



ALF LAYLA WA LAYLA

ALF LAYLA WA LAYLA, “One thousand nights and one night,” Arabic title of the world-famous collection of tales known in English as *The Arabian Nights*. The first published translation, by Antoine Galland (*Les mille et une Nuits, contes arabes traduits en françois*, Paris, from 1704), appeared gradually because of the author’s difficulty in obtaining manuscripts (see E. Littmann, “Alf layla wa-layla” in *EI*², and especially M. Abdel-Halim, *Antoine Galland et son oeuvre*, Paris, 1964); arabists and oriental publishers then proceeded to establish, according to their own discoveries and tastes, collections so different that a table showing the divergences is indispensable for research (see the table established by N. Ellisseeff, *Thèmes et motifs des Mille et une Nuits*, Beirut, 1949, pp. 185-205). Galland’s version was immediately regarded as a work of literature, and in the course of the 18th century it was rendered into English, German, Italian, Dutch, Danish, Flemish, and even Yiddish (see Ellisseeff, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77). The extant manuscripts, which can be divided into three families (*ibid.*, pp. 55-64), were used to establish the text of various editions. The oldest of these appeared in Calcutta in 1814-18 under the title, *The Arabian Nights Entertainments in the Original Arabic. Published under the Patronage of the College of Fort William by Sheykh Uhmud bin Moohummud Sheerwanee ool Yumunee*. The subsequent ones (Bulāq, 1256/1835; Calcutta, 1839-42, by W. H. Macnaughten; Cairo, 1302/1910) have served as the basis for later editions and for the principal translations of the 19th and 20th centuries. As Ellisseeff points out (*op. cit.*, p. 168), none of these editions contains the tale of “Alā’-al-dīn and the magic lamp” or that of “Alī Bābā and the forty thieves;” their Arabic texts were published respectively by H. Zotenberg (*Notice sur quelques manuscrits*



des Mille et une Nuits et la traduction de Galland, Paris, 1888) and D. H. Macdonald (*JRAS*, 1911, pp. 219-21, and 1913, p. 432); but their translation and popularity go back to Galland. The most current translations today are in French by Galland and by Mardrus (1899-1904), in English by Lane (1859) and by R. Burton (1885-88), in German by Littmann (1921-28), in Danish by Oestrup (1927-28), in Russian by M. A. Salier and I. Krachkovsky (1929-33), and in Italian by F. Gabrieli (1949); most of these have seen several editions.

The most ancient testimony to the existence of a collection of tales bearing this title is given by Mas'ūdī (d. 345/956; see *Morūj* IV, p. 90; ed. Pellat, sec. 1416). He refers to work full of untrue stories translated from Persian, Sanskrit, and Greek, including the “book entitled *Hazār afsāna*, or the thousand tales, because a tale is called in Persian *afsāna*. This volume is known to the public under the title “One thousand and one nights;” it is the story of a king, his vizier, his daughter Šīrāzād, and her slave Dīnāzād.” This passage is corroborated by Ebn al-Nadīm in his *Fehrest*, written in 377/987-88 (ed. Flügel, p. 304; tr. Dodge, pp. 713-14). Although he does not indicate the contents of the collection, he confirms the existence of an Arabic translation that must go back to the 3rd/9th century (cf. N. Abbott, “A Ninth-Century Fragment of the “Thousand Nights,” new Light on the Early History of the Arabian Nights,” *JNES*, 1949, pp. 129-64).

Ebn al-Nadīm’s account shows that he was not acquainted with the first part of the prologue, which may be summarized as follows: A Sasanian sovereign established in the islands of India and China has two sons who themselves are kings: Šāhzamān in Samarqand, and Šahrīār in India and China. The first, invited by his younger brother to visit him, forgets to bring with him a gift, returns to his palace, and finds his wife in the company of a black slave. After killing the guilty couple he starts off again and arrives at his brother’s. One day when the latter has gone off hunting Šāhzamān catches sight of the queen and her women behaving odiously with black slaves. Šahrīār finally extracts an account of the scene; having verified it, he invites Šāhzamān to travel in search of a companion in misfortune. They arrive on the seashore and are approached by a jinn carrying a trunk; once opened, it discloses a woman of marvelous beauty; while the jinn is asleep, she forces the two brothers to give in to her desires and tells them: “This jinn carried me off on my wedding night, locked me up in a box, put the box in a trunk with seven locks and set me down on the bottom of the sea. He did not know that anything we want, we women, we obtain.” The brothers return to Šahrīār’s capital; the latter has the



queen and her women and slaves beheaded and decides to take every night a virgin bride, whose head he will have cut off on the morrow.

