

An Early Persian Precursor to the Tales of Sindbād the Seafaring Merchant*

Von ULRICH MARZOLPH, Göttingen

Summary: Discussing a specific tale in context, the present essay is a contribution to the study of pre-modern Middle Eastern narrative culture. The tale under consideration is contained in the anonymous *Muğmal at-tavāriḥ va-'l-qeṣaṣ* (Compendium of History and Tales), a historical work compiled in Persian early in the twelfth century. In terms of narrative motifs, the tale of the king of Ḥimyar's adventures contained in the *Muğmal at-tavāriḥ* overlaps with the later tale of Sindbād the seafaring merchant's fourth adventure to such an extent as to consider the former a precursor to the latter.

When discussing the sources of the tales told by Sindbād the seafaring merchant, customarily called Sindbād the sailor, scholars in addition to ethnographic evidence have primarily studied Arabic sources.¹ This has led to the identification of a number of mostly geographical and historical works that in one way or another may be regarded as precursors to a collection of sailor's yarns. Probably as late as the seventeenth century—the period of the oldest preserved manuscripts²—this collection of sailor's yarns developed into the fully-fledged composition that, although originally an independent work, became subsequently known by way of its inclusion in the third volume of Antoine Galland's adapted version of the *Thousand and One Nights*, published in 1704.³ This collection comprises a frame-tale and a total of seven embedded tales told by Sindbād the merchant to his namesake Sindbād the porter. The main exception to the dominant focus on Arabic sources is constituted by a number of studies discussing the story of a shipwrecked sailor in ancient Egyptian literature.⁴ Indian literature, where the

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¹ MARZOLPH/VAN LEEUWEN 2004, vol. 1, pp. 383–389, no. 179.

² For a recent survey of manuscripts see BELLINO 2015.

³ Galland's colleague and competitor François Pétis de la Croix had also prepared a translation of the Sindbād tales in 1701. This translation has now been edited from the translator's autograph version preserved in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich, Cod. Gall. 799; see CHRAÏBI/MARZOLPH 2016.

⁴ MASPÉRO 2002, pp. 81–88; BRUNON 1994.

Bṛhatkathāslokaśaṃgraha, an abridgment of the lost *Bṛhatkathā* (The Great Story), contains the *Travels of Sānudāsa the Merchant*, a name that is tantalizingly similar to that of Sindbād, has so far not been taken into account.⁵ Similarly, Persian literature has implicitly been regarded as irrelevant for the history of the Sindbād tales, probably due to the fact that many, if not most, of the tales documented in Persian literature of the Muslim period appear to be offshoots of earlier versions in either Indian or Arabic literature. Even so, it is well known that Persian authors of the early Muslim period often compiled their works in Arabic as the *lingua franca* of the day. In fact, the author of an important early source for the Sindbād tales, the Arabic *Kitāb ‘Ağā’ib al-Hind* (Book of the Wonders of India), compiled around the middle of the tenth century, is the Iranian captain Bozorg ibn Šahriyār of Ramhormoz.⁶

In the present essay, I will discuss a precursor to the Sindbād tales, or, to be exact, to Sindbād’s fourth adventure, that is contained in a historical work compiled in Persian early in the twelfth century. Without aiming to propagate a linguistic or national priority of Persian language sources, this essay supplements current knowledge by advocating an interdisciplinary cooperation as the only promising means to arrive at a holistic assessment of the body of Middle-Eastern narrative traditions—Arabic, Persian, Ottoman Turkish, the Jewish and Christian narrative traditions, and several others—all of which are historically related to each other and none of which may claim an exclusive position.

The Persian work containing the tale to be discussed here is the *Muğmal at-tavāriḥ va-’l-qeṣaṣ* (Compendium of History and Tales). Although known for long, this book has only fairly recently been edited in a critical edition that is based on all four manuscripts preserved today.⁷ The book’s author does not disclose his name, but in one passage mentions the name of his grandfather as Mohallab b. Moḥammad b. Šādi.⁸ Internal evidence permits the dating of the book’s compilation to the year 1126/1127.⁹ The oldest preserved manuscript dates from about 300 years after the book’s compilation. In addition to constituting a rare specimen of early historical writing in Persian, the book is of prime importance for its quotations of material from a large number of earlier sources, several of which have not been preserved.¹⁰

⁵ BUITENEN 1959, pp. 218–258; MATEN 1973. I thank JEREMY SALTER for mentioning this source to me.

