

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

List V

*From a lithographed scroll
illustrated with images of Solomon & jinn
to a fine Crimean Qur'an
calligraphy by a Daghestani master
& a Hong Kong imprint
in Arabic, English, & Chinese*

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.*



Lithographed amuletic scroll
to protect a pregnant woman
depicting King Solomon & jinn

1. [Amulet.] **[Prayer scroll.]** [Tehran?], no printer, 1264 AH (1847/8 CE).

Scroll (166.5 x 8 cm), formed of five conjoined strips of wove paper, varying in length, with lithographed Arabic and Persian text in *naskh*. At top, a rectangular headpiece, formed of calligraphic panels around a central standard; small calligraphic panel with the *bismillah*; first text section; blank cartouche; second text section; blank cartouche; calligraphic medallion surrounded by anthropomorphic calligraphy in the shape of four birds; blank cartouche; captioned illustrations of Solomon, haloed and riding a horse, and jinn, captioned as the *umm al-sibyan*; blank cartouche; a second calligraphic medallion surrounded by birds; blank cartouche; final text section with a triangular colophon. Text, decorations, and illustrations all within a lithographed frame, crudely outlined in red wash; illustrations and decorations heightened with light coloured wash. Marginal wear and intermittent finger soiling, with conserved tape marks from previous mounting, and final text section with three small abrasions touching a few lines of text. Old fold marks. Preserved in a modern card case, with a Tyvek wrap. £6,000

[images](#)

A remarkable survival: a Muslim prayer scroll, lithographed and dated 1264 AH (1847/8 CE), ascribable to the earliest period of illustrated lithography in Iran, intended to protect a pregnant woman and her child from misfortune. The first section describes an encounter between Solomon and the *umm al-sibyan* (*mother of children*), a fearsome creature whose touch could induce miscarriage, appearing in folklore from Iran to Africa. The text invokes God and Muhammad, but there is repeated invocation of King Solomon, Solomon's seal, and his mastery over the jinn throughout, with Qur'an, Torah, Gospel, and Psalms cited as licit sources of power. The scroll's illustrations center Solomon and a subordinate jinn quite literally, emphasizing Solomon's mastery despite the sheer physical presence of the splendidly horned and mustachioed jinn, who, even crouched hirsutely with his tail curled, stretches to twice the height of the king atop his steed, horns almost pricking the horse's belly.

This scroll is an important witness to the earliest period of lithographed illustration in Iran, where the first illustrated book was printed in 1843, with the first book lithographed in Iran only a decade earlier. Prayer scrolls and amuletic texts were a near ubiquitous feature of Muslim devotional practice from at least the 10th century,

beginning with the very first Arabic block prints, and continuing down the subsequent centuries in manuscript. As Ulrich Marzolph noted in a 2014 article on an illustrated Hajj scroll ascribed to the late 19th or early 20th century, “Items of a more ephemeral nature, such as single-leaf prints of illustrations, amulets, charms, and announcements of personal or public import, have rarely been preserved and, if so, are often in extremely fragile condition.” - this is the earliest lithographed Muslim prayer scroll I have traced and its illustrations render it a rare window into the intersection of popular religious iconography and print culture in Qajar Iran.

Absent a place and printer, one could argue that this scroll might be the product of Indian rather than Iranian lithography; the close connections between Qajar printing and Persian printing in Bombay is long established. A stylistic argument could be made for either option - Bombay lithographic illustration often emulated Qajar types. But it seems improbable that an experienced Indian lithographer would have used such unfortunate ink as here, still less retained such a flawed printing. The consistency of the ink used to lithograph this scroll was far from perfect; text and lines have a blurred, heavy appearance, suggesting that the ink dried slowly and unevenly. My initial impression was that this scroll’s text had perhaps been traced manually but close examination has ruled this out. Examination of the joins between the scroll’s constituent sheets reveal that several were separately printed, with marked gaps between the sections. An enterprising would-be printer in Iran, whose inexperience resulted in the misprints noted above, is the obvious candidate, or culprit, for the production of this prayer scroll.

