and the courtship and to focus solely on the marriage contract is too utterly bourgeois and not to be borne in the best salons!175

The other signal sent by the protagonists in Les Précieuses Ridicules is an implicit, or even explicit, consciousness of a Platonic paradigm. In particular, Mascarille proclaims in Scene IX, “Je veux établir chez vous une Académie de beaux esprits.”176 But the noble ideal of the Platonic Academy, or symposium, is destroyed by the préciosité of the seventeenth century salon, and the latter is recognized for what it really is in Gorgibus’ concluding speech at the end of the play in Scene XVII as he castigates his précieuse daughter and niece:

Nous allons servir de table et de résée à tout le monde ... Et vous, qui êtes cause de leur folie, sottes billevesées, pérnicieux amusements des esprits oisifs, romans, vers, chansons, sonnets et sonnettes, puissiez-vous être à tous les diables!177

Indeed, as Beasley neatly puts it, “the play offers a catalogue of all the general characteristics associated with many of the salons, such as women’s desire to control marriage or reject it altogether, and to exert power over comportment and language according to models advanced primarily in Scudéry’s popular novels, to which Molière explicitly refers.”178 It is entirely credible that it is Mlle de Scudéry who is the focus of Molière’s attack in Les Précieuses Ridicules.179

It may be thought at first that we have come a long way from al-Mas’ūdī’s own Barmakid majlis. But nothing could be further from the truth. The seventeenth century French salon and al-Mas’ūdī’s medieval majlis swim in a common pool of artificial literary conceits and magniloquent boasting. Indeed, taking our four key leitmotifs of drink, structure and textuality, themes and semiotics, it is clear that several profound intertextual links may be established between Xenophon’s Symposium, al-Mas’ūdī’s Arabic Symposium and the salon atmosphere, pretentious taste and artifice of Molière’s Les Précieuses Ridicules, themes later to be revisited in Molière’s 1672 play Les Femmes Savantes.180 Over all hangs the brooding presence of Plato’s own Symposium, master prototype and key paradigm.

177 Ibid., pp. 75–76; Beasley, Salons, p. 45.
178 Beasley, Salons, p. 45.
179 Ibid., pp. 278–279; see Shaw, Molière: Les Précieuses ridicules, p. 42.

6

Intellectual Gold? Oxford’s Book of Curiosities and its importance for research on the Middle East and Islamic World

Lesley Forbes*

Paul Auchsler’s distinguished career in Middle Eastern librarianship has focused primarily on printed and electronic resources relating to the Middle Eastern and Islamic World, rather than manuscripts. This contribution to his Festschrift, based on an early 13th-century copy of a work written between AD 1020 and 1050, might therefore seem an unusual choice to honour his achievements. Yet this is no ordinary manuscript. I hope to demonstrate that the Book of Curiosities is of major significance – an intellectual goldmine for research in many branches of Islamic Studies today. Its digital presence on the internet, along with the extensive research and professional programme that has been mounted since 2002 to interpret it, have made it accessible to the widest possible audience for further study.

The anonymous, recently discovered copy of the Arabic treatise at the centre of this article is entitled Kīdāb Ghārī ib al-ринūn wa-niṣlaḥ al-‘uyūn, loosely translated as The Book of Curiosities of the Sciences and Marvels for the Eyes, or Book of Curiosities for short. It is a cosmography in 48 folios (96 pages), consisting of two books: Book I on the sky in ten chapters (fols 1a–22a) and Book II on the earth in 25 chapters (fols 22b–48b). The two books describe and illustrate the heavens and their influence upon events on earth, and the size and shape of the earth, its seas, islands, rivers, and the marvels and curiosities that inhabit it. The illustrative matter comprises over 30 astronomical diagrams, tables of stars and star-groups, lunar mansion maps and in-text illustrations in Book I, and in Book II two world maps, one rectangular and one circular; three maps of ‘the great seas’: the Indian

* Author’s note: I am grateful to the Bodleian Libraries (formerly Oxford University Library Services) for making available to me for research for this article internal records created between 2000 and 2008 relating to the Medieval Islamic Views of the Cosmos project, and to Pamela Clement for commenting on a draft of the article. I especially wish to thank Emillie Savage-Smith for her help and advice.
Ocean, the Mediterranean and the Caspian; four maps of Mediterranean islands and cities: Sicily, al-Mahdiyyah, Tinris and Cyprus; five river maps: the Nile, the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Indus and the Oxus, plus five other illustrations and maps, including illustrations of a walnut tree and an ‘inhabited scroll’, dating possibly from the 14th century.

