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The Transnational Influences of the *Arabian Nights*

Abstract

The *Arabian Nights* or the *Thousand and One Nights* is a famous collection of Eastern tales with a complex legacy in the West. In the early 18th century, Antoine Galland endeavored to unite the scattered Arabic manuscripts of the *Nights* tradition and translate them into the French *Les Mille et une nuits*. For an audience with Western expectations of a canonical text, the closest thing to an “original” *Nights* is this very translation. Galland intended to preserve the Arabic collection’s essence in French through only working with manuscript sources that were confirmed to have been traditionally associated with the *Nights*. However, public demand compelled him to include orally transmitted tales in his work as well. Hence, the stories of Ḥannā Diyāb, a young Syrian Maronite visiting Paris as the apprentice of a French explorer, were appended to the translation. Among these stories was the tale of “The Ebony Horse.” Scholarship devoted to the development of the *Nights*’ uses Galland’s translation to divide the collection’s growth in Arabic traditions from its legacy in the West. This is due to the *Nights*’ association with the discipline of Orientalism. Either the collection is analyzed as a representation of European cultural dominance, or of a pure Middle Eastern literary tradition that has survived years of misinterpretations by Western colonial powers. Both insights simplify how different authors imposed the literary style of their respective intellectual cultures to alter the *Nights*. Ḥannā Diyāb’s contribution to this tradition can be revealed through differences in the version of “The Ebony Horse” from the Arabic manuscript of the *Hundred and One Nights* to its reproduction in *Les Mille et une nuits*. His experience as a Catholic Ottoman subject in France offers a uniquely transnational perspective that removes the *Nights* from a strict East and West dichotomy and grants it more agency as a work. In analyzing the metamorphoses that occurred in this specific tale, the *Nights* can be appreciated for representing different cultural projects by communities seeking to understand other cultures through their own unique frameworks. Not only will this enlighten the compilations’ past development, but also unique possibilities for its future evolution.

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Introduction

The *Arabian Nights*, also known as the *Thousand and one Nights*, are a collection of fantastic and magical tales that are known to derive from an Eastern, Islamic tradition. This collection has served as an artistic inspiration for films, plays, art, and literature around the world. Yet, the collection's most notorious products are its English translations. Most recently, a review from *The New Yorker* celebrates a translation from Yasmine Seale in *The Annotated Arabian Nights: Tales from 1001 Nights* (2021) as one that “Brings ‘Arabian Nights’ Home,” and rescues “the virtues obscured by centuries of adaptation.”¹ The praise for Seale's version springs from the cultural perception of the *Nights* as a victim of Orientalism, but does not delve into the overwhelming and complicated origins of the *Nights*. Unlike other works entrenched in conversations about Orientalism, there is no definitive original of the *Arabian Nights*. Before 1704, tales from the *Thousand and One Nights* or *Alf Laylah* collection were dispersed in different manuscripts. These tales were united for the first time by the French Orientalist, antiquarian, and translator Antoine Galland in his famous French translation: *Les Mille et une Nuits*. This translation marked the collection's introduction into the Western tradition after centuries of development in the East.² This dramatic shift in setting began *Les Mille et une Nuits*' complicated legacy in the Western world.

Western, Oriental interpretations of the *Nights* are known to misconstrue the tales in the process of exploiting the cultural material of subject populations for the uses of the colonial power. The paradigm of such distorted translations is Richard Burton's *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*. Originally published in the late 19th century, His translation is famous for its inclusion of sexually explicit information expunged in prior versions of the story.³ Burton's inclusion (and exaggeration) of such lewd details

¹ Yasmine AlSaiyad, “A New Translation Brings ‘Arabian Nights’ Home,” *The New Yorker*, January 24, 2022, <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/a-new-translation-brings-arabian-nights-home>. The translation reviewed in this article is: Paulo Lemos Horta, *The Annotated Arabian Nights: Tales from 1001 Nights*, trans. Yasmine Seale (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2021).

² The *Nights*' heritage can be traced as far back to similar moral and pedagogical collections of tales from India – specifically the *Panchatantra* story cycle composed in Sanskrit no later than the 6th century. The tales are believed to have subsequently evolved into a core that is present in the Persian *Hazar Afsaneh*, before settling into the Arabic tradition around the 8th century. Robert Irwin, “Oceans of Stories,” in *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London: Tauris Parke, 2005), 39-58.

³ Galland's translation is among those guilty of expunging provocative material to be appropriate for his audience. A prime example is in the frame narrative, when Galland describes Schahzenan's discovery of the infidelity of his brother Schahriar's wife. The details of the orgy that the Queen, her handmaidens, and slaves take part in are

was so scandalous, that in order to avoid indecency charges for violating the censorship regime that regulated books sold to the public— Burton created the Kama Shastra Society of London and Benares to publish the *Nights* privately.⁴ Philip Kennedy, asserts that the provocative translation was bred from his indignance of being “banished” from England and demoted to consular service, and was his way to challenge his repressive Victorian society.⁵ However, it seems that Burton’s audience would have been too distracted by the content and style of the translation to appreciate his defiance. In the article, “The Exotic Dimension of Foreignizing Strategies,” Tarek Shamma discusses how Burton’s “deliberately foreignizing translation,” integrated cumbersome elements of Arabic prose into his English translation to exaggerate the foreignness of the tales.⁶ For example, Burton maintains the verb-subject and noun-adjective grammatical order of Arabic, thus rendering what sounds poetic in the Arabic into awkward English passages.⁷ Rather than preserving this artistry, Burton’s work preserved the “linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text,” so that the Arabian tales remained ultimately unrecognizable and unteachable to his audience.⁸ This notorious work is associated with other translations of the *Nights*, but Burton’s alienating strategy does not define the discipline of Orientalism.

In investigating if *Les Mille et une nuits* is an Orientalist production, it is useful to trace the development of this incredibly complex and protean term in its origin. Orientalism was coined and popularized as the title of Edward Said’s 1978 book, where it refers to the cataloging of Islamic and Eastern regions under European dominance as

censored with Galland writing apologetically that “La pudeur ne me permet pas de raconter tout ce qui se passa entre ces femmes et ces noirs, et c’est un détail qu’il n’est pas besoin de faire.” Antoine Galland, *Les Mille et une nuits*, vol. 1 (Paris: chez Billois, 1811), 30.

⁴ Tarek Shamma, “The Exotic Dimension of Foreignizing Strategies: Burton’s Translation of the Arabian Nights,” *The Translator* 11, no. 1 (2005), 53. Legislation such as the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 only had jurisdiction over books accessible to the broader public, not private subscriptions.

⁵ Dave Kennedy, “‘Captain Burton’s Oriental Muck Heap’: The Book of the Thousand Nights and the Uses of Orientalism,” *Journal of British Studies* 39, no. 3 (2000), 321-22. Burton’s previous career was publicly and embarrassingly ended by a bitter disagreement over the source of the Nile with his partner John Speke. The adventurer’s previous expeditions included a journey to the Muslim cities of Mecca and Medina while disguised as a Persian pilgrim in 1853. This dangerous undertaking is recorded in Burton’s work *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah*, originally published in 1857.

⁶ Shamma, “The Exotic Dimension,” 58.

⁷ A similar result ensued from Burton’s use of *saj’* or end rhyme. The poetic device used in oral narrations of the *Nights* tales to make it sound conversational, but it came off as excessively formal and stilted in the English translation. One jarring example included by Shamma from Burton’s text is: “whatso woman willeth the same she fulfilleth however man nilleth.” Shamma, “The Exotic Dimension,” 58.

⁸ Shamma, “The Exotic Dimension,” 63.

an Occidental discipline of study. Said marks Napoleon's campaign in Egypt as the reification of Oriental studies in Europe, developed early on through research institutions such as the Institut d'Égypte— a facility that Napoleon himself established in Cairo in 1798 as an adjunct to his military operations.⁹ The facility began its “fact-finding mission,” as soon as Napoleon’s occupation of Cairo began, where all physical and intellectual material was to be recorded for Western study.¹⁰ While military and political dominance is the key, and perhaps most obvious feature of Orientalism, the scholastic discipline is dedicated to documenting and organizing a foreign region for cultural and practical research.

Although France in the Early Modern Period is not what it would become in Napoleon’s era, *Les Mille et une nuits* represents the precursor to the encyclopedic Orientalism of the Institut d'Égypte. In the *Avertissement* to his work, Antoine Galland presents the work as an ersatz-voyage to the East for his reader, such that “sans avoir essuyé [sic] la fatigue d’aller chercher ces Peuples dans leur Pays, le Lecteur aura ici le plaisir de les voir agir, et de les entendre parler.”¹¹ In line with this aim of presenting a realistic portrait of the peoples of the Orient, he had taken pains “[à] conserver leurs caractères, de ne pas s’éloigner de leurs expressions et de leurs sentiments.”¹² This principle of fidelity to the original also had an editorial component, insofar as he pledged to the reader not to have departed from the original Arabic text except when absolutely necessary.¹³ Galland understood his role as translator of the *Nights* as simply delivering the tales to the French public without encroaching upon their unique design. While the comprehensive documentation of the *Nights* categorically establishes it as an Orientalist work, the source conscious rendering protects the inspiration from irreversible changes. That is to say, *Les Mille et une nuits* was not completely transformed into an emblem of French dominance. Its preservation of the Eastern influences critical to its creation designates it as a site of cultural convergence, where different literary traditions

⁹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 42. “For my purposes here, the keynote of the relationship was set for the Near East and Europe by the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798, an invasion which was in many ways the very model of a truly scientific appropriation of one culture by another, apparently stronger one.”

¹⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, 84.

¹¹ Galland, *Les Mille et une nuits*, vol. 1, xix.

¹² Galland, *Les Mille et une nuits*, vol. 1, xix.

¹³ Galland, *Les Mille et une nuits*, vol. 1, xix.

complimented each other instead of competing for full authority. In order to appreciate the transnational creation of the *Nights*, it is crucial to first understand the historical context of French Orientalism.

Orientalism in France

France and the Ottoman Empire had a fluctuating relationship during the Early Modern Period, but overall, France strived to remain in the good graces and protection of their stronger neighbors. This is especially true given the expansion of Turkish naval presence in the Mediterranean starting in the late fifteenth century.¹⁴ Franco-Turkish relations in Galland's lifetime are better appreciated in light of their history from the early sixteenth century. When France was racked by The Wars of Religion (1562-1598) the nation prioritized maintaining a good diplomatic relationship with the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵ Foreign support for both of the warring Catholics and Huguenots posed a serious threat to the nation, so an economic alliance with the Turks physically secured the nation from a potential enemy, while granting lucrative trade opportunities in the Levant. France went to great lengths to protect this trade, even if it meant undermining the success of the Holy League.¹⁶ Under the reign of Catherine de Medici (1519-1589), French diplomat François de Noailles convinced Venice to abort their efforts in the Lepanto war and accept to pay a heavy indemnity to the Turkish powers.¹⁷ This hefty price was profitable for France, as the resulting peace in the Mediterranean allowed for French trade to resume in the Levant. Diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire thus offered France both physical markets, and a lifeline from internal religious strife.

However, such benefits were not constant. Franco-Turkish relations reached a point of crisis in the mid-seventeenth century. The Cretan Wars (1645-69) were particularly consequential, given France's military assistance to Venice, which led to the three-month imprisonment of French ambassador Denis de la Hay Vantalet (1639-61) in

¹⁴ Fariba Zarinebaf, *Mediterranean Encounters: Trade and Pluralism in Early Modern Galata*, (University of California Press, 2018), 129.

¹⁵ De Lamar Jensen, "The Ottoman Turks in Sixteenth Century French Diplomacy," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 16, no. 4 (1985), 462.

¹⁶ The Holy League, initiated in 1571, consisted of temporary alliances between Christian powers. They were especially concerned in curbing the expansion of their common Ottoman enemy.

¹⁷ De Lamar Jensen, "The Ottoman Turks in Sixteenth Century French Diplomacy," 462.

1659.¹⁸ General disorganization of French activity in the Levant was exacerbated by *avarias* (illegal fees) being imposed on French merchants by Köprülü viziers and pashas in Cairo and Aleppo.¹⁹ Furthermore, competition with the Netherlands and England made French trade decline to less than three million *livres* in 1660, “the lowest point in Ottoman-French trade since the early sixteenth century.”²⁰ It was only with the conclusion of the Cretan Wars, and the appointment of Minister Colbert that would rescue French-Ottoman relations from its dismal nadir.

Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683) was appointed Controller-General of Finance in the court of Louis XIV in 1665, and Antoine Galland began his professional career in the midst of this minister’s transformative policies that rekindled French trade in the Levant. The most sweeping reforms were achieved through the ambassadors that Colbert appointed to negotiate with Turkish powers. One was the Marquis de Nointel, Charles-Marie-François Olier, who held office from 1670 to 1679. He succeeded in negotiating for trade terms equal to those enjoyed by their English and Dutch merchants competitors. This meant that custom rates on imports and exports were lowered, and French ships were permitted to trade in the Red Sea.²¹ However, economic growth was not the exclusive interest of Louis XIV; it was typically joined to the Sun King’s expanding jurisdiction over Ottoman-Catholic communities. The Ahdname of 1673, for example, had seventeen articles that established the right of the French king to protect Catholic communities of the Ottoman Empire.²² This protection was not simply nominal, it also granted increased access to holy sites (including those in Jerusalem) and exemptions for French citizens from the poll tax.²³ The diplomatic prowess of the Marquis de anointed is not exclusively responsible for restoring Franco-Turkish goodwill. Royally sponsored research on the Orient was critical of maintaining the area as a continued resource for the ambitions of the French monarchy.

¹⁸ Zarinebaf, *Mediterranean Encounters*, 129

¹⁹ Zarinebaf, *Mediterranean Encounters*, 130.

²⁰ Zarinebaf, *Mediterranean Encounters*, 130.

²¹ Zarinebaf, *Mediterranean Encounters*, 133.

²² Zarinebaf, *Mediterranean Encounters*, 133.

²³ Zarinebaf, *Mediterranean Encounters*, 133.

The Site of Oriental Research

Colbert created institutional strongholds that would establish a setting within France to foster Oriental studies. The minister was clearly influenced by the new trend in Europe where courtly circles from the Renaissance were replaced by state-sponsored academies as the new centers of intellectual inquiry.²⁴ Practical facilities included the Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO), which was established in 1669 by Colbert to satisfy the Kingdom's demand for linguists.²⁵ However, it was the minister's plans for a 'grande académie' out of the Académie royale des Sciences (founded in 1666) that the growth of orientalist studies can be understood. The academy was intended to unite the disparate disciplines of *belles lettres*, history, philosophy, and mathematics in one institution.²⁶ Each of these fields would doubtlessly include scholars who used knowledge from the Orient to advance their fields.²⁷ The opportunities for interdisciplinary studies could have created a flourishing nexus for learning, but the state-sponsorship failed to reach its potential. The institution struggled to establish itself without encroaching upon the privileges of other established academies or trifling with politically and religiously sensitive issues.²⁸ As France was investing in research that would enrich the nation commercially and culturally, it took precautions to protect these objectives from intellectually liberal scholars.

The connection of Oriental languages to theological matters made it susceptible to the disapproval of Church authorities and the monarchy. Louis XIV religious policies were a key feature of his reign. Louis XIV's proactive policies that protected Catholics outside of his jurisdiction reinforced his use of religious claims to extend and protect his power. Colbert's institutions were directly involved in these objectives. For example,

²⁴ Nicholas Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 42.

²⁵ Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France: Eurasian Trade, Exoticism, and the Ancien Régime* (Oxford: Berg, 2008), 128.

²⁶ Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, 52-53. Each section was meant to meet during different days of the week, but the first Thursday of every month was reserved for a general assembly of the whole academy, dubbed the "États Généraux de la Littérature" where the individual sections could observe each other's procedures.

²⁷ One such scholar is John Greaves, a quintessential citizen of the Republic of Letters who traveled to the Middle East in order to access Islamic scientific knowledge. His notebook includes a list of "What books are to be read by a student of astronomy according to my Sheic's opinion at Cairo," Quoted in Zur Shalev, "The Travel Notebooks of John Greaves," in *The Republic of Letters and the Levant*, edd. Alastair Hamilton, Mauritius H. Van Den Boogert, and Bart Westerweel (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 99.

²⁸ Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, 53.

founding member of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Amable de Bourzeis..worked closely with Colbert, producing documentary evidence to back up the crown's claims, like the defence of Gallicanism against the pope, or of the queen's rights to lands in the Spanish Netherlands in the build-up to the War of Devolution."²⁹ In order to protect the academy from ecclesiastical objections, subjects were defined by their exclusion of controversial materials, such as astronomy being separated from 'judicial astrology' and chemistry from alchemy.³⁰ Royal institutes only facilitated Oriental research that was economically and politically beneficial to the monarchy. The acutely monitored scholarship within these institutions stifled intellectual explorations, and frustrated scholars.

Restrictive scholarship was not the only problem faced by Orientalists. Establishing oneself in scholastic settings was difficult and the rewards were scant. Antoine Galland, among the most famous Orientalists of his era, struggled to obtain his salary even after 5 years of service as the chair of Arabic at the Collège de France.³¹ Such treatment is why others were compelled to move between sponsors. While Galland remained in service of the French King for the entirety of his career, his contemporary Barthélemy d'Herbelot moved between competing bastions of Florentine and Parisian intellectual societies for better compensation.³² However, some scholars were forced to consider less prestigious options. Arabic teacher Solomon Negri, for example, struggled to find suitable posts in European cities. When considering an offer in the royal library, Negri was so offended by the meager salary, that he chose to travel to England instead.³³ Ultimately, Negri remained on the move for most of his life, working on the outskirts of national and royal institutions. However, working on the

²⁹ Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, 56.

³⁰ Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, 61.

³¹ McCabe, *Orientalism in Early Modern France*, 135.

³² Dew, *Orientalism in Louis XIV's France*, 67. Financial rewards were not the only reason for the scholar's movement. The Medici court was more successful than the French monarchy in protecting Orientalist studies from church censorship and allowing more intellectual freedom for interdisciplinary work, *loc. cit.*, 71.

³³ John-Paul A. Ghobrial, *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe*, edd. Jan Loop, Alastair Hamilton, and Charles Burnett (Brill, 2017), 319. After failing to secure employment for himself elsewhere, Negri returned to France and advertised himself as a *savant* who could serve Louis XIV. He even suggested himself as a potential replacement for Barthélemy d'Herbelot as the chair of Syriac at the Collège Royal. Negri had extensive knowledge of several languages including ancient Greek, Latin, French, Italian, Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, Turkish and Persian, so his struggle to achieve a stable post did not demonstrate incompetence on his part, but rather the severe competition for positions in Oriental learning during his time.

fringes did not obstruct his access to intellectual projects. Negri was able to participate in scholarly activities through collaborative work with his students, and other scholars—including the production of an Arabic New Testament with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK).³⁴ Even scholars with consistent access to prestigious positions would work within a spontaneous, intellectual network to freely pursue their interests. Galland was among them.

Galland and the Republic of Letters

The emergence of royally funded institutions was emblematic of the growth of the Orientalist discipline, but not necessarily the true site of it. Rather, productions of Near East literature circulated in the Republic of Letters. “The Republic of Letters,” was a scholarly network or “an intellectual ‘estate’ which knew no political boundaries.”³⁵ This relatively informal system granted more freedom than the restrictive institutions of the French monarchy. Instead of being grouped together in the boundaries of an institution, scholars maintained connections through correspondence, book dedications, gift exchanges, and, most importantly, travel.³⁶ Journeys to Istanbul, for example, meant access to an incredible book market with a vast collection of foreign works and manuscripts. This was not only convenient for European scholars. Galland notes that even scholars from Persia would come to the city to find works originally published in their own lands for cheaper.³⁷ While royal academies viewed the Levant as a political target, the Republic of Letters considered it a hub of global resources and knowledge.

Galland’s participation in the Republic of Letters goes back to his service for the Marquis de Nointel in the 1670s, as a dragoman.³⁸ Minister Colbert would charge collectors such as Galland to collect books deemed beneficial for “European intellectual inquiry, whether religious, political, philosophical, or scientific.”³⁹ Often, such materials

³⁴ John-Paul A. Ghobrial, *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe*, 314.

³⁵ Patrick J. Lambe, “Critics and Sceptics in the Seventeenth-Century Republic of Letters,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 81, no. 3 (1988), 273.

³⁶ Shalev, “The Travel Notebooks of John Greaves,” 98.

³⁷ Bevilacqua, Alexander, *The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the European Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018), 24.

³⁸ “Orientalism as science,” 128. The term comes from the Turkish word *tarjuman*, which means translator.

³⁹ Bevilacqua, *The Republic of Arabic Letters*, 27. Colbert was instrumental in dictating what books collectors and dragomans would gather from the Orient, prioritizing “books useful to European intellectual inquiry, whether religious, political, philosophical, or scientific.”

also served the political agendas of the monarchy, including statements of beliefs from Eastern Christians that reinforced Catholic doctrine and buttressed Louis XIV's polemics against his protestant enemies.⁴⁰ Crafting a comprehensive collection of Oriental works was a French ambition that Galland was trained to assist in— and it directly set the foundation for future Oriental studies. Seventeenth-century Arabists like Galland had collected materials that would be the focus of Oriental studies for the next three hundred years, with few new Arabic materials entering European collections during this time.⁴¹ Subsequent years were dedicated to the interpretations of accumulated materials, but Galland was involved solely in the documentation and extracting process. Galland has been traditionally credited with styling his *Les Mille et une nuits* so they suited the romantic, French literary taste of his readers.⁴² To understand Galland's encyclopedic approach to the *Nights*, which he needed to organize and assess the Manuscript sources he was working with, it is necessary to analyze the journals he had written during his service under the Marquis de Nointel.

These journals demonstrate no artistic or literary skill, which is understandable as Galland never meant to publish them. Rather, they function as ledgers, detailing what Galland was focused on obtaining during his service in the Ottoman Empire. For example, in Galland's *Voyages inédits* about his journey to Izmir (*Smyrne*), the antiquarian records a list of "Marchandises qui s'achètent à Smyrne" that includes "Gomme arabique," and "Opion" [opium].⁴³ However, the most striking example of Galland's methodology comes from a snippet from his Journal "pendant son sejour à constantinople." Below is an image of a chessboard that Galland purchased during his journey there. Not only does Galland note the canvas material from which it is made, but he etches out the pieces with ostensible attention to detail, as the images within each block are clearly defined. This page is not a testament to the antiquarian's artistic

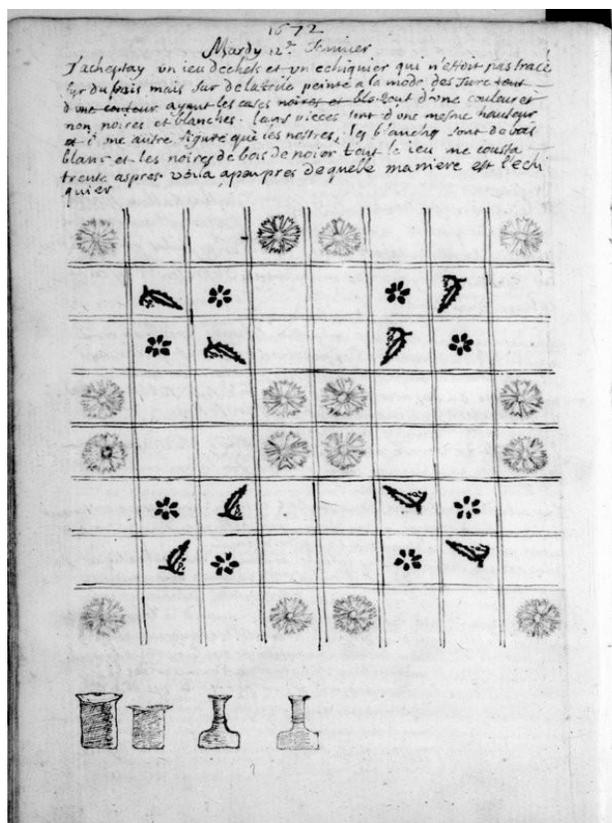
⁴⁰ John-Paul A. Ghobrial, "Migration from Within and Without: In the Footsteps of Eastern Christian in the Early Modern World," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 27 (2017), 163.

⁴¹ Alastair Hamilton, "The Study of Islam in Early Modern Europe," 182.

