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Woodcut Tailpieces of the First Arabic Books Printed by Athanasios Dabbās in Aleppo

1 Introduction

Following his successful collaboration with the future metropolitan of Wallachia, Antim the Iberian,¹ on the publication of the Greek and Arabic editions of the Book of the Divine Liturgies (Snagov, 1701) and the Horologion (Bucharest, 1702), Athanasios Dabbās² decided to return to Aleppo and continue his printing work

¹ Antim the Iberian, originally from Georgia, served as metropolitan of Wallachia from 1708 to 1716. A prolific typographer, he had learned the art of printing as an apprentice of Mitrofan of Buzău (bishop of Huși, 1682–1691; bishop of Buzău, 1691–1702) at the printing press of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, which operated between 1682 and 1715 at the Monastery of Cetățuia, near Iași. In 1694, at the request of Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688–1714), he established a printing press in the Monastery of Snagov, close to Bucharest. By the time Athanasios Dabbās arrived in Wallachia in the early 18th century, Antim had already published a number of books in several languages at this press. These included works in Romanian, Slavonic, and Greek. The first joint project of Dabbās and Antim, the Arabic Book of Divine Liturgies, was published in 1701. In the same year, Antim published two Greek books: the *Proskynitarion of the Holy Mount Athos* and the *Eortologion* of Sevastos Kyminētēs. On the typographic activity of Antim the Iberian, see D. Bădără, *Tiparul românesc la sfârșitul secolului al XVII-lea și începutul secolului al XVIII-lea*, Brăila, 1998, p. 101–120; D. Bădără, “The Beginning of Printing and Print Culture in the Romanian Principalities”, in R. Dipratu, S. Noble (eds.), *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond. First Volume of Collected Works of the TYPARABIC Project*, Berlin/Boston, 2024, p. 128, 134–136. See also Archim. P. Chițulescu (coord. ed.), *Antim Ivireanul. Opera tipografică*, Bucharest, 2016. The volume offers a critical examination of previous literature. For the Greek-Arabic books published by Antim in collaboration with Athanasios Dabbās, see I. Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands. The East-European Connection*, Berlin/Boston, 2023, p. 143–162.

² Athanasios Dabbās (patriarch of Antioch, 1686–1694, 1720–1724, and metropolitan of Aleppo, 1694–1720) was a proponent of the literary reform initiated by Meletios Karma, former metropolitan of Aleppo (1612–1634) and patriarch of the Church of Antioch (1634–1635). Karma’s most ambitious project was the publication, in Rome, of a revised edition of the Arabic Bible, based on the Arabic manuscript tradition. His project was ultimately rejected by the Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide. For the contribution of Meletios Karma and Athanasios Dabbās to Arabic literature and print culture in the broader context of the Arab cultural Renaissance of the 17th and 18th centuries, see *HMLÉM* IV.1, p. 70–87, 132–146; C.-M. Walbiner, “Melkite (Greek-Orthodox) Approaches

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in Ottoman territory. Having already acquired practical experience in the technique of movable-type printing, the former patriarch proceeded to establish an Arabic-type press at his metropolitan residence shortly after his return to Syria. As early as 1706, the first liturgical books in Arabic were published in Aleppo. The editorial plan of the press was carefully drawn up by Dabbās himself, who was involved in all phases of the printing process, including proofreading and revising the texts. The founding of the Aleppo press in 1706 marked a significant milestone for the Arabic-speaking Christians of Ottoman Syria, whose long-held aspiration to print in Arabic in their homeland was finally accomplished.

Once settled in Aleppo, Dabbās broadened the scope of his editorial project to include, in addition to primary liturgical texts, anthologies of sermons and theological works, which he saw as contributions to the spiritual edification of his congregation. Over the course of its six-year existence, the Aleppo press published a total of nine distinct titles, in addition to one reprint.³ Notably, the press published three titles in 1706 alone.⁴ These included a Psalter (of 296 pages) and a Gospel, which came out in two different versions (amounting to over 800 pages). The success of Athanasios Dabbās's pioneering enterprise, as well as the relatively short time in which he was able to establish the press,⁵ has given rise to the assumption that

to the Bible at the Time of the Community's Cultural Reawakening in the Early Modern Period (17th–Early 18th Centuries)", in S. Binay, S. Leder (eds.), *Translating the Bible into Arabic: Historical, Text-Critical and Literary Aspects*, Beirut, 2012; A. Wade, "A Preliminary Comparison of the Horologion in Sinai Arabic 232 (13th c.) with the 1702 Edition of Athanasios Dabbās and the Earlier Version of Meletios Karma", in Dipratu, Noble (eds.), *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond*, especially p. 243–251. On the typographic activity of Athanasios Dabbās in Syria, see Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands*, p. 162–186.

³ These books are: 1) Psalter (1706), re-edited in 1709; 2) Gospel Book (1706); 3) Gospel Lectionary (1706); 4) *The Book of the Chosen Pearls from the Sermons of Saint John Chrysostom* (1707); 5) *Acts of the Apostles* (1707); 6) *The Holy Book of the Paremia, or Prophetologion* (1708); 7) *A Sermon by John Chrysostom for the Easter Feast* together with *The Sermons of Athanasios, the Patriarch of Jerusalem* (1711); 8) *Book of the Paraklitiki, or Octoechos* (1711); 9) Athanasios Dabbās, *Brief Epistle on How to Repent and Confess* (1711).

⁴ In 1706, Athanasios Dabbās published two different editions of the Gospel. The initial version covers a total of 243 pages. The second version was expanded with patristic commentaries on the biblical pericopes, bringing the total to 566 pages. For bibliographic references, see below, the section devoted to the engraved decoration of the first Arabic Gospel published in Aleppo.

⁵ Although Arabic book printing in Wallachia ceased after the release of the Horologion, it is believed that Dabbās continued to reside in the principality until at least 1704. The precise date of Dabbās's return to Syria is uncertain, although it is known that he made a detour to Cyprus via Constantinople in 1705, after his appointment as archbishop of Cyprus by the Ecumenical Patriarch Gabriel III (1702–1707). See C.-M. Walbiner, review of E. Hanebutt-Benz, D. Glass, G. Roper (eds.), *Sprachen des Nahen Ostens und die Druckrevolution: Eine interkulturelle Begegnung/Middle*

the Syrian metropolitan acquired the necessary printing equipment (or, at least, an important part of it) from Wallachia.⁶ However, there is no concrete evidence to substantiate this assumption. The preface to the Psalter, the first book printed at the Aleppo press, does not provide any context as to how Dabbās set up the press and who assisted him in the process.⁷ One plausible hypothesis is that he was accompanied to Aleppo by apprentices of Antim the Iberian, who may have assisted him in installing the press.⁸ This hypothesis is supported by the evidence that Antim employed a similar approach when solicited to assist in the establishment of the first Georgian printing press in Tbilisi around the same time.⁹

Furthermore, there is currently no consensus among scholars regarding the provenance of the typefaces used by the printing press in Aleppo. The prevailing opinion is that the former patriarch received the set of Arabic typefaces as a gift from Antim the Iberian upon his departure from Wallachia and used them to print his books in Aleppo.¹⁰ However, the lack of a direct comparison between the typefaces used in the Wallachian printed books and those used by Athanasios Dabbās in his newly established press leaves this hypothesis open to questioning. Indeed, some skepticism has persisted

Eastern Languages and the Print Revolution: A Cross-Cultural Encounter (Westhofen, 2002), *Oriens Christianus*, 88, 2004, p. 285; Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands*, p. 162.

6 See, for example, *HMLÉM* IV.1, p. 132, 145; C.-M. Walbiner, “Some Observations on the Perception and Understanding of Printing amongst the Arab Greek Orthodox (Melkites) in the Seventeenth Century”, in P. Sadgrove (ed.), *Printing and Publishing in the Middle East*, Oxford, 2008, p. 71; J.-P. Ghobrial, “The Ottoman World of ‘Abdallāh Zāhir: The Bindings of the Melkite Monastery at Shuwayr in the Arcadian Library”, in G. Mandelbrote, W. Bruijn (eds.), *The Arcadian Library: Bindings and Provenance*, London, 2014, p. 194.

7 See the relevant passage in section 3 below.

8 Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands*, p. 162–163.

9 In 1707, Antim the Iberian sent his disciple Mihail Ștefan (Mikhael Stepaneshvili) to Tbilisi to help the Georgians set up their first movable type printing press. This was undertaken at the behest of King Vakhtang VI of Kartli, who sought to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge among his people through the medium of printing. In the preface to the Gospel (Tbilisi, 1709), Mihail Ștefan himself testifies to having travelled to Tbilisi with the requisite equipment for establishing the printing press. This included woodcuts, and possibly even the Georgian characters in the Nuskhuri script, which were employed to print the first Georgian books in Tbilisi. See A. Pippidi, “À propos des débuts de l’imprimerie en Georgie”, in E. Siupiur, Z. Mihail (eds.), *Impact de l’imprimerie et rayonnement intellectuel des Pays Roumains*, Bucharest, 2009, p. 25–40; Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands*, p. 319–323. A comparison of the illustrations in the books printed in Tbilisi with those published by Antim the Iberian reveals striking similarities. On this topic, see the chapter signed by Nino Kavtaria in this volume.