The two calligraphic medallions above and below the illustrations contain the *shahada*. The text of each medallion concludes with the Shi’i testament that ‘Ali is *wali Allah*, or endowed with particular authority by God. A later owner, presumably Sunni, has smudged out the offending instances of *wali Allah*. This amulet’s prophylactic qualities, however, were clearly prized equally by Sunni and Shi’i owners.

Statements of rarity with non-Western materials are often hostages to fortune, but the ephemeral nature and fragile format of this scroll suggest it is a true rarity. The only other lithographed Muslim prayers from the 19th century I have traced are a single, undated sheet, printed in Bombay, and now held, together with its amuletic case, at the Blackburn Museum (no accession number available). The Blackburn example was displayed as a manuscript, which points to the challenge of weeding out amuletic lithographs from amuletic manuscripts. Such an exercise might reveal an unimagined abundance of 19th-century lithographed amuletic texts or, more likely, confirm the rarity of the handful of examples extant. This scroll remains an important witness to a fascinating period of printing history, testament to the enduring power of folk medicine and faith at the crossroads of print and manuscript.

No other copies traced.

For the only Qajar illustrated scroll published to date, see:

Marzolph, Ulrich, "From Mecca to Mashad: The Narrative of an Illustrated Shi’i Pilgrimage Scroll from the Qajar Period." *Muqarnas* 31 (2014), pp.207-42.

For the *umm al-sibyan*, see ‘Ali Bolukbashi’s article in *Daneshname-ye farhang-e mardom* (1391 AH / 2012 CE), Vol. I, pp. 614-622. I am grateful to Prof. Dr. Marzolph for the reference.



Cairo-lithographed facsimile of calligraphy by a Daghestani émigré to Istanbul

2. Celaleddin, Mahmud, *calligrapher*. **[A muraqqa or calligraphic album.]** Cairo, Ministry of Public Education, 1309 AH (1891/2 CE).

Oblong 8vo (14 x 23 cm), lithographed Arabic text, with four lines of black *naskh* and *thuluth* per page; ff.(20, printed rectos only), text within lithographed frames, partially floreated, printed in gold. Original printed blue wrappers, Arabic imprint on upper wrapper, preserved in modern folding card case. Wrappers marked, two small sections torn from upper wrapper. Spine’s glue perished: text block split and detaching. Contents clean and bright. Upper wrapper with 20th-century ownership inscription of O. Volkoff and earlier French inscription: “manuel de calligraphie arabe publié en A.H. 1309 (1890).”

£2,200

[images](#)

Unrecorded: an aesthetically pleasing and intellectually intriguing album of calligraphy, mixing prayers and pen exercises, published to unknown purpose by Egypt’s Ministry of Public Education in 1891/2. Ottoman calligraphic connoisseurship hugely influenced 19th-century lithographic printing in Istanbul, where texts were often printed after the manuscripts of famed calligraphers, many long deceased, with the most prominent example of this tendency the Hafiz Osman Qur’an edition which ushered in the age of the Ottoman printed Qur’an.

Albums of calligraphy had been appreciated for centuries across the Muslim world by 1309 AH; lithographed works after calligraphic masters were an established part of Istanbul publishing and, by extension, the Egyptian book trade. That same year the Ottoman calligrapher and educator Mehmed Izzet Efendi issued his third lithographed writing manual in Istanbul. Calligraphies written by one Muhammad Mu’nis had been photolithographically reproduced at Bulaq in 1301 AH (1883/4), with one copy located at the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (shelfmark 4” Zu 4545).

This album is foremost an aesthetic object, mirroring the physical scale and gilt decoration of a manuscript calligraphic album, which copies an original signed in 1317 AH (1802/3 CE) by Mahmud Celaleddin Efendi (d.1829). Celaleddin is a fascinating choice for a “facsimile” album. He emigrated to Istanbul from Daghestan in the second half of the 18th century and is said to have taught himself by studying the works of earlier masters, rather than under contemporary calligraphers. Celaleddin’s calligraphy has been described as hard and stubborn as he was. Bar a brief resurgence after one of his students taught Sultan Abdülmecid I, it has been seen as admirable but isolated from the currents of the calligraphic mainstream, and he has never achieved the ubiquitous

acclaim of other Ottoman calligraphers. Reproducing an album of Celaleddin's work seems an idiosyncratic choice in Khedival Cairo and one which invites further enquiry.

