

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

List VII

*a Mughal Gulistan copied on blue paper
the first miniature book printed in India
a manuscript Qur'an from Somalia
constitution for independent India
& a 1969 artist's book
designed & illustrated
by Saloua Raouda Choucair
inscribed to Ghassan Kanafani*

2021



*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.*



An exquisite Mughal *Gulistan*
copied at Burhanpur
on blue paper flecked with gold

1. Sa'di, Musharraf al-Din Muslih. گلستان **(The Rose Garden)**. *Burhanpur, copied by Nasr al-Din Husseini al-Qadiri walad Mir Abu [sic] al-Hassan, 14 Muharram 1104 AH (25 September 1692).*

12mo (14.5 x 8 cm), Persian manuscript on laid paper, the majority blue-dyed and gold-flecked, the remainder cream-coloured, with 15 lines of black *nasta'liq* per page; ff.i, 118, with important words written in red, text within triple frames of red, gold, and white or blue, with catchwords on lower margin and running chapter headings on the top margin. Rebound in 18th-century Indian morocco, gilt, endpapers partially renewed. All edges painted blue. With 19th-century electric-blue velvet bag, rather rubbed. Modern red cloth box. Leather varnished and highly polished. Short split at head of spine, some small areas of loss from the gilt-stamped decorations of the flap and upper board. Front free endpaper tipped-in. There is a large, early damp stain throughout the text block, a small hole touching one line in the first few folios, and a short tear to the upper margin of f.104, touching three lines, without any loss. There is a near-contemporary Persian purchase note and seal impression, undated, on f.1r, though I have been unable to trace the seal's owner. Bookplate and loosely inserted descriptive note of George Godfrey Pearse, Major, Royal Artillery, the note dated July, 1867 at Kamptee.

SOLD

[*images*](#)

A delightfully pocket-sized Mughal copy of the *Gulistan*, perhaps the most influential work of Persian prose, a series of improving stories mixed with verse, completed in 1258 by Sa'di (1210-1291), whose life is largely known through his own works. Produced in the waning years of Aurangzeb's reign, this manuscript speaks to the enduring importance of Indian patronage to Persian literature throughout the 17th century, with Persian literature and emigres alike garlanding the Mughal court.

George Godfrey Pearse (1827-1905) spent his career in the Royal Artillery, finding time, while stationed at Kamptee, to excavate an Iron Age site nearby and present his finds to the British Museum in 1868. His personal papers are divided between the British Library, Royal Artillery Museum, and Trinity College, Cambridge.

The *Gulistan* is among the most copied texts of Persian literature but this is a pleasing example of a Mughal manuscript copy. For Pearse's excavations, see: 'On the Excavation of a large raised Stone Circle or Barrow near the Village of Wurreegaon, one mile from the Military Station of Kamptee, Central Provinces of India', *Journal of the Ethnological Society of London* (vol.1, 1869), pp. 207-17.



The first miniature book printed in India

2. [Miniature book.] **Moral Precepts: translated from the English into Hindoostany verse.** Cawnpore, printed by the Asiatic Lithographic Company's Press, published under the patronage of His Majesty the King of Oude [sic], 1834.

24mo (4.8 x 3.5 cm), lithographed Urdu text, six lines of *nasta'liq* within double-ruled frames per page; ff.71, including Urdu and English title-pages and a two-page English printer's preface. Bound in contemporary gilt-ruled tan morocco, with pastedowns of blue paper. Lightly worn, slight loss from base of spine. All edges gilt. Margins closely trimmed when bound, removing original lithographed pagination. Preserved in modern cloth box.

SOLD

Extremely rare: the first miniature book printed in India, part of the extraordinary publishing programme of the Nawabs of Oudh, Ghazi-ud-Din Haidar (r.1814-27) and Nasir-ud-Din Haidar (r.1827-37), his ill-fated son, whose royal presses and patronage produced a dazzling body of literary, lexicographical, didactic, and scientific works, all in the span of a few decades, even establishing one of the earliest indigenous lithographic presses in India.

The text is a collection of moral tales and aphorisms from English sources rendered into Urdu verse, entitled *Khulasa al-nasa'ih (The Choicest Counsel)*, one of at least four such collections printed between 1833 and 1836 for use at the school established by Nasir-ud-Din Haidar at Lucknow. The present miniature book is the only Cawnpore imprint of the four, with all of the others lithographed by the Nawab's own press at Lucknow. The school was intended for children of all faiths: these collections include an 1833 edition in two volumes with parallel English and Urdu texts, an 1835 parallel Urdu and Persian edition, and another edition in Urdu only, printed in 1836. The others were clearly intended as moral textbooks: the present book's size is more suggestive of an amuletic manuscript than a usable textbook. All are unsurprisingly rare.