10 See, for example, D. Simonescu, E. Muracade, “Tipar românesc pentru arabi în secolul al XVIII-lea”, *Cercetări literare*, III, Bucharest, 1939, p. 3. Joseph Nasrallah states that the Arabic type was cast anew by ‘Abdallāh Zāhir in Aleppo: see Nasrallah, *HMLÉM* IV.1, p. 145.

in scholarship regarding the likelihood that Dabbās continued his work in Aleppo with the same movable type that he used to print his books in Snagov and Bucharest. More than a century ago, the French scholar Émile Picot, who examined the Gospel (Aleppo, 1706) and the Prophetologion (Aleppo, 1708), concluded that the Arabic fonts used in these books were of a different shape and of inferior quality compared with those used in the Book of the Divine Liturgies (Snagov, 1701) and the Horologion (Bucharest, 1702).¹¹ A similar claim has recently been made by Serge A. Frantsouzzoff regarding the first publication of Dabbās's press, namely the Book of Psalms.¹² Alternatively, it has been suggested that the Arabic type presented by Antim the Iberian to the Syrian metropolitan was not used for printing new books in Aleppo, but rather served as a model for the newly cast type with which Dabbās printed his books at the Aleppo press.¹³ Further research is expected to shed more light on these issues.

2 Elements of Decoration in Publications by the Aleppo Press

Preliminary research indicates that the icons and ornaments in the books published by Athanasios Dabbās in Aleppo were not printed from woodblocks manufactured in Antim's printing workshop. This chapter will demonstrate this assertion in relation to the tailpieces, although it appears that all woodcuts used by Dabbās's press were cut anew in Aleppo. The printing press employed artists and woodcutters capable of creating its own unique stock of book ornaments and illustrations.

The Aleppo editions bear witness to the engravers' remarkable capacity to process iconographic sources from a wide range of geographical regions. The publications by the Aleppo press between 1706 and 1711 reveal a combination of Eastern and Western artistic traditions, seamlessly integrated within Ottoman and

11 É. Picot, "Notice biographique et bibliographique sur l'imprimeur Anthime d'Ivir, Métropolitain de Valachie", *Nouveaux Mélanges Orientaux*, Paris, 1886, p. 538–539, 543–544. In this article, Émile Picot presents a critique of Christian Friedrich Schnurrer's assertion regarding the identity of the Aleppo and Wallachian typefaces; cf. C. F. Schnurrer, *Bibliotheca Arabica*, Halle, 1811, p. 270–271, no. 266. In addition to Picot, other scholars advanced the idea that the type was not identical. See the discussion in Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands*, p. 180–182.

12 S. A. Frantsouzzoff, "Les psautiers arabes imprimés dans les bibliothèques de Saint-Petersbourg", in P. Chițulescu, I. Feodorov (eds.), *Culture manuscrite et imprimée dans et pour l'Europe du Sud-Est/ Manuscript and Printed Culture in and for South-Eastern Europe*, Brăila, 2020, p. 198. The author later reformulated his opinion in more careful terms; see S. A. Frantsouzzoff, "Les vieux livres imprimés en écriture arabe dans la collection des Rousseau, père et fils, conservée à Saint-Petersbourg", in I. Feodorov, B. Heyberger, S. Noble (eds.), *Arabic Christianity between the Ottoman Levant and Eastern Europe*, Leiden/Boston, 2021, p. 254–255.

13 Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands*, p. 181.

Central Asian ornamental patterns which migrated into book decoration from other branches of decorative arts. It is this blend of imagery that distinguishes the books produced in Aleppo from those printed in the Romanian Principalities¹⁴ or in any of the other major Orthodox printing centers of the time. Nevertheless, in their search for iconographic and compositional solutions, the Aleppo printers often drew inspiration from the expertly crafted Wallachian editions that inaugurated Dabbās's book series: the Book of Divine Liturgies and the Horologion. Rather than simply copying one model or another, the Aleppo press adapted the designs in Dabbās's earlier editions to suit its specific needs and ideas.

While borrowings from the Wallachian artistic repertory occurred with some regularity until 1711, the present analysis is limited to the collection of single-block woodcut tailpieces used by Athanasios Dabbās in the first two books he published after his return to Syria, namely the Psalter and the canonical version of the Arabic Gospel.

European printers employed decorative devices for a variety of purposes beyond the enhancement of the physical form of printed materials. In addition to their intrinsic visual appeal, headpieces, tailpieces, title page vignettes and borders, made with matrices of wood or lead, served to create the interior structure of the book and to facilitate the readers' navigation through it. Whether iconic, narrative, or purely ornamental in nature, elements of book decoration were designed to engage the readers with the textual content of the books by focusing their attention and stimulating their imagination.¹⁵ Tailpieces were primarily employed to mark

14 In the 17th and 18th centuries, typographic art in Wallachia and Moldavia was influenced by the European Baroque aesthetic, largely through the dissemination of Ukrainian printed books and the contribution of Ukrainian printers to book production in the Romanian territories. Woodblock engraving was the predominant printing technique employed for illustrated books in the Romanian Principalities during the early modern period. See Bădără, "The Beginning of Printing", especially p. 131–132. See also the chapter signed by A.-E. Tatay in the present volume. For a comprehensive description of woodcut ornaments used by different printing presses across the Romanian Principalities in the 17th and 18th centuries, see A. Andreescu, *Arta cărții. Cartea românească în secolele XVI–XVII*, Bucharest, 1997; O.-L. Dimitriu, *Ilustrația cărții românești vechi din secolul al XVIII-lea în colecțiile Bibliotecii Academiei Române. Gravura*, Bucharest, 2023, especially vol. I. *Țara Românească*, and vol. II. *Moldova*, Bucharest, 2023. The precise extent to which books printed in Venice and other Italian typographic centers served as a source of inspiration for printers in Wallachia has yet to be fully elucidated. It is known that books commissioned by Wallachian patrons were printed in Venice in the late 17th and 18th centuries; see P. Chițulescu, "Livres imprimés à Venise aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles avec la contribution des Pays Roumains", in Chițulescu, Feodorov (eds.), *Culture manuscrite et imprimée/Manuscript and Printed Culture*, p. 13–41.

15 M. C. Planche, "Ornaments and Narratives: The Dialogue of Engraved Motifs", in C. Ionescu (ed.), *Book Illustration in the Long Eighteenth Century: Reconfiguring the Visual Periphery of the Text*, Cambridge, 2011, p. 566–597.

the end of a section of text. Such texts could include dedications in prose or verse, prefaces, chapters, subdivisions of a larger work, and colophons. By filling in the remaining blank spaces on a printed page, tailpieces not only improved the book's overall visual presentation, but also reinforced the established visual and verbal conventions associated with closing sections in early printed books.¹⁶ Finally, printers used end ornaments for practical reasons as well. As tailpieces were typically relief-cut ornaments, they provided structural support for the paper as it was pressed from above during the printing process. The pressure beneath the paper ensured that the page remained flat and secure within the press, eliminating the risk of displacement, which could result in a blurred text.¹⁷

The incorporation of woodcut or cast ornaments on title pages, especially in the absence of a woodcut-printed border, as in the case of most of the Aleppo editions, had a considerable effect on the compositional balance of the page. In the Aleppo books, the text section on title pages typically ends with a woodcut tailpiece. On occasion, the title paragraph is positioned between a headpiece composed of separate ornaments of common design and a woodcut tailpiece (Fig. 1).

It should be noted that printers in Aleppo used the same woodcut blocks without distinction, both at the end of a text section and on title pages. Moreover, an examination of the paragraph style in title pages and closing sections of the books printed by the Aleppo press reveals no discernible distinction in their design. There is a unified approach to the formatting of title pages and closure sections in publications in Dabbās's press, which favors what is called in art literature a "half-diamond indentation",¹⁸ or the inverted triangular arrangement of the text. In the mid-16th century, Western European printers frequently arranged the title parts of title pages in the form of inverted triangles.¹⁹ However, this practice became less frequent as time passed.²⁰ Another characteristic of the Aleppo books is that the text itself occupies

16 W. H. Sherman, "The Beginning of 'The End': Terminal Paratext and the Birth of Print Culture", in H. Smith, L. Wilson (eds.), *Renaissance Paratexts*, Cambridge, 2011, p. 65–87.

17 Martin Dominique Fertel, *La science pratique de l'imprimerie: Contenant des instructions très-faciles pour se perfectionner dans cet art. On y trouvera une description de toutes les pièces dont une presse est construite, avec le moyen de remédier à tous les défauts qui peuvent y survenir [...]*, Saint Omer, 1723, p. 55. These aspects are discussed in detail by J. Fleming, "How not to Look at a Printed Flower", *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 38, 2008, p. 353–355.

18 M. M. Smith, *The Title Page. Its Early Development 1460–1510*, London/New Castle, DE, 2000, p. 61.

19 See, for example, the title section on the title page of *L'Eneïde de Virgile, prince des poètes latins*, translated into French by Louis des Masures, illustrated by Bernard Salomon and first published in Lyon by Jean de Tournes in 1550.

20 On the layout and paragraph style of title pages in early printed books, with a special focus on the book production of the *Officina Plantiniana*, see G. Proot, "The Officina Plantiniana from 'Renaissance' to 'Baroque': A Typographical Transition (1555–1670)", in G. Proot, Y. Sordet,

only a small proportion of the title pages, and despite the typical presence of an ornamental vignette, a considerable area of the front page of the book remains blank. This imbalanced proportion is reminiscent of that seen in incunabula, where this same feature shows the evolution of title pages in relation to colophons.²¹

In his last liturgical book, which was a monumental edition of the Octoechos, completed in 1711, Dabbās introduced a new layout scheme for the title page, marking a clear departure from previous practice. He incorporated a wide woodcut frame with busts of saints in pointed arch medallions, which permitted the title section to be displayed in a dedicated central square rather than floating freely on the page. However, in his earlier books, including those under consideration in this study, the printers were committed to a stylistic approach that treated title pages in a manner analogous to colophons, a practice which is also attested in incunabula. This resulted in a somewhat antiquated appearance of the Aleppo title pages.²²

Except for the Arabic Psalter published in 1706, which is illustrated with two full-page intaglio engravings bearing the coat of arms of Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu and the portrait of King David (Fig. 2), all the other books published by the Aleppo press were illustrated with icons and ornaments printed from woodblocks. Although the production of etchings was a relatively rapid and straightforward process and, therefore, somewhat cheap compared with engravings created using a sharp tool, known as a burin, on copper plates, it was not as affordable as woodcuts. This was due to the fact that the inclusion of an etched ornament or icon on the printed page required the outsourcing of printing to a printmaker's workshop, which would also result in a significant delay in the production process of the book.²³

A survey of the ornamental repertoire of the books published by Dabbās's press during its six-year run reveals the absence of etched or engraved tailpieces,

Ch. Vellet (eds.), *Un siècle d'excellence typographique: Christophe Plantin & son officine. A Century of Typographical Excellence: Christophe Plantin & the Officina Plantiniana (1555–1655)*, Paris/Dilbeek, p. 78–91. The first textbook on printing, *La science pratique de l'imprimerie*, was published by the printer and bookseller Martin-Dominique Fertel in 1723. In the second chapter, "De l'ornement des premières pages & de la disposition de differens ouvrages", Fertel addresses the issue of title page arrangement; see p. 79–111, especially p. 80–81.