⁴² Duncan B. Macdonald, for example, writes that "Galland was a born story-teller; he had a flair for good stories and enjoyed telling them." However, this conclusion separates Galland's work on the *Nights* from his life-long participation in the archival Orientalism of the Republic of Letters: "A Bibliographical and Literary Study of the First Appearance of the 'Arabian Nights' in Europe," *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 2, no. 4 (1932), 387.

⁴³ Antoine Galland, *Voyages inédits*, vol. 1: *Smyrne ancienne et moderne* (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2001), 185-196.

ability, but rather the methodological and precise nature of his technique to catalog the Orient. Galland did not have experience in adding his artistic flair to materials, as he was trained to preserve them for future study.



[Paris, BnF, Français 6088, f.5v]

“J’achetay un jeu d’echek et un échiquier qui n’estoit pas tracé sur du bois mais sur de la toile peinte à la mode des Turcs, ayant les cases tout d’une couleur et nos noires et blanches. Lemurs pièces sont d’une mesme hauteur et d’une autre figure que les nostres. Les blanches sont de bois blanc et les noires de bois noyer. Tout le jeu me cousta trente aspires. Voilà à peu près de quelle manière est l’échiquier.”⁴⁴

Collaboration in the Republic of Letters

The Republic of Letters also prioritized a different audience than Oriental institutions. There was a correlation between the preference of encyclopedic work over

⁴⁴ Antoine Galland, *Journal d’Antoine Galland pendant son Séjour à Constantinople (1672-173)*, vol. 1, ed. Ernest Leroux. (Paris: Librairie de la Société Asiatique de l’École des Langue Orientales Vivantes, etc., 1881), 27.

general knowledge and producing materials more for the popular market and specialized scholars.⁴⁵ Perhaps the paradigm of this type of scholarship is the *Bibliothèque orientale, ou Dictionnaire universel contenant tout ce qui regarde la connoissance des peuples de l'Orient*. This work was begun and nearly completed by Barthélemy D'Herbelot—but Antoine Galland had edited the collection after the main author's death and wrote the preface.⁴⁶ The ambitious dictionary was meant to catalog all available knowledge on the East, with as little judgment as possible.⁴⁷ While certainly a monumental and symbolic work, its scholastic reception was underwhelming. Certain Oriental scholars lamented its alphabetical organization and certain inconsistencies that made the immense work cumbersome and difficult to navigate for quick reference.⁴⁸ However, the work was popular enough to elicit a second edition published in France between 1781-83, designed specifically for public and popular readership.⁴⁹

Although the first edition of the *Bibliothèque orientale* left much to be structurally desired, certain aspects of the original production made it more accessible to non-scholarly readers. For example, its use of latin script to transliterate every Arabic, Persian, and Turkish word into French.⁵⁰ Despite its unconvincing debut, the work demonstrated potential for public taste, but not without significant adjustments. Along with some much-needed clarifying reforms in terms of organization and transliteration, arcane material that was believed to be the exclusive interest of scholars was removed from the work. Furthermore, material from travel accounts and supplementary information from Galland's *Paroles remarquables, bon mots et maximes de Orientaux* were added to the original dictionary.⁵¹ While these additions could be accused of compromising the spirit of the original, the popular audience was not the least bit intimidated by the vast amount of information. Rather, the "Avertissement de l'Editeur; included a pledge to print a supplementary volume which would comprise all excised

⁴⁵ Lambe, "Critics and Skeptics in the Seventeenth-Century Republic of Letters," 279.

⁴⁶ Bevilacqua, "How to Organise the Orient: d'Herbelot and the 'Bibliothèque Orientale,'" *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 79 (2016), 244.

⁴⁷ "How to Organise the Orient," 225.

⁴⁸ "The dragoman Jean-Michel Venture de Paradis regretted that 'notions scattered in such a voluminous dictionary, whose very key is hard to find, are as good as lost for public instruction.'" Alexander Bevilacqua, "How to Organise the Orient," 214.

⁴⁹ Bevilacqua, "How to Organise the Orient," 244.

⁵⁰ Bevilacqua, "How to Organise the Orient," 216.

⁵¹ Bevilacqua, "How to Organise the Orient," 244.

material for those who insisted on the full work,” indicating sincere interest from the readers.⁵² The creation of the *Bibliothèque orientale* demonstrates two crucial elements of Orientalism during this time. Firstly, scholars worked collaboratively as Galland and d’Herbelot did, to complete works with a shared understanding of professional standards. Secondly, the encyclopedic standards that scholars operated with were aligned with popular demand. These two features of Orientalism parallel the second literary tradition that influenced the creation of the *Nights*.

The Composition of the *Nights*

Galland had discovered the *Thousand and One Nights* through the Sindbad cycle of stories that he had originally prepared to publish at the turn of the eighteenth century.⁵³ In realizing that this story was only part of a vast collection of similar material, he halted the printing of the seven voyages and decided instead to publish the complete collection of tales. Thus began the antiquarian’s hunt for Arabic manuscripts of the *Nights*. A three-volume fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript became the basis for the first seven volumes of his translation, published rapidly between 1704 and 1706,⁵⁴ but Galland continued to seek more Arabic sources to extend the cycle due to its wild popularity.⁵⁵ While fulfilling the immense popular demand was a motivation,⁵⁶ Galland also had the idyllic goal of uniting a collection of stories in French as he imagined they had originally been compiled in Arabic. Galland was able to use separate manuscripts of tales like the voyages of Sindbad and “Dormeur éveillé” to fill his volumes, but his

⁵² Bevilacqua, “How to Organise the Orient,” 244.

⁵³ Galland completed his translation of “Sindbad the Sailor,” circa 1698. He mentions these tales in his dedication to his patron Madame la Marquise d’O, the ambassador De Guillargues’ daughter, explaining that the delay from her initial commission to the publishing of the *Nights*’ first volume was due to the discovery of the larger collection. For more on Galland’s relationship to his patron, see: Muhsin Mahdi, *The Thousand and One Nights*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 18.

⁵⁴ Mahdi, *The Thousand and One Nights*, 27. After Galland had exhausted his sources from the three-volume manuscript, volume 8 was published three years later in 1709. Volumes 9 and 10 were published in 1712, and volumes 11 and 12 were published after Galland’s death in 1715. The shift in pacing demonstrates Galland’s struggle to find adequate resources for his translation.

⁵⁵ For more information on the sources that Galland used, see: Ibrahim Akel, “Quelques Remarques sur la Bibliothèque d’Antoine Galland et L’arrivée des *Mille et une nuits* en Occident,” in *Antoine Galland et l’Orient des savants*, eds. Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat and Michel Zink (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2017), 197-215.

⁵⁶ The popularity of Galland’s French translation cannot be overstated. The French writer Michaud noted that Parisians would often stop by Galland’s door and wake him up by calling out loudly: “O vous, qui savez de si jolis contes, et qui les racontez si bien, racontez nous en un!” Quoted in Mushin J. al-Musawi, *The Islamic Context of The Thousand and One Nights*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 49.

comprehensive approach was incongruent with the immense and transmutative nature of the *Nights*. Eventually, Galland turned to an unexpected source of tales for his translation: a young creative storyteller named Ḥannā Diyāb. Before Ḥannā Diyāb's contributions, *Les Mille et une nuits* was meant to be an unadulterated representation of the *Alf Laylah* tradition as Galland found it. However, the inclusion of his orally performed tales revealed the project to be a representation of the intellectual trends of the Republic of Letters in the Early Modern Period.

Ḥannā Diyāb (ca. 1688 - ca. 1763) was a Syrian Maronite who had come under the guidance of the antiquarian Paul Lucas (1664-1737). Lucas had come East in service of the French king Louis XIV (1643-1715) to collect historical materials such as coins and inscriptions and had enticed Ḥannā Diyāb to join him as a translator in exchange for a promised future position in the *Bibliothèque du Roi* in Paris.⁵⁷ Once in Paris, Ḥannā Diyāb made the acquaintance of Antoine Galland, who recognized in him a potential source for additional stories to complete *Les Mille et une nuits*. Ḥannā Diyāb would recount approximately fifteen tales to Galland during a series of meetings in 1709, ten of which were ultimately selected for publication in the last four volumes of *Les Mille et une nuits*. Among these tales are arguably the most iconic stories associated with the *Nights*, such as “Aladdin” and “Alī Bābā and the Forty Thieves.” However, Galland's inclusion of them is surprising given the precedent he established in his previous volumes. In his first seven volumes, Galland only used tales that had manuscript evidence for inclusion in the *Alf Laylah* or the *Thousand and One Nights* collection.⁵⁸ Galland had even disowned the eighth volume of *Les Mille et une nuits* because of the insertion of two tales by the publisher, unbeknownst to Galland himself, which were not a part of the *Nights*.⁵⁹ Even if Galland believed that Ḥannā Diyāb was

⁵⁷ Our knowledge of this promise comes from an account that Ḥannā Diyāb produced later in life, and which will be a source for much of our information about him: *The Book of Travels*, ed. Michael Cooperson, trans. Elias Muhanna, vol. 1 (New York: New York University Press, 2021), 23.

⁵⁸ Sylvette Larzul, “Further Considerations on Galland's *Mille et une Nuits*: A Study of the Tales Told by Hanna,” *Marvels & Tales: Journal of Fairy-Tale Studies* 18, no. 2 (2004), 260.

⁵⁹ Larzul, “Further Considerations on Galland's *Mille et une Nuits*,” 260. These two tales were translated by François Pétil de la Croix. For more on the publishing history of the *Nights* and its relationship to Galland's authorship see: Arafat Abdur Razzaque, “Genie in a Bookshop: Print Culture, Authorship, and ‘The Affair of the Eighth Volume’ at the Origins of *Les Mille et une nuits*,” in *The Thousand and One Nights: Sources and Transformations in Literature, Art, and Science*, eds. Ibrahim Akel and William Granara (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 82-119.

providing tales derived from *Alf Laylah*, his acceptance of them without manuscript attestation is inconsistent with his stated values of source fidelity, especially since Ḥannā Diyāb is not credited in the volumes.

While the tales contributed by Ḥannā Diyāb have been the subject of serious study, they are often separated from the rest of the published *Nights*. Tales derived from Galland's three-volume manuscript have enjoyed a higher status than other stories because of their explicit, written connection to the *Alf Laylah* tradition. Muhsin Mahdi's hypothesized "Syrian Manuscript" is the paradigm of this approach. Mahdi constructed a *stemma codicum* of the Syrian branch of manuscripts utilized by Galland to come up with an Arabic archetype from which the European versions of the *Nights* were supposedly derived.⁶⁰ Madeleine Dobie argued that trying to validate the *Nights* through an appeal to unadulterated, Arabic sources is "problematic to the extent that it negates the significance of intercultural transmission that occurs... in a messy, discontinuous way, rather than as the result of a single, serendipitous act of exchange."⁶¹ Source critical approaches that are restricted to the Arabic manuscript tradition are additionally blinkered in their exclusion of Ḥannā Diyāb's tales from the broader corpus of the *Nights*, preventing valuable comparisons and relationships from being drawn between them.⁶² This segregation of tales with Arabic manuscript sources from Ḥannā Diyāb's so-called "orphan tales," maintains a dichotomous, Eastern and Western framework for studying the *Nights*, which is ultimately insufficient for investigating its enormous geographic and temporal history.⁶³

⁶⁰ For a holistic summary of the manuscript traditions of the *Nights* and a critique of the accuracy of Mahdi's archetype (including the non-canonical interchangeability of the *Nights*, the underestimated potential of other manuscripts, and content within the manuscript that challenge its dating to the thirteenth century), see: Robert Irwin, "The Book without Authors," in *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London: Tauris Parke, 2005), 42-62.

⁶¹ Madeleine Dobie, "Translation in the Contact Zone: Antoine Galland's *Mille et une nuits: contes arabes*," in *The Arabian Nights in Historical Context: Between East and West*, eds. Saree Makdisi and Felicity Nussbaum (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 37.

