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Crescentia's Oriental Relatives: The "Tale of the Pious Man and His Chaste Wife" in the *Arabian Nights* and the Sources of Crescentia in Near Eastern Narrative Tradition

Introduction

The "Tale of the Pious Man and His Chaste Wife" is one of several tales of which varying though closely related versions are contained in the different redactions of the *Arabian Nights*. Essentially, the tale narrates the adventures of a pious and chaste married woman who, during the absence of her husband, faces repeated attempts of seduction, evades them all through her uncompromising chastity and faithfulness, and in the end triumphs by curing the evildoers from the physical afflictions they have suffered as a result of their sinful behavior. In terms of content and structure, the tale belongs to the genre of the "innocent persecuted heroine," numerous versions of which exist in international narrative literature (Moser-Rath; Jones). In folkloristic terms, it is a variant of tale type AT 712: Crescentia (Aarne and Thompson 247–48; Uther, *Types* 386–87). The tale type derives its denomination from the name of the protagonist in what is commonly regarded as the tale's oldest documented version as contained in the German *Kaiserchronik*, an epic poem written toward the middle of the twelfth century (Uther, "Crescentia"). Considering its prominent position in German and world literature, the tale has repeatedly been the subject of extensive studies since the

middle of the nineteenth century.¹ Already in the nineteenth century, literary historians had noticed the striking similarity between the tale of Crescentia and the tale of “The Pious Man and His Chaste Wife” in the *Arabian Nights*, probably first in relation to the sources of Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline* (Echtermeyer, Henschel, and Simrock 211–12). As there was little doubt that the version of the *Arabian Nights* was comparatively recent, subsequent research took great pains to locate other and, notably, earlier Oriental versions of the tale. These efforts led to identifying another early modern Near Eastern version in the tale of Repsima in François Pétis de la Croix’s narrative collection *Les Mille et un Jours* (“The Thousand and One Days,” 1710–12). While compiled in emulation of Antoine Galland’s contemporary *Mille et une Nuits* (“The Thousand and One Nights,” 1704–17), Pétis de la Croix’s collection ultimately relies on an Ottoman Turkish compilation of the “Relief after Hardship” genre, whose oldest preserved manuscript is dated 784/1382.² They also succeeded in documenting the tale in Persian author Zeyâ’oddin Nakhshabi’s *Tuti-nâme* (“Book of the Parrot”), completed in the Muslim year 730, corresponding to CE 1329–30 (Pertsch 536–38; Hatami 108–10, no. 52, night 32), of which numerous later Oriental versions in various languages exist (Marzolph, “Papageienbuch”), some of which, such as Sarî ‘Abdullâh’s seventeenth-century Ottoman Turkish adaptation (Rosen 61–74), contain the tale under consideration. As the *Tuti-nâme* in general is known to constitute a Persian adaptation of the Indian *Śukasaptati* (“Seventy [Tales of a] Parrot”), a work of considerable age, scholars such as Theodor Benfey went on to speculate about an eventual Indian origin of the tale (Benfey 3: 71; Stevanovic 466; Spies 413). Others, notably Svetislav Stefanovic, preferred to rely on the chronological evidence of the earlier version in the German *Kaiserchronik* as their basis to argue for the tale’s origin in Western literature, from where it would have migrated to the East (Stefanovic; Grundtvig; Uther, “Crescentia” 170). The majority of scholars today, however, agree on the tale’s unspecified “Oriental” origin, notwithstanding both the chronological priority of the Western versions and the apparent unavailability of Oriental versions serving as ultimate proof of their hypothesis.³ Recently discovered Persian and Arabic versions, one of which predates the Western ones by as much as two centuries, now prove the tale’s Near Eastern origin beyond reasonable doubt. The fact that at least one of these texts (Ritter, *Meer* 353–56) had been available in a Western—to be exact, German—translation since the middle of the twentieth century serves as a further argument, if such an argument is needed, for a trans-disciplinary cooperation in the field of comparative literary studies as the only promising way to arrive at sound conclusions in matters of transnational narrative research (van der Kooi).

In introducing the Oriental versions of the “Tale of the Pious Man and His Chaste Wife,” I propose first taking a closer look at the three varying versions

of the tale in different redactions of the *Arabian Nights*—those texts that were first recognized as “Oriental” analogues to the tale of Crescentia. The ensuing discussion focuses on hitherto unknown Persian and Arabic texts that on the one hand document the tale’s tradition in the medieval Near Eastern literatures and on the other ultimately predate the Western versions. In conclusion, and returning to the point of start, I suggest a link between the medieval Oriental versions and the tale’s appearance in the *Arabian Nights*. No two of the versions discussed here are identical, and each one of them would deserve a thorough analysis of its content, embedded meaning, and author’s intention. This important task will have to be relegated to a later opportunity, as in this essay I focus on the tale’s textual history. Translations of the majority of texts discussed here for the first time are given in the translation section of this issue.

