

**TYPARABIC PROJECT**  
**4<sup>th</sup> CONFERENCE**

*The Role of Italian Presses in Early Arabic Printing.*  
*A View from the East*

This conference is organized within the ERC-AdG-2019-TYPARABIC project which received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, Grant Agreement No 883219.

# Organizers

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**IOANA FEODOROV**, PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, TYPARABIC  
Institute for South-East European Studies, Bucharest, Romania



Ioana Feodorov is a researcher in the fields of Christian Arab studies, Arabic printing, Arabic language and literature, and cultural relations between the Romanians and the Arab Christians. A graduate of the Arabic Section of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Bucharest (1984), she was granted a Ph.D. in 1998, publishing her thesis in 2003. Since 2005 she is attached to the Institute for South-East European Studies of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest, where she works on Arabic literature that connects the Romanians with the Christian communities of the Levant, the complete Arabic edition and English translation of Paul of Aleppo's *Journal* (1652–1658), and the publication of a New Series of *Romanian Cultural Traces Abroad. Romanian Creations and Sources about the Romanians in Foreign Collections*, with seven volumes published by 2018. Since 2020, she is the Principal Investigator of the ERC-funded TYPARABIC research project (Grant Contract No. 883219 – 2019, Horizon 2020).

## **BISHARA EBEID**

Università Ca' Foscari, Venice



Bishara Ebeid specialized in Byzantine, Coptic, Syriac, and Christian Arabic Theology at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, where he received his MA in 2012 and his first doctoral degree in 2014. His dissertation on the Christology of Christian Arabic authors was published as *La tunica di Al-Masīḥ. La Cristologia delle grandi confessioni cristiane dell'Oriente nel X e XI secolo* (Rome, Edizioni Christiana Orientalia, 2018). This monograph was followed by an edition and study on Elias of Nisibis, *Elias of Nisibis. Commentary on the Creed (Tafsīr al-amānah al-kabīrah)* (Beirut, CNERU–CEDRAC, 2018). In 2019, he obtained his second doctoral degree from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, with a dissertation on the figure of Pontius Pilate in the New Testament and in apocryphal literature. From February 2019 to August 2023, he worked as a senior researcher on the ERC project FLOS Florilegia Syriaca at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, and since April 2024, he has been a tenure-track Assistant Professor at the same university.

## **CRISTIAN LUCA**

Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica, Venice



Cristian Luca is a Professor of Late Medieval and Early Modern History at the Lower Danube University of Galați. He holds a BA degree from the University of Bucharest (1999), an MA in Eastern European Medieval and Early Modern History (2001), and a Ph.D. degree *Magna cum Laude* in Early Modern European History (2006). He was awarded the Nicolae Iorga National Fellowship for Research and Postgraduate Specialization in Venice from 2002 to 2004. He was an Andrew W. Mellon Fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences from September 2008 to February 2009. He received other grants for research in Italy. He is the Director of the Romanian Institute of Culture and Humanities Research in Venice (Italy). His research interests include maritime trade in the northwestern Black Sea from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the late 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Western diplomacy in Constantinople during the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the social and economic history of the Romanian Principalities in the Early Modern period. He has edited collective volumes and published books, essays, articles, and book chapters since the late 1990s.

# 4<sup>th</sup> CONFERENCE OF THE TYPARABIC PROJECT

UNIVERSITY OF CA'FOSCARI &  
ROMANIAN INSTITUTE OF CULTURE  
AND HUMANIST RESEARCH  
VENICE, MAY 27-29, 2025

## *THE ROLE OF ITALIAN PRESSES IN EARLY ARABIC PRINTING. A VIEW FROM THE EAST*

Tuesday, May 27

**Venue:** University of Ca' Foscari

**10:00 – 12:15**

Opening Speech: Ioana Feodorov, Principal Investigator, TYPARABIC Project

### **Panel 1**

#### *Eastern Book Printing: The Italian Connection (1)*

Aurélien Girard – *Les traductions d'ouvrages occidentaux éditées par la typographie de Saint-Jean-de-Shuwayr au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*

Fr. Rami Wakim – *The Evolution of Greek Catholic Theology in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Arabic Print: A Study of 'Abdallāh Zākhir's Al-Burhān and Its Theological Contributions*

Fr. Charbel Nassif – *Le Psautier arabe imprimé à Padoue en 1709: par qui, pour qui, pourquoi?*

Alessandro Flavio Dumitraşcu – *Italian Authors Translated into Arabic in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century*

**12:15 – 13:30 Lunch (at the Cafeteria)**



**13:30 – 15:45**

**Panel 2**

***Non-Latin Type: Italian, Central European and Levantine Varieties in Pre-Modern Times***

J. R. Osborn – *An Isolated Medial? Tracking the History of the Four-Form Table of Arabic Script*

Titus Nemeth – *The Arabic Naskh Type by Albrecht Krafft: An Austrian Contribution to 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Arabic Typography*

Oleksii Chekal – *Typeface Analysis of the Early 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Arabic Books Printed by Athanasios Dabbas in Wallachia and Aleppo*

Brad Sabin Hill – *Hebrew Printing in the Arab and Islamic Lands*

**16:00 – 17:00 Book Launch**

Orlin Sabev – *The Müteferrika Press: Arabic Typography in an Ottoman Context, EAPE-5, De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston, 2025*

**Wednesday, May 28**

**Morning**

11:30 – 13:00 – Visit and *hands-on* session at the Marciana Library.

