



‘AJĀ’EB AL-MAKLŪQĀT

‘AJĀ’EB AL-MAKLŪQĀT (“The marvels of created things”), the name of a genre of classical Islamic literature and, in particular, of a work by Zakarīyā’ b. Moḥammad Qazvīnī.

i. Arabic works.

ii. Persian works.

i. Arabic Works

Works of this sort form part of a general interest by Muslim scholars in the monuments and buildings of classical antiquity, whether of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, or Persia; in physical and topographical phenomena, such as unusual springs and wells, mineral deposits, volcanoes, etc.; and in the marvels of the heavens and the celestial bodies. The Muslims were stimulated in this interest on the one hand by the classical heritage, and especially the Greek one, with the searching questions about nature posed by the great Hellenic scientists and philosophers; and on the other hand by the Qur’ān, which stresses the marvels of God’s creation and emphasizes God’s role as *al-Kāleq and al-Bāri’*, though it does not specifically use the term *‘aj̄ba*. Islamic literature soon began to recount these *‘aj̄’eb*, especially in geographical and travel works. Thus in the second *resāla* of the globe-trotter Abū Dolaf Yanbū’ī (middle of the 4th/10th century), natural wonders and ancient constructions



such as dams and bridges loom large, and reveal the author as somewhat credulous. The *'Ajā'eb al-Hend* of the Indian Ocean sea-captain from Rāmhormoz, Bozorg b. Šahrīār (early 4th/10th century), is a collection of travelers' tales in which the sensational and wondrous is mixed with the results of sober observation. Even a work like Jāḥeẓ's *Ketāb al-ḥayawān* (3rd/9th century) may be noted here, for attention to zoological marvels, to be continued later by an author like Damīrī (8th/14th century), begins with this rambling and anecdotal work.

It is not till the 6th/12th century that the study and recounting of marvels, a subordinate element in the works of the great Arabic and Persian geographers of the 3rd-4th/9th-10th centuries, might legitimately be described as a separate genre of literature. A key figure here is the Spanish Arabic author Abū Ḥāmed Moḥammad Ġarnāṭī (d. 565/1169-70), who was a great traveler, penetrating through eastern Europe as far as Central Asia. His two major works, both written in Iraq for local patrons, the *Ketāb al-mo'reb 'an ba'z 'ajā'eb al-Maġreb* and the *Toḥfat al-albāb wa noḡbat al-aġāb*, contain not only genuine, valuable travel and geographical information but also much material on marvels and legendary topics. Their contemporary and subsequent popularity is attested by frequent citations in later works and by the existence of numerous surviving manuscripts (Brockelmann, *GAL* I², pp. 628-29, Supp. I, pp. 877-78, where it is noted that a *Ketāb 'ajā'eb al-maḡlūqāt* attributed to Abū Ḥāmed must in fact be a later compilation, whose author drew on his predecessor's book). The genre of *'ajā'eb* works reached its fullest form at the hands of the cosmographers of the 7th/13th century and after. The geographical and travel element decreases, with a correspondingly increased emphasis on the marvelous and the anecdotal. The outstanding author was Abū Yaḥyā Zakarīyā' b. Moḥammad Qazvīnī (ca. 600-82/ca. 1203-83).

Qazvīnī's work. The *Ketāb 'ajā'eb al-maḡlūqāt wa ġarā'eb al-mawjūdāt* ("Marvels of created things and remarkable features of existent things") is often referred to as the *Cosmography*. (The Arabic title had already been used, in the last quarter of the 6th/12th century, by an unnamed author from Hamadān who wrote a Persian cosmography; see Storey, II/1, pp. 121-22.) It complements Qazvīnī's other great Arabic work on geography, the *Āṭār al-belād*, although certain infelicities of style seem to show that Arabic was not his native tongue. Both were apparently written toward the end of Qazvīnī's life, when he had abandoned his career as a *qāzī* in Iraq before the Mongol sack of Baghdad in 656/1258 and had devoted his remaining years to



scholarship. He acquired the patronage of the great statesman and historian 'Alā'-al-dīn 'Aṭā'-malek Jovaynī, governor of Iraq and Kūzestān for the first two Mongol Il-Khans, Hülegü and Abāqā, and to him he specifically devoted the *Cosmography*.