Ebn al-Nadīm begins with Šahrāzād's adventure as Šahrīār's bride. The above events were probably added later to explain the decision and behavior of Šahrīār. The real frame-work of the story *Thousand and One Nights*, which serves to keep death at bay, must have introduced the *Hazār afsān*: At the end of three years Šahrīār's vizier is unable to find a young girl to bring to the king, for the town is depopulated. He returns home disheartened and uneasy about his own fate, but his daughter Šahrāzād offers herself and obtains permission from the king to bring with her her young sister Dīnārzād, whom she has instructed to ask her every night for a story. One thousand and one nights thus pass, at the end of which Šahrāzād is definitively saved.

The sources of the prologue and the frame-story as well as of the tales themselves have been the objects of dispute. J. von Hammer ("Sur l'origine des Mille et une Nuits," *JA*, 1827, pp. 253-56), resting on the testimony of Mas'ūdī, considered the collection's original to have come from Persia and perhaps from India. S. de Sacy ("Recherches sur l'original du recueil de contes intitulé les Mille et une Nuits," *Journal des Savants*, August, 1829, p. 509) held that the text is not ancient and refused to consider an Indian or a Persian origin. Schlegel ("Lettre à M. le Baron Silvestre de Sacy," *JA*, 1836, pp. 575-80) distinguished three categories of tales, according to their Arabic, Persian, or Indian source. Von Hammer returned to the fray after discovering the passage in the *Fehrest*, which allowed him to infer a Persian source ("Note sur l'origine persane des Mille et une Nuits," *JA*, 1839, pp. 171-76). During the 19th century orientalist adopted on the whole von Hammer's thesis, which gradually acquired polish and precision.

Ebn al-Nadīm writes that the *Hazār afsān* is said to have been written for Homāy, daughter of Bahman, but that other explanations have also been proposed; the truth is that Alexander was the first to listen to fabulous tales, in which he saw a means of instruction. After him kings utilized the book of *Hazār afsān*, which counted one thousand nights but less than two hundred tales, since each of these may last for several nights. "I have seen it in complete form a number of times and it is truly a coarse book, without warmth in the telling." It is perhaps because of this lack of interest, at least in the eyes of Ebn al-Nadīm, that only some original tales have been preserved. Nevertheless two points in this passage are noteworthy—Alexander's role (though the few Greek influences seem accidental; see G. E. von Grünebaum, *Medieval Islam*, Chicago,



1946, chap. IX) and the claim, probably by Persians, that the book in question was written for Homāy, daughter and spouse of Bahman. In Iranian tradition she had a second name, Čehrāzād (*Šāh-nāma*, ed. Borūkīm, VI, p. 1756; *Moǧmal*, pp. 30, 54, 92); Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) admits no doubt about the fact that Homāy and Čehrāzād (*Šahrāzād*) are the same (I, pp. 688-89; cf. A. Christensen, *Les Kayanides*, Copenhagen, 1932, p. 149). He also specifies that Homāy's paternal grandmother was called Esther (*Estār*); Mas'ūdī (II, p. 127; sec. 551) links Bahman's mother with the Children of Israel, and adds (II, p. 129; sec. 553) that Homāy was also known under the name of Šahrāzād. Thus a Čehrāzād figures in the list of sovereigns attributed by a thousand years of tradition of prehistoric Iran.

The name of Esther and the Jewish origin of one of the women concerned suggest a biblical reminiscence and a transferring of the tradition relating to Ahasuerus (Esther 2:7ff.); M. J. de Goeje (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 9th ed., 1888, XVII, pp. 316-18; cf. *ET*² I, p. 361) in fact endeavored to prove that the frame-story of the *Thousand and One Nights* was related to the Book of Esther and that both are derived from the folklore of ancient Persia. In another connection Mas'ūdī refers (II, pp. 122-23; sec. 545) to a certain Dīnāzād, who also reminds one of Esther, since she is a captive Jewess, spouse of Nebuchadnezzar, who promoted the return of the Jewish tribes to their homeland. But the theory of M. J. de Goeje was not accepted. P. E. Pavolini (*Giornale della Società asiatica italiana* 12, 1899, pp. 159-69), P. Rajna (*ibid.*, pp. 171-96), E. Cosquin ("Le prologue-cadre des Mille et une Nuits, les légendes perses et le livre d'Esther," *Revue Biblique*, 1909, pp. 749, 161-97; "Le prologue-cadre des Mille et une Nuits," *Etudes folkloriques*, Paris, 1922, pp. 265-347) proceeded to show that the Indians originated the book of tales and the Persians translated it. J. Przyluski ("Le prologue cadre des Mille et une Nuits et le thème du Svayamvara," *JA*, 1924, pp. 101-37) discovered in India an analogous story-frame.

