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The Case of the Ebony Horse: Hannâ Diyâb's Creation of a Third Tradition

Ruth B. Bottigheimer

Part 2

In the cruel winter of 1708-9, a 20-year-old Syrian named Antûn Yûsuf Hannâ Diyâb (1688/9-after 1768) arrived in Paris in the company of his employer, Paul Lucas (1664-1737).[1] In February 1707 Lucas had hired Diyâb in Aleppo to serve as his interpreter and go-between during his second trip to the Middle East.[2] In the rest of 1707 and most of 1708 they moved through and within nomadic and urban Levantine and North African cultures as Lucas searched out antiquities for Louis XIV's personal museum, the Royal Cabinet.

The two journeyed from Aleppo through Jerusalem to Damascus and on to Alexandria, where they were warmly received by local dignitaries.[3] Everywhere they went, Lucas sought out French merchants, but when he proceeded to Cairo, Diyâb remained in Rosetta, where, according to the historian Maurice Martin, he enjoyed 'le charme des cafés de Rosette, au bord du Nil, ou le luxe d'un diner chez le bey du Fayoum'.[4] At the end of the trip, after the two embarked in Tunis for Marseilles, Lucas suffered deep disappointment when he lost everything he had purchased to French pirates on the high seas.[5] For his part, Diyâb was assailed physically by the bitter weather and felt demoralised when they finally arrived in Paris in late 1708.[6]

During the same brutal winter,[7] the respected Paris Orientalist Antoine Galland (1646-1715), having published eight volumes of *Mille et Une Nuits: Contes Arabes* between 1704 and 1708, sought to extend his collection and was in need of new stories. When he met Diyâb at Lucas's home on Sunday, 17 March 1709,[8] he noted the young Aleppan's multilingualism: a native speaker of Arabic, Diyâb also knew Turkish, Provençal and French 'passably well'. Galland and Diyâb conversed, but no storytelling occurred. Nor did that happen the next day when Galland returned to Lucas's residence. But on Monday, 25 March 1709, Lucas was just leaving as Galland arrived, and on this occasion 'M. Hanna Maronite d'Halep' told him 'quelques contes Arabes fort beaux', and promised to write them down for him at some point. Galland, with a varied and busy social and professional life, did not meet Diyâb again until Saturday 4 May, and then by chance. On this occasion they spoke not about tales, but about the price of fish and figs in Egypt. The next day, 'le Maronite Hanna d'Alep'

finished telling him the 'Conte de La Lampe'.[9] If Diyâb had begun the tale a day or so before, Galland hadn't mentioned it in his journal.

Early May 1709 marks the beginning of Diyâb's cascade of tales that would ultimately form nearly a third of Galland's *Mille et Une Nuits* – half of volume 9 and all of volumes 10, 11, and 12. On 13 May Diyâb recounted the fourth of the fifteen or so tales he ultimately imparted to Galland.[10] It concerned the adventures of a flying horse and its princely rider, told in a rough and unpolished French.[11]

Galland's journal entry for Diyâb's 'Horse' appears to render a fair copy of notes taken at the time of its telling, and it has less of the grammatical misperceptions, narrative pace, and the teller's pronunciation that are evident in his entries for some other Diyâb tales.[12] In the following pages I have translated Galland's journal entry literally, in an English version that maintains Galland's wording.[13]

The Enchanted Horse[14]

The Maronite Hanna told me this Arabic Story: In a public Celebration where the cleverest [people] both from [his] country and from abroad offered the King many kinds of rarities, an Indian presented him with a wooden horse. The King asked him what was special about this horse. Sire answered the Indian: to whatever location that I would wish to go this horse would carry me there in very little time,. [sic] He had him see for himself and the King asked him what price he put on it. The Indian answered that he had not bought it, that he had given a daughter that he had to acquire it, and that he could not come to an agreement with His M[ajesty] except that His Majesty [give him] his daughter. At first [he] rejected the proposition; but the longing to possess the horse made that he consented to give her to him. The Prince[15] shows his indignation. The King says to him to examine the horse himself. The prince mounts upon [it] and he is raised into the air almost as far as the sun. As he did not lack intelligence he bethought himself to turn the button that made the horse descend. he [sic, no capitalisation] descended and he crashed onto the terrace of a Palace [when] it was almost dark. The Prince pressed by hunger went down a stairway. He finds a room where the Eunuchs were sleeping each with their unsheathed sabre next to them [sic]. he sees some Light in a chamber goes there, he finds it magnificent and he finds there a Princess asleep with her women with whom he falls in love. He awakens the Princess, and she falls in love with him. She has delivered [something] to eat, and she ordains secrecy to a Eunuchs [sic],. [sic] After a stay of forty days, the Prince wants to return home. The princess opposes it; she resolves to follow him, he takes her on the wooden horse. He stops in a Garden not far from the city, and he leaves her in the Palace