The Urdu title-page gives both Gregorian and Hijri dates, and identifies the printer as the Cawnpore office of the Asiatic Lithographic Company Press, information omitted from the subsequent English title. The Calcutta-founded Asiatic Lithographic Company was the most successful early lithographic press in India, and had established a subsidiary at Cawnpore in 1830, managed by Henry Archer. Within the year Archer was poached by Nasir-ud-Din Haidar to establish the Nawab's own lithographic press at Lucknow.

There is no preface in the Nawab's name but there is a curious two-page English note by the printer, signed A[siati]c L[ithographi]c Press, Cawnpore. It begs the reader's indulgence and states that "this little volume... is believed to be the first of the kind which has appeared in any of the native languages, and should it lead to the preparation of others more worthy of perusal having in view the moral improvement of the people its object will be obtained." This was not, even in 1834, a unique example of printed moralising text in Urdu: the printer clearly recognised the technical accomplishment of producing India's first printed miniature book, even if requisite false modesty required the suggestion that it was only intended to pave the way for superior improving works.

This book is an "exceptional rarity", in the words of Louis Bondy, poised at the intersection of miniature books in print and manuscript, princely patronage, and the first flowering of lithographic printing in South Asia, all in the same year that the East India Company's Board of Control first considered deposing the Nawab and annexing his kingdom, foreshadowing the successive catastrophes of annexation in 1856 and rebellion against British rule in 1857, which ended with the Nawabs exiled, their libraries looted, and their palaces pillaged.

British Library (ORB 30/859), Cambridge, Edinburgh, and the State Library of New South Wales. The copy listed as no.65 in Blackwell's 2016 catalogue (B184) is now in a private collection. Another copy was sold at Toovey's as part of lot 3137 on 21 April 2015. I have traced no other examples on the market. Bondy, Louis, *Miniature Books: Their History from the Beginnings to the Present Day* (1981), p.145. I am grateful for the generosity of Graham Shaw in supplying information from his own research.



Ottoman *belles-lettres* in contemporary wrappers

3. Yemli hazade, Mustafa Kamil al-Elbistani. المنظومة حاوية لاصول قوائد سبعة فنون على الأجمال
(Principles of the rules for the seven most beautiful arts set into verse).
[Istanbul], [no printer], 1275 AH (1858/59 CE).

8vo (21.5 x 15 cm), lithographed Arabic text, 28 lines of *naskh* per page, printed within triple-ruled frames; pp.(1)-24, with one lithographed headpiece, occasional printed marginal notes. Contemporary decorated paper wrappers. Wrappers worn at edges, decorated surface rubbed, with slight loss; one faint marginal stain to text.

£650

[images](#)

The seven arts of a classical Ottoman education, glossed in twenty-four pages of didactically rhymed Arabic verse by Mustafa Kamil al-Elbistani Yemli hazade, *qadi*, poet, and scholar. Among the arts versified are logic, prosody, and rhetoric - this work draws on a longstanding tendency to set educational material into verse, creating glosses whose consumption required a comprehensive grasp of the foundational grammatical and literary texts of a *madrassa* education.

Mustafa Kamil al-Elbistani Yemli hazade was born in Elbistan, in southeastern Turkey, as his name suggests. Beyond his poetry, he wrote tracts and commentaries on logic and the religious sciences, as well as a number of brief works like the present one. He died in 1877 at Kayseri.

The decorated paper appears to be Ottoman rather than imported. The blue ground has been painted not dyed, and the motif of a crescent containing two small crosses, repeated in lines hand-stamped in red and black. There is relatively little documentation of local decorated papers in 19th-century Ottoman printed books - rather more attention has so far been paid to the use and circulation of decorated papers from western Europe.

No other copy located.



How to pray and write talismanic texts to best effect

4. al-Sharji [al-Zabidi al-Hanafi] al-Yemeni, Shihab al-Din Ahmad [b. Ahmad] bin ‘Abd al-Latif. *كُتَابُ الصَّلَاتِ وَالْعَوَائِدِ فِي مَجْرِبَاتِ الْفَوَائِدِ* (**Book of Prayers & Recitations with Proven Benefits.**) [Bombay], [no printer], Ramadan 1282 AH (January/February 1866 CE).

First edition. Octavo (19.6 x 13 cm), lithographed Arabic text, 21 lines of *naskh* with catchwords per page within double-ruled lines; pp.(1)-248, with a lithographed headpiece on p.2 and marginal section headings throughout. Numerous diagrams to text. Printed on wove paper. Bound in modern brown cloth. Contents a little soiled, one small abrasion on the last page, text unaffected. Later inscriptions in Arabic on first and last blank leaves.