²¹ One well-known example of this type of arrangement is the title page of Franciscus Columna's *Hyperotomachia Poliphili* (Venice, Aldus Manutius, 1499); cf. Smith, *The Title Page*, p. 104, Fig. 6.7.

²² John Day's edition of Aelfric, *A testimony of antiquity shewing the ancient faith in the Church of England, touching the sacrament of the body and blood of the Lord* (London, 1567), offers a late example of the practice of including colophons in printed books. In this example, the text is laid out in a centered paragraph between a headpiece and a title-page vignette.

²³ D. Imhof, "From Arnold Nicolai to Peter Paul Rubens: Book Illustration under Plantin and the First Moretususes", in Proot, Sordet, Vellet (eds.), *Un siècle d'excellence typographique*, p. 106–120.

headpieces, or page borders. Considering the workshop's limited funding, the decision to use woodcuts was a pragmatic one adopted by Dabbās. The printing of an etched ornament would have demanded the services of a printmaker, who would have been responsible for transferring the image to the printing surface using a rolling press.²⁴ In contrast, woodcuts were printed on the same press used for printing the text. Moreover, the creation of a woodcut ornament required the joint efforts of a draftsman and a woodcutter, both of whom should have been full-time employees of the press. The artist was responsible for designing the ornament, while the block-cutter was tasked with carving it into the block of wood. During the printing process, the raised areas of each woodcut ornament were transferred to the printing sheet in black or color ink, while the indentations (non-printed parts) remained white. The use of woodcuts thus enabled the printing of the text and ornaments in a single operation.

As early as the mid-16th century, printing presses in Western Europe began using cast ornaments known as typographic fleurons (or printer's flowers) to generate complex and varied patterns in borders, headpieces and tailpieces. These were cut by skilled punch cutters and were part of the printers' stock of type.²⁵ The Aleppo press did not adopt the use of cast fleurons on a large scale in its printed editions. However, it did experiment with two types of combinable fleurons in the Gospel, and subsequently in a more systematic manner in the Gospel with commentary (also called by some authors a Lectionary). As will be discussed later, both ornaments are stylized vine leaves and are close imitations of fleurons created by the French punchcutters in the second half of the 16th century.

Not much is known about the organization of Athanasios Dabbās's printing press. However, some basic information can be obtained by studying the frontmatter. Typically, the title pages of the Aleppo editions include only the book title, followed by the place and year of publication. In some cases, the name of Athanasios Dabbās is mentioned together with the information about the edition, which can be taken to suggest that the former patriarch acted as printer and publisher for the books in question. The prefaces in the Aleppo publications provide further insight

24 N. M. Orenstein, A. Stijnman, "Bitten with Spirit: Etching Materials and Techniques in the Sixteenth Century", in C. Jenkins et al., *The Renaissance of Etching*, New York, 2019, p. 22–23.

25 F. Meynell, S. Morison, "Printers' Flowers and Arabesques", *The Fleuron. A Journal of Typography* edited by Oliver Simon, 1, 1923, p. 1–43; E. Offner, "Renaissance Typographic Ornament: Origins, Use, and Experiments", in M. Senechal, G. Fleck (eds.), *Patterns of Symmetry*, Amherst, 1977, p. 50–73; J. Fleming, "Changed Opinions as to Flowers", in H. Smith, L. Wilson (eds.), *Renaissance Paratexts*, Cambridge, 2011, p. 48–64; J. Fleming, "How to Look at a Printed Flower", *Word & Image. A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry*, 22, 2012, 2, p. 165–187; H. D. L. Vervliet, *Granjon's Flowers: An Enquiry into Granjon's, Giolito's, and De Tournes' Ornaments: 1542-86*, New Castle, DE, 2016, p. 9–17.

into Dabbās's role as proofreader at the printing press. However, the illustrations included in the books indicate that the printing press collaborated with artists who were responsible for creating woodcuts and metal engravings. The parallel work on different editions suggests a dynamic and well-organized workshop with a clear distribution of tasks among the permanent staff members. The two etched icons mentioned above bear the date of their creation. Significantly enough, this date corresponds with the book's publication year, 1706, which indicates that the plates were not purchased by the printers from other presses and reused but were originally designed for the Psalter.²⁶ The artist who signed the engraving of David the King and Prophet identifies himself merely as Simeon, which provides little assistance in determining his identity. A preliminary analysis of the compositional and iconographic features of the depiction of David playing his ten-stringed harp indicates that the engraving was created by an artist affiliated with the local artistic milieu, well versed in Eastern Orthodox iconography, with a refined style and a marked preoccupation with ornamental details.

The eclectic stock of woodcut tailpieces used by the Aleppo press was likely created in successive stages by Dabbās's woodcutters, as evidenced by their distribution over various works published there. The present study focusses on the end ornaments used by Dabbās in his first book printed in Aleppo, the Psalter, which were subsequently reused in the Gospel Book of the same year, and later on in the *Acts of the Apostles* and the *Prophetologion*. In contrast with the tailpieces that were developed later, these earlier ornaments employed by the press provide tangible evidence of the transmission of book art elements from Wallachian presses to the first printing press established by Athanasios Dabbās in Ottoman Syria. The following section will discuss these ornaments in greater detail.

3 Tailpieces of the Aleppo Psalter

The first book printed by Athanasios Dabbās in Aleppo in 1706 was an Arabic version of the Psalter entitled *Kitāb al-Zabūr al-Sharīf al-manṭūq bi-hi min al-Rūḥ al-Qudus 'alā fam al-nabī wa-l-malik Dāwūd [...]* (*The Holy Book of the Psalms Composed by the Holy Spirit through the Mouth of David the Prophet and the King [...]*). In the first preface to the Psalter, the former patriarch of Antioch acknowledges the contribution of the Wallachian prince Constantin Brâncoveanu to the inaugural publication

²⁶ The artist's signature is discernible in the lower portion of the engraving's ornate frame: Χειρ συμεών αψς, "By the hand of Symeon, 1706". However, the artist who created the engraving has yet to be identified; cf. *BRV* I, p. 470.

of the Aleppo press. However, Dabbās does not provide any details regarding the establishment of the printing press or the precise nature of Brâncoveanu's assistance. Instead, he expresses his satisfaction at having successfully initiated the printing of Arabic books in the city of Aleppo.²⁷

It is not concealed from Your Excellency that it is through you that the Lord bestowed His help to us, so that we might successfully start printing in Arabic in the city of Aleppo in Syria. We printed first of all this Psalter, a copy of which you are receiving, to see [the fruits] of your benevolence that you have been showing us previously and now. We are sending you as a gift this holy book that came to be due to your goodness [...] (Psalter, Aleppo, 1706, p. [5]).

To honor his patron, Dabbās placed Brâncoveanu's coat of arms at the beginning of the book and embellished the Psalter with a full-page icon of King David portrayed as a poet and musician. Both images were printed from etched plates. The drawing on the etching plate was executed in a freehand style and subsequently bitten with acid, thereby allowing for tonal variations and greater detail than could be achieved with a woodcut block.²⁸ One can only speculate as to what may have influenced the printers' decision to illustrate the Psalter with etchings instead of woodcuts. It could have been only a matter of opportunity, or perhaps the Aleppo printers wanted to present the book to their patron in a distinctive and appealing style. The superior quality of the images created through intaglio techniques made them indeed highly regarded by Western European printers and their more selective customers of the time.²⁹ On the other hand, etched plates were prone to wear and tear

27 I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Yulia Petrova (Institute for Oriental Studies in Kyiv/TYPARABIC Project, Bucharest) for allowing me to use her translation. The complete text of the preface will be published in a volume that she is currently preparing in collaboration with Ioana Feodorov for the *Early Arabic Printing in the East* book series published by De Gruyter. A French translation of the first preface to the Psalter was published in *BRV* I, p. 469–477, with the passage cited here translated with some differences on p. 473. For a comprehensive description of the 1706 Psalter, see Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands*, p. 263–265. For a content-related analysis of the two Arabic prefaces of the Psalter, see Y. Petrova, “The Prefaces of the Christian Arabic Books Printed in Wallachia and Syria in the Early 18th Century”, in Dîpratu, Noble (eds.), *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond*, p. 267–290.

28 During the early 16th century, the increasing appeal of printmaking among professional painters in Northern Italy coincided with the advancement of etching techniques. On this topic, see C. Jenkins, “Drawing on the Plate: Parmigianino and Early Etching in Italy”, and “A Painter's Medium: Etching in Verona and Venice”, in C. Jenkins et al., *The Renaissance of Etching*, New York, 2019, p. 129–137 and 161–199, respectively.