with the wooden horse. He goes to present himself to the King his father, who has the mourning changed into joy, and who gives Liberty to the Indian whom he had imprisoned. While the King prepares to go to take the Princess with the Queen and all the Court, The Indian goes ahead, reaches the princess in making the concierge believe that he is coming on behalf of the Prince who had enjoined him not to give entry to anyone. He takes the Princess on the wooden horse, and the Prince who learns in arriving, this kidnapping from the concierge himself, doesn't want to leave the Garden in his despair. he disguises himself as a Dervish and he goes to search the world. The Indian carries off the Princess and he sets her down on earth in a woods near a capital city, where he goes in search of food. He presses the princess to give herself up to his wishes she makes resistance, and in the meantime, the hunt brings the King right to th[at] place. The Indian wants to make it believed that the Princess is his wife. The Princess assures the King of the contrary. The King has the Indian beheaded, takes the Princess. He falls in love with her, has a wedding and when he wants to come to bed with the princess, she acts as if she were insane: He calls Doctors from all directions, and she doesn't let anyone approach. The Prince her beloved arrives in that city where in the Khan where he lodges he learns the story of the Princess; The illness, and the search that the King was doing for Doctors from all kinds of countries for her cure. He puts on a doctor's clothing with a long beard, and announces in the city that he is a foreign Doctor, passes before the Palace. The guardsmen have him enter, run to announce to the King who has him come, and who has him first see the princess without being seen [by her]. He hears her utter some verses,[16] that indicate that she continues to love him, and the despair where she was [because] of his being distant. He indicates to the King that he has discovered the princess's illness, and he asks to see her alone. The Princess doesn't want to talk with him, he allays her fears and he makes himself known. He convinces her to let herself be taken, and to be presented to the King the next day, by him. the Next day, he presents her to the King and he has him hear that she is only half cured. He asks him about the way in which she found herself in his palace, as if he had not learned it from the princess. The King tells him, and he talks to him about the wooden horse, the King had had put in his treasury. The Prince doctor says that this knowledge was the occasion of achieving the complete cure and he asks for different kinds of perfumes. He proposes to the King of having the Princess dressed in the most precious jewels that he could have, and of having his officers assemble, his guards and as many people that he could with all his court &c. In

> presence of the King of &c. The King perfumes the horse, then the princess, after having gotten her mounted on the horse, he mounts behind and after having arranged other perfumes around the horse, he turns the button and he rises into the air with the Princess, and he betakes himself to the Palace of the King his Father. Where he marries the Princess. The King who lost them was in despair, but to no avail.[17]

Hannâ Diyâb's telling appears to be a barebones summary of the tale's many European versions discussed in Part 1 of this article: the early 13th-century Andalusian romance; Adenet le Roi's 1283 *Cléomadès*; Girart d'Amiens's *Méliacin* (later 1280s); the 1480 prose manuscript *Cheval volant en bois*; and the chapbook *Clamades* whose abbreviated tale continued in print from 1602 well into the 1800s. Close reading, however, suggests Diyâb's adherence to a different source, the Arabic-language posterity of the Andalusian 'Ebony Horse'. This narrative tradition clearly derived from the same 13th-century Andalusian romance that underlay the European magic horse tradition, but it lived on in North Africa, where it left its first documentary trace five and a half centuries later in a Tunisian manuscript dated March 1776.[18] A third telling of the lengthy tale survived in the Levant, as evidenced by the table of contents for a now lost volume of tales (*Kitâb al-Hikâyât al-Ajîba wa'l-akhbâr al-gharîba*) probably composed in what is today's Syria, or possibly in Egypt.[19] Thus, 'The Ebony Horses' that evidently originated in cosmopolitan 13th-century Andalusia could have reached Hannâ Diyâb by any of three routes: a northerly one through Europe, a southerly one through north Africa, or a local one in the Levant. One, the other, or the third are, in theory, equally possible sources for Hannâ Diyâb's telling.

One must also consider reception modes. Hannâ Diyâb could have read the tale in 1) a printed chapbook or 2) an Arabic manuscript copy of either the *Mi'at Layla wa-layla* (*Hundred and One Nights*) or the lost *Hikayat*. Alternatively, he could have heard the tale one or more times in 1) a storytelling venue in Aleppo,[20] 2) Rosetta in Egypt,[21] or 3) one of the other North African towns and cities to which he accompanied Lucas.[22] He might also have both read and heard the tale.

In chronological terms 'The Ebony Horse' came to life within western (Maghrebi) Islam in Andalusia in the early 13th century. As it moved northward into France, it absorbed structural and cultural conventions from Europe's rich tradition of chivalric romances. At probably much the same time, 'The Ebony Horse' moved south across the Strait of Gibraltar and then in an easterly direction across North Africa, as evidenced by its presence in 18th- and 19th-century Tunisian editions of *The Hundred and One Nights*.