£750

[images](#)

Rare: first edition of this 15th-century Arabic manual of effective prayers and guide to writing talismans with text, letters, numbers, and symbols. Shihab al-Din Ahmad al-Sharji (d.1488) was a Yemeni scholar, otherwise best known for his biographical dictionary of famous Yemenis. This book contains one hundred different sections, with the marginal headings indicating the purpose of each section and sub-section. One prayer and talisman may best ward off a devil while another protects a pregnant woman - others are intended for specific body parts or ailments. Often one text will be followed by several further options within the same section. Sometimes the marginal headings indicate that a text and method are particularly excellent and powerful. The power of words is paramount, with these prayers and talismans centered on the Qur’an and the Prophet.

The printer's colophon specifies month and year of publication but gives neither the printer's name nor location. It states that printing was carried out under the supervision of Sheikh Ibrahim al-Zarwi al-Khalili and Sheikh Muhammad Hussein al-Abriri (?). The formats of colophon and title-page are consistent with a small group of 19th-century lithographed Arabic alchemical texts in a private collection whose colophons state that they were printed in Bombay. The similarity of their small, triangular title-pages is particularly striking.

Bombay by the 1860s had become an enormously important city in the production of Arabic books, a veritable linchpin in the Arabic book trade, shipping printed Qur'an and more, eastwards and westwards. A text like this, popular and practical, would make abundant commercial sense. That it inverts the title under which al-Sharji's manual circulated in manuscript and later printed editions suggests perhaps a production with an eye on speedy delivery to market more than scholastic precision. That Brockelmann records multiple 19th-century editions suggests the publishers were astute in their choice of text.

GAL SI 254. Brockelmann records a lithographed edition of the same year, but I have not located any institutional copies.



Unrecorded Ottoman photography manual

5. "Ragip", *compiler*. عملی فوطوغافیا رساله سی (Treatise on practical photography). Istanbul, Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1307 AH (1889/90 CE).

12mo (16.8 x 13 cm), typographic Ottoman Turkish and French text; pp.[i, blank], [ii, contents], [i, blank], (1)-40. Original wrappers, printed in black and red, stapled. Staples rusted but wrappers holding firm. Spine lightly faded. Small 20th-century bookseller's marks in ballpoint on upper wrapper and p.40. Contemporary presentation inscription to Jafar Bey Efendi.

SOLD

Extremely rare: a concise manual on photography, clearly compiled by a practicing photographer with access to current technical information, published at a point where photography in Istanbul was in transition. If not exactly intended for a mass-market audience, the present manual was clearly intended for a wider audience than preceding Ottoman photographic manuals.

A brief preface glosses the history of photography from Daguerre to 1889 and defends the practice of photography as an essential part of modern life. The following sections provide a step-by-step manual of photography, with technical terms and section headings provided in French and Turkish. A reference to "revelateur Tondeur" indicates a commercial developing agent sold by J. B. Tondeur, Parisian supplier of photographic

equipment and supplies. The presumed audience would be those wealthy enough to order their supplies from overseas.

Two manuals only precede the present work: an 1866 treatise, written in Ottoman Turkish but printed in Armenian characters, and an 1872 treatise, issued by the press of the *Ceride-i Askeriyye*, official newspaper of the army. Until the late 19th century, photography in Istanbul was dominated by commercial studios, operated either by religious minorities from within the empire or foreigners. While photography was clearly appreciated and employed by Ottoman subjects and sultans alike prior to the 1890s, this is the first of a flurry of Ottoman Turkish photography manuals produced between 1889 and 1900. Of the eleven others identified to date, the four earliest were all issued by the same publisher as the present work, Mahmud Bey Matbaası, suggesting that there was a ready well-heeled Ottoman readership for practical photography manuals prepared by practitioners.

No other copy located.



Ottoman devotional ephemera: prayers for Ramadan

6. [Anonymous.] شرحیله برابر رمضان دعاسی (**Ramadan prayers with commentary**).
[Istanbul], [no printer], for sale by Ibrahim Efendi, 1307 AH (1889/90 CE).

12mo (16 x 12 cm), lithographed Arabic and Ottoman Turkish text in *naskh*; pp.[i, title, within elaborate lithographed frame], [14, erratically paginated], [1, blank]. Outermost bifolium doubling as wrapper, most likely as issued. Stab-sewn. Resewn in the 20th century.

SOLD

[images](#)

A charming Ramadan booklet, of a type cheaply printed in Istanbul for popular devotions from the late 19th century well into the 20th. An apparent rarity only, simply because neither institutions nor book-collectors have paid much attention to these booklets to date. A fairly comprehensive collection of such pamphlets could be put together with a little interest and not much more money, which is to say: this copy is embarrassingly expensive for what it is but no less interesting for that.

No other copies of this edition located.



