terms “Printed” and “Arabic”.
- “Printed work” < “Notes”.
- “Printed” < “Scope and Contents”.
- “Arabic” < “Writing System” (even for printed texts) + “Languages”.
- “Binding” > “MS Bound with a printed work” + “Fragments of printed book used as binding waste”.

²³ Dimitrie Alexandru Sturdza-Miclăușanu (1833–1914) was a political figure and a president of the Romanian Academy who donated his entire library to the Romanian Academy in 1896.

²⁴ Cyrille Korolevskij, *Kniga bytija moego (Le livre de ma vie). Mémoires autobiographiques*, edition and notes by Giuseppe M. Croce, t. I–V (Città del Vaticano: Archivio Segreto Vaticano, 2006–2007).

Several of the records in the vHMML database refer to manuscript codices containing, bound within manuscript folios in various scripts and languages, whole books that belong to the corpus of 18th-century Arabic printed books surveyed by the TYPARABIC team. They are all worth studying in future, as they may continue to provide new information to historians of Arabic printing after our project is completed. The *Holy Book of the Paremia* (*Kitāb al-Nubū'āt al-kanā'isī*) printed at Aleppo in 1708, a book only known to be preserved in one copy at the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist in Khinshāra, is present in two codices in the vHMML, one belonging to the Church of Saints Sergius and Bacchus in Munṣif (Lebanon).

I have also had the chance to survey *de visu* the first Arabic printed *Akathist to the Mother of God*, which has no place nor year of publication indicated. Although ornate with an *Annunciation* engraving originating in a Romanian printing press and other marks of a connection with Sylvester, including an emblem that could have been created by the Thassos-born typographer Duca Sotiriovici in Iași, the place of publication and year are still unknown.²⁵

Studying this book not only helps the research on early printing in Arabic, but it also allows philologists to compare the text printed here for the first time as an individual collection of hymns and prayers with the ones contained in several previously recorded manuscripts of *The Akathist Hymn*, including those present in the following codices:

- Sinai Ar. 170, *Apostolos*, 1285, Greek version with Arabic at the end (f. 206v).
- Ms. Leiden Or. 2377, *Four Gospels*, 1331, final section.
- Ms. Leiden Or. 2367, *Psalter*, 1560, final section.
- Ms. Dayr al-Shīr 25 (1649), 27 (1749), and several others containing the *Book of Hours*.
- Ms. Leiden Or. 1571, *Gospels*, final section (f. 200r).

Turning to the West for the Fourth TYPARABIC Conference of 2025, convened on May 27–29 in Venice, at the Ca'Foscari University (Aula Magna Silvio Trentin) and the Romanian Institute of Culture and Humanist Research, we presented other outstanding outcomes of our team's research.

²⁵ Feodorov, "New Data," 217–21.

Among them was Fr Charbel Nassif's study of the 1709 Melkite *Psalter* of Padua, a neglected Arabic liturgical book that rightfully deserved an expert's attention.²⁶

One of the topics that was added to our research aims was a survey of the Mavrocordat era from the perspective of the Phanariot princes' contribution to printing and education, including their support of Arabic book-printing. By including this discussion in our Third Conference in Bucharest, at the Library of the Holy Synod, we have confirmed, with the contribution of our guest speakers, the cultural mission that these Greek princes of Moldavia and Wallachia had set for themselves, which also implied support for the Christians who lived under Ottoman rule. The group of contributions to Volume 4 of the *EAPÉ* series is sufficient proof in this respect (see below).

The Mavrocordat family was also evoked in the exhibitions that the team organized in 2024 and 2025: again, a new item on our list of project tasks. Exhibiting the Arabic books and early printed production of Romanian presses became essential while we progressed with our work, as it was a great opportunity to underscore the exceptional value of this cultural heritage and present the new research devoted to it by the TYPARABIC team. We started with a brief exhibition that accompanied the TYPARABIC team's conference in Râmnicu Vâlcea in September 2024,²⁷ then moved to a three-month exhibition at the BULAC (Library of the INALCO) in Paris, from May to July 2024, accompanied by a *journée d'études* on May 28,²⁸ and in June 2025, an exhibition at the Romanian Academy Library in Bucharest.

3. From Expectations to Outcomes

Among the outcomes that exceeded the expectations for this project, the ERC's as well as the team's, and those of the Host Institution, I will name

²⁶ His essay "Preliminaries to the Study of the Arabic Melkite *Psalter* of Padua (1709) Commissioned by Filibbus Ghaylân" was published in *EAPÉ-7, The Role of Italian Presses in Early Arabic Printing. Third Volume of Collected Works of the TYPARABIC Project*, edited by Ioana Feodorov and Octavian-Adrian Negoită (Berlin-Boston: De Gruyter, 2026), 51–78.

