

hood, and a dwarf colonnade above. Another change that can be dated to soon after the Muslim reconquest was the installation of the elaborate wooden *minbar* (destroyed in 1969), commissioned by Nūr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Zankī in 564/1168–69. The north portico was the work of the Ayyūbid sultan al-Mu‘azzam ‘Īsā in 614/1217–18 (van Berchem, 393–429).

Mamlūk sultans from al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn to al-Ashraf al-Ghawrī made improvements to the dome, the doors, and the roof. Tankiz, the governor of Syria, renovated the transept in 731/1330–31, and may have added the decorative rosette within the mosaic of the *miḥrāb* hood (see Meinecke for references). Both the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqṣā Mosque received coloured glass and stucco window grilles during the reign of the Ottoman sultan Süleymān I, though the surviving examples within the Aqṣā are probably nineteenth-century copies. Additions, including painted decoration and changes to the windows, are associated with sultans Muṣṭafā II, Maḥmūd II, and ‘Abd al-‘Azīz (van Berchem, 439–44; Flood, 449–51). In the twentieth century further restorations were undertaken, most importantly in 1923–7 and 1938–42.

On 21 August 1969 the dome and the south-eastern section of the mosque were severely damaged in a fire started by an Australian religious extremist. The restoration of the structure and ornamentation of the mosque were undertaken by the Al-Aqṣā Mosque and Dome of the Rock Restoration Committee and the International Centre for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments, Rome (Lazzarini and Schwartzbaum). A replica of the destroyed sixth/twelfth-century *minbar*, commissioned by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, was installed within the mosque in 2007.

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M. MILWRIGHT

## Arabian Nights

**Arabian Nights**, the work known in Arabic as *Alf layla wa-layla*, “A thousand nights and one night,” is an oriental collection of stories that is constituted by a frame-tale focused on the narrator, Shahrazād, telling stories for a thousand nights. Derived from a pre-Islamic Iranian prototype that relied partly on Indian elements, the collection gained fame in the Western world by way of the French translation adapted from various Arabic sources and published by Antoine Galland between 1704 and 1717. Commonly known in English as *The Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* or, in short, the *(Arabian) Nights*, the collection in its many versions constitutes the Islamic world’s major contribution to world literature and an icon that has permeated literary imagery around the world. Rather than denoting a specific book, the name the *Arabian Nights* implies a phenomenon, since the work is both anonymous and authored by many different contributors over an extended period of time. Different versions in Arabic manuscripts and printed texts exist, as well as numerous translations and adaptations into European and other languages.

### 1. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The only critical edition of an *Alf layla wa-layla* manuscript is the edition prepared by

Muhsin Mahdi (1984), based on the Galland manuscript, which was one of the sources Galland used for his famous translation. The text of this edition has served as the basis for several translations into European languages, including English, Dutch, and German. The older English translations, such as those of Lane and Burton, which are based on various manuscripts, combinations of manuscripts, and other sources, are available as Internet resources. The volumes of Victor Chauvin's *Bibliographie* pertaining to the *Nights*, originally published 1900–03 and recently reprinted, contain detailed summaries and commentaries on the tales of the *Nights* (and many other tales). Mia Gerhardt's monograph, *The art of story-telling*, and David Pinault's "sequel" study, *Story-telling techniques in the Arabian Nights*, remain highly readable and inspiring studies. Comprehensive information about the *Nights* in English is available in Robert Irwin's *The Arabian Nights: A companion* and in *The Arabian Nights encyclopedia*, prepared by Ulrich Marzolph and Richard van Leeuwen. A number of important essays tracing our gradually growing understanding of the complex nature of the *Arabian Nights* have been republished by Marzolph in *The Arabian Nights reader*. The tercentenary of the publication of Galland's translation in 2004 occasioned the publication of a number of volumes documenting the state of the art in *Arabian Nights* research (see Chraïbi; Joly and Kilito; Ouyang and van Gelder; Yamanaka and Nishio; and Marzolph, *Transnational*).