**Afternoon**

Venue: Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica

**13:30 - 14:45 Lunch (at the Institute)**

**14:45 – 17:00**

**Panel 3**

***Eastern Book Printing: The Italian Connection (2)***

Paolo Lucca – *Printing Armenian Catechisms in Early 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Venice. From Jacques Villotte to Mechitar*

Alina Kondratiuk – *Italian Sources of the Early Modern Books Printed at the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra*

Aleksandar Savič – *Presses de résistance: Serbian Book-Printing between Venice, the Romanian Principalities, and the Ottoman Empire (Late 15<sup>th</sup> to Mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century)*

David Neagu – *The Benefits of the Mekhitarists' Printing Work in San Lazzaro for the Armenians' Confessionalization*

## Thursday, May 29

### Morning

9:00 – 13:00 Visit and *hands-on* session at the San Lazzaro Monastery of the Armenian Mechitarist Order

### Afternoon

Venue: Istituto Romeno di Cultura e Ricerca Umanistica

**13:30 - 14:45 Lunch (at the Institute)**

**14:45 – 17:00**

### Panel 4

#### *The Sponsorship and Ownership of Printed Books*

Lidia Cotovanu – *Les dépôts du Patriarcat de Jérusalem à la Zecca de Venise et les destinations philanthropiques des intérêts annuels: les écoles chrétiennes de Palestine*

Archim. Policarp Chițulescu – *Sources of Knowledge and Art Objects: The Arabic Books in Medieval Libraries of the Romanian Principalities*

Vera Tchentsova – *Non-Arab Readers & Owners of Arabic Books: Evidence from Oxford Libraries*

Habib Ibrahim – *Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī's Annotation of Girmānūs Farḥāt's Baḥṭh al-maṭālib*



# Abstracts



# Typeface Analysis of the Early 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Arabic Books Printed by Athanasios Dabbās in Wallachia and Aleppo

*Oleksii Chekal*

**T**he question of the origin of the Arabic fonts used in the Aleppo printing press founded by Athanasios III Dabbās, Patriarch of Antioch (1685-1694, 1720-1724), remains unresolved in the scientific community. The provenance of the printing implements in question has been a subject of scholarly debate. Some scholars have posited that they were crafted by Antim the Iberian and subsequently transported from Snagov and Bucharest. Conversely, other scholars posit that the printing implements were only partially transferred from Bucharest to Aleppo, with the fonts being redesigned by ‘Abdallāh Zākhir, guided by the style and typographic models of Romanian publications. This study compares the Arabic fonts used to print books in Aleppo, specifically the Book of Psalms and the Mazepa Gospel of 1706/1708, with those used by printers in Snagov and Bucharest to publish the Book of the Divine Liturgies (*Liturgikon*, 1701) and the Book of Hours (*Horologion*, 1702). The paper surveys the first Arabic printed books of Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Levant, employing paleographic measurements and the logic of type design to compare them with editions from that era in both the Romanian Principalities and Western Europe. It will also present modern computer reconstructions of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Arabic fonts, based on an in-depth study of their features and the differences and similarities of font forms. These reconstructions will be presented in typeface tables and diagrams.

# Sources of Knowledge and Art Objects: The Arabic Books in Medieval Libraries of the Romanian Principalities

*Archim. Policarp Chițulescu*

**T**he advent of the printing press was instrumental in disseminating information and fostering the development of knowledge. The countries of Eastern Europe exhibited a keen interest in this novel craft, though its rapid development was impeded, regrettably, by the pervasive political and economic instability engendered by the Empires contending for hegemony in the region. The cultural elites of the Romanian Principalities demonstrated a keen interest in acquiring books, but also in producing them for various purposes, with a particular emphasis on religious texts. Within the Danube Principalities, a concerted initiative was undertaken to produce literature in four languages—Romanian, Greek, Slavonic, and Arabic—intended for the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire. Notable rulers demonstrated a keen interest in Arabic, encouraging its teaching and providing financial support for Arabic-type printing activities within their domains and in the Levant. This paper aims to shed light on the current state of Arabic printed books held by prominent libraries of Romania, including those belonging to the Cantacuzino, Brâncoveanu, and Mavrocordat families, as well as ecclesiastical institutions. As the owners' ability to comprehend the content of these Arabic books waned, they came to be regarded as items of *bibliophilia* and art of the book, meticulously preserved and bequeathed to their heirs.

## **Les dépôts du Patriarcat de Jérusalem à la Zecca de Venise et les destinations philanthropiques des intérêts annuels: les écoles chrétiennes de Palestine**

