

ARTÍCULOS

A Review of the Escorial Codex Árabe 1876: A Collection of Fourteen Short Stories from North Africa

Una reseña del MS Árabe 1876 del Escorial:
Una colección de catorce relatos cortos del Norte de África

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Abstract

This is a review of a collection of fourteen stories, preserved in a single manuscript, dated 5th of Rabī' I, 1137 H./ November 21, 1724 CE. The manuscript is held at the library of the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial in Spain, at least since the year 1848. The collection received limited scholarly uptake: it was considered an Andalusī work and was framed within the Iberian Chivalric Romances (6th/12th–7th/13th c.) as well as within the literary court of the Umayyad Chancellor Almanzor in Córdoba (late 4th/10th c.). The manuscript also was assumed to belong to the Zaydānī library (transferred to the Escorial in 1614). Through literary and contextual excavations, I argue for a different genetic history, and show how the collection shares elements with *A Hundred and One Nights* (*Mi'at layla wa-layla*), *The Thousand and One Nights* (*Alf layla wa-layla*), Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's travelogue, and an understudied *sīra* that circulated in Egypt in the latter half of the 8th/14th century. By analyzing the marginalia, furthermore, I propose the manuscript is a latecomer to Spain, produced, not in al-Andalus, but in North Africa.

Keywords: Escorial Codex 1876; Zaydānī library; *Alf layla wa-layla* (*The Thousand and One Nights*); chivalric literature; *sīra*, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa; Pascual de Gayangos; manuscripts; translation.

Resumen

La presente reseña remite a una colección de catorce relatos compilados en un único manuscrito, fechado el 5 de Rabī' I, 1137 H./ 21 de noviembre de 1724 e.c., actualmente conservado en la biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, en España. La colección tuvo una acogida académica limitada: fue considerada una obra andalusí, enmarcada dentro de los romances caballerescos ibéricos (s. VI/XII – VII/XIII) y perteneciente a la corte literaria del canciller omeya Almanzor de Córdoba (finales del s. IV/X). Se cree que el manuscrito perteneció a la biblioteca de Zaydān, trasladada a El Escorial en 1614. A través de excavaciones literarias y contextuales, definiendo una genealogía diferente mostrando elementos compartidos con *Las cien y una noches* (*Mi'at layla wa-layla*), *Las mil y una noches* (*Alf layla wa-layla*), la *rihla* /las memorias de viaje de Ibn Baṭṭūṭa y una *sīra* poco estudiada que circuló en Egipto en la segunda mitad del siglo VIII/XIV. Mediante el análisis de la marginalia, además, propongo que el manuscrito es de llegada tardía a España, y que no se produjo en al-Andalus, sino en el norte de África.

Palabras clave: códice árabe 1876 de El Escorial; biblioteca Zaydānī; *Alf layla wa-layla* (*Las mil y una noches*); literatura caballeresca; *sīra*; Ibn Baṭṭūṭa; Pascual de Gayangos; manuscritos; traducción.

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1. Introduction

The present article is part of a larger study that prepares an Arabic edition and an English translation of a unicum manuscript held at the library of the Monastery of San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Escorial MS Árabe 1876. It is a collection of fourteen stories, that carries the following title on the first folio, *Kitāb fīhi ḥadīth Ziyād B. ‘Āmir al-Kinānī wa-mā jarā ‘alayhi min al-‘ajā’ib wa-l-gharā’ib bi-qaṣr al-lawālib wa-buḥayrat al-‘ajab* (*A Book That Includes the Story of Ziyād Son of ‘Āmir al-Kinānī and the Wonders and Marvels He Experienced in the Palace of Spirals and the Lake of Wonder*). The title in Arabic is “كتاب فيه حديث زياد بن عامر الكناني وما جرى عليه من العجائب والغرائب بقصر اللوالب وبحيرة العجب” The manuscript is signed in the colophon, the fifth of Rabi‘ al-Nabawī (the third month of the Hijrī calendar) of the year 1137 Hijra, which corresponds to November 21, 1724 CE. There is no attribution to a scribe, author, or patron.

Little is known of Codex 1876 before the 1882 publication that alerted the scholarly community to this manuscript. The conditions and date of its authorship and of its acquisition by the Escorial remain unclear. A few moments in its history can be reconstructed. Spanish Arabist Enrique Alix made a copy of Codex 1876 or had a copy made for him in 1848; it is currently housed at the Biblioteca Nacional de España (Mss. 5098). The manuscript itself also carries traces of readers who held the manuscript and interacted with it: a colophon (a spell and two lines of poetry), and an invocation (of blessings for the prophet of Islam) added on the upper margins of most folios. This short review intends to introduce the manuscript, the fourteen tales and the scholarly reaction Codex 1876 received. The present review puts forth two claims: that the collection, in bearing marks of editorial processes, is very likely the work of a single author; and that Codex 1876 is a product, not of al-Andalus, but of North Africa. To best understand this manuscript in the context of its production and circulation, the next stage of research will cover two areas. The first pertains to the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, in North Africa and Europe, especially the Iberian Peninsula, as well as the movement of ideas, manuscripts, and individuals across the Mediterranean. The second focuses on the 19th century, and the scholarly and political interest in Arabic language and history in Spain. The current review does not address either.