Versions of the *Arabian Nights*

The “Tale of the Pious Man and His Chaste Wife” does not belong to the core corpus of the *Arabian Nights* and is not contained in any of the manuscripts predating Galland’s introduction of the *Arabian Nights* into world literature at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Probably the best-known version of the tale in the *Arabian Nights* is contained in what has been termed “Zotenberg’s Egyptian redaction” (hereafter, ZER). This redaction, established in research by French scholar Herman Zotenberg, refers to a group of manuscripts that was probably compiled in Egypt in the latter half of the eighteenth century (Marzolph and van Leeuwen 2: 740). Manuscripts of ZER far exceed the fragmentary redactions such as the one serving as the basis of Galland’s adaptation, with ZER’s numerous additional fantastic, wonderful, and entertaining tales having been extracted from a variety of sources. As ZER manuscripts were used for both the Bulaq and Calcutta II editions, published in 1835 and 1839–42 respectively, which in their turn served as the basis of the majority of translations into Western languages, this version is widespread. The ZER version is relatively short, covering some three pages in Richard Burton’s rendering (Burton 5: 256–59; Marzolph and van Leeuwen 1: 242–43, no. 163; Chauvin 3: 154–55, no. 321).

The story introduces a Jewish *qādī* (judge) and his beautiful and chaste wife. When the *qādī* sets out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he entrusts his wife to the care of his brother. As soon as the *qādī* has left, his brother, who had long been lusting for the woman, asks her favors, and since she refuses, calumniates her with false witnesses before the king, who subsequently orders her to be stoned to death. Although she is buried in a pit and stoned, she survives and is rescued by a villager, who takes her home. The villager’s wife cures her and eventually entrusts their infant child to be nursed by her. Next, a stranger

lusts for her and, as she does not give in to his advances, schemes to kill her. Attacking her at night, he instead kills the infant sleeping by her side. The next morning, the mother accuses her of having killed the child, but the villager who had rescued her believes her pledge of innocence and sends her away without punishment. With the little money she has with her, she frees a man who had been fixed to a tree stump in retaliation for some unnamed crime. Out of gratitude, the man builds her a cell where she takes to worshipping God and eventually gains renown for the curative powers of her prayers. Meanwhile, the brother of the woman's husband has been smitten with cancer, the villager's wife suffers from leprosy, and the stranger who killed the child has been afflicted with palsy. Together, they visit the saintly woman and on her demand confess their crimes, gain forgiveness, and are healed. In the end, all take to worshipping God "till Death parted them."

The second version to be discussed is contained in the Breslau redaction of the *Nights* that was published 1824 to 1843, initially by Maximilian Habicht and then by Heinrich Leberecht Fleischer. This redaction partly relies on ZER while also incorporating substantial material from various other sources, including an alleged Tunisian manuscript. In the Breslau redaction the tale is integrated into the narrative cycle titled *King Shah Bakht and His Wazir al-Rahwan* (Marzolph and van Leeuwen I: 167, no. 306; Chauvin 8: 104, no. 79; 3: 157–58, no. 322 B), itself constituting an Arabic adaptation of the original Persian *Book of Sindbad* that is known in the West as *The Seven Sages*. The Breslau version is somewhat longer than the one contained in the ZER manuscripts, covering about nine pages in Burton's translation (Burton 11: 270–78).

Here, before setting out on a pilgrimage, a man of unnamed profession in the Iranian city of Nishabur entrusts his wife to the care of his beloved brother. The brother, gradually realizing the woman's beauty, becomes infatuated with her and asks her favors. When she refuses, he fears she might later inform his brother about his misconduct and maligns her with the help of a group of false witnesses so that she is stoned to apparent death. Remaining alive, however, she is rescued and taken in by a passing villager, who cures her. The villager's son lusts for her, and when she refuses to give in to his advances, he has a friend spread the false rumor that she had been stoned because he had been her lover. Although her host defends her against this accusation, he sends her away without punishment, and gives her a thousand dirhams as a gift. She uses the money to free a man who had been pressed for paying tribute. The man, in his turn, becomes infatuated with her and, when she does not give in to his advances, caluminates her to the king. Before the king manages to arrest her, however, she has already left, now wearing a man's clothing so as to avoid further trouble. In another realm, she is taken in by the king's daughter to serve as her teacher. When the old king dies, the people suspect a disreputable

relationship between the teacher and the king's daughter and furiously slay the latter. The pious woman manages to save her life only by confessing her true sex. Subsequently, the people repent and she gives in to them, imploring her to act as their ruler. Eventually she gains renown for her piety, and numerous people travel to profit from the curative power of her prayers. Meanwhile, the evildoers, who have been struck by various diseases, arrive to be cured by her intercession. She has them confess their sins, whereupon they are cured and leave. In the end, she convinces the people to install her husband as the new king, and all live happily ever after.

The third version of the tale in a redaction of the *Arabian Nights* is contained in the so-called Wortley-Montague manuscript. This manuscript, now preserved in the Oxford Bodleian Library, is dated 1764–65. In terms of style, the text, according to the evaluation by Felix Tauer, is closely related to the performance of contemporary popular storytellers. As for content, the manuscript contains numerous funny and some bawdy tales not encountered in other redactions. Notwithstanding these characteristics, the Wortley-Montague manuscript contains the tale's most elaborate version (Tauer 805–23; Marzolph and van Leeuwen I: 319–20, no. 512; Chauvin 3: 155–56, no. 322 A).