⁶² "Dormeur éveillé," is one story that offers itself up for comparison with Ḥannā Diyāb's tales. Ulrich Marzolph writes how "several specifications in the manuscript's version [which Galland used as a model for his rendition] of the tale of *The Sleeper Awakened* deserve particular attention, as they differ from the specifications in most of the tale's other known versions and only appear here," "The Arabic Source Text for Galland's 'Dormeur éveillé,'" *Oriente Moderno* 98, no. 1 (2018), 5. Tracking this tale's evolution through its dated manuscripts will provide valuable insight on how the *Nights* was altered through transmission in medieval Islamic contexts. Comparing this trajectory with the transformation of "The Ebony Horse," will help draw important conclusions about the differences of the written and oral circulation of the *Nights*.

⁶³ This infamous term for Ḥannā Diyāb's tales was coined by Mia Gerhardt: *The Art of Story-telling* (Leiden, 1963), pp. 12-14.

Maronites as Mediators

Ḥannā Diyāb was not involved in European orientalism solely through his associations with Lucas and Galland. Rather, it was his identity as a Syrian Maronite that would have exposed him to opportunities for social mobility and travel through the discipline. The Maronites were a sect of Eastern Christianity that were traditionally aligned with the Roman Catholic church, and thus had ecclesiastical and scholastic ties to Catholic institutions in Europe.⁶⁴ They formed a peasant community that was concentrated in the northern part of Mount Lebanon from the early 14th century, but began to settle in Aleppo from the 1640s.⁶⁵ Although subject to Ottoman rule, monasteries had access to institutions in Rome that trained and mobilized Eastern Christians as extensions of European Catholic power. Pope Gregory XIII, for example, founded the Maronite college as a means to train ecclesiastical leaders who would strengthen faith for Christians under Turkish reign. However, after getting a Western education in Rome, extremely few young Maronites returned home to guide and reform their Christian communities in the East.⁶⁶ Aleppo and Mount Lebanon were strongholds of Maronite learning and copying, but those with skills in Oriental languages typically sought sophisticated positions in European universities, libraries, and oriental presses.⁶⁷ Prominent Catholic institutions in Europe and the Levant were centers of liturgical production. Yet, the most riveting developments of Maronite literature were unfolding outside these institutions.

While Ḥannā Diyāb did have a brief experience in the Monastery of St. Elisha,⁶⁸ his contributions to the *Nights* were inspired by the emergence of a new literary phenomenon in his own Maronite community in Syria. Aleppo in the early 18th century

⁶⁴ Maronites traditionally dominated academic posts in Europe, such as the Syriac chair at the La Pienza, as they “benefited from the centuries-long tradition of good relations with Rome, not to mention their proximity to powerful patrons.” Ghobrial, *The Teaching and Learning of Arabic in Early Modern Europe*, 324.

⁶⁵ Hilary Kilpatrick, “The Arabic Culture of Christians in Syria in the 16th and 17th Centuries,” in *Contacts and Interaction: Proceedings of the 27th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants Helsinki 2014*, edd. Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, Petteri Koskikall, and Ilkka Lindstedt (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 221-2.

⁶⁶ Aurelien Girard and Giovanni Pzzorusso, “The Maronite College in Early Modern Rome: Between the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Letters,” in *College Communities Abroad: Education, Migration and Catholicism in Early Modern Europe* (Manchester University Press, 2018), 176.

⁶⁷ Girard and Pzzorusso, “The Maronite College in Early Modern Rome,” 186.

⁶⁸ Ḥannā Diyāb, *The Book of Travels*, vol. 1, xix.

was undergoing a literary renaissance. Hilary Kilpatrick describes the emergence of a group of Arab Christian writers in Syria around 1700 who were able to “reflect on the Arabic language in terms of the indigenous tradition, and to incorporate elements of the (Muslim) Arabic literary heritage into their own works.”⁶⁹ Maronites were included in this trend as their poems included dialect Syriac and ‘neo-Aramaic’ words that appealed to a more popular Levantine audience outside of monasteries.⁷⁰ The compromised sanctity of Syriac as the exclusive language and tradition of Maronite production reveals the inception of a new literary style that served material besides religious contents. Popular Maronite travelogues used these developments to convey vivid and personal reactions to new, strange lands.

Travel narratives are considered a quintessentially European form of literature and are intertwined with Orientalism in the way that it represented Western modes of thinking and representing foreign lands. However, European travelers’ safety concerns, ignorance of the language, and general lack of interest in local inhabitants provided narratives with little historical value on their own.⁷¹ Thankfully, another group ventured into new territories around the same time and were able to provide much more valuable accounts. Service as alms-collectors provided Maronites with a chance to travel abroad. While many traveled to European cities to collect money for their church, there were some Eastern Christians who were able to travel to the uncharted territory of the New World, and thus on the frontiers of Western expansion.⁷² These individuals differed from Maronites who capitalized on the well-established connections of their community to obtain privileged scholastic positions as copyists, translators and librarians. Rather than assimilate themselves either into Muslim or Catholic traditions of formal writing, they became “purveyors of luxuries and marvels” who delivered sensational accounts of exciting lands to an eager, popular audience.⁷³ Maronites who wrote travelogues operated similarly to oriental scholars, like Galland, in the Republic of Letters. Both

⁶⁹ Hilary Kilpatrick, “From Literatur to Adab: The Literary Renaissance in Aleppo Around 1700,” *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 58 (2006), 206.

⁷⁰ Kilpatrick, “The Arabic Culture of Christians in Syria in the 16th and 17th Centuries,” 224.

⁷¹ Elizabeth Sirriyeh, “The Memoires of a French Gentleman in Syria: Chevalier d’Arvieux (1635-1702),” *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 11, no. 2 (1984), 125.

⁷² John-Paul A. Ghobrial, “Stories Never Told: The First Arabic History of the New World,” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/ The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 40 (2012), 260.

⁷³ John-Paul A. Ghobrial, “Migration from Within and Without: In the Footsteps of Eastern Christians in the Early Modern World,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 27 (2017), 156.

worked in the outskirts of official institutions, while crafting a genre about foreign areas that appealed to public taste.

Diyab's Journal

In order to meaningfully investigate the *Nights'* the literary trends that contributed to its reinterpretation must be understood. While the candid, record-keeping style of Galland's European Orientalist tradition defines the volumes of the *Nights* that were translated from an Arabic manuscript, Ḥannā Diyāb's influence on the collection is represented through the literary culture that he derived from. While his contributions were oral, Ḥannā Diyāb did write and produce a written memoir entitled *The Book of Travels (Kitāb al-Siyāhah)*. The travelogue depicts the Ottoman subject's experiences in French territory and is notable for its artistic writing style. Despite having been written in 1764, approximately fifty-five years after his meeting with Galland in 1709, the memoir is remarkably vivid. Even decades later Ḥannā Diyāb is able to provide a precise itinerary of his travels, but perhaps his most impressive feat was capturing the emotions he experienced during his encounters, especially those with powerful individuals and institutions in the French kingdom. His travelogue coincides with other artistic travel narratives being published before and after his visit to Paris, and his literary style derives from the broader trend of these writers, as is to be explained further in the following section.

The memoir has been said to resemble the *Thousand and One Nights*, not only in the centrality of oral storytelling in both texts, but also "in the way the storyteller's memory functions and in his manner of refashioning existing narratives and motifs."⁷⁴ The methodology adopted in this essay relies on the assumption that Ḥannā Diyāb's voice in his memoir would correspond to his narration of his tales. Galland's journals are also published, but unlike Ḥannā Diyāb's they are rather methodical. Instead of describing the customs and cultures of the areas he was visiting, he provides a meticulous record of the books and manuscripts he encounters. Madeleine Dobie remarks that the "I" of the traveller/ author is almost completely effaced," in Galland's

⁷⁴ Ḥannā Diyāb, *The Book of Travels*, vol. 1, xxvi.

“formless and dry” journal.⁷⁵ This characterization of his writing style simply corroborates Galland’s lack of interest in original, creative production, in lieu of his anthropological expertise. The differing styles of the creators’ journals reflects how Ḥannā Diyāb would be far more likely to have artistically altered the tales than Galland. Thus, comparing one of Ḥannā Diyāb’s tales in *Les Mille et une nuits* to Ḥannā Diyāb’s source of that story can reveal how the Syrian traveler adjusted the narrative to reflect his imperial experiences.

Copying as an Act of Transformation, not Preservation

The extent of Hanna Ḥannā Diyāb’s involvement in the literary culture of Aleppo is to be investigated through his ownership of fellow Maronite İlyās ibn Ḥanna al-Mawṣilī’s travel writings. The specific “Aleppo” manuscript owned by Diyab, discovered in 1905 by Jesuit scholar Antoine Rabbath, is entitled “the travels of the priest, İlyās al-Mawṣilī.” The first 269 pages of this manuscript consist of İlyās’s travelogue (also titled the *Book of Travels*), while the next 114 pages include a *History of Spanish involvement in the Americas*.⁷⁶ The final 55 pages are from an Arabic translation of the Ottoman *sefaretname* of Ottoman envoy “Sa’id Pasha,” to France in 1719.⁷⁷ The *Book of Travels* details İlyās’ journey to the new world as an alms-collector in service of the Spanish kingdom. İlyās arrived in Cartagena in 1675 and he would remain in the Americas until his departure from Mexico City in 1684. Near the middle of his stay, during a sojourn in Lima in 1680, he began to write his Arabic travelogue and history of the New World.⁷⁸ Compared to an Ottoman account of the discovery of the New World, the *Tarih-i Hind-i garbi*, İlyās’ writing style is much more detailed. İlyās includes “names of specific individuals, dates of particular events,” along with “a running account of the various conflicts that emerged between the Spaniards and the native inhabitants, and interestingly, among the Spaniards themselves.”⁷⁹ The first half of this description seems similar to Galland’s approach, and it is possible that İlyās was also influenced by the same encyclopedic trend. The shift into a more artistic, and

⁷⁵ Madeleine Dobie, “Translation in the Contact Zone: Antoine Galland’s *Mille et une nuits: contes arabes*,” 30.

⁷⁶ Ghobrial, “Stories Never Told: The First Arabic History of the New World,” 263.

⁷⁷ Ghobrial, “Stories Never Told: The First Arabic History of the New World,” 263.

⁷⁸ Ghobrial, “Stories Never Told: The First Arabic History of the New World,” 260.

⁷⁹ Ghobrial, “Stories Never Told: The First Arabic History of the New World,” 276.

sociological perspective in his writings, more representative of the literary revival of Aleppo, can be explored through the role of manuscript copying.

Ḥannā Diyāb's name was discovered by Rabbath underneath an ink blot on the first page of the manuscript, and was presumably in his possession sometime between 1720 and his death in 1760.⁸⁰ While his autograph confirms his ownership of the manuscript, John-Paul Ghobrial suggests that Ḥannā Diyāb had also copied the work himself from a (now lost) manuscript from 1699 in Spain.⁸¹ In his article "Stories Never Told: The First Arabic History of the New World," John-Paul A. Ghobrial remarks that the handwriting is similar between the manuscripts of Ḥannā Diyāb's *Book of Travels* and his copy of Ilyās' work.⁸² This evidence is further supported through the four other hand-copied books in Ḥannā Diyāb's library, with all of their calligraphy also matching that of the *Book of Travels*.⁸³ Furthermore, the Aleppo manuscript is the only extant document that includes the *sefaretnama* along with the *Book of Travels* and the *History*— which might be representative of Ḥannā Diyāb's research interests.⁸⁴ Pages from each manuscript are included below, and they appear to be written by the same hand. However, there is one stray annotation in the margin's Ḥannā Diyāb's manuscript that might suggest a more free-hand approach. The calligraphy is similar in both the photos, aside from wider spacing in the Aleppo manuscript. However, these differences can better represent changes of circumstance and pace in writing, than the rendering of another hand. It would be appropriate for an older Ḥannā Diyāb, more conscious of the literary culture of his time, to slowly and carefully copy someone else's story while he would write his own travelogue as it came to him.

⁸⁰ Ghobrial, "Stories Never Told: The First Arabic History of the New World," 263-4. Presumably, Ḥannā Diyāb's name was blotted out when the manuscript was acquired by Jibrā'īl ibn Yūsuf Qirmiz in 1817.

⁸¹ Ghobrial, "Stories Never Told: The First Arabic History of the New World," 266.

⁸² Ghobrial, "Stories Never Told: The First Arabic History of the New World," 263, n. 8.

⁸³ Ḥannā Diyāb, *The Book of Travels*, vol. 1, xxvii.

⁸⁴ Ghobrial, "Stories Never Told: The First Arabic History of the New World," 269.

