

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

List IV

*From Qajar lithographed astronomy
to an early Singapore Qur'an
& Irish missionaries printing a Persian dictionary*

2020



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.



Early illustrated Qajar lithograph: astronomy & astrology

1. Birjandi, Nizam al-Din ‘Abd al-‘Ali; Molla Mozaffar bin Muhammad Qasim Junabadi, *commentator*. **Sharh-i bist bab-i Molla Mozaffar (Commentary on the Twenty Chapters by Molla Mozaffar)**. *Tehran, Sha’ban 1271 AH (April or May 1855 CE)*. First edition. 8vo (21.5 x 16 cm), lithographed Persian text, with 22 lines of *naskh* in double-ruled frames per page, captions and section headings in *thuluth*, extensive printed marginal notes in *nasta’liq*, with catchwords; pp.[1, blank], (1)-235 [later Persian pagination in pencil], [1, blank]; floreated headpiece. 46 illustrations to text, numerous diagrams and charts. Loose in contemporary blind-stamped and ruled brown roan, heavily worn and marked, early cloth repair to base of spine. First and last leaves pasted onto doublures, no loss of text. Text block with original sewing, slightly loose, light marginal stains, finger soiling at beginning and end. Occasional annotations and underlines. With French and Persian ownership inscriptions of Manouchehr Nazerian, dated 1956 on the margins of pp.55-571. Pencil pagination, annotation, and underlining appear to be in the same hand.

£4,500

[images](#)

First edition of this illustrated commentary by the Safavid scholar Junabadi on the *Bist bab dar taqvim (Twenty chapters on the calendar)*, a compact but rich work of astronomy and astrology compiled by the Persian astronomer Nizam al-Din ‘Abd al-‘Ali Birjandi (d. circa 1527). Junbadi dedicated his commentary to Shah ‘Abbas I (r. 1588-1629).

The book’s twenty chapters span: systems of alpha-numeric correspondence; calendar systems, lunar and solar, including the Hijri and various ancient calendars; the Zodiac, including the different planets and spheres; movements of Sun, Moon, and stars, with predictive tables; astronomical means of discerning the time and direction for daily prayers; intercalation and the dates of Muslim, Christian, and Zoroastrian festivals; the cycles of Chinese chronology; significance of eclipses, lunar and solar; and extensive notes predicting the weather and fortunes from the Zodiac and other stars.

The present work is a rare example of an illustrated scientific book from the earliest period of Qajar lithographic illustration. The first illustrated lithographic book from Iran identified to date is an 1843 edition of Maktabi’s *Leyli o Majnun*, with only four crude illustrations. By 1847 more extensively illustrated books were being printed, a few editions even with hundreds of illustrations, and the following decade saw an explosion of illustrated editions. Production appears to have been driven by commercial

demand, which leant hard towards lavishly illustrated narrative works. Any illustrated work from this period of Qajar lithography is a rarity but an illustrated astronomical work is doubly so.

The illustrations themselves are figurative depictions of the Zodiac and other constellations, iconographically familiar, from Cancer as a crab, to Gemini, a pair of discreetly naked twins, and attracted the interest of an earlier reader, who helpfully supplied their Western names in pencil. Both these illustrations and the book's extensive tables and diagrams draw directly on a deep vein of manuscript Persian illustration, decorative and technical, adapted only slightly to lithographic printing.

The book's octavo format is an interesting contrast to the quarto and folio illustrated editions of popular narratives which dominated the contemporary Iranian book market at the time. This is a discreet, practical handbook, not a vividly coloured epic poem with full-page pictures, and all the more unusual for it. The work was presumably a commercial success, with two more illustrated editions of the same small format published in the following decade (1859 and 1865). The condition of the present copy certainly suggests extensive use.

Outside of Iran, Columbia only. Ulrich Marzolph records two copies, one at the Malek Museum & Library and another in a private collection, in *Narrative Illustration in Persian Lithographed Books* (2001). Storey, *Persian Literature, Volume II, Part I*, pp.81-2.



Large-format map of Sindh's canals

2. Beatty, John. **Plan Shewing the Canals in the Hyderabad Collectorate with the exception of those in the Nowshera District. (Signed) J. Beatty, Assist. Collector for Canals, Hyderabad.** Hyderabad, [no printer], 7 August 1865.