²⁷ "Antim Ivireanul și epoca lui în cercetarea academică actuală. Noi teme și preocupări științifice" [Antim the Iberian and his Times in the Current Academic Research. New Scientific Themes and Aims], conference organized in cooperation with the Archbishopric of Râmnic, at Râmnicu Vâlcea, on September 18 and 19, 2024.

²⁸ "TYPARABIC. Les premières imprimeries arabes chrétiennes en Orient" [TYPARABIC. The First Christian Arabic Printing Presses in the East], book exhibition, BULAC, Paris, May 27–July 25, 2024.

only a few, as they are all clearly visible in the books and articles we have published.

The series of books that we originally pledged to publish comprised five volumes. However, the outstanding results of the team's research required me, as the Principal Investigator and Series Editor, to rethink this output. After the contract for Open Access services was attributed to De Gruyter, we agreed to extend the series to ten volumes, eight of which have been released, and the last two will be published in the next couple of months. The eight volumes published so far in the series *Early Arabic Printing in the East* are all accessible on the De Gruyter website by searching their author or title, as listed here.

1. Ioana Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands. The East-European Connection*, EAPE-1, 2023.
2. Radu Dipratu and Samuel Noble (eds.), *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond. First Volume of Collected Works of the TYPARABIC Project*, EAPE-2, 2023.
3. Mihai Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch. Life and Achievements of an 18th-Century Christian Orthodox Patriarch*, EAPE-3, 2024.
4. Oana Iacubovschi, Samuel Noble, and Ioana Feodorov (eds.), *Icons, Ornaments, and Other Charms of the 18th Century Christian Arabic Books. Second Volume of Collected Works of the TYPARABIC Project*, EAPE-4, 2024.
5. Orlin Sabev, *The Muteferrika Press. Arabic Typography in an Ottoman Context*, EAPE-5, 2025.
6. Habib Ibrahim, *The Correspondence of Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī (1732–1787). Critical Edition, English Translation, and Introduction*, EAPE-6, 2025.
7. Ioana Feodorov and Octavian-Adrian Negoită (eds.), *The Role of Italian Presses in Early Arabic Printing. Third Volume of Collected Works of the TYPARABIC Project*, EAPE-7, 2026.
8. Archim. Policarp Chițulescu and Yulia Petrova, with Ioana Feodorov, *Books Printed for the Arab Christians in the 18th Century. A Descriptive Catalogue*, EAPE-8, 2026.

We had not planned to include a descriptive record of Ibrahim Muteferrika's printed works, nor the correspondence of Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī: they were both required by the advances in our project and the benefit they would bring to the academic community. The third volume of collected works resulted from the exceptional series of contributions presented in 2025, at our Fourth Conference in Venice. The prefaces of the corpus books

have proven to be invaluable sources for the history of the travels and endeavours of several outstanding leaders of the Church of Antioch, and the support they received in the Romanian Principalities from Constantin Brâncoveanu, Antim the Iberian, boyars and princes, including the Mavrocordat rulers. As the books we are studying are extremely rare, we feel that publishing a collection of their metatexts is a desirable outcome. Therefore, Yulia Petrova has prepared an additional book that contains the Arabic prefaces, their annotated English translation, and an introduction explaining their function and the circumstances of their composition: *Prefaces to 18th-Century Christian Arabic Books. Texts and Translations*, EAPE-9, to be released in September 2026. Finally, the *Acts of the Synods of Constantinople* have turned out to be of interest to historians in Europe and the Middle East, especially in the context of the commemoration, in 2024, of 300 years since the 1724 division in the Church of Antioch. The fact that this book, preserved in only two accessible copies, in Vienna and Cambridge, contains lists of patriarchs, clerics, and scholars of both the Greek Orthodox Church and the Melkite Greek Catholic Church of Antioch makes it even more precious as a document on the life and predicaments of these communities, as well as their relations to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Ottoman power. Habib Ibrahim is therefore preparing *EAPE-10, Acts of the Synods of Constantinople. Critical Edition, English Translation, and Introduction*, to be released in December 2026.

When submitting the project proposal, clear publishing tasks were projected for each team member, but we had not expected to reach the figure of 94 titles (books, articles, and book chapters in collected works), all available in Open Access. We are happy that a few of us have published in Arabic, in the Proceedings of the University of Balamand conference of 2024.²⁹ Also, our colleague Radu Dipratu has published an article on Open Research Europe (ORE), the ERC-supported portal that has become the state-of-the-art vehicle of dissemination for the outcomes of European projects.

