

author of that monumental survey of the medieval Orthodoxy for which he coined the term 'Byzantine Commonwealth'. At the same time, and this is not the least of the book's merits, Kitromilides dismisses the conventional views and the anachronisms (like the back-dating of nationalist ideas) that can still be found in many works of Balkan history.

Andrei Pippidi

Antoine César DEBBAS, Nakhlé RÉCHO, *Tārīḥ al-ṭibā'a l-'arabiyya fī l-Mašriq. Al-Baṭriyark Aṭanāsīyūs aṭ-ṭālī Dabbās (1685–1724)* (A History of Middle Eastern Printing in Arabic. Patriarch Athanasios III Dabbās), Beirut, Dar al-Nahar, 2008, 137 pp., illustrations, 8 pp. of colour plates.

Monographs that focus on printing in Arabic types are quite rare. Except for Josée Balagna in 1984<sup>1</sup> and Wahid Gdoura (Qaddūra) in 1985<sup>2</sup>, to our knowledge no other author had devoted a whole volume to this fascinating topic. It was therefore high time that a consistent survey is published, and even more so in one of the Near Eastern countries where the beginnings of Arabic printing took place.

Rumanian historians of culture and typography have retained a vivid interest in this topic, considering that the first books in Arabic types were printed in the Romanian principality of Walachia under Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu (1701–1702). Scholars such as Nicolae Iorga, Marcu Beza, Dan Simonescu, Mircea Păcurariu, Virgil Cîndea researched and wrote articles and notes on the help that Rumanian princes and Church hierarchs offered to the Christian Arabs of the Antiochian Patriarchate, around 1700 in Bucharest, capital of Walachia, and again in 1744–1747 in Iași, capital of Moldavia. They were sensitive to the Antiochian Patriarchs' aspiration to spread the Orthodox teaching in Arabic, the language of the people of Ottoman Syria. Starting with Patriarch Makarios Ibn al-Za'īm, who spent nearly four years at the courts of Walachia and Moldavia (1653–1657), several hierarchs of the Antiochian Church approached the Rumanian princes for help. Among them was a forefather of the author's, Antoine César Debbas, whose recent book written together with Nakhlé Récho is a timely addition to the insufficient bibliography of the above-mentioned topics.

Divided into three major parts, this book comprises a brief chapter on each important issue connected to printing in Arabic types until 1890. After the *Introduction* of A. C. Debbas (*Printing with Arabic types*, pp. 9–10) and a brief note on the development of printing in Europe, the second chapter evokes Arabic learning in Europe between 1514 and 1700, while the third, *The First Arabic Printing-presses* (pp. 19–34), deals with the Arabic books printed in Italy (Fano, 1514, Rome, 1566–1622, Milan, 1632 and Padua, 1687), Paris (1538–1645), Holland (after 1595) and Germany. The rich production of the printing-presses in England is only briefly mentioned (p. 32). Also included in this chapter is the 1610 *Psalter* in Karshuni (Garšūni) script – a Syriac script used especially to write the Arabic language – printed at the monastery of Saint Anthony in Quzḥayyā, in northern Mount Lebanon. The general conclusion to this chapter is that "Arab Christians welcomed the art of printing and agreed with its benefits, based on the books printed in Europe that reached them. However, their interest in the printing-press did not prevent them from rejecting the contents of the books sent to them from Rome and Paris, because [...] they enclosed texts that reflected the Catholic teachings. The Church of Rome was trying hard to bring the Eastern Churches to the Catholic faith (...)." (pp. 33–34)

Athanasios Dabbās's visits to Walachia are reported in *Part two: Printing in Aleppo. Patriarch Athanasios III Dabbās* (pp. 35–81). After a survey of the historical circumstances in Aleppo (*Trading*

<sup>1</sup> Josée Balagna, *L'imprimerie arabe en Occident (XVI<sup>e</sup>, XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, Paris, 1984, 153 pp. (not mentioned in the volume under scrutiny).

<sup>2</sup> Wahid Gdoura, *Le début de l'imprimerie arabe à Istanbul et en Syrie: évolution de l'environnement culturel (1706–1787)*, Tunis, 1985; revised Arabic edition, Tunis, CEROMDI, 1992 (not 1993, as mentioned in the book under scrutiny herewith).