⁶ Buzurg ibn Shahriyar 1981.

⁷ NAJMABADI/WEBER 2000. An earlier Persian edition has been published by BAHĀR 1318/1939.

⁸ NAJMABADI/WEBER, p. 269, line 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19 (introduction).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–16 (introduction).

The tale under consideration here is not known from any other earlier source and might thus be taken from a source that is no longer available today.

The book's twenty-third chapter deals with geography. After a discussion of important cities such as Mecca, Medina, Constantinople and Alexandria, the chapter contains a passage that the author himself regarded as a digression without which, however, as he says himself, the book would not be complete. The passage presents two tales that deal with the Golden City and the City of Brass, respectively.¹¹ The Golden City is a legendary city built in Africa by Tāwīl, the brother of the giant 'Ūḡ, both of whom were born from the incestuous relation between Cain and his sister 'Anāq[a]. Having been deserted for more than a thousand years, the Golden City was later conquered by the Egyptians and became the source of their fabulous wealth.

Versions of the tale of the equally legendary City of Brass, a tale that is also included in the *Thousand and One Nights*, have been repeatedly studied, particularly in relation to their mystical message.¹² The tale's version in *Muḡmal at-tawāriḥ va-'l-qeṣaṣ* begins with the Umayyad ruler 'Abdalmalik b. Marwān (r. 685–705) finding a book about the City of Brass in his treasury and sending his vizier to the ruler of Ḥimyar in Yemen as the only person who might know where the city is located—"they said that if anybody has knowledge (*āgābi*) of that city, it would be nobody but the king of Ḥimyar."¹³ When 'Abdalmalik's vizier arrives in Ḥimyar and meets the king, he is surprised to see him in the company of several young men (*ḡolāmān*) whose heads are shaped like the head of a horse. Inquiring about the horse-headed men, he learns that they are the king's sons. Next the vizier notices a large palm tree in the king's quarters (*sarāy*) to which a black man (*zengi*) of giant stature is tied with iron chains. When the king of Ḥimyar passes by, he descends from his horse and with his own hand gives the man fifty lashes with the whip. Finally, the king receives the vizier with cordial respect and inquires about the reason for his visit. The vizier tells him that originally he had come with a single concern; but now this state has passed, as his concerns have multiplied to three. First, he asks to be informed about the identity of the black man, why he is tied to the tree, and why he is given lashes, particularly by the king himself. Second, he asks the king to lift the mystery of his horse-headed sons. Only then the vizier inquires about his original concern, i.e. to be shown the way to the City of Brass. In the manner of "narrative men" (TODOROV)¹⁴, typical for the *Thousand and One Nights* and

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 384–395.

¹² See, e. g., HAMORI 1974; GENEQUAND 1992; PINAULT 1992, pp. 148–239; MARZOLPH 1999a; FUDGE 2006, and, most recently, HAJJAR 2012.

¹³ NAJMABADI/WEBER 2000, p. 387, lines 5–6.

¹⁴ TODOROV 2006.

other middle Arabic narrative literature, the king tells an extensive tale in response to the vizier's three-fold request. It is this narrative that is of particular relevance for the early history of the Sindbād tales. Before discussing the narrative in some detail, I will first supply a complete translation. Introducing his response with the customary formal "Hearing is obeying" (*sam'an wa ṭā'atan*), the king continues:

[p. 387] As for the tale of the black man—when I was young and my father was still alive, I yearned to do trade in order to see the ocean. With numerous goods and in the company of many merchants, I boarded a ship (*be-daryā nešastam*; literally: took place on the sea). For four months we sailed with an auspicious wind until finally a conflictive wind rose that blew us to the island of Zanzibar to a cannibal people known as Majkuy (Majkavi?). The captain was very much scared and after an intensive consideration said to us: "In order to save ourselves (*čāre ān ast*) we will paint our sail and the ship itself black. Only then will we approach that country so that we will hopefully be saved. If we don't do this, they will kill and devour all of us." So we painted the sail and the ship black and approached them. The black people liked it very much. We started to trade, and whatever we had bought for a single *derham* they bought for a hundred golden *dinārs*. And the king of Zanzibar developed a friendly attitude towards me.