We had not imagined that our conferences would be hosted by the Gotha Research Library (Forschungsbibliothek Gotha), due to the invitation addressed to us in 2024 by Dr. Feras Krimsti, curator of the Oriental

²⁹ *Al-Kanīsa al-Urthūdhukṣīya al-Anṭākīya min al-qarn al-khāmis ‘ashar ilā al-qarn al-thāmin ‘ashar. Naḥwa fahm daḡiq li-l-tārikh*, edited by Archimandrite Ya‘qūb Khalīl, Saint John of Damascus Institute of Theology, University of Balamand, 2025, with contributions from the following TYPARABIC team members: Archimandrite Policarp Chiṭulescu, Ioana Feodorov, Vera Tchentsova, Mihai Țipău, and Hasan Çolak.

Manuscript Collection, and, in 2025, by the Ca'Foscari University and the Romanian Institute for Culture and Humanist Research in Venice, with an invitation from Dr. Bishara Ebeid and Dr. Cristian Luca.

I am also bound to mention the exceptional work achieved by the art historians on our team: Archimandrite Policarp Chițulescu, an expert in book art and director of the Library of the Holy Synod in Bucharest, Fr. Charbel Nassif, Alina Kondratiuk, and Oana Iacobovschi. Their laborious survey of the book corpus to trace the influence of Ukrainian, Moldavian, and Wallachian iconography and decoration on the Arabic printers of Aleppo and Beirut has revealed that visual elements from the Pechersk Lavra in Kyiv, created in the times of the Metropolitan Petro (Petru) Movilă, came to be copied in Moldavian and Wallachian books and ended up in Arabic books as late as 1752. Moreover, icons, woodcut creations, and influences of Antim the Iberian's books are found in many of the Arabic books of the 18th-century Eastern presses. From the beauty of the Aleppo woodblock-printed titles to the clumsy *Deesis* in the *Psalter* of Beirut of 1752, imprinted from a woodblock carved as a positive image instead of a negative one,³⁰ the connection to typographers of the Romanian Principalities is now conclusively established. Equally certain has become the difference between this style of book artistry and that originating in Western Europe, which influenced the printing press of the Monastery of St John the Baptist – Shuwayr (Khinshāra) and produced a different kind of elegance, closer to the Catholic books printed by the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide in Rome.

4. Acknowledgment and Benefits from the TYPARABIC Team's Research Output

Any form of public recognition of someone's work presupposes a positive evaluation of its benefits. The TYPARABIC project has received the academic community's acknowledgment in various ways. Seven reviews of volumes in the De Gruyter series have been published. Volume 1 (my own book) received the *2025 Book Award* of the Middle East Librarians' Association in the United States. The team was invited last January to present the *EAPE* series at the 57th Cairo International Book Fair, at the official stand of Romania, guest of honour of this edition, where Archimandrite Policarp Chițulescu, Octavian-Adrian Negoită and I showcased the project and the team's research, based on the book display we provided, to a diverse international audience. Team members have talked

³⁰ Feodorov, "New Data," 216.

about our work at conferences in Bucharest, Râmnicu-Vâlcea, Alba Iulia, Cluj-Napoca, Iași, Kyiv, Odessa, L'viv, Paris, London, Oxford, Granada, Tbilisi, Gotha, Venice, Cairo, Munich, Berlin, Sofia, Istanbul, etc.

I also consider the fact that colleagues who are acknowledged experts in their fields have agreed to contribute to our team's conferences as a sign of appreciation of the high-level academic exchange that took place during our reunions. Among the guest speakers were Ovidiu Olar, Taisiya Leber, Carsten Walbiner, Ronney El Gemayel, Raphaëlle Ziadé, Feras Krimsti, Fr. Joseph Mourkarzel, Paolo Lucca, J. R. Osborn, Simon Mills, Anca Tatay, Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan, Nino Kavtaria, Titus Nemeth, and the list goes on.

The most gratifying recognition of the quality of our team's series published with De Gruyter recently came from Elizabeth Savage, Senior Lecturer in Book History and Communications at the School of Advanced Study and Head of the Academic Research Engagement of the Senate House Library, University of London, in her review of Volumes 1 and 4 of the *EAPE* series, published in *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* (PBSA) in December 2025.³¹ In her opinion, the TYPARABIC project

is generating a vast amount of groundbreaking book historical research into this long overlooked corpus – and the international community of Greek and Arab patriarchs, church leaders of the Middle East, nobility and rulers of Ukraine and the Romanian Principalities, and widely travelling printshop owners and jobbing printers, who created punches, cast type, set up printshops, commissioned images, wrangled with patrons, and disseminated libraries.

