

N. G. McBurney  
*early printing & manuscripts  
of the Islamic world*

List VIII

*Mughal manuscript bearing  
Emperor Akbar's seal*

→

*al-Kawakibi's proposal for Islamic renewal  
delivered as the proceedings of  
a fictitious conference in Mecca*

→

*Omani Arabic primer  
for Anglophone officers of  
the Sultan's Armed Forces*

→

*early attempt to publish  
a Braille Qur'an  
in Tehran*

2022



*Statements of rarity and institutional holdings are not absolute.  
Material in non-European languages frequently falls between the cracks of  
institutional cataloging. Please do take these statements as a guide rather than gospel.  
I am always happy to hear of examples I have missed.*



from Delhi to Cleveland:  
a Mughal manuscript bearing Akbar's seal

1. Dihlavi, Amir Khusraw. *اربعة امير خسرو دهلوي*

**(The Four [Poems] of Amir Khusraw Dihlavi).**

*[Perhaps Lahore, unsigned and undated, early in the 17th century and unlikely to be later than 1605 CE.]*

4to (33 x 23 cm), Persian manuscript on a burnished pink Indian paper; ff.i, 208, i; 22 lines of black *nasta'liq* per page, titles and section headings in red, written in four gilt-ruled columns, with black, blue, and gold inner frames, and a single-ruled outer frame in blue, with catchwords; five illuminated headpieces: three fine and early 17th-century work, with some 19th-century restoration and marginal extension; and two 19th-century additions, one supplied erroneously in place of a full-page painting at f.24v, the other supplied together with a 19th-century replacement text leaf, f.49. Some interlinear and endpiece illumination added in the 19th century. With fifteen paintings, executed between 1860 or so and no later than 1867, most likely at Delhi, in a vigorous, colourful pastiche of 17th-century Mughal work, supplied in blanks throughout the text to complete the manuscript. Rebound in the 1860s for Colonel George William Hamilton in a hybrid Indian binding of red goatskin, consistent with other manuscripts from his library, boards within gilt-tooled frames, with gilt-stamped corner-pieces and three central lozenges, pastedowns of European marbled paper, flyleaves 19th-century replacements. Binding worn, upper board and spine separated from text block, lower board holding. Text block entirely re-margined in the 1860s, with a thick white Indian paper, and numerous marginal repairs and occasional replacements to text, never affecting more than a few words. Marginal stains and marks. One text leaf only, f.49, a 19th-century replacement, on a pink paper, with blind-rules to text. Signs of fire damage to margins of text prior to restoration, suggesting that original flyleaves and any prior binding were damaged beyond repair. It is possible that Hamilton acquired this manuscript as a disbound wreck, given his propensity for purchasing manuscripts which required restoration and rebinding, even making up multi-volume sets from odd volumes. With impressions of a small seal bearing the name and title of the Mughal emperor Akbar on ff.24r, 143r, and 208r; f.1r with a Persian inscription, most likely in the hand of Muhin Das, identifying Colonel George William Hamilton (as the manuscript's owner), providing a uniform title, "The Four [Poems]", naming Amir Khusraw as author, and listing the four individual poems within, translated in pencil below, erroneously, perhaps by a 19th-century

bookseller, naming Hamilton as the work's dedicatee and supplying "Poems" in place of Muhi Das's numerical precision.

SOLD

### images

A splendid chimaera: a Mughal manuscript of four poems by India's preeminent mediaeval Persian-writing poet, Amir Khusraw, with intriguing imperial provenance, restored and illustrated for a British officer, Colonel George William Hamilton, at Delhi some two hundred and fifty years later.

Amir Khusraw Dihlavi (1253-1325 CE), poet, Sufi, scholar, and musician needs almost no introduction. Born to a Turkish father and Indian mother, his dazzling, polylingual literary career adroitly spanned political turmoil, pivoting from patron to patron as circumstances required, memorably serving both the first Khalji sultan of Delhi, Jalal al-Din, and his nephew, assassin, and heir, 'Ala' al-Din.

This manuscript assembles four of his longer poems, clearly selected and intended as a collection, not merely a remnant of the poet's famous *Khamsa*, written in response to that of the Persian poet Nizami. The first poem, *Qiran al-sa 'dayn*, recounts a meeting between one of Amir Khusraw's princely patrons and his estranged son, cast as the conjunction of two auspicious planets. The second, *Matla ' al-anwar*, comprises moral verses, while the third, *Noh sepehr*, provides a rich account of mediaeval Indian court life, couched in the conceit of nine spheres and corresponding poetic metres. The final poem is the *A 'inah- 'i Sikandari (Mirror of Alexander)*, a life of the great conqueror, which was Amir Khusraw's response to Nizami's famous *Sikandar-nama*. The poems collected here are a princely selection, written on fine pink paper, in excellent *nasta'liq*. There is the strong temptation to suggest that this unfinished manuscript was intended by the imperial parent as a present for his estranged son, Prince Salim, particularly given the intriguing presence of Akbar's small, personal seal.