Fars for the Shah:
described, mapped,
& its antiquities illustrated

7. Fasa'i, Mirza Hasan ibn Hasan. تاریخ فارسنامه ناصري (**History of Fars**). Tehran, *Kitabhkhana-i Fasa'i*, 1312-14 AH (1895-7 CE).

First edition. Folio (35.5 x 22 cm), lithographed Persian text, with 35 lines of *nasta'liq* within double-ruled frames per page, running titles and marginal section headings in *thuluth* within a single-ruled frame, printed marginal notes in *nasta'liq*, with catchwords; pp.(1)-347, [2], [1, blank]; (1)-339; 33 [index]; lithographed floreated frames and headpieces. With 2 lithographed maps to text (1 double-page) and illustrations: 1 double-page, 4 full-page (1 coloured), and 2 half-page. Printed on thin Russian wove paper. Bound in contemporary blind-ruled roan, doublures of pink paper, retaining original headbands. Boards rubbed and scuffed, with a short tear at foot of spine. Hinges cracked but holding. Some staining, a few lines on p.13 of the preface covered in purple ink, albeit still legible. Persian title faintly inscribed on fore-edge. Persian presentation inscription to "Major Max" on title, dated using the solar Hijri calendar, 12/4/1324 (3 July 1945 CE). Pencilled stock mark of bookseller Ronald Gooch (Ad Orientem Ltd) on front free endpaper.

SOLD

[images](#)

Important illustrated Qajar work with a double-page map of Iran's southern coast and the Persian Gulf: a traditional chronicle of the rulers of Fars from 631 to 1883 CE with a supremely detailed geography of Shiraz and the wider province, this work is "unmatched as a contemporary source of information for the social history of the province of Fars and the city of Shiraz in the 19th century", in the uncharacteristically hyperbolic assessment of *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. It was compiled by Mirza Hasan Fasa'i, a polymath physician, at the behest of Nasir al-Din Shah, after Fasa'i had already completed maps of Fars in 1872 and 1876. Fasa'i compiled his work from late 1879 until the spring of 1887, with printing completed almost a decade later.

The first part, as a compilation of regnal annals, with a marked focus on the Zand and Qajar dynasties is perhaps most interesting as a witness to 19th-century Iranian views of national history, but the second part, geography, is the true meat of this text. The prefatory material is conventional enough: climate, flora, fauna, together with sections on mapping, finding the *qibla*, and the position of Fars. But Fasa'i then presents an account of human geography which is supremely rich in detail, substantially drawn from his own observations and those of others resident in the region. The different quarters of Shiraz are listed, with more than one hundred prominent families from those quarters listed, together with their genealogies and connections, both local

and international. Shrines, schools, mosques, parks, and gardens: the built and planned heritage of the city is scrupulously described. Fasa'i provides a wider survey for Fars as a whole, albeit one drawn on similarly inclusive lines.

This final section is also extensively illustrated with a double-page map of Fars and drawings of its antiquities, including the Masjid-i Sangi (a rock-cut mosque), Persepolis, the palaces of Sarvestan and Ardeshir (mistakenly described as a Zoroastrian temple), and many sculptural reliefs. Bar the maps, these are the only illustrations, and speak to a clear Qajar fascination with the region's rich heritage.

Mirza Hasan Fasa'i (1821-1898) was born into a prominent scholarly family with branches in Shiraz, Hyderabad, and Mecca, which traced its lineage to the Prophet. His father died shortly after his birth, and his mother, from a wealthy mercantile family, not long after that. Orphaned, Fasa'i was raised by a grandmother, then an older brother, and after completing his studies in Isfahan, turned to medicine. He maintained a wide range of interests, reading, writing on varied subjects, including composing his own verse, and studied calligraphy. The present work represents the culmination of his intellectually curious life, blending traditional forms with personal knowledge. Remarkably common in institutional holdings for a 19th-century Iranian imprint although I have yet to see another copy in the book trade.



Ottoman calligraphy
manual & sample-book
bound as one

8. Izzet, Mehmed, and Hafiz Tahsin. سلس نسخ و تعليق حروفاتی مستق مجموعسى (**Thuluth, naskh, and ta'liq: collected exercises**). *Istanbul, Matba'a Osmaniyye, 1317 AH (1899/1900 CE)*. [bound with:] Izzet, Mehmed. خطوط عثمانية (**Ottoman calligraphies**). [*Istanbul*], [*no place*], [*no date*].

Two works bound as one, oblong 8vo (14.8 x 27 cm), lithographed Ottoman Turkish text, on wove paper; ff.20; 51-1 [of 52], both works printed single-sided. Bound in contemporary cloth-backed boards. Second work bound with original printed wrappers. Boards rather rubbed. Purple ink stain to lower corner of printed wrapper's upper cover. Some spotting and a few stains to text, a few inoffensive paper repairs to second work, and a handful of manuscript notations.