29 During the first half of the 17th century, the Plantin Press, which was managed by Plantin's son-in-law Jan Moretus I, and later by Moretus's sons Jan II and Balthasar Moretus, produced different illustrated versions of the same work, sold at different prices and to different categories of buyers.

during printing at a much faster rate than engraved metal plates or woodcuts.³⁰ For one reason or another, Dabbās ceased to engage the services of a metal-plate engraver following the printing of the Psalter.

The printers used three different styles of tailpieces, all in single woodcut blocks, to enhance the visual impact of certain end sections of the book. It should be noted that all three woodcuts discussed below were later used to decorate other works published by the same press. Subsequent entries are noted for each ornament in the relevant sections.

3.1 Tailpiece A

After the second preface,³¹ before the beginning of the Psalms, on the left-hand side of David the Prophet playing his harp, the editor summarizes the contents of the Psalter and explains the liturgical division of the Psalms into twenty *kathismata* (Fig. 2). This brief introduction concludes with a triangular woodcut (l = 4.5, h = 4.5 cm) that features a lion-headed *mascaron* with leafy floral sprays sprouting from his mouth. The plant motif is worked into an arabesque pattern (Fig. 3). The design of this woodcut, which I labeled as tailpiece A, was most probably inspired by a wood-carved tailpiece reproduced several times in the Greek and Arabic versions of the Book of the Divine Liturgies and the Horologion printed in Wallachia. The ornament first appears on the

Until the 1650s, most of their books were decorated with woodcuts. A number of the printed volumes were decorated with intaglio engravings. The copies of a print run that were intended to be illustrated with copperplate engravings were printed without the illustration, which was subsequently added in a printmaker's press. These books were produced at a higher cost and subsequently offered for sale at higher prices to the press's more affluent and knowledgeable clientele. After the mid-17th century, engravings began to replace woodcuts for most of the printed works. See Imhof, "From Arnold Nicolai to Peter Paul Rubens", p. 108–110, 130–140.

³⁰ Imhof, "From Arnold Nicolai to Peter Paul Rubens", p. 120–127.

³¹ Two of the surviving copies of the Psalter, with two distinct prefaces, are held by the Library of the Romanian Academy (CRV 154) and the National Library of Austria (2.J.7 ALT PRUNK). From one of the two copies of the Aleppo Psalter held by the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St. Petersburg (Bt I 84), the initial 50 pages and part of the introduction are missing. The second copy in St. Petersburg lacks the engraving of King David that should appear between the last page of the second preface and the first page of the Psalter. It is likely that this copy did not have this engraving since its production; see Frantsouzoff, "Les psautiers arabes imprimés dans les bibliothèques de Saint-Petersbourg", p. 197, 203, Fig. 3. The copy in the Gotha Research Library is also incomplete, starting directly with the first page of the Psalter. A digitized version of the Gotha exemplar is available at: https://dnhb.thulb.uni-jena.de/rsc/viewer/ufb_derivate_00012655/Theol-4-00020-16_002.tif.

final page of the Greek and Arabic preface addressed by Athanasios Dabbās to Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu in the Book of the Divine Liturgies, at the end of the Greek version, p. [18] (Fig. 4). A second impression of this tailpiece is visible on page 78 of the same volume. A year later, the woodcut with a *mascaron* was also reproduced on several pages of the Horologion (p. 308, 388, 616, and 651).

The Aleppo press developed a simplified yet refined version of the original Wallachian design. The ornate leafy sprays characteristic of the Wallachian ornament were converted by the woodcutter into a delicate, see-through arabesque pattern that coexists harmoniously with the floral and vegetal motifs depicted in the woodcut headpieces and around the calligraphic titles of the Aleppo Psalter. Tailpiece A was reprinted in the Psalter on page 161, following the hymn included after the twelfth *kathisma*. The ornament was used again on the final page of the first edition of the Gospel printed in Aleppo in the same year. In 1707, it appears on a single occasion in the *Acts of the Apostles*, to mark the end of the explanation of the Epistle reading for the liturgy of the Holy Saturday (p. [386]).³² A year later, tailpiece A was reprinted in the Prophetologion. The first impression of this decorative element, at the bottom of the title page of the book, is flanked by two rectangular ornaments (tailpiece C), which will be described in greater detail later. The identical combination of elements reappears on page [131] and on the last page of the volume (p. [252]), which also marks the final documented occurrence of the tailpiece with *mascaron* in the publications of the Aleppo press.

It is also worth noting that tailpiece A is one of the ornaments that were transferred from Aleppo to the printing press of the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist in Khinshāra, on Mount Lebanon, following the closing of Dabbās's press in 1711. Unlike other Aleppo-made ornaments, this one did not enjoy much popularity among the printers at Khinshāra. Its presence can be ascertained in only two of the 29 books they published by the end of the 18th century.³³

³² I am grateful to my colleague Fr. Charbel Nassif (CEDRAC/Saint-Joseph University, Beirut) for his assistance in identifying this passage.

³³ The ornament can be seen in two books published in Khinshāra: *Kitāb tafsīr sab'a mazmūrāt min mazāmīr Dāwūd al-nabī*, a commentary on the "penitential Psalms", published in 1753, and *Kitāb al-nubu'āt* (Prophetologion) published in 1775; see C. Nassif, "Les gravures des livres imprimés au XVIII^e siècle au Monastère Saint-Jean-Baptiste à Khenchara – Mont Liban", *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia*, 21, 2024, p. 70, 73, and the motif F in the table on p. 92–95.

3.2 Tailpiece B

It is not until the conclusion of the fifth *kathisma* (reaching one-third of the volume) that new decorative elements are introduced in the Psalter. Following the hymn which comes after the fifth *kathisma* (p. 82), the printers added a diamond-shaped arabesque-patterned woodcut (tailpiece B), which measures 4.5 x 4.5 centimeters and features four small flowers at its center (Figs. 5, 6). The design of this ornament was most probably inspired by the diamond-shaped woodcut reproduced in the Greek and Arabic Book of the Divine Liturgies (p. 205) published by Athanasios Dabbās and Antim the Iberian in 1701 (Figs. 7, 8).³⁴ It should be pointed out that Antim had previously included this ornament in the Greek edition of the Psalter that he had printed at the Monastery of Snagov in 1700.³⁵ The diamond-shaped tailpiece can be seen on the recto side of the second folio in the Psalter, after the Greek verses dedicated to David the King and Prophet, entitled Στίχοι εἰς τὸν θεῖον Δαβίδ³⁶ and Ἑτέροι Στίχοι εἰς τὸν θεῖον Δαβίδ (Fig. 9).³⁷ The same ornament was later used to decorate the Romanian edition of the Octoechos published in Târgoviște in 1712.³⁸ A close examination of tailpiece B reveals that it is indeed an altered version of the ornament repeatedly used by Antim the Iberian in his books. The outer edges of the Aleppo tailpiece have a distinct rounded outline. By contrast, the woodcut used by Antim has straight edges and sharp corners, with a central square featuring four diamond-shaped marks. Moreover, the Wallachian ornament shows a closer affinity with the 16th-century versions of this tailpiece, such as the one reproduced on p. 132 in Giovanni Francesco Peverone's *Due breui e facili trattati*³⁹ published

34 The ornament appears at the end of the Troparion in honor of the Theotokos, which follows the recitation of Psalm 45 (i.e., the final Psalm of the fifth *kathisma*).

35 B.A.R., CRV 122; see Picot, "Notice biographique et bibliographique sur l'imprimeur Anthime d'Ivîr", p. 536, no. 13; BRV I, p. 409–411; Chițulescu (coord. ed.) et al., *Antim Ivireanul. Opera tipografică*, p. 75–77.

36 Byzantine Psalters often contained epigrams in verse dedicated to David the King and Prophet, considered to have been the author of the Book of Psalms. For the first epigram reproduced in the Greek Psalter published in Snagov in 1700, see V. Căndea, "O epigramă grecească tradusă de spătarul Nicolae Milescu", *Limba română*, 12, 1963, 3, p. 74–77; G. R. Parpulov, *Toward a History of Byzantine Psalters, ca. 850–1350 AD*, Plovdiv, 2014, p. 218, no. 5.

37 For the second epigram reproduced in the Greek Psalter published in Snagov in 1700, see Parpulov, *Toward a History of Byzantine Psalters*, p. 222, no. 17.

38 B.A.R., CRV 162; see BRV I, p. 485–486; Chițulescu (coord. ed.) et al., *Antim Ivireanul. Opera tipografică*, p. 167–169. The diamond-shaped ornament is printed after the editor's commentary on the contents of the Octoechos.

39 *Due breui e facili trattati, il primo d'arithmeticca: l'altro di geometria: ne i quale si contengono alcune cose nuove piacevoli e utili, si à gentiluomini, come artigiani*, Lyon, 1558.

by Jean de Tournes in Lyon in 1558 (1504–1564).⁴⁰ Jean de Tournes sourced the diamond-shaped arabesque motif from Peter Flötner's⁴¹ catalog of arabesque designs, alternatively referred to as *Mauresques et damasquinures*,⁴² *Grotesken und Mauresken*,⁴³ or *Maureskenbuch* (Fig. 10).⁴⁴ Initially compiled and published in Zürich in 1549 by the printer and publisher Rudolff Wyssenbach, Flötner's woodcuts of arabesque designs were later reprinted by Andreas Gessner in his illustrated collection of biographies of Roman emperors, *Imperatorum romanorum omnium orientalium et occidentalium verissimae imagines*, published in Zürich in 1559.⁴⁵ The arabesque emerged as a main design element in illustrated books published in Lyon and other French cities in the mid-16th century, subsequently reaching presses in England. Peter Flötner's diamond-shaped ornament is replicated, for example, in the Latin translation of Sophocles's *Antigone* by Thomas Watson published in London in 1581 by John Wolfe.⁴⁶

A subsequent reprint of tailpiece B can be seen on the title page of the first edition of the Gospel published in Aleppo in 1706.⁴⁷ The diamond-shaped ornament is documented for the last time on the title page of the *Acts of the Apostles* published by Dabbās's press in 1707.