When a pious and just *qādī* in the city of Baghdad sets out for a pilgrimage to Mecca, he entrusts his beautiful and chaste wife to the care of his brother. No sooner has he left than the brother lusts for her. As she does not give in to his advances, he has several false witnesses accuse her of adultery, subsequently flogs her, and throws her out of the house. Wandering around outside the city walls, she reaches the house of a camel driver, who takes her in and has her live with his family. A visitor lusts for her and, as she refuses to give in, schemes to kill her. Instead, he unwittingly cuts the throat of the couple's ten-year-old boy. Without blaming her for what happened, her host sends the woman away, even giving her a hundred dinars as a gift. With the money, the woman frees a young man who was about to be hanged for not paying his debt of exactly the same amount. Although the young man is grateful, he still lusts for her and, when she repudiates him, schemes to do her harm. When they reach the shore, the young man sells the woman to the captain of a certain ship for a thousand dinars, and even though she swears to be a free woman, she has to give in to the situation. When later the captain attempts to seduce her, however, she repudiates him and asks deliverance from God. In consequence, the ship is wrecked, and while all aboard are somehow saved, she reaches the shore by clinging to a plank. After arriving at a certain city, the king agrees to build a mansion for her, and gradually the power of her curative prayers becomes known far and wide. Meanwhile, her husband has returned from his pilgrimage only to learn about her alleged death. In order to receive some consolation, he sets out to travel to the saintly woman and is gradually joined by

his brother, the two camel drivers, the young man, and the captain. Without recognizing the woman's true identity, one after the other the men relate their misdeeds. Though the king is ready to have them killed, the woman pardons them and has them go free.

Even though distinctly different in the execution of individual traits and motifs, the three versions of the tale of "The Pious Man and His Chaste Wife" in the *Arabian Nights* possess an obvious common core. The main protagonist is always characterized as a pious and chaste woman who suffers subsequent attempts at seduction at the hand of various male characters. The first attempt is unanimously conducted by her husband's brother while the woman's husband is away on pilgrimage and has trusted his brother as the next of his kind to take care of his wife. As with the initial situation, the end of the tale corresponds more or less in all three versions: The evildoers visit the saintly woman. Not being aware of her true identity, they confess their sins and are pardoned. In some cases their misdeeds have allegorically turned into visible physical afflictions, and their repentance and subsequent pardon is exemplified by their being healed. The shorter versions in the ZER and Breslau redactions, with two (ZER) or three (Breslau) attempts at seduction, are obviously not complete. This assumption is corroborated by the fact that their versions appear to spoil one of the main points of the tale's narrative logic—namely, the fact that the woman attains her sainthood more or less independently. Leaving aside one or two attempts at seduction of the complete version, these texts faced the need to mend the "broken ends." In ZER the man the chaste woman has saved from the gallows builds her a hermit's cell, thus cutting short the narrative dynamic of increase and multiplication. The Breslau redaction already presents the second attempt at seduction and its consequence in a garbled version. Instead of killing the child of the woman's host (which normally would happen either intentionally or by accident), the repudiated lover-to-be employs a highly constructed ruse to calumniate the woman, though the result of her being sent away is eventually the same. The only unbroken version of the tale, as the following discussion will show, is presented in the Wortley-Montague redaction. This version contains a total of four attempts at seduction: by the woman's brother-in-law, by a person related to the man who cared for her after being stoned, by the young man she rescued from the gallows, and by the sea captain and group of seafaring merchants.

In comparison to the complete Oriental versions, with four attempts at seduction, the standard version of the Crescentia tale contains only two (the first and second ones). Notably, the elaboration in the Oriental versions does not result from simple repetition or narrative embellishment devoid of meaning. Rather to the contrary, the following attempts at seduction also augment the moral contrast inherent in the respective situations and thus substantially

contribute to demonstrating the woman's extraordinary capacity of dealing with the humiliating circumstances she is subjected to. The first two attempts can be understood as exploring two opposing traits of human nature: human selfishness on the one hand, and humane magnanimity on the other. Human selfishness is demonstrated by the woman's brother-in-law, who disrespects the basic laws of social interaction by sexually approaching his brother's wife against her explicit will, a transgression that inevitably leads to the further misdeeds of calumny and attempted murder. Humane magnanimity is exemplified by the woman's host. Even when the woman is suspected of having killed his infant child, he respects the laws of hospitality by not submitting her to trial. Instead, he sends her away, often supplied with a generous gift. While the series of attempts at seduction might end here, and in fact does in *Crescentia* and in the ZER-version, the third and fourth attempts of the complete version both add new dimensions in terms of trial for the innocent persecuted heroine. The young man whom the chaste woman saved from the gallows by sacrificing the only possessions she had exemplifies human shabbiness in that he not only retaliates her selfless generosity with an attempt at selfish male domination but also factually degrades her to the status of slave, thus denying her individual self-determination. And finally, the fourth attempt at seduction aims at the complete annihilation of the woman's human identity by downgrading her to the status of sheer object.