And the author continues:

Ioana Feodorov, the principal investigator, is leading a massive publication campaign to make this research accessible; in its first three years, her series *Early Arabic Printing in the East* at De Gruyter will have published six monographs and edited volumes. This review considers two; with over one thousand pages, they could constitute a self-contained secondary literature to this “new” field. [...] Led by Feodorov, this community of researchers is pushing book historical research beyond cultural, confessional, and linguistic boundaries defined in the “conventional” (i.e., Western) book historical scholarship. The authors deftly move between primary texts and archival documents in varied

³¹ Review of *EAPE*–1 and *EAPE*–4 by Elizabeth Savage, *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* (PBSA) 119, no. 4 (December 2025): 519–22.

alphabets and political contexts – not least Arabic, multiple styles of Georgian scripts, Greek, Hebrew, Romanian, Serbian, and Turkish – to document how the printers, publishers, authors, and readers were linked across Western, Central, and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. The print historical scholarship spans the gamut of printshop work, from the creation of supplies through to typesetting, illustration, sale, and later collection and library use. Feodorov explores the international mobility of type (many sorts were damaged in transit from Târgoviște, Romania, to Bucharest in the early 1700s) and how techniques of typesetting were tied to confessional communities.³²

Moving on to our work's expected benefits, the most striking is offered by Volume 8 of the *EAPC* series, co-edited by Archimandrite Policarp Chițulescu and Yulia Petrova: *Books Printed for the Arab Christians in the 18th Century. A Descriptive Catalogue*. Here, the curious reader will find in a nutshell the entire knowledge we have at this point of the content, form, publication circumstances, editors and other characters involved in the printing of the 18th-century Christian Arabic books of Snagov, Bucharest, Aleppo, Iași, Beirut, and Shuwayr. The major beneficiaries are librarians and cataloguers, including those working with manuscripts that hold Arabic printed material. Second, antiquarians and private holders of Arabic books that belong to the 18th-century corpus will be able to find with precision the titles and rigorous descriptions that they need for their own research.

I have collected over the past decade multiple cases where library records could be improved based on in-depth research – and more recently, by mining the outcomes published by the TYPARABIC team as new contributions to the field of Arabic printing. I will not delve on the improvements that we hope to see in the catalogue of the Library of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest and a few other libraries across Romania. This is an on-going project that will exceed the timeline of the TYPARABIC project. But we can see also in foreign libraries that 18th-century Arabic books have been dated or placed wrongly, and even mislaid, on occasion. To give just a few examples:

- In the Princeton University Library catalogue, beside suggestions to eliminate the inconsistency in the Arabic transcription, we can provide reliable information to improve the record of the 1711 *Risāla wajīza tūḍīḥu kayfiyyat al-tawba wa-l-i' tirāf* (*Brief Epistle on Repentance and Confession*): “Published/Created: [Aleppo?]”: yes,

³² Savage, review, 519–20.

no doubt about it; “publisher not identified”: this is definitely Athanasios Dabbās, at his own press.³³

- At the Uppsala University Library, in the Carolina Rediviva Special Collections (Shelf: Teol. Biblar. Semit. Arab.), the *Psalter* of Beirut, printed in 1752, is catalogued under the name of ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Faḍl al-Anṭākī, the illustrious Arab scholar and translator active in the 11th century. It is somewhat unexpected to search for a book printed in the 18th century by the name of an 11th century author. The title begins with that of the introductory text, an Orthodox Catechism, which is misleading because the book is, in fact, a *Psalter* with additional texts. The press is correctly identified as Beirut, indicated in the beginning and the colophon of the book, but the year on the first page gives the printing date of the Catechism, or just the title page, which may have been printed in Bucharest, while the Psalms were completed in 1752 at Beirut. The latter information is mentioned in the “notes” of the detailed record, but it is not considered in the main entry of the catalogue.