Interrogating Codex 1876 by attending both to its narrative claims and to its historical evidence poses a challenging question, that may help further reflection on this collection. On the narrative level, the collection announces its citational character. The first story makes an explicit claim on re-reading. It acknowledges and embraces intertextuality by presenting itself as a mode of knowledge sharing that admits recovery, adaptation, and repetition.¹ Reverberations of several literary works in the stories of Codex 1876 support the claim to intertextuality: over fifty motifs identified by El-shamy as markers of folk tales can be located in Codex 1876.² This embeddedness within broader narrative fabrics, however, does not extend to the afterlives of the collection itself, at least in light of all evidence available to researchers today. How can this intertextuality be reconciled with the fact that the collection survived in a unicum manuscript and left no discernable traces in Arabic literature?³ It has been noted that a unicum should not be taken as an indication for how often and

¹ In the opening scene of the first story, “The Story of Ziyād Son of ‘Āmir al-Kinānī and the Wonders and Marvels He Experienced in the Palace of Spirals and the Lake of Wonder,” the caliph is distressed and unable to sleep. To remedy the insomnia, he summons Ziyād son of ‘Āmir al-Kinānī to narrate his adventures, and tells him, “I have experienced last night disquiet and chagrin, and found myself reflecting on the meaning of this wordily existence, and on the meaning of faith, contemplating how kingship, moves from one king to another until there is no one left but god, glory be to him. As I was looking into the books of the Arabs, and the tomes they wrote to keep their histories from being forgotten, I came across a wondrous tale, and it was mentioned to me that you have witnessed marvels and wonders and lived many adventures. I want you to narrate to me the marvels and wonders of it all” (2r). This notion is reiterated in the conclusion of the story. When the character completes its tale, the caliph says, “Ziyād, you have not added or missed a single detail. I heard your story from other sources, but I wanted to hear it from you” (28r).

² El-Shamy, *A Motif Index of The Thousand and One Nights*; and *Types of the Folktale in the Arab World: A Demographically Oriented Tale-Type Index*.

³ This question is justified if we examine Codex 1876 against *The Hundred and One Nights*, a work that is comparable in length, style, provenance (North Africa), and period. Seven manuscripts have been identified and examined, one is believed to be lost, and one has been located in Leiden (Leiden OR. 14303). *The Hundred and One Nights*’ oldest (of the dated) manuscripts is Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Arabe 3662. It is copied in 1190/1776, and it names its owner as al-Ḥājj Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥājj Ḥamīdah. For a review of the manuscripts of *A Hundred and One Nights* see Fudge, pp. xix- xxxiii.

over how long a particular work has been reproduced, read or commented on. A look, for example, at *Ṭawq al-Ḥamama* (The Ring of the Dove) by Andalusī scholar Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), which survived in a single manuscript reveals traces of a very complex itinerant life: this work has been sought, purchased and owned by several people, in different locations, and over a considerable period of time (Liebrenz, “Ibn Ḥazm’s *Ṭawq al-Ḥamama*”). This is not the case with Codex 1876. Apart from the readers who added the colophon and the invocation — and the textual edits, if it is assumed they were not added by the copyist of Codex 1876 themselves — the manuscript does not carry traces of purchase, possession, or review.