بيت الحار وسكن من حجره وصفها من حجار مطبوخ يهويهم فكل
سكنه فصحنا في ذلك الموضع وسالنا ذلك القاطن في الروم
كان حينا من حيل النصارى التي يراها فواجبنا بان نعلم ان كان
عامر وسكن في ايامه فمضت ايامه ولم يبق له من حجار مطبوخ
شديد وهذا القطار حتى يهوي من الزبد ونطو حجاره التي كانت
عامرة في حجار كان حتى غارت زهره واستخدمت رومة تحت القوس
سنتين بعد يومه الهول ارسلا الله فطال في حجاره فكلتونها
ذلك الرسل منها زماره التي يهوي حجارها لربنا ذلك التان
احمر اخضر من ذلك الزيت والبطيخ ومن الحجار المطبوخ
نهارين السمك ثم سطرنا اليق وصلنا اليوم بترسو ساه
فلم وصلنا اليك البريد فمضنا القاطن ان نودخل اليها
تعمله لنا بان اهل البلد اسوا برنا في رومنا يروا حجار
لاسم مني ولا سرافي ولا هودي ولا من غيرهم في ترف رومهم
و يقضهم للذين نالتهم نزل برات البلوت تحت الصور فبنا
تلك الليلة في ذلك المكان ولما اصبح الصبح هبت في السقر
ولم وصلنا القاطن في البلوت حتى يشرب الشاي الزاد والصح
سابقنا في الطريق ويعد ما تنوق لنا جميع ما يحتاجه واستكر في
من واحد من اولاد البلوت دابة حتى ياتوا معنا لان كان لادنين
وكل بلد التي نودخلها استكر في دابة وراحها حتى ياتوا معنا فلما
استكر في تلك الدابة عمل عليها جميع حجار حجارا كان يفعل
مع العين يركب اليه علمي دابة فاضير في دابة فاضير ايضا

51

واحد استلوا شيئا
وربنا انها اليه

[Hannā Diyāb's Book of Travels Rome, BAV, Sbath 254, f.51a]

هو سوق اسبدا الذين مزعما يكون على هذه الملكة
وهي من قريه واصلت اليكم لانهم جنود غير معروف روم
بعد ذلك يبذل اهل البلاد ويطلب عبادة هذه الاصنام
وقال لهم يربلكم ان تقادوم في طبعوم واخذوم حيث انا
هذه الرجال ناموسهم اقبل ولص من نابوسنا ولا احد يحل
سلاح ضد في عيونهم ولا يروم بولاجب وصوابا وهذا الحار
على الهنود في معوز باح حتى يستشربول بواحد من الاصنام
وهو يرد عليهم ويخبرهم كلما يعرف حيندات السلطان
ولينا كما كانت فقام اجتمع خدام بيتة مقدار الزينى وقتلوا
تفرسهم حتى يروصوا بخدمه ايضا في الحياة الاخرى وكانوا
يتراحمون في ان الموت تاملت ذلك لاجل محبة ملكهم
وسلطانهم وقيل رتلة قسم خزائنه على الصناد وخلق له في
السلطنة ابناء الذي يما قوس وسقار فذلك كان ابناء
الكبير اللو ومن العتد فاقام تولى وسلطان ما انومر ب
ولار للمقبي فلما مات ابوه جلاوه ملكا عليهم ولكن كان
لداضار غير ابراه بنديقا وكان يسا انكوا ليا وكان صفرا
في العركن نوب القطن شصع وصلحيتوق من غيرهم
ولا تايو فلما نظر ان ابوه في السلطنة وسقط سلطان وصار
الملك وهو سكت في بلد الكرم فقام هذا وتشارب مع اعباب
ابوه والعسكر الذين في حوزة فطلب ان يكلع ملكا كلفه
ورعد ذلك ارسال الكونكو عسكر الهنود عقار كام التي وصف

القياد

[Ilyās ibn Ḥanna al-Mawṣilī's Book of Travels Rome, BAV, Sbath 108, f. 62r]

Beyond Ḥannā Diyāb's ownership of Ilyās' work, his potential role in copying it opens the possibility that he had altered it as well. Manuscript copying in monasteries and universities are known to replicate works for their preservation. However, in Aleppo, copying functioned as a metamorphic process that converted raw material from travel records into artistic travelogues. The literary productions of two Maronite brothers, Arsāniyus Shukrī al-Ḥakīm and physician Ḥannā al-Ṭabīb reveal this process in motion. Both lived in Aleppo and wrote their own respective travel narratives in the mid-eighteenth century, around the time Ḥannā Diyāb wrote his own *Book of Travels*. Arsāniyus' travel narrative is based on his journey to France as an alms-collector in 1748. However, Arsāniyus' himself did not write according to the popular travelogue styles of his contemporaries. Instead, he adhered to the standards of alms-collectors' documents which were expected to include a detailed itinerary of their movement, expenses, and income.⁸⁵ Copies of Arsāniyus' edited travelogue mentions a (now lost) cash booklet that would likely have contained the bulk such information:

The booklet (دفتر) is written in the French language and expense after expense is written down without changes. [It contains] everything we gathered in France while collecting alms (شحاده), everything we gave back to the French people (طائفة الفرنساوية) payment after payment, and everything we spent in the last three and a half years, for us, our journey, our horses, food, drinks, accommodation, etc.⁸⁶

Arsāniyus was concerned in recording information that would be useful for his monastery, and had recorded his journey with the same clinical perspective that Galland used in his observations in Izmir and Constantinople. Yet, his work was able to fulfill a second life through its subsequent copies, where it could supply material for more interesting narratives rather than remain preserved as a ledger.

Ḥannā al-Ṭabīb was the first copier of his brother's works, and thus his changes were crucial to converting the genre of Arsāniyus' account. While some changes were more structural, they made the work more accessible to a popular Arabic-speaking audience. For example, Arsāniyus transliterates the city of "Périgueux" in his travel

⁸⁵ Krimsti, "Arsāniyus Shukrī al-Ḥakīm's Account of His Journey to France," 210.

⁸⁶ Gotha, Ms. Orient. A 1549, 129b. Quoted in Krimsti, "Arsāniyus Shukrī al-Ḥakīm's Account of His Journey to France," 212.

journal using Latin letters, albeit without the accent.⁸⁷ As there is no equivalent “P” in Arabic, Ḥannā improvises by using the Persian letter *pe* (پ), rendering it to be “پیریکوه”.⁸⁸ This change is similar to the script accessibility of the *Bibliothèque orientale*. Ḥannā’s own travelogue, about his eight month sojourn at Istanbul between 1764 to 1765, “is rich with...curious stories and anecdotes, and occasional amounts of political events.”⁸⁹ The work demonstrates how he did not intend to record information for a higher authority, but rather to satisfy the desires of an audience for ethnographic information about the world.⁹⁰ As Ḥannā ostensibly the language of his brother’s works, we can also assume that he included details that would align the work with his own personal, and lively travel narrative.

The main difference between the writing styles of Galland and Arsāniyus is that these individuals focused on the materials they encountered or collected in their journeys. Ḥannā al-Ṭabīb and Ḥannā Diyāb focused on portraying the sociological experience of visiting these areas and witnessing daily life there. Remarkably, Arsāniyus’ work was inducted into the greater trend of Syrian travelogues, not through his own creativity, but through the collective effort of his subsequent copiers. This parallels the collaboration of Galland and d’Herbelot who created the *Bibliothèque orientale* in light of what their popular audience desired. For these French scholars, it meant crafting a work that focused on an encyclopedic organization of knowledge. The Maronites of Aleppo instead appeased their audiences with dramatic and lucid details of everyday life in the areas they traveled. Productions within each tradition were created through collaboration, but *Les Mille et une nuits* is unique in how it represented two disparate interpretations of it to coincide in one reproduction.

The Nights as a Historical Source

Tales from the *Nights* have been studied for their representation of the politics, culture, and religious practices of their medieval Middle Eastern settings. In particular,

⁸⁷ Krimsti, “Arsāniyus Shukrī al-Ḥakīm’s Account of His Journey to France,” 219. This example of Arsāniyus’ writing style comes from one of the surviving four pages of his travel journal in Gotha, Ms. Orient. A 146, 13a.

⁸⁸ Gotha, Ms. Orient. A 1549, 121a. Quoted in Krimsti, “Arsāniyus Shukrī al-Ḥakīm’s Account of His Journey to France,” 219.

⁸⁹ Feras Krimsti, “The Lives and Afterlives of the Library of the Maronite Physician Ḥannā al-Ṭabīb (c.1702-1775) from Aleppo,” *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 9 (2018), 195.

⁹⁰ Krimsti, “Arsāniyus Shukrī al-Ḥakīm’s Account of His Journey to France,” 220.

Muhsin al-Musawi's consideration of the "The Steward's Tale," in his work "The Islamic Context of *The Thousand and One Nights*," explains how the plot and characters are guided through the customs of its original setting 10th century Baghdad, which would have been noticed by their traditional Arab audience. This story is the second in the Hunchback cycle of tales.⁹¹ The steward character from the Hunchback frame story recounts an incident where a merchant was seen by his guests to wash his hands one hundred and twenty times before eating some ragout (*zīrbājah*), only to reveal that he had his thumbs and big toes cut off both his hands and feet.⁹² The merchant then begins narrating his own story, explaining that his excessive washing and mutilation are because he fell in love with a woman who frequented his shop. This love interest was a waiting woman for Lady Zubaida, the wife of the reigning Caliph. After confessing his feelings for her, and learning that they are reciprocated, he is told by her Eunuch to wait at a mosque. There, some servants bring a crate for him to be locked in so that he could sneak into the palace harem without the Caliph's knowledge, and Lady Zubaida could approve of their union. Once the marriage ceremony and celebrations had passed, and the couple were about to consummate their marriage, the merchant had eaten ragout with cumin in it and wiped his hands instead of washing them. When his wife had smelled the food on his hands, she was enraged at his lack of decorum, and ordered his thumbs and big toes to be cut off so that he may never repeat the mistake again. She accepts his oath that he would never eat ragout without washing his hands one hundred and twenty times, and the wedded couple lives the rest of their lives in ease.⁹³

Varying jurisdiction in the different settings of this tale, according to al-Musawi, guides the movement of the protagonist in this tale. As the merchant travels through the different public spaces of the story, each with its own types of jurisdiction and expectations of behavior as per the *hisbah* manuals, he exposes himself to different levels of danger.⁹⁴ al-Musawi describes how the *muhtasibs*, or bazaar supervisors, are empowered through the *hisbah* manuals to enforce law and order in society. These

⁹¹ This frame story details the interrogation of different characters for the supposed murder of the King of China's favorite clown, the Hunchback. As all the characters confess to the crime, they begin their stories to appeal to the King and avoid punishment.

⁹² Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Arabian Nights*, trans. Husain Haddawy (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 225.

⁹³ Heller-Roazen, *The Arabian Nights*, 224-34.

⁹⁴ Al-Musawi, *The Islamic Context of The Thousand and One Nights*, 88.

officials would be particularly active in the marketplace milieu of the cloth merchant protagonist in “The Steward’s Tale.” Once leaving the morally dubious marketplace, he enjoys relative security in the mosque as a zone where “the Islamic ethics of equality and justice” are dominant, which protect the merchant from the disadvantages that might otherwise come due to his social class. However, once entering the palace he is once again revealed as “a different species from the nobility,” and is mutilated at the command of his new bride, who was enraged by the smell of *zīrbājah* (ragout) on his hands. This punishment for his lower-class habits is meant to enforce etiquette appropriate for his new standing.⁹⁵ The political and cultural norms of this setting reveal the logic around significant plot developments of this tale.

In his book *The Thousand and One Nights*, Muhsin Mahdi takes this approach one step further, and examines how the *Nights* are capable of representing the eras they were written in— not just the setting of the tale itself. “The Steward’s Tale” in the Hunchback cycle, can offer us a model as to how reality can bleed into fiction (either deliberately or subconsciously) as it is adapted directly from a historical report from the 10th century in Baghdad, written about events earlier in the same century.⁹⁶ Although the storyteller, who converted the tale from history to fiction is unknown, the historical report was reported by al-Muhassin al-Tanūkhī (329-384 A.H./ 940-994 A.D.) He was a figure well known in the second half of the 10th century, as a judge in various cities in Mesopotamia, and later in Baghdad as a prominent aide to the Buid King ‘ Adud al-Dawlah.⁹⁷ The stories are similar enough for Mahdi to insist that the storyteller had his source in front of him or, at least that he memorized a near-perfect copy.⁹⁸ In fact, the storyteller is suspected to “not have the opportunity to revise his work in order to cover his tracks and remove the signs pointing to his model.”⁹⁹ The comparison between the model and the tale are similar enough then, for Mahdi to pinpoint precise areas of difference which can reveal traces of transformation that adjust the story for a new era.

