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# The First Book Printed in Arabic

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*A book of Hours, printed in Arabic in Fano, Italy, in 1514 by a press subsidized by Pope Julius II has come into the possession of the Library. While not previously unknown, it is exceedingly rare and its production has long presented difficult questions to scholars. For example, what missionary or warlike project of Pope Julius in the Near East prompted the translation and production of a Catholic book of Hours in Arabic? What local usage does the book follow? Or perhaps it follows the Eastern Orthodox usage rather than the Western. These are questions that some scholar may solve in the future.*

*That the book was intended to attract adherents of Islam is clear by the opening lines of the various sections which imitate the beginnings of the sections of the Koran, "In the name of God, the Ever-living, the Eternal," etc. If it were translated into Turkish, it might well be connected with the overtures made by Pope Julius to the Turks shortly before his death, but the Arabic text would seem to preclude that supposition.*

**I**NTO the safekeeping of the Treasure Room of Princeton University Library there has recently passed a small unpretentious skin-bound book that represents the first attempt ever made at printing Arabic from movable type. Its title is *Kitāb Salāt al-Sawā'i* (literally, the book of the prayer of the hours). Its date of printing is September 12, 1514, and the place Fano, Italy.

The interest of the book does not end there. It is a rarity of which only three others are known to exist. All three are in Italy: One in the Estense Library at Modena, another in the Medici Library at Florence and a third in the Ambrosiana at Milan. This copy, unique in the Americas, stands on a shelf in the Treasure Room next to a copy of the first Arabic work ever printed on a linotype in an American university press.

The book consists of 120 leaves in octavo, all extremely well preserved. The text is in black ink but the rubrics and punctuation marks in red; 12 lines per page. Nine pages have decorative woodcut borders, five of which are white on black, consisting of lines and geometrical figures imitating flowers and leaves and following the pattern of illuminated borders in Korans and other Oriental manuscripts. These borders constitute one of the earliest appearances in print of such motifs and ornamental de-

signs, generally termed "arabesque" or "moresque." Four borders carry varied patterns also arabesque but with aquatic and aerial birds, indicating influence from European ornamental designs of and following the period of the Renaissance. Similar interlacing ornamentation and avian decoration begin to appear in the late fifteenth century in Italy and become current in Europe in the course of the sixteenth on goldsmiths' work, textiles, books and bookbindings. A glance at some of the illustrations in Paul Kristeller, *Die Lombardische Graphik der Renaissance* (Berlin, 1913), Arthur M. Hind, *An Introduction to a History of Woodcut* (London, 1935), Richard Fisher, *Catalogue of a Collection of Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts* (London?, 1879) and Alfred W. Pollard, *Italian Book Illustrations* (London, 1894) shows close affinity with the decoration in our book borders. The decorator was no doubt an Italian craftsman.

The first page translated into English reads:

In the name of God, the Ever-living, the Eternal.  
 We begin with the aid of God, be He exalted!  
 And by His gracious favor, to write  
 the nocturnal and day prayers.  
 First among them is the midnight prayer.  
 Thou shalt say: Through the supplications of our fa-  
 thers the holy men, O our Lord Jesus  
 Christ our God, have mercy upon us. Amen.



... في أبي النوع مكمله ...  
 و كان الفراغ من هذاه التواقيع  
 ليباركه نهار الثلث تاني عشر  
 شهر شتمبر سنة الف وخمسمائة  
 واربع عشر ، لشهر نايشوع المشايخ  
 لكره المحي اهبين وهي ختم المظ  
 غريغور ريو س بيت غريغور ريو  
 من مدينة البزنطية ختمت في مدينة  
 فان ختم حكيم ائمة اليها الهون  
 ماغاك كرسي القلايس مار بطرس  
 الرسول بن بنة رومان ورجل به غلط  
 بخله في حق الله شان به شفاعة العبيد له

The colophon says:

The completion of this blessed Book of Hours  
 took place on Tuesday, the twelfth of  
 September, in the year of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
 glory to his name! Amen. It was printed by the master  
 Gregorius of the house of Gregorius  
 of the city of Venice. Done in the city of  
 Fano [Fân] during the reign of His Holiness Pope Leo,  
 the occupant of the chair of Saint Peter  
 the Apostle in the city of Rome. He who finds error in it  
 let him rectify it, and God will rectify his affairs  
 through the intercession of the Lord. Amen.