*Centre, Cultural Renaissance*), the story of the Dabbās family starts to unfold ('*Ā'ila Bānū Dabbās*, pp. 39–41), merging data already enclosed in Joseph Nasrallah's surveys<sup>3</sup> with new information, presumably originating in the family archives. The authors then briefly address the issue of the *Language spoken by the Eastern Christians* (without any reference, though, to Jérôme Lentin's fundamental work *Recherches sur l'histoire de la langue arabe au Proche-Orient à l'époque moderne*, Ph. D thesis, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris III, 1997<sup>4</sup>). They move on to *Prayer books and the Orthodox contribution to printing in Europe*, later focusing on the connections between the Christian Arabs of Syria and the Rumanians, reported somewhat in reverse: *Development of the connections between the Antiochian Orthodox Church and the Rumanians* (pp. 49–50), *Connections between Christian Arabs and Rumania* (sic!, pp. 50–51), *Origins of the Aleppo printing-press: Arabic printing in Bucharest* (p. 51), *The cultural Renaissance in Rumania* (pp. 51–54). This last chapter provides a concise report on church life in the Rumanian provinces, and efforts made towards teaching and printing in the vernacular. The preliminary data on books printed in Arabic in Walachia would have better been left aside, considering that the chapter *Travelling to Rumania* follows right after (pp. 55–61). This part provides the reasons for Athanasios's travels to Bucharest, his relationship with Constantin Brâncoveanu, the personality and skills of the great printer and engraver Antim Ivireanu, the activity of the printing-presses in Snagov and Bucharest, where two church books were produced in Arabic and Greek types, a *Book of Mass* (*Qūndāq al-kāhin*, 1701) and a *Book of Hours* (*Kitāb Al-Sawā'ī*, 1702).

The following chapter, *The printing-press of Aleppo* (pp. 63–79), surveys the aftermath of Athanasios's return to Aleppo with the printing implements that he received as a gift from Prince Brâncoveanu. Several essential issues are discussed, not exactly in a chronological order: establishment of the printing-press, source of the printing tools, difficulties of Arabic printing in Aleppo, the printing process, choosing the manuscripts, titles published, distribution, end of the activities. The improbable theory that the Arabic types were made in Aleppo is rejected by the authors, who describe the difficulties of carving such types, also concluding that they must have been brought from Walachia (pp. 68–73). *Part two* ends with an annotated bibliography of Athanasios's theological and literary works (pp. 82–105), including his translations from Greek (in a rather peculiar order<sup>5</sup>).

*Part three* encloses a brief survey of Arabic printing activities in later periods: Istanbul (1726–1784), Dayr Al-Šuwayr in Lebanon (beginning with 1734), Iași in Moldavia (1745) and Beirut (1751). Again, the Rumanians' contribution to the establishment and operation of the last two by Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch, a dedicated defender of Orthodoxy, is duly recognized (pp. 120–129). Quoting earlier commentators the authors agree that the Beirut printing-press remained functional until 1766 and then resumed its work after ninety years, while in 1881 its location and tools were completely renewed.

This book clearly reflects the reasons that drove several of the Antiochian Patriarchs, beginning with the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, to Orthodox European principalities, especially to Walachia and Moldavia. Unfortunately, most of the sources of this survey were already well-known to the scientific community, with little addition of new information. While offering a well-structured collection of data on the topic of Athanasios Dabbās's contribution to the beginnings of printing in Arabic, it would have been preferable, rather than turning again to the famous works of C. F. Schnurrer, G. Graf, J. Nasrallah, C. Karalevsky and W. Gdoura, that this survey made the most of recent research achieved by Arab scholars, less familiar to the Western scholarly community, or to other recent bibliography. Incidentally, Patriarch Athanasios's works were mostly edited and commented by Rumanian researchers: beside these endeavours, little has been achieved in modern

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Nasrallah, *L'Imprimerie au Liban*, Beyrouth-Harissa, 1949; *idem*, *Histoire du mouvement littéraire dans l'église melchite du Vème au XXème siècle*, Louvain – Paris, vol. III, 1983, vol. IV, t. I, 1979.

<sup>4</sup> Distributed by Atelier national de reproduction des thèses, Lille.