The French inscription on the upper wrapper is doubly erroneous: the Hijri-Gregorian conversion is off by a year and this album is not a manual of calligraphy, any more than an illustrated catalogue of Matisse paper cuts is a manual of decoupage. Rebound or absent the printed wrapper this album would be an enigma, easily ascribed to an Istanbul printer. Wrappers and calligraphy together point to a sophisticated, aesthetic fusion of print and manuscript cultures in Khedival Egypt, something more than a didactic aide. Now this copy exists as the beautiful remnant of unlocated original and a lithographed edition alike: an enigmatic facsimile.

No other copies traced. I have been unable to locate the original manuscript album.

For Mahmud Celaleddin Efendi see: Derman, M. Uğur, *Letters in gold: Ottoman calligraphy from the Sakıp Sabancı collection* (New York, 1998), p.108.



Palm-sized lithographed Qur'an issued
by a Tatar press in Bakhchisaray
in handsome original binding

3. [Qur'an.] **Kalam qadim (The eternal word.)** *Bakhchisaray, printed at the Tercuman Press with permission, given 20 October 1898, of the Ministry of Printing, Saint Petersburg, 1316 AH (1898 CE).*

12mo (10.5 x 7.5 cm), lithographed Arabic text, 15 lines of black *naskh* per page; pp.(1-3), 4-522; text within double-ruled frames, *sura* headings in elaborate cartouches, with verse markers and minimalist marginal *juz'* markers; p.1 with title and imprint inside floreated double-frames, pp.2-3 with 7 lines per page within elaborate floreated frames, *sura* and verse counts in cartouches at top and bottom. Bound in original silver-embossed roan with flap, all edges gilt, and matching slipcase, preserved in modern folding card case. Silver oxidised, edges worn, and one corner bumped; slipcase heavily worn and splitting, most leather lost from one side, flap re-attached. Short internal tear to first leaf, text unaffected. An attractive book.

£1,600

[*images*](#)

A finely lithographed Qur'an, pocket-sized, printed under the auspices of Isma'il Bey Gaspirali (1851-1914), a Tatar and perhaps the foremost Muslim reformer of imperial Russia, at the press of his newspaper *Tercuman*. Bakhchisaray was the erstwhile capital of the Crimean Khanate, but this publication, and indeed almost all of Gaspirali's education and extensive publishing activities took place in the shadow of Russian colonial rule, as this book's imprint makes clear. Gaspirali himself used the Slavicised name Gasprinski, for all that he is often seen as one of the founders of Pan-Turkic thought and the Jadidist reform movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The earliest Qur'an printed in Russia dates to 1787; by the late 19th century, Kazan had become the heart of state-sanctioned Muslim printing within the empire.

This book marks a break with the Kazan editions: calligraphy and format here owe a clear debt to Ottoman manuscripts, while the lithographed illumination and binding's decorative motifs have the air of European riffs on the arabesque. This is one of the smallest 19th-century Qur'an editions I have handled: the *naskh* is impressively crisp and legible despite its size. This book was meant to be carried and read: the state of its case suggests just that occurred.

Mikhaylo Yakubovych identifies the first Bakhchisaray Qur'an edition as 1893 and notes that numerous editions followed, with new editions issued until 1914 and Gaspirali's death. He describes large and small format examples, and notes that Gaspirali clearly saw this Qur'an as a commercial production, which he regularly advertised in the pages of *Tercuman*, even going so far as to seek religious authorisations from scholars in Istanbul and Cairo for later editions. (See Yakubovych's 2020 article [here](#).) I have located no institutional copies of any Bakhchisaray edition bar that of 1898; as Yakubovych notes, examples are still more readily found locally in private hands.