£1,200

[images](#)

A well-used witness to the use of lithographed calligraphic manuals in the Ottoman Empire: this contemporary *sammelband* unites an enormously popular manual of Ottoman scripts, compiled by the writing instructor Mehmed Izzet Efendi

(1841-1903), with the virtuoso set of lithographed calligraphic exercises he produced shortly before his death, assisted by his student, Hafiz Hasan Tahsin Hilmi Efendi.

First issued in 1892, Izzet's calligraphy manual demonstrates the construction of proportional script and introduces the student to the essential calligraphic scripts of the Ottoman empire, including *naskh*, *thuluth*, *diwani*, *riqa'*, *ta'liq*, and various majuscule derivatives. It includes numerous showpiece calligraphic pieces written by the author.

Curiously, it appears that whoever assembled this *sammelband* arranged for both works to be rebound so that their texts appear verso only, leaving blanks opposite the majority of the calligraphy. Perhaps these were intended for use in copying, though they remain blank and unused. The manual is bound without its printed wrappers, which makes it more or less impossible to tell which edition it might be.

Istanbul-born, Mehmed Izzet Efendi taught calligraphy from 1863, serving as a writing instructor for the rest of his career. Unusually, he appears to have received his calligraphic licenses decades after he began teaching, and thus long after he presumably learned to write in these scripts. His renown rests principally on his *riqa'* and the many calligraphic manuals and sample-books which he wrote, all reprinted repeatedly and many still in print today.



Lithographed Ottoman calligraphy manual

9. Izzet, Mehmed. خطوط عثمانية (**Ottoman calligraphies**). *Istanbul, Osmanlı Kutuphanesi, 1323 AH (1905/6 CE)*.

Oblong 8vo (15.8 x 28 cm), lithographed Ottoman Turkish text, on wove paper; ff.51 [of 52], printed single-sided. With remnants of the original printed pink wrappers, upper cover remaining, lower cover lost. Wrapper worn, stained, and torn, with small losses from lower corner. Paper browned, with several prominent stains, and a short tear to upper margin of f.51. Modern folding card case.

SOLD

[images](#)

A battered and defective example of this enormously successful calligraphy manual written by Mehmed Izzet Efendi (1841-1903).

I locate a single copy of this edition at Michigan.



Qur'an manuscript from Somalia

10. [Qur'an.] القرآن [Section from the Qur'an comprising 7:171 - 14:25]. *Algoi, [anonymous], [circa 1900 CE]*.

8vo (17 x 12 cm), Arabic manuscript on laid paper, 10 lines of thick majuscule per page, fully vocalised; ff.105, written as continuous text without any marginal division markers, *sura* headings, or verse markers. Recased in original blind-ruled morocco, endpapers renewed with decorated paper. Binding discreetly repaired, with evidence of numerous wormholes remaining and a short split to the fore-edge flap. A handful of small wormholes at beginning and end of text, with corresponding paper repairs, largely inoffensive: text entirely legible. A half-page of Arabic prayers on f.1r and two Italian inscriptions on f.105r in the same hand. The first records that this Qur'an section was copied by a holy man in the town of Algoi, dated November 1911; the second is a presentation inscription from Doctor Carlo Bottari, dated 17 August 1912.

SOLD

Extremely rare: a Qur'an section, comfortably pocket-sized, copied in a majuscule script quite distinct from the Arabic scripts used either along the Swahili coast or in West Africa, carefully but austere written by an unnamed holy man in the town of Algoi in the late 19th or early 20th-century. The text is presented as a continuous block, intended for a reader familiar enough with the Qur'an that it foregoes division markers of any kind.

The binding, although repaired, is clearly the manuscript's original, with wormholes corresponding to the condition of the text block. Even in this restored state, it is a remarkable survival. Both the leather of the binding and the imported laid paper suggest a production of quality, however simple the appearance of this manuscript's blind-ruled boards and stark black text.

Although the manuscript is undated and unsigned, the two lengthy Italian inscriptions at the end of the manuscript provide a number of details. This manuscript was acquired in 1911 by Dr Carlo Bottari, an Italian medical officer stationed at the residency in the port of Merca (see the 1912 *Manuale per la Somalia Italiana*), then part of colonial Italian Somaliland. A second inscription in his hand records its presentation in 1912. Bottari crucially notes that the Qur'an came from the town of Algoi and that it was copied by a local holy man, locating this manuscript's production firmly in Somalia. I have not seen another example of a Qur'an manuscript from Somalia with such detail as to its place of production.