Lithographed map on five conjoined sheets (175 x 67.5 cm [96 cm at widest point]). Scale: 2 miles to 1 inch. Waterways hand-coloured in blue wash. Folded to 15 x 23.5 cm. One long split to fold line, a few short marginal tears and closed internal tears at fold pints, slight loss at base.

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An early survey of Sindh's critical irrigation canals, prepared in the aftermath of Napier's invasion and subsequent establishment of the Hyderabad Collectorate. The Indus River's essential role in irrigation and thus Sindh's agricultural prosperity was long-established, but this map speaks to the tortured British relationship with India's irrigation canals. Napier had recognised the importance of Sindh's canals and established a short-lived Canal Department. Despite this avowed interest, and surveys such as the present plan, British canal administration remained resolutely inept. As early as 1855, senior British officials were rejecting plans developed by individual engineers for comprehensive improvements to the canal system, setting a pattern which persisted throughout the 19th century, punctuated by the spectacular failures of the handful of private companies which ventured into commercial irrigation projects.

As late as 1875, some thirty years after the East India Company's invasion and annexation of Sindh, the *Gazetteer of the Province of Sindh* would complain that none of the canals had their heads at the river bank and none were in any case deep enough to draw water except during the "inundation". British administrators largely restricted themselves to organising the dredging of major canals in advance of the annual flood: cost concern seems to have precluded major works for most of the 19th century.

The British Library holds an undated lithographed map of the roads and canals of the Hyderabad Collectorate, printed at the Bombay Education Society's Press, and signed by "John Beatty B.A.C.E. 3rd Executive Engineer C.D. In charge Canal Duties H.C." (Mss Eur F126/112). It shows individual districts' borders, lists canals' reported mileage, and provides a key classifying roads as cleared, formed, drained at intervals, partly bridged, and/or bridged throughout. The present plan was likely preliminary work prepared for internal circulation.
No other copy traced.



Unrecorded: a lithographed Singapore Qur'an

3. **al-Qur'an.** [*Singapore*], 1287 AH (1870/1 CE).

Folio (31 x 20 cm), lithographed Arabic text with 15 lines of *naskh* within triple-ruled black frames per page, outermost red frames in manuscript, *juz'* markers in marginal roundels, *nisf* markers indicated by text only, with catchwords; ff.i [detached leaf of illumination, loosely inserted as a guard], ii-vi, 303 [of 304, lacking final *sura* and colophon]. Lithographed floreated frames on ff.1v-2r and 303v, each page with 7 lines of *naskh*, frames with blank cartouches for *sura* titles, hand-coloured in red, green, and yellow; ff.142v-143r with thinner, marginal floreated frames, hand-coloured in yellow only. Printed on Dutch laid paper. Rebound in a crudely prepared hide with flap, flesh side out, remnants of hair inside, most likely in the first half of the 20th century. Original headbands and sewing structures intact. Inserted guard leaf with long central tear. Text defective at end: lacks single leaf with last *sura* (*al-Nas*) and colophon. Paper soiled, particularly at beginning and end, water stains, a handful of chipped corners, and final third of text with a series of internal splits and punctures, partially repaired, presumably caused by pressure applied to the original binding's lower board, affecting the odd handful of letters. Early marginal paper reinforcement to f.5, long tear to bottom margin of f.26, no loss of text. Despite all this the paper remains crisp, bar first and last few pages. The aesthetically regrettable binding is at least structurally sympathetic and allows the book to open comfortably. Pencilled stock mark of the British bookseller Ronald Gooch (Ad Orientem Ltd) on inserted guard leaf and his marginal inscription on f.303v, recording the missing final leaf.
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Very rare: one of only three extant dated copies of the Qur'an lithographed at Singapore during the earliest period that these intriguing printed manuscripts were produced, between October, 1869, and no later than February, 1871. All exhibit features consistent with contemporary Qur'an manuscripts copied on the East Coast of the Malay

peninsula, as outlined by Annabel Teh Gallop: use of three double-pages of floreated, illuminated frames at beginning, middle, and end; red circles as verse markers; the adoption of a fifteen-line *mise-en-page* for all but the first and last illuminated double-pages with seven lines of text; and the use of the distinctive Ottoman *ayet ber kenar* division of *juz'*, with each *juz'* occupying exactly ten folios or twenty pages, through the extensive use of *kashida* or calligraphic elongation. The addition of numbers to each marginal *juz'* marker is the one major difference between these lithographed copies and their manuscript contemporaries.

