

# Some Comments on Early Arab "Wonders and Marvels" Literature

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## Abstracts

This study discusses copious early Arab literature of "wonders and marvels". The authors of such books found their materials in the Muslim religion, in the ancient Arab heritage and in strange facts about other cultures. The study examines the themes addressed by these works, including magic, fantasy, strange customs, curiosities, humor, the absurd, mockery, nightly chats, puzzles, riddles, rebuke, satire, defamation, battles, animals, angels, demons, etc. Composers of "wonders and marvels" books chose rhyming names for their works in order to attract the reader. The study found that the popularity of such books was due to the fact that certain phenomena and customs were perceived as incomprehensible by Arabs, who therefore sought transcendental or supernatural explanations, giving free rein to their imagination. Some books of this genre were apt to arouse fear in the reader and the oft-repeated stories in them were eventually believed by many and became means for realizing Arabs' desires and dreams. The study found that at first such books were perceived with scorn, as collections of superstitions and myths, and were therefore popular mainly among the lower classes. Because the genre did not attract the interest of the more educated, its scholarly study was neglected for a long time.

**Keywords:** Arab Literature, Wonders and Marvels, Supernatural Themes.

## 1. Introduction

The study of the legacy of the past is "not only due to its uniqueness, but also because it is a connection with our deepest selves, for many of its elements remain in our contemporary lives and affect us more than we think". The Arab Islamic legacy, too, possesses literary and other elements of significance in the intellectual history of the Arabs. One prominent element of this type is the literary genre of "wonders and marvels" (al-*ʿajāʾib wal-gharāʾib*), containing astonishing stories which create an esthetics of a special kind, reflecting the totality of Arab culture and the Arab genius of classical times.

Arab Islamic heritage abounds in traditional narrations of strange tales, oral and also written. This was due to the Arab affinity for listening to tales and reports of novelties and rarities. The narrators of such tales were very popular, among rulers as well, as attested in the following

report: "Hārūn al-Rashīd sought the proximity of Abū l-Sarī (Sahl b. Abī Ghālib al-Khazrajī), a poet who claimed a close relationship with the jinn and wrote a book about the latter, their wisdom, family ties and poetry. H claimed that he caused them to pledge their allegiance to al-Amīn as heir-apparent. He became a close companion of the caliph and his family. The latter is quoted as having said to him: "If you saw what you mentioned, then you saw a marvel, and if you did not see it, you wrote literature". This episode clearly shows the great fondness for stories about unusual happenings among both the mighty and the common people. Authors responded to this desire with compositions portrayed as "authentic artistic rebellion", such as al-Tawābī' wal-zawābī', *Risālat al-ghufrān* (The Epistle of Forgiveness) and others, which adopted the formula of "moving from what is amazing to what is even more amazing", by extending one's creative imagination to the utmost degree.

These compositions also made use of the plentiful unusual materials found in Islam, including the miracles performed by prophets and others, as well as pre-Islamic Arab tales about supernatural beings. In fact, Arab writers did not only use elements of religion and culture to enrich Arab literature with inimitable works, but also at times borrowed fantastic tales of other cultures. Thus, for example, 'Abdullāh b. al-Muqaffa' (d. 759 CE) translated the Indian fables contained in *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, which "put wisdom and eloquent speech in the mouths of beasts and birds". While there was disagreement among Arab critics concerning whether this work was a translation or an original work by Ibn al-Muqaffa', there can be no doubt that its appearance marked a change in the development of fantastic works of prose, which now became a vehicle for the expression of the forbidden. Speech put in the mouth's of animals produced a kind of balance "between illogical deeds invented by the imagination and events which could not be expressed overtly out of fear and repression". Arab writers thus used every available resource in composing their tales of marvels and wonders, which were not only received with admiration by Arab readers, but were also appreciated in the West, where they inspired writers of this genre.