In their country there was no salt. I sent a certain amount of salt to the king and instructed the cook how to use it. The king was very pleased and sent a large amount (*čendāni*) of goods, presents, gold and [388] jewels to me that it had no equal. When our business was finished, I went to the king, asked for permission [*dasturi*; i. e. to talk] and said: "If there is any service I can do, please mention." By way of his interpreters, the king of Zanzibar accorded me his favor saying: "You should come regularly and bring lots of salt with you, and you should also bring a beautiful slave girl." I accepted and returned to the place of my longing and desire, and the wind helped. When I arrived at my city, I had amassed wealth beyond imagination [*ke dar emkān nayāyad*; literally: that went beyond possibility].

Again I had this yearning [to travel]. I joined the merchants, filled a ship with salt, bought a beautiful slave girl and went off in the direction of Zanzibar. When I arrived there, I sent the salt to the king of Zanzibar. The slave girl said to me: "O you impudent one (*nā ḡavān-mard*)! May the Lord give you your remuneration! I am a Shi'i (*'alavi*) and ran away from [the Iraki town of] al-Ḥilla. They caught me and sold me [as a slave]." I responded: "You should have mentioned this earlier on. At this time, what can I do?" When they took her away, a great sorrow and distress took hold of my heart. After the following prayer, the king of Zanzibar invited me to a meal, as he had usually invited me every day. But [this time] when everybody sat down at the table they brought a golden tray and placed it in front of the king, and they had placed the roasted hand of the slave girl on it. When I saw that, my soul separated from my body and I began to shiver. But I kept my composure and prayed to the Lord saying

[to myself] that should I escape from there safely, I would take revenge for that Shi'i girl. From then on, I did not trust the black people. I told the event to the other merchants, and as they were also much scared, we strove to finish our affairs as soon as possible and to ask permission [to leave]. As usual, I went to the king and said: "Tell me whatever service I can do!" The king said: "You should bring several slave girls and lots of salt!" I responded: "I am a servant to whatever the ruler commands!" We steered our ship, and a good wind assisted us, until we returned to our country. My father had died, I conducted the mourning rites, and the merchants went their way (*parākande šodand*; literally: dispersed).

I stayed there and bought slaves, some two to three hundred, all of them around ten to eleven years of age. I gave orders to educate them in the religious rites (*farz*) and in traditional manners (*sonnat*). Then I brought teachers of the martial arts to teach them the art of using weapons and manly combat (*mardi*) such as shooting arrows, throwing the javelin, using shield, sword and missiles, and swimming, and everything that a warrior needs to know. This went on for almost five years, and I educated all of the young men in such a manner that if I had ordered all of them to throw themselves into a blazing fire they would not have shied away. Then I gave orders to prepare the ship as usual and did not tell the other merchants anything [about my plans]. [389] Instead of wares, I had placed weapons on the ship. Passing the young men off as merchants, I entered the vessel and took off for Zanzibar.