The typographer Gregorius de Gregoriis, who evidently made the type following the model of some unknown manuscript, was originally of Forli, but was summoned from Venice, the then leading center of printing and engraving, to undertake this original project, for whom we are not sure. Father Cheikho asserts in *al-Machriq*, vol. III (1900), p. 80, that this Arabic press in Fano was established by Pope Julius II (1503-13), a patron of literature and art; but Jacob Manzoni, a former owner of our copy and author of *Annali tipografici dei Soncino* (Bologna, 1883-6), surmises that the press was attached to the printing establishment of G. Soncino, which produced many works, among them some in Hebrew in 1505. Soncino was himself a Jew. The Italian books of reference do not know much about Gregorius beyond this notable achievement of his, nor about the type he created. If other Arabic works were published in Fano, none are now known. In the article "Fanum Fortunae," in *Dictionnaire de Géographie Ancienne et Moderne à l'Usage du Libraire* (Paris, 1870), by Pierre Deschamps it is stated that this Arabic book of hours was published at the request and the expense of Pope Julius II, who died before its completion. The colophon mentions the name of his successor, Leo X (1513-21).

Our copy bears some interesting handwritten glosses and marginal notes, mostly contemporary. The title page carries a manuscript title in Latin: "Horologium è Graeco sermone in Arabicum translatum." Below it a later Latin ownership inscription, probably eighteenth century, names the Augustine Eremite Convent at Munich. Other Latin notations on the margin render the Arabic captions. The collation of the forms of the book was marked in Syriac and Arabic by some hand, an Oriental one. Could it be the hand of the typesetter, some Christian immigrant

from Lebanon, or was it the hand of a reader, one of those Maronite Lebanese scholars who in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries labored in Rome introducing and popularizing Oriental studies? To the inside cover is attached the bookplate of Jacob Manzoni: "Ex Libris Jacobj Manzoni," with his coat of arms. Manzoni was a bibliophile, scion of an aristocratic family of Milan. He died in 1889; his library was sold 1892-4. Finally this item in it found its way, through an auction sale in England last winter, into the hands of a London bookdealer, Goldschmidt, from whom Princeton acquired it by purchase. Here ends the story of our copy.

Several European orientalists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries possessed or utilized copies of this work. The French scholar Renaudot used a copy in Paris in 1716 and rightly termed the prayers Melkite, i.e., Greek Orthodox, evidently of the Alexandrine rite. Other copies in France, mentioned by Brunet, *Manuel du Libraire*, vol. IV, pt. 2 (Paris, 1863), p. 859, were in the libraries of two distinguished Arabists, Silvestre de Sacy (d. 1838) and Quatremère (d. 1857). The Quatremère copy was sold for 60 francs only. The Italo-French mathematician and bibliophile Libri sold presumably the same copy in 1859 for £ 5, 15 s. The de Sacy copy fetched 201 fr. In his *Catalogus Bibliothecae Mediceae* (Florence, 1742), the younger Assemani (al-Sam'ani describes the Medici copy. The German scholar Tychsen had in 1776 a copy cited in Schnurrer, *Bibliotheca arabica* (Halle, 1840), pp. 231-3. In his *Dictionnaire géographique d' Italie* (Florence, 1905), art. "Fano," Fumagalli reproduces a page of this Arabic book of prayers taken from a copy in the collection of L. S. Olschki, a Jewish bookdealer in Rome. Where those copies at present are we do not know. The *Encyclopedia Italiana*, art. "Libro," pl. XXII, reproduces the first page of the copy at Modena (Biblioteca Estense). Professor Nallino of Rome, according to a verbal report made to me by Professor Della Vida of the University of Pennsylvania, had recently occasion to examine the Ambrosian copy. A check by my colleague Dr. Faris on the printed catalogs of the major libraries of Western Europe and the Arab East failed to reveal the existence of any other copies. It is surprising that the Vatican does not treasure one.

The second time after 1514 in which Arabic makes its appearance in print is again in Italy in a polyglot Psalter edited by Agostini Giustiniani and published in Genoa 1516. It is interesting in this connection to note that the first Arabic press introduced into Egypt was that of the College of the Propaganda in

Rome, which was plundered by Napoleon shortly before his invasion of Egypt in 1798. The first Arabic press in the East was founded in Aleppo, Syria, in 1792, almost two centuries after the Fano press. Today the leading Arabic press of Europe is in Leyden, Holland. Arabic printing was not introduced into America until 1892, when an enterprising Syrian immigrant founded a newspaper in New York.