Akbar's imperial patronage has been suggested for an early 17th-century illustrated manuscript of the Persian life of Christ written at the emperor's command, now in the Lahore Museum (Ms.46, acc. no.M-645), on grounds of an impression of the same small seal of Akbar on the front flyleaf. (Curiously, though, there is also an inscription, dated 1604, noting the manuscript's presentation by one Mirza Kamran to his son.) The attribution of that manuscript to Akbar's patronage was rebutted in 2012 by Pedro de Moura Carvalho, though the Lahore manuscript is one of three interrelated illustrated copies of the text produced in an imperial Mughal milieu between 1602 and 1604.

Carvalho suggests that the copy now at the Cleveland Museum of Art (acc. no.2005.145) may have been produced for Prince Salim at Allahabad. "As mentioned earlier, some miniatures of the Cleveland copy are of high quality and it is clear that artists with great skills were involved in their making: consider the fineness of the pigments used ... Other miniatures ... reveal poor standards. Such variation in terms of quality is compatible with what is known about manuscript illustration at Allahabad.

The possibility that Salim ordered two illustrated copies of the manuscript cannot be completely discarded but should perhaps not be given too much credence. Illustrated manuscripts were also produced for other patrons, including the ladies of the court, yet very little is known about non-imperial patronage..." (Carvalho 2012, p.62) It is worth emphasising, as Carvalho does, that the Cleveland manuscript, commissioned by Prince Salim or not, was abandoned with a substantially incomplete sequence of painting.

This digression hopefully illustrates the sheer tumult of imperial Mughal manuscript production at the dawn of the 17th century, with strained relations between the emperor and his heir. The present manuscript of Amir Khusraw lacks even the context of its original flyleaves but the fact that the Lahore Museum manuscript, though clearly intimately linked to Mughal court life, had passed into the hands of a relative unknown by 1604 suggests another explanation. Perhaps both the present manuscript and that Persian life of Christ were imperial discards, marked with Akbar's seal and given as efficient gifts to courtiers. If so, they represent the bare tip of an undiscovered bibliographical iceberg.

Even at the imperial court, illustrated manuscripts were never a matter of the high artistic productions beloved by art historians alone: Mughal book history clearly has further bibliographical riches to offer. There is no evidence that the Lahore Museum manuscript lingered in the imperial library during the 17th-century - it has none of the layered inscriptions associated with the methodical librarianship that came with Akbar's successors. I suspect that the present manuscript of Amir Khusraw's poetry was similarly bereft, or such inscriptions would have been preserved during restoration.

This manuscript's circulation between the early 17th century and the 1860s in north India is unknown, though it seems to have been badly burned during those intervening centuries. There is neither material evidence nor any inscriptions to explain how it entered the library of Colonel George William Hamilton, a British colonial official who served in India from 1823 to 1867 and assembled a vast library of manuscripts. Hamilton bought manuscripts, often rebinding, frequently restoring, and even occasionally commissioning his own manuscripts. (For an example of the latter, see [Rylands Persian MS 707](#), written in 1861 at Multan by Vayah Qadir Bakhsh Multani.) Hamilton clearly maintained a network in the Indian book trade and capitalised on his final service as Commissioner of Delhi to acquire books looted by British forces from the royal and private libraries alike of Lucknow and Delhi. Provenance, perversely, mattered to Hamilton, and he may well have acquired this manuscript on the basis of those three small seal impressions with Akbar's name.

Hamilton's complete restoration of this manuscript, with the supply of fifteen paintings and added illumination, suggests he valued it greatly. That work involved multiple workshops and artisans - the foliation of the 19th-century margins, with corresponding numerals often marked on the original text leaves, suggests the degree of care taken. There is a slim line of instructions to the painter(s) left partially visible at the bottom of the painting on f.35r. It seems likely that the manuscript was disbound

entirely, remargined and then leaves requiring painting or illumination were sent to separate establishments. This perhaps explains the 19th-century headpiece to nowhere, as it were, supplied on f.24v over a blank full-page clearly left for a painting, which must have been sent to the wrong workshop and fallen victim to an enthusiastic illuminator.

The paintings themselves are fresh and engaging pastiche, rich in colour, pattern, and expressive faces. There is something poignant in the thought of Indian artists producing these works so soon after the final destruction of the Mughal empire by the British in 1858. These paintings are not the high art of Akbar's ateliers but a vivid 19th-century Indian response to those traditions.

Hamilton's manuscripts were sold, after his death in 1868, through Bernard Quaritch. Charles Rieu selected several hundred manuscripts for the British Museum. The bulk of the library was then sold to the 25th Earl of Crawford, Alexander Lindsay. (That bulk, as part of the Bibliotheca Lindesiana, has been part of the John Rylands Library since 1908.) This manuscript was apparently neither purchased by the British Museum nor the Earl of Crawford. It was acquired by Joseph Isaac (1855-1926) of Cleveland and then passed by descent until 2022.

Many thanks to Katherine Butler Schofield and Jake Benson for their generous scholarship and conversation, which was enormously helpful as I tried to wrap my head around the questions of provenance and context raised by this manuscript. Jake Benson's detailed catalogue notes of the Hamilton manuscripts now at the John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, were invaluable reading. Any errors are my own.