When I arrived, I went to the king as usual. I had brought some salt that I took to the king. When he requested the slave girl, I responded by way of the interpreters: "I have brought the slave girl. She is on the boat. Now I ask the king to give me the great honor to be my guest on the ship." With a thousand tricks and ruses I brought the king onto the ship as my guest. There I staged a nice carousal with the good wine I had brought, red and yellow and white. When the night began to fall, the guests left, and I implored the king's entourage that the king should stay there for the night. The king accepted my invitation (*eğābat kard*) and stayed on with ten of his close servants. When a certain time of the night had passed, I put a drug into the wine that would make them unconscious. All of them drank it and fell unconscious. For the king I had brought a strong iron chain with which I tied his arms and legs. To the sailors and slaves I said: "Sons! For a day like this I prepared you!" I ordered all of the slaves to take their weapons. The sailors hoisted the sails and we sailed away, and the wind assisted us. When the morning arrived, we had already sailed for fifty *farsang*. I had placed several slaves to guard the black man so that in case anything happened—God is our shelter!—they would kill him. In the meantime the black people had become aware of what had happened and attacked us on our way. We fought severely, but at last victory was ours and we escaped from them safely. After some time we arrived in our country. I chained the black man to this tree and took an oath that whenever my eyes would fall upon him I would beat him fifty times with my own hand. This is this story. And this person is that king who is tied to the tree.

As for the tale of my sons—know and be aware that when the rule passed from my father to me, it took a while to put the affairs [of the state] in order, but then I yearned again to trade. I transferred the rule to the vizier, equipped the ships and notified the merchants. And when the right season came, I set sail, and for several months we sailed with good winds. Then suddenly a [strong] wind arose, the anchor broke and the sails were torn, and for three days and nights we did not know whether we were in the skies or on earth. When the wind settled down after three days, the captain (*piš*) looked at the ship's state and began to wail and lament, shouting: "O Muslims! Say your prayers (*šahādat biyāvarid*; literally: pronounce the profession of faith)! Our affair has come to an end! Nobody is going to escape from this place! [390] We asked: "But what happened?" And he responded: "Look [for yourselves] and you will see this green [over there]. In the middle of the sea there is a tree, and at the foot of the tree the water of the sea goes down into a hole. And since our ship is drifting in that direction, there is definitely no rescue!" Our ship began to rotate around itself and its speed accelerated. The tree appeared higher, and the hole got into sight. We said our prayers, and finally all of the ships went down into that hole while the crying and wailing (*naḥir*) of the passengers arose. When it was the turn of our ship I grabbed a branch of that tree with my hand and pulled myself a little further onto it with a thousand efforts and stratagems. And when I had finally achieved it, I fell unconscious [literally: there was no trace of life left in me]. When I regained consciousness, I climbed higher up and for a long time said to myself that I will surely die. But it was still daytime. When night fell, a white bird [big] like a camel came and settled on that tree. I was hiding under some branches. In the morning, the bird left, and I kept thinking all day long about my rescue. I did not see any other chance but to seize the bird's foot so that he would either rescue me or kill me. When the bird came the next day and wanted to fly away, I seized its foot, the bird flew away, and I closed my eyes. Around lunchtime (*čāštgāh*) I opened my eyes. My hands were weak, but the ground was close. I opened my hands and stepped down, and the bird attacked me. I saw a group of people who chased the bird away and fell unconscious. When I regained consciousness I saw those people whose heads were like those of horses. I was amazed and asked for directions. It took a while (*dar zamān be-didand*) but then they indicated [the way] with gestures. When I arrived in the city all of its people had the same features, and they looked at me in amazement. As I walked around for two, three days, I found a blacksmith who looked like me, with one eye. He developed a fondness for me, and I told him about my adventures. He said: "I also was a merchant and was shipwrecked. I also arrived at that place, climbed upon that tree, and that bird saved me. But he picked out one of my eyes."

[391] After some time, carnal desire troubled me, as I was young. So I asked their king for a bride. They had the custom that if the husband would die sooner [than the wife], they would bury the wife alive together with him; and when the wife died [sooner], they would bury the husband alive [together with her]. After a certain time, my wife fell ill. I was scared, went to the blacksmith

and said: "What can I do to prevent this happen?" The blacksmith responded: "There is nothing you can do. Those people have a large burial chamber. It is a spacious cave with a narrow opening, and they close that opening with a millstone. When the wife dies, they supply the husband with bread for three days and a pitcher of water. And whatever they [i. e., the buried couple] possess in terms of clothes, they throw down." I said: "For God's sake, please put some bread, some oil for a lamp, a wick (*horāqdān*), a lamp and a knife inside my clothes so that, if my wife dies, they will throw it down after me into the cave."