The *'Ajā'eb al-maklūqāt* begins with four *moqaddemāt* or prologues. The first provides an exposition of marvels and includes a psychological explanation of their attraction to the human mind; the second describes the two subdivisions of created things, those that can exist independently by their essence, corporeal or spiritual, and those that are only accidents; the third defines the strange and remarkable; and the fourth mentions the subdivisions of existing things. The work proper then begins; it is divided into two *maqālāt* or discourses, the first on supraterrrestrial things (*al-'olūwīyāt*) and the second on terrestrial ones (*al-soflīyāt*), both with numerous subdivisions. The first discourse deals with the heavenly bodies, the moon, the sun, the planets, and the fixed stars, explaining en route such phenomena as eclipses. Then it passes to the denizens of the heavens (*sokkān al-samāwāt*)—the angels bearing God's throne, the Faithful Spirit, the archangels Gabriel, Esrāfil, etc., the guardian angels, the two examining and punishing angels Monkar and Nakīr, etc.—and closes with a consideration of questions of time and chronology, the differing calendars of the Arabs, the Greeks (sc. the Syrian calendar), and the Persians (sc. the Zoroastrian). The second discourse is some four times as long as the first; it begins with a description of the four elements, the winds, and heavenly phenomena like rainbows, thunder, and lightning. Then it goes on to the division of the earth into seven component climes and describes all the known seas and islands, followed by an examination of the three realms of nature: the mineral, the vegetable (trees, plants, fruits, vegetables), and the animal. This last kingdom forms the remaining half of the discourse, beginning with the human being, his anatomy and physiology, and his nervous and emotional system; the jinn and the demons; and the animals, birds, and creeping things. A *kātema* or concluding section deals with remarkable monsters and with the forms of the angels.

As the first systematic exposition of a complete cosmography in Islamic literature, Qazvīnī's book was deservedly popular. Numerous manuscripts of the *'Ajā'eb al-maklūqāt* exist, the oldest going back to the author's own lifetime, and there were several Persian, and especially Turkish (Osmanli and Čaġatāy) translations, and even metrical versions (see Brockelmann, *GAL* I², pp. 633-34, S. I, pp. 882-83; Storey, II/1, pp. 124-27; M. Streck, "al-Ḳazwīnī," *EI*²; M.



Kowalska, “Eine unbekannte Handschrift al-Ḳazwīnīs *Kitāb ‘Ağā’ib al-maḥlūqāt*,” *Folia Orientalia* 1, 1959, pp. 326-32). It seems, from the exhaustive study of J. Ruska (“Ḳazwīnīstudien,” *Der Islam* 4, 1913, pp. 14-66, 236-62) that there were at least four different recensions of the basic Arabic text of the *Cosmography*, a fact not realized by F. Wüstenfeld when he produced his pioneer edition of both the *Cosmography* and the *Geography* (Göttingen, 1848-49); he selected the latest of the four versions, a 12th/18th century one, for his edition of the first work, and made unwarranted additions to it from other manuscripts, so that his text does not reflect Qazvīnī’s original. Oriental prints include several texts on the margins of Damīrī’s *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān* (Cairo, 1305/1901-02, etc.), and recently, that from the Maṭba‘a Moṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī (Cairo, 1376/1957). None of these editions has indices, and a new, genuinely critical edition is a desideratum. The topics dealt with in the *Cosmography* meant that its manuscripts lent themselves to illustrations of animals, plants, sea monsters, etc., as well as to the inclusion of astronomical tables, and several manuscripts of high artistic value exist; the study of these illustrations is not without value for the history of Islamic science.