2. Studies

The first tale of the collection, “Ḥadīth Ziyād b. ‘Āmir al-Kinānī,” appeared in a Spanish translation by Francisco Fernández y González in 1882, under the title *Historia de Zeyyad ibn Amir el de Quinena*. Fernández places his interest in this collection within broader European attention to Arab and eastern literatures, and more particularly, to popular or chivalric romances. Fernández speculated that Codex 1876 was Andalusī, possibly from Granada, produced sometime after the Almoravid reign (r. 447/1056 – 541/1147) (416). It was since briefly mentioned by a number of scholars (Menéndez y Pelayo, *Edición Nacional*; Palencia, *Historia de la literatura*; al-Qalamāwī & Makkī, “On Adab”), who subscribe to the theses of Fernández. Luciano Rubio Calzón published a piece on the manuscript in 1936, “Una colección de cuentos orientales de la Biblioteca escurialense,” in which he proposed some tales were produced after the twelfth century. Based on the language of the tales and reverberations of *The Thousand and One Nights*, Rubio Calzón proposes, albeit without any references or examples, the collection could be produced in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. He finds some tales more worthy of scholarly attention than others, primarily the first tale, which has literary value as well as chivalric elements (Rubio Calzón, “Una colección de cuentos,” p. 90). The first tale was also the topic of investigation by David Wacks, who believes the collection was produced in the mid-thirteenth century CE. Granada, and places the first tale in conversation with Iberian chivalric literature and Arthurian legends, and briefly, with the *sīra* and *Nights* traditions (Wacks, *Medieval Iberian Crusade*; “Popular Andalusī Literature”; and “Ziyād ibn ‘Āmir al-Kinānī”). A recent article on Codex 1876 came out in 2020, in *Imagination and Fantasy in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time: Projections, Dreams, Monsters, and Illusions*, titled “Ladies, Warriors and Genies: Imagining Gender and Power in *The Book of the Tales of Ziyad Ibn Amir al-Kinani*” by Jessica K. Zeitler. The article looks at the women protagonists in the tale of “Ziyād b. ‘Āmir al-Kinānī,” loosely, against the Andalusī context. Zeitler, however, works off the Spanish translation of the first tale, and accepts the premise that the manuscript originated in the Iberian Peninsula in the thirteen century. It appears that Zeitler somehow assigns to Fernández (*Historia de Zeyyad*), a claim that he did not make, namely that the manuscript was created during the Almohad reign. In a forthcoming study tentatively entitled, “Redrawing the Limits of the Human: The Issue of Race in *Ziyad ibn Amir al-Kinani*,” Jonathan F. Correa-Reyes examines race in the first tale of the collection. An Arabic edition was produced in 2009 by al-Shinnāwī, who suggests Codex 1876 belongs to the first period of *Mulūk al-ṭawā’if* or Party Kings (fifth H./eleventh century CE.). Although published in 2009, the Arabic edition, remains obscure in academic scholarship, both in the Arab world and beyond. The interest in popular or folk literature has been renewed with more translations (Jayyusi, *The Adventures of Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan*; Bohas & Hassan, *Sirat al-Malik al-Zahir Baybars*; Fudge, *A Hundred and One Nights*) along with the more canonical studies on Arabic epics (Heath, *The Thirsty Sword*; Lyons, *The Arabian Epic Heroic and Oral Story-telling*; Kruk, *The Warrior Women of Islam*) and the growing interest in the *Nights*. It is hoped that a similar interest can be cultivated around this collection.

Except for al-Shinnāwī and Calzón, all scholars who mention this collection base their analyses and conclusions not on the fourteen tales, but on the first tale only. Through literary and contextual excavations, in the longer study, I argue for a different genetic history.

The initial impressions proposed by Fernández in the preface to his translation seem to have established a framework for approaching this manuscript as a thirteen-century Andalusī work. However, Fernández remained rather vague about his claims, failing to clarify whether he believed the tales themselves were Andalusī or if he meant that both the tales and the manuscript were Iberian. An analysis of the marginalia of Codex 1876, previously unexplored, indicates the manuscript was

produced and remained for some time in an Arab-Islamic milieu which would not have been possible in Spain during the first half of the 18th century. More specifically, two features of the marginalia support this assertion: an invocation formula seeking blessings for the prophet of Islam, at the top margin of most folios, and glosses on the last folio, of two section: a quotation of two lines of poetry preceded by a fertility spell. The verse lines are quoted from al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965), a famed Abbasid poet, and the topic of the lines is kingship and piety, or more particularly, how a king can engage in recreational activities, but remain pious and committed. The fertility spell can be traced back to a formula mentioned in a book widely popular in the Islamic West (Sijpesteijn, “Arabic Medical-Magical Manuscripts”), namely, *Kitāb al-raḥma fī al-ṭibb w-al-ḥikma* (*The Book of Mercy on Medicine and Wisdom*).⁴ The verse and the spell appear to be written by the same hand and appear to be visibly distinct from the copyist of Codex 1876. The invocation on the upper margins of most folios also appears to be written by a different hand. This suggests glosses and invocation may be read as two different moments in the life of the manuscript.

Until now, it remains unclear how Codex 1876 came into the possession of the Escorial. The manuscript was presumed to belong to the Zaydānī library. Specifically, in an article entitled, “Una colección de cuentos orientales de la Biblioteca escurialense (ms. 1876),” Luciano Rubio Calzón, quoting the Escorial notice on the manuscript, which cannot be independently verified, as it did not survive, states, “Probablemente, este manuscrito procede de la Biblioteca de Muley Zidán” (Rubio Calzón, “Una colección de cuentos,” p. 89). Mawlāy Zaydān ruled Morocco, with interruptions, from 1012/1603 to 1036/1627. Faced with political turmoil and a threatening plague, Zaydān retreated south and commissioned Jehan Philippe de Castelane to move his possessions from Safi to Agadir in June 1612. Amidst volatile political atmosphere, when the payment was delayed for six days, Jehan Philippe de Castelane reneged on his agreement with Zaydān and sailed with the cargo north. He was intercepted by the Spanish fleet and the cargo was taken first to Lisbon. Subsequently, the library it contained, which had around four thousand manuscripts, was moved to Madrid before being transferred, two years later, in 1614, to the Escorial library (Hershenzon, “Traveling Libraries”). The Zaydānī origin does not seem plausible if the date stated in the manuscript (1137/1724) is accepted, and Braulio Justel Calabozo does not present any arguments that justify questioning the manuscript age.

