

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

List II
*from al-Farabi
to the Arabic Molière*

2019



Persian grammar written
for the author's children

1. Jawnpuri, Rawshan 'Ali Ansari; Muhammad Askari Fitrat, *editor*. **Quwaidi-Farsee, or Rules on Persian Grammar**. *Calcutta, printed for the Calcutta School-Book Society, by the editor Mirza Mohummud Uscuree, at the Press of Hidayut' Ooollah and Co., 1819.*

8vo (19.8 x 14.6 cm); pp.[iv], (1)-63, [1, blank], Persian text printed in *nasta'liq*, title printed in English and Persian. Bound in original printed blue wrappers, chipped and stained, but intact. Contents clean, bar marginal ink marks on final page. Upper wrapper with contemporary inscription from W. Roper Esq. to Wm. Jenks., modern ownership inscription on title, dated 1988. One of 2000 copies printed.

£2,200

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First edition of a concise Persian grammar, edited and printed for the groundbreaking Calcutta School Book Society: a rare, early example of such a work printed for a non-European audience. Rawshan 'Ali Ansari Jawnpuri (d. 1810) was a professor at the College of Fort William and in service to the Nawabs of Bengal at Murshidabad, where he is buried. He composed this grammar, with introduction, eleven brief chapters, and conclusion for the use of his son, Afdal 'Ali, and his other children. The text circulated in manuscript from at least 1769: a copy dated 1781 was sent back to England in 1790, and is now among Eton College's Pote manuscripts.

The Calcutta School Book Society was established in 1817 for the "preparation, publication and cheap or gratuitous supply, of works useful in schools and seminaries of learning", principally in English, Bengali, Hindi, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. The production of religious texts, though not ethical treatises, was expressly prohibited.

The Society's managing committee was divided equally between European and Indian members, including eminent Hindu and Muslim scholars. A member's voting rights were accorded to an individual subscribing any sum, however small, towards the society each year. Its editions were correspondingly diverse, printed in pamphlet format and distributed cheaply in wrappers, though copies in such original condition are rarities.

Jawnpuri's grammar was a natural fit with the Society's aims: the scarcity of surviving copies suggests they saw immediate use by their intended audience of Indian schoolchildren. A second edition was printed in 1828, with at least nine other editions printed by 1886, when Naval Kishore published an edition of this grammar.

British Library (14820.b.1(2)), Cambridge, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Munich, and Stuttgart only.



“My jaded camel bellows with fatigue...”

2. Tughra’i, al-Husayn ibn Ali. *Şerh-i lamiyet ül-acem (A commentary on the rhyming verses of the non-Arabs beginning with L)*. [Istanbul], Matbaa-yi Amire, Awa’il Rajab 1271 AH (March 1855 CE).

8vo (20.5 x 15 cm); pp.[1, blank], (2)-114; 25 lines of printed Arabic and Ottoman Turkish text per page, printed double frames and catchwords; p.2 with a typographic headpiece. Bound in contemporary marbled paper boards, cloth-backed. Small damp stain on lower board, edges worn, slight loss at top and bottom of spine. Contents clean bar some light toning. Ottoman censor’s seal impression on p.1; cancelled stamps of l’Université de France on pp.2 and 114. £1,000

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First publication in the Muslim world of the 59-couplet Arabic *Lamiyya al-’ajam (Rhyming verses of the non-Arabs beginning with L)*, together with an anonymous Ottoman Turkish commentary and gloss.

The *Lamiyya* was composed at Baghdad between 1111 and 1112 CE by al-Husayn ibn Ali Tughra’i (d. 1121 CE), an Arab poet and Seljuk courtier, whose name was a play on his perceived proximity to the royal seal (*tughra*). His poem’s title and content reference a preeminent *jahili* poem by al-Shanfara, *Lamiyya al-’Arab (Rhyming verses of the Arabs beginning with L)*, perhaps the foremost example of classical *su’luk* poetry, the laments of those cast out by their tribes.

The poem mixes sententious commonplaces with classical motifs, but its high style proved enduring popular, attracting numerous Arabic commentators. It was the foremost example of Arabic literature published by Jacob Golius in his groundbreaking collection of 1629. Over the subsequent two centuries numerous European editions and translations were published.

Commentaries and copies circulated widely in the Muslim world in manuscript but this edition was the first appearance of the *Lamiyya* in print outside of Europe. The text is presented couplet by couplet. Each couplet is printed centred within brackets. The bracketed couplet is then parsed in Ottoman Turkish, word by word, concluding with a note on the stanza’s meaning. The commentary is not designed for a litterateur, but a Turkish-speaker with a desire to improve the elegance of their Arabic.