The preliminary material of this Qur'an includes indices of *sura* and *juz'*, together with prayers, one of which is dated 1287 AH (1870-1 CE). The indices refer to a pagination which was not printed in the book; the use of *ayet ber kenar* goes some way to remedying this deficiency.

The two other dated examples of these lithographed Qur'ans survive with their detailed colophons intact. The first, donated to the National Library Board of Singapore in 2015, was completed on 3 Rajab 1286 AH (19 October 1869), copied by Tengku Yusuf bin Tengku Ibrahim, and published by Haji Muhammad Nuh bin Haji Isma'il, by the Sultan Mosque in Singapore. The mosque's neighbourhood was the epicentre of Muslim lithographic printing during the period between 1860 and 1880 described by Ian Proudfoot as one of "Experiments". These early Qur'an editions exemplify the strong influence of peninsular scribal culture, particularly from East Coast copyists like Tengku Yusuf bin Tengku Ibrahim, who was from Terengganu, one of the most prolific scribes active in Singapore printing at this time, with Proudfoot identifying seven lithographed books copied by him. Haji Muhammad Nuh bin Haji Isma'il was perhaps the pre-eminent Singapore printer-publisher of this period, responsible for nineteen publications recorded by Proudfoot.

The second extant dated copy, held by the Museum Volkenkunde (RMV 03-240) at Leiden, is dated 20 Rabi' al-awal 1287 (20 June 1870), copied by Abdul Kadir bin Mustafa of Terengganu, and published by Haji Askawi bin Warintah of Java, again by the Sultan Mosque, Kampong Gelam, Singapore. This book was looted by the Dutch military expedition against Aceh in 1898, hinting at the wide regional circulation of these lithographed Qur'an editions. A handful of fragmentary leaves from a different Singapore lithographed Qur'an survive as an enclosure to this copy.

Proudfoot records a defective copy of a different 1869 Qur'an held by the National Library Board of Singapore (Q11.4A/2), which he catalogued from microform since it was (and remains) "not catalogued, not found." It was copied by Muhammad Hanafi bin Suleiman al-Sumbawi, published by Sheikh Muhammad 'Ali bin al-marhum Mustafa of Purbalingga, printed by al-Matbaat al-Aman, and completed in November, 1869.

In addition to these examples, we locate six substantially defective, undated copies of comparable lithographed Qur'an editions: two at the Bayt al-Qur'an, Jakarta (private correspondence), two at the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (1998.1.3439 and

1998.1.3459), Museum Volkenkunde (RMV 1599-696), and one in the library of the Pakualaman Great Mosque in Jogjakarta (private correspondence). Each is a unique survival and all give every indication of being lithographed at Singapore. Our copy is the only dated example outside an institution which we have traced.

The Ottoman influence evident in the textual arrangement of these Qur'an editions is also supported by the regional circulation of Ottoman manuscript copies and of Istanbul lithographed editions as early as 1883 through their distribution by Ottoman representatives in the region. Pilgrims travelling to Mecca played a part in this circulation of Qur'ans, but the Hajj was only one of numerous connections.

The Ottoman connection is even more apparent in the earliest Qur'an lithographed in Southeast Asia. Haji Muhammad Azhari bin Kemas Haji Abdullah acquired a lithographic press in Singapore and published at least two editions of the Qur'an at Palembang in south Sumatra. The earliest extant Palembang Qur'an is dated 21 Ramadan 1264 AH (21 August 1848 CE): a single copy is in a private collection, while another is said to be held by the Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II Municipal Museum. The illumination's style is almost entirely that of an Ottoman manuscript. The second extant Palembang Qur'an, dated 14 Dhu al-Qi'dah 1270 AH (7 August 1854), is noticeably more akin to contemporary Southeast Asian Qur'an manuscripts in format, script, and illumination: two copies extant, one at the National Library of Indonesia (XXXVI 38) and another at the Masjid Dog Jumeneng, Cirebon.

The rarity and apparently limited circulation of these Palembang Qur'an editions may reflect the deep-seated suspicion with which Dutch colonial authorities viewed both Muslim printing and cultural ties between the region and the Ottoman Empire. Singapore, by comparison, was already on the road to becoming a preeminent hub in Southeast Asia's 19th-century book trade, fed in part by the import and distribution of Qur'ans printed in South Asia, particularly Bombay.