Early Persian Versions

As for the sources of the *Arabian Nights* tale, previous research has succeeded in identifying the tale in Persian author Nakhshabi's early fourteenth-century adaptation of the *Book of the Parrot* as apparently the tale's oldest accessible Oriental version. While Nakhshabi's version is complete in terms of structure, one of its distinct characteristics is the fact that most of the acting individuals bear personal names. The chaste woman is named Khorshid (Sun); her husband, 'Otâred (Mercury); and her husband's brother, Keivân (Saturn). Considering the allegorical nature of these names, one feels tempted to interpret Nakhshabi's version as a cosmological struggle between the sun and the planets. The other persons bearing names in Nakhshabi's version rather suggest an ironical or even cynical approach. After surviving the stoning, the woman manages to reach the house of her (unnamed) father-in-law, where she suffers an attempt at seduction by this man's brother, who is named Latif (Pleasant, Friendly). In a similar vein, the young man Khorshid saves from the gallows is named Sharif (Noble). In the general plot and its individual motifs, Nakhshabi's version, however, corresponds with the tale's complete version as contained in the Wortley-Montague manuscript.

Mentioned in Orientalist studies on the *Book of the Parrot*, but not taken into account by international research on Crescentia, is the fact that Nakhshabi's work clearly presents itself as the remodeling of an earlier Persian adaptation of the same narrative material whose style had been deemed unsatisfactory. This earlier Persian adaptation of the Indian *Śukasaptati* is a book titled *Javâher al-asmâr* ("Jewels of Nocturnal Entertainment"), whose text was published in 1973. The book was compiled by an unidentified author in 714/1314, and thus less than two decades before Nakhshabi's version. The tale's version in this earlier work closely corresponds to Nakhshabi's version and differs only in minor details. Thus, the place of action is specified as the town of Lobnân (Lebanon), and the names of the main characters are less allegorical. Although the pious woman is named Khorshid, her husband Sâ'ed and his half-brother Zobeir bear ordinary human names. The son of the person who takes care of her after she escapes from stoning is again called Latif, but the names of the other characters are not specified. An interesting convergence between these two early versions is apparent in the fact that the attempt at seduction by the ship's captain (*Javâher al-asmâr*) or seafaring merchant (Nakhshabi) provokes a heavy storm that in both cases induces the man to relent from his action and henceforth treat the woman with due respect.

Another Persian-language version exists that, although several centuries younger than both Persian adaptations of the *Book of the Parrot*, proves that the "Tale of the Pious Man and His Chaste Wife" was not necessarily linked to that narrative collection but could develop a life of its own. It is contained in Mohammad-'Ali Hablerudi's seventeenth-century collection of proverbs and their tales, titled *Jâme' al-tamsil* ("Collection of Proverbs"; Marzolph, "Illustrated Exemplary Tales"). Hablerudi, who probably came from the northern Iranian province of Mazanderan, appears to have been attracted by the contemporary Muslim civilization in India, in which Persian was the intellectual lingua franca as the language of court and literature. He compiled his work during the reign of 'Abdallâh Qutbshâh (ruled 1035/1626–1083/1674) in the Deccan kingdom of Golkondâ, situated in the vicinity of the present south Indian city of Haiderabad. In twenty-eight alphabetically arranged chapters, Hablerudi's work offers a choice of salient Persian proverbs together with the related tales, often against a dominant moral backdrop. The most striking characteristic of Hablerudi's version is its verbosity (Hablerudi 218–28).

The tale is localized in Iraq, as becomes evident during the course of action from the fact that the young man whom the woman has saved from the gallows at the banks of the river Tigris sells her to a merchant who is about to travel to the city of Basra. An interesting detail, probably significant for the tale's ultimate origin, introduces the woman's husband as Abû Sâleh al-Himyari, who, notwithstanding the fact that he is a pious Israelite, sets out for

a pilgrimage to the Muslim Ka'ba at Mecca. The only significant diversion from the standard plot as outlined previously appears in the final scene of seduction. Here, the alleged female slave is acquired communally by a whole group of merchants. Even though only one of them dares to approach her physically, all of them are either miraculously thrown into the sea or jump into the water without any apparent reason. As the woman and her female servants are the only persons left aboard, they take possession of all the trading goods. This enables the woman to avoid exploiting the kindness of the king whose realm she later reaches, as she presents him with all the goods in return for his constructing a hermit's cell, where she will live in pious devotion.