It is also worth calling attention to the fact that the Arabic Psalter printed by Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch (1724–1766) in Bucharest in 1747 does not include the Aleppo version of the diamond-shaped tailpiece. Instead, it features the Wallachian one used in the Greek and Arabic Book of Divine Liturgies printed in Snagov in

40 The Lyon-based printer and publisher Jean de Tournes collaborated with the punchcutter Bernard Salomon, who was responsible for designing the metal-engraved tailpieces and headpieces included in de Tournes' books. Salomon's son-in-law was the typefounder Robert Granjon (1513–1590), who is credited with the innovation of combinable typeface ornaments, which enabled printers to create an unlimited array of designs in printed books. Christophe Plantin was one of Granjon's clients. For the diamond-shaped ornament, see Offner, "Renaissance Typographic Ornament", p. 58–61; Vervliet, *Granjon's Flowers*, p. 172, 212, no. 97.

41 Peter Flötner (1485–1546), born in Switzerland, was a designer of ornaments for furniture, altarpieces, fountains, and gold and silver objects. He was a sculptor and carver in his own right but is most renowned as a printmaker of models for other artists in Renaissance Germany.

42 The title "Flatner Moresq", accompanied by the year 1549, is inscribed on the leather binding of the copy preserved in the Collections numérisées de la bibliothèque de l'Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA), Paris, accessible at: <https://bibliotheque-numerique.inha.fr/idurl/1/19133>.

43 Accessible at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/343652>.

44 Meynell, Morison, "Printers' Flowers and Arabesques", p. 12.

45 The plate featuring Flötner's multiple diamond-shaped arabesque ornaments is printed on the recto of f. 42, below the biographical entry for the Roman emperor Licinius (308–324).

46 H. R. Polmer, *English Printer's Ornaments*, London, 1924, p. 132, 217, no. 89.

47 See section 4 below.

1701.⁴⁸ The woodcut ornament (which may have been Antim's original woodcut) was part of the ornament stock available to the typographers of the Monastery of Saint Spyridon in Bucharest at that time.⁴⁹

A variation of tailpiece B, which reveals similarities to both the Aleppo and the Wallachian tailpieces, is seen in Nikolaos Mauroeidēs' work *Tò áποστολικόν δύκτιον* [sic]⁵⁰ (*The Apostolic Net*) published in Iași in 1756 by the renowned typographer and engraver Mihail Strilbițchi.⁵¹ This later iteration of the ornament has a slightly rounded shape, comparable to that of the Aleppo tailpiece, but its interlaced design is identical to that of the Wallachian examples (Fig. 11).

3.3 Tailpiece C

Tailpiece B is combined on page 82 of the Psalter with two rectangular ornaments made of conventional leaf motifs, each measuring 2.5 × 2.5 cm (Fig. 5). No similar designs have been reported in books printed in Walachia during the same period. The Aleppo printers always used the rectangular ornaments in pairs; two identical pieces of the same ornament are typically placed in the blank spaces below the end paragraph of a chapter, often to create a symmetrical arrangement with a central tailpiece. In addition, C-type tailpieces could be used either as squares, as it is illustrated in the 1706 Psalter (p. 37, 82), or cornerwise, as evidenced on the final page of Athanasios Dabbās's preface appended in 1708 to the 1706 Gospel.

A review of the available evidence suggests that the Aleppo press did not utilize any Wallachian-made ornaments to embellish the Psalter printed in 1706. Two of the three ornaments commissioned for the Aleppo press's inaugural publication were based on designs created in Wallachia. These include the tailpiece with a lion-headed *mascaron* (tailpiece A) and the diamond-shaped tailpiece with an arabesque

48 I. Feodorov, "Sylvester of Antioch's Arabic Books Printed in 1747 at Bucharest. Recent Findings", *Scrinium*, 19, 2023, p. 11, fig. 4.

49 Concerning Patriarch Sylvester's typographic activity in Bucharest, see I. Feodorov, "New Data on the Early Arabic Printing in the Levant and its Connections to the Romanian Presses", *RESEE*, 56, 2018, 1–4, and the relevant chapter in the recent book by Mihai Țipău, *Sylvester of Antioch. Life and Achievements of an 18th-Century Christian Orthodox Patriarch*, Berlin/Boston, 2024.

50 It should be noted that either the editor or the author himself misspelled the Greek term δίκτυον (meaning "mesh", "fishing net"); see *BRV* II, p. 123.

51 The ornament first appears at the conclusion of the second preface of the volume (B.A.R., CRV 302), signed by Nikolaos Mauroeidēs of Kefalonia. It then reappears on pages 136, 204, 244, 258, 295, and 359. On Mihail Strilbițchi's activity as an engraver, see the chapter authored by A. E. Tatay and C. Tatai-Baltă in the present volume.

pattern (tailpiece B). The Wallachian woodcuts that inspired the tailpieces A and B were previously used to adorn the bilingual, Greek and Arabic, editions of the Book of the Divine Liturgies and the Horologion printed in Antim the Iberian's presses during the stay of the Syrian metropolitan in the North-Danubian principality in the early 18th century. The design of the Wallachian woodcuts underwent considerable variation in the books printed at Aleppo. This variation allows us to conclude that none of the ornaments were printed from woodblocks cut in Antim the Iberian's workshop.

4 Wood-Carved and Lead Cast Fleurons used in the First Publications of the Aleppo Press

In 1706, in addition to the tailpieces that I have already mentioned, Dabbās's stock of ornaments included three smaller ornaments that were occasionally used to mark the end of text sections. These were a woodcut ornament in a small rectangular format (0.8 x 0.8 cm) and a radial floral design, as well as two varieties of typecast fleurons. Both the Psalter and the Gospel make extensive use of small woodcut ornaments. In contrast, cast ornaments appear only on a limited number of occasions in the same books. For example, the Psalter contains no cast ornaments whatsoever, whereas the Gospel features them exclusively in the front matter.

The small wooden stamps of rectangular format were employed extensively throughout the Psalter, starting with the first page of the text (Fig. 12). Printers appended them to headings and subheadings and used them to mark concluding paragraphs where there was insufficient space to add an end ornament. Occasionally, the same rectangular elements were employed to emphasize certain words by isolating them from the surrounding text. The woodcut flowers reappear in the first version of the Gospel published later that year and were subsequently employed in two additional books: *The Acts of the Apostles* (1707) and the Prophetologion (1708). It seems that after this year, the multipurpose woodcut fleurons were superseded in popularity by a new generation of typecast ornaments, which were smaller and more versatile than their woodcut counterparts.

Lead-cast fleurons were first used in the 1706 edition of the Gospel. The first type unit, visible on the title page of the Gospel (Fig. 13), recalls the style of a fleuron engraved by the French punchcutter Robert Granjon in the second half of the 16th century and popularized by the Antwerp-based French typographer Christophe

Plantin (c. 1520–1589).⁵² The design was still frequently in use in the early 17th century.⁵³ The Aleppo printers certainly did not fully explore the combinable potential of this fleuron, but as I mentioned when discussing the layout of title pages, they did create a headpiece with a serial arrangement of the same type unit in two parallel rows above the title section of the title page of the 1706 Gospel.

The second type of fleuron employed by the Aleppo printers is another conventional vegetal motif with two loops and a trefoil at its center (Fig. 14). This motif was similarly utilized with a circumscribed scope in the Gospel, namely, to create a headpiece on the first page of the preface to the Gospel. This type of ornament was also designed by Western punchcutters and was employed by various presses in Western Europe since the 16th century. The earliest known use of the typographic ornament, as indicated by Francis Meynell and Stanley Morison, was recorded in Hugues de la Porte's press in Lyon in 1547.⁵⁴ The flower was later used by Guillaume Rouillé and Robert Granjon in 1558.⁵⁵ It remained a popular motif throughout the 17th century, with no alterations in form. The Aleppo fleuron is virtually identical in shape to the type of ornament that composes the title-page vignette in the Spanish version of Edward Nicholas's *Apology for the Honorable Nation of the Jews* published by John Field in London in 1649 (Fig. 15).⁵⁶

Following the initial application of cast ornaments in the Gospel, Dabbās's printers proceeded to fully explore the potential of typographic fleurons, as evidenced by the subsequent book printed by the press. The Gospel with commentary shows a heavy use of typecast flowers, particularly of the second variety. Throughout the book, printers demonstrated their skill in manipulating the same element to achieve a range of ornamental effects. The same building block was used to create frames of varying complexity and ornamental patterns of remarkable diversity around the headings and subheadings of text. Alternatively, the small cast ornaments were

52 Meynell, Morison, "Printers' Flowers and Arabesques", p. 40, no. 12; Vervliet, *Vine Leaf Ornaments in Renaissance Typography*, New Castle, DA/Houten, 2012, p. 27; Vervliet, *Granjon's Flowers*, p. 86, no. 32, units a–b.

53 It appears, for example, in the multi-unit frame that adorns the *Contents* page at the beginning of Robert Barker's 1615 edition of the Bible: *The Bible: that is the Holy Scriptures contained in the Old and New Testament; translated according to the Ebrew and Greeke, and conferred with the best translations in divers languages*, London, 1615.

54 Meynell, Morison, "Printers' Flowers and Arabesques", p. 40, no. 7.

55 Vervliet, *Granjon's Flowers*, p. 61–62, no. 23. The ornament created by Granjon resembles a version used in 1544 by Gabriele Giolito (c. 1508–1578) in his printing press in Venice. This version was subsequently reworked by Jean I de Tournes in 1548; cf. Vervliet, *Granjon's Flowers*, p. 131, no. 59; p. 157, no. 82.