Many questions remain around the appearance of lithographed Qur'an editions at Singapore in 1869, decades after the first introduction of lithographic printing to the city, not least because every example identified to date remains a unique survival. Particularly intriguing is that these Singapore Qur'an editions precede the first Qur'an printed by the Ottoman state, which appeared in 1871, and that the span of time between the appearance of the Palembang Qur'an and 1869 corresponds neatly to an increasing anxiety within the Ottoman world around the printed Qur'an and its circulation. These Singapore Qur'an editions appear to spring from the fluid consortiums of printer, publisher, and copyist which underpinned Muslim printing in Kampong Gelam and forged a hybrid form of printed Qur'an, retaining manuscript features like the red-ruled outer frames and rubrication in our copy. To what extent they were a response to the pressing question of the printed Qur'an in the Ottoman world remains an open question.

The rarity and relatively poor condition of Qur'an manuscripts from Southeast Asia as compared to other parts of the Muslim world is a truism but the entire

documented corpus of Singapore lithographed Qur'an editions makes such manuscripts appear numerous and well-preserved. We know of no other example to have appeared on the Western book market.

No other copy traced.

See: Ali Akbar, "The Influence of Ottoman Qur'ans in Southeast Asia Through the Ages" in *From Anatolia to Aceh: Ottomans, Turks, and Southeast Asia* (2015), edited by Annabel Teh Gallop and Andrew Peacock; Annabel Teh Gallop, "The spirit of Langkasuka? Illuminated manuscripts from the East Coast of the Malay Peninsula", *Indonesia and the Malay World* (2005), 33:96, pp.113-182; Ian Proudfoot, *Early Malay printed books* (1993), pp.432-3.



Illustrated Urdu translation of the Nights done for the Naval Kishor Press

4. Muhammad Hamid 'Ali Khan, *translator. Hazar dastan. Alf layla nashr. (The Thousand Tales. The Thousand [and One] Nights in prose.) Munshi Naval Kishor Press, Lucknow, 1890 CE.*

Four parts bound as one, folio (33 x 25 cm), lithographed Urdu text on yellow wove paper, with 31 lines of *nasta'liq* in two columns per page, single-ruled frames; pp.(1)-104, (1)-105, [1, blank], (1)-85, [1, blank], (1)-80; each part with separate title in floreated frame and headpieces; 83 lithographed illustrations in text, 17 discreetly signed Yusuf Khan. Bound in contemporary Indian half roan, gilt, over green cloth, with marbled endpapers. Spine badly chipped, two sections of leather detached but present, corners rubbed, cloth marked and a section torn from the lower board.

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Lavishly illustrated lithographed edition: an Urdu translation of the *1001 Nights* from Naval Kishor's press, perhaps the most famous Indian press of the 19th century. The translator, Hamid 'Ali Khan (1860-1918), was a barrister, colonial administrator, and poet whose edition of the *Nights* appears to have received little critical attention to date, unsurprisingly, perhaps, since extensive printed circulation of the *Nights* in 19th-century India is remarkably little studied relative to the sheer volume and diversity of material encompassed.

The earliest Urdu editions of the *Nights* were those of Shamsuddin Ahmed Shirvani (Madras, 1836) and 'Abdul Karim (Cawnpore, 1847), both intended for European students, and written in a correspondingly simple prose. In 1867 Naval Kishor published the first Urdu edition intended for an Indian audience, an elaborate literary translation by Totaram Shayan (d.1879); Kishor simultaneously published a versified Urdu edition (1861-8), begun by Asghar 'Ali Khan (Nasim) Dehlavi, who only managed the first volume, and completed by Totaram, who translated the second and third volumes, and Shadi Lal (Chaman), for the final two volumes. The Totaram Urdu prose translation would remain a mainstay of Naval Kishor's operations; Richard Burton rather snidely noted in his own English edition of the *Nights* that by 1883 it had reached

its fourth edition, with copies now available with “badly-executed full-page illustrations evidently taken from English prints...”

Hamid ‘Ali Khan was a prosperous and successful man by the late 1880s. He had completed his legal training in London and returned to practice law at Lucknow in 1886. As a boy he had already studied Persian and Arabic at home and English in school, while in London he learned French and Latin while in London, even publishing a volume of valedictory English verse in 1885. Whether he wished to translate the *Nights* to satisfy his own literary ambitions or was approached by Naval Kishor is unclear.

The surprisingly crowded publication history of Hamid ‘Ali Khan’s translation suggests that Kishor saw the work as eminently commercial. A glance through the heading “Arabian Nights” in Blumhardt’s 1909 *Supplementary Catalogue of Hindustani Books in the Library of the British Museum* shows three other Urdu translations made within a decade of Hamid ‘Ali Khan’s, in addition to the earlier versions which remained intermittently in print.