## 2. Research questions

The study attempts to examine the following issues:

- What is "wonders and marvels" literature?
- What themes does it contain and what are its main features?
- What were the causes of its emergence?
- Why the interest in this literature in Arab heritage?

## 3. Research method

The present study used the descriptive method, involving a description of the contents of the works in question, as well as collection and comparison of relevant data, in order to determine recurring details and themes, issues requiring further study and aspects that have so far not received due scholarly attention.

## Examples of "wonders and marvels" books

Arab Islamic culture recognizes a literary genre known by the name of al-‘ajā’ib wal-gharā’ib ("wonders and marvels"), that document the rare and fabulous. The following is a partial list of such works: ‘Ajā’ib al-baḥr and al-‘Ajā’ib al-arba‘a by Hishām b. al-Kalbī (d. 204/819, or 206/821), both now lost; ‘Ajā’ib al-dunyā by al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 346/957); al-Masālik wal-mamālik by Abū l-Qāsim Ibn Ḥawqal, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī (d. 367/977); ‘Ajā’ib al-buldān by Abū Dulaf al-Yanbū‘ī (d. 385/995); Funūn al-‘ajā’ib fī akhbār al-māḍīn min Banī Isrā’īl wa-ghayrihim min al-‘ubbād wal-zāhidīn by Abū Sa‘īd al-Naqqāsh (d. 414/1023); al-Murīb ‘an ba‘d ‘ajā’ib al-Maghrib and Tuḥfat al-albāb wa-nukhbat al-Ḥiḥāb by Abū Ḥāmid al-Māzinī al-Andalusī al-Ghirmānī (d. 565/1169); ‘Ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt wa-gharā’ib al-mawjūdāt by al-Qizwīnī (d. 682/1286); Nukhbat al-dahr fī ‘ajā’ib al-barr wal-baḥr by al-Dimashqī (d. 727/1326); Kharīdat al-‘ajā’ib wa-farīdat al-gharā’ib by Ibn al-Wardī (d. 749/1348); Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār wa-gharā’ib al-amṣār wa-‘ajā’ib al-asfār by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 776/1374); ‘Ajā’ib al-maqdūr fī akhbār Taymūr by Ibn ‘Arabshāh (d. 854/1450); Nuzhat al-umam fī l-‘ajā’ib wal-ḥikam by Ibn Iyyās al-Ḥanafī (d. 908/1502); ‘Ajā’ib al-malakūt by al-Kisā‘ī (lived before 1004/1595) and many others which deserve study.

The fabulous topics which some of these books address provide a broad gate to numerous arts, such as magic, tricks and the supernatural. Other books treat curiosities, humor, nonsense and buffoonery, entertainment, riddles, praise, disparagement and defamation, serious and frivolous topics with an element of marvel and wonder.

Within the same category we may place numerous books on battles and wars, books on animals, angels, demons, types of creatures and descriptions of the afterworld, in addition to chronicles of journeys, books of geography, biography and miracles performed by ṣūfīs. What they all have in common is love of the strange, the rare and the different.

Writers sought and recorded strange reports in their perusal of various books and produced various types of singular writings "which were usually called *fā’ida* (literally: "useful lesson") or *nādira* (literally: "anecdote"). "If such reports were found on old sheets paper or in a notebook, not in a book, they were called *wijādāt*, while if they were passed on orally by others, old or young, they were called *ifāda* if they were couched in prose and *inshāda* if they took the form of a poem. All these would be registered in a file, called *kunnāsha* in Morocco".

A prime example of such writing is the book *al-Ifādāt wal-inshādāt*, which represents the type of writing that "is concerned with collecting selections of curiosities, rarities and morals in prose and in verse, narrated by writers who heard them from their forefathers and companions, on a variety of topics, for the purpose of grasping scientific lessons [...] and providing a store of facts which may seem unconnected but they bring them together in order to sharpen the intellect and delight gatherings", satisfying people's curiosity about what is strange and rare. In scholarly circles this type of writing is quite well-known. It relates the type of marvels that impresses the educated classes; for just as every generation has its own wonders, so is every class of men curious about and interested in its own type of wonder: What is a marvel for the refined classes is not necessarily a marvel for the masses. But here our purpose is not to compare, but to demonstrate the unique features in an open and integrated manner.