56 Edward Nicholas, *Apologia por la noble nacion de los Iudios y hijos de Israel*, London, 1649; cf. Polmer, *English Printer's Ornaments*, p. 135, 229, no. 116.

grouped in the Lectionary along the decreasing lines of the final paragraphs and in places where there was insufficient space to accommodate a woodcut-printed tailpiece.

5 Tailpieces of the Gospel Book

After his return to Syria, Athanasios Dabbās set himself the ambitious task of preparing, along with the Psalter, a liturgical edition of the Gospel that had been revised by him based on the Greek version.⁵⁷ The Gospel book was published in 1706 under the title *Kitāb al-Injīl al-sharīf al-ṭāhīr wa-l-miṣbāḥ al-munīr al-zāhīr* [...] (*Book of the Holy and Pure Gospel or the Resplendently Shining Lamp* [...]). It contains the four Gospels in their original order, with the text itself divided into liturgical pericopes. Each section or pericope is preceded by a red heading indicating the feast day or Sunday on which the passage was to be read in church.

In terms of decoration, the Aleppo Gospel does not exhibit any particularly innovative features. The typographers used the same ornaments that had been employed to decorate the Psalter. As already noted, the diamond-shaped woodcut (tailpiece B) was reproduced on the title page, below the title paragraph, which also incorporates details regarding the place and the year of publication. Additionally, a pair of rectangular foliate ornaments (tailpiece C) was printed after the final pericope of the Gospel of Matthew (*Matthew* 28:10-20), on page [65], and in conjunction with tailpiece A after the last pericope of Mark (*Mark* 16:16-20), on page [102].

The Library of the Romanian Academy holds two copies of the inaugural edition of the Gospel published by Athanasios Dabbās in 1706. The first copy (CRV 154A) forms part of the set of volumes bound and distributed in 1706.⁵⁸ The second copy (CRV 155A), notable for its lavishly embellished leather covers, was bound with funds provided by the hetman Ivan Mazepa in 1708.⁵⁹ Before they were distributed,

57 For further information regarding the manuscript sources of Dabbās's Arabic translation of the Gospel and his work to improve the consistency of the translation, see R. Wakim, "Patriarch Athanasios III Dabbās's Gospel. Origin and Characteristics", in Dīpratu, Noble (eds.), *Arabic-Type Books Printed in Wallachia, Istanbul, and Beyond*, p. 295–297; R. Wakim, "The Commentary in the Melkite Lectionary. The Case of Patriarch Athanasios III Dabbās's Lectionary of 1706", *Scrinium*, 19, 2023, p. 70–99.

58 BRV IV, p. 32–33; Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands*, p. 271–274.

59 Simonescu, Muracade, "Tipar românesc pentru arabi", p. 17–18; Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands*, p. 274. A second copy with the dedication to Ivan Mazepa, featuring identical ornate leather bindings, is held by the National Library of Ukraine in Kyiv; see <http://irbis-nbuv.gov.ua/dlib/item/0002840>.

the remaining copies of the 1706 edition were given a new title page where the year of publication was updated to 1708. Additionally, the preface was altered to include a eulogy for the Cossack hetman, whose coat of arms was printed with a woodcut made in Aleppo and placed in the beginning of the volume.⁶⁰

It is worth calling attention to the fact that both the title page and the preface of Mazepa's Gospel feature ornaments that differ from those seen on the title page and the preface of the 1706 Gospel. The diamond-shaped motif (tailpiece B) was removed from the newly printed title page. Instead, a woodcut ornament depicting an Ottoman-style vase of flowers was inserted, to fill the blank space below the book's title (Fig. 16). Furthermore, the typographers combined a six-winged seraph ornament with a second floral design in a vertical alignment below the concluding paragraph of the newly added preface (Fig. 17). None of these three ornaments is present in the main text of the volume, which was fully printed in 1706. This suggests that the aforementioned woodcut ornaments were created after the publication of the first Aleppo Gospel, for use in the expanded, second version of the Gospel (with commentary) published later that year.

6 Conclusion

At some point between the publication of the two Arabic versions of the Gospel, the Aleppo press expanded its collection of woodcut ornaments with five additional pieces. Among the three newly added floral designs, one depicts a double-handle vase containing a single carnation surrounded by lotus flowers, while the other shows a low pedestal vase with two symmetrical branches of lotus flowers. As previously stated, both ornaments were included in the preface printed in 1708, which was bound with the text of the first version of the Gospel published by Athanasios Dabbās in 1706. The third floral motif shows a frontal arrangement of flowers, buds and serrated leaves. Two figurative ornaments have also been added to the collection, one depicting the bust of an angel, and the other a six-winged seraph. Owing to their distinctive visual charm, the newly designed tailpieces soon took precedence over the earlier Wallachian-inspired woodcuts, and after 1708, they became the only ones used at the Aleppo press.

The examination of the Aleppo books and their decorations leads to the conclusion that printers maintained a distinction between the two sets of tailpieces and never combined them in a single book. The only element shared between the

⁶⁰ The woodcut for Mazepa's coat of arms is preserved today in the museum of the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist in Khinshāra, Lebanon.

books decorated with the first set of tailpieces and those decorated with the second set of ornaments is represented by tailpiece C.⁶¹ The Wallachian-inspired designs of the first series were used in the Psalter (1706), the first version of the Gospel (1706), the *Acts of the Apostles* (1707), and the Prophetologion (1708). The remaining five ornaments are present in the other five books printed in Aleppo between 1706 and 1711. These include the Lectionary (1706), *The Book of the Chosen Pearls from the Sermons of Saint John Chrysostom* (1707), the title page and preface added in 1708 to the Gospel (1706), the frontmatter of the Lectionary dedicated to the hetman Daniel Apostol (1708),⁶² *The Sermons of Athanasios, the Patriarch of Jerusalem* (1711), the Octoechos (1711), and Athanasios Dabbās's *Brief Epistle on How to Repent and Confess* (1711). The reason behind this approach is not readily apparent. It is possible that printers were motivated by purely aesthetic considerations in their manipulation of the ornamental stock, or that practical factors played a role in the decision, particularly if the two sets of ornaments were used to decorate books printed at the same time on different presses.

The Aleppo press experimented with a variety of decorative elements, consistently refining the visual presentation of its publications from one edition to another. The ornaments that Dabbās reused from his joint editions with Antim the Iberian were not the ones that became the most distinctive visual feature of the Aleppo editions. This role was taken on by the new floral tailpieces that emerged in the eclectic artistic milieu of Ottoman Aleppo. As a testimony to their success, three of these designs reappeared two decades later in the books published by the new Arabic-type press established at the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist in Khinshāra, on Mount Lebanon. So far, only one of the tailpieces used in the Psalter and the first edition of the Gospel has been identified in Arabic books printed in the East after 1711. The analysis of the decorative elements in the books published by Dabbās in Aleppo is of great interest for the history of the first printing press of the Church of Antioch. It represents a remarkably fruitful avenue of inquiry into the evolution of the Aleppo press, its response to changing circumstances, and the solutions it identified over time as appropriate for the visual presentation of its books. Furthermore, it illustrates the printers' concern for the bookmaking craft and their acknowledgement of the role played by the visual components in the success of Dabbās's editorial project.

⁶¹ The only exception is the title page of the first version of the Gospel, which was reproduced identically in the Lectionary of the same year, 1706.

⁶² Feodorov, *Arabic Printing for the Christians in Ottoman Lands*, p. 274.