The original 11th-century treatise is not known to us, although a number of other partial copies of the text, mostly unillustrated and produced relatively recently (in the 16th-18th centuries), have been identified.1 In June 2002, its 400th-anniversary year, the Bodleian Library in Oxford acquired the only known plentifully illustrated copy, now shelf-marked MS. Arab. c. 90. This manuscript copy of Books I and II of the treatise is incomplete, however, for the copyist has omitted the eighth and ninth chapters of the second book, the manuscript has lost part of chapter 24 and all of chapter 25, and lacks a colophon. On the basis of internal textual evidence, the original treatise is thought to have been composed between 1020 and 1050, in Egypt, and, from the physical evidence, the Bodleian’s manuscript copy to date from about 1200. Further details are available on the website devoted to the treatise, and to the Bodleian’s manuscript copy of it, at http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/bookofcuriosities.

After a brief description of the manuscript itself, and the background to its acquisition, a summary of the work carried out under the five-year, Heritage Lottery funded, Medieval Islamic Views of the Cosmos project follows. I shall then describe some of the principal academic and other outputs that have been based on the Book of Curiosities in the short time that it has been available for study, and suggest some other potential areas of research for which it might be relevant.

II

The story begins in October 2000, with the appearance at auction in London2 of a very scruffy, grimy, battered, altogether unprepossessing manuscript, with a bird dropping on the front cover of its ill-fitting 18th- or 19th-century Ottoman binding. The manuscript was described in the sale catalogue as being produced probably in Iraq during the 14th century and was noted as being possibly related to a work with a longer title by Iḥn al-‘Arabānī (d. c. 1450). Prior to this appearance in the saleroom, both the manuscript copy and the treatise it contained were unknown to scholars, having previously been in private ownership. In view of this, a few preliminary words may be appropriate about this exciting discovery and the early recognition in Oxford of its potential for extending and enhancing the world-view of medieval Islam.

Just before the sale, an Oxford colleague, Emilie Savage-Smith, had had the opportunity

1 Manuscripts containing different parts of the text of Kīṭāb Gharāʾib al-funūn wa-muḥāb al-qādirin are held in Cairo, Damascus, Girda, Milan, Oxford, and possibly Mosul. For an explanation of the relationship of these manuscripts to the Book of Curiosities see the section ‘Afterlife of the treatise’ via the Book of Curiosities link <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/bookofcuriosities> (viewed 30th March 2011).

with ramifications glimpsed at the outset, but the extent of which could hardly have been foreseen.

An early task was to agree on a working English title for the treatise. At first it had been roughly rendered as The Book of Strange Arts and Visual Delights, then, more rhythmically, in tune with the Arabic title, The Sciences’ Strange Sights and the Eyes’ Delights, then again, more literally, The Book of Curiosities of the Branches and Marvels from the Sources of Knowledge. The final choice was The Book of Curiosities of the Sciences and Marvels for the Eyes. During the remainder of 2002 the project infrastructure was put into place. A research team was appointed (Emilie Savage-Smith and Yossef Rapoport) and started work in February 2003 on an ambitious programme for editing and translating the manuscript. Simultaneously, conservation and digitisation work was planned, timetabled and started, and ideas for the website discussed. Already from 2002, such was the interest in the manuscript, that talks were being given to academic groups, societies and at international meetings. In 2003 pressure increased as planning commenced on a major exhibition to be mounted at the Bodleian Library in 2004, a detailed specification for the website was drawn up, tenders invited and assessed and a choice made, graphic designs were commissioned and approved, and the first research article about the manuscript was published.1