We may classify among books that report and attempt to interpret and explain marvels and wonders also works on strange things in the Qur'ān and ḥadīth, such as al-Taysīr al-'ajīb fī tafsīr al-gharīb, al-Nihāya fī gharīb al-ḥadīth wal-athar, and others.

Other books that may be included in the list of collections of rarities, marvels and witticisms: Kitāb al-firāsa, which contains within its pages rare and curious facts about Islamic jurisprudence; Laṭā'if al-ma'ārif by al-Tha'ālibī, who collected rare facts about language which are not commonly in circulation among the people; Zahrat al-akam fī l-amthāl wal-ḥikam; Aḥmad Taymūr's collection Ṭarā'if min rawā'i' al-adab al-'arabī, and many others, which cannot be mentioned here due to lack of space.

There are also books whose strangeness lies in the language in which they are couched, for example, books that can be read in a number of different ways and on different topics. One book of this type is 'Unwān al-sharaf al-wāfī fī 'ilm al-fiqh wal-'arūḍ wal-tārīdh wal-naḥw wal-qawāfī, which consists of columns and color charts: the first column is read as dealing with prosody, the second as history, followed by grammar and lastly rhyme; the text is to be read line by line across the page, in the usual manner.

A similar work is Al-Nafḥa al-miskiyya wal-tuḥfa al-makkiyya, an epistle of several pages composed by al-Suyūṭī in Mecca in a single day. The epistle, when read as a continuous text from beginning to end, is about grammar, but if read in broad columns the words change their meanings and context and the text is revealed as dealing first with prosody, then rhetoric, followed by the art of the metaphor and finally by the author's autobiography, when reading the letters of the lines from top to bottom.

In this context we may also mention Yūsuf al-Sharbīnī's Ṭarḥ al-madar li-ḥall al-ālā' wal-durar, which contains advice for life and comportment. It is not divided into chapters, nor are there diacritical dots on the letters. All his texts, whether poetry or prose, have letters with no diacritics. The phenomenon of such strange books may be due to the esthetics of the Arabic script, which provides ample opportunity for combining letters and creating meanings. A writer who is well-versed in the esthetics of Arabic literature can thus combine letters in an unusual way, that brings together disparate elements and creates remarkable expressions that can attract readers. The surprise and beauty aroused by such texts can make them an attractive introduction to reading.

Such books' linguistic strangeness is due to two reasons: 1) The unusual format in which they are composed; 2) the unusual and unfamiliar formulations and meanings used in the text. Books of this type are very numerous, and cannot all be mentioned here.

A book's oddness occasionally lies in its interesting rhyming title, as is the case with several books by al-Jāḥiẓ, Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī, and others. Titles may also reflect a book's odd topic, for example Tafḍīl al-kilāb 'alā kathīr mimman labisa al-thiyāb (literally: Dogs are to be preferred over many who wear clothes), as the editor of the latter book notes: "This kind of subject matter arouses the wonder and perplexity of many cultured people, so you may imagine the effect it has on the masses".

Possibly the existence of so many books of marvels in the Arab legacy is due to the fact that "ancient storytellers were mostly driven by a desire to amaze". The ancients viewed reality

strangely from our perspective, but this should not be taken to mean that they intended to fool their readers. Indeed, they were quite honest, for they gave a natural explanation for what they were able to explain rationally, whereas anything that their minds were incapable of explaining naturally was interpreted in a transcendental or supernatural way. This paved the way to the use of the imagination in order to arouse even more amazement. The amazing thus became "a discourse that both conceals and reveals a background that serves definite purposes", which mostly deal with matters of religion, as representing the dominant Islamic culture. For this reason, in many books of wonders the authors take care to describe marvels in great detail and with great emphasis, in order to reveal God's powers through those of His creatures, and so "these compositions, of various types, constitute a lofty literature based on the faith, containing a mixture of religion and scholarship, of the real and the imaginary, and became one form of the Arab Islamic intellectual system".