The uncertainty of how the manuscript was acquired by the Escorial rests on an historical exclusion: Codex 1876 has not been included in the major catalogue prepared by Rome-educated Lebanese Maronite scholar Miguel Casiri, *Bibliotheca Arabico-hispana Escorialensis* (1760-1770). This omission opens the door to several interpretations, including the possibility that the manuscript was acquired by the Escorial after 1770, the year Casiri completed his catalogue. Another possibility, although less likely, could be that the manuscript was deliberately excluded by Casiri, in light of two points argued by Glesener in his article “Gouverner la langue arabe: Miguel Casiri et les arabisants du roi d’Espagne au siècle des Lumières,” namely the political nature of Casiri’s mission, and his disinterest in North African literature. Glesener’s examination suggests Casiri may have had a clear attitude towards Middle/Mixed Arabic and North African literatures, as evidenced by his disdainful comments on North African documents he was asked to evaluate and translate (pp. 254-255). This is also evidenced by his interactions with the Moroccan ambassador Aḥmad Al-Ghazzāl, sent on behalf of Morocco Sīdī Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh (1171-1204/1757-1789), whom Casiri was tasked with accompanying as an interpreter.⁵ Did the anonymous manuscript fall off the record due to the political nature of Casiri’s project? Did the attitude Casiri held on North African literature play a role in the decision? These two possibilities remain moot until further evidence is recovered. It is safe to maintain, in the meantime, as an equally valid explanation, that Codex 1876 was not yet acquired by the Escorial by the time Casiri was preparing his catalogue.

⁴ As shown by Sijpesteijn, this book has two versions, one by al-Suyūfī (d. 911/1505) and another by al-Ṣanawbarī (d. 815/1412).

⁵ “Durant le séjour de l’ambassadeur marocain Ahmed al-Ghazzal (1766), il l’accompagne comme interprète sans cacher son dédain envers sa manière d’écrire et de parler,” in Glesener, “Gouverner la langue arabe,” p. 255.

3. The Manuscript



Fig. 1. Folio (1r) of the Escorial MS Árabe 1876.

The manuscript consists of a hundred and six folios, preserved in a North African binding and written in Maghribī script by a single scribe. On the first page of the manuscript, three items are noted: “N.o 31” (the old call number, handwritten in black ink, at the top right), “No-1876” (handwritten in red in the middle of the page), and “Colección de cuentos orientales” (handwritten in black ink, positioned between the first two). Additionally, there is the Escorial stamp. On the second page, “Codex 1876” is handwritten across the top center. Codex 1876 seems to be written by a single scribe/author in Maghribī script, described as “bella escritura magrebī, de una sola mano, grande y clara.” The binding is also identified as North African, “Encuadernación magrebī.” Justel Calabozo quoted a detailed description, though it cannot be independently located at the Escorial.⁶

⁶ “Papel. Copia del 5 de rabī I del año 1137 h. /4 ff. modernos en blanco + 106 útiles + 4 modernos en blanco; 19 líneas por página; 250 (185) x 175 (125) mm. /Bella escritura magrebī, de una sola mano, grande y clara, tinta negra, epígrafes y palabras destacadas en rojo o azul. Reclamos en cada folio. /Encuadernación magrebī, de cartera, hierros y adornos dorados y óvalo rojizo a seco en el centro de cada tapa y en la solapa; 250 x 175 mm; tejuelo de papel: 1876 / Signatura antigua: n.o 31. Conservación: Buena,” in Justel Calabozo, “Catalogación,” pp. 38-39.

The incipit is a *basmala* and the conventional supplication “*ṣallā allāhu ‘alā Muḥammad wa-ālihi.*” Throughout the folios, justification is maintained, arranging the text into blocks of justified lines, often resorting to word division and superscription of the last word or a portion of it, a common feature in Islamic manuscripts (Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*). The convention of leaving the first word of the verso on the left edge of the recto’s tail is followed on each folio. The manuscript is polychromic, utilizing red and blue colors for key words, tales titles, and in specific terms such as *dhukira* (it was said); *qāla*, *fa-qāla*, *qālat* or *fa-qultu* (he said, then he said, she said, I said). *fa-lammā* (when), and *thumma* (then). When colored ink is not employed, these words are written in bold black. Vocalizations are generally added to all four with occasional color usage for *i ‘lam* (know that), *hādhā* (this), and *wa- amma* (as for).

In the titles of the tales, orthographic signs are incorporated, with blue used for words in red and red for words in blue. Round or rhomboid dots, arranged in triangles or colored trefoils, are utilized as textual dividers at each end of a poetry line and at the edges of tale titles, while a single dot is employed to separate poetry hemistichs. At each page’s horizontal edges, a single dot is placed, alongside the colophon’s two statements: “completed with the grace, help, and guidance of God” and “On the fifth of Rabī‘, of the year 1723.” Minor corrections are applied within the body of the text and in the margins. Punctuations are absent, though occasional dashes and marks of textual variant or criticism are present. With further analyses of the manuscript, and its material, as has been done by recent studies, may yield further elements to reconstruct the conditions within which Codex 1876 has been produced.⁷