When I returned home, my wife had died. They lifted her up, took me along, and brought us to that cave. With a rope they let me down and blocked the entrance of the cave. After they had lowered the [body of my dead] wife and the [bundle of] clothes and I had regained my senses, I got up and saw a tremendously large cave. I installed the wick and lit the lamp, chose a place by the side, cleaned it and made a bedstead. And when every two days they threw somebody down there alive, I killed that person with my knife and took the supplies of three days bread and water, until one day they deposited in that cave my former wife's sister alive, together with her dead husband. When she saw me, she recognized me and consented to marry me. I slept with her and had several children with her. Some time later I started to dig the ground in a corner of the cave with my knife until I had made a [large] hole to the side of the sea. Every day I would sit there, until I finally saw a ship. I attached a piece of cloth to a stick and waved it, until the ship came close and took me and my children aboard. They also asked me the same question [i. e. why my children had heads like horses], I told them my story, and they delivered me to my country. I had many more children with that woman. This is the story of my children and their ancestry.

Complementing the tale of the king of Ḥimyar with a short comment on Alexander's visit to that country, the author then goes on to narrate the tale of the City of Brass. His version of that tale corresponds more or less to the other known versions, except that numerous obstacles the travellers have to overcome before they reach their destination have been added.

Reading the tale of the king of Ḥimyar as an early version of a tale that later came to be known as one of Sindbād's tales, there is a remarkable overlap between the two versions in terms of narrative motifs and episodes.¹⁵ First and foremost, although the traveller is originally the son of a king, he becomes a merchant in order to travel and see the world rather than explore the world on land, as a prince might be expected to do. The element of assuming a new professional identity as merchant links the tale of the king of Ḥimyar not only to the tales of Sindbād, but moreover to numerous tales in the *Thousand and One Nights* whose protagonists are merchants, notably often spendthrift sons of rich merchants who embark on their travels only after they

¹⁵ In the following, all references to Sindbād are to HADDAWY 1995.

have wasted their fortune with false friends.¹⁶ The beginning of the king of Ḥimyar's first adventure with the cannibal black people in Zanzibar bears a certain similarity to the adventures of the shipmaster Ismā'īlawayh as retold in Bozorg ibn Shahriyār's *ʿAḡāʾib al-Hind*. In Ismā'īlawayh's tale, a storm drives the ship to the African coast at Sofāla, today in Eastern Mozambique. Although the residents are black cannibals, they treat the foreigners with respect, and the merchants are able to make good profit by selling their goods. When, however, their gentle king visits their ship to bid farewell, the greedy merchants abduct him in order to sell him and his companions as slaves on the market in Oman.¹⁷ The episode is also reminiscent of the first episode of Sindbād's fourth voyage, when Sindbād and his shipwrecked companions arrive at an island of cannibal magians who fatten and devour his companions. In the present version, however, the protagonist and his companions manage to save themselves through a series of clever stratagems. First, they please the black people by literally adopting their complexion by painting their ship and its sails black. And second, Sindbād himself pleases the king by presenting to him salt to season his dishes. Unusual as these actions may appear in confrontation with a cannibal people, they pave the way for a different development that reaches its first climax when the protagonist during a festive meal sees the roasted hand of the beautiful slave girl he had brought being served to the king. Gruesome as this event is, it is further accentuated by the fact that the young woman the protagonist had bought as an alleged slave was actually a free woman who had been abducted and enslaved when for a short time she had been without male protection. Although the reason why the woman ran away is not specified, it is tempting to read her flight as an attempt to escape male dominance. Moreover, the young woman explicitly states that she is an adherent of the Shi'ī creed and thus (as probably the tale's author, narrator, and audience) not only a true believer but also, supposedly, a member of the same creed as the person who delivered her to the cannibal king. In terms of the moral obligations of contemporary society, the young woman's illegal abduction and gruesome killing might implicitly be read as a deserved punishment for her having challenged the rules of the male-dominated society she lived in. At the same time, her death also results from the protagonist's naïve action. After all, it was the prince of Ḥimyar who had delivered her as a human object to the cannibal ruler. Had he seriously thought about the cannibal king's wish, he could not possibly have believed that the king would use the slave girl as Muslim men would do, i. e. for entertainment of all kinds, including sexual intercourse. But whereas the

¹⁶ MARZOLPH/VAN LEEUWEN 2004, vol. 2, p. 808, motif W 131.1.