### Writing about marvels: From the terrifying to the pleasurable

Clearly writings about wonders and marvels are not something new in Arabic literature, but have roots that go back to pre-Islamic times. Some books go back very far in time, describing wondrous creatures that were said to have existed before God created Adam, nations that are mentioned by al-Mas'ūdī: "Among them a nation of tall green creatures with wings, that speak like birds [...] and a nation in which everyone has two heads and two faces like lions, tall, whose speech is incomprehensible ...". He goes on to describe all manner of strange creatures of all sizes and shapes, without specifying their nature, whether human, animal or plant. The Arab imagination is filled with stories of other types of marvelous creatures and fabulous beasts, for example "The ghoulish Shiqq al-Anmārī", "The soothsayer Saṭīḥ al-Dhi'bī", and "The soothsayer Zarqā' al-Yamāma". These creatures had both a frightening and an amusing effect on the audience of this type of literature, due to their unnatural features, being composed of a number of unrelated beings and constantly changing in form. Thus, a ghoulish was a strange creature "capable of assuming various appearances, usually terrifying, sometimes in the shape of a man with a donkey's leg and at other times with the head of a cat", while Shiqq the soothsayer had "one hand, one leg and one eye", Saṭīḥ the soothsayer "had no bones in his body... his face was in his chest and had no head and no neck", while Zarqā' al-Yamāma "could see the moon's orbit and related marvelous things about it". The preceding are merely a sample of the many fear-inspiring creatures to be found in the Arab heritage. How, then, do we explain the fact that the wonders and marvels in Arabic literature were transformed from terrifying to entertaining?

The ancient Arabs lived a nomadic life. Some of the strange stories they were told could have constituted an obstacle to their wanderings, since they were apt to create in their minds images of strange creatures, intent on "misleading travelers": The shiqq and the ghoulish were the most prominent of the terrifying creatures that confronted the traveler when alone. Because such stories were so often told, Arabs came to believe them, so that one should not wonder that they also reported seeing such creatures and added various details, including ostensible violent encounters with them, in which they bravely fought and defeated them, occasionally even producing some material proof of their deed. Thus the pre-Islamic vagabond poet Ta'abbat Sharran (Thābit b. Jābir, d. 607 CE) boasted that "he had met the ghoulish in a place in al-Ḥijāz called Raḥā Biṭān [in the town of Hudhayl], where they fought. He killed it and carried its head

to the neighborhood, where he displayed it so that everyone would see proof of his courage". Several of the Prophet's Companions also reported seeing the ghoul, among them the caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, who claimed to have seen it on his trips to Damascus and to have struck it with his sword, before the appearance of Islam.

Stories of this type conveyed the message that travel between countries was something that only courageous men could undertake. Due to the status of poets in Arabia, they had to represent themselves as brave men, who did not fear the fire which ghouls lit at night in order to confuse and frighten travelers, and who transformed the creatures' sounds into sweet melodies and their flames into pretty colors. Thus the poet Abū l-Muṭrāb (or Abū l-Muṭrād) ('Ubayd b. Ayyūb al-'Anbarī, d. ?):

To Allāh the pearls of the ghoul, any companion Is a friend in the desert, an ally, place for crossing

It wailed with one melody after another and lit around me fires that shine and glow