Tughra’i composed his poem as a versifier’s tour-de-force; as an introduction to the versatility and variety of Arabic its appeal is easy to understand, both for Ottoman and European readers. J. N. Mattock’s rather brutal translation, published in the *Journal of Arabic Literature* (1982, Vol.13, pp.53-57), illustrates both this appeal and

the way in which the text, even to a contemporary Baghdad reader, must have appeared almost parodically exotic. Mattock's rendition of couplet 7 makes this plain:

“My jaded camel bellows with fatigue; my pack animals complain
at their suffering, and my companions never cease to blame me.”

Outside of the Middle East, only a single defective copy at Princeton.



First Arabic Molière: extraordinary translations into colloquial Egyptian verse

3. Molière; M[uhammad] ‘U[thman] J[alal], translator. *Al-arba’ riwayat min nakhb al-titrayat (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 x 13 cm); pp.(1)-240; Arabic text printed in *naskh*. Bound in contemporary pebbled cloth, probably European, crudely rebacked by a later owner, retaining headbands, traces of original pink wrappers in gutters of title and final page. Boards worn and rubbed. Paper toned, title with heavy stain, lower margins of pp.1-14 torn, with partial loss of bottom three lines, edges spotted, a little staining, and occasional chipping. Gutters reinforced at beginning and end. An academic's much-used copy, with the erroneous note of an early owner attributing this collection to the “Egyptian Molière,” Yaqub Sannu’ (1839-1912), Jewish-Egyptian journalist, writer, and theatrical impresario.

£1,400

[click for 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 criticism but remains among the earliest uses of such a form to serious literary effect in Arabic, a fascinating offshoot of 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 novel, *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 Hijri month and year, which are unambiguous.

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



inscribed by an eminent Parsi scholar
to a French-Jewish orientalist

4. Kanga, Kavasji Edalji, *Headmaster, Moolla Feeroz Madressa. A practical grammar of the Avesta language, compared with Sanskrit, with a chapter on syntax and a chapter on the Gâthâ dialect.* Bombay, printed at the Education Society’s Press, Byculla, 1891.

8vo (22 x 15 cm); pp. xii, 312; printed English and Avestan text. Bound in contemporary blue cloth, gilt and blind-stamped, by the Education Society’s Press, with their binder’s ticket.

Binding badly stained and marked, upper edge foxed. Contents clean, surprisingly, bar a slight damp stain to lower margin of initial and final leaves. Contemporary presentation inscription from K. R. Kama (Kharshedji Rustomji Cama) to J. Halevy (Joseph Halévy).

SOLD

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The first grammar of Avestan, an Old Iranian language known only from the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism, published for the use of the Parsi community, the culmination of fifty years of educational reform spearheaded by the Parsi scholars of Bombay, this copy inscribed to the leading French orientalist Joseph Halévy (1827-1917) by Kharshedji Rustomji Cama (1831-1909), a widely travelled and educated scholar whose private tuition in Pahlavi and Avestan produced a generation of students who reshaped their community.

Avestan, an Old Iranian language known only from the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism, attracted increasing western interest in the latter half of the 19th century, as the author notes in his introduction, though Parsi students wanted for a practical grammar of their own. Haug had published an outline grammar in 1862, which was followed by the grammars of Justi (1864), Spiegel (1867), de Harlez (1878), and Geiger (1879). Jackson published his grammar a year later in 1892.

This grammar was written in Gujarati and translated into English at the suggestion of Kanga's friends. The first nine chapters cover the alphabet, nominal bases, suffixes, nouns and their declension, gender, adjectives, including comparatives and superlatives, numerals, pronouns and pronominal adjectives, and verbs, conjugations, tenses, and indeclinables. The tenth chapter treats the Gâthâ dialect. This grammar remains in current use; a reprint was issued in 2005 by the Trustees of the Parsi Punchayet Funds & Properties.

The author was a student of K. R. Cama and ran the school established in 1854 to honour Firuz Mulla bin Kawoos (1758-1830), renowned Parsi scholar and manuscript collector, whose library was left to the Parsis of Bombay.



al-Farabi's pioneering masterpiece on musical theory & practice

5. al-Farabi, Abu Nasr Muhammad bin Muhammad ibn Tarkhan ibn Awzalagh.

Kitab al-musiqi al-kabir (The Great Book of Music). [*Istanbul*], copied by 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Qarabi, 28 Dhu' al-Qa'da 1319 AH (9 March 1902 CE).