## 2. CONTENT

The frame-tale of the *Nights* begins with an anonymous narrator telling the story of the Sassanian kings Shāhriyār and his brother Shāhzmān, the ruler of Samarqand. Deeply traumatised by the unexpected discovery of their wives' sexual debauchery, they start to roam the world in order to find out whether there are any faithful women to be found anywhere. In their travels, they meet a woman who tells them of her abduction by a demon who keeps her locked away in a box at the bottom of the sea, allowing her out only when he wishes. But while the demon sleeps, she blackmails the two men into having sex with her, thereby ultimately convincing them that men

will never manage to control women's wiles. On the journey home, Shāhzmān decides to live in celibacy, while Shāhriyār determines to marry a new woman every night only to kill her the next morning. Once back in his kingdom, he continues this practice until the number of marriageable women grows scarce. At this point, the *wazīr's* daughter Shahrazād (Scheherazade) takes it upon herself to save her sex by volunteering to marry the cruel ruler. After the nocturnal consummation of their marriage, she has her younger sister (or, in some versions, her nurse) Dunyāzād (Dīnāzād, Dīnāzād) request that she divert them by telling tales. With the king's permission, Shahrazād does so. As dawn breaks, Shahrazād interrupts her story at a point that leaves the king's curiosity aroused, and he decides to let her live so that he can hear the rest of the tale the following night. This continues for a total of a thousand nights. On the thousand-and-first night, Shahrazād discloses her stratagem to the ruler, and he pardons her.

## 3. TEXTUAL HISTORY

### 3.1. Early history

The collection developed into its present shape in several steps that can be reconstructed with a fair degree of certainty. The most important attestations for the early history of the *Nights* are two references, one preserved in the work of the Arab historian al-Mas'ūdī (d. 345 or 346/956–7) and the other in the catalogue (*al-Fihrist*) of the Baghdad bookseller Ibn al-Nadīm, written in 377/987 (see Abbott). Both authors agree that the collection derives from an earlier Persian book named *Hazār afsān(a)* ("A thousand stories"), a title rendered in Arabic as *Alf khurāfa* ("A thousand fantastic stories"), the term *khurāfa* relating to the eponymous protagonist of fantastic stories who allegedly lived during the prophet Muḥammad's lifetime (Drory). Both authors note that the Arabic translation is commonly known as *Alf layla* ("A thousand nights"). Ibn al-Nadīm also mentions the general design of the work's frame-tale and explicitly states that he had seen the book on various occasions "in its entirety" (*wa-qad ra'aytuhu bi-tamāmihi dafa'āt*). While he describes the book as containing some 200 tales, he does not, however, mention the actual content of any

of the tales included. Ibn al-Nadīm's evaluation of the collection as "a poor book with silly tales" (*kitāb ghathih bārid al-ḥadīth*) characterises the attitude of the learned, both contemporary and modern, and disregards the fact that the collection's tales were obviously enjoyed by the indigenous popular audience.

Several elements in the collection's frame-tale have been shown to derive from ancient Indian models (Cosquin). These elements include the stratagem of narrating stories in order to prevent death as well as two specific tales, viz., the tale of the "Woman in the box" (Aarne/Thompson tale-type no. 1426), experienced by King Shāhriyār and his brother as a personal adventure, and the story of the man who knew the animal languages (Aarne/Thompson tale-type no. 670), told to Shahrazād by her father in the hope of dissuading her from marrying the king.