4. The Replica

A copy of Codex 1876 is housed at the Biblioteca Nacional De España (Mss. 5098), henceforth, the Replica. The manuscript bears a signature similar to the Escorial codex (dated the 5th of Rabī‘ al-Nabawī, 1137), but its age, noted by what appears to be the same hand, on the last folio (134v) is “Escorial 19 de julio de 1848.” The Replica contains only twelve of the fourteen tales found in the Escorial codex. Guillén Robles mentions in the *Catálogo de los manuscritos árabes existentes en la Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid* that this manuscript is a copy made for or by Enrique Alix from the Escorial Codex. He writes, “Este ms. es una copia tomada de un cód. escorialense por D. Enrique Alix, que la terminó según una nota final castellana, en el Escorial, en 19 de Junio de 1848” (Robles, *Catálogo de los manuscritos árabes*, p. 82, n. CLXXII). A comparison between the two suggests that the Replica relied exclusively on the Escorial codex.⁸

⁷ See for example, the analysis made possible by the investigating the Escorial collection by François Déroche, Nuria De Castilla, and Lbachir Tahali, or the examination of materials and techniques used in Islamic manuscripts produced from the 13th through the 19th centuries, a project that was reported in “Materials and techniques of Islamic manuscripts,” 2018; or the work done through Sherman Fairchild Center for the Conservation of Works of Art on Paper, at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (TMMA), on an Islamic manuscript, leading to inquiry into “[t]he nature, properties, and characteristics of the text block paper, fiber and pigment identification, chemical compositions, condition assessment, and inherent deterioration mechanisms within the palette are described” by Yana van Dyke, “A Technical Study of a 17th-Century Manuscript of Muḥammad Bin Sulaymān al-Jazūlī’s *Dalā’il al-Khayrāt*.”

⁸ This is evident from the lacunae in the Escorial MS., which appear as blanks in the Replica. For instance, on 10v of the Replica, gaps are indicated with “...” to signify missing content from the Escorial Codex (9r). Similarly, on 10r and 11v-r of the Replica, gaps in the lines correspond to missing words (seemingly covered with tape) in the Escorial Codex (9v). An apparent gap in the last line of 14r in the Escorial Codex is represented by a space in the Replica 17r; likewise, instead of a tear on folio 92v and 92r in the Escorial Codex, blank spaces are present in the Replica (111r and 112v, respectively). An instance of the common repetition of the first part of a word at the end of a line (تش) and the beginning of the next (تشرون) meaning “you [plural] advise” in Codex 1876 (58r), a case of superscription, is misread and added as one word (تستشرون) meaning “you [plural] ask for advice” in the Replica (70r). Additionally, the Replica copyist (113r) appears to have skipped an entire line from Codex 1876 (93r) and resumed with the following line that starts with the same word as the skipped line (*yatrūkūnahā*) meaning “they leave her.”