Gaspirali's reforms, politics, and influence remain unsurprisingly contested across multiple fields. It seems significant that these Qur'an editions are omitted from the bibliography Gaspirali appended to his 1901 essay "First steps towards civilising the Russian Muslims", both translated and annotated by Edward J. Lazzerini (*Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, Vol.16, No.2 (1975), pp.245-277). These Qur'an editions were arguably the most widely distributed and used of any text issuing from the *Tercuman* press, a fact which may have galled Gaspirali and speaks to one of the enduring critiques of his reforming movement: that it only affected a small fraction of Russian Muslims at any time, its effect inflated by Gaspirali's accounts of the intellectual stagnation of Islam in Russia and his own efforts to improve the lot of his fellow Muslims. He clearly recognised the enduring appeal of a well-produced Qur'an and its commercial implications, and his Bakhchisaray Qur'an arguably represents a subversion or usurpation of the established place of Kazan Qur'an editions among Russian Muslims. Five copies only located: Fondation du Roi Abdul-Aziz (Casablanca), Holy Spirit University of Kaslik, Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt, National Library of Israel, and the University of Utah.



4. [Qur'an.] **Kalam qadim (The eternal word.)** [*Bakhchisaray, printed at the Tercuman Press with permission, given 20 October 1898, of the Ministry of Printing, Saint Petersburg, 1316 AH (1898 CE).*]

12mo (10.5 x 7.5 cm), lithographed Arabic text, 15 lines of black *naskh* per page; pp.[1-2, supplied in crude modern facsimile], (3)-522; text within double-ruled frames, *sura* headings in elaborate cartouches, with verse markers and minimalist marginal *juz'* markers; p.3 with 7 lines within elaborate floreated frames, *sura* and verse counts in cartouches at top and bottom. Bound in unsympathetic modern leather, incorporating original upper board and retaining original headbands, with modern plastic slipcase. Text defective, lacks first leaf, supplied in

crude modern facsimile. A few pages with heavy finger-soiling, some marginal stains, and a handful of short marginal tears, text unaffected. A usable copy.

£250

[images](#)

Another copy, whose condition suggests that the Bakhchisaray Qur'an editions continued to be read and used throughout the 20th century.



Lahore bookseller's catalogue of lithographed calligraphy, cards, & calendars

5. [Stationery.] **[Catalogue of "Tughras (Qitas)", Eid cards, and calendars.]**
Lahore, Hafiz Qamar-ud-Din & Sons, Booksellers, [1931].

Octavo pamphlet (18.5 x 12.5 cm), lithographed English and Urdu text, printed in blue, black, brown, red, green, and purple; pp.3-30 [defective, lacking pp.1-2 and 31-32, which likely doubled as the wrappers]; with photo-lithographic illustrations throughout, printed in single colours. Lacking wrappers, remaining first and last leaves (pp.3-4, 29-30) detached but present, paper toned. Fragile: preserved in a modern folding card envelope.

£500

[images](#)

Rare Lahore trade catalogue of Hafiz Qamar-ud-Din & Sons: witness to the scope of an Indian bookseller's operations in the '20s and '30s. The first twenty pages are devoted to "Tughras (Qitas)", chromolithographic religious posters of Arabic calligraphy, many with interlinear Urdu translations; pp.21-23 to a "Hijazi Calendar for 1931" (30 x 20 inches), "Very Attractive, gold varnished printed in ten fine colours with Photos of Macca and Madina with the tin Plates"; pp.24-28, greeting cards for Eid, many pictorial; and pp.29-30 to thirty-two new "Tughras", "quite new designs being Sketched and prepared by a Competent artist... proof of their specialty."

Hafiz Qamar-ud-Din & Sons were one of the foremost publishers of Eid cards, an ephemeral parallel to the European postcard boom, in the early decades of the 20th century. Many of the cards, as this catalogue makes clear, were printed in Germany to Indian designs, with Urdu captions and scenes of sites from the Ka'aba to the Taj Mahal. Most have elaborate pictorial frames fusing motifs from east and west, with crescent moons and shaking hands sharing the same sheet. Wholesale rates are advertised for orders ranging from the dozen to the thousand, while individual prices are listed throughout.