For a useful discussion of early 17th-century Mughal manuscript production, see: Pedro de Moura Carvalho and W.M. Thackston. *Mir'āt al-quds (Mirror of holiness): a life of Christ for Emperor Akbar: a commentary on Father Jerome Xavier's text and the miniatures of Cleveland Museum of Art, Acc. no. 2005.145*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

For a parallel discussion of attribution and collecting, with a particularly helpful discussion of the appearance of imperial Mughal seals in unexpected places, see:

Yael Rice, "Painters, Albums, and Pandits: Agents of Image Reproduction in Early Modern South Asia", *Ars Orientalis* (Volume 51, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.3998/ars.13441566.0051.002>



a man of West African descent endows  
a magnificent Qur'an from Harar, copied on Italian paper,  
to his mother in the principal Portuguese port of Gujarat  
at the close of the 17th century

2. [Qur'an.] القرآن (The Qur'an).

[Probably Harar, unsigned, after 1678 but no later than 1694 CE.]

4to (33 x 23 cm), Arabic manuscript on several laid Italian papers, the majority marked with *tre lune* and V G, lightly burnished; ff.316, i; 15 lines of black *harari* per page with pale red inner frames, double-ruled, and single-ruled outer frame, with catchwords, text vocalised in black and rubricated in red, verse divisions marked by red dots, *sura* headings in a red minuscule,

marginal *hizb* markers in red, ff.2v-3r each with elaborate penwork frames in red, green, and yellow, with the text divided into two panels, the upper containing *sura* title and prefatory material in red minuscule and the lower the Quranic text in black *harari*. Systematic marginal annotation throughout, giving the different canonical readings of the text in red and identifying their sources by single letters written in green or yellow, providing an accessible visual concordance for the reader, together with occasional commentary and injunctions to the reader in red. Extensive collation notes in a black minuscule. Most likely rebound in the first quarter of the 20th century: spine reinforced with a printed European export textile, retaining early sewing structures, then loosely inserted within a matching folding wrapper, cloth over card boards, using the same printed cotton export textile. Cloth faded, corners bumped, but a sound, functional book, opening easily in hand. Textblock worn and stained at beginning and end, with a short tear to the lower margin of f.1, touching text without loss, marginal staining and soiling throughout, and signs of rodent damage to lower corner. Partial two-line inscription in red on f.1r, from Hassan bin Adojo at Diu in Gujarat, endowing this manuscript to his mother, Fatima Shasho, with two further lines all but erased and illegible. Inscribed date of 1105 AH (1693/4 CE) written thickly in black on f.314r, and a short excerpt from the Qur'an in the same hand inscribed on f.316r.

SOLD

### [images](#)

Remarkable: Hassan bin Adojo, a man of West African descent, endows a magnificent Qur'an from Harar, copied on Italian paper, to his mother Fatima Shasho in Diu, the principal Portuguese port of Gujarat, at the close of the 17th century.

This is a Qur'an which bears witness to family, devotion, and global trade, an artefact of the cultural exchanges of the Indian Ocean and their complex legacy. It was copied towards the end of the 17th century in the Muslim city-state of Harar in Ethiopia, its place of production identified from its script, decorative scheme, and distinctive palette of red, green, yellow, and black. It is undated and unsigned. Bar the bravura opening double-page spread, there is a spare efficiency to the way each page is constructed, with texts in coloured inks, not illuminating gold, and a focus on text above else, in every sense. The Quranic text is preceded by a brief critical preface on the canonical readings and transmissions, including an elaborate table and colour-coded alphabetical key to the systematic marginal notes whose alternating colours and angled inscriptions provide a highly efficient frame-text for the reader. Each *sura* heading presents not so much decoration as the opening for further information-delivery in a tight red minuscule. The manuscript concludes with a few dense pages of prayers, margins left narrow but bare.

The production of this manuscript was a rigorous, intellectually sophisticated endeavour, which demanded a series of critical editorial engagements, traces of which are obvious on the page. Most obvious are the small single-word collation notes in black ink which pepper the margins, added after the body text and inner double-ruled frames, but before the outer margins were ruled - see f.121v for an example of this. These

collation notes sometimes appear on facing pages (see ff.131v-132r), one written right side, the other upside down, suggesting that this collation was the work of two readers in tandem, facing each other across the book, perhaps one reading to the other. That alone would suggest a laborious process, in addition to the extensive marginal notes, but the catchwords and calligraphed marginal *hizb* markers were both written after the outer margins were ruled, suggesting a further process of collation took place - see ff.127v and 146r for examples. The last step may well have been the addition of the keyed critical notes in the margins.

The manuscript was copied on Italian export papers, whose marks correspond to papers used in Ottoman documents as early as 1678. It seems improbable that such paper would have reached Harar before Istanbul but perfectly plausible, given the former city's extensive trading ties, that such paper would have reached the Horn not much later. The inscribed date, 1105 AH (1693/4 CE), at f.314r is clearly not in the same hand(s) as the manuscript. It is not a dated colophon. Neither, however, is it the work of some slapdash forger. Rather, the combination of inscribed prayer and date suggests a pious owner recording their acquisition of this manuscript or some other significant date. In any case, these two data points are mutually supporting and permit the manuscript's production to be attributed to the period between 1678 and 1694.