One critical change that Mahdi recognizes in “The Steward’s Tale” is the introduction, when the steward is seen washing his hands before eating the *zīrbājah*,

⁹⁵ Al-Musawi, *The Islamic Context of The Thousand and One Nights*, 89.

⁹⁶ Muhsin Mahdi, *The Thousand and One Nights*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 165.

⁹⁷ Mahdi, *The Thousand and One Nights*, 167

⁹⁸ Mahdi, *The Thousand and One Nights*, 167

⁹⁹ Mahdi, *The Thousand and One Nights*, 167

not after. In the historical report, nothing unusual happens before his guests see him excessively washing his hands. However, in the fictional story, his excessive hand washing draws the attention of the guests to his character, who then notice the far more intriguing feature of his mutilated hands. No mutilation is ever mentioned in the historical report. He struggles to eat the *zīrbājah* with them, and thus he establishes himself an apt character, fitting into the broader theme of mutilation in the Hunchback cycle of tales.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the fictional story differs from its inspiration because of how the storyteller was interested in assimilating this tale into the motifs of the broader collection. As Ḥannā Diyāb assimilates the tale of “The Ebony Horse,” in his repertoire of oral storytelling, and consequently into Galland’s collection, it is crucial to investigate how his experience of France influenced the new themes of his retelling.

Analyzing one of Ḥannā Diyāb’s tales for the thematic remnants of its era can reveal how the story’s historical context suffuses the narrative, as is the case in “The Steward’s Tale.” In this essay, the tale of “The Ebony Horse,” or “Le Cheval Enchanté,” as it is was published in Galland’s 11th volume of *Les Mille et une nuits*, will be used to demonstrate how the young storyteller’s experience in France connected him both to the broader political atmosphere of his time and the larger collection of the *Thousand and One Nights*. Ḥannā Diyāb’s experience maneuvering between the French and the Ottoman Empires influenced his storytelling of “The Ebony Horse,” and can inform our understanding of the other tales in the *Nights*, and not just the ones he narrated. Although Ḥannā Diyāb’s tales were not known as part of the *Alf Laylah* tradition, his decision to introduce them into the translation of the work suggests that the structure of the *Nights* lends itself to receive stories that reflect the concerns of the era in which they were forged.¹⁰¹ Ḥannā Diyāb’s alterations of the tales he recounted have marginalized their study in academic scholarship, as the mistakes begotten from the informality of his

¹⁰⁰ Mahdi, *The Thousand and One Nights* 170.

¹⁰¹ Galland and Ḥannā Diyāb match the prevailing compilatory trend of the *Nights* in preferring more modern additions as opposed to older, confirmed tales. In his discussion of the tale “Abū al-Ḥasan the Wag,” or “Dormeur éveillé,” in Galland’s *Les Mille et une nuits*, Ulrich Marzolph surmises how compilers in and after the seventeenth century who had less access to classical works might have preferred to work with newer tale renditions to create a work more suitable for their time. For, “in ideological terms the compilers felt that culture had moved on and that it would be jettisoning valuable material to go back to the oldest works and disregard the later ones that had grown out of them and that would, in fact, be more suitable in consciously interpreting traditional material for contemporary society,” “The Story of Abū al-Ḥasan the Wag in the Tübingen Manuscript of the Romance of 'Umar ibn al-Nu,mān and Related Texts,” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 46, no.1 (2015), 49.

session with Galland taint the preservation of the tales. However, this imperfect storytelling also corresponds with the development of the other tales in the *Nights*, like “The Steward’s Tale,” especially through how the collection hedges the traditions of sophisticated literature and popular folklore.¹⁰² To conduct this procedure successfully, Ḥannā Diyāb’s voice in the French translation must prove substantial, and his historical influences must be clearly identified.

Hannā Diyāb and A Hundred and One Nights

Out of all of the tales that Ḥannā Diyāb recounted to Galland, only one has manuscript attestation: “The Ebony Horse.” Paris, BnF, MS ar. 3662,¹⁰³ also known as the Paris Manuscript or (as it will be called here) the Tunisian Manuscript, is the best representation of the version of the tale that Ḥannā Diyāb would have heard and been inspired by.¹⁰⁴ The tale of the “Ebony Horse,” does not belong to the *Thousand and One Nights*, but rather a sister-collection known as *A Hundred and One Nights (Mi’at laylah wa-laylah)*.¹⁰⁵ The Tunisian manuscript is the oldest known complete manuscript of *A Hundred and One Nights*, and was copied in the year 1190/1776.¹⁰⁶ While this manuscript’s copying date is well after Galland’s encounter with Ḥannā Diyāb and the final publication of *Les Mille et Une Nuits*, it is still the best representation of the version that influenced Ḥannā Diyāb’s telling of “The Ebony Horse.”¹⁰⁷ In her analysis of the tale, folklorist and scholar Ruth Bottigheimer asserts that the “North African ‘Ebony Horse’ tradition as codified in the 1776 Tunisian *Hundred and One Nights*” can be

¹⁰² The Middle Arabic language present in manuscripts of the *Nights* itself matches its unfixed status as a text. This language, in its variable and malleable forms, is “produced by the interference between the Standard language and the colloquials.” Jérôme Lentin has argued that linguistic modifications such as the deliberate “colloquializing” and “decolloquializing” of certain words allowed the *Nights* to move between registers of Middle Arabic, and occupy different literary and class strata to appeal to different audiences, “Comparing the Language of Manuscript Versions of Two Tales: Promise and Limitations,” in *Arabic manuscripts of the Thousand and One Nights: Presentation and Critical Editions of four Noteworthy Texts: Observations on Some Osmanli Translations*, ed. Aboubakr Chraïbi (Paris: espaces & signes, 2016), 354-5.

¹⁰³ For a description, relevant bibliography, and digitized version, see the catalog entry for the manuscript at: <https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc315430>.

¹⁰⁴ Ruth B. Bottigheimer, “The Case of the Ebony Horse,” *Gramarye* 6 (2014), 10.

¹⁰⁵ For more information on this collection’s history, see: Aboubakr Chraïbi and Ulrich Marzolph, “The Hundred and One Nights: A Recently Discovered Old Manuscript,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 162, no. 2 (2012), 299-316.

¹⁰⁶ Bruce Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights* (New York: NYU Press, 2016), 34.

¹⁰⁷ Bottigheimer, “The Case of the Ebony Horse,” 11. There is a European version of the tale that could have reached Ḥannā Diyāb in the French mercantile community in Aleppo where he worked, but the version in *Les Mille et une nuits* corresponds far more with the North African tradition of the story.

assumed to have “underlay public tellings in North Africa,” which Ḥannā Diyāb could have heard in his travels there, or read through a manuscript copy.¹⁰⁸

Before comparing the story as it appears in the Tunisian manuscript¹⁰⁹ with the version that ended up in Galland’s *Les mille et une nuits*, it is valuable to recount the basic plot of “The Ebony Horse,” which is consistent between both versions. The tale begins by introducing the audience to a public celebration where a Persian King is presented with gifts from his kingdom and abroad. The final presenter is a sage who offers him an ebony horse, designed to look realistic, but which also has the ability to fly its rider wherever they wish to go at remarkable speeds. In exchange for this horse, the King agrees to give the sage his daughter’s hand in marriage. She despairs at this news, and so her brother, the Prince, challenges his father’s decision. The King tells his son to mount the horse in order to prove its worth, but before the Prince could be informed how to make the horse descend, it accelerates quickly into the sky. The sage is imprisoned in the wake of this incident and the Persian court’s presumption of the Prince’s demise. But in fact the Prince eventually finds the pin to switch on the horse’s descent, and arrives in a far-off, new kingdom where he will meet the beautiful Princess. They fall in love and she eventually agrees to go return to his kingdom with him.

On their return to the Prince’s land, she waits in a garden to be introduced to his father. However, the sage, who had been released from prison when the Prince returned, abducts her on the very horse she arrived on. After traveling for a while, they are found by the King of another land, who disposes of the sage, and prepares to wed the Princess. Evading this fate, she pretends to act insane. He seeks doctors from all over the world to cure her, but to no avail. The Persian Prince in the meantime, who has been searching for her since her absence, finally discovers her whereabouts. In order to reach her, he pretends to be a doctor and secures an introduction to the King. His cunning diagnosis is that the only way she can be fully cured is if she were to mount the

¹⁰⁸ Bottigheimer, “The Case of the Ebony Horse,” 11. While Ḥannā Diyāb could have read the tale in either the *Hundred and One Nights* or *Tales of the Marvellous* collections, I believe that he would have been more likely to have listened to it, considering how his memoir is filled with stories that he *heard* from others. At one point in his memoir Ḥannā Diyāb describes how Lucas recounted a long story to him about a princess in the King’s court, specifically so that Ḥannā Diyāb could present it accurately when telling it himself: *The Book of Travels*, vol. 2, 19.

¹⁰⁹ This manuscript is the basis of the parallel Arabic-English translation of *A Hundred and One Nights* by Bruce Fudge: *A Hundred and One Nights* (New York: NYU Press, 2016). All further references to this manuscript and the North African tradition will be taken from this edition.

horse again. When the King agrees to this condition, the Prince takes the opportunity to rescue the Princess and return back to his kingdom with her.

Surviving the Sovereign

In their broad strokes, the versions of “The Ebony Horse” in the Tunisian manuscript and in Galland are quite similar, but the scenes in which they differ are striking for the refashioning of the main characters in *Les Mille et une nuits*. To select these key scenes, it is valuable to begin with alterations that can be confirmed as Ḥannā Diyāb’s handiwork— meaning changes that can be proven to have been *said* by Ḥannā Diyāb before the tale was edited by Galland.¹¹⁰ The only written record of Ḥannā Diyāb’s oral performance of “The Ebony Horse,” appears in Galland’s journal. It might be argued that the notes are not faithful to Ḥannā Diyāb’s recitation, since Galland would have inserted his own ideas when writing down his summaries after listening to Ḥannā Diyāb. Furthermore, it is possible that Galland could have misremembered tales. While these circumstances are true for some summaries in Galland’s journal, Bottigheimer argues that there is a group of tales that Galland transcribed simultaneous to Ḥannā Diyāb recounting them, among which is included “The Ebony Horse.”

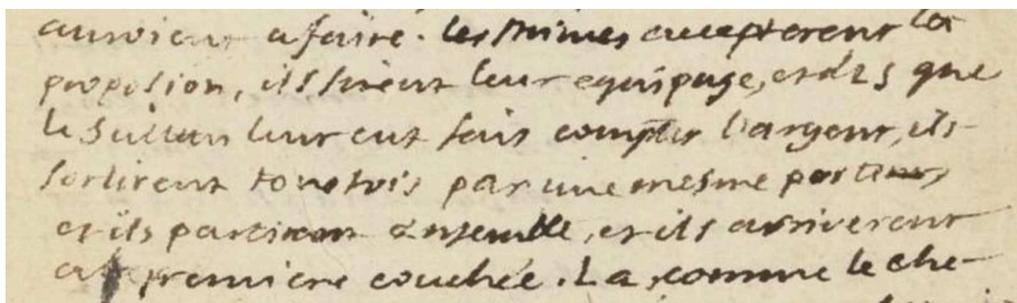
A transcription of Ḥannā Diyāb’s storytelling that can be proven to have extremely little editing or stylistic influence from Galland is crucial for confidently identifying Ḥannā Diyāb’s own contributions to the tale of “The Ebony Horse.” The rushed calligraphy of Galland’s handwriting and other tell-tale signs of *sur-le-champ* notation are not consistent with his notes on other stories.¹¹¹ For example, there are fewer instances of “etc.” or ampersands than in the tales that had summaries written for them, presumably because Galland was referencing earlier notes taken elsewhere.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ This technique will also prevent us from excessive speculation in projecting Ḥannā Diyāb’s memoir onto “Le Cheval Enchanté.” I follow the example set by Paulo Lemos Horta in his footnotes on the tale of “Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp” in *The Annotated Arabian Nights* (417-489). He compares Ḥannā Diyāb’s situation to that of the character of Aladdin; connecting the iconic symbol of the lamp to the first treasure hunting expedition that Ḥannā Diyāb experienced with Lucas (429, n. 35) and compares the language that Ḥannā Diyāb in his memoir uses to describe the palace of Versailles to Aladdin’s palace (472, n. 112).