A considerable number of books printed by ‘Abdallāh Zākher in Shuwayr after 1734 are accessible in the vHMML. Now that *EAPE*–8 was released, it will be possible to indicate precisely *what* printed texts are enclosed in codices on the vHMML. This new catalogue will also help adjust the dates of certain items from the 19th century to the 18th. For example, to the record of the MS Ar. 82 of Our Lady of Bzummār Convent (18th century, 159 pages, HMML Project Number: BzAr 00082), *Ta’ammulāt rūḥīyah li-ayyām al-usbū’* (*Meditations for the Seven Days of the Week*), we can add that it contains a printed book whose text was composed by Giovanni Pinamonti (information to add to the page 1 mention of “an unnamed Carmelite monk”)³⁴ and its printing was completed on October 4, 1736, at the press of ‘Abdallāh Zākhir, at the Saint John the Baptist Monastery of Shuwayr.³⁵ A manuscript copy of this text is also present in the vHMML: Khinshārah, Lebanon, Ordre Basilien Choueirite, MS 469, HMML Project Number: OBC 0055, recorded as

³³ The record is accessible here: <https://catalog.princeton.edu/catalog/9996838163506421>, accessed May 12, 2026.

³⁴ For Pinamonti’s life and works, see Alessandro Flavio Dumitrașcu, “Italian Authors Translated into Arabic in the 18th Century,” in Feodorov, Negoită, *The Role of Italian Presses in Early Arabic Printing (EAPE–7)*, 181–98.

³⁵ To see the record of MS Ar. 82 Bzummār, visit <https://www.vhmml.org/reading-Room>, accessed May 12, 2026.

19th century. If confirmed, this dating could mean, interestingly, that this is a manuscript copy of the book printed by Zâkhir in the 18th century. This could come as proof of the enduring interest in this book at a time when the printed volumes had become rare.

Museums could also use the information we have discovered and collected to describe their holdings for inventory purposes and exhibitions. A *Gospel* of Aleppo (1706) is exhibited in the National Museum of Qatar in Doha, where the information could be improved: we may agree with the description “*Bible. New Testament*” for this *Gospel* but instead of: “Around 1720, Ahmad Efendi Chalabi established an Arabic press in Istanbul”, the description would better be: “In 1723, Ibrahim Müteferrika established an Arabic-type Turkish press in Istanbul.”

With *EAPe-8*, conservators who find Arabic printed leaves stuck to manuscript bindings will be able to identify the book they come from. As far as we know, these cases involve Greek, Arabic, Slavonic, and Syriac, but the phenomenon could be broader. We have received queries from researchers who work with manuscripts and find Arabic printed sheets inside codices, including a waste page identified by Yulia Petrova as belonging to the Bucharest *Book of Hours* of 1702. A considerable number of manuscripts in the vHMML hold such refuse leaves in their bindings: e.g., in MS 23 of the Melkite Greek-Catholic Patriarchate Library in Damascus, eight pages are refuse of a book probably printed at the Monastery of Saint George in Beirut around 1752. As the books of Beirut are rare, these stranded pages could help determine with more precision the record of titles printed there.

The most important beneficiary of the TYPARABIC project team’s research work remains the Christian community in the contemporary Near East, living in dire circumstances since the last century at least, torn between ethnic groups and confessions that are actually fighting each other, not them. We have also brought more proof for the community of spiritual thought and living, rites and rituals inherited from Byzantine culture, liturgical texts, and a need for praying and serving in the vernacular, supported by the printed book. Our work confirms that peoples cannot live in isolation, even if they are inhabiting neighbouring continents. Travel, communication by all possible means, and the need for trans-frontier dialogue have brought Europe in contact with the Mediterranean East and, apparently, will keep them together for ever.

When last mapping the projects funded under the Horizon 2020 programme, the European Research Council report stated that “the

ERC funds curiosity-driven research without predetermined thematic priorities”.³⁶ In the H2020 Framework Programme (grants approved in 2014–2020), in the Social Sciences and Humanities domain, Romania is present with two Advanced Grants (AdG): the first one, approved in 2020, is TYPARABIC, the only one in sub-category SH5, and the subsequent one was approved in SH6. These two projects were part of 2421 applications, with 274 projects funded, which were granted an overall budget of 495 million euros. At the 2025 Call, whose results were announced in June 2026, only one AdG project was granted in the SH5 category to a Romanian Principal Investigator attached to a Romanian Host Institution.³⁷

The combination of historical, philological, theological, and art history subjects that we proposed to the ERC in the 2019 call was deemed worthy of an Advanced Grant, and with an international team, half Romanian, half foreign, we succeeded in placing Romania on the map of countries that have obtained such a Grant in the SH5 category. This attests the interest that Romanian topics hold among the vast array of cultural research themes, as important pieces of the puzzle of European civilization across the centuries, in itself but also in everlasting connection with the age-old Christian communities of the Near East.

³⁶ Report accessible online at: <https://doaj.org/article/4c0da5d2808b-409883412c1236af8c29>, accessed May 12, 2026.

³⁷ Anca Părvulescu, Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. A second AdG was granted to Lavinia Stan of the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu in a different category, SH2.