<sup>5</sup> Probably influenced by Nasrallah's division of the Eastern Christians' works according to his views on their general topic.

times towards publishing Patriarch Athanasios's works. Thus, his *History of the Patriarchs of Antioch* was edited and translated from Greek by a Rumanian priest, Fr Vasile Radu<sup>6</sup> (*Istoria Patriarhilor de Antiohia*, with Cyril Karalevski, in "Biserica Ortodoxă Română", Bucharest, no. 48/1930, pp. 851–864, 961–972, 1039–1050, 1136–1150; no. 49/1931, pp. 15–32, 140–160), while the Arabic text of his *Salāh al-ḥakīm wa-fasād al-‘ālam al-danīm*, i.e., his version of Dimitrie Cantemir's *Divan* (Iași, 1698), was recently edited and translated in Bucharest<sup>7</sup> (*Dimitrie Cantemir, The Salvation Of The Wise Man And The Ruin Of The Sinful World*, Arabic Edition, English Translation, Editor's Note, Notes And Indices by Ioana Feodorov, Introduction and Comments by Virgil Căndeă. Romanian Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 2006, 400 pp.). The historical background of A. C. Debbas and N. Récho's study would have been enhanced by this and by other recent surveys, like that of Eva Hanebutt-Benz, Dagmar Glass, Geoffrey Roper (eds.), *Middle Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution. A Cross-Cultural Encounter*, Westhofen, WVA-Verlag Skulima, 2002, or Carsten Walbiner, *The Christians of Bilād al-Shām (Syria): Pioneers of Book-Printing in the Arab World*, in *The beginning of Printing in the Near and Middle East: Jews, Christians and Muslims*, Wiesbaden, 2001, Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 11–29<sup>8</sup>.

The accuracy of the data that refers to events in Walachia and Moldavia could also have benefited from the expertise of Rumanian scholars who researched the connections between the Antiochian Church and the Rumanian Orthodox Christians. Some errors may thus have been avoided. Thus, no *Holy Scripture (Al-Kitāb al-muqaddas, bi-kāmili-hi*, "in full") was printed in Arabic in 1700, in Snagov, as the authors assert on pp. 58 and 101<sup>9</sup>. This is probably a reference to the complete *Evangels* printed in 1693 in Greek and Rumanian. The information could have been checked with Ion Bianu and Nerva Hodoș, *Bibliografia românească veche. 1508–1830* ("The Early Romanian Bibliography"), Bucharest, I, 1903, pp. 328–335. The Greek-Arabic *Liturgikon* was printed in 1702 in Bucharest, not in Snagov, as mentioned in the legend to one of the plates. The "anonymous chronicler" referred to on p. 60, n. 15, is actually Radu Popescu, a contemporary of Patriarch Athanasios III who inserted a short note about him in his *Chronicles*. While Brâncoveanu's title was *Ioan Constantin Basarab Voievod, Lord and Master of the entire Hungro-Wallachia*, the legend to his portrait on p. 61 gives: *Prince Ioan Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688–1714) Lord Basaraba Voievode in the Country of Rumania*. This last name is often used instead of "the Rumanian Principalities" or "Walachia and Moldavia", that had not yet been joined in a united national state.

However concise (and imprecise at times), this monograph devoted to the life and works of Patriarch Athanasios III Dabbās is a valuable contribution to the general knowledge of the history of Christian Arab civilization. It also has the merit of revisiting a neglected episode of the history of Middle Eastern printing. The project of a general survey of the Rumanians' contribution to the beginnings of printing in Arabic is in progress at the Institute for South-East European Studies of the Rumanian Academy in Bucharest.

Ioana Feodorov

<sup>6</sup> Mentioned by Debbas and Récho in a note on p. 82.

<sup>7</sup> Inaccurately cited by Debbas and Récho, in a note on p. 95, as a new edition of the Romanian-Greek version of Cantemir's *Divan* published by Virgil Căndeă in 1974.

<sup>8</sup> No mention is made either of research published by Dagmar Glass in *Malta, Beirut, Leipzig and Beirut Again. Eli Smith, the American Syria Mission and the Spread of Arabic Typography in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Lebanon*, Beirut, Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 1998, or Bernard Heyberger, *Livres et pratique de la lecture chez les chrétiens (Syrie, Liban) XVII<sup>e</sup>–XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*. "Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée", no. 87–88, Aix-en-Provence, 1999, pp. 209–223.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from *Asāqifat ar-Rūm al-Malikiyyīn bi-Ḥalab (The Greek-Orthodox Bishops of Aleppo)* by Mgr. Neophitos Edelby (s.l., 1980, p. 115).