It is significant to keep in mind that no Indian original for the tale under consideration has yet been identified. Moreover, any search for Indian precursors is to some extent misleading, since the fourteenth-century Persian adaptations of the Indian *Śukasaptati* did not constitute translations in the modern sense. Similar to the Persian adaptations of other works of Indian literature, such as *Kalila wa-Dimna*, a work derived from the Indian *Panchatantra*, they rather result from a creative adaptation of the original work's frame story. While in these similar cases, the frame story might be adapted more or less unchanged, it would then be filled with tales of various origins, not necessarily all of them contained in the original work. As for *Kalila wa-Dimna*, the Pahlavi and later Arabic and Persian adaptations of the Indian original integrated narratives not only from the Indian *Pancatantra* but also from other sources, such as the Indian epic *Mahābhārata*. In consequence, searching for an Indian original of any tale included in a Persian adaptation of an Indian frame story might well lead in the wrong direction. Moreover, Persian narrative literature in the premodern period is rightfully known to be closely related to Arabic sources. The problem of whether and to what extent Arabic texts such as those of the *Arabian Nights* compiled in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries would draw on Persian sources will be considered later. For the present discussion the focus should be on Persian-language works from the Golden Age of Persian literature up to the modern period. These works would often profit from the narrative material contained in Arabic works or, to be more specific, in works compiled in Arabic, regardless of their author's ethnic origin, as many authors of Arabic literature were ethnic Iranians. In consequence, a search for the ultimate sources of the tale under consideration should focus on authors writing in Persian from the twelfth century onward. It is their works and their sources that add substantially to our previous knowledge about the origin of the Crescentia tale.

The first of these works, not mentioned in previous discussions about Crescentia, is Farid al-din 'Attār's mystical poem *Elāhi-nāme* ("The Book of God"). 'Attār died around the year 1221, when the invading Mongol armies conquered his native city of Esfahan. He is renowned as one of the most influ-

ential mystical poets of Persian literature, though his work has the reputation of being difficult to understand. The lengthy poetical works he composed present the sum of his mystical teachings and have been systematically analyzed in Hellmut Ritter's seminal study *The Ocean of the Soul*, first published in a German edition in 1955 and recently (2003) translated into English (Ritter 1955 [1978] and 2003). 'Attâr's poetical works contain hundreds of narratives, many of which belong to the stock of international narrative literature (Marzolph, Rev.). In 'Attâr's *Elâhi-nâme* the *Story of the Chaste Woman Whose Husband Had Gone on a Journey* is the first one quoted (Yusofi; Ritter, *Meer* 353–56; Ritter, *Ocean* 366–69). The narrative serves as an argument in the discussion between the king and his sons about the value of sensual love. The father reproaches his son for worshipping lust and "as a shining example of overcoming sensual temptations, he sets before his eyes the behavior of a pious woman who resists her numerous admirers' attempts at seduction" (*Ocean* 366). Although 'Attâr's version is complete, containing a total of four attempts at seduction, some additional motifs and some minor individual alterations occur. Foretelling the story's action, the woman is called Marjuma ("The Stoned One").⁴ The bedouin who cares for the woman after she has escaped from stoning at first also lusts for her, but, realizing her chastity, repents and vows to treat her as his sister. The person who kills the bedouin's son here is a black slave. When the young man the woman has rescued from the gallows has sold her to the sea captain, the whole group of travelers on board the ship lust for the woman, thus underlining her degradation to an object intended to serve the quenching of lust of an unfathomable and anonymous group of men. Subsequently, all men are destroyed by a divine fire arising from the sea. When the woman has reached the shore and has changed into men's clothing, the king of the realm intends to make the supposed male hermit his successor; instead, the woman reveals her true gender to the women she has been proposed to marry, abdicates, and devotes herself to pious seclusion. In the end, when the evildoers have confessed their sins and have received her pardon, the chaste woman installs her husband as the new king and the helpful bedouin as his vizier.

A prose text of the tale under consideration contemporary to 'Attâr's poetic version, not analyzed in previous research, is contained in Sadid al-din Mohammad al-'Oufi's (died 629/1232) *Javâme' al-hekâyât va lavâme' al-revâyât* (roughly, "Collected Tales and Brilliant Stories"; Rossi 152; Nizâmu'd-din 231, part 3, chapter 23, no. 1766). 'Oufi's work is an encyclopedic compilation presenting a total of 2,113 narratives that are strictly arranged in 100 thematically organized chapters. Many of the narratives in 'Oufi's work have been shown to derive from Arabic sources (Nizâmu'd-din 33–103; see also Marzolph, *Arabia ridens* 1: 101–03 and 2: 288). The tale of the chaste woman is here titled *The Ordeals Which Marhuma, the Virtuous and the Fair, Had to Suffer on Account of*

Her Fatal Beauty and Extreme Purity. Suitably, the narrative is included in book 3: *On the Despicability of Vices*, chapter 13: *On Chaste and Virtuous Women* ('Oufi 674–79). 'Oufi's text closely corresponds to 'Attâr's version. When after the final attempt at seduction the woman disguises herself in men's clothing, however, she gives all the possessions aboard the ship to the king in return for his constructing a hermit's cell for her. Since the narrative now does not require a new king (as in 'Attâr), in the final scene the woman and her husband both devote themselves to prayer and pious devotion.