The endowment inscription on f.1r must be a near contemporary to the manuscript's production, written in a dark red ink and hand very similar to some of the marginal and prefatory passages of the body text. In it, Hassan bin Adojo endows this book for the duration of his life and then to his mother, Fatima Shasho. He is identified as a resident of Diu in "Ijaruta" (Gujarat). It bears noting that women feature regularly enough in the endowment inscriptions associated with Harar. (See for example the 30-part Qur'an manuscript now at Duke (Arabic MS 24), once owned by one Fatima, and the inscriptions published by Alessandro Gori in 2015.)

Neither of these names, however, correspond to any in the corpus of published *waqf* inscriptions from Harar or appear to match those in the collection of the Sherif Harar City Museum. Adojo is not a name associated with Harar. There are no apparent Persian, Arabic, or South Asian names to associate with it. The most likely scenario is that Adojo is the transliteration of a West African name, suggesting that Hassan bin Adojo was the son of a West African man who made his life in Portuguese Gujarat. Shasho too suggests a transliterated African name.

The presence of a Muslim family from sub-Saharan Africa in Diu is perhaps less startling than it might sound at first suggestion. There were African individuals resident in India from at least the 13th century and enslaved African soldiers had risen to found Muslim dynasties by the 15th century. Whether the merchants were Indian or European, a steady flow of enslaved men and women from Africa to India was maintained during this period. Bar the handful of individuals who rose to great political or military power, and the visual trope of the Black *Habshi* or *Siddi* musician in the repertoire of Mughal

and later Indian paintings, the overwhelming majority of these men and women are only visible through sidelong glimpses in the surviving historical record.

The presence of a free Black Muslim family in Portuguese Diu is perhaps more surprising, though not entirely improbable. This manuscript is the only extant evidence of such a family I have traced. It is substantial testament to the fact that Hassan was wealthy enough to purchase a large, elaborate manuscript on imported European paper copied on the far side of the Indian Ocean. His endowment inscription hints that he expected to predecease his mother - it may well have been written when he was severely ill or contemplating some particularly risky venture. But it suggests too that both Hassan and his mother Fatima were confident enough in their position in the city to expect his wishes to be respected and her place after his death to be a secure one. I know of no comparable witness to the presence of free Black Muslims in Portuguese India, or, indeed, the circulation of Arabic manuscripts from Harar in India.

Much of the subsequent fate of the manuscript is obscure. It was clearly read and used regularly, though, bar a single brief 19th-century note in blue pencil, there is no evidence of later annotation. The early 20th-century rebinding does not, sadly, shed much light. The printed textile used is of a sort plausibly present in India, Central Asia, or Africa. The style of binding is a functional hybrid - neither the loose folios in a case associated with sub-Saharan Arabic manuscripts nor the sort of textile over-wrapper used to consolidate old leather bindings in north-west India. Perhaps the only firm observation to make is that this textile wrapper is nothing like the fine blind-tooled bindings particularly associated with manuscripts from Harar.

At some point between its early 20th-century rebinding and the second half of the 20th century, this manuscript passed into European hands and its original context was lost. (That there are none of the characteristically informative inscriptions written by European soldiers when looting books in theatres of war strongly suggests that this book was purchased as curiosity or souvenir, not looted as trophy.) In 2021 it was offered for sale at auction in Zurich, catalogued as probably Iranian, written in a “sorgfältiges” *nasta'liq*, and dated 1105 AH. Hassan bin Adojo's inscription was not noted at all.

For an engaging overview of Qur'an manuscripts from Harar, see:

Sana Mirza, “The visual resonances of a Harari Qur'ān: An 18th century Ethiopian manuscript and its Indian Ocean connections”, *Afriques* [online], 08 | 2017

[<https://journals.openedition.org/afriques/2052>]

For examples of *waqf* inscriptions from Harar see:

Alessandro Gori, “Waqf certificates of Qur'āns from Harar: a first assessment.” in Bausi, Gori, & Nosnitsin (eds.), *Essays in Ethiopian Manuscript Studies: Proceedings of the International Conference Manuscripts and Texts, Languages and Contexts: the Transmission of Knowledge in the Horn of Africa Hamburg, 17–19 July 2014*. Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, *Supplement to Aethiopica International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies*, vol. 4 (2015), pp.281-295.

[[https://static-curis.ku.dk/portal/files/156864158/Gori\\_in\\_AethSup4.pdf](https://static-curis.ku.dk/portal/files/156864158/Gori_in_AethSup4.pdf)]





Warda al-Yaziji's earliest work:  
first published modern Arabic poetry by a woman  
pioneer in literature & women's rights alike

3. al-Yaziji, Warda. حديقة الورد (**The Rose Garden**).

Beirut, al-Matba'a al-Mukhallisiya, 1867 CE.

8vo (20.6 x 15 cm), typographic Arabic text, 15 lines of *naskh* within double-ruled frames per page, on wove paper; pp.[1]-46, title within frame of typographic ornament, preface with typographic headpiece. Bound in contemporary blind-stamped purple cloth. Cloth stained and faded, edges rubbed, with slight loss at top and bottom of spine. Two minute worm tracks at front and back, barely extending into the text block, text untouched. Some light spotting and marginal soiling. An Arabic couplet in a contemporary hand added after the last printed verse on p.46, extensive student notes in pencil, mathematics and rough verse, on pastedowns and rear free endpaper. Bookseller's stock mark pencilled on front pastedown.