The dwindling production of Eid cards and the ascent of digital greetings has paralleled the development of several private South Asian collections of Eid cards, like those of Omar Khan, Reena Mohan, Priya Paul, and Yousuf Saeed, whose essay "Eid Mubarak: Cross-cultural Image Exchange in Muslim South Asia" discusses Eid cards and other ephemeral print in an Indian context. The essay may be found [here](#), hosted as

part of Tasveer Ghar, a digital archive of popular South Asian culture. No such systematic collecting interest has yet arisen in the calligraphic “Tughras” which constitute the bulk of this catalogue. The stock of Hafiz Qamar-ud-Din & Sons is rare enough, in that I have located no institutional examples of their posters or Eid cards, but this catalogue, defective though it is, is rarer still, with text that outlines the pricing, production, and advertising which drove a vibrant trade, and detailed illustrations which document a popular Muslim print culture in India at its height. No other copies of this or any other catalogue issued by Hafiz Qamar-ud-Din & Sons traced.



Unrecorded tri-lingual Hong Kong edition of *Surat Ya-Sin* from the Qur'an

6. Muhammad Yaqub bin Ibrahim Ma Tat Ng, *Imam, compiler*. **YA-SIN, a chapter in The Holy Quran compiled by Imam Ma Tat Ng (English & Chinese edition) with the compliments of the Mission of Hong Kong Muslims.** *Hong Kong, printed by the Hong Kong Muslim Press, 1385 AH (1965 CE).*

Octavo pamphlet (18.5 x 12.5 cm), printed English, Chinese, Arabic, and romanized Arabic text; pp.(i), 1-26, (1, blank). Original printed coral wrappers, with Arabic title embossed in gold. Spine discreetly conserved, wrappers lightly worn, with a handful of pin-prick worm holes, no loss of text. Preserved in modern folding card envelope. Rather attractive despite wear.
£1,200

[*images*](#)

An unrecorded 1965 Chinese and English translation of a *sura* from the Qur'an, compiled by a Hong Kong imam. This pamphlet was clearly intended for distribution amongst Hong Kong's small Muslim population, which had increased rapidly after World War II, with immigrants from South East Asia, mainland China, and South Asia forming the core of an extremely diverse but minuscule portion of Hong Kong's religious life.

The text is arranged with Arabic in the top half of each page, original script above and romanised below, and the page's lower half for English on the left and Chinese on the right. English numbers are used to collate verses across all four texts; the use of romanised Arabic to provide a phonetic reading suggests English was, unsurprisingly given the colonial context, the most reliably shared language of Ma Tat Ng's readers.

The English translation was compiled from Muhammad Ali's English and Arabic edition of the Qur'an, first published in 1917 by the Islamic Review Office, Woking. The translator was a prominent Ahmadi scholar based in Lahore. For context, the first full Chinese edition of the Qur'an translated from the Arabic was only published in 1932 (Beijing). Hong Kong's Muslim printing appears almost entirely undocumented though the Islamic Union of Hong Kong's library is named for Imam Ma Tat Ng, which perhaps illustrates the extent of his influence on a nascent Hong Kong Muslim community.

The Arabic text is written in a thick *naskh*, reminiscent of the scripts in lithographed Bombay Qur'an editions, which played a major role in the international Muslim trade in printed Qur'an editions and continued to do so well into the 20th century. It is extremely easy to imagine that such Bombay Qur'ans were first brought to Hong Kong at the turn of the century by South Asian migrants and that a generation later they shaped the calligraphic traditions of the local Muslim community. No other copies traced. [The British Library holds the colonial deposit for Hong Kong, which may contain a copy, but the relevant section is uncatalogued.] The *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Vol. 4, 1964, p.143) records presentation of a 1962 tri-lingual "Prayer Ceremony," edited by Imam Ma Tat Ng, from L.A. Khan, but this title does not appear in the catalogue of books from the Society now on deposit at the Central Library of Hong Kong.