Here the terrifying behaviors presented by the strange creature (the ghoul in this case) are transformed into manifestations of beauty and pleasure, and fear is transformed into music, something which only a nation's bravest can achieve. Strangely enough, Arabs' hostility towards some of these creatures sometimes turned into love, with ensuing marriage and children. Thus it is related that 'Amr b. Yarbū' b. Ḥanzala married a sa'lā, who remained with him for some time and bore a child from him. She stayed with him until one night when she saw lightening over her homeland, whereupon she flew back to her parents, who had told him that they would find him the best of wives, as long as she did not see lightening, because the sa'lā abhorred lightening. The warm relations between man and fabulous creature (sa'lā, jinni, etc.) in such stories are perhaps reflections of dissatisfaction with normal marital sexual relations and a fantasy about the kind of licentiousness which only heroic poets and knights can achieve, as for example in the following lines:

A deflowered woman, if I loved that from her and when I wanted, I found only a virgin

'Amr's daughter, her uncle Miṣlāl al-khayr and my uncle Humaym is 'Amr's companion

Jinni appeared regularly in Arab literature, including stories of love between humans and jinni. In *The Arabian Nights*, for example, there are stories of a jinni's love for a human and vice versa, not to speak of the story of Sayf b. Dhī Yazan, "in which jinni repeatedly abduct human girls that they love, who are subsequently rescued by the hero". This may remind us of the stories of marriages between gods and humans in Greek mythology, possibly leading us to the conclusion that stories about fabulous creatures may reflect a human desire to shirk off the factors that prevent one from obtaining all that one wishes. With a superhuman creature anything is possible; this may explain why stories about relations between humans and jinni abound, especially among poets. Writers used the theme of unusual romantic relations in order to express their licentious desires, free of the restrictions placed by human nature and society. The presence of fabulous creatures constituted one of the foundational elements of the Arab qaṣīda (classical poem). It reflected human preoccupations in the finest detail. The presence of ghouls or jinni was "in my estimation, nothing but the embodiment of the existential worry and fear of his fellow human beings which lay deep in the heart of mankind, transformed from giving love and goodness into giving harm and evil. The presence of the marvelous in Arab creative writing was thus not so

much an esthetic decoration or an artistic device for driving away routine and boredom as it was an expression of the worries of existence and an embodiment of great hopes, whose realization the restrictions of reality prevented. Enter the supernatural being, who perform miracles beyond the ability of mankind", as a necessary device from bringing human life back into equilibrium.

Other stories of wonders and marvels relate events going back to Arab antiquity, for example the story of the despotic king 'Amlīq and his bride Shamūs, the story of 'Ūj b. 'Anaq, "of whom it is related that he caught clouds and drank from them, and caught a whale from the sea depths, roasted it with the sun and ate it", and other venerable stories of this type, not to speak of folktales about the exploits of fabulous heroes, such as "The Story of 'Antara", "The Story of Sayf b. Dhī Yazan", "Al-Zayr Sālim", "Princess Dhāt al-Himma", "Abū Zayd al-Hilālī" and others, as well as maqāmas such as those of Badi' al-Zamān al-Hamdānī and al-Ḥarīrī, collections of Arabic proverbs, such as those by al-Maydānī and al-Zamakhsharī, and works devoted to witchcraft and astrology, such as Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā and Tadhkirat al-'arifīn, etc. The numbers and types of books about marvels and wonders in the Arab Islamic heritage are too large to enumerate here. The reason we mention some of them here is to show the reader the extent of the phenomenon, and to provide an intellectual and esthetic stock that will enable researchers and students to understand an aspect of the Arab mentality.

#### 4. Conclusion

Although the Arabs in former times possessed a great many books of wonders and marvels, these compositions were mostly ignored by early Arab critics. Muḥammad Arkūn explained that this was due to the fact that this was a genre that was viewed with contempt, since its contents fell within the domain of superstition and folktales or, in other words, that it was considered an inferior class of literature. In fact, formal legal opinions (fatwā) were issued against circulating such books, while Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) dismissed stories of miraculous events recounted in history books such as those by al-Mas'ūdī, al-Ṭabarī and the like, which he claimed to have natural explanations but were interpreted wrongly by their transmitters. Al-Jāhīz devoted a chapter in his book al-Ḥayawān called "Chapter on Bedouins' and Poets' Claims That They See Ghouls and Hear the Music of the Jinni". Other attempts were also made to marginalize this literature and to prevent its dissemination. As a result, it has not received the scholarly attention it deserves.