SOLD

[images](#)

Rare: first publication of modern Arabic poetry written by a woman, in this eponymous collection by Warda al-Yaziji (1838-1924), born to a prominent Christian intellectual family in Lebanon, first educated at home, whose career as poet and journalist spanned the course of the *Nahda* in Beirut and Alexandria. Issued under al-Yaziji's own name, when she was only twenty-nine and a year after her marriage to Francis Shamun, this slim but precocious volume collects poems she had composed over more than a decade.

A brief but punchy preface asserts that God bestowed his gifts on men and women alike, names Warda bint Sheikh Nasif al-Yaziji as the author of the work, and notes that this is but a selection from her verse, and closes by invoking the divinely-given opportunity to succeed. Succeed it did: a second, revised edition followed in 1887 and a third in 1914.

The poems are principally in classical Arabic rhymed form, ranging in length from a single couplet to a page, most elegiac in voice. Many are couched in epistolary introductions, addressed to a dear female friend, a Christian patriarch, or a *hajji*, to take but three named examples. al-Yaziji often writes of love in verses addressed to a female friend, though whether this is a genteel convention to avoid publishing love poetry as a married woman or a coded expression of same-sex affection, as classical echo or otherwise, is an open question. Another, addressed to the Syrian poet Warda al-Turk, praises her correspondent's own verse, illuminating a private literary sphere.

Warda al-Yaziji taught, wrote, advocating for education as the means to widen women's horizons and warning against merely aping Christian European mores, and corresponded extensively with literary figures such as 'A'isha al-Taymuriyya and Mayy Ziyada, in the following decades, emigrating to Alexandria after her husband's death in

1899. Suggestions that her poetry was the work of her father, Sheikh Nasif, or brothers, Ibrahim and Khalil, all prominent literary figures in their own right, were quietly rebutted by her continued output, and the eulogies she wrote for each after their deaths.

At Warda al-Yaziji's own death in 1924, Mayy Ziyada delivered a rousing encomium-cum-eulogy, praising her as an astonishingly influential thinker and writer: a genius and a pioneer deserving recognition. A portrait of Warda al-Yaziji was paid for by subscriptions from the women of Beirut and placed in the city's public library.

4 copies located: British Library, Royal Danish Library, Harvard, and Holy Spirit University of Kaslik. I have not seen another example on the market.



stunning:  
chromolithographed  
Ottoman Qur'an

4. [Qur'an.] القرآن (**The Qur'an**).

[Istanbul], *Matbaa-i Osmaniye*, 1305 AH (1887/1888 CE).

8vo (19 x 13 cm), lithographed Arabic text, 15 lines of *naskh* within triple-ruled frames per page, with catchwords, on wove paper; pp.[1, blank], [2]-609, 610-11 [ruled but blank], [1, blank], text vocalised throughout in black and rubricated in red, running titles along top margin indicating *juz'* number, verse markers in gold and red, opening pages with elaborately chromolithographed frames in red, gold, blue, and yellow, *sura* headings within red and gold cartouches, and marginal markers. With original gilt-stamped brown morocco with flap, all edges gilt, red and green head and endbands, in matching gilt slipcase, with flap, and red and white striped pull-tab. In an effort to find condition faults: the binding and case have a few minute signs of wear and there is a discreet modern repair to the slipcase flap. Handful of marks to margins of text. Those noted, this remains the finest example of an Ottoman lithographed Qur'an I have handled: a superb copy in astonishing condition. Initial blank with Arabic inscription recording receipt from Hafiz Shawqi, dated 12 [Rama]dan[?] (14 October) 1940. Ottoman censor's stamp on p.610.

£4,500

[images](#)

A superb copy of the Qur'an in astonishing condition: the finest example of Istanbul chromolithography which I have handled and the epitome of Ottoman Qur'an printing as happy alignment of long manuscript traditions with 19th-century innovations. Many lithographed Ottoman editions of the Qur'an reproduced the work of historic calligraphers, particularly from Qur'an copied by Hafiz Osman (d.1698). The present example, however, is in the contemporary hand of (Kadırgalı) Mustafa Nazif Efendi, particularly associated with Qur'an chromolithographed at the imperial Ottoman presses in the waning years of the 19th century.

This finely executed Qur'an is the more remarkable for the speed with which the Ottoman Empire adopted lithographic printing for the purpose of producing Qur'an.

The first Qur'an licitly produced for distribution within the empire was only printed in 1871, photomechanically reproducing the text of a 17th-century manuscript copied by Hafiz Osman. This edition was produced with such discretion that many sources, even contemporary ones, suggest that it was done either in Paris or by European lithographers working in Istanbul. In fact, production was contracted out to London, as evident from two inscribed copies deposited with the British Museum as-was (now at the British Library: see shelfmarks 14507.a.02 and 14507.a.03). The dated and located inscriptions identify the two printers in London responsible.

Within a matter of years, such Qur'an were lithographed in Istanbul, and these subsequent editions circulated widely within the Muslim world, both as diplomatic presents, the book trade, and through the annual movements of pilgrims to Mecca. For one exploration of their influence, see Ali Akbar's chapter, 'The influence of Ottoman Qur'ans in Southeast Asia through the ages' in *From Anatolia to Aceh: Ottomans, Turks, and Southeast Asia* (Oxford University Press, 2015).