Looking back, the year 2004 was a period of strenuous activity. Much of the first six months was devoted to detailed preparation and design of the exhibition Medieval Views of the Cosmos: Mapping Earth and Sky at the time of the Book of Curiosities, working alongside Dana Josephson and regular Bodleian Libraries Exhibitions staff. Conservation of the manuscript and its digitisation both before and after conservation also had to be completed by the time of the opening of the exhibition. The manuscript was disbound. In all, over 1350 hours of painstaking work, removing and sometimes replacing a hotchpotch of older repairs and strengthening the folios to enable them to be handled, was undertaken by Alison McKay and Sabina Pugh of the Bodleian Libraries Conservation workshop.2 Pigments and inks were examined by Raman spectroscopy and optical microscopy and found to be completely consistent with the suggested origin and age of the manuscript.

Drawing on the Bodleian’s superb manuscript map collections, with the Book of Curiosities as the centrepiece, the exhibition set it in its historical context of European and Islamic map-making. Particular attention was devoted to helping visitors to understand the impact of medieval Islamic scholarship on Europe through explanatory wall and case panels, including specially created reproductions of key maps and diagrams with the Latin or Arabic place names or other labels overlaid with English translations. The exhibition, which featured some 67 items, 25 of them opening/folios from the Book of Curiosities, including ten items loaned by four other Oxford institutions, was mounted in the Exhibition Room of the Bodleian with ramifications glimpsed at the outset, but the extent of which could hardly have been foreseen.

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The project was originally envisaged as running for three years from 2002–2005, but in the end a further two years were required to complete the work. This was made possible by extra financial support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, supplementing the Heritage Lottery Fund grant, along with much extra voluntary assistance. After the success of the exhibition, all efforts were devoted to pressing ahead with the research and interpretative programme, developing and populating the website, and writing, designing and printing the Teachers’ Pack intended to link with Key Stage 3 (for 12–13 year olds) of the National Curriculum for History, Geography, English and Science.

These three areas of project work brought different challenges and pressures, demands for specialist expertise, for creative energy and imagination, and a need for much appreciated assistance from academic and Bodleian Libraries colleagues, and other professionals. Two further invited research papers that contributed significantly to awareness of the manuscript were published in late 20051 and early 2006.12 These years were characterised by concentrated bursts of activity in order to complete all strands of the Heritage Lottery Fund programme by October 2007.

The website http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/bookofcuriosities is the main output of the project, and the basis for all ongoing research.13 It enables access to the manuscript in fully digitised form, with an edited Arabic transcription, and an English translation. All maps and diagrams

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1 E. Edson and E. Savage-Smith, Medieval Views of the Cosmos: Picturing the Universe in the Christian and Islamic Middle Ages (Oxford, 2004).
2 E. Edson, E. Savage-Smith and A.-D. von den Brincken, Der mittelalterliche Kosmos: Karten der christlichen und islamischen Welt (Braunshaid, 2000). This translation includes additional material.
are displayed with mouse-overs allowing the user to see, in a new window, an Arabic transcription of each label (i.e. place-name or other text), a transliteration of it into Roman script, an English translation and identification of it. All these names (personal, place and star names) and the footnotes are fully searchable via the advanced search feature. There are summaries of the content of each chapter and downloadable explanatory diagrams of all maps and textual illustrations. There is a glossary of over 1600 place and personal names and references, with more being added as time permits. The website also includes background information about the manuscript and the project (summarising much of the information above), a downloadable User Guide to the website, downloadable PDFs of the Teachers’ Pack, a full list of lectures, talks and publications based on the manuscript and acknowledgement of the help that many people have given to the project since 2000.

A primary aim of the MIVC project was to increase public awareness of the Islamic contribution to our common heritage, thereby contributing towards better understanding between society at large and Muslim communities. It was at times a labyrinthine path. By means of the website, the Teachers’ Pack, the 2004 and other exhibitions, and continuing dissemination by lectures, and particularly through publications, it is to be hoped that this aim has been broadly achieved, though inevitably more remains to be done.