Arabic guide to colonial legislation in French Algeria

11. al-Khodja, Muhammad bin Mustafa ibn. *مجموع على قوانين مفيدة وتنظيمات سديدة* (**Collection of Useful Laws & Relevant Regulations.**) Algiers, Fontana Press, 1320 AH / 1906 CE.

8vo (23.5 x 16 cm), typographic Arabic text, with 21 lines of *naskh* per page; pp.10 (index), [1, errata], [1, blank], (1)-248 [including two folding tables], typographic headpiece on p.2. Bound in contemporary calf-backed boards, red, spine with gilt rules and Arabic title. Boards scuffed

and tatty, hinges cracked but holding firm. Contents toned with intermittent foxing. Blindstamped address of James MacIver McLeod (1866-1944) and bookplate and inscriptions of the Foreign Office Library recording the book's bequest in 1944, with the library's stamps and shelfmark, stamped "withdrawn" on p.248.

SOLD

[images](#)

A surprisingly rare Arabic digest of French colonial legislation in Algeria, elegantly arranged by Muhammad bin Mustafa ibn al-Khodja, corrector of Arabic publications in the French administration. Complete with initial oration in rhymed verse and longer introduction in prose, this unusual work offers model documents, including several folding tables, practical examples, and a wide-ranging survey of applicable laws, arranged by subject.

The would-be student may consult the table of contents at the rear or the alphabetical subject index at the front. Topics range from currency and regulation of public markets to the telegraph and telephone. The book was clearly written for Muslim readers: the author presumes knowledge of Islam and a degree of pride in Algeria's own history prior to the French invasion and occupation.

Sir James MacIver McLeod held British consular posts at Fez, 1907-17, and Tunis, 1923-30. His interest in North Africa seems to have persisted after his retirement from diplomatic service.

I locate a single copy at King Abdulaziz Public Library, Riyadh. The Foreign Office Library appears not to have been checked closely against British institutional holdings prior to its dispersal, based on this and other books which I have handled over the years.



Illustrated Ottoman Turkish alphabet book

12. Hamid, Mustafa. رسمى الفبا (**Illustrated alphabet**). *Istanbul, Kitabhane-i Hilmi, 1339 AH (1920/1 CE)*.

8vo (22.5 x 15 cm), lithographed and typographic Ottoman Turkish text in *naskh* and *ruq'ah*; pp.(3)-82 [complete despite pagination]; extensive illustrations to text (4 full-page). Original printed wrappers with vignette of a schoolroom scene. Wrappers chipped and stained, slight loss from spine. Water stain on title and following pages, edges occasionally chipped.

SOLD

[images](#)

Early edition of this successful alphabet book compiled by Mustafa Hamid, first published in 1919, which remained in print until the Turkish script reforms of 1929. The bulk of the book comprises the alphabet, with each letter presented in initial, medial, and final forms, accompanied by common words in *naskh* and more complex examples

in *ruq'ah*, an efficient script which was perhaps the most widely used text hand in the Ottoman empire. The final quarter of the book contains sample texts and prayers.

The programme of black and white illustrations is charming and varied, with full-page illustrations ranging from stark white-on-black line drawings to cosier a schoolyard scene of children at play around their female teacher. The vignettes in the text range from charming motifs of swallows in flight, or a sequence of chicks, freshly hatched from their eggs, even a traditional pen case, nestled between two lines, to a chic Japanese gentleman in traditional dress, parasol in hand. A peacock, a train, a mosque, a woman at home, and a boy whose kite string stretches across the page to his kite: all are presented with verve.



By way of Kabul, Moscow, & Istanbul:

constitution for an India which never came to pass

13. [Sindhi, Ubaidullah.] **The Constitution of the Federated Republics of India.** [*Istanbul?*], [*no printer*], 1926 CE.

8vo (19 x 13.5 cm), typographic English and Urdu text; pp.[ii], (i)-viii, 56. Original stapled wrappers with printed title. Wrappers stained, torn at edges, and spine splitting. Text block holding but browned, with a few spots, and a handful of marginal tears.

SOLD

An extraordinary document issued by the Zelig-like Deobandi Ubaidullah Sindhi (1872-1944), here ostensibly writing in his capacity as President of the Congress chapter in Kabul, albeit from Istanbul. Sindhi outlines his proposals for a federal, secular India, complete with constitution, suggested constituent republics, foreign allies, and his own Mahabhart Sarvrajia Party, fusing Muslim and Marxist principles, supported by numerous quotations from the Urdu poetry of Altaf Hussain Hali.

The five chapters comprise “Party Program and Principles”, “Organisation”, “Fundamental Principles of Sarvrajia Republics”, “Indian Federal Sarvrajia Republican State”, and “The Sarvrajia Asiatic Federation”. The “Program” was first published in Urdu in 1924, but as the preface notes, the British Government of India banned both the Urdu edition and any translations. Sindhi’s suggestion that this English version has been sufficiently altered to evade that ban is perhaps more barbed humour than anything else.