An Iranian origin is strongly suggested by the fact that the earliest known references to the *Arabian Nights* explicitly mention a Persian-language predecessor. This notion is further supported by the Persian background of the main characters in the frame-tale. Notably, the narrator's name is of Persian origin, the Arabicised form Shahrazād being the equivalent of the Persian Chehr-āzād, meaning "of noble descent and/or appearance." Moreover, Ibn al-Nadīm reports the opinion that the book was composed for Homāni, the daughter of King Bahman. Al-Mas'ūdī identifies a certain Humāya, daughter of Bahman, himself the son of the legendary hero Isfandiyār, and a woman named Shahrazād, who was the sister of the Achaemenid emperor Darius who reigned before him; this information is corroborated by various other Arabic historians. Modern nationalistic Iranians who claim that the *Nights* are a monument of Persian literature are certainly not completely wrong. Their claim, however, has also to be considered against the tendency of traditional Arabic fiction to localise tales of magic in an Iranian atmosphere (see Marzolph, *Persian Nights*, 278–80).

Various scholars have suggested a distinct Arabic origin for the collection. In particular, the monumental collection prepared by Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. 'Abdūs al-Jahshiyārī (d. 331/942) has been proposed as a precur-

sor to the *Nights*. As Ibn al-Nadīm states, al-Jahshiyārī intended to compile a book of a thousand tales from the stories of the Arabs, the Persians, the Greeks, and others, with each tale covering one night. He succeeded in collecting some 480 tales before death overtook him. The Istanbul manuscript of *al-Ḥikāyāt al-'ajība* ("Wonderful stories"), probably dating from the eighth/fourteenth century and containing several stories that also occur in the *Nights*, has, albeit erroneously, been interpreted as a fragment of al-Jahshiyārī's compilation (see Marzolph, *Das Buch*, 632f.).

None of the available early testimonies contains an indication of the content of the Iranian prototype or its early Arabic adaptation, and any attempt at reconstructing this content is purely speculative. The content is, however, summarily intimated by a paper fragment published by Nabia Abbott in 1949. Dating from the third/ninth century, this fragment preserves the first pages of a book called *The tale of the thousand nights (Ḥadīth alf layla)*. Here, a certain Dīmāzād asks an unspecified narrator, if she be not asleep, to tell her a story promised earlier and to "quote striking examples of the excellencies and shortcomings, the cunning and stupidity, the generosity and avarice, and the courage and cowardice that are in man, instinctive or acquired, or pertain to his distinctive characteristics or to courtly manners, Syrian or Bedouin." None of the actual tales are quoted in the fragment. It is noteworthy that the request only to some extent matches the content of the *Nights* as documented in later Arabic manuscripts, since there is no mention of the fairy tales, fables, romantic epics, jokes, and anecdotes that make up the *Nights* as they are later known (Chraïbi, *Les mille et une nuits*, 95–104).

Additional evidence for the physical existence of the *Nights* is contained in the notebook of a Jewish physician who sold, bought, and lent out books in mid-sixth/twelfth-century Cairo (see Goitein). The notice pertains to a book called *The thousand and one nights* and thus bears testimony to the fact that the elaborate title by which the collection is known today had by then come into use.

Since the earliest preserved manuscript of the *Nights* is dated to about five centuries later than

the early testimonies to the book's existence, the content of the original collection and its further development can only be hypothesised. Obviously the nucleus of the *Nights* was a second/eighth-century Arabic translation of the Persian collection *Hazār afsān(a)*. This translation, whether Islamised or not, was known as *Alf layla*. The third/ninth-century paper fragment testifies to the fact that the collection did not necessarily exist in complete manuscripts. Rather, various different selections appear to have existed since very early times. This argument makes the existence of a canonical text of the *Nights* highly improbable. Instead, what is more likely is a constant rebuilding of the collection around a constitutive nucleus, probably not comprising much more than the frame-tale and the early tales that relate to Shahrazād's own situation, in that they also deal with the stratagem of saving one's life through the telling of tales. The collection then, originating with tales from the Indian and Iranian traditions, grew with the addition of narratives relating to the 'Abbāsīd period in pre-sixth/twelfth-century Baghdad and tales of urban Cairo during the Mamlūk period.