These two early thirteenth-century versions of Crescentia in Persian literature document the tale in Oriental tradition a century earlier than previously attested. Still, both versions are younger than the tale's first occurrence in European tradition. Thus, while they are proof of the tale's popularity in early Persian literature, they do not necessarily support the tale's presumed Oriental origin. However, the solution to this question is furthered by yet another early version that has recently been pointed out by Persian literary historian Heshmat Mo'ayyad. The earlier monograph study of the sources of 'Attâr's poetic works by Fâteme San'atiniyâ (26–31), while listing two later versions (those contained in *Javâher al-asmâr* and *Jâme' al-tamsil*), does not mention any version predating 'Attâr. Thus, Mo'ayyad's essay essentially aims to supplement a possible source for 'Attâr's tale. Not being concerned with international tradition, Mo'ayyad is not aware of the implications of his finding for the history of the Crescentia tale. Yet he does not only succeed in documenting the tale in a tenth-century version, thus considerably earlier than any of the European versions. Moreover, the version he publishes contains important arguments that, considered together with other clues in additional versions, suggest the tale's ultimate origin.

The Tale's Oldest Version in Arabic Literature

The text identified by Mo'ayyad is contained in an Arabic work titled *Al-Kâfi* (*fi 'ilm al-dîn*) (roughly, "A Comprehensive Commentary on the Science of Religion"). The work is a guide to Shiite (*imâmi*) doctrine in theology and Islamic law (*fiqh*) compiled by Abû Ja'far Muhammad ibn Ya'qûb al-Kulaynî (or al-Kulînî), a Shiite traditionist who probably died in the Muslim year 329, corresponding to CE 940–41 (Madelung). It is today regarded as the most authoritative of the four canonical collections on which Shiite law is to be based. The tale under consideration is included in a passage on narratives before the conclusion of the book treating married life (*nikâh*), in a chapter titled "Whosoever abstains from the sacred possessions of other people abstains from those in his own possession" (*inna man 'affa 'an haram al-nâs 'affa 'an haramihi*), a formulation that might be more directly rendered as "Only those who respect other people's possessions respect their own." After presenting a number of exem-

plary anecdotes, the author quotes the tale in question (Kulaynī 556–59, no. 9). Kulaynī's text presents the tale's complete version more or less in accordance with the general outline as sketched above.

The tale introduces a certain king of the Israelites, his *qādī*, and the *qādī*'s brother. As it is the *qādī* to whom the chaste woman is entrusted during his brother's absence, the authority of the calumniator's accusation is unquestioned, and the king straightforwardly orders the woman to be stoned for adultery. The only significant difference from the other, notably later, Persian versions occurs in the final scene of attempted seduction when the woman, allegedly a slave, has been bought by the sea captain. In this version the company travels on two separate boats. Although the sinful merchants and all other people on board drown in a storm, the woman who is on the second boat remains unharmed and safely reaches the shore together with all of the merchandise. Since she does not appeal to anybody for help, the possessions remain with her until the story's conclusion. In the end, the woman reveals her true identity to all of the men who had come to ask her intercession, including the king, her husband, the *qādī*, her host, the man who killed her host's child, and the man she saved from the gallows. As she explicitly states that she will no longer desire anything from men (*laysa li hājja fi l-rijāl*), she presents the possessions to her husband and henceforth spends her life in pious seclusion.

Kulaynī's version, although written in Arabic, is closely connected to the realm of Persian, as the Shiite creed its author adhered to was prominent in Iran and, as of the Safavid period, even became the official creed of the Persian state. Moreover, Kulaynī received at least part of his education in Qom, a city that still today is renowned as a center of Shiite religious erudition. Considering these circumstances, any Persian scholar with a solid religious education would know Kulaynī's work and might easily have come across his version of the tale. Kulaynī's text, moreover, not only presents the earliest known version of the Crescentia tale. Conforming with the traditional presentation of texts in a scholarly context, it is here introduced by a chain of transmitters (*isnād*), stating that "one of his companions" heard the tale from a certain person who had heard it from another person. The chain of transmitters contains a total of six elements, the last person actually telling the tale being a certain "Abū 'Abdallāh." This Abū 'Abdallāh is none other but the sixth imam venerated by the Shiite creed, generally known as Ja'far al-Sādiq, who died on Rajab 15, 148, corresponding to September 6, 765. The like chains of transmitters may or may not correspond to actual circumstances and have often been employed to authenticate fabricated traditions. Nevertheless, there is no serious reason to doubt that the tale might already have been told orally in the eighth century. Moreover, the narrator quotes the tale as taking place in a Jewish context. This detail might prove quite significant for the ultimate origin of the tale and has

already been encountered in various forms in the tale's version rendered in the ZER manuscripts and in Hablerudi's collection of proverbs.

Jewish Versions

Considering our tale against a possible Jewish background, on the one hand one feels tempted to read it as an elaboration of the initial situation of the tale of chaste and pious Susanna in the biblical book *Daniel* 13:1–64 (Heller, “Susanna-Erzählung” and “Encore un mot”; Schwarzbaum 34, 445–46; Wimmer). Susanna is also calumniated when she rejects the two suitors who want to force her into adultery; following the accusation, the story then develops a turn of events different from the one concerned here. On the other hand, the repeated attribution to a Jewish background in the tale's Islamic versions suggests the existence of older Jewish versions, none of which have so far been seriously considered. Though there appears to be no old equivalent to the tale in Midrashic lore (Perles 123–24, no. 1), it comes with little surprise that there is a closely related version in a Hebrew manuscript collection of tales dating from the third quarter of the thirteenth century (Lévi 234–39, no. 7; Bin Gorion 386–88, no. 202; see also Yassif, *Hebrew Folktale* 274–75 and 514–15, no. 31).