Chromolithographed Qur'an such as the present copy were only produced from the late 1880s onwards and their production curiously parallels the use of printing in gold by missionary presses in Istanbul. The present edition is unusual in using several layers of printed colour, particularly an extensive use of red and gold throughout text, with the use of yellow and blue restricted to the elaborate decoration of the opening pages. The palette of red, black, and gold is effective, though overprinting in gold is not universally successful. The finely printed vocalisation and rubrication is remarkable and readily taken for manuscript work at first glance.

The Qur'an, printed or manuscript, is meant to be read, and reading, inevitably, means wear. These lithographed Qur'an were enormously popular and the vast majority survive in correspondingly worn and well-read condition. I have handled no finer example of a printed Qur'an from the 19th century.



first Arabic Molière:  
in colloquial Egyptian verse

5. Molière; M[uhammad] 'U[thman] J[alal], *translator*.

الاربع روايات من نخب التياترات (**Four plays from the best theatrical work**).

[Cairo], *al-Matba'a al-'Amira al-Sharqiyya, Sha'ban 1307 AH (March or April 1890)*.

8vo (19.9 x 14 cm); pp.(1)-240; Arabic text printed in *naskh*. Rebound in 20th-century quarter cloth over marbled boards, printed Arabic title on spine. Paper browned, title-page with a large tear at top, with partial loss of headpiece, small worm holes throughout, occasionally touching text, without loss. A sturdy copy of a book which I have yet to see in anything other than rather battered condition.

£750

### images

First edition of this remarkable collection of four Arabic comedies, translated from Molière's French, and consciously, deliciously "Egyptianised" by Muhammad 'Uthman Jalal. His translations, particularly of *Tartuffe*, introduced a remarkable vein of bawdy, broad wit entirely his own. Jalal's selection of colloquial Arabic verse attracted contemporary literary critique but remains among the earliest uses of such a form to serious literary effect in Arabic, amidst the *Nahda* or Arabic renaissance in Egypt, that still-contested 19th-century wave of reformation and experimentation which continued until the early decades of the 20th century.

The four plays are *al-Shaykh Matluf (Tartuffe)*, *al-Nisa' al-'alimat (Les femmes savantes)*, *Madrasat al-azwaj (L'école des maris)*, and *Madrasat al-nisa' (L'école des femmes)*. This was the first appearance in print of all but *al-Sheikh Matluf*, which Jalal had published in a minuscule edition at his own expense in 1873. Both the 1873 and 1890 editions were published under his initials only. None of these plays were performed during his lifetime but *al-Shaykh Matluf* proved a popular success when finally staged in 1912.

Muhammad 'Uthman Jalal was the son of a court clerk, who was enrolled in the Bureau of Translation established by Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), where he clearly excelled, working as translator and clerk in various ministries, including War, and publishing several military manuals. In 1869 he founded the innovative political periodical *Nuzhat al-Afkar*, together with Ibrahim Muwaylihi, which was suppressed by the Khedivate almost immediately. Despite this brush with the censorious state, Jalal's bureaucratic and literary careers continued in tandem; his final posts were as a judge in Alexandria and then Cairo until his retirement in 1895. His translations into Arabic include several of Racine's tragedies, Fontaine's fables, and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*. Jalal's sole original play, *al-Khaddamin wa al-Mukhaddamin (Servants and their masters)* was published posthumously in 1904.

Some libraries record the date of publication as 1889 but the printer's colophon gives both month and year, which are unambiguous.

Basel, Berlin, Columbia, Geneva, Harvard (2 copies), National Library of Israel, NYU Abu Dhabi, Marburg, and National Library of Sweden.



unsophisticated Tashkent edition  
of a remarkable Chaghatay *divan*  
with chromolithographed boards

6. Shah Baba Mashrab. دیوان مشرب (**Divan of Mashrab**).

[Tashkent], Typo[graphy] of [the General] Staff of the Turk.[estan] Military District, [no date, but most likely 1901, with a printed St Petersburg censor's authorisation in Russian dated 1901 CE.]

8vo (27 x 17 cm), lithographed Chaghatay text, 21 lines of *nasta'liq* within triple-ruled frames per page, on yellow wove paper; pp.[1]-157, 158-160 [paginated and ruled by blank], with elaborate pictorial frame of engraved vignettes on title-page. Bound in original roan-backed cloth, with sheets of paper, chromolithographed in imitation of a manuscript binding, pasted over the upper and lower boards. Boards worn and rubbed, with a handful of wormholes, spine splitting at top but holding, hinges cracked. Text block split but holding.  
SOLD

[images](#)

A rare Tashkent edition of the Chaghatay *divan* of itinerant poet Shah Baba Mashrab of Turkestan (1640-1711), whose unorthodox life and verse ensured the enduring popularity of his literary work and long afterlife as a Central Asian folk hero following his execution. (Shah Baba Mashrab's quixotic search for the divine stretched to such methods as urination.) His *divan* is divided between verse and the author's adventures in prose, travels where he meets, among others, Khidr.