One can not consider the storyteller of the *Thousand and One Nights* the same as the queen Homāy/Čehrāzād (cf. J. von Hammer, in *JA*, 1839, pp. 171-76), and one must reject as well the hypothesis of M. Buisson (*Le secret de Shéhérazade*, Paris, 1961, pp. 15-16), for whom she is none other than the Šīrīn of Neẓāmī (d. 599/1203), who also recounted tales to entertain Parvīz. The wisest position is that adopted by Mme. Laly-Hollebecque (*Le féminisme de Schéhérazade*, Paris, 1927, pp. 10-11), who denies all real existence to the storyteller and compares her with Plato's Diotime or Dante's Beatrice.



The fact remains that the names of the three personages who played a principal part in the prologue are Iranian, and a fourth is an Iranian compound. Šahrīār is a Middle Persian name (*šahr* + *dār*) which literally means “holder of a kingdom, possessor of ruling power,” and therefore, “prince, king.” Among the class-conscious Iranians of Sasanian times, the word carried a sharply defined social significance and referred to a provincial/local ruler, ranking with the most prestigious families (see *Camb. Hist. Iran* III, pp. 698ff.). Čehrāzād, another Middle Persian name, is composed of *čehr*, “lineage,” and *āzād* (going back to Av. *āzāta-*, which originally meant “agnate, born [into a family with full rights]” and eventually came to mean “noble, exalted”). In Sasanian Persia, *āzād* referred to the nobility as a whole, as against the slaves and the non-citizen freeborn, and it also designated the lower echelon of the nobility, mostly landed gentry (see *Camb. Hist. Iran* III, pp. 644ff.). Čehrāzād, therefore, means “of noble or exalted lineage.” Dīnāzād, which also appears in the manuscripts as Dīnārzād and Donyāzād, is almost certainly the Middle Persian *Dēnāzād, composed of *dēn* (Av. *daēnā-*), “religious consciousness or sensibilities,” which was hypostatized as a goddess, and *āzād*, the name therefore meaning “[the goddess] Dēn[is] exalted.” Names with *dēn* appear elsewhere in Middle Persian and Parthian, notably the Sasanian queen Dēnag mentioned in Šāpūr I’s great inscription at Ka’ba-ye Zardošt. Šāhzamān, literally “king of the age,” is composed of the Persian *šāh*, “king,” and the Arabic *zamān*, “time.”

Thus the theory which ascribes to the prologue and frame-story an Indo-Persian origin is no longer open to doubt; as for the tales of the collection, those have three different, though unequal, sources: Indian, Persian, and Arabic. It is not easy, however, to sort them according to these three categories, the more so since, with the passing of centuries and at the whim of the tellers’ imagination, some of them have been modified, enlarged, or shortened. While Ebn al-Nadīm counted almost two hundred tales in the initial collection, the total extant is only some one hundred and seventy, and the original core of texts has been mutilated. Macdonald (“Earlier History of the Arabian Nights,” *JRAS*, 1924, pp. 355ff.) distinguishes five stages in the elaboration of the text: the *Hazār afsān*, the Arabic translation of the Persian tales made in Baghdad in the 4th/10th century, an Arabic form in which the frame and some original tales subsisted, the *Thousand and One Nights* edited under the Fatimids in Egypt, and finally the form found in Galland’s manuscripts. But von Hammer’s scheme is to be preferred: the core corresponding to the *Hazār afsān*, translated at the latest in the 3rd/9th



century; a group of tales added in Baghdad in the 4th/10th century; and another group added in Egypt ca. the 6th/12th century. Some of the original tales were eliminated during the two last phases. It is unlikely that the contents of Arabic origin could be due to a single Egyptian and a single Iraqi compiler (in spite of Jahšīārī's 4th/10th century collection of Arabic, Persian, Greek, and other tales mentioned in the *Fehrest*, p. 304; tr. p. 714).