This old Hebrew version begins with the standard introduction of the man about to travel entrusting his wife to the care of his brother, and proceeds in the usual manner until the woman is stoned. Following this, it introduces a peculiar turn of events that reveals its origin as a slightly veiled Jewish adaptation of the standard action. The woman is saved by a man and his son traveling to Jerusalem, where the son intends to study law. The woman informs the man about her own erudition in that particular field of learning, and instead of continuing their travel to Jerusalem, the man and his son turn back home, where the woman is engaged as the son's teacher. After the boy has (unwittingly) been killed by the revengeful servant, the next standard episode of the man at the gallows is missing. Instead, the woman reaches the seashore all by herself and is taken captive by a band of pirates. When a violent storm arises, the pirates cast lots in order to find out on whose behalf this evil has befallen them. As the lot falls on her, they ask about her story, and when she informs them about what had happened to her, they take pity on her, set her free, bring her to land, and even construct a house for her. The tale's final episode ends with a singular turn of events as the evildoers, who have all been afflicted with leprosy, are not willing to confess their sins to her and, since she refuses to heal them, consequently die. In the end, the woman and her husband live happily ever after.

All Jewish versions of the Crescentia tale known at present are younger than the oldest European versions in German literature.⁵ Nevertheless, Jewish tradition in general—whether written or oral—might well be supposed to

supply the “missing link” between the tale’s Oriental and Western versions.⁶ In addition to the similarity of the initial situation to the biblical tale of Susanna, both context and attribution of some of the Oriental versions suggest a derivation from Jewish sources. This conjecture is all the more tempting, as it would relieve research from the obligation to look for an ultimate source in “Oriental,” let alone Indian, literature. Both the Oriental and the Western versions could then be regarded as deriving from closely related Jewish sources that over the centuries have given rise to individually constructed versions.

A Probable Source for the Compilers of the *Arabian Nights*

A Jewish *qādī* also acts as the chaste woman’s husband in the last Oriental version to be discussed here. This version closes the circuit of the present discussion insofar as it might have served as a reference for the compilers of the younger redactions of the *Arabian Nights*. It is contained in ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Saffūrī’s book *Nuzhat al-majālis wa-muntakhab al-nafā’is* (“Entertainment of the Learned Gatherings and Choice of Precious Anecdotes”), compiled in 884/1479 (Saffūrī 83–84; Ritter, *Meer* 356; Mo’ayyad 437; Brockelmann 229 [178], no. 7). As the title of this fifteenth-century Arabic work indicates, it is a compilation of entertaining anecdotes of all kinds. Its version of the tale under consideration in terms of wording is fairly straightforward and pragmatic, while in terms of content it is more or less in accordance with the standard structure and also contains a total of four attempts at seduction. Although the second attempt takes place in the house of the woman’s host, a camel driver, the fourth and final one, on the ship, results in the ship sinking and the woman being washed ashore. As in some of the previous versions, the ruler of the realm she reaches has a hermit’s cell constructed for her. And when in the final scene all evildoers have been healed, this is the only version to state explicitly that the chaste woman traveled back home together with her husband.

It is well known that the compilers of the younger redactions of the *Arabian Nights* exploited a large range of sources to complete the fragmentary manuscripts they had at hand in order to produce a version of the *Arabian Nights* that would actually, as the name *A Thousand and One Nights* suggests, fill a thousand and one nights of storytelling.⁷ Besides early works such as Muhammad al-Ghazzālī’s *al-Tibr al-masbūk fī nasihat al-mulūk* (“Smelted Ore: On the Counsel of Kings”; Marzolph and van Leeuwen 2: 574; Yamanaka), they used contemporary sources such as Muhammad Diyāb al-Itlidi’s *l’lām al-nās fīmā waqa’a li-l-Barāmika ma’a Banī ‘Abbās* (“Information of the People Concerning What Happened to the Barmakids Together with the Abbasids”; Marzolph and van Leeuwen 2: 606–07) and many other works. Al-Saffūrī’s work is within the range of sources the compilers would have used and thus

constitutes a potential intermediary between the tenth-century Arabic version of the Crescentia tale and its derivations in the various redactions of the *Arabian Nights*. The Jewish *qādī* acting as the chaste woman's husband links the tale to the version in the ZER manuscripts, and the character of the camel driver who takes care of the woman after she is stoned relates it closely to the version in the Wortley-Montague manuscript, as the character of the camel driver does not figure in any other version known so far. Meanwhile, Saffūrī's text does not correspond verbatim to any of the later versions. This fact, however, should not serve as a compulsory argument to deny al-Saffūrī's text the role of a model. While al-Saffūrī's text might constitute just another intermediary version, it is well known that even though the compilers of the *Arabian Nights* worked in writing down the tales, they did not feel compelled to follow any previous text slavishly. Instead, they acted as storytellers—adapting, changing, and inventing as they went through their sources. Besides the large variety of narratives contained in the *Arabian Nights*, their creativity produced the charm of the collection as a monument of transnational narrative.