*Lidia Cotovanu*

**L**'œuvre culturelle et philanthropique accomplie par le patriarche de Jérusalem Chrysanthé Notaras comprend, entre autres, aussi la fondation et le subventionnement d'écoles élémentaires, d'études moyennes et supérieures destinées à l'instruction des enfants et des jeunes issus de milieux modestes. Le patriarche Chrysanthé porta une attention particulière aux écoles chrétiennes arabes de Palestine, veillant à l'approvisionnement de celles-ci avec le nécessaire et notamment avec des livres qu'il commandait auprès de ses amis et collaborateurs de Venise. Il sera question dans cette communication des moyens financiers mobilisés par le patriarche Chrysanthé Notaras et de la logistique mise en place pour faire fonctionner les écoles chrétiennes de Palestine, et d'autres institutions philanthropiques d'ailleurs. Si traditionnellement pareilles institutions étaient entretenues par des monastères, qui tiraient leurs revenus principalement de l'exploitation de leurs patrimoines agricoles, les marchands grecs de Venise, qui capitalisent leurs revenus en liquidités, innovent en la matière et font recours à la Zecca de Venise pour subventionner des actes de piété et des œuvres philanthropiques. Chrysanthé Notaras, qui fit ses études à Padoue, connut de près ces pratiques et les adopta à son tour une fois monté sur le siège patriarcal. Il finança son œuvre culturelle et charitable en partie par le moyen des multiples dépôts à la Zecca, qu'il reçut en donation, au nom du Saint Sépulcre de Jérusalem, de la part d'importantes personnalités chrétiennes de son temps : le prince de Valachie Constantin Brâncoveanu, le grand palatin Șerban (Drăghici) Cantacuzène, le grand écuyer Georgios Kastriotis et le marchand Nikolaos Karagiannis. Par ailleurs, c'est Karagiannis, ami de longue date de Chrysanthé, qui fut le premier épitrope du Patriarcat de Jérusalem à Venise, ayant pour attribution de gérer les dépôts et les intérêts annuels de celui-ci. La découverte de nouveaux documents dans les archives de Venise et d'Athènes vient enrichir considérablement ce dossier encore peu connu dans les milieux académiques.


## Italian Authors Translated into Arabic in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

*Alessandro Flavio Dumitrașcu*

**T**he works of renowned Italian Jesuits such as the inseparable Paolo Segneri and Giovanni Pietro Pinamonti, on the one hand, and Francesco Rainaldi, on the other hand, had the opportunity to circulate in the Levant, indicating both the missionary aspirations of the authors themselves and those of the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* in Rome. This dissemination also suggests a limited modernization of the Eastern world and a potential cultural exchange between the East and the West. The decision of Pierre Fromage, a preacher and the superior of the Jesuit order in Aleppo, to translate two of Paulo Segneri's works into Arabic was not an arbitrary choice. Segneri, a renowned author in the Catholic world, was also a well-known figure for the Eastern faithful, including the Maronites, Greek Orthodox, and Greek Catholics, who had the opportunity to meet him during his doctrinal mission. A similar phenomenon can be observed in Giovanni Pietro Pinamonti, who accompanied Segneri on his travels to the Levant, as a friend and a co-author of many of his works. A potential outcome of this endeavor was the union with Rome of a segment of the faithful of the Patriarchate of Antioch in 1724. A comprehensive examination of the works of these Italian authors, in conjunction with their travels to the Levant, illuminates both Western and Eastern confessional issues during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This examination also documents the translation of Western Christian works into Arabic, offering insights into the unique characteristics of that era.

## Les traductions d'ouvrages occidentaux éditées par la typographie de Saint-Jean-de-Shuwayr au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle

Aurélien Girard

 partir de 1733, l'alépin Abdallāh Zākhī dirigea une typographie au couvent grec-catholique de Saint-Jean-de-Shuwayr dans le Metn, au Mont-Liban. Plusieurs ouvrages publiés au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle furent des traductions d'ouvrages occidentaux notamment préparés par le jésuite français Pierre Fromage et par Zākhī, qui ignorait les langues occidentales. Ces éditions s'inscrivaient dans la continuité des publications romaines destinées aux communautés chrétiennes du Proche-Orient (typographie polyglotte de la Congrégation *de Propaganda Fide*) et des manuscrits diffusés par les missionnaires depuis la fin du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle. Les traductions arabes prennent une certaine liberté avec l'œuvre originale de sorte à l'adapter aux besoins du lectorat local. Après avoir dressé un tableau général, je m'arrêterai sur le cas du catéchisme de 1756, puis sur le diptyque de Paolo Segneri consacré au sacrement de la confession, avec un livre destiné au pénitent (1747, rééd. 1794) et un livre destiné au prêtre confesseur (1760). Enfin, je montrerai comment ces livres s'articulent aux nouvelles pratiques pastorales de ces moines catholiques.

# Hebrew Printing in the Arab and Islamic Lands

*Brad Sabin Hill*

**T**he art of printing by movable type was first introduced outside of Christian Europe by Jewish exiles from Spain who established a Hebrew press at Constantinople (Istanbul) in 1493. Soon thereafter, Iberian refugees set up presses at Salonika in Ottoman Greece (the earliest printing on the territory of Greece) and at Fez in Morocco (the first press on the continent of Africa and the first book printing in the Arab world). The subsequent spread of Hebrew printing in different parts of the Middle East and Asia – not least at Safed in the Galilee in 1577 (the first press in Ottoman Palestine) – comprises a little-known chapter in the history of typography and of the book.

## Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī's Annotation of Girmānūs Farḥāt's *Baḥṭh al-maṭālib*

*Habib Ibrahim*

**G**irmānūs Farḥāt, Maronite bishop of Aleppo (1725-1732), authored numerous handbooks on Arabic grammar, aiming to render its intricacies accessible to a broader audience, particularly untrained Christians. This endeavor can be seen as a response to the frequent criticisms directed towards Christians for their perceived lack of Arabic proficiency. It also foreshadows the competition among different Christian denominations concerning which group possessed a higher level of Arabic fluency. Farḥāt's literary contributions seem to have garnered acceptance among the Rūms. Two letters in Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī's preserved correspondence contain poetry written by Farḥāt. Of particular significance is the fact that Mūsā copied *Baḥṭh al-maṭālib* for Yurgākī, the nephew of Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch (1724-1766). This copy contains annotations and corrections made by Mūsā himself. This paper will present an analysis of Mūsā Ṭrābulṣī's annotations of Farḥāt's seminal grammatical work, a subject that has not been previously examined.

## Italian Sources of the Early Modern Books Printed at the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra

*Alina Kondratiuk*

**T**he influence of Italian art is evident in various aspects of Ukrainian culture, including architecture, painting, and the design of publications printed in Ukrainian presses. During the early modern period, Ukrainian artists gained primary exposure to Western European art through engravings. From the late 16<sup>th</sup> century onward, a significant influx of European publications into Ukraine ensued. These publications encompassed a wide array of genres, including numerous illustrated albums. Of particular interest are the images from these albums that depicted the Holy Scriptures, which served as a source of inspiration for Ukrainian engravers and icon painters. Notable examples include the mid-17<sup>th</sup>-century Bible illustrations by the Ukrainian engraver Ilya, many of which were derived from European illustrated Bibles. This paper will discuss the artists and works that influenced the artistic movement in Ukraine in the domain of printing and engraving in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

# **Printing Armenian Catechisms in Early 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Venice. From Jacques Villotte to Mechitar**

*Paolo Lucca*

**I**n just under thirty years, from 1710 to 1737, five Catholic catechisms were printed in Armenian in Venice: the first, in 1710, by the French Jesuit Jacques Villotte; the second, in 1715, by the two Armenian Dominican Friars Petros Guliari and Grigor Pehluan; the remaining three, in 1725, 1727, and 1737, by Mechitar of Sebaste, founder of the Mechitarist Order. I will discuss in my paper the compilation and composition strategies used by the four authors, analyzing the structures and contents of the different catechisms. These five catechisms, in their diversity – and given the different backgrounds of their authors – constitute an excellent ground for investigating the different ways in which the teaching of Christian doctrine was promoted and carried out by different actors in the context of the Roman Catholic press for the Eastern Christians' benefit.

## Le Psautier arabe imprimé à Padoue en 1709 : par qui, pour qui, pourquoi ?

*Fr. Charbel Nassif*

**L**e Psautier arabe de Padoue imprimé en 1709 reste encore peu étudié. Dans cette présentation, nous nous proposons d’explorer son contenu, qui comprend, en plus des psaumes et des dix cantiques, un calendrier des fêtes fixes et des saints, ainsi qu’un calendrier des fêtes mobiles couvrant les années 1709 à 1739. Nous analyserons également la postface du Psautier, qui fournit des informations précieuses sur son commanditaire, le prêtre Filībus Ġilān, disciple du patriarche Athanasios Dabbās, ainsi que sur les circonstances de son impression et le public visé par cette publication. Nous tenterons également de situer ce Psautier dans le contexte plus large de l’impression des livres arabes, en portant une attention particulière au Psautier imprimé à Alep en 1706 et republié en 1709.

# **The Benefits of the Mekhitarists’ Printing Work in San Lazzaro for the Armenians’ Confessionalization**

*David Neagu*

**I**n 1701, Mekhitar Sebastac‘i established in Istanbul a Catholic religious order that would come to be known as the Mekhitarist Order. Shortly after its establishment, members of the order encountered opposition from Armenian Orthodox Christians in Istanbul and were compelled to depart from the Ottoman capital. The monks relocated to the city of Modon, and subsequently, in 1717, to the island of San Lazzaro in the Venice Laguna. The new monastic order engaged in the creation of a confessional nation, disseminating the Catholic faith through literary works and consolidating the Armenian heritage of the preceding centuries. Mekhitar, a prominent member of the order, played a pivotal role in the development of a literary language that served as a conduit between the 17<sup>th</sup>-century Armenians and their ancestors who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. Additionally, Mekhitar aspired to extend the authority of the Holy See over the maximum number of Armenians possible. The present paper aims to analyze some of the books printed by the Mekhitarists in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and to use them as historical sources to understand how monks used printed books in their attempts to create a confessional Armenian nation. This research also examines the reactions of the Armenian Apostolic Catholicosate in Etchmiadzin to the Mekhitarists’ proselytizing activities.


# **The Arabic *Naskh* Type by Albrecht Krafft: An Austrian Contribution to 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Arabic Typography**

*Titus Nemeth*

**I**n the 1840s, the Austrian government sought to print an existing trade treaty with the Ottoman Empire. In this context, it was decided that the Turkish text would not be reproduced lithographically, as was often the case, but rather, it would be composed and printed using letterpress. To this end, the authorities sought to procure a suitable Arabic type fount. However, they eventually decided to renew local attempts at producing Arabic foundry type. A young scholar from the Austrian Court Library, Albrecht Krafft, was entrusted with the task of creating the original drawings that would serve as the model for the punchcutters of the Court and State Printing Office in Vienna. The present paper traces the origins of this little-known Austrian contribution to 19<sup>th</sup>-century Arabic typography. The paper discusses Krafft's work in the context of earlier regional efforts to practice Arabic type-making, such as the fount created for Franciszek a Mesgnien Meniński's 1680 dictionary. It also challenges some details of its inception as discussed in the literature. The paper introduces Albrecht Krafft as a designer of Arabic typefaces prior to the establishment of his reputation, and it presents the resulting Arabic font. The paper showcases examples of its use in publications and considers its characteristics and qualities in comparison to typefaces from the same era. It reflects on dynamics of Orientalist scholarship and inter-European competition in the field.