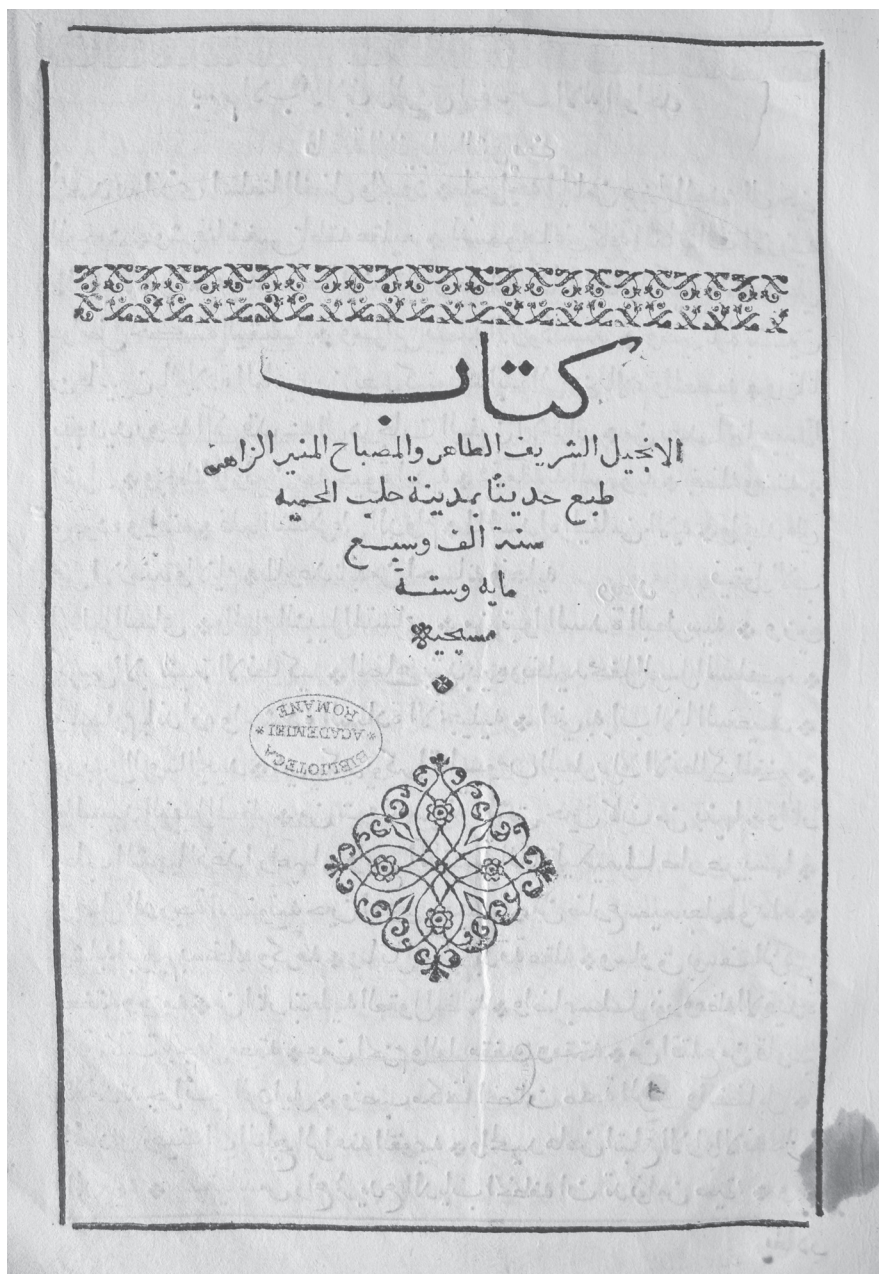


Fig. 1: Title page of the Gospel (Aleppo, 1706) decorated with a headpiece composed of a single type of fleuron and a diamond-shaped tailpiece in arabesque pattern, CRV 154A (B.A.R. Photo Oana Iacubovschi).



Fig. 2: Intaglio engraving of King David playing his ten-stringed instrument, opposite the first page of the Psalter, Aleppo, 1706 (B.A.R. Photo Oana Iacubovschi).



Fig. 3: Woodcut tailpiece with *mascaron* with leafy floral sprays coming out from his mouth (tailpiece A). Psalter, Aleppo, 1706, detail of Fig. 2 (B.A.R.).



Fig. 4: Woodcut tailpiece with *mascaron* with leafy floral sprays coming out from his mouth. Book of the Divine Liturgies, Snagov, 1701, p. [18] (B.A.R. Photo Oana Iacubovschi).

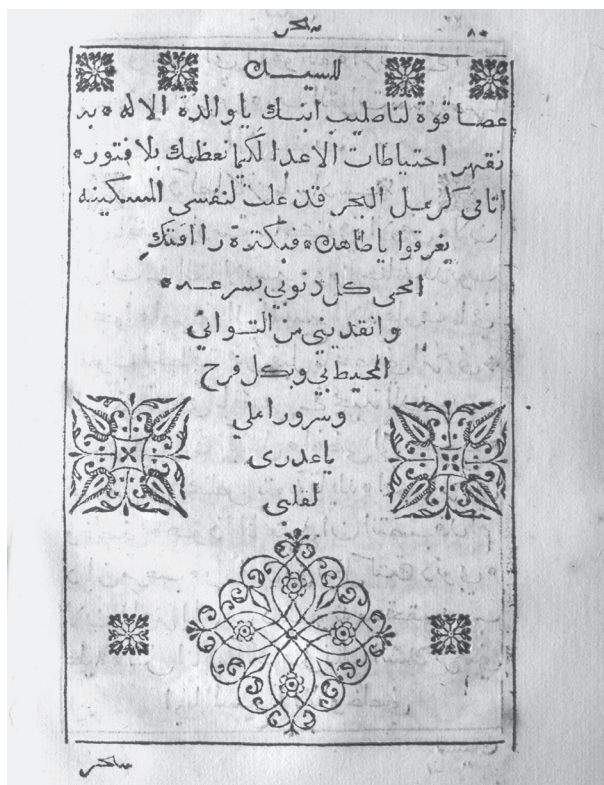


Fig. 5: Tailpieces B and C, Psalter, Aleppo, 1706, p. 82 (B.A.R. Photo Oana Iacubovschi).

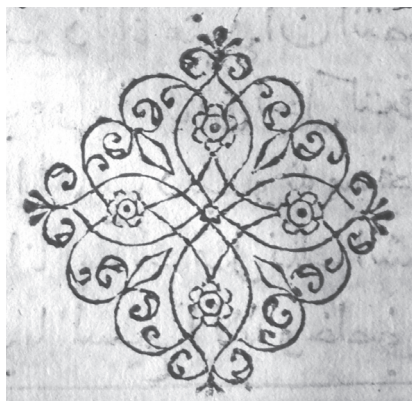


Fig. 6: Diamond-shaped tailpiece in arabesque pattern (tailpiece B). Psalter, Aleppo, 1706, detail of Fig. 5 (B.A.R.).

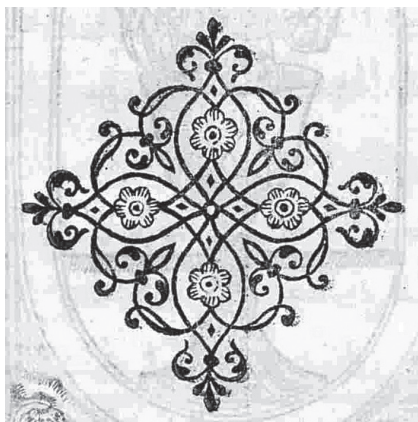


Fig. 7: Diamond-shaped tailpiece in arabesque pattern. Greek-Arabic Book of the Divine Liturgies, Snagov, 1701, detail of Fig. 8 (B.A.R.).



Fig. 8: Composition with a diamond-shaped woodcut in arabesque pattern and combinable ornaments in black and red ink. Book of the Divine Liturgies, Snagov, 1701, p. 205 (B.A.R.).

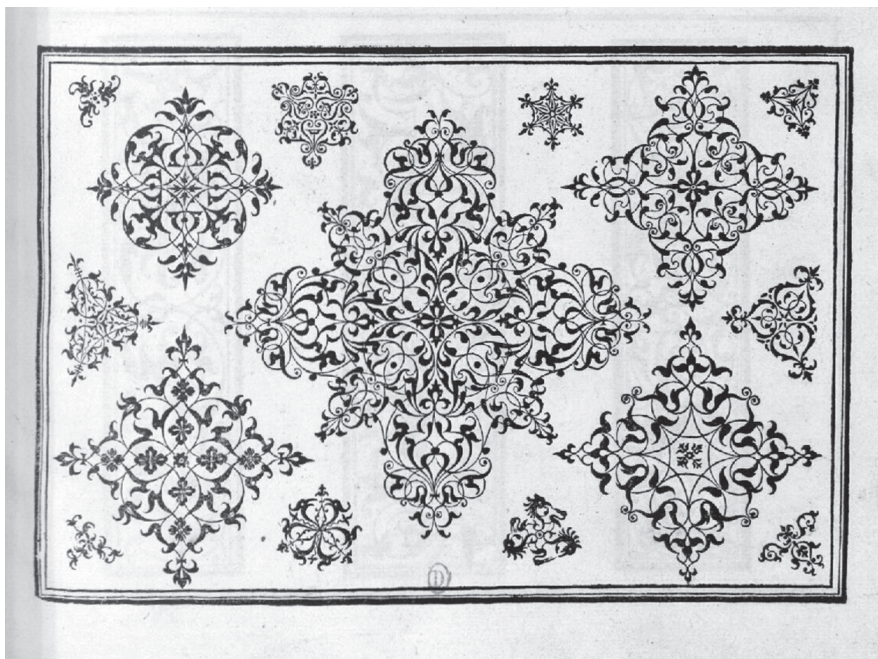


Fig. 10: Plate with arabesque patterns from Peter Flötner's pattern book, Zürich, 1549, detail of pl. [XVII] (Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris. Public Domain).

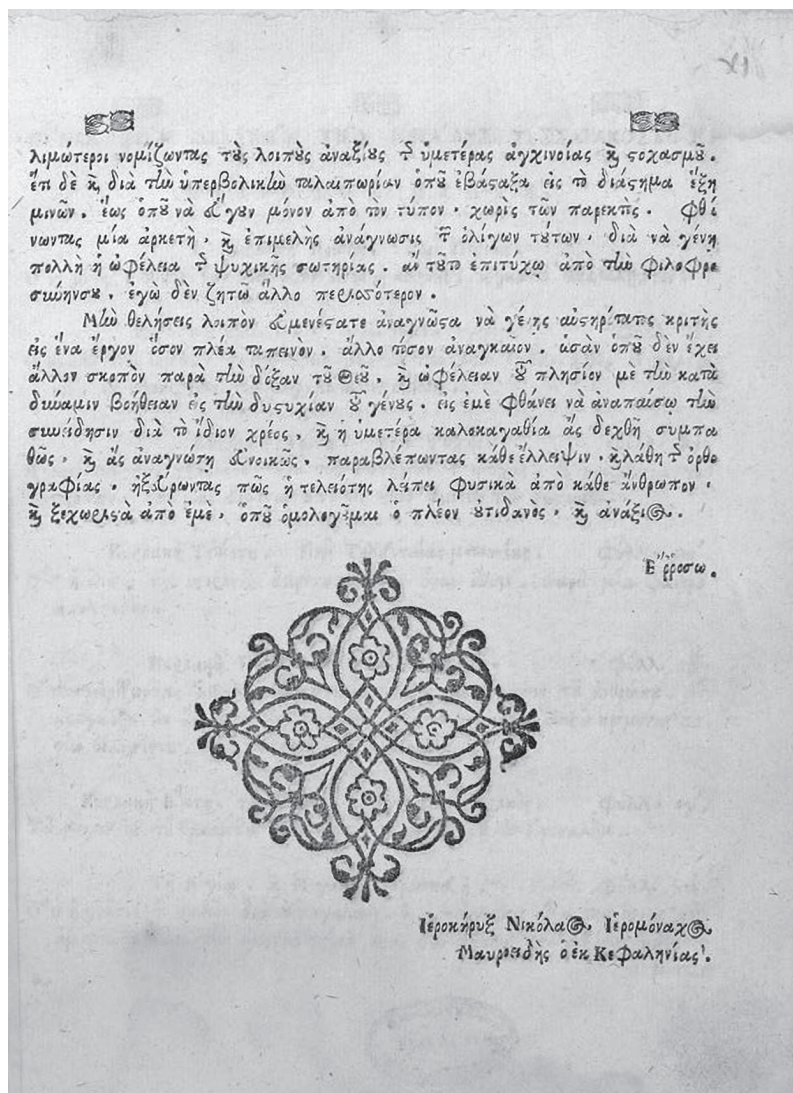


Fig. 11: Diamond-shaped tailpiece in arabesque pattern, printed in Nikolaos Mauroeidēs, *Tō apostolikόν δύκτιον* (*The Apostolic Net*), Iași, 1756, preface, p. [11] (B.A.R.).