### 3.2. *Manuscripts of the Nights pre-dating Galland's translation*

The oldest preserved text of the *Nights* is contained in a three-volume Arabic manuscript, known as the Galland MS (Bibliothèque Nationale, arabe 3609–11). According to numismatic evidence – mention of the coin *ashrafi*, first issued by al-Malik al-Ashraf Barsbāy in 829/1426 – the manuscript has been dated to the middle of the ninth/fifteenth century (see Grotzfeld, Age). It was acquired and used by Galland for the first part of his translation. The manuscript is incomplete and contains only the beginning of the *Nights* up to Night 282, breaking off in the middle of the tale of Qamar al-Zamān and Budūr.

Besides this manuscript, no more than half a dozen Arabic manuscripts that pre-date Galland's translation are known, none of them containing a complete text of the *Nights* (Marzolph, Re-locating). These MSS include (1) the John Rylands Library (Manchester), MS Arabic 706 (first half of the tenth/sixteenth century); (2) the Vatican MS (arabo 782), dated 1001/1592–93,

in its second half probably constituting a direct copy of the Galland MS; (3) the MS Kayseri, Raşid Efendi Kütüphanesi, Edebiyat 38 (tenth/sixteenth century or later), (4) the Maillet MS, now preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, arabe 3612 (second half of the eleventh/seventeenth century). In addition to the Arabic manuscripts, several Turkish translations of the work pre-dating Galland's translation exist, some of which even in his day were held in the Bibliothèque du Roi (now the Bibliothèque Nationale) in Paris.

### 3.3. *Galland's translation*

Galland in his *Mille et une nuits* not only translated, but to a certain extent created the *Arabian Nights*. Having spent a considerable part of his adult life in the Middle East (Bauden), Galland, after his return to Paris, was employed as the King's antiquary, mainly being responsible for the royal collection of antiquities, coins, and manuscripts. He also co-edited Barthélemy d'Herbelot's highly influential *Bibliothèque orientale*, the very first encyclopaedia of the Islamic world in a European language, which drew much of its information, albeit often with a strong Christian bias, from compilations in the indigenous languages. Galland's interest in Middle Eastern literatures being aroused, he had at some time before the year 1700 acquired a manuscript of the tales of Sindbād, which he translated and intended to publish. Learning about a similar, yet much larger compilation, he postponed the publication of this work and managed to acquire a manuscript of the *Nights* from Syria. Galland's adapted translation was published in twelve volumes. Vols. 1–6, published in 1704, and vol. 7, published in 1706, present the tales from the Arabic manuscript in accordance with contemporary criteria of translation (Larzul, *Traductions*), with the Sindbād tales integrated at the beginning of vol. 3. For the tale of Qamar al-Zamān and Budūr, of which the old manuscript contained only a fragmentary version, Galland used an additional Egyptian manuscript. When his original texts had been exhausted, his enthusiastic readers demanded that he continue and complete the work up to the prospective 1001 nights. Vol. 8, published in 1709, begins with the tale of Ghānim ibn Ayyūb as translated by Galland

from an Egyptian manuscript. To this, the publisher, without Galland's knowledge or consent, had added the tale of Zayn al-Aṣṣnām and the tale of Khudādād and his Brothers, as translated by Galland's orientalist colleague François Pétis de la Croix. For the remaining vols. 9–10, published in 1712, and vols. 11–12, published posthumously in 1717, Galland had recourse to various other sources. The story of the Sleeper and the Waker (a version of Aarne/Thompson tale type no. 1531) is adapted from an as yet unidentified source. For the remainder of the tales, and in particular for the tales that are most popular in later European traditions, Galland is indebted to the performance of the gifted storyteller Ḥannā Diyāb. In his diaries, Galland states that he met Ḥannā, a Syrian Maronite Christian from Aleppo, in the house of their common friend Paul Lucas, who himself had travelled widely in the Middle East. From 6 May to 2 June 1709, Galland wrote down extended summaries of the tales Ḥannā told him (Abdel-Halim, 271–87). For the tale of Aladdin, Ḥannā is even credited with supplying a written version, the manuscript of which is, however, not available. Galland later reworked some of his summaries of Ḥannā's tales into fully fledged tales and published them in his *Mille et une nuits*. This applies in particular to the tales of Ali Baba and Aladdin, which, for various reasons, were most appreciated by Western audiences. The Arabic manuscripts of both tales later identified by orientalist scholars were for a long time taken to be of "genuine" Arabic origin. While initial doubts about the manuscripts' authenticity had been voiced at various occasions, it was only Muhsin Mahdi's detailed argument that finally unmasked them as forged adapted translations of Galland's texts (Mahdi, 3:51–86). The only one of Ḥannā's tales for which independent Arabic manuscripts have been found that pre-date Galland's translation is the tale of the Ebony Horse.