4to (27 x 20 cm), Arabic manuscript on lightly polished wove paper; 13 lines of black *naskh* per page (text area 15 x 11 cm) with catchwords and erratic contemporary pagination, copied in a professional scribal hand, with interpolated sections copied in a second, rougher hand by Rauf Yekta Bey; pp. [iv], [1]-144, 145-152 [second hand], 145-180, [2, 2nd], 181-212, 213-220 [2nd], 213-260, 261-272 [2nd], 261-328 [erratic pagination, partially corrected], 329-332 [2nd], 391-394 [misbound], 325-386, 387-390 [2nd], 395-471, [1, index], [iv]; with diagrams, including illustrations of musical instruments, at pp. 64, 68, 77, 123, 154-6, 170-1, 178, 236, 293-6, 298, 303, 305, and 322. Numerous marginal annotations, corrections, and diagrams in pen and pencil by Ra'uf Yekta Bey, with his collation notes in the margins, some further notes in a later hand. Closed marginal tear at pp. 327-8, a few early marginal paper repairs, text intermittently toned. Bound in contemporary roan-backed red-cloth boards, manuscript paper label on upper board, spine lightly worn. Title and author supplied on initial blank by a later hand, author and erroneous title supplied on p. 1 together with two small notes identifying the source manuscripts by the copyist 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Qarabi, erroneous title cancelled.

SOLD

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Rare and important: one of five complete copies of al-Farabi's *Kitab al-musiqi al-kabir*, which championed empirical knowledge over pure theory, a monumental survey of music in theory and practice, composed in the tenth century for Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn al-Qasim al-Karkhi, vizier to the Caliph al-Radi, to sate the vizier's curiosity about Greek musicology.

The vizier's selection of Abu Nasr Muhammad al-Farabi was fortunate, for the man was "a theorist of genius, whose work has yet to be superseded," in the words of George Sawa. Most importantly, he was a musician. His early life is a cipher but by his death in 950 al-Farabi had spent his adult life in study, teaching, and writing at Baghdad, Aleppo, and Damascus, and earned the sobriquet of "the second master" after Aristotle. More than one hundred and fifty works are attributed to al-Farabi, on alchemy, astronomy, ethics, grammar, logic, mathematics, metaphysics, music, philosophy, and politics. Only four of his eight works on music survive. Ironically, it was al-Farabi's short treatise, *Ihsa' al-'ulum (Classification of the sciences)*, a short outline of the *Kitab al-musiqi al-kabir*, which had profound influence on medieval European music theory. Translated into Latin as *De scientiis* by Gerard of Cremona in the 12th century, it became a foundation text for medieval scholars of music theory.

Al-Farabi only acceded to the vizier's request after he found that extant works in Arabic were inadequate. The Greek texts seemed to have suffered in translation or from poor selections, while those of al-Kindi (d. 870 CE) were written by a brilliant philosopher with no practical musical knowledge or sympathy, and those of Ishaq al-Mawsili (d. 850 CE) by a professional musician without the scholarly rigour to support his work.

Revising and incorporating both classical and contemporary texts, al-Farabi blended theory with his own musical knowledge. The result was a book in two parts: the first on the art of music; the second on its craft. The first part is an introduction to musical theory, addressing the philosophy of music and basic acoustics. The second part is divided into three sections ("arts"). The first art describes music's theoretical elements, such as melody, rhythm, and intervals, building on the work of al-Farabi's predecessors.

The second and third arts are al-Farabi's own innovative work: descriptions of contemporary instruments, 'ud (lute), Baghdadi and Khorasani *tonbur*, *mezmār* (reed pipe), *sornay* (oboe), the *rababa* (rebec), the *me'zafa* (lyre) and *sanj* (harp), and the means by which the tones of musical theory might be achieved in practice, composition, performative practice, including customary rhythms and melodies, the relationship between music and language, types of voice, and even music's purpose. Together, they provide an unparalleled, invaluable account of early music in the Muslim world, more

remarkable for the author's argument for performance and the ear to understanding music.

Writing for an educated reader without any musical training, al-Farabi appropriated terminology from different disciplines throughout his work, with the result that many of the theoretical sections remain challenging, particularly the almost impenetrable passages treating melody. His clarity of thought is evident in other sections, such as those on rhythm: this textual obscurity is the result of a brilliant man struggling to synthesize an adequate vocabulary before any comparable works existed.