The first edition of the *Divan-i Mashrab* was published in 1893 at Tashkent. Six editions were published between 1900 and 1901, all using the text of the third Tashkent edition (1899) as their prototype. A comparison of the present edition with the British Library copy (shelfmark ORB.30/8207) of a 1901 edition shows that the text is reproduced in a different hand but with exactly the same line and page breaks throughout. The censor's authorisation, in Russian, on the British Library edition is dated 1901 and the printed colophon is dated 1318 AH (1900/1901 CE). This edition clearly belongs to the same cluster of Tashkent editions - the British Library copy's title-page includes vignettes identical to those used in the present edition. The blank cartouche on the bottom of the present copy's title-page suggests space for a publisher's name in Perso-Arabic script, as is the case in the British Library copy.

The book's binding, despite its battered condition, is an unrestored example of the hybrid bindings produced across the Persianate world for lithographed texts. The use of paper, lithographed with decorative patterns in imitation of a manuscript's decorated leather boards, is known in 19th-century Qajar examples, albeit without colour. This is the first example of this binding technique which I have handled where printed colour was used.

I locate no other copies of this edition. See Hofman's *Turkish Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, vol.4, pp.125-32 for Mashrab in manuscript and print. Despite the numerous editions recorded by Hofman, copies of this *Divan* in any Tashkent edition are extremely rare. Many thanks to a Chaghatay-reading correspondent for their generous scholarly assistance. The correct identification of the Russian imprint was the work of the client who purchased this book and kindly shared that information and their further research with me. Any errors above are my own.



from Tunis to China:  
a Meccan conference to renew Islam  
[& overthrow Ottoman rule]

7. al-Kawakibi, ‘Abd al-Rahman. أم القرى (**The Mother of Villages**).

Cairo, printed at the expense of Ibrahim Faris, proprietor of *al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya*, [undated, but no earlier than 1903, unlikely to be much later than 1905, and not later than 1920 CE].

8vo (18.2 x 12.8 cm), typographic Arabic text, 22 lines of *naskh* within double-ruled frames per page, on wove paper; pp.[1]-185, [1, blank], with photographic portrait of the author. Rebound in red buckram on 17 October [19]63 per pencil note on front free endpaper. Text trimmed when rebound. Title-page partially re-margined, text browned, occasional short marginal tears, and a number of pages reinforced partially or entirely with thin tissue paper. With stamps, marks, and pencil inscriptions of the Syrian Protestant College, Beirut, and St Antony’s College, Oxford. Numerous contemporary pencil notes in Arabic.

£3,000

[\*images\*](#)

Fourth edition, rare, of this remarkably influential text, the proceedings of a fictitious Meccan conference, written by the Syrian reformer and journalist ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi (c. 1855-1902), who enjoyed the patronage of Egypt’s Khedive during his brief exile in Cairo. *Umm al-Qura* sets out a detailed assessment of the failures of Muslim polities and a corresponding proposal for an Islamic renewal, with the return of a caliphate to the Hijaz, and intellectuals as the vanguard of this gradual renovation.

The anonymous attendees are identified by role and origin: they come from India, Tunis, Afghanistan, Kazan, and beyond - from a Sindhi sheikh to a Chinese imam. The conference is scathing in its assessment of Ottoman rule and the failures of Islam, proposing a division of the caliphate from temporal power, rooted in Arabic and Arab culture, supported by the consent (and troop) of Muslim nations across the world. It was an immediate sensation when first published pseudonymously with a “Port Said” imprint, shortly after Kawakibi left Aleppo for Egypt under confused circumstances in 1898. His relationship with the Ottoman authorities in Syria was marked by controversy - both the newspapers he started in Aleppo were successively closed down, and he was obviously aware that publishing anything like *Umm al-Qura* while in Syria would have been foolhardy. The book’s banning within the Ottoman Empire and persistent rumors that Kawakibi himself was assassinated by imperial agents suggest he was correct.

*Umm al-Qura* was an immediate sensation, with multiple editions following in quick, tangled succession. The first edition was published pseudonymously under a false (“Port Said”) imprint, without an author portrait, shortly after Kawakibi’s 1898 arrival in Egypt, institutionally cataloged with pp.221. (The book was abridged and serialised by Rashid Rida in *al-Manar* from 1902 and 1903.) A presumed second edition, still pseudonymous, and heavily abridged, was published in 1903 after the serialisation in *al-Manar*, with pp.112. A presumed third edition, undated, but no longer pseudonymous, with authorial portrait, was published between the *al-Manar* edition and the present fourth edition, with pp.146 or 148.

The present edition, with authorial portrait, is a stated fourth edition, with Kawakibi's name and portrait (in Bedouin dress with umbrella). It is identified as a posthumous edition, so can be no earlier than 1903, perhaps 1905, while the stamps of the Syrian Protestant College (or the American University of Beirut as it would become from 1920) provide a *terminus ante quem*. (The bookseller and publisher Ibrahim Faris was active from the last quarter of the 19th century.)

Kawakibi's work was widely read, with the abundance of early editions suggesting immediate demand, and it had enduring influence with would-be reformers in the Arab world, attracting new readers with successive waves of reformists, whether nationalist, religious, or both. *Umm al-Qura* has attracted remarkably little scholarly attention in western Europe and North America, as compared to Arabic scholarship, perhaps because it fails to fit neatly into the boxes often supplied for turn-of-the-century reformers in the Ottoman Empire.