#### 3.4. *The consequences of Galland's translation*

Galland's creative and enlarged adaptation of the Arabic manuscripts and oral sources available to him was a tremendous success in Europe. While the publication of the *Mille et une nuits* was still underway, the tales were translated

into various European languages and published in complete or partial editions. Virtually all Western writers and creative artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were to some extent inspired by the *Nights* (Irwin, 237–92). Moreover, the work gave rise to a vogue of literature in the oriental style, in particular a whole genre of orientalist fairy tales (Dammann, 138–9), and thus constitutes an exotic ingredient added into the Age of Enlightenment. Some of Galland's scholarly colleagues even aimed to imitate his success, such as Pétis de la Croix, who published a collection titled *Les mille et un jours* ("The thousand and one days"), allegedly translating a collection copied from a manuscript in the possession of a Persian dervish (see ed. P. Sebag, Paris 2003<sup>2</sup>). While Pétis de la Croix in his younger days had in fact stayed in the Iranian city of Isfahan for an extended period, his compilation was later exposed as an adapted translation of a Turkish collection of tales of the *Faraj ba'd al-shidda* genre preserved in the Bibliothèque du Roi in Paris. In the field of orientalist studies, Galland's translation inspired scholars to occupy themselves with the origin of the collection, its various tales, and the culture presented therein. Moreover, it initiated a search for complete manuscripts of the work, as all of the manuscripts available in the early eighteenth century were fragmentary.

#### 3.5. *Post-Galland manuscripts*

In response to growing demand, Arab compilers, above all in Egypt, produced complete manuscripts, including a full set of 1001 nights. The French scholar Hermann Zotenberg later surveyed these manuscripts, dividing them into two branches. While the "Syrian branch" included the old manuscript used by Galland, later research has agreed to term the more widely documented "Egyptian branch" as "Zotenberg's Egyptian Recension" (ZER). The alleged "Tunisian" manuscript, tales of which in addition to texts from Galland and other sources were used as the basis of the Arabic edition (and subsequent German translation) by German scholar Maximilian Habicht, turned out to be a wilful mystification prepared by the Tunisian Jew Mordecai b. al-Najjār. Similar criteria apply to the manuscripts prepared in Paris by Dom Chavis (second half of the eighteenth century)

and Michel Sabbāgh (first decade of the nineteenth century). Egyptian manuscripts with partly differing contents include the Wortley-Montague manuscript preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford (dated 1764–5; see Tauer) and the Reinhardt manuscript in Strassburg (dated 1831–2; see Chraïbi, *Contes*). All of the post-Galland compilers of Arabic manuscripts were faced with the situation of having to prepare “complete” texts of the *Nights*. As no notion of a specific or canonical set of tales to be included existed, completeness referred solely to the fact that a total of one thousand nights of storytelling had to be filled.