Chronology of the Near Eastern Versions

before 940	al-Kulaynī, <i>al-Kāfi</i> (Arabic)
10th c?	<i>Midrash Aseret ha Dibberot</i> (Hebrew, from Iran?)
before 1221	'Attār, <i>Elāhi-nāme</i> (Persian poetry)
before 1232	'Oufī, <i>Javāme'</i> <i>al-hekāyāt</i> (Persian)
late 13th c	Anonymous collection of narratives (Hebrew)
1314	<i>Javāher al-asmār</i> (Persian)
1329	Nakhshabi, <i>Tuti-nāme</i> (Persian)
1382	<i>al-Faraj ba'd al-shidda</i> (Turkish)
1479	al-Saffūrī, <i>Nuzhat al-majālis</i> (Arabic)
ca 1650	Hablerudi, <i>Jāme'</i> <i>al-tamsil</i> (Persian)
before 1660	Sarī 'Abdullāh, <i>Tuti-nāme</i> (Turkish)
early 18th c	ZER redaction of the <i>Arabian Nights</i> (Arabic)
1764–65	Wortley-Montague manuscript of the <i>Arabian Nights</i> (Arabic)
1824–43	Habicht edition of the <i>Arabian Nights</i> (Arabic)

Notes

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1. See Bäckström; Grundtvig; Mussafia; Wallensköld, *Conte*; Stefanovic; Wallensköld, "L'Origine"; Baasch; Ohly; Plagwitz; and Stiller.
2. Pétis de la Croix (ed. Sebag) 450–66, 507–08; new ed. 564–84, 645–47. The most recent edition of this work, Pétis de la Croix (ed. Brunel) 865–85, 1292 (summary), does not add any new findings in terms of comment. For introductions to the "Relief after Hardship" genre in the Near Eastern literatures, see Wiener (Arabic) and Baldauf (Ottoman, Persian, Tatar).
3. For a survey of the "Oriental branch" of the Crescentia tale, see Wallensköld, *Conte* 17–23. I am not aware of more recent discussions of the Crescentia tale considering "Oriental" sources in addition to those analyzed by Wallensköld.
4. Not considering the diacritic point in the name's third letter in Arabic, it would read Marhuma ("The Deceased One"); see Ritter, *Meer* 356.
5. See the headnote by Dan Ben-Amos in Bin Gorion 386–87. A popular Jewish version is also contained in the *Ma'assehbuch*, a Yiddish collection of tales first printed in 1602 of which various redactions exist; see Elstein and Krasny. For versions of the tale in different redactions of the *Ma'assehbuch*, see Pappenheim 252–57, no. 209; Starck 2: 600–12, no. 203; Schwarzbaum 33–34.

I am indebted to Rella Kushelevsky for supplying me with a detailed discussion of the possible source of the thirteenth-century Hebrew manuscript in the *Midrash Aseret ha Dibberot* (Midrash of the Ten Commandments), assumedly a tenth-century compilation originating from Iran. While some of the manuscripts of this work contain the tale under consideration, the work is stated to be a very dynamic compilation, so the tale might have been added at a later date. In the Moscow-Ginzberg and Zürich manuscripts, the tale is followed by that of Sussanna. It is summarized by Kushelevsky as follows:

A pious man travels to the temple in Jerusalem to pray for children, since he has none. Meanwhile, his brother attempts to seduce his brother's wife. When she refuses to give in, he accuses her of adultery, and she is stoned. She is then found by a man and his son, who, upon returning to the city at night, find the gates closed and are compelled to spend the night outside. They listen to her story and offer her to stay with them. In return, she offers to teach the son the Torah. Next the slave of the house attempts to seduce the woman, she refuses, and he kills his master's (her host's) son. While she escapes, the slave accuses her of the murder. She then saves a thief from being hanged by paying his ransom. The thief sells her to the captain of a boat (implied: a pirate) who suffers from leprosy. She promises to the captain that if he will let her off at some place she will cure him. He does so, she prays for help and succeeds in curing him. He builds a house for her, and she becomes a famous healer. Meanwhile, her husband has returned home and refuses to believe the story his brother tells him. They all travel to the woman to ask for cure. At first they refuse to confess their deeds, but the woman's husband makes them confess and tell the truth. The slave is killed by his master. The calumniator is cursed by his brother never to be cured. In the end, the woman and her husband return to their city and are blessed with children.

6. As for Jewish folklore as a bridge between the Moslem East and Christian Europe, see Yassif, "The Man Who Never Swore an Oath."

7. For a general survey of sources exploited by the compilers of the *Arabian Nights*, see Marzolph and van Leeuwen 2: 471–72.

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