The classification of the literature of wonders and marvels as "folk literature", as a collection of superstitions and fables, "dominated by supernatural elements such as magic, jinni and illogical acts, free of the strict logic of spacetime", is evidence for the contempt and scorn with which it was held, "and therefore we find that such texts are only disseminated orally among specific social classes". Because of this, this literature was ignored by Arab intellectuals and did not receive scholarly attention in the Arab world, in contrast to the West, in which it was studied more than in its own homeland.

Frequently writers who composed texts which deviated from customary norms paid with their lives for their daring. Thus Ṭarafa b. al-'Abd was killed on the orders of a king who did not relish his unusual writings and behavior. Al-Mutanabbī, too, paid with his life for the poetic

imagination with which he expressed his desires, satirized whomever he wished and boasted about things which deviated from what others thought acceptable. He was killed, according to some accounts, due to the following lines in one of his poems:

It is me the horses, night, and wilderness sure realize

And the mighty sword, papers, and pen do likewise.

Some writers paid for their words with their health, security and livelihood, especially when their works remained unappreciated, neglected and marginalized, and they themselves were threatened and put under pressure due to their inclination towards unofficial and marginal literature.

The distinction between canonical and folk literature is apparently equivalent to the distinction between enlightened and folk culture. The difference between them "inheres in the difference between the official and the marginal". As a result, "the features of wonder and marvel are almost exclusively the property of 'naïve' folk culture, which considers superstitions and the supernatural a spacious world in which dreams come together that are unrealizable, due to the domination of the political and scholarly class over sources of material and symbolic influence". The stratagem of writing about marvels and animals was used to veil unpopular meanings, since "between wisdom and the reader stood the ruler, so that it was necessary to evade the one in order to reach the other". We do not claim that the educated classes were not familiar with stories of wonders and marvels; rather, the type of stories that appealed to them differed from the type that interested the masses. It must thus be stressed that writings about wonders never lost their allure; they always attracted the interest of readers and aroused contradictory reactions.

When original writings go beyond what is customary, the texts are imbued with esthetics that enable them to be classified as belletristic, for "literature differs from non-literature by the former's strangeness, excessiveness and shifts. While non-literature is based on routine, normal speech and a low style, literature is based on strangeness, distance, obscurity and delusion, on destruction of what is dominant, rational and customary. This means that literature is strange and goes beyond what is usual and dominant". We may thus conclude that the phenomenon of books of wonders and marvels in Arab Islamic heritage represent a reflection of transformations which Arab society has undergone throughout history and the result of its constant endeavor to escape routine reality. The study of this literature may help uncover hidden facets of the secret of the Arab genius in periods of revival and advancement.