### 3.6. *Printed editions and translations*

With the exception of the Breslau edition, which is partly based on the alleged Tunisian manuscript, ZER-manuscripts formed the basis of most of the printed editions of the *Arabian Nights* prepared in the nineteenth century. The most important editions are (1) Calcutta I = ed. Aḥmad al-Shirwānī, 2 vols., Calcutta 1814–8; (2) Bulaq I = 2 vols., Būlāq (Cairo) 1835; (3) Calcutta II = ed. W. H. Macnaghten, 4 vols., Calcutta 1839–42; (4) Breslau = ed. M. Habicht and H. L. Fleischer, 12 vols., Breslau 1825–43; (5) Bulaq II = 4 vols., Būlāq (Cairo) 1862. Prior to the Arabic editions of the *Nights*, Galland’s French version had served almost exclusively as the source of reference for translations into other European languages.

The most widely known English-language translations published in the nineteenth century are those prepared by Edward William Lane and Sir Richard Francis Burton. Lane’s translation (3 vols., London 1839–41) largely follows the Bulaq I edition. Lane was an excellent scholar of Arabic, but his translation bows to puritanical Victorian morals in eliminating various scenes and even complete tales that according to contemporary criteria were deemed objectionable. Since Lane intended the book to be read as a mirror of Arabic customs and, in fact, a contemporary ethnographic guide, his translation is supplied with profuse and often distracting annotation.

Burton in his translation (10 vols., “Benares,” i.e., London, 1885) profited to a considerable extent from the previous limited English edition by John Payne (1882–4). He employed archaic language and stressed sexual undertones and

embellished any sexual scenes he could find; in particular, his “Terminal Essay” is notorious for its preoccupation with sexual matters. The main body of Burton’s translation is based on the Calcutta II edition. In addition, he later published a six-volume installment of *Supplemental Nights* (1886–8) containing additional tales from other versions of the *Arabian Nights*, including the Breslau edition, the so-called “orphan stories,” and tales from the Wortley-Montague, Chavis, and Cazotte manuscripts.

The English-language translation published by Powys Mathers (1937) is based on the French version prepared by Joseph Charles Victor Mardrus (16 vols., Paris 1899–1904). This translation is the least faithful to the Arabic original but due to its public appeal has been reprinted numerous times. It contains numerous additions from a large variety of sources, including traditional Arabic literature and nineteenth-century collections of folktales from the Arab world. The Mardrus version was widely acclaimed in France by influential writers such as André Gide and Marcel Proust and also contributed to the collection’s fame in its English version. More recent contributions to the literature include an English translation of the Galland manuscript by Husain Haddawy, who has also translated some of the more popular stories, following Bulaq I; and a faithful English translation of the “complete” text, based on Calcutta II, with the addition of four stories from Galland’s French text, prepared by Malcolm C. Lyons and Ursula Lyons. A German translation that has been widely praised for its sensitive adherence to the original Arabic was presented by Enno Littmann (1921–8, often reprinted since 1953; based on Calcutta II, with the addition of the “orphan tales”).

### 4. CHARACTERISTICS

While all versions of the *Nights* contain both the specific frame-tale and a largely identical initial set of stories, they often differ in content, particularly in their later parts. Shahrazād’s stratagem of breaking off her tales at a critical point arousing the cruel king’s curiosity not only had the practical consequence of saving her life and, in consequence, saving her sex. It also turned the frame-tale into a powerful device able to integrate a potentially endless number of tales. The more the narration proceeds, the

looser the original device of “cliffhanger,” i.e., of interrupting the tales at specifically fascinating points, is practised. And while most of the early tales are quite long, stretching over a number of nights, many of the later nights contain several short anecdotes told in a single night.