¹⁷ BUZURG IBN SHAHRIYAR 1981, pp. 31–36, no. 32.

woman is punished for her transgression, the male protagonist's naïve action does not result in any negative consequences for him. At any rate, the young woman's cruel death calls for an equally strong retaliation, and the male protagonist fulfills his obligation by performing this retaliation. This is the reason why the cannibal king is not simply put to death—a retaliation that in view of his crime the audience would probably have deemed as too mild. Instead, he is abducted and cruelly tormented for the rest of his life. In this manner, the fact that the prince of Ḥimyar risks his own life by abducting the cannibal king might have been read by the contemporary audience as an indemnification of his prior naiveté.

The king of Ḥimyar's second adventure shows an even closer similarity to Sindbād's fourth voyage. While during his first adventure, the protagonist had merely been delivered to an unintended and dangerous destination, he is now shipwrecked in a maelstrom, from which he is only able to save himself by his inventiveness, strong determination and physical strength. Although the tree to the side of the maelstrom in the middle of the sea is a somewhat surprising element, it derives its narrative justification from constituting the means by which the protagonist can save himself. As we learn later in the tale, other people have also been able to save themselves in the same manner as the king of Ḥimyar does. The tree and the large bird alighting on the tree thus reveal themselves to be supernatural elements of providence. Even in the context of a world-view that accepts humanity's fate as predestined, a person can influence the course of events by serious commitment and personal effort as there is no single predestined future but a variety of options whose eventual practical course depends on the protagonist's active intervention. The huge bird to whose foot the protagonist clings, usually known as Ruḥḥ, appears in Sindbād's second voyage, when Sindbād is left behind on an island where the Ruḥḥ has laid its eggs. The very same strategem is already mentioned in Bozorg ibn Šahriyār's *ʿAğāʾib al-Hind*,¹⁸ and it is employed in various tales of the fifteenth-century Ottoman Turkish *Ferec baʿd aṣ-šidde*.¹⁹ The horse-headed people the king of Ḥimyar meets after having been saved are also related to Sindbād's fourth voyage, albeit loosely. After Sindbād has been saved from the cannibals, he comes to a country where horses are held in high esteem and where he manages to gain a fortune by making saddles and bridles that had previously been unknown. Whatever

¹⁸ BURZUG IBN SHAHRIYAR 1981, pp. 8–9, no. VIII.

¹⁹ MARZOLPH 2017, summaries of nos. 26, 31, and 42. I thank the late GYÖRGY HAZAI and his collaborator HEIDI STEIN as well as the beneficiaries of the TIETZE and HAZAI estate for giving me access to TIETZE's unpublished German translation and for permitting me to use it. For the work itself see TIETZE 1957; BALDAUF 1994; ANETSHOFER 2005, pp. 23–38; HAZAI/TIETZE 2006, vol. 1, pp. 11–27.

the “original” link between the protagonist and horses might have been, and regardless of the question whether there ever was an “original” version, both versions analyzed here agree insofar as a kind of horse plays an important role in the tale’s action.