III

Even before the formal acquisition of the manuscript by the Bodleian Library in June 2002, talks and papers on the manuscript were being given, and by early 2011 over 40 formal lectures/conference presentations had taken place, in the UK, Europe and North America. Alongside this, some 25 publications have appeared, or are in press. These lectures and publications are listed on the website, and some are referred to in the course of this article.

So far, published research has concentrated primarily on the larger maps and their cartographic and historical value. Only the circular world map usually associated with the Arab geographer al-Idrisi (fl. 1154), who lived a century later than the date suggested for the composition of the Book of Curiosities, and the maps of the Nile and the Caspian Sea are known from other sources. All the other maps in Book II of the Bodleian manuscript are not attested anywhere else so far as is known. The Book of Curiosities’ circular world map (MS. Arab. c. 90, fols 27b–28a) makes its own notable contribution, providing evidence (if it was an integral part of a treatise composed well before the Norman invasion of Sicily) that the circular world map, for so long linked with al-Idrisi, had an independent existence at least a century earlier.

Each map demands specific examination and interpretation. Four[13] have had detailed exposure, inevitably largely raising more questions than answers. In form, the maps of the Book of Curiosities look very different from the maps we know today, and are richer in various ways than the uniform content presented in our contemporary maps. Itineraries of

[13] The Rectangular World Map and the maps of Sicily, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea—see further below.

the European engraving published in 1555.\(^{19}\) Three recently published articles present a detailed assessment and interpretation of the mapping of the Mediterranean.\(^{20}\)

Apart from the impact of all the studies mentioned above, it has become clear through research carried out during and since the MIVC project that the Book of Curiosities is of interest because it reveals new evidence for international commerce in the 11th century, particularly about the activities of Islamic merchants in the Eastern Mediterranean.\(^{21}\) Travel and trade is everywhere evident in the maps of the Book of Curiosities. It is a significant new source for the history of pre-Crusader global trade networks, and presents some of the earliest Islamic mapping of Asia. The maps of the Mediterranean provide evidence that pre-Crusader Arab ships used to visit Byzantine ports regularly. To the East the maps of the Indian Ocean and the rivers give us an original picture of Muslim merchant networks around the Indian Ocean and the routes through which knowledge and commerce travelled back and forth between Africa, as far south as Mozambique and Zanzibar, China and western Asia. They also demonstrate that the overland routes across northern India towards southern China were much more important than was previously thought.

The move-overs used on the website for the map-labels offer an innovative technique for publishing historical maps. A printed edition of the Book of Curiosities is in preparation, with planned publication by Brill, Leiden, in their series Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, in 2014. This will include a colour facsimile of the whole manuscript, with edited Arabic text and English translation, all fully annotated, with glossaries, and will be accompanied by historical and interpretative essays. As well as serving the needs of scholars and university teachers by placing the work in its wider historical context, it is expected that this academic edition of the manuscript will attract an extensive readership among those interested in the extraordinary contribution of Muslim artists and scientists to our society.

Enough has been said, it is hoped, to indicate that the Book of Curiosities sheds light on an unusually wide and diverse range of subjects, and can provide a new stimulus to research in a whole variety of topics relating principally, but by no means entirely, to medieval Islamic civilisation.

Its spectacular series of unique astronomical illustrations and terrestrial maps make the

\(^{19}\) C. Scoppe (ed.), Iterum a Carolo V. Caesarre Augusto in Africa bello gestorum commentarii (Anwerp, 1555), map between fols 152v and 153r.


6. INTELLECTUAL GOLD? OXFORD’S BOOK OF CURiosITIES

Bodleian’s Book of Curiosities a manuscript of permanent artistic and academic worth. The advantage of making such a primary source for research fully and freely available in digitised form is beginning to bear fruit, with evidence of wider use through the website. Studies discussing particular maps or matters mentioned in the treatise have begun to appear.\(^{22}\) The website has been noticed by many blogs, some of which have mounted images of a number of the maps. More extensive websites, for example one relating to Islamic science, technology and civilization,\(^{23}\) have drawn more substantially on the Book of Curiosities website. It has been recognised by The Islamic Manuscripts Association (TIMA) as a serious user-focused digital manuscript resource for Islamic Studies. It has featured in courses taught at the universities in the UK, Europe, the Middle East and Australia.