# An Isolated Medial? Tracking the History of the Four-Form Table of Arabic Script

J. R. Osborn

 In 1597 AD, a 64-page tract entitled *Alphabetum Arabicum* was published by the Typographia Medicea in Rome. The piece was edited by Giovanni Battista (Giambattista) Raimondi and printed with Arabic type cut by Robert Granjon. The text showcases Granjon's Arabic type alongside a Latin essay on Arabic script, and pages 4-7 contain a table presenting the Arabic alphabet in four forms: isolated, initial, medial, and final. The table abstracts handwriting in the technical direction of moveable type by parceling the cursive line of Arabic script into discrete combinatorial forms. An isolated medial, for example, does not exist naturally in the wild. By definition, a handwritten medial necessarily connects with other letters to form a larger block. Yet, the four-form model visually abstracts the medial as a distinct and isolated shape. This paper explores how the table of four forms foreshadows the appearance of Arabic type specimen sheets, and how this model diverges from the presentation of Arabic script in manuscript and scribal contexts. Although the four-form model is now the dominant presentation of the Arabic alphabet, it was not always so, and the Typographia Medicea's *Alphabetum Arabicum* may be the first printed occurrence of this presentation. This paper considers the ramifications of this shift for technical, graphic, and semiotic understandings of writing.

# ***Presses de résistance: Serbian Book-Printing between Venice, the Romanian Principalities, and the Ottoman Empire (Late 15<sup>th</sup> to Mid-16<sup>th</sup> Century)***

*Aleksandar Savič*

**T**he subject of this paper is early Serbian book printing, which was a means of cultural and spiritual survival after the Ottoman conquest. To provide a comprehensive overview of this phenomenon, it is necessary to consider the activities of printing presses in the former Serbian territories – where liturgical books were produced in several monastic centers – but also beyond. In other words, one needs to consider the impact of Božidar and Vincenzo Vuković, master printers of Serbian origin operating in Venice, but also of the press founded in Wallachia owing to the efforts of Archbishop Maxim (formerly George Branković, titular Despot of the Serbs in Southern Hungary). In that sense, the purpose of the present paper is to establish a connection between these regions and actors, while taking into account the broader political circumstances in Southeastern and Central Europe. The paper will demonstrate how printing was used as an instrument of social-religious cohesion and resistance during a period roughly spanning half a century – from the late 15<sup>th</sup> to around the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

# Non-Arab Readers & Owners of Arabic Books: Evidence from Oxford Libraries

*Vera Tchentsova*

**I**n the forewords to the first Arabic liturgical books and in his letters, the former Patriarch of Antioch Athanasius III Dabbās explained his motivations for initiating printing for the Orthodox Arabs. He mentioned two reasons for this decision: the high cost of manuscripts and the desire to help his Arabic-speaking flock gain spiritual benefit and salvation. The initial publications, which were produced by the printing press in Wallachia with the financial backing of Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu, were primarily disseminated among the Orthodox Arabic-speaking clergy and adherents. However, a substantial proportion of the extant exemplars of these early editions were not utilized within ecclesiastical settings or by the adherents, as they rapidly deteriorated and were subsequently supplanted by alternative tomes. Instead, most extant copies were preserved within scholarly collections, held by individuals who had studied Arabic for practical or academic purposes. The Oxford libraries, for instance, possess two copies of the inaugural book published in Snagov in 1701, entitled the Book of the Divine Liturgies (*Kitāb al-Qaddāsāt al-thalātha al-ilāhiyya*), accompanied by parallel texts in Greek and Arabic. The origin of these copies can be traced in notes left by their owners. One copy, housed in the All-Souls College Library, was bestowed by Athanasius Dabbās to Alexei Pochainov, an interpreter for the Russian Embassy in Constantinople, as a gesture of benediction. The second copy, housed in the Corpus Christi College Library, was brought to Britain by the Reverend Edmund Chishull, who acquired it during his sojourn in Wallachia. The present study focuses on the transfers of these two rare Greek-Arabic books from hand to hand, as reflected in the marginal notes found in them, and traces the story of their arrival at Oxford.