Some of the earlier tales appear to be consciously linked to the frame-tale in that they also apply the stratagem of telling stories to save one's life. In recent research, the tales with that purpose have consequently been labelled “ransom tales.” This criterion applies to the tale of the Merchant and the Jinnī, the tales told by the Qalandars in *The Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad*, the tale of *The Three Apples*, and *The Hunchback's Tale*, including the tales of the Broker, the Reeve, the Jewish Doctor, the Tailor, and the Barber. These tales, moreover, exhibit a particular framing device of story-within-a-story that at times goes down several layers. From the perspective of the listener and/or reader, the *Nights* are narrated by a storyteller who has Shahrazād narrate a story in which the protagonist tells his or her story, and so on. In his essay “Narrative-Men,” Tzvetan Todorov has identified this device as one of the major characteristics of the *Arabian Nights*. In order to tell others who they are, the narrative characters relate their previous experience by telling their story. In this manner, telling a story signifies life, and consequently, the absence of narrative signifies death. As the characters are “merely narrative” and must narrate in order to live, their storytelling generates the overwhelming abundance of embedding and embedded tales in the *Nights*. The device of having characters within a tale tell their own tales embedded within the narrative creates a labyrinthine structure that greatly contributed to the fascination of the *Arabian Nights*, particularly with Western audiences.

As a consequence of the frame-tale's narrative potential, and to some extent resulting from the fact that “complete” manuscripts of the *Arabian Nights* were not always available, the compilers of later manuscript versions incorporated tales of the most divergent categories. These tales included folktales and fairy tales, romances of love and chivalry, religious and didactic tales, fables, and jokes and anecdotes, many of which are culled either from classical Arabic literature or from the numerous existing

anonymous collections of tales. Some manuscripts even incorporated large and originally independent narratives or narrative cycles such as the lengthy romance of 'Umar b. al-Nu'mān or the Persian *Sindbād-nāme*, a collection of moralistic stories better known in the West as the *Seven Sages*. The tales of Sindbād's travels that by way of Galland's version became an integral part of the *Nights* had previously been included in a seventeenth-century Turkish manuscript. Even some of the European translators, notably Mardrus, could not resist the temptation to enlarge the repertoire of the *Arabian Nights* by adding tales from extraneous sources.

Research has classified the tales of the *Arabian Nights* and their hypothetical origin or integration into several strata. While comparative folk-narrative research has in many cases succeeded in identifying the ultimate origin of the tales, it is hard, if not impossible to tell at which point they were integrated into the *Nights*. The Indian stratum probably encompasses the “wiles of women” stories about extramarital sexual relations and some of the fables, notably those having parallels in the collection *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, which is essentially an adaptation of the Indian *Pāñcatantra*. The Iranian stratum is said to contribute those tales closest to the European understanding of fairy tale, in which wonder and magic occur on an unquestioned and natural level. Greek influence is particularly discernible in the romances (von Grunebaum). The Jewish stratum, often relating to stories from the *Talmud* or the Midrashim, the so-called *Isrā'īlyyāt*, encompasses tales of a moralistic nature, often focusing on death and eternal merit in the hereafter. The Baghdad stratum prominently deals with tales of the so-called Hārūn-cycle, in which Hārūn al-Rashīd is portrayed as a model ruler, as well as jokes and anecdotes from the times of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty, mostly culled from Arabic *adab* literature. The Cairo stratum is the latest addition to the narrative repertoire. Its tales are localised in the atmosphere of urban Cairo and encompass Mamlūk tales of deceit and roguery. These strata cannot, as earlier research suggested, be separated from each other clearly. Rather than constituting a palace whose various chambers were added to the original building at specific periods, the *Nights* resemble a building that fell into ruin repeatedly, while new buildings were

erected on the remnants in consecutive periods (Grotzfeld and Grotzfeld, 68–9).