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- The author's full name is Yūsuf b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Jawād b. Khadr al-Sharbīnī (was alive in 1098/1686). The book was published by Maṭba'at al-ṣidq al-khayriyya, Cairo, 1350/1931.
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- Author of *al-Tarbī wal-tadwīr*, *al-Burṣāt wal-'urjāt wal-'umyān wal-hūlān*, among others.
- Author of *Bulūgh al-ma'ārib fī akhbār al-'aqrīb*, *al-Wadīk fī faḍl al-dīk*, *Ṭarḥ al-'imāma fī l-tafriqa bayna l-maqāma wal-qimāma*, *Ākām al-'iqyān fī aḥkām al-khiṣyān*, *Bulūgh al-ma'ārib fī asmā' al-dhīb*, *Ikhbār al-tullāb fī akhbār al-kilāb* and others, listed at the end of his *al-Fāriq bayna l-munṣif wal-sāriq*, ed. Hilāl Nājī. Beirut: 'Ālam al-kutub, 1998, 181.
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- Al-Sa'fī, Wahīd. *Al-'Ajīb fī kutub tafsīr al-Qur'ān: Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr unmuḍhajan*. Damascus, Dār ṣafahāt lil-dirāsāt wal-nashr, 2007, 35.
- Al-Mas'ūdī, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn. *Akhbār al-zamān*. Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1980, 32-33.
- Shiqq b. Ṣa'b b. Yashkar b. Rahm al-Qasrī al-Bajlī al-Anmārī al-Azdī was a pre-Islamic soothsayer, a contemporary of Saṭīḥ (also a soothsayer). Both were occasionally summoned for consultation or for interpreting a dream. Shiqq lived until after the Prophet's birth, according to some reports. He was described as being "half a man", with one hand, one leg and one eye. For more details, see: al-Ālūsī, Maḥmūd Shukrī. *Bulūgh al-arab fī ma'rifat aḥwāl al-'arab*, ed. Muḥammad Bahja al-Atharī. Cairo: Maṭabī' dār al-kitāb al-'arabī bi-Miṣr, 1342/1293, 3:278-281.
- Rabī' b. Rabī'a b. Mas'ūd b. 'Uday b. al-Dhīb, of the Banū Mazid clan, of Azd, a Ghassānite pre-Islamic soothsayer, known as Saṭīḥ. The Arabs appealed to him to decide legal issues and were satisfied with his decisions. He was said to have not a single bone in his body except for his head, that his face was on his chest, and that he had no neck. He therefore lay constantly on the ground, being incapable of sitting or standing. He could be rolled up like a mat and spoke of wonders. He is reported to have lived until a short time after the Prophet's birth. For more details, see: al-Ālūsī, *Bulūgh al-arab fī ma'rifat aḥwāl al-'arab*, 3:281-283.
- Zarqā' al-Yamāma, a woman whose true name was 'Anz, belonged to the clan of Jadīs. She was known for her great beauty, which was compared to that of the full moon at night. She lived in al-Yamāma, in the Faṣṭha region. She was famous for her powerful sight and her ability to distinguish objects at a very great distance. For this reason she was called Zarqā' al-Yamama, that is, the blue-eyed woman from al-Yamāma. For more details, see: al-Baghdādī, 'Abd al-Qādir b. 'Umar. *Khizānat al-adab wa-lubb libāb lisān al-'arab*, 4th printing. Cairo: Maṭba'at al-khānjī, 2000, 261-262; al-Qazwīnī, Zakariyā b. Muḥammad Ibn Maḥmūd. *Āthār al-bilād wa-akhbār al-bilād*. Beirut: Dār ṣādir, no date of publication, 133-135.
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- Al-Mas'ūdī, *Akhbār al-zamān*, 124.
- Shalḥad, *Bunā l-muqaddas 'ind al-'arab qabl al-islām wa-ba'dahu*, 48.
- Al-Qazwīnī, Zakariyā b. Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd. *Āthār al-bilād wa-akhbār al-'ibād*. Beirut: Dār ṣādir, no date of publication, 92.
- Al-Mas'ūdī, 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn. *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jawhar*, 4th printing, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī l-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd. Cairo: Maṭba'at al-sa'āda, 1964, 2:155.
- Ibid., 2:157.
- A mythical creature, a female ghoul according to some, a jinni sorceress according to others. See: Ibn Manẓūr, Muḥammad b. Mukarram. *Lisān al-'arab*, ed. 'Abdullāh 'Alī al-Kabīr and Ḥāshim Muḥammad al-Shādhilī. Cairo: Dār al-ma'ārif, 1981, s.v. s'l.