Oestrup (*Studier over 1001 Nat*, Copenhagen, 1891) considers the marvelous tales to be of Persian origin and classifies the following as Indo-Iranian: Badr and the Princes Jawhara (no. 5 in Ellisseeff's table), Qamar-al-zamān and Bodūr (12), the magic horse (50), Ḥayāt-al-nofūs (143), Sayf al-molūk (145), and Ḥasan al-Bašrī (146). While eliminating a dozen tales, Ellisseeff retains as part of the *Hazār afsān* the frame-story (at least partially), the merchant and the jinn (1), the fisherman and the jinn in the bottle (2), the street-porter and the two ladies (3), the three apples (4), the story of the barber's fifth brother (6), and nos. 5, 12, 50, 143, and 146. E. Littman (*ET*² I, p. 362) counts among tales of Indian origin the poisoning by means of the pages of a book (2A), the stories of pious men reminiscent of Buddhist and Jain saints, such motifs as the magic horse (50), and the cycle of Sendbād the Wise; for him the prologue-frame and the first tales of the collection (1-3) are Indian wonder tales.

These hypotheses are consistent and plausible, but can not yet be pushed further. At least the tales can be sorted by principal subject: wonderful tales ('Alā'-al-dīn and the magic lamp, no. 161; 'Alī Bābā and the forty thieves, 162); romances ('Omar b. al-No'mān, 9; 'Aḡīb and Ġarīb, 128); love stories (see Ellisseeff, op. cit., pp. 90-92, 97-98); tales of thieves and robbers (ibid., pp. 130-31, 152), and of seamen (Sendbād, 124); Arab legends (Ḥātem Ṭā'ī, 14); parables (10); didactic stories (Jale'ād and Šemās, 152; Tawaddod, 196); and humorous ones (Abu'l-Ḥasan or the wide awake sleeper, 66; the cobbler Ma'rūf, 160, etc.). The themes and motifs of the collection have been carefully surveyed by Ellisseeff. The collection's erotic character stressed in Mardrus' translation is studied in E. F. Dehoi (*L'érotisme des Mille et une Nuits*, Paris, 1960). A thorough literary analysis is provided by Mme. M. I. Gerhardt (*The Art of Story-Telling, a Literary Study of the Thousand and One Nights*, Leiden, 1963).

In some descriptions, sermons, and letters contained in the stories, the language and style are polished, verses are inserted into the narrative, passages are found in rhymed prose. But on the whole the language is close to colloquial Arabic. The title has been understood literally, so that the material is apportioned over one thousand and one nights; the tales have been



arbitrarily sectioned to keep the listener in suspense. The part allotted to each night can be told in a much shorter time; a complete story necessarily stretches over at least two nights and sometimes many more, as Ebn al-Nadīm already noticed (see the tables of compared lengths of time in Elisseeff, op. cit.).

Ebn al-Nadīm's unfavorable opinion (see above) was shared during the Middle Ages by the Arab men of letters; it was the public storytellers who spread among the people the tales which form the extant collection. Some of these, translated in writing or orally recounted, no doubt crossed the boundaries of the Arab speaking world. It is not impossible to discern a reflected gleam of the *Nights* in Western literature even before Galland's translation. We know through Maqqārī (d. 1041/1632) that their text had long been circulating in Spain, and undoubtedly that country served as transmitter. R. Lull (d. 1315) inserted in the *Book of Beasts* (see ed. A. Llinarès, Paris, 1954, p. 24) a tale taken from the *Nights*, and the frame of Calderon's (d. 1681) *La vida es sueño* stems from the wide-awake sleeper (no. 66); other examples are quoted by A. Gonzáles Palencia (*Historia de la literatura árabe-española*, 2nd ed., 1945, pp. 342-46). In Italy, the *Decameron* of Boccaccio (d. 1375) show traces of Arab influence; the *Novella d'Astolfo* of Giovanni Sercambi (d. 1424) and an episode of canto 27 of Ariosto's (d. 1530) *Orlando Furioso* can be attached to the frame-story. In England influences make themselves felt quite early (D. Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England*, New Haven and London, 1977, Index, s.v. Arabian Nights), but it is difficult to trace those that affected Chaucer (d. 1400) or Shakespeare (d. 1616). Fārūq Sa'd, in a well-developed essay of comparative literature (*Men wahy layla wa layla* with a French title, *Inspiration de* [sic] *Mille et une Nuits*, Beirut, 1962-66, I, pp. 84-95) has even discovered an influence on the *Nibelungenlied* (ca. 1200).