Many topics have been raised during work on the MIVC project that require further exploration. While the primary geographical focus of the Book of Curiosities is on the Eastern Mediterranean, virtually every country in the Middle East and many countries in Africa, Asia and Europe are likely to be mentioned either on a map or in the text or both. There is, therefore, also much to interest regional Middle East–European historians and historians of East Africa, South, Inner and East Asia. Both illustrations and text preserve materials gathered from Muslim astronomers, historians, scholars and travellers of the 9th–11th centuries, many of whose works are lost or preserved only in fragments.

The value of the Book of Curiosities in providing evidence for research in subjects such as archaeology, astronomy, economic history, maritime history, natural history, river and sea transport, travel, marvels, myths and curious information relating to the medieval world is clear. It contains abundant material relating to, for example, abandoned ports and harbours, star groups, constellations, the history of comets, medieval commerce, the medieval textile industry, foodstuffs, the bird population, fishes of the Mediterranean and medieval fishing, animals, plants, navigation, the churches of Cyprus, and boats of the Nile. Other subjects such as climate research, divination, population studies, social history, Fatimid history, reading material circulating in 11th-century Fatimid Egypt, the continued role of Copitic texts in the medieval Islamic world and undoubtedly many more could profitably be explored.


\(^{23}\) <http://islamicheritage.com/topics/> (via Manuscript link) (viewed 30th March 2011).
Further study of the Bodleian Library’s manuscript copy of the Book of Curiosities as an artefact would also be beneficial, not only to assist in building up a more detailed knowledge of the production of illustrated medieval Arabic manuscripts, but also for the study of the history of the book in general. As a result of some of the research carried out during the conservation of the manuscript, it could contribute evidence relating to, for example, paper, inks, pigments, the colour palette, and explanations of variations of colour, painting and overpainting techniques, quire makeup and the pattern of sewing techniques for binding.

Thanks to the intensive research programme and interpretative publications of the last eight years, specialists and non-specialists alike can now examine, appreciate and utilise this historically rich treatise with multi-disciplinary appeal. The easy availability of the whole manuscript, with supporting documentation and critical apparatus on the website, offers possibilities for any number of future teaching and research projects at many different levels.

As may be inferred, the three people originally involved were convinced from the outset of the potential academic and scientific importance of this previously unknown treatise. Not only for Islamic history, for medieval astronomy and cartography, and life, culture and trade between Christians and Muslims in the Mediterranean in the 11th century, but also as a resource for extending our understanding of the Islamic contribution to world knowledge.

The MIVC project was made possible by the indispensable support of the Heritage Lottery Fund (not forgetting those other generous donors who made possible the purchase of the manuscript, and the completion of the MIVC project). But without the skills, enthusiasm and commitment of the team of three scholars, Jeremy Johns, Yossef Rapoport and Emilie Savage-Smith, the Kitāb Gharā'ib al-fanān wa-mulūb al-ayān might well be lying in obscurity for another 100 years.

Now, in the light of eight years of research on the Book of Curiosities, a revision of the history of medieval cartography and astronomy is required. It is possible that Oxford’s Book of Curiosities of the Sciences and Marvels for the Eyes may prove, in the words of the person who provided an early assessment of its worth, to be ‘the type of codex that will be mined and interpreted almost without end’—an intellectual gold mine indeed.