Hamid ‘Ali Khan completed his Urdu prose translation, retaining the numerous verse fragments of the *Nights*, rendered here as *ghazals*, in 1889. Naval Kishor published the folio first edition that same year at Cawnpore. I locate only two copies, both now at the British Library (shelfmarks 14112.e.16. & VT577). The present folio edition followed at Lucknow in 1890; Naval Kishor also published an illustrated octavo edition of 4000 copies that same year. I locate a single, fragmentary copy of the octavo edition in the Maulana Azad Library of Aligarh Muslim University. The 1890 folio and octavo editions have different but related suites of illustrations, both signed, in part, by the same artist, Yusuf Khan. An 1894 Lucknow quarto edition, with a single copy at Harvard, is the latest edition traced so far. The impression is that Hamid ‘Ali Khan’s translation found a ready, eager audience in multiple editions, sized and priced to suit a variety of customers.

Yusuf Khan’s illustrations are engaging, their relatively simple lines capturing action and expression in a compelling fashion. Lions, ladies, lords, djinn and even the hunched Ali Baba and his mule are caught by Khan’s pen and poised on the page. Compared to the formulaic Qajar-lite illustrations of the numerous Bombay editions of the *Shahnameh*, these have the ready charm of a well-drawn comic book. I regret that I have been unable to trace the artist.

One copy located at the British Library (shelfmark 306.25.D.2).

See: Ulrike Stark, *An empire of books: the Naval Kishore Press and the diffusion of the printed word in colonial India* (Ranikhet, 2007); Mohammad Raisur Rahman, *Islam, Modernity, and Educated Muslims: A History of Qasbahs in Colonial India* (doctoral thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 2008).



I have shown your Persian books to competent persons
and it may end in their being used in some schools.”

5. Doctor, Sorabshaw Byramji. **The Student's enlarged English-Persian dictionary, Pronouncing and Explanatory.** *Surat, printed at the Irish Presbyterian Mission Press, 1892.*

First edition. Small 4to (26 x 17 cm), English and Persian text, printed in two columns; pp.[viii], 732, ii, [i, advertisements], vii (reviews), [1, blank]. Bound in contemporary blind-stamped maroon cloth, gilt title on spine; cloth marked, corners bumped, spine torn at top and bottom; pp.[i-iv] tipped-in, a handful of marginal tips and tears. Tatty but sound. Remnants of a bookplate on front pastedown.

£350

images

Intended as “an exhaustive dictionary of the Persian Language” at an affordable price, five years’ work by S. B. Doctor, Persian teacher at Elphinstone High School, late of Surat High School. Doctor intended this work to complement his smaller Persian-English and English-Persian dictionaries. He omits etymology: each English word is given its Persian equivalent(s) romanised and in Perso-Arabic script. From “foot-boy” to “lappet”, the brevity of definition given is a marked contrast to the variety of English vocabulary the compiler felt relevant. A second edition followed in 1898.

Eight titles by Doctor are advertised at the rear: three primers, priced from 12 annas to 1 rupee 4 annas; two grammars, 10 annas and 8 annas each; and three dictionaries, including the present work, priced at 9 rupees, to the others’ modest 3 rupees 8 annas. Copies were obtainable from: Thacker & Co. (Bombay); Thacker Spink & Co. (Calcutta); Higginsbotham & Co. (Madras); and Mrs Radhabai Atmaram Sagoon (Kalbadevi Road, Bombay). Mrs Atmaram Sagoon ran an eponymous publishing and bookselling firm well into the early 20th century.

Doctor evidently sent unsolicited copies to academic institutions and newspapers. The opinions printed at the rear include those of Edward Rehatsek (Bombay University), Shamsul ulama Dastur Hoshang Dastur Jamasp (Deccan College), unnamed professors at Lahore, Benares, and St. Xaviers Colleges, and reviews from the *Times of India*, *Bombay Gazette*, *Indian Spectator*, and *Progress*. The last word perhaps belongs to the nameless Inspector of Schools, Presidency Division, Madras: “I have shown your Persian books to competent persons and it may end in their being used in some schools.”

I locate eight copies: British Library, Berlin, University of Chicago, National Library of Ireland, Munich, Monash, New York University, and Sorbonne Nouvelle.
Ghani, *Iran & the West*, 466.