¹¹¹ Ruth B. Bottigheimer, “Ḥannā Diyāb’s Tales in Antoine Galland’s *Mille et une nuit(s)*: I. New Perspectives on their Recording II. New Conclusions about Western Sources within Nights Texts,” in *Antoine Galland (1646-1715) et son journal: actes du colloque international organisé à l’Université de Liège (16-18 Février 2015) à l’occasion du tricentenaire de sa mort*, eds. Frédéric Bauden and Richard Waller (Leuven: Peeters, 2020), 56.

¹¹² Bottigheimer, “Ḥannā Diyāb’s Tales in Antoine Galland’s *Mille et une nuit(s)*,” 56.

Bottigheimer also argues that Ḥannā Diyāb had recounted these tales in “passable” French.¹¹³ Had Ḥannā Diyāb told these tales in Arabic, Galland would have had more control over the notes with his role in translating Ḥannā Diyāb. However, given that Galland preserved in his notes a number of grammatical errors consistent with non-native French speakers, he was most likely transcribing exactly what he heard from Ḥannā Diyāb.¹¹⁴ Bottigheimer points to two specific instances where Galland records such mistakes, both from his notes on the story of “Prince Ahmed and Pari Banou,” (recounted on May 22, 1709). Even though these examples are from a different tale, they are relevant to our discussion on “The Ebony Horse,” since “Prince Ahmed and Pari Banou,” is also identified as one of the tales that Galland transcribed *sur-le-champ*.¹¹⁵ The first instance demonstrates how “porteur” is corrected into “porte,” on page 115 of his journal, and the second image demonstrates how “apres” is converted into “en bas,” on page 117. These visible details prove that Galland’s notes are a reliable account of exactly how Ḥannā Diyāb performed the tale, and deviations from the Tunisian manuscript can be inferred as Ḥannā Diyāb’s own additions, as opposed to Galland’s creative inputs.



[Paris, BnF, Français 15277, f.113]

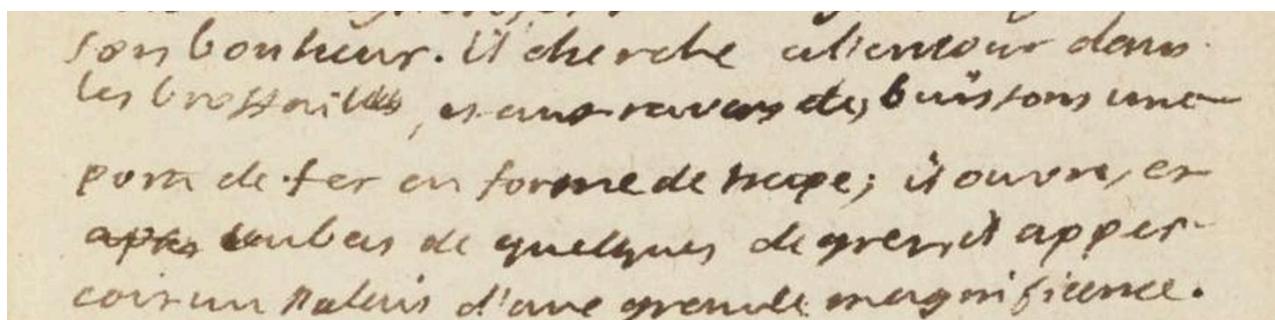
*Les Princes acceptèrent la propos[it]ion, ils firent leur equipage, et des que le Sultan leur eut fait compter l'argent, ils sortirent tous trois par une mesme porte, et ils partirent ensemble, et ils arriverent a la premiere couchée.*¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Bottigheimer, “Ḥannā Diyāb’s Tales in Antoine Galland’s *Mille et une nuit(s)*,” 60, n.30.

¹¹⁴ Bottigheimer, “Ḥannā Diyāb’s Tales in Antoine Galland’s *Mille et une nuit(s)*,” 60.

¹¹⁵ Bottigheimer, “Ḥannā Diyāb’s Tales in Antoine Galland’s *Mille et une nuit(s)*,” 56.

¹¹⁶ Antoine Galland, *Le Journal D’Antoine Galland (1646-1715) La Période Parisienne*, vol. 1, 1708-1709, eds. Frédéric Bauden and Richard Waller (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 343.



[Paris, BnF, Français 15277, f.117]

*Il cherche a l'entour dans les brossailles, et aux travers des buissons une porte de fer en forme de trape; il ouvre, et en bas de quelques degrez, il apperçoit un Palais d'une grande magnificence.*¹¹⁷

The first divergence between Ḥannā Diyāb and the manuscript tradition is right at the beginning, insofar as Ḥannā Diyāb starts his story at a later stage in the action from how the tale is told in the Tunisian manuscript. In the North African tradition, the craftsman is introduced as the third “sage” (الحكيم)¹¹⁸ who presented his magic craft to the King. A precedent is established by these two sages in which they present themselves and their gifts to the King, they prove the veritable magic of their crafts on “the Day of the Test,” (الاستخبار اليوم)¹¹⁹ and are then promised marriage to the King’s two daughters as a reward for their ingenuity.¹²⁰ Neither the supernatural nature of the horse, nor the request for the King’s daughter in marriage, is as shocking or sudden in the North African tradition as it becomes in *Les Mille et une nuits*, all because of Ḥannā Diyāb’s exclusion of the two prior sages. An additional change that should not be ignored is the altered nationality of the craftsman. In the Tunisian manuscript, only the first¹²¹ and second sages are foreigners, while the villainous sage is Persian, like the King. Having both the antagonist and the protagonist (the Prince) be from the same country confines the tension to one political and cultural realm. However, Ḥannā Diyāb’s decision to make his sole, audacious, villainous sage a foreigner introduces an extra set of political

¹¹⁷ Galland, *Le Journal D’Antoine Galland*, 345.

¹¹⁸ Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*, 458.

¹¹⁹ Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*, 458.

¹²⁰ Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*, 454-61.

¹²¹ Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*, 461. In the Tunisian manuscript, the first sage is the one who is presented as Indian, and the princess promised to him is delighted by his refinement and brilliance.

tensions and competition, which, as will be argued below, correlate to Ḥannā Diyāb's personal difficulties as an outsider in France.

Ḥannā Diyāb dramatizes the villainous sage's end even more than his initial appearance in *Les Mille et une nuits*. In his notes, Galland writes a perfunctory, "The King has the Indian beheaded, takes the Princess," to delineate the sage's abrupt fate in Ḥannā Diyāb's account, before moving on to introduce the second villain of the story: the King of a distant land.¹²² In the Tunisian manuscript, when the sage is discovered by this new King, he is simply disposed of in jail.¹²³ However, Ḥannā Diyāb's lethal elimination of the sage was so jarring to 19th century compilers that the beheading was replaced with a mere vicious beating and imprisonment in both the Bulaq Recension and Calcutta II.¹²⁴ Bottigheimer suggests Ḥannā Diyāb's tyrannical depiction of an Eastern king corresponded to his other Orientalizing additions, such as the inclusion of perfumes around the horse when the Prince rescues the Princess.¹²⁵ Bottigheimer explains that such features might "be inventions of his own to address European expectations or to communicate shared cultural prejudices."¹²⁶ This was not an unusual approach, as Maronites known as "Olive Princes" or "Arabian Princes," collected charity through taking advantage of European concerns of religious persecution by the Turks¹²⁷ However, had no reason to present himself Ḥannā Diyāb in any specific way to Galland or his audience. Rather, the villainous sage's presence in Ḥannā Diyāb's rendition of "The Ebony Horse," reflects to the impression that his encounter with French royalty left on him. This meeting is vividly described in his memoir.

Ḥannā Diyāb's memory of his visit to the French court focuses not so much on the Royals themselves, but rather his precarious state in their presence, which parallels his depiction of the Indian sage in his version of "The Ebony Horse." Ḥannā Diyāb had accompanied Lucas to present animals brought from the Orient to King Louis XIV, but the Royals soon regarded Ḥannā Diyāb himself as the more entertaining spectacle. In enjoying the attention, however, the young Syrian traveler also exposed himself to a

¹²² Bottigheimer, "The Case of the Ebony Horse: Ḥannā Diyāb's creation of a Third Tradition, part 2," 9.

¹²³ Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*, 487.

¹²⁴ Bottigheimer, "The Case of the Ebony Horse," 12.

¹²⁵ Bottigheimer, "The Case of the Ebony Horse," 11.

¹²⁶ Bottigheimer, "The Case of the Ebony Horse," 12.

¹²⁷ Feras Krimsti, "Arsāniyus Shukrī al-Ḥakīm's Account of His Journey to France," 209.

degree of ridicule and danger. Ḥannā Diyāb was dressed in traditional Oriental clothing that Lucas had instructed him to pack specifically for meeting the King, which the Royals upon meeting him found extremely amusing.¹²⁸ They proceeded to touch him and his clothing, with one Royal even removing the calpac off his head for inspection, until a Princess discovered a concealed dagger that he was wearing.¹²⁹ Suddenly, Ḥannā Diyāb found himself in danger as he was caught unwittingly breaking the absolute prohibition of carrying hidden weapons *in* the King's palace. Had it not been for Lucas' intervention and the King's mercy for the ignorant foreigner, Ḥannā Diyāb could have been at risk for capital punishment.¹³⁰ This particular experience, as well as Ḥannā Diyāb's memory of witnessing public executions and seeing a veteran being beaten for begging on the streets,¹³¹ must have instilled him with anxiety of persecution in France as a foreigner, and an overwhelming sense of the sovereign's power.

The Indian's interaction with the Persian King after the Prince is carried away by the horse demonstrates how a foreigner in danger with imperial authorities behaves. While Galland's notes do not explicitly detail this change, it can be assumed as Ḥannā Diyāb's contribution, since it corresponds to his previous alterations as well as motifs present throughout his memoir. In the Tunisian Manuscript, the sage is enraged by the Prince's rejection of his marriage proposal, and deliberately plans to make the Prince fly away. When the King demands that he bring his son back, he shouts a defiant "Impossible!" and proclaims that "You'll never see him again," (هيهات لن تراه ابدا).¹³² He openly broadcasts his crime against the sovereign, unafraid of punishment for any perceived *lèse-majesté*. However, in Galland's version, the sage is not antagonized by the Prince's rejection of the marriage. Rather, the sage was hopeful that the Prince would eventually come around to accepting him, and was fully inclined towards instructing the Prince how to use the horse.¹³³ Unfortunately the Prince had already mounted the horse himself and quickly turned the pin before the sage could instruct him. After the Prince is whisked away into the sky, the sage implores the King to spare

¹²⁸ Ḥannā Diyāb, *The Book of Travels*, vol. 2, 29.

¹²⁹ Ḥannā Diyāb, *The Book of Travels*, vol. 1, 11.

¹³⁰ Ḥannā Diyāb, *The Book of Travels*, vol. 2, 17.

¹³¹ Ḥannā Diyāb, *The Book of Travels*, vol. 2, 37.

¹³² Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*, 466.

¹³³ The sage is described as "prêt à l'aider [i.e. le Prince] à le [cheval] monter, et l'avertit ensuite de ce qu'il fallait qu'il fit pour le bien gouverner," Antoine Galland, *Les Mille et une nuits*, vol. 7 (Paris: chez Billois, 1811), 101.

him punishment and reassures the King that his son will land safely and eventually find help.¹³⁴ The dramatic shift from an insolent, vindictive sage (as characterized in the Tunisian manuscript) into an apologetic foreigner scrambling for mercy was not done to create sympathy for the craftsman. After all, he ultimately does abduct the Princess and remains a villain up until his death. However, this posturing demonstrates what Ḥannā Diyāb regards as crucial for surviving his imperial setting: tactful, and sometimes deceptive, diplomacy.