# **The Evolution of Greek Catholic Theology in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Arabic Print: A Study of ‘Abdallāh Zākhir’s *Al-Burhān* and Its Theological Contributions**

*Fr. Rami Wakim*

**T**his paper explores the emergence of Greek Catholic theology in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Arabic printed texts. The focus is on *Al-Burhān al-ṣarīḥ fī ḥaqīqat sirray dīn al-Masīḥ* (*The Clear Proof of the Two Mysteries of the Christian Faith*) by ‘Abdallāh Zākhir. Published in 1762 by the pioneering Khinshāra press, this work signifies a substantial advancement in Arabic Christian theology, exemplifying both fidelity to Patristic sources and innovative responses to the intricate cultural and religious milieu of its era. While Zākhir’s work does not overtly engage in polemics, *Al-Burhān* subtly addresses core accusations raised within Islamic thought, notably the alleged falsification of the Christian Scriptures. By reaffirming scriptural integrity from a distinctly Christian perspective, Zākhir positions *Al-Burhān* as a discreet yet robust defense of Christian doctrine within an Islamic milieu. This study places particular emphasis on Zākhir’s emphasis on deification as an intrinsic element of Christology, representing a significant theological development beyond the framework set by earlier Arabic Christian theologians. This paper examines the theological contributions of *Al-Burhān* as a testament to the adaptability and resilience of Arabic Christian thought, underscoring the role of this book in the broader narrative of Middle Eastern Christianity during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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## OLEKSII CHEKAL

Museum of Books and Printing, Kyiv



Oleksii Chekal is a Ukrainian graphic designer, calligrapher, art historian, and font designer. He is a researcher at the Museum of Books and Printing in Kyiv. He was a Visiting Professor at the Florence Classical Arts Academy. He specializes in complex cross-cultural and cross-language design tasks for scholarly and religious projects (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam). He has extensive experience working with historical script styles and achieving harmony between typography and calligraphy using Latin, Greek, Cyrillic, Hebrew, Arabic, and Syriac scripts for institutional patrons of many faiths. He is the author of the graphic style and fonts of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. He is writing his dissertation on multiscript typography in scholarly and religious publications. Oleksii is experimenting in the field of typographic art of letterpress and handmade technology. As a designer, he cooperates with such scientific institutions as Gorgias Press, the Ukrainian Center for the Study of Ancient Egypt, the Ukrainian Catholic University, the International School of Hebraistic and Semitic Philology (Ukraine), and many others.

## ARCHIM. POLICARP CHIȚULESCU

Library of the Holy Synod/TYPARABIC Project



Policarp Chițulescu is an Archimandrite at the Monastery of Radu Vodă in Bucharest, a patriarchal counselor, the director of the Library of the Holy Synod, and a Senior Researcher on the TYPARABIC project team. He holds a Ph.D. in Theology (Christian literature). He is an expert in early printing and rare books. He attended numerous conferences, wrote and published several books and tens of essays and articles. Research fields: the history of printing, books (manuscripts or printed), and libraries, the history of the usage and practices of writing, the history and circulation of ideas, cultural relations between the Romanian Principalities and Central and Western Europe. He composed catalogues of manuscripts and rare books (published 2020-2024), enclosing his contributions to these fields. He has recently published the outcomes of his research in Open Access in *Scrinium* (20/2024) and *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond. First Volume of Collected Works of the TYPARABIC Project (EAPe-2)*, Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter, 2024.

Lidia Cotovanu holds a Ph.D. in History from École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris (2013). She is a Senior Researcher at the “Nicolae Iorga” Institute of History of the Romanian Academy (Bucharest). Her research focuses on the migration flows in South-East Europe, in the 14<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries; the dependencies of the Eastern Orthodox Patriarchates in the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia (1565-1714); the jurisdiction of the Eastern Patriarchates over the Romanian Principalities; the post-Byzantine Orthodox devotional practices and evergetism; “citizenships” in Medieval and Modern South-East Europe; the social and bureaucratic practices of personal and collective identification in the Danubian Principalities and, more generally, in South-Eastern Europe. Selected publications: *Émigrer en terre va-laque. Estimation quantitative et qualitative d’une mobilité géographique de longue durée (seconde moitié du XIV<sup>e</sup> – début du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)*, Brăila, Istros, 2022 (“Nicolae Bălcescu” Prize of the Romanian Academy); “Moneylending in the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia: Microcredit between Monasteries, Solidarity Groups, and Moneylenders”, in P. Avallone, D. Strangio (ed.), *Different Forms of Microcredit and Social Business: Microfinance in Global History from the Late Medieval to the Modern*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2024; “Migrants, villes, monastères, commerce. La concentration urbaine des métoques acquis par les Patriarcats grecs en Valachie et en Moldavie”, *Études balkaniques* 58/2 (2022); “Orthodox Monasteries as Banks: A Comparison with Catholic Mounts of Pietà”, in R. Avramov et al. (eds.), *Does Monastic Economy Matter? Religious Patterns of Economic Behavior*, Sofia, CAS, 2021.



## ALESSANDRO FLAVIO DUMITRAȘCU

Institute for South-East European Studies, Bucharest

Alessandro Flavio Dumitrașcu is a researcher at the Institute for South-East European Studies of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest. He defended his Ph.D. thesis in History at the University of Bucharest in 2020, under the direction of Professor Andrei Pippidi. He subsequently published his thesis, entitled *Genoa, the Lower Danube and Moldavia in the 13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Brăila, Istros, 2021). His main areas of research are medieval Italian relations with South-Eastern Europe and the Greek diaspora in Italy. He has authored several articles on these topics in academic journals published in Romania and abroad.



## AURÉLIEN GIRARD

Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne /TYPARABIC Project



Aurélien Girard is a Senior Lecturer at Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne, a member of CERHIC, and a Senior Researcher on the TYPARABIC project team. He is an expert on the multifaceted history of Eastern Christians (16<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the history of European Orientalism. His latest publications include Aurélien Girard, Bernard Heyberger, and Vassa Kontouma (eds.), *Livres et confessions chrétiennes orientales. Histoire connectée entre l'Empire ottoman, le monde slave et l'Occident (XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2023.