I locate copies at Harvard and Leiden (with an attributed date of 1902 CE). I would be grateful for any information on the second and third editions implied by this book's title-page. The apparent abundance of 1316 AH (1898/99 CE) editions in institutions appears to be the result of copies cataloged according to the date of the author's fictitious Meccan conference.



from sugar in your tea to  
machine guns in the mountains:  
Omani colloquial for British officers

8. [The Sultan's Armed Forces.] **Elementary Omani Colloquial Arabic for English Speakers.** [*No place but presumably Oman*], HQ Education Service, *Sultan's Armed Forces, 1974 CE*.

Small 4to (24.8 x 17.6 cm), English and romanised Arabic text; pp.[1-2, blank], [3]-176, with two printed diagrams in text. Bound in original imitation leather, upper board blind-stamped with gilt title, spine with gilt title. Corners a little bumped, boards marked. Text block pristine.

SOLD

[\*images\*](#)

An unusual military vocabulary and grammar, written for the benefit of British personnel serving with the Sultan of Oman's Armed Forces in the final years of the long-running Omani civil war which, on several fronts, lasted from the early 1960s until the middle of the 1970s. The focus is purely on spoken, working knowledge of Arabic, and the preface is clear that the only way to achieve that is by speaking to Omanis as one works through the book's nine units and twenty-four word lists.

The units are each structured around a small introductory vocabulary, a ruthlessly simplified grammar, and sample dialogues, with later units adding revision. There is remarkable little sense in the bulk of the book that its readers would be on active service - there are numerous dialogues around ordering tea, making polite

conversation, and establishing the rank of your military interlocutor. The only hint of combat is found in the supplied vocabulary lists for military locations, weapons, kit, medical situations, and the different formations of the Sultan's Armed Forces.

The book is written with almost conversational informality at points - the footnotes and appended contextual notes have a distinct whiff of *1066 & All That*. An author willing to footnote, apropos of nothing at all, the statement that the "Middle East is the cradle of three great religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam" or to compare Omani naming conventions which cite a tribe to the clan names of the Scots is either an author possessed of a dry humour or a clot. Given their sensible advice on achieving working proficiency in Arabic, I suspect the former.

Bamberg, British Library, Oxford (Bodleian), and St Andrews. There is a fourth copy in the archives of Edward Ashley (1934-2001), who served two tours in Oman with the Sultan's Armed Forces, which is now held by St Antony's College, Oxford.



early Braille Qur'an  
printed under the auspices  
of Farah Pahlavi in Tehran

10. [Qur'an.] القرآن الكريم المجلد الأول - السادس (The Noble Qur'an. Part[s] One - Six).  
*Tehran, printed at the Braille Press of the National Welfare Organisation for the Blind under the patronage of the Shahbanu, Farah Pahlavi, 1394-98 AH (1974-78 CE).*

Six volumes, folio (33.8 x 22 cm), typographic Arabic and Persian title-pages with embossed Arabic and Persian Braille text on card; ff.[iii], [71]; [iii], [71]; [iii], [82]; [iii], [89]; [iii], [75]; [iii], [73]. In original card wrappers, first and third volumes with their embossed Braille spine labels, other volumes with traces of their labels. Wrappers soiled and chipped. Contents clean. £2,800

[images](#)

A rare and early example of the Qur'an in Braille, printed in Tehran under the patronage of Farah Pahlavi in the years immediately prior to the 1979 revolution. This set comprises six [of a projected seven] volumes. The sixth volume concludes with the 39th *sura* of the Qur'an (*al-Zumar*). Arabic Braille books were not widely produced until the last quarter of the 20th century and this appears to be one of the earliest substantial attempts to produce a Braille Qur'an.

Education for the blind in Iran was spearheaded by European missionaries: the first boarding school for the blind was established at Tabriz in 1926 by a German missionary, and the handful of additional schools founded in the following thirty years were also operated by Christian organisations. In 1964 Farah Pahlavi funded the establishment of the first Iranian school for the blind to break with this pattern: the



Reza Pahlavi School in Tehran. Her support of this Qur'an edition, with six volumes over four years, suggests a continued interest in the education of blind Iranians.

This set does not contain the complete text of the Qur'an. This is hardly surprising given the events of 1979 and the project's patron. Circumstances presumably forced the abrupt conclusion of this early foray towards a complete Braille Qur'an. No other copies located.



modern miniature Qur'an  
in stylishly simple but effective slipcase

[Qur'an.] القرآن **(The Qur'an).**

*[No place, no publisher, second half of 20th century.]*

Miniature (3.5 x 2.5 cm), photo-lithographed Arabic text, 21 lines of *naskh* within triple-ruled frames per page, on wove paper; pp.[1, blank], [2]-521, [1, index], text vocalised throughout, with opening pages within floreated frames and *sura* headings within floreated cartouches. In original gilt-stamped imitation red leather over thin card. With a metal slipcase, open on three sides, imitating the boards and spine of a book, with magnifying lens set onto the upper "board" and corresponding circular hole punched through the "lower" board, allowing the slip-case to be used as a magnifying stand, and a loop for chain or string attached to the "spine".

SOLD

[images](#)

A charming example of the printed miniature Qur'an still worn and carried throughout the Muslim world, with an unusually clever book-form slipcase, allowing the book to slide gently out and in, while the slipcase may be squeezed gently shut to hold the book securely when it is worn or carried.