Treading Carefully in Foreign Territory

As fascinating as his portrayal of the Indian sage is, we do not have to assume that this character was meant as a proxy for Ḥannā Diyāb himself. Rather, the way that Ḥannā Diyāb revises how characters behave in their environments reveals how his experience in foreign environments had percolated into his rendition of the story. Another character who is changed from the North African tradition into the French version is the main protagonist, the Persian Prince. In Galland's notes, the Prince is described as someone who did "not lack intelligence," an almost offhand compliment that is, however, lacking in the Tunisian manuscript.¹³⁵ This note comes when the Prince is in the air and figures out how to make the horse descend. In the North African version, the Prince simply searches the horse until he finds the descent pin.¹³⁶ Galland would expand Ḥannā Diyāb's characterization of the Prince in the written version of the tale in *Les Mille et une nuits*, emphasizing how even when the Prince realizes the great peril he was in, "cette connaissance ne lui fit pas perdre le jugement: il se recueillit en lui même avec le bon sens dont il était capable."¹³⁷ Other changes from the Tunisian manuscript to *Les Mille et une nuits* similarly reflect how Ḥannā Diyāb designed the Prince to be more conscious about judiciously navigating the dangerous situations in which he found himself.

Les Mille et une nuits invents a new scene that is lacking in the North African tradition. This is when the Prince and Princess exchange information about their

¹³⁴ Galland, *Les Mille et une nuits*, vol. 7, 102.

¹³⁵ Bottigheimer, "The Case of the Ebony Horse: Ḥannā Diyāb's creation of a Third Tradition, part 2," 8.

¹³⁶ Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*, 467.

¹³⁷ Galland, *Les Mille et une nuits*, vol. 7, 106.

kingdoms. After the Prince finds himself in the Kingdom of Bengal, the Princess obliges him to stay. In hopes that she can tempt him to remain longer, she presses him for details about his kingdom of Persia so that she could respond with all the benefits of her own domain. However, after “le prince de Perse, sans rien exagérer, lui fit un détail si avantageux de la grandeur du royaume de Perse, de la magnificence et de l’opulence qui y régnaient,” the Princess is left somewhat embarrassed about her own kingdom, thinking Bengal to be much inferior to Persia.¹³⁸ It is only after the Prince entreats her many times that she returns the favor, but in fear of making any kind of favorable comparison between Bengal and Persia, she even resorts to downplaying those aspects of her kingdom that might rival those of the Prince’s.¹³⁹ Her diplomatic tact is a way of signaling to the Prince that she is willing to leave her kingdom behind and follow him.¹⁴⁰ This might be seen as corresponding to the romantic trope of the Princess abandoning her royal responsibilities for true love, but the whole interaction is tinged with a political and almost ambassadorial tone.

It is important to recognize that, while the primary role that the Prince and Princess fulfill is that of lovers, they are members of the royal family, and thus wield political power and diplomatic responsibility to their own kingdoms. Their royal status might be understood as simply elevating the stakes for two lovers in an exciting story, since these roles are carried over from the *Hundred and One Nights*. Understanding Ḥannā Diyāb’s influence at work, however, reveals a shift away from open conflict to a more savvy and tactful diplomacy. In the Tunisian Manuscript, while the Prince and Princess do fall in love of their own accord, they converse far less, especially about their own kingdoms. When the Prince does have to face the political consequences of a marriage with his beloved, he does so through a confrontation with her father. The father rejects the proposal of the young man, because even though he is a good match, he has broken the proper marriage protocol of that era. A path forward is provided, however, when the Prince convinces the King to arrange a battle between him alone

¹³⁸ Galland, *Les mille et une nuits*, vol. 7, 134.

¹³⁹ The Princess delivers her description of Bengal “en diminuant plusieurs avantages par où il était constant que le royaume de Bengale surpassait le royaume de Perse,” Galland, *Les mille et une nuits*, vol. 7, 135.

¹⁴⁰ Galland, *Les mille et une nuits*, vol. 7, 135.

and the troops of Bengal,¹⁴¹ in which his victory will grant him permission to take his daughter:

فإذا أصبح الله الصباح تخرج بجميع عساكرك وجنودك وتأمروا معنا في ميدان الحرب فإن
غلبوني فذلك المراد وان انا غلبتهم فمن يأخذ ابنتك غيري.

*In the morning, come out with all your troops and all your soldiers and order them to meet us on the battlefield. If they win and I am defeated, so be it; if I win and defeat them, I alone will take your daughter.*¹⁴²

This proposition comes out of nowhere, and while it does allow him to escape and return to Persia, he leaves the Princess behind.¹⁴³ Disregarding whether this is simply a convenient (if rushed) plot device, the Prince comes across as incredibly arrogant and reckless in this scene. When the Princess' father threatens to have him killed, the Prince laughs, insulting the sovereign's intelligence and boasting that the King could not find a better husband for his daughter than the Prince right in front of him.¹⁴⁴ Like the sage in the same story, the Prince is unafraid of royal punishment, and quickly escalates matters into open warfare. After the Prince victoriously flies off, the audience encounters a scene in which the Princess suffers in his absence.¹⁴⁵ This short scene qualifies the Prince's triumph over the King by revealing the serious consequences his impetuous actions have. The Prince in the North African tradition does not demonstrate the diplomacy and coolheaded competence that he possesses in *Les Mille et une nuits*. This more subtle and intelligent Prince reflects the value of cautiousness that Ḥannā Diyāb learned through his fraught experience as a foreigner in France.

¹⁴¹ The Princess' kingdom is known as Bengal in *Les Mille et une nuits*, but this detail was added on by Galland. Neither the Tunisian manuscript or Galland's notes on Ḥannā Diyāb's performance of the tale explicitly mentions the regions that the princess, and the King who eventually abducts her, are from. Bottigheimer surmises that Galland's decision to have his main characters come from Muslim regions is an Orientalizing technique: "The Case of the Ebony Horse: Ḥannā Diyāb's creation of a Third Tradition, part 2," 12.

¹⁴² Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*, 476.

¹⁴³ In the Tunisian manuscript, the Prince eventually returns for her a second time and takes her to his kingdom without her father's permission; Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*, 481-2.

¹⁴⁴ Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*, 476.

¹⁴⁵ Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*, 479.

The way that successful governance is depicted in the diplomatic exchange between the Prince and the Princess in *Les Mille et une nuits* also corresponds to Ḥannā Diyāb's own priorities. While Ḥannā Diyāb had no official diplomatic role while he assisted Lucas in his travels, he notes one experience with a diplomat from the Ottoman empire that bears striking similarities to the aforementioned scene in "The Ebony Horse." Ḥannā Diyāb's recounts in his memoirs the arrival in Paris of a diplomat dispatched by the Ottoman Sultan Ahmad to request anchors from the French King. The ambassador was welcomed ceremoniously with great celebration and procession. He stayed in one of the French King's palaces, outfitted with servants and amenities of every comfort. While in Paris, the ambassador was shown around the royal gardens in the palace of Versailles and entertained various members of the French nobility in his apartments. Ḥannā Diyāb acted as an interpreter during some of these visits, which is how he became attached to the ambassador for a time in Paris. Ḥannā Diyāb describes the ambassador's reaction as he traveled around the French capital and its environs:

يتفرج على أماكنهم وحسن نظامهم وتديبيرهم وعيشتهم الهنيه فراء فرق عظيم ما بين نظام بلاد الفرنجيه
وبين نظام بلاده المملوه من السجس والاضطراب والظلم وجور الحكام على الرعية.

*He gazed upon their homes, with their orderliness and good management, and their comfortable way of life. It struck him that there was a notable difference between the law and order in Frankish countries and law and order in his own land, which was beset with tumult, trouble, oppression, and tyrannical leaders who lorded over their subjects.*¹⁴⁶

Interestingly, "law and order" or simply propriety and efficient management are expressed by Ḥannā Diyāb through the repeated word نظام (*nizām*). Michael Cooperson, the editor of Ḥannā Diyāb's memoir, notes that this choice of words "suggests that he (or at least the Ottoman ambassador whose views he is communicating) saw the domains of city planning, household management, and political leadership to be

¹⁴⁶ Ḥannā Diyāb, *The Book of Travels*, vol. 2, 57.

linked.”¹⁴⁷ This equation between good governance and the comfort of one’s subjects turns out to be a central theme in the conversation between the two lovers in Galland’s version of “The Ebony Horse,” and so it is worth exploring what *nizām* may have looked like for Ḥannā Diyāb.

Both the Princess and the ambassador characters depicted by Ḥannā Diyāb marvel at the comfort experienced by the highest classes in the new empires they are introduced to. Although the Prince mentions the impressive army that Persia commands, its large cities, and the immense reach “de son commerce par terre et par mer jusqu’aux pays les plus éloignés,” the most in-depth description is devoted to the Prince’s private residence.¹⁴⁸ He lives in a populated city where he has a choice of different, furnished residences appropriate to the different seasons of the year.¹⁴⁹ The ambassador in Ḥannā Diyāb’s memoir is not impressed by the French kingdom for its treatment of lower class subjects, but rather how the *nizām* benefits the lifestyles of the elite. This correlates to how the Prince chooses to emphasize the perpetual spring of his palace rather than the conditions of the many subjects who live in his city. Ḥannā Diyāb focused on the Prince’s riches because he appreciated Empire for the opportunities it could offer him, including upward social mobility. While Ḥannā Diyāb does notice and reflect on the conditions of those less fortunate in France, the narrative of his memoir is focused on his own pursuit of opportunity, even if the kingdom he seeks it from cannot supply it to others.

Conclusion

In his memoir, İlyās ibn Ḥanna al-Mawṣilī’s chose to use the word *kharāj* when referring to a special tax that the Spanish demanded from the Incan Emperor Atahualpa, at Cajamarca.¹⁵⁰ This term was specifically associated with the poll-tax that non-Muslims like İlyās would pay in Ottoman territory. It would be natural for a Maronite audience to compare their own situation to that of the Incans under the Spanish, despite their incredibly different circumstances. There is likely no political intention in using this

¹⁴⁷ Ḥannā Diyāb, *The Book of Travels*, vol. 2, 280, n. 25.

¹⁴⁸ Galland, *Les mille et une nuits*, vol. 7, 134.

¹⁴⁹ “Il avait même des palais tout meublés, prêts à le recevoir, selon les différentes saisons, de manière qu’il était à son choix de jouir d’un printemps perpétuel,” Galland, *Les mille et une nuits*, vol. 7, 134.

¹⁵⁰ John-Paul A. Ghobrial, “Stories Never Told: The First Arabic History of the New World,” 277.

term, but it demonstrates how narratives assign a universal context to a certain group's own experiences. As Catholic minorities in the Muslim Ottoman Empire, Maronites were hardly a dominating force that could exercise cultural power over others. Yet, their literary tradition surpassed their politically humble status. This group was able to develop a rich and compelling literary style dedicated to describing foreign lands and people. In doing so, they imposed their own framework upon others in an effort to understand and organize the world in a way that was relevant to them. Albeit with significant political and stylistic differences, this process is similar to how both Arabic and French Orientalist interpretations have continued the development of the *Nights*.

Exonerating *Les Mille et une nuits* from the charge of being a symbol of French Orientalism does not automatically characterize it as a bastion of a preserved Eastern tradition. Typically, Orientalist texts are regarded as works incorrigibly perverted by Western interpretations, or as uncontaminated capsules of an Eastern tradition that has retained its essence despite Occidental interference. Striving for a balance between these two approaches does not entail denying the effects that harmful Orientalist works have had on the perceptions of Eastern culture. Nor does it mean sacrificing both abstract and experienced notions of cultural difference for an idyllic narrative on cultural diffusion. Rather, this paper simply sought to disrupt the manichean rivalry of the East and West that literary monuments like the *Nights* are caught between. As a Maronite, Ḥannā Diyāb does not fit neatly either into a Western or Eastern tradition. Yet, he used his personal experience to alter the tale of "The Ebony Horse," in the same way that Ilyās had imposed *kharāj* on the Incans. This third layer of interference by Ḥannā Diyāb in the conception of the *Nights* coincides with previous and following efforts to transform the *Nights* to represent the concerns and experiences of an author. Certainly, there are more subtle transformations that changed the *Nights* that cannot be appreciated in an East versus West framework. This analysis of the transnational influences of the *Arabian Nights* will not only be useful in investigating the nuances of its past development, but unique possibilities of its current and future evolution.

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