## BRAD SABIN HILL

George Washington University, Washington, DC



Brad Sabin Hill has held curatorial positions in Canada, Britain, and the USA, notably as Head of the Hebrew Section of the British Library in London, as Librarian and Fellow in Hebrew Bibliography at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, and as Dean of the Library and Senior Research Librarian at the YIVO Institute in New York. In 2017 he held the Fellowship in Wissenschaft des Judentums at the University of Manchester (UK), where he was elected to the Simon Visiting Professorship in 2018. The author, co-author, or editor of a number of books and articles in the field of Hebrew bibliography and booklore,

including *Incunabula, Hebraica & Judaica* (1981), *Hebraica from the Valmadonna Trust* (1989), *Miscellanea Hebraica Bibliographica* (1995), *Hebrew Printing in Ukraine* (2008), and *The Marmorstein Collection* (2017), he has lectured widely on book history and the art of the book at institutions in North America, Europe, and Israel, including the National Library of Canada, the Library of Congress and the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, the Center for Jewish History in New York, and Harvard, Oxford, Manchester, Central European and Hebrew universities.



Habib Ibrahim earned his Ph.D. from the École Pratique des Hautes Études in 2016, with a thesis on John of Damascus in the Arabic tradition. His edition of several of John's *Polemical Treatises* in Arabic translation will soon be published in the *Patrimoine arabe chrétien* collection. His main research focus has since been on the authors and translators of Hagiography in Antioch during the 11<sup>th</sup> century. He has published the abridged version of the Antiochian *Menologion* of Yūhannā 'Abd al-Masīḥ and, recently, identified a corpus of Ibn Sirri's works (9<sup>th</sup> century). He has also specialized in developing digital tools to automate the critical edition process of Christian Arabic texts, focusing on enhancing accessibility and research efficiency. This spans the entire editorial pipeline, from handwritten manuscript recognition and collation of textual variants to lemmatization and the creation of comprehensive dictionaries.



Alina Kondratiuk is a Senior Researcher on the TYPARABIC project team. She holds a Ph.D. from the National Academy of Visual Arts and Architecture in Kyiv, where she started her research work specializing in the Ukrainian art of the early modern period. She has held scientific positions in the Kyiv Museum of Russian Art, the National Art Museum of Ukraine, and the National Preserve "Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra". Her main fields of study are connected to post-Byzantine art, early modern Ukrainian art, cultural transfers between Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Near East in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the iconography of liturgical books printed at the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries. She has published over a hundred scholarly articles in academic journals and conference proceedings, two monographs, several edited books, curricula for art history courses, and a university textbook (as co-author). She is the author of *Patriarchs' and Bishops' Emblems on Printed Books. The Journey of Prototypes from the West to the East* in Oana Iacubovschi, Samuel Noble, and Ioana Feodorov (eds.), *Icons, Ornaments, and Other Charms of Christian Arabic Books. Second Volume of Collected Works of the TYPARABIC Project*, De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston, 2024.



## PAOLO LUCCA

Ca' Foscary University, Venice



Paolo Lucca is a post-doc researcher at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice, where he teaches Biblical Hebrew and Jewish Literature and Civilization. He has a background in Biblical philology and has worked and published on the textual criticism of the Hebrew, Greek, and Armenian Old Testament. He has also published on the history of Dominican missions to Armenia in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and on the relations between Western missionaries and the local Armenian clergy. He is a member of the ERC-funded project “Early Jewish and Christian Magical Traditions in Comparison and Contact” led by Joseph Sanzo,

working on anti-magic polemics in medieval Armenia and early modern Armenian amulets.

## FR. CHARBEL NASSIF

CEDRAC and Université Saint-Joseph, Beirut/TYPARABIC Project



Fr. Charbel Nassif completed a Ph.D. in History of Art at Sorbonne University and a Ph.D. at the Catholic Theology Institute in Paris, both in 2017. He is a head librarian of the Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarchate of Antioch (Raboueh) and a researcher at CEDRAC – Saint-Joseph University in Beirut. In July 2021, he joined the TYPARABIC Project as a Senior Researcher. His domains of academic research interest are the liturgical and iconographical heritage of the Melkite Church and the Arab-Christian Heritage of the Jesuits (16<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries). In 2024, he co-edited with Fr. Rami Wakim a facsimile of the first

Arabic book ever printed, *Kitāb Ṣalāt al-Sawā'ī*, published in Italy in 1514.



David Neagu is a researcher at the Institute for South-East European Studies in Bucharest and a Junior Researcher on the TYPARABIC Project team. He defended his Ph.D. thesis on the relationship between the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia and the Papacy in the 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries at the University of Bucharest in 2024 under the supervision of Professor Andrei Pippidi. His main task for the TYPARABIC project is the study of the early Armenian printed books of the Ottoman Empire and neighbouring countries and the relations between various Armenian printing presses in Europe and Western Asia.



Titus Nemeth is a typographic designer and historian. He has a keen interest and rich expertise in Arabic script culture, which is reflected in his practice and publications. Titus has designed original type, multilingual editions, and a range of Arabic interpretations of well-known Latin typefaces. His publications include scholarly articles, papers in edited volumes, contributions to reference works, the monograph *Arabic Type-Making in the Machine Age* (Brill, 2017), and the edited volume *Arabic Typography: History and Practice* (Niggli, 2023). He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Reading, UK, and is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie alumnus. Titus has taught at schools in France, Morocco, Qatar, and the UK.