This constitution envisages India transformed into a “leader of the coming World Revolution”, one of many independent Asian nations freed from colonial rule, grounded in an Indian revolution remade at a scale where any Indian can see their place in the work without either becoming a devotee of “Mahdi or Mahatma” or “laying down all his hopes in the victory of a Power that may be inimical to the British”.

Ubaidullah Sindhi wrote from bitter experience of the First World War and its uneasy bedfellows. In Kabul from 1915 to 1922, imprisoned at points, then on to Istanbul via Moscow, he was part of a generation of Deobandis who turned from the Ottoman call to holy war, seeing more future in the Indian independence movement. After years of exile, he returned to India in 1938, dying in 1944, before he could witness partition, which he vehemently opposed.

No other copy located.



post-Ottoman samizdat
prayers of the Nur movement
completed in manuscript

14. [Egemen, Atif.] دلائل النور **(Signs of the Light)**. [No place], *Matba'a al-Burhan al-Din Araflar [sic]*, 1949 CE.

16mo (15.5 x 11.6 cm), duplicated Arabic text, principally in *naskh*, on good quality cream wove paper; pp.27 (manuscript pagination), [1, blank], with blank spaces for important words left in text and completed in red manuscript, as intended, with the bulk of the prayers written as almond-shape medallions of varying sizes. Original printed wrappers with title and imprint, stapled, a little soiled, with a few marks.

£450

[images](#)

Early printed example of these Arabic prayers, compiled by Atif Egemen (1900-1988), part of the vast illicit textual culture associated with the 20th-century Nur movement (*Nurculuk*), the hugely influential Muslim mass-movement in Turkey. The combination of printed body text and blanks left for a copyist to supply the Prophet's name and other significant words by hand suggests that this prayer book was meant to encourage direct engagement with the text.

Founded by Said Nursi (1877-1960), perhaps the 20th-century's most influential Turkish scholar of Islam, in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire's collapse and the foundation of a secular Turkish republic, *Nurculuk* was fueled by the illicit dissemination of thousands of copies of Nursi's writings, at first solely in manuscript, and then, from about 1946, also printed from manuscript via duplicating machines.

This is an interesting example of manuscript and print technologies used in combination to simple but pleasing aesthetic effect after the ostensible 19th-century heyday of such productions. Given the brevity of text, the original copyist's use of widely varying page layouts is particularly engaging - blocks of text, almond-shaped calligraphic lozenges containing single prayers, sometimes large and single-page, sometimes smaller and set in combination across a page. There is even a brief prayer

written into the form of a heart, outlined in red manuscript. Absent the imprint given on the wrapper dating this little prayer book would be an interesting challenge.

No other copy located.



With the compiler's name obscured

15. [Egemen, Atif.] دلائل النور **(Signs of the Light)**. [No place], Nazir Akbasan Matbaasi, 1955 CE.

16mo (16 x 12 cm), duplicated Arabic text, principally in *naskh*, on good quality cream wove paper; pp.27 (manuscript pagination), [1, imprint], with blank spaces for important words left in text and completed in red and pink manuscript, as intended, paginated in blue manuscript, with the bulk of the prayers written as almond-shape medallions of varying sizes. Loose, folded into original wrappers with printed title, soiled, edges rubbed. Blank piece of paper pasted over the compiler's name on final page.

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Another example of the *samizdat* prayer books associated with *Nurculuk*, here completed in manuscript using several colours. Unusually, this copy includes the name of the prayers' compiler, Atif Egemen, albeit discreetly obscured by a small paper blank. A year later the Nur movement began licitly printing its texts in modern Turkish - one wonders if Egemen's name was included in optimistic anticipation of this shift. In any event, these Arabic-script prayers books would remain a source of tension between the Turkish government and *Nurculuk*.

No other copy located.



Unrecorded: prayers printed at Izmir

16. [Egemen, Atif.] دلائل النور **(Signs of the Light)**. Izmir, Moripek Basimevi, 1958 CE.

16mo (15 x 11.5 cm), duplicated Arabic text, principally in *naskh*, on good quality cream wove paper; ff.[14], with blank spaces for important words left in text and completed in red manuscript, as intended, with the bulk of the prayers written as almond-shape medallions of varying sizes. Original stab-sewn wrappers with title, lightly soiled, with some spotting.

£450

[images](#)

A late example of these prayers associated with the Nur movement (*Nurculuk*), which circulated illicitly in print and manuscript over decades. This edition was printed two years after the Nur movement began licit printing of its texts in modern Turkish,

interestingly, but suggests continued tensions between the movement and the Turkish state over Arabic script books.