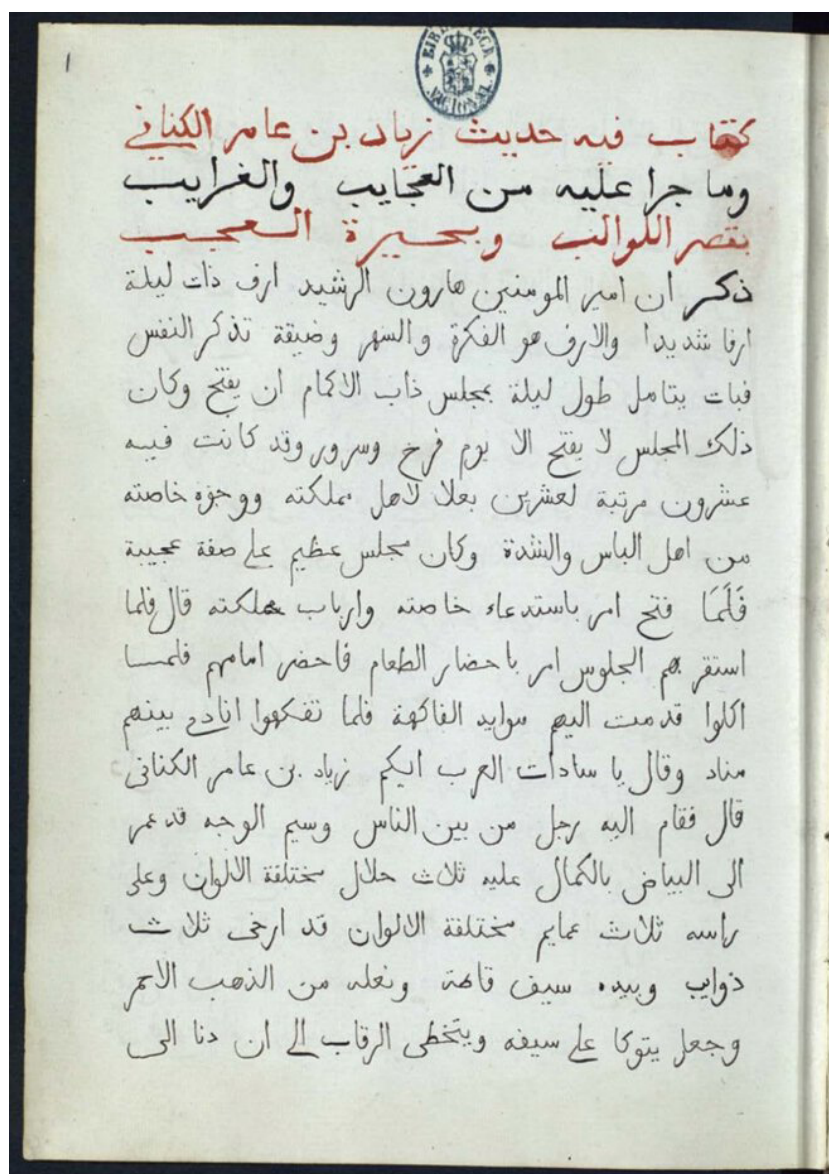


Fig. 2. Folio (1r) the Biblioteca Nacional de España Mss. 5098.

Enrique Alix is mentioned in Antonio Cánovas del Castillo's (1828-1897) *El Solitario y su tiempo: biografía de D. Serafín Estebanez Calderón y crítica de sus obras*, as a young expert in languages (Latin, Greek and Arabic), with connections to research circles in Madrid (Cánovas del Castillo, *El Solitario y su tiempo*, p. 163).⁹ From a eulogy written for Spanish Orientalist José Moreno Nieto (d. 1882) by Spanish Arabist Leopoldo Eguílaz y Yanguas (1829-1906), I have retrieved a note on Enrique Alix, stating that he died young, leaving several important projects unfinished (Eguílaz Yanguas, *Elogio Fúnebre*, pp. 16-17, fn. 2).

Although the Replica does not contribute to examining the Escorial Codex, it remains significant for reconstructing the afterlives of this manuscript, and the scholarly interest around it. Enrique Alix appears to be the first scholar to look at the Escorial Codex, three decades before Fernández came across the manuscript and decided to translate the first of the fourteen tales, from Arabic to Spanish. Did Alix copy the manuscript on behalf of another scholar? What I could reconstruct about his life and career remains modest. He appears to be a language expert, who, in the same year in which the Replica was created, 1848, made a copy or had a copy made for him of another manuscript,

⁹ I wish to thank Manuela Marin and Fernando Rodríguez Mediano to sharing references on Enrique Alix that greatly helped me in tracing more evidence of his unpublished work.

namely, *Tuhfat al-nuzzār fī gharā'ib al-amṣār wa-'ajā'ib al-asfār* by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, preserved under the Biblioteca Nacional de España Mss. 4872. The note at the Biblioteca Nacional de España states, “Esta copia fue realizada, según la suscripción, por Enrique Alix, en Madrid en 1842 [sic. the last folio (666r) of the manuscript is signed as 1848, ‘*kutibat hādhihi al-nuskha fī madīnat Madrīd ‘ām thamaniya wa-’arbān wa-thamanmi’a wa-alf*’].”¹⁰ Whether it was intended to be studied by Enrique Alix himself or some other scholar, remains moot. It is safe to suggest, however, that the intended use did not produce any publication. From a comment in the translation, it appears that Fernández was not aware of why the Replica was made or by whom, which also suggests there was no publication, debate or references based on it that were known to him (Fernández, *Historia de Zeyyad*, p. 416, fn.1).

5. The Collection

The fourteen tales of Codex 1876 vary in length. The longest story is twenty-six folios (I: Ziyād b. ‘Āmir al-Kinānī); the shortest is three folios (V: Wonders and Marvels of the Sea). Each story has a distinct diegetical world. Except for the first tale, all are prefaced by a brief connector: “and we follow that with the tale of... [the title of the new story being quoted] (*thumma natlūhā bi ḥadīth...*). Of the fourteen tales, twelve open with monarchs (an unnamed king from India, king Sābūr or Shapur, and ten ‘Abbāsīd and Umayyad rulers: Harūn al-Rashīd (in three tales); al-Māmūn, al-Manṣūr, al-Mutawakkil, al-Saffāḥ; al-Walīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik, and Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān), and two with scholars; an unnamed scholar (*rajul min ahl al-‘ilm*), and al-Aḥfash, in X: Ḥabīb the Perfumer and the Marvellous Magic of His Tale and V: The Wonders and Marvels of the Sea, respectively. Several Arab philologists hold that the name al-Aḥfash (Weipert, “Al-Akhfash”), however no specific designation is given in the tale, suggesting the character is generically portrayed as a scholar. Baghdad, Basra, Damascus, Ctesiphon, Sanaa, Adam’s Peak (Sri Lanka), and numerous islands are the imagined geographical sites for the tales. Protagonists travel to India, China, and Egypt. The tales follow comparable structures, except for two VII: The Wizardess and the Marvellous Horse and IX: King Sābūr — both take place at non-Islamic kingly courts. All the hosts/primary addressees are men in power (monarchs or scholars). The narrators who are often the main protagonists are men in all tales, except for XIV: A Wondrous Tale on Sorcerers, in which a woman narrates her story to the caliph. Characters are both human and non-human (*jinn*, diaphanous creatures, talking animals, and talking plants). Several mythical and (pseudo) historical figures and geographies appear in the tales including Alexander the Great, Dhū al-Qarnayn, Shapur II, King Solomon and his rebellious *jinn*, Hārūt and Mārūt, the Amalek, Babylon, Sarandīb and Mount Qāf.