In terms of ethical values, the narrative universe presented in the *Nights* is dominated by the world-view of the merchant class propagating the ethics of success (see Molan and Coussonnet). This is all the more understandable, as merchants and people trading or buying in the bazaar probably constituted the major audience for oral performances of tales from the *Nights* in their indigenous context. Accordingly, alluding to the traditional literary genre of the “mirror for princes,” the *Nights* may be termed a “mirror for merchants,” that is, “a manual of basic rule in manners and customs for young merchants” (Chraïbi, Situation, 6). Though the *Nights* are by no means a unified collection, the tales convey to some extent an image of social life in the Muslim world, particularly Egypt in the Mamlūk period. They should not, however, be taken as an ethnographic manual, as, following Lane’s translation, was popular in Victorian England. In particular, the playful atmosphere of the *Nights* relating to licentious behavior or the consuming of intoxicating beverages and drugs should not be interpreted as advocating a tolerant or permissive atmosphere. It can rather be seen as a sort of compensation for the shortcomings of mundane existence and the product of wishful thinking, imagining a better, “fairy-tale” life. The enthusiastic reception of the *Nights* in Europe, particularly in Victorian England, is most probably due to the rigorous moral standards reigning at the time.

##### 5. THE IMPACT OF THE NIGHTS

The impact of the *Nights* on creative imagination can hardly be overestimated. Elements from the frame-tale of the *Nights* can already be traced in Italian Renaissance literature long before Galland. Both Giovanni Sercambi’s (d. 1424) *Novella d’Astolfo*, and canto 28 of Ludovico Ariosto’s (d. 1533) *Orlando furioso* contain the story of the two men being sexually betrayed by their wives. This coincidence suggests transfer by way of oral tradition, probably through Italian trade with the Levantine countries. After the tremendous success of Galland’s translation, hardly a major European writer of the eighteenth or nineteenth century could avoid being in some way or other influenced by tales of the *Nights*. By way of re-creations in oral per-

formance or public reading from printed tales, many of which were published as separate chapbooks, tales from the *Nights* also reached the illiterate strata of society, and many of its tales have since become stock tales of European folk literature (Marzolph, Comparative folk narrative), in particular the tales of Aladdin, Ali Baba, Sindbād, and the Ebony Horse. The media of drama and, later, film, also took inspiration from the *Nights* and shared in propagating popular appreciation of the tales. Some of the earliest films ever produced by Georges Méliès are inspired by the *Nights*. Both Douglas Fairbanks’ *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924) and Lotte Reiniger’s *Die Abenteuer des Prinzen Achmed* (1926), the first feature-length animated film ever produced, are partly based on the tale of Prince Ahmed and the Fairy Pari Banu from the *Nights*. Numerous works in the modern literatures of the collection’s countries of origin, particularly Arabic and Persian literature, also take inspiration from the *Nights* (Walther, Modern Arabic Literature). Already late in the nineteenth century, the *Nights* had become a worldwide phenomenon, the impact of which transcended the boundaries of both the Middle East and the West. Recently, the impact of the *Nights* has been studied in regions as far flung as Hawaii (see Bacchilega and Arista), Indonesia (see Cohen), and Japan (see Sugita).

From the twentieth century on, images and tales from the *Nights* have formed an integral constituent of world culture. The collection as a whole is regarded as the quintessential fairy-tale world of ultimate fascination, well-being, and happiness – a matrix resembling the European notion of Cockaigne, with the added spice of (imagined) uninhibited sexuality. International popular imagery includes the number 1001, denoting an endless amount, the image of the *jinnī* who, when released from the bottle, cannot be controlled any more (from the tale of the Fisherman and the *Jinnī*), or the words “Open, Sesame” (from the tale of Ali Baba). The best-known tales from the *Nights* have moreover gained fame as modern trade names, chosen with the purpose of spontaneously forming a link in the popular imagination between the product and the content of the stories: “Aladdin” serves as a trade name for bail bonds and Internet search engines, “Ali Baba” is probably the most famous name for Western restaurants



in the oriental style, and “Sindbad” is a popular name for travel companies, particularly those catering to single males.

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## Arabic Literature

**Arabic Literature** encompasses sixteen centuries of literary creativity across a range of genres, in language spanning the spectrum from the classical to the vernacular.

### 1. FIFTH AND SIXTH CENTURIES C.E.:

#### PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIAN LITERATURE

The pre-Islamic literary prose that has survived consists mainly of some adages, sometimes