## J. R. OSBORN

Georgetown University, Washington, DC



J. R. Osborn is a scholar and experimentalist of communication. His work explores media history, semiotics, communication technologies, visual culture, and design aesthetics, with a regional focus on the Middle East and Africa. Dr. Osborn is currently an Associate Professor of Communication, Culture & Technology (CCT) and Co-Director of Technology Design Studio and Iteration Lab at Georgetown University, Washington, DC. His book *Letters of Light: Arabic Script in Calligraphy, Print, and Digital Design* (Boston, Harvard University Press, 2017) won the 2018 British-Kuwait

Friendship Society Book Prize and received an Honorable Mention for the 2018 Albert Hourani Book Award from the Middle East Studies Association (MESA). The book follows the story of Arabic script and technology from the advent of calligraphic tradition to the implementation of the Unicode standard. Dr. Osborn also produced, co-directed, and edited the feature documentary *Glitter Dust: Finding Art in Dubai* (2012), and he co-authored *African Art Reframed: Dialogues and Reflections on Museum Culture* (University of Illinois Press, 2020), which analyzes the global circulation of African art through extensive curator interviews, ethnographic site visits, the “unmixing” of artworks, and studies of audience response. Dr. Osborn is currently exploring and collecting significant diagrams in the social sciences and the humanities for his *Diagrammatica* archive.

## ALEKSANDAR SAVIĆ

University of Belgrade



Aleksandar Savić is an Assistant Professor at the University of Belgrade, from which he holds a doctorate in Medieval History (2023). He teaches several courses on medieval Europe and the Mediterranean, with special emphasis on cultural history. He is a member of the Serbian Committee for Byzantine Studies and Secretary of the Centre for the Theory of History (Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade). He also serves on the editorial board of the “Polis” book series (CLIO Publishing, Belgrade). He

has published articles and chapters on medieval hagiography, Holy Land pilgrimage, cultural transfers in the Eastern Mediterranean, and Christian-Muslim relations. Selected publications: “Athos – Jerusalem – Sinai: Peregrinations and Identities in the Lives of St Sava of Serbia”, in *South-Eastern Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean*, ed. by Archim. Polycarp Chițulescu and Ioana Feodorov, Brăila, 2020, p. 23-52; “A Sea of Miracles: Reflections on Narrative Space in Medieval Serbian Hagiography”, *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog Instituta* 58 (2021), p. 39-71; “‘The Heathen Are Come into Thine Inheritance’ (Ps. 78, 1): Identity and Alterity in Serbian Political Discourse in the Ottoman Conquest Era”, in S. Marjanović-Dušanić et al., *Political Frameworks of Collective Identities: Evidence from Medieval Serbia*, Belgrade, 2024, p. 77-114 (in Serbian).

Vera Tchentsova is an Associate Professor at the École Pratique des Hautes Études and a Senior Researcher within the TYPARABIC project. She obtained her Ph.D. at the Institute of General History of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. Initially a specialist in Byzantine economic and social history, her research interests gradually shifted toward manuscript studies and archival documentation, which led her to join several research projects focused on unpublished sources related to the interactions between Muscovite Russia and the Christian East during the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Her main areas of expertise include early modern printing presses, documentary sources on the activities of Macarius III ibn al-Zaʿīm, Patriarch of Antioch, and his son, Paul of Aleppo, and relations between the Metropolitan See of Kyiv, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and Moscow in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These themes are explored in several of her recent publications: *Киевская митрополия между Константинополем и Москвой, 1686*, Kyiv, 2020; “‘Tout Moscou, Ville-Reine, trembla de te rencontrer.’ Le patriarche Macaire d’Antioche et la tutelle des patriarches orientaux sur l’Église russe,” in Ioana Feodorov, Bernard Heyberger, Samuel Noble (eds.), *Arabic Christianity: Between the Ottoman Levant and Eastern Europe*, Leiden/Boston, Brill, 2021, p. 47–75; “La naissance du portrait dans l’espace orthodoxe : représenter l’auteur dans les livres grecs du début du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in Radu Dîpratu and Samuel Noble (eds.), *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond. First Volume of Collected Works of the TYPARABIC Project*, Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter, 2024, p. 143–173.



Father Rami Wakim is the Chief of Chancellery of the Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarchate in Raboueh, near Beirut, Lebanon. He is a Senior Lecturer at the Higher Institute for Religious Studies at Université Saint-Joseph in Beirut and is currently coordinating the editing and publication of the *Lexicon of Practical Theology in Arabic*. His main research fields include anthropology in Patristic thoughts, particularly in the works of Maximus the Confessor, the formation of Christian doctrine, and inter-Christian relations. Among his recent publications in Open Access are: “The Commentary in the Melkite Lectionary: The Case of Patriarch Athanasios III Dabbās’s Lectionary of 1706”, in *Scrinium* (Brill, 2023), and “Patriarch Dabbās’s Gospel Books. A comparative study of his 1706 and 1708 versions of the *Tetraevangelion*”, in *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond. First Volume of Collected Works of the TYPARABIC Project (EAPe-2)*, Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter, 2024.



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