- Al-Jāhiz, 'Amr b. Bahr. al-Ḥayawān, 2nd printing, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn. Cairo: Sharikat maktabat wa-maṭba'at Muṣṭafā al-Bānī al-Ḥalabī wa-awlādihi, 1965, 6:197; see also: Murtāḍ, 'Abd al-Malik. Al-Mithūlūjiyya 'ind al-'arab (Dirāsa li-majmū'a min al-asāṭir wal-mu'taqadāt al-'arabiyya al-qadīma). Algiers: al-Mu'assasa al-waṭaniyya lil-kitāb and al-Dār al-tūniyya lil-nashr, 1989, 37; also: Khūrshīd, Fārūq. 'Ālam al-adab al-sha'bī al-'ajīb, 160.
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- In his al-Fihrist, Ibn al-Nadīm devotes a full chapter to "The Names of Human Lovers of Jinni and Jinni Lovers of Humans". For more details, see: Ibn al-Nadīm, Abū l-Faraj Muḥammad b. Ishāq. Al-Fihrist, 2nd printing. Beirut: Dār al-ma'rifa, 1997, 373. On relations between humans and jinni see: al-Shiblī, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Abdullāh. Gharā'ib wa-'ajā'ib al-jinn kamā yuṣawwiruhā al-Qur'ān wal-sunna, ed. Ibrāhīm Muḥammad al-Jamal. Cairo: Maktabat al-Qur'ān lil-ṭab' wal-nashr wal-tawzī', 1983 (for sexual relations with jinni, see p. 83).
- Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī in his al-Aghānī describes various aspects of the relations between poets and jinni. For details, see: al-Iṣfahānī, Abū l-Faraj 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn. Al-Aghānī, ed. 'Abd al-Sattār Aḥmad Farrāj. Beirut: Dār al-thaqāfa, 1981.
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- 'Ūj b. 'Anaq, 'Ūj b. 'Awaq or 'Ūj b. 'Ināq (In the Old Testament: Og, עוג מלך הבשן) was an Amorite king of the Bashan region. According to the biblical account, he and his troops were killed in battle by Moses in the Battle of Edre'i. He was one of the giants who survived Noah's Flood, thanks to the help he gave Noah in transporting the wood for his ark. For more details, see: Admiel, Kosman. "The Story of a Giant Story - The Winding Way of Og King of Bashan in the Jewish Aggadic Tradition", in: Hebrew Union College Annual (HUCA) 73, (2002) pp. 157-90.
- Khūrshīd, Fārūq. 'Ālam al-adab al-sha'bī al-'ajīb, 135.
- Arkūn, Muḥammad. Al-Fikr al-islāmī: Qirā'a 'ilmiyya, 2nd printing, trans. Hāshim Ṣāliḥ. Beirut: Markaz al-imā' al-qawmī - al-Markaz al-thaqāfī al-'arabī, 1996, 211.
- Ibid., 187.
- See some examples in: Yaqtīn, Sa'īd. Al-Kalām wal-khabar: Muqaddima fī l-sard al-'arabī. Beirut and Casablanca: al-Markaz al-thaqāfī al-'arabī, 1997, 61.
- Al-Ka'bī, Diyā'. Al-Sard al-'arabī al-qadīm: al-Ansāq al-thaqāfiyya wa-ishkāliyyāt al-ta'wīl. Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'arabiyya lil-dirāsāt wal-nashr, 2005, 52.
- Al-Jāhiz. Al-Ḥayawān, Part VI.
- Al-Fāsī, Muḥammad. Dirāsāt maghribiyya, 127.
- See: Ḥajjū, Muḥammad. Al-Ḥaky al-sha'bī bayn al-khurāfa wal-uṣṭūra: Dirāsa sīmiyā'iyya fī l-ḥikāya al-sha'biyya, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Sultan Mawlāy Sulaymān University, 2002; see also: Lawlādī, Yūnus. Al-Uṣṭūra bayn al-thaqāfa al-gharbiyya wal-thaqāfa al-islāmiyya. Fez: Maṭba'at anfu-print, 1996.
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- Al-Ḥabāsha, Ṣābir. "al-'Ajīb wal-gharīb fī tafsīr al-Qur'ān: Manṭiq al-sard am ḥajājiyyat al-dalāla?". Muqārabāt, 3 (2), spring 2009, 37.
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