The most obvious overlap between the king of Ḥimyar’s adventures and Sindbād’s fourth voyage is, however, the custom of a husband or wife being buried alive together with their deceased spouse.²⁰ The earliest documented occurrence of this motif in the literatures of the Muslim world is a lengthy text in al-Muḥassin at-Tanūḥī’s (d. 384/994) Arabic *al-Faraġ ba’d aš-šidda* (Relief after Hardship);²¹ at-Tanūḥī’s version of the motif probably constitutes a “reimagined version”²² of the report by the tenth-century Iranian geographer (writing in Arabic) Ibn Rusta who mentioned that when the Rūs bury a leading man, they customarily bury his wife alive together with him.²³ In terms of chronology, the motif’s occurrence in the early twelfth-century *Muġmal at-tavāriḥ* discussed here is second in order. It is followed by a steadily increasing variety of treatments, including those in the thirteenth vizier’s story in the Ottoman Turkish *40 Viziers*, an extended version of the Persian *Sindbād-nāme* whose earliest versions probably date to the fourteenth century;²⁴ in the fifteenth-century Ottoman Turkish *Ferec ba’d eṣ-šidde*,²⁵ a collection of the compendium-of-tales (Persian *Ġāme’ al-ḥekāyāt*) kind²⁶ that was most likely translated from a Persian precursor; in the *-Maqāma -baṣriyya* of al-Sayyid ‘Abdarraḥīm al-‘Abbāsī (d. 1556);²⁷ in versions of the Persian romance dealing with the adventures of the Prophet Muḥammad’s paternal uncle Ḥamza b. ‘Abdalmuṭṭalib, the *Romuz-e Ḥamze*, the earliest of which dates at least to the seventeenth century;²⁸ twice in different tales of the Mašhad manuscript of the Persian compilation *Ġāme’ al-ḥekāyāt* that probably dates to the beginning of the seventeenth century;²⁹

²⁰ THOMPSON s.a., vol. 5, p. 306, motif S 123.2; EL-SHAMY 1995, vol. 1, p. 336; EL-SHAMY 2006, p. 311.

²¹ MARGOLIOUTH 1905; CANARD 1956, pp. 59–60. I owe these references to the kindness of MAURICE POMERANTZ; see POMERANTZ 2015. For the Arabic text, see at-Tanūḥī 1978, pp. 191–205. A German translation of the tale is available in at-Tanūkhī 1979, pp. 101–119.

²² POMERANTZ 2015.

²³ Ibid., referring to MONTGOMERY 2001, p. 76; Ibn Rusta 1990, p. 146.

²⁴ GIBB 1886, pp. 151–163, no. 25, at 154–155; see CHAUVIN 1904, p. 130, no. 121.

²⁵ HAZAI/TIETZE 2006, vol. 1, pp. 637–641, no. 42. I thank HELGA ANETSHOFER for supplying this reference together with her German translation of that story at a point when I did not yet have access to TIETZE’s complete German translation of *Ferec ba’d eṣ-šidde*. For the tale’s English summary see MARZOLPH 2017, no. 42.

²⁶ ŠAFĀ 1373/1994, pp. 1533–1538; ḤADIŠ/ĠĀFARI 1390/2011, pp. 9–12.

²⁷ POMERANTZ 2015.

²⁸ ŠE‘ĀR 1347/1968, pp. 246–248; *Romuz-e Ḥamze* 1273–1276/1857–1859, fol. 91b.

²⁹ HAAG-HIGUCHI 1984, pp. 105–106, no. 41; ḤADIŠ/ĠĀFARI 1390/2011, pp. 610–612.

in the tale of Cogia Muzaffer in Antoine Galland's Constantinople diary, recorded from oral tradition after its version in *Ferec ba'd eš-šidde*,³⁰ in the *Tale of Āzādbaht* that is embedded in the Urdu romance *Bāg o Bahār*,³¹ an early nineteenth-century adaptation of a work whose Persian original is attributed to Amīr Khosraw of Dehli (died 725/1325); and in various modern folktales in Turkish and several European languages in which the motif of husband and wife being buried together is combined with the misogynous motif of the unfaithful wife.³² The fact that the motif already in the tenth/eleventh century occurs in different forms and varied contexts indicates that it is probably considerably older and that already at this early period it was part and parcel of the narrative stock talented storytellers would exploit to construct their tales. The strong Persian element in the motif's distribution, from the Iranian geographer Ibn Rusta via the Ottoman tale translated from Persian to the versions of the Persian romance of Ḥamze documents, if not its origin from Persian tradition, at the very least its wide dissemination in pre-modern and early modern Persian literature.