But it was Galland's translation that, by arousing considerable interest in the West, inspired a narrative literature of allegorical novels, philosophical or satirical stories, stories for the education or entertainment of children, imitations, and parodies; it even inspired musicians. A Scots nobleman settled in Paris, Anthony Hamilton (d. 1720), challenged to make up stories just as interesting, wrote the satirical *Conte du Bélier and Fleur d'Epine*. Distinguished writers drawn into the game included Voltaire, Thomas Moore (who relies on the frame-story in his *Lalla Rookh*, 1817), and Dickens whose *Thousand and One Numbuds*, presented as a translation of an Arabic manuscript, satirizes the French Revolution and its consequences. In 1842 Théophile Gautier in his *La*



mille deuxième nuit brings Dinarzarde (sic) to the fore; Sheherazade asks for her help, since her own imagination is running short. This author already removes the storyteller from one specific time period. Three years later in his “Thousand-and-second tale of Scheherazade” Edgar Allan Poe takes up the principal personages of the frame-story and makes his heroine relate extraordinary adventures; this “science fiction” story in which the teller attains mythical dimensions heralds the exploitation of this personage by French and especially Egyptian writers in the 20th century.

From 1800, F. A. Boieldieu achieved success with his comic opera *Le calife de Bagdad*, another testimony to the general infatuation with the Orient and the *Thousand and One Nights*. In 1822 there was staged at the Opera in Paris a fairy play by Etienne (music by Nicolo and Benincori), *Aladin et la lampe merveilleuse*, which was followed in 1833 by *Ali Baba ou les Quarante voleurs* by Scribe and Mélesville (music by Cherubini), the subjects being drawn from two well-known tales. In 1899 came Rimsky-Korsakov’s orchestral suite *Shéhérazade*; “because this name and the Thousand and One Nights evoke for each of us the Orient of the marvellous tales;” the fashion was well launched. (Later comic operas also used these materials—e.g., *Ali Baba* of Charles Lecoq, 1918, and *Hassan* by J. E. Fletcher, 1922.)

At this time the “translation,” or rather adaptation and even partial recreation, of Mardrus appeared and made quite a stir. It was favorably judged by several arabists, and appreciated by its readers; versions of it were produced in Spanish by V. Blasco Ibañez (1916) and in English by E. Powys Mathers (1921) and it aroused renewed interest in the *Nights* as a source of inspiration and meditation. Undoubtedly the Egyptian writer ‘Aqqād (d. 1964) did not need Mardrus for his 1926 verse-play *Šahrazād aw seḥr al-ḥadīṭ* (“Sheherazade or the magic of discourse”), in which the storyteller cures Šahrīār of his morbid cruelty. But Mardrus’ rendering of the frame-story did provide Michel Georges Michel with the material of the poem accompanying Diaghilev’s ballet *Shéhérazade* (1906) to the music of Rimsky-Korsakov, and Gunzbourg with that of his opera *Schéhérazade* (1931) to the same music, while Népoty and Rabaud used a tale translated by Mardrus to write their comic opera *Marouf, savetier du Caire* (1928). More recently, a ballet *Shéhérazade* was staged in 1975 in France, Belgium, and Italy, with music by Aminollah André Hossein, choreography by Georges Skihine, and staging by Robert Hossein.

In the 1920s the prologue of the *Thousand and One Nights* began to inspire literary works seeking to delve into the psychology of the royal couple and



explain the malady of Šahrīār and his cure. In 1927 a militant feminist, Mme. Laly-Hollebecque, underlined in *Le féminisme de Schéhérazade* “the outstanding role given to woman in every part of the book,” and brought to the fore “the duel of spirit against force, of knowledge against ignorance, light against darkness;” she entitled her last chapter “Results of the initiation of man through woman: progress.” The version of Mardrus and not the real text inspired this author to conclusions at times extreme, but it nevertheless remains true that Sheherazade becomes a symbol of femininity, of knowledge and intelligence; without having necessarily read this pioneer work, several authors and poets contributed to the development of a kind of myth presaged by Poe (see H. Aboul-Hussein and Ch. Pellat, *Chéhérazade, personne littéraire*, Alger, 1976, 2nd ed., 1981).