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Translators of Naguib Mahfouz in English

Rasheed El-Enany

When Naguib Mahfouz became the first (and so far the only Arab Writer) to be accorded international recognition with the award to him of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1988, this did not come out of the blue. The age-old Orientalist interest in classical literature was to be extended in the early decades of the twentieth century to modern Arabic literature, a natural result of the literary renaissance that was beginning to take root at that time at the hands of the modernisers or the ‘enlightenment generation’ as they came to be called in Arabic literary histories. The establishment in Arabic, thanks to that generation, of new literary genres such as the short story, the novel, drama and the literary essay was inevitably to attract the attention of western Arabists to the contemporary scene at the time, starting perhaps in the 1930s. Thus a translation by E.H. Paxton of the first part of Tāhā Husayn’s Al-Ayyam (1929) appeared in English under the title, The Stream of Days, only within three years of its first publication in Arabic, while Tawfiq Al-Hakim’s Yawmiyyat Nā‘ib fi al-Ayrāf (1937) was rendered into English as The Maze of Justice by Abba Eban in 1947, ten years after the publication of the original. As for the first translation of a novel by Naguib Mahfouz, that had to wait until 1966 when Trevor Le Gassik published his translation of Zamāq al-Mīdāq as Midāq Alley, nearly 20 years after its appearance in Arabic in 1947. Mahfouz had by then already transcended his realistic phase to which Midāq Alley belonged and began his ‘modernist’ phase, which was radically different both aesthetically and in subject matter. At that time Mahfouz had also become the unchallenged master of the Arabic novel following the publication of the Trilogy in 1956–7: the translation effort in English was clearly lagging badly behind.

For the purposes of translation, modern Arabic literature initially meant the novel and the short story; and more recently, mainly the novel only, after an apparent global dwindle of interest in the short story. On the other hand, modern poetry and the theatre have from the outset received scant attention from translators and publishers in the West. Regardless of the unequal fortune of different genres, the interest in modern Arabic literature born in the 1930s had to wait until the 1970s to see significant growth. This can be attributed in part at least to the increase of international preoccupation with the Middle East, following the two wars Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973 which led to a rise of interest in the Arab world, its language, culture and literature among specialists but also, to a lesser extent, the general
Books and Bibliophiles

Studies in honour of Paul Auchterlonie
on the Bio-Bibliography of the Muslim World

edited by
Robert Gleave

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1. STUDIES IN BIO-BIBLIOGRAPHY

Robert Gleave

The studies collected in this volume come in two categories. First, there are bio-bibliographical studies of Middle Eastern and Muslim literature, in which contributors examine texts and their interrelations in a series of discrete studies. In the second section, the focus is on the advancement of the study of this literary heritage outside of the Muslim world, primarily in Western Europe. The two sections reflect, to an extent, the interests of Paul Achterlonie, to whom we dedicate this collection of studies. He has engaged himself in the study of bio-bibliography in the Muslim world, whilst at the same time developing resources for its study by present and future generations of researchers. In addition to these activities, Paul has also made a major contribution to the development of the infrastructure of Middle East and Islamic Studies librarianship in the UK - an activity no less important than the actual development of resources for study. At this time, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, subject specialist librarians are an increasingly rare breed. Those that survive need a national and international context in which to develop their work. Peter Colvin in the second part of this introductory chapter, describes Paul’s contribution to MELCOM and MELCOM International. Through his part in the development of these organisations, Paul has aided in the construction of a crucial support mechanism and pressure group for dedicated research resources for Islamic and Middle East Studies. This, as much as his day-to-day librarian work in Exeter, and his own publications in bio-bibliography, forms part of his legacy to the subject area when he retired in 2011.

In the first section, pressing intellectual questions run through the various contributions which form central concerns of the bio-bibliographer. The first of these is the vexed question of ‘authorship’; extant books, tracts or reports are attributed to particular authors, but their content, at times, seems to indicate an alternative author. This suspicion of ‘attribution of authorship’ primarily emerges because of a disjuncture between the literary item itself and what we know of the intellectual context of the supposed author (as is the case with Al-Sarhan’s assessment of some of Ahmad b. Hanbal’s creeds [Chapter 3.1]). But a suspicion of attribution can also develop from our construction of a particular personality for the author, and finding that a particular work seems out of kilter with that construction. This also forms part of Al-Sarhan’s methodology, which is then critically analysed by Melchert