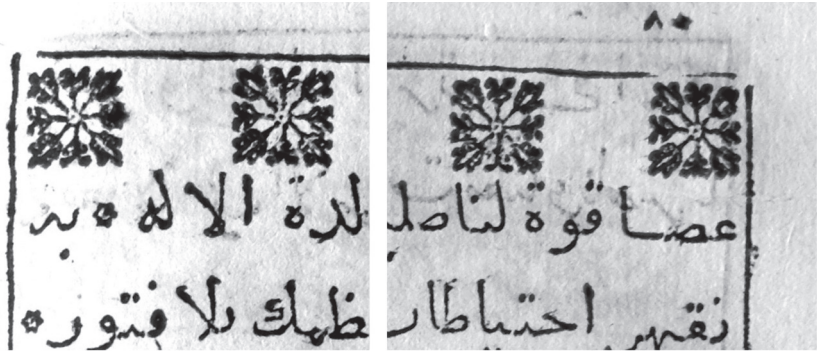


Fig. 12: Woodcut fleurons on p. 82 of the Psalter, Aleppo, 1706, details of Fig. 5 (B.A.R.).

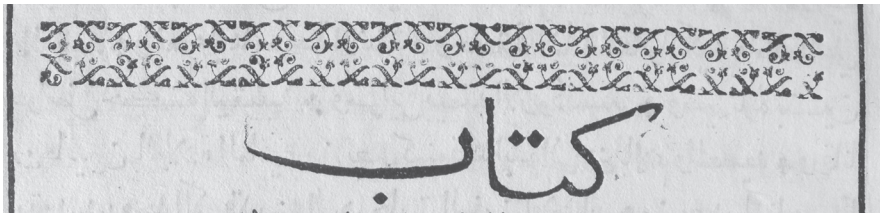


Fig. 13: Headpiece made up of a single type of fleuron, Gospel, Aleppo, 1706, title page, detail of Fig. 1 (B.A.R.).

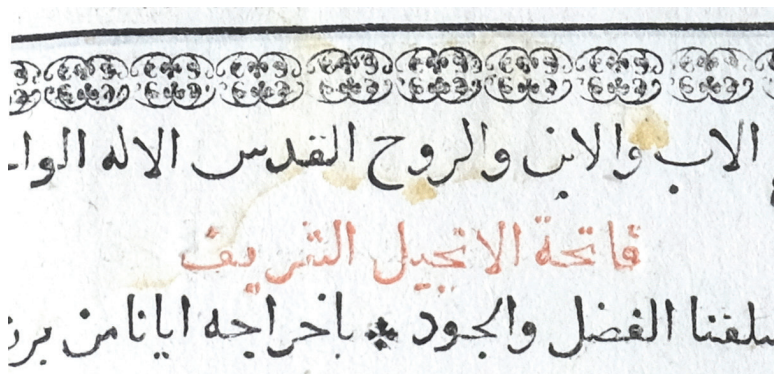


Fig. 14: Headpiece made up of a single type of fleuron. Gospel, Aleppo, 1706, detail of the first page of the preface, CRV 154A (B.A.R. Photo Oana Iacubovski).



Fig. 15: Title-page vignette made up of fifteen fleuron units and an acorn arranged in an inverted triangle shape. Edward Nicholas, *Apologia por la noble nacion de los Judios* (London, 1649) (by permission of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek).

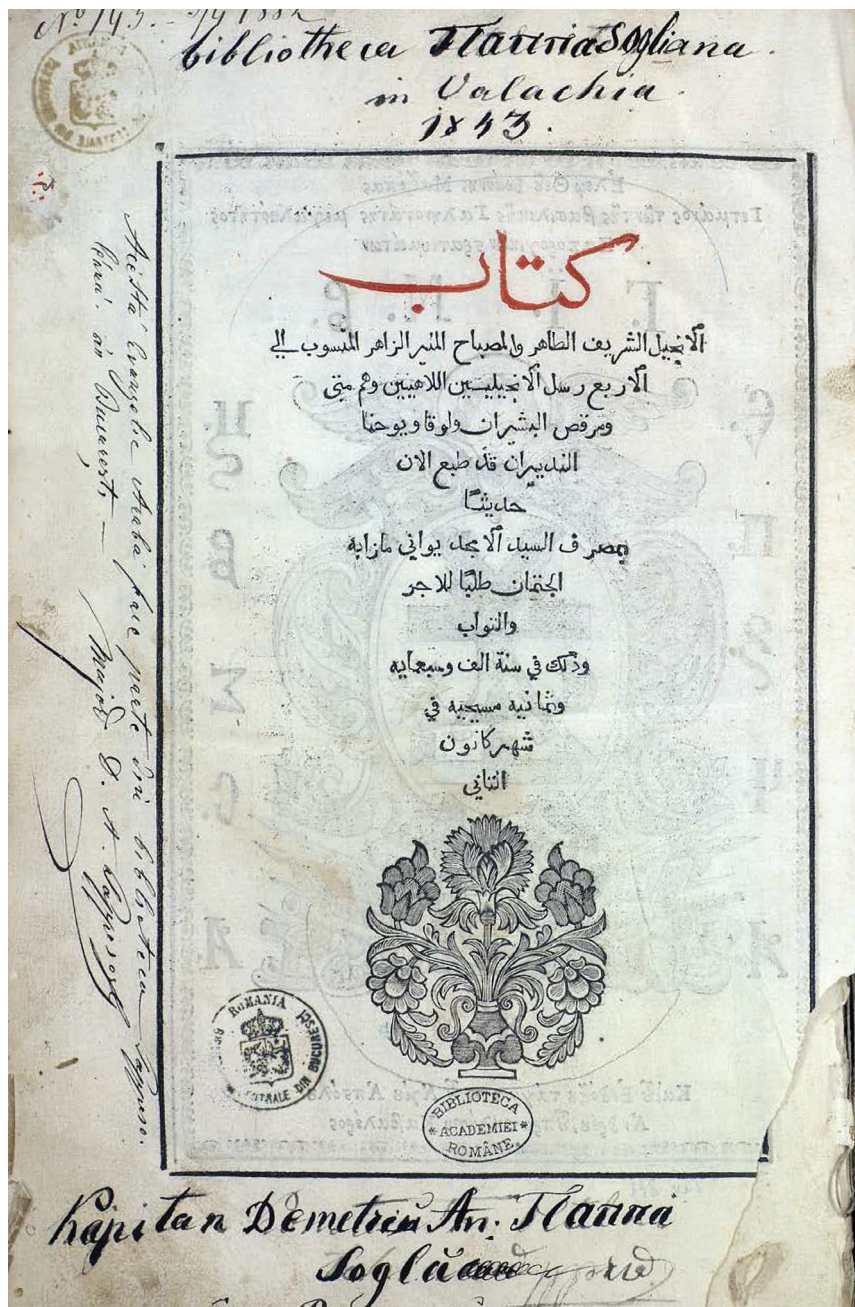


Fig. 16: Floral tailpiece on the title page added in 1708 to the first edition of the Gospel, Aleppo, 1706, CRV 155A (B.A.R.).

أما القوة التي لنا فهي هــ ان حقارتنا مع جميع من يخلصنا من الرهط الكهنوتي
الرتبه. وبقي خواص الكنيسة المرتبه. تقدم اليركت البطريكية. مع التوسلات
الروحانية. بالعبادة والغدا ونصنع النهار. بتضرع جزيل وتوسل عزيز.
نحو الرب الضابط الكل الإله العلي. خلوا من فتور لاجل احسانك هذا الشريف
السني. واما بقية حسني العبادة من العوام. فبعد حون جنابكم العزيز علي العوام.
ويدهونكم بطول البقا لستين عديك وكثرة اعوام. وكافتنا ايضا بغير واحد.
وقلب متفق بتوسل متضرعين الي التالوث الالهة المتساوي الجوهر الواحد.
ان يبعث شرفكم ذا الهدى والابضاع سلامة غير متناهية. وصحة بطول العمر اقيه.
وشيوخه بالقضايل زاهرة. واهيه. وبعد هــ كلها خلاص النفس والمبرات العلوي
الموعود به الحبيب والقيامة. وفاجعل وصاياه مع جميع ما جو به بلا طم الحفوظ
من الله. وجميع من يلود بكم بيسوع المسيح ربنا الذي له المجد
الى الابد وان يسكب عليكم اجمعين

رحمة ونعمة

امين

البطريك الانطاكي سابقا
العاي دايما



اناسيوس بركة الله تعالى
الداي بجنابكم



Fig. 17: Woodcut ornaments grouped on the final page of the preface added in 1708 to the first edition of the Gospel, Aleppo, 1706 (B.A.R.).

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