Qazvīnī’s sources for the *‘Ajā’eb al-maḥlūqāt* merit detailed study. Over twenty sources are mentioned by name, from Jāḥeẓ onwards, with Abū Ḥāmed Ḡarnāṭī the most oft-quoted single authority. Together with his contemporary Šams-al-dīn Demašqī, Qazvīnī also quotes an anonymous, or unidentified, author, who wrote a *Ketāb toḥfat al-ḡarā’ib* (see the following entry, work no. 2), apparently on supernatural phenomena (Kowalska, “Remarks on the unidentified cosmography *Tuḥfat al-ḡarā’ib*,” *Folia Orientalia* 9, 1967, pp. 11-18). Hence Qazvīnī was, in his *Cosmography*, clearly a skillful adapter of earlier material rather than a powerfully original mind; nevertheless, in regard to this work, Streck was still able to call him the most deserving of the Arabic geographers to bear the “name of the mediaeval Herodotus or of the Arab Pliny.”

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Works listed by Streck, *EI*¹ II, pp. 841-44 and by T. Lewicki, *EI*² IV, pp. 865-67.

Articles listed by Pearson in *Index Islamicus* 1906-55, p. 167, and supps.

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ii. Persian Works

(1) The first named Persian book in this genre is ascribed to Abu'l-Mo'ayyad Balkī, but its text has not survived (see *'Ajā'eb al-donyā*). (2) The earliest book of this type to survive in toto is *Toḥfat al-ġarā'eb*, ascribed in the Tashkent manuscript, one of the five complete manuscripts to reach us, to Moḥammad b. Ayyūb Ṭabarī (d. 485/1092 or 520/1126), author of several works on mathematics and astronomy (Storey, II, pp. 34, 43-44). The work is quoted more than thirty times by Qazvīnī in each of his two books (see above), as well as by Šams-al-dīn Demašqī and Ḥamdallāh Mostawfī. Six of its thirty-six chapters deal explicitly with wonders to be found in the sea, the land, rivers, mountains, etc., while much of the rest concerns a wide variety of "magic" tricks and stratagems that can be employed for amusement or for such practical ends as removing stains from carpets, trapping animals, and determining thieves; in addition, a great deal of information is provided about popular beliefs. An edition is being prepared by J. Matīnī (see his "Toḥfat al-ġarā'eb mansūb be Moḥammad b. Ayyūb al-Ḥāseb Ṭabarī," *MDAM* 7, 1350 Š./1971, pp. 887-903; idem, "Barḳ-i az bāzihā va sargarmihā-ye rā'ej dar Īrān dar rūzgārān-e pīš," *MDAM* 13, 1356 Š./1977, pp. 177-96; Moḥammad b. Ayyūb Ṭabarī, *Meftāḥ al-mo'āmalāt*, ed. A. Rīāhī, Tehran, 1349 Š./1970, intro., pp. 6-17; G. Lazard, "A quelle époque a vecu l'astronome Mohammad b. Ayyub Tabari," *Yād-nāma-ye Īrānī-ye Minorsky*, Tehran, 1969, pp. 96-103). (3) Another early work is Moḥammad b. Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad Ṭūsī's *'Ajā'eb al-maḳlūqāt wa ḡarā'eb al-mawjūdāt* (ed. M. Sotūda, Tehran, 1345 Š./1966), which the author also calls *'Ajā'eb-nāma* (p. 18) and *Jām-e gītīnomā* (p. 38). Though Ḥājji Kalīfa gives the date of its composition as 555/1160, it is dedicated to the Saljuq ruler Toḡrel b. Arslān (570-90/1175-1194) and events are mentioned pertaining to the years 555/1160 (p. 276) and 562/1166 (p. 300), dates which would appear to define the period of composition (preface, p. 19). The work describes the wonders of the world in ten chapters: celestial bodies; the space between the heaven and



the earth; the land, seas, and mountains; cities, mosques, churches, and synagogues; trees, plants, and drugs; marvelous trees; humans (including their minds, souls, and social classes); the jinn; birds; carnivores and large animals. The editor lists eleven manuscripts (preface, pp. 35-36; cf. M. T. Dānešpažūh, “‘Ajā’eb,” *Rahnamā-ye ketāb* 3, 1339 Š./1960, pp. 31-34; Storey, II/1, pp. 121-22).