The novels of Henri de Régnier, *Le veuvage de Schéhérazade* and especially *Le voyage d’amour* (both 1930) endow the woman narrator with immortality, and the famous Egyptian writers Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm and Ṭāhā Ḥosayn (d. 1973) soon became familiar with them. The first, who had already written two youthful plays, *‘Alī Bābā* and *Kātām Solaymān* (“Solomon’s seal”), was sent to Paris by his father, who wished to turn him away from the theater, but there he encountered Régnier’s works and witnessed the success of Mardrus’ *Nights*. These gave him the idea for his *Šahrazād* (1934; produced in French in 1955), a symbolist play of which he himself proposed three different interpretations (the latest in *al-Moṣawwar*, 21 April 1972); Šahrīār is transformed, thanks to the magician Sheherazade, into a feeling and thinking being. The storyteller retains her quality of magician in *al-Qaṣr al-maṣhūr* (“The enchanted palace”), written together by Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm and Ṭāhā Ḥosayn; yet, though a symbol of immortality, in vain she believes herself able to escape time. The writers continued separately to exploit the personage of Sheherazade, e.g., in *Aḥlām Šahrazād* (“Sheherazad’s dreams,” 1943) by Ṭāhā Ḥosayn, who assumes the role of prophet in announcing in symbolic form the atom bomb, the punishing of war criminals, and the fate of dictators. Other Oriental writers and poets followed the movement thus launched and utilized the characters of the prologue in works of all literary genres. Among the most remarkable of these is *Serr Šahrīār* (“Šahrīār’s secret”) by Bākaṭīr (1953), which psychoanalyzes the behavior of the prince, while satirizing Egyptian politics before the 1952 revolution. The *Šahrīār* by ‘Azīz Abāza (1954) treats the relations between man and woman, king and people, etc.; the frame-story is respected, and Donyāzād intervenes to prompt the king to kill her elder sister. Finally Šahrīār takes the road to Mecca, where he hopes to find inner peace. Fārūq Sa’d in his *‘Awda*



Šahrīār (1968) discovers a certain improbability in the frame-story and explains the prince's behavior by attributing it to the transports of love and a desire to humiliate the other sex. Western novels which draw on the *Nights* include Nicole Vidal, *Schéhérazade* (1960) and D. Westlake, *Adios Scheherazade* (French tr., 1962).

In France Jules Supervielle's play *Shéhérazade* (1948) is full of poetry and humor, while marvels of the Orient are materialized by a female magician, a flying horse, and the flying away of Šahrīār's palace. Somewhat as in Ṭāhā Ḥosayn's *Bayna oḵtayn* ("Between two sisters") Dinarzade represents "the woman of the earth," while her sister is "the woman of the clouds."

The cinema also has found rich material in the *Nights*. At the beginning of the 20th century Georges Méliès shot such films as *La Lanterne magique* (1903) and *Le palais des Mille et une Nuits* (1905). The most exploited of the tales seem to be "Ali Baba and the forty thieves," "Alladin and his lamp," and "Sindbad." There are also such works as *Thief of Baghdad*, *Thief of Damascus*, *The Magic Carpet*, *The Magic Ring*, and E. Knoblock's *Kismet* (shot three times in Hollywood, 1924, 1941, 1955). Subjects drawn from the *Thousand and One Nights* enjoy such success that they inspire cinematographic ballets such as *Initiation to the Dance*. In the French film *Shéhérazade* (1971) the action takes place at the beginning of the 9th century, and Sheherazade, promised to Hārūn al-Rašīd, falls in love with a knight sent by Charlemagne! For the producer the title must be catchy, and so it is that *Ali Baba in the City* has nothing in common with the tale (on films earlier than 1966 see F. Sa'd, op. cit.).

Apart from the few tales used by novelists, poets, musicians, or script writers, the prologue of the *Thousand and One Nights* has exercised the greatest influence on occidental culture and through it on contemporary Arabic literature, which has sought in it a source of inspiration truly Arabic, even though the protagonists bear Persian names. Such exploitation is an indirect tribute to the Indo-Persian storytellers who provided the foundation for a monument long disdained by the Arabs and then revealed to the world by a West that has not yet finished taking delight in it.



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