Concerning this motif, it is furthermore remarkable to see the extent to which the protagonist in this version prepares himself for the future situation. Although Sindbād and virtually all other protagonists of the tale's different versions have been warned what to expect, they more or less stumble into the situation unprepared. Although most of them kill other people in order to survive, their action is spontaneously motivated by the needs of the moment. To the contrary, the protagonist here has a pre-conceived agenda, as he consciously prepares himself for the challenge of surviving the unavoidable burial by taking careful precautions. In addition to bread and a lamp, he even prepares a knife, indicating that from the beginning he is determined to kill in order to survive. Moreover, he has his friend deliver the objects to him in a concealed fashion, wrapped up in a bundle of clothes so that nobody will notice them. These precautions characterize him as a man who is consciously shaping his destiny at all times, rather than those who give themselves up to a presumed fate and are only rescued by coincidence, chance or a sudden stroke of ingenuity.

Without intending to hypothesize a direct relationship, it is remarkable to note that the two tales told by the king of Ḥimyar have merged into one in the corpus of the Sindbād tales. At the same time, Sindbād's fourth adventure shows the same constitutive elements as the tales in the *Muğmal at-tavāriḥ*, albeit reworked in a different fashion—i. e. the cannibals, some

³⁰ SCHEFER 1881, vol. 2, pp. 45–46; see also MARZOLPH 2016.

³¹ FORBES 1874, pp. 240–246.

³² EBERHARD/BORATAV 1953, pp. 137–138, Typ 120 (8–9); UThER 2004, vol. 1, pp. 352–353, tale-type 612; GOLDBERG 2007.

kind of horses, and the motif of husband and wife being buried together. Given the lack of additional evidence, we do not know whether the author of the Sindbād tales actually knew the *Muğmal at-tavāriḥ* nor what exactly happened to the conglomerate of motifs encountered in the *Muğmal at-tavāriḥ* after the twelfth century. At the very least, however, it appears justified to regard the king of Ḥimyar's tales in the *Muğmal at-tavāriḥ* as an early Persian precursor to Sindbād's fourth adventure.

In addition to the motifs common to both the king of Ḥimyar's tale and the tales of Sindbād, there is a certain number of intertextual references to other texts of Middle Eastern narrative literature in Arabic, Persian, or Ottoman Turkish, such as the cannibal black men, the one-eyed person whose one eye had been picked out by a bird, and the character of the friendly person who advises and helps the protagonist in a strange and sometimes hostile land. Cannibal black men are stock characters of pre-modern Middle Eastern literature.³³ A group of three one-eyed mendicants figures prominently in the tale of *The Porter and the Three Ladies* in the *Thousand and One Nights*.³⁴ And the friendly helper appears, for instance, in the *Nights*' tale of Amḡad and As'ad.³⁵ Considered together, these intertextual references document the narrative to result from the conscious effort of an educated person who composed the tale as a diligent construction by taking recourse to and integrating various motifs of learned as well as popular tradition. It is not always possible to reconstruct what the author actually intended or alluded to by including specific motifs. For instance, in a well-known narrative from pre-modern Arabic and Persian tradition, a one-eyed character is taken as an ill omen³⁶, whereas here he figures as a friendly adviser and helper. But rather than taking texts such as the one studied here as the products of an anonymous popular or "folk" tradition that would indiscriminately lump together all kinds of material, and thus belittling the creative act of a single individual, we need to consider them as artful creations composed by a talented narrator. Only when acknowledging the author's command of "intertextual allusions to themes, motifs, and concepts familiar to the audience [as] a highly effective narrative technique for linking new and unknown tales to a web of tradition the audience shares"³⁷ can we arrive at an understanding of pre-modern Middle Eastern narrative literature that comes close to doing justice to the role it played in its original context.

³³ See the commentary in MARZOLPH 1999b, p. 658, no. 16.

³⁴ MARZOLPH/VAN LEEUWEN 2004, vol. 1, pp. 324–326, no. 14.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 343, in no. 61.

³⁶ MARZOLPH 1992, vol. 2, p. 63, no. 243.

³⁷ MARZOLPH 2014, p. 240.

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