These three editions were all printed after the same manuscript original, albeit with small alterations between each edition, such as a heart shape outlined in manuscript or print. It seems likely that successive editions were duplicated from earlier printed examples, with occasional manuscript alterations prior to duplication.

Unusually for these illicit *Nurculuk* prayer books, this 1958 edition carries a real imprint and provides a place of printing. The 17 July 1959 issue of *Milliyet* carried a brief report from Izmir that “Mor Ipek” had been prosecuted for publishing another prayer book in Arabic script - it seems likely that this edition was suppressed. No other copy located.



Designed & illustrated by Saloua Raouda Choucair,
its text a poem by Mahmoud Darwish,
inscribed by the editor to Ghassan Kanafani

17. Darwish, Mahmoud. *جندي يحلم بالزنايق البيضاء*. [Beirut?], no printer, 1969.

Square 24mo (15 x 15 cm), Arabic and English text, on brown paper, text overprinted in black on white rectangles; pp.[ii], 1-23 (Arabic text, in *naskh*, headings in *ruq'ah*), [2, illustrations], 41-1 (English text), [ii], with full-page illustrations printed in white throughout the text. In original printed wrappers with stylised Arabic and English titles. Some wear to spine, one pencil mark on lower wrapper. A handful of pencil corrections to the English translations. Undated presentation inscription to Ghassan Kanafani, signed ‘Abd al-Rahman Yaghi.

SOLD

“A masterpiece in a collection of masterpieces” to borrow the bold words of ‘Abd al-Rahman Yaghi’s foreword: this 1969 artist’s book with powerful provenance, inscribed to Ghassan Kanafani, marries the poetry of Palestine’s preeminent poet, Mahmoud Darwish, with the eye-catching lettering, book design, and poignant illustration of the remarkable Lebanese modernist, Saloua Raouda Choucair.

Darwish’s poem, first published in his 1967 collection, *At the End of the Night* (آخر الليل), is presented with two English translations, the first collaborative work by three academics at the University of Jordan, ‘Abd al-Rahman Yaghi, Harry Martens, and ‘Abd al-Rahman Bushnaq, while the second is the work of Mrs Frances Fuller, an American missionary who spent most of her life in Amman and Beirut.

The Soldier who Dreamt of White Lilies is a dialogue between Darwish and an Israeli soldier, meditating on the scents and tastes of a homeland, violence, and dreams of peace. In later life the poet suggested that the Israeli soldier was based on an actual

man whom he had met through the Communist Party in Israel. Choucair and Darwish both worked for the information department of the PLO in Beirut, with the former designing covers for PLO publications, which perhaps explains how this unusual artist's book was conceived.

This is an artist's book on an intimate scale, with its square format reminiscent, however inadvertently, of the small Qur'an manuscripts of Muslim Spain and North Africa. The single illustration by Saloua Raouda Choucair, printed in repeat, depicts a dove, olive branch in beak, above a field of lilies. The simple white lines of these illustrations, printed with varied weight throughout the book are a subtle contrast to the stark black-on-white text, which all but pops from each facing page. The hyper-stylised Arabic cover, with text mixing geometric abstraction and thick curves, sets Choucair's interest in indigenous traditions of abstraction against the more rigid capitals of the English cover.

Saloua Raouda Choucair (1916-2017) was born into a prosperous Druze family in Lebanon, and raised by her mother after her father's premature death. Her 1947 exhibition of works at the Arab Cultural Gallery was the first of modern abstract art in the Arab world. She went on to work prolifically in sculpture and painting, with a particular interest in modular calligraphic forms, though critical recognition was slow in coming. Suggestions that her work was derivative of Western abstract art understandably infuriated her but a 2013 Tate Modern retrospective at last brought the artist critical recognition beyond the Arab world. This artist's book shows clearly how intimately her artistic practice was involved with the literature and political struggles of her generation.

Ghassan Kanafani (1936-72), writer and revolutionary, to whom this copy was inscribed, was perhaps the foremost Palestinian novelist of his generation. In the brief course of his life his politics moved from pan-Arabism to Marxism and he became an increasingly visible spokesman for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). He was killed with his niece by a Mossad-orchestrated car-bomb in Beirut on 6 July 1972. The assassination was widely seen as a reprisal for the aftermath of the attack on Lod Airport in May that same year, which had been organised by the PFLP and carried out by members of the Japanese Red Army trained in Lebanon. Mahmoud Darwish's poem, *The Palestinian Wedding*, would lend its title to a bilingual volume of Palestinian resistance poetry published in Kanafani's honour (Three Continents Press, 1982).

I locate 6 copies only: University of Alberta, Binghamton, British Library, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, University of Iowa, and McGill.