The fourteen tales are labelled *ḥadīth*, a story or a tale, they are:

- I. The Story of Ziyād b. ‘Āmir al-Kinānī and the Wonders and Marvels He Experienced at the Palace of Spirals and the Lake of Wonder (*Ḥadīth Ziyād ibn ‘Āmir al-Kinānī wa-mā jarā ‘alayhi min al-‘ajā’ib wa-l-gharā’ib bi-qaṣr al-lawālīb wa-buḥayrat al-‘ajab*)
- II. The Story of the Hunter’s Son, the Bird & the Woman Genie (*Ḥadīth al-fatā ibn al-ṣayyād, wa-l-ṭayr wa-l-jāriya al-jinniyya*)
- III. The Story of the Amber Islands and Its Marvels and Wonders (*Ḥadīth jazā’ir al-‘anbar wa-mā fīhā min al-‘ajā’ib wa-l-gharā’ib*)
- IV. The Story of the Emerald Island (*Ḥadīth jazīrat al-zumurrud*)
- V. The Story of the Wonders and Marvels of the Sea (*Ḥadīth ‘ajā’ib al-baḥr wa-gharā’ibihī*)
- VI. The Story of the Island of the Two Stars (*Ḥadīth jazīrat al-najmayn*)
- VII. The Story of the Wizardess and the Marvellous Horse (*Ḥadīth al-sāḥira ṣāḥibat al-najīb*)
- VIII. The Story of the *Jinn* Youth and the Woman Magician (*Ḥadīth al-fatā al-jinnī ma’a al-mar’a al-sāḥira*)
- IX. The Story of King Shapur (*Ḥadīth al-malik Sābūr*)
- X. The Story of Ḥabīb the Perfumer and the Marvels of Magic (*Ḥadīth Ḥabīb al-‘aṭṭār wa-mā fīhi min ‘ajā’ib al-siḥr*)

¹⁰ This information is cited in/quoted from Robles (*Catálogo de los manuscritos árabes* pp. 58-59, no. CXVIII); although Robles too dates it mistakenly to 1842 (p. 59).

- XI. The Story of Shurā'a, His Daughter and the Queen of Sorcerers (*Ḥadīth Shurā'a wa-bintihi wa-malik al-saḥara*)
- XII. The Story of the Wonders of the Sea II (*Ḥadīth 'ākhar fī 'ajā'ib al-baḥr*)
- XIII. The Story of Caliph al-Mutawakkil, the Gazelle & the Merchant's Son (*Ḥadīth 'ākhar li-amīr al-mu'minīn Ja'far al-Mutawakkil 'alā Allāh ma'a al-ghazāla wa-ibn al-tājir wa-mā fīhi min al-'ajā'ib wa-l-gharā'ib*)
- XIV. A Wondrous Story on Sorcerers (*Ḥadīth gharīb min akhbār ba'd al-saḥara*).

Codex 1876 is not a miscellany, a series, a chain or an anthology. It occupies a unique position: it is a collection of independent tales that do not cohere under an overarching theme, question or a unified diegetical world. Rather, the stories seem to be rewritten to form a book, which gestures to interventions made by a single author. Two features may be cited in defense of this claim. In clear departure from literatures that adhere to framing/embedding traditions,¹¹ Codex 1876 presents a series of stand-alone tales. While the stories open with an indication that admits borrowing and transmission as an incipit, “it is mentioned/said that”¹² — bar two tales that have a special status as will be shown elsewhere in the present study (VII and IX) — the repetitive formula is quickly dimmed by the encounter of protagonist and host. The in-text reminders that the story is being continued (he said: *qāla* or and he said: *wa-qāla*), similarly, lose their epistemic weight, and act like textual breaks. In breaking with the frame narrative, each story locates all expanses of reference in the experience and life of one character, who/which alone occupies the narrative focus. This narrative decision, in its novelty, may provide preliminary insight into debates around the emergence of the short story in Arabic literature.