The *Great Book of Music* is a surprisingly rare text given its importance: this is one of only five complete copies extant. No holograph or contemporary copies survive. The earliest dated copy is the Istanbul Köprülü MS, completed in 654 AH (1256 CE), while the defective, undated manuscript at Madrid was probably completed in the 6th century AH (12th century CE). The Leiden MS was completed in 943 AH (1537 CE), ostensibly copied from a manuscript dated 482 AH (1089 CE).

Kitab al-musiqa al-kabir drew the interest of European Orientalists in the 19th century; Kosegarten published a selection from the Arabic text in 1840; Spanish, Dutch and French translations of excerpts followed in 1853, 1880, and 1884. Baron Rodolphe d'Erlanger (1872-1932) published a complete French translation, *Grand traité de la musique*, at Paris between 1930 and 1935, the only complete translation in European language. The only complete Arabic edition was published at Cairo in 1967, based on the Köprülü, Leiden, and Princeton manuscripts.

This manuscript was prepared for the eminent Ottoman musicologist Rauf Yekta Bey (1871-1935) from the Istanbul Köprülü and Ragıp Paşa manuscripts: the long sections in a fine scribal hand were copied by 'Abd al-Ra'uf al-Qarabi from the Köprülü MS and the shorter interpolated sections in a rougher hand were compiled from the undated Ragıp Paşa MS by Rauf Yekta Bey himself. The numerous diagrams and illustrations are based on the Köprülü MS, the earliest dated copy known. There is significant textual variation even among the small number of surviving manuscripts, as the quantity of interpolations makes plain.

Rauf Yekta Bey annotated and corrected this manuscript over several decades. He collated the text against Kosegarten's partial Arabic edition, the partial Dutch and French translations of J.P.N. Land, and the complete French translation of d'Erlanger, with whom he corresponded in the final years of his life. Letters from Rauf Yekta Bey to d'Erlanger survive in the archives of Ennejma Ezzahra, the Tunisian palace in which the Frenchman lived, now a museum, home to the Centre des Musiques Arabes et Méditerranéennes.

This copy of al-Farabi's peerless text is both a manuscript of exceeding rarity and an important witness to the scholarship of Rauf Yekta Bey and Rodolphe d'Erlanger. It

is based on the earliest dated copy of *Kitab al-musiqa al-kabir* known and includes a complete set of diagrams and illustrations.

We locate four other complete copies of the text: Leiden (Universitätsbibliothek, Or. 651), Milan (Biblioteca Ambrosiana, no. 289), and Istanbul (Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Ragıp Paşa, no. 876; Köprülü, no. 953); two substantial but defective copies are held at Madrid (Bibliotheca Nacional, Res. 241) and Princeton (Princeton University Library, Garrett 1984). The Beirut manuscript cited by Rodolphe d'Erlanger in the preface to his French translation has disappeared.

We know of no manuscript of this text offered for sale since 1925 when Robert Garret purchased a defective manuscript from Brill. Garret donated the manuscript to Princeton in 1942.

Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur I*, 234; Farmer, *The Sources of Arabian Music* (Bearsden, privately issued, 1940), no. 159; Sawa, *Music performance practice in the early 'Abbāsid era 132-320 A.H./750-932 A.D.* (Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1989), pp. 14-20; Shiloah, *The Theory of Music in Arabic writings (c. 900-1900) : descriptive catalogue of manuscripts in libraries of Europe and the U.S.A.* (Munich, G. Henle Verlag, 1979), nos. 056-7.



“by 570 AD montheistic Christianity had
become tainted with Jesus-worship”

6. Ali, U[mmed]. Mohammed in ancient scriptures. Vols. III-IV. New Kotwali, Agra, S. R. & Brothers, printed by Mohammed Syed Uddin at the Allahabad Press, 1947.

Two volumes bound in one, 12mo (19 x 13 cm); pp. [viii], 101, [1, blank], [vi], 109, [1, imprint]. Original green cloth, faded, stained, and marked. Contents clean.

£200

[click for images](#)

A comparative examination of Christianity and Islam, drawing on Christian scripture and teaching to advance the supremacy of Muhammad and the Qur'an, and the apostasy of contemporary Christianity. Sources range from the Epistle of Barnabas to the hymns of the Church of Scotland: the Christianity described is overwhelmingly, perhaps unsurprisingly, Protestant.

One memorable passage asserts that “the Athanasian Creed, “the cream of all the creeds” also deifies Jesus (P), and “was probably manufactured by Satan for use about 539 A.D. *By 570 A.D. it had become very famous.*” Ali’s source here was *The Finished Mystery* (1917), controversial Biblical scholarship associated with the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

These volumes are from a series of ten published erratically between 1936 and 1961, which included comparative examinations of Jewish, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist scripture.