(4) Qazvīnī’s *‘Ajā’eb al-maklūqāt* was the object of various more or less complete Persian translations and adaptations: (a) A complete but loose translation made for a nobleman named ‘Ezz-al-dīn Šāpūr b. ‘Oṭmān. In the printed text (ed. N. Sobbūhī, Tehran, n.d., p. 220) a certain Fażlallāh b. Moḥammad Ja’far Astarābādī has inserted information about varieties of acorns; this may be the name of the translator (Ī. Afšār, *Rahnamā-ye ketāb* 21, 1357 Š./1978, p. 107), but since it does not appear in the mss. examined by Dānešpažūh (“Dāstān-e tarjama-ye do ta’līf-e Qazvīnī,” *Āyanda* 6, 1359 Š./1980, pp. 419-26), it is more likely that of a copyist. The translator takes liberties, e.g., the insertion of two Persian verses (p. 268), though again this may have been done by a copyist. Mss. are numerous (Monzavī, *Noskaha* I, pp. 434-36) and several illustrated editions have appeared, the earliest lithographed in 1263/1847 (Mošār, *Fehrest*, col. 2290). (b) An abridged but faithful translation; ms. in the British Museum (Rieu, *Pers. Man.* II, p. 464; Storey, II/1, p. 126). (c) A rather faithful adaptation; ms. in the British Museum (Rieu, *Pers. Man.*, supp., p. 135; Storey, II/1, p. 126). (d) A loose translation that may be a revision of (a), completed in Šābān, 956/September, 1549, for Ebrāhīm ‘Ādelšāh, the sultan of Bijapur; printed at Calcutta in 1283/1866 and 1290/1873 (Storey, II/1, p. 126). Other mss. mentioned by Storey have not been examined and compared.

(5) *Toḥfat al-‘ajā’eb*, a loose and incomplete translation of Qazvīnī’s geographical work *Āṭār al-boldān* with additions, completed in either 928/1522 or 948/1541 (five other translations of *Āṭār al-boldān* also exist, without the word *‘ajā’eb* in the title; Dānešpažūh, “Dāstān,” p. 425; Storey, II/1, p. 128). (6) *‘Ajā’eb al-maklūqāt*, translation of a still undiscovered Arabic work by ‘Abd-al-Rašīd, known as Bāyazīd al-Bošnokī (Storey, II/1, p. 133); the Persian version was completed before 840/1435. (7) *Maǰma’ al-ġarā’eb*, by Solṭān Moḥammad b. Darvīš Moḥammad Moftī Balkī, who traveled from Balk to Kabul in 935/1529. Two recensions are dedicated respectively to the Shaibanid rulers Pīr Moḥammad Khan b. Jānī Malek Khan (963-67/1556-60) and ‘Abdallāh b. Eskandar (991-1006/1583-98; Storey, II/1, pp. 135-36). (8) *Negārestān-e ‘ajā’eb va ġarā’eb* (title invented by the publisher), the work of an unknown writer who lived in Nīšāpūr in the reign of Nāder Shah Afšār (1148-60/1736-47). Published



by M. Ramazānī (Tehran, 1341 Š./1962) on the basis of a single manuscript, it has twelve “portraits” (*taṣwīr*) on the wonders of cities, fish, mountains, stones, springs, plants, trees, birds, animals, miscellaneous matters, and nomenclature. (9) *Toḥfat al-ġarā’eb*, by Moḥammad Ḥosayn Astarābādī. Written in the 12th/18th century, it consists of an introduction and twelve chapters (ms. 132 of the Ḥekmat collection, Tehran University; Dānešpažūh, “Dāstān,” p. 423). Titles mentioned in various books and catalogues indicate that many other works of the same genre have been written.

Given in the text.