This frame-less characteristic of the collection makes it unique in another respect. In the absence of a narrative arch that links the stories, the collection establishes ontological consistency to the interstice between and within the tales, a task that requires editorial intervention. Despite their multiple genealogies, the stories maintain a dense network of shared motifs, images, and attitudes. These tales seem to have undergone editorial processes aimed at achieving uniformity, by keeping the distinct climes they inhabit connected through sensory and emotive states. The first tale, I. Ziyād b. 'Āmir al-Kinānī and the Wonders and Marvels He Experienced at the Palace of Spirals and the Lake of Wonder and last tale, XIV. A Wondrous Story on Sorcerers, as an example, have very little in common. The first is closer to an epic, a *sīra*, and covers the adventures of a knight as he moves across and conquers lands and kingdoms and marries human and jinn lovers/queens. The last tale inhabits an urban setting, and a family unit, in which a wealthy young woman, the daughter of a merchant, is infatuated by a young man she sees from her balcony, frequents a public bath, meets her lover's cousins who are visiting town for a festivity, and is aided by her lover's mother who brings her a spell that secures parental permission for her mobility to visit her lover. The young woman remains single (no marriage takes place). The first tale is narrated by a knight; the last by an adventurous woman. Both protagonists narrate their tales to a caliph, at the palatine court. In both tales, characters experience joy and sadness, excessively, and the emotive state osmoses into those around them. In both too, there are references to idol worshipping. Even as the stories develop their plots against distinct social norms (celebrations, marriage customs, hospitality, ethical conduct, and forms of enslavement), as shown briefly in the case with the first and last tales, they are made to exhibit synonymous styles, language choices, and value systems (concerning beauty, wealth, and rulership).¹³ They, lastly, subscribe to analogous structures, narrative techniques and endings.

I have located textual affinities between Codex 1876 and several literary works, including *A Hundred and One Nights*, *The Thousand and One Nights*, the travelogues of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (770/1368-9 or 779/1377), and an understudied *sīra* that circulated in Egypt in the second half of the 8th/14th century, which I briefly note here, but detail in the longer study. Wacks (“Ziyād ibn 'Āmir al-Kinānī”),

¹¹ Frametales are used in *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, *A Hundred and One Nights*, or *The Thousand and One Nights*, to name the most examined examples.

¹² It was mentioned that in: I, II, III, IV, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII (*khukira anna*); it was mentioned in some news that: XIV (*dhukira fī ba'd al-akhbār*); Al-Akhfash said: V (*qāla al-Akhfash*); it was said that: VI (*qīla*).

¹³ Love and marriage, it must be noted, do not hold a stable frame of reference in the collection, and vary considerably from one tale to another.

who examined the first tale of the collection, and Rubio Calzón (“Una colección de cuentos”) who reviewed the collection as a whole, both suggest resemblance to *The Thousand and One Nights*. Additionally, Wacks draws attention in a footnote to parallels between the first tale and *A Hundred and One Nights*, particularly regarding characters of women warriors dressed like men. I agree with the link made by these scholars and identify elements and direct links on the level of structures, motifs, themes, and narrative elements shared by Codex 1876 with the *Nights* traditions, as well as with a number of other works. “*Qiṣṣat Sayf al-Mulūk and Badī‘at al-Jamāl*” of *The Thousand and One Nights*, I suggest, acts as a hypotext for two tales in Codex 1876, namely, Story VII. “The Story of the Wizardess and the Marvellous Horse,” and Story IX. “The Story of King Shapur.” Elements from “*Madīnat al-nuḥās*” “The City of Brass,” of *The Thousand and One Nights* (Calcutta II), additionally, appear in several tales in Codex 1876, as well as several narrative features from *A Hundred and One Nights*.

Two tales from *A Hundred and One Nights* reappear partially or entirely reproduced in Codex 1876, but this affinity is rather complex as I will try to explain. “The Story of the King and the Gazelle” from *A Hundred and One Nights* (Fudge, pp. 344-363) appears to be reworked into a longer version in Story XIII of Codex 1876, “The Story of Caliph al-Mutawakkil, the Gazelle & the Merchant’s Son.” Both tales, however, intimate the account of Abū Barakāt al-Barbarī in Ibn Baṭṭūṭa’s travel accounts (Gibb & Beckingham, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, pp. 829-831). The second instance of intertextual affinity is equally complex. “The Story of King Sulaymān ibn ‘Abd al-Malik,” from *A Hundred and One Nights* (Fudge, pp. 120-151), appears to be closely connected to a short *sīra* that circulated under the title, *Qiṣṣat Sayf al-Tijān*. This work, *Qiṣṣat Sayf al-Tijān* was quoted in a historiographical book, namely, *al-Ilmām fī mā jarat bihi al-aḥkām al-maqḍiyya fī wāqī‘āt al-Iskandariyya* (Gleaning what transpired in the raid of Alexandria) by al-Nuwayrī (c. d. 775/1372), which shows that a version of it circulated in Egypt by the end of the fourteenth century (Kadik, *Qiṣṣat the King Sayf al-Tijān*, pp. 63-66). *Qiṣṣat Sayf al-Tijān* in turn appears to be the basis for the first tale in Codex 1876, “The Story of Ziyād b. ‘Āmir al-Kinānī and the Wonders and Marvels He Experienced at the Palace of Spirals and the Lake of Wonder.”

These affinities, along with the analysis of the manuscript and its marginalia, encourage a reassessment of the work’s ties to the Party Kings, Arthurian, or Iberian Chivalric literatures which were suggested by a number of scholars, and pull the speculation over the provenance of Codex 1876 away from the Iberian Peninsula, and towards the southern shores of the Mediterranean.

Declaration of competing interest

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Enass Khansa: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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