The question I would like to pose is this: does Hannâ Diyâb's tale as he told it to Antoine Galland show a greater affinity with the northern European textual tradition or with the southern Maghrebi tradition? (It is, of course, impossible to compare his telling with the lost Levantine text.) Two texts, one from each of these traditions, are the likeliest candidates

for having furnished Diyâb with his tale. The first is the Oudot chapbook of 1602 (or a later imprint of the same text), because of the likelihood that this text would have found its way into the French mercantile community in Aleppo, where Diyâb already worked. The other is the North African 'Ebony Horse' tradition as codified in the 1776 Tunisian *Hundred and One Nights*, which we may reasonably assume underlay public tellings in North Africa.[23] A detailed charting of the three narratives (Hannâ Diyâb's tale, the Oudot chapbook, and the Tunis manuscript) allows readers to assess degrees of affinity of Diyâb's telling with the French and Tunisian texts.

Hannâ Diyâb shaped his brief telling by omitting narrative structures and by abbreviating the number of characters and associated episodes in both the northern, European, Christian and the southern, African, Muslim versions. In all three versions, for instance, the prince mounts the horse and is carried out of sight, but Diyâb omits the ensuing discussion between the prince's father and the giver of the magic horse that exists in both the northern Christian and the southern Muslim versions. In addition, Diyâb concentrates the tale's action on a single individual ('the Indian'), rather than incorporating three gift-bearing foreign visitors, as do both the northern and southern traditions.

In several instances, however, the northern and the southern narrative traditions differ from one another. In these instances, Diyâb drew far more frequently on the southern Muslim version.[24] Only in two instances did he carry forward the northern Christian tradition, first by calling the horse 'wooden' instead of 'ebony', and second by maintaining a guard with an unsheathed sabre[25] to protect a sleeping princess. (In the southern Muslim tradition the sleeping girl herself lay next to an unsheathed sabre.)

Diyâb also orientalised episodes in his tale.[26] In Galland's journal entry, a guardian eunuch occupies the place of the northern guardian giant. In addition, Diyâb inserted a stereotypic forty-day stay by the prince with his beloved, a number that informs ancient Jewish (Moses' forty years in the desert) and Christian numerology (Jesus' forty days' fasting in the wilderness; the forty days from Easter to Pentecost) that lived on in traditional Arabic storytelling. In another instance, Diyâb orientalised the country to which the captive princess is taken by locating a Khan (a typically Muslim commercial institution) in its capital city. He then attributes a deadly arbitrariness to its Muslim-by-imputation king by recounting the king's peremptory order to behead the princess's captor. Later Diyâb exoticised the tale by having his princely hero demand different kinds of perfumes, with which the King himself perfumes the magic horse. After mounting it together with the princess, the prince orders yet more perfumes (I repeat 'perfumes', as does the journal entry for the tale) spread around the horse as he turns the magic peg that raises the mechanical steed into an aerial escape to the wedding that marks the tale's happy ending, while the king who lost the princess despairs in vain.

Diyâb's additional insertions into his telling bespeak his own familiarity with the vocabulary of commerce: the prince's father asks the wooden horse's Indian owner what *price* he set

on the horse, to which the Indian replies that he gave his own daughter in *exchange* for it and therefore requires the king's daughter in *payment* for it now. This language is consistent with Diyâb's youthful mercantile experience in Aleppo that preceded his Paris storytellings.

By and large Galland kept Diyâb's abbreviations and orientalised shaping of the tale. Galland himself turned the king whom the Indian visited into a Persian monarch, who paradoxically expresses himself in an even more commercial vocabulary: 'Quelque somme', 'd'estime', 'acheter', 'à vendre', 'juste valeur', 'le prix'.[27] Galland also added language of magic and a rhetoric of obeisance as his Indian prostrates himself before the now-Persian monarch. With Persian origins apparently still in mind, Galland dubbed Diyâb's unnamed prince Firouz Schah and the unnamed king who rescued Diyâb's unnamed princess (now the Princess of Bengal) the King of Kashmir. Like Diyâb, Galland had the princess's Indian captor summarily beheaded,[28] and he carried Diyâb's orientalising further by specifically identifying all the characters as Muslim, either by their names or by the kingdoms over which they ruled or from which they came.[29]

Both Diyâb and Galland can be seen to have incorporated occasional unflattering views of Muslim behavior and Islamic mores into their magic horse stories. This did not sit well with either 19th-century Muslim or Christian compilers of the *Thousand and One Nights*, as is shown by the versions of the horse story that they produced. The 1835 Arabic-language Bulaq Recension of the *Nights* produced by Egyptian compilers in Cairo contains neither the exchange of horse for human nor the speedy beheading, substituting for the latter a ferocious beating followed by imprisonment.[30] The Macnaghton edition, commonly called Calcutta II, which was based on a manuscript acquired in Rosetta, follows the same beating-followed-by-prison pattern.[31]

Readers will note that Diyâb's tale has none of the lively dialog that enlivens the Andalusian 'Ebony Horse' and later magic horse tales. Perhaps the absence of direct speech is simply an artifact of his storytelling style. Or perhaps it stands for a temporal distance between him and a performed text. Style is highly personal and, at best, one may observe that few of Diyâb's tales have much dialogue.

We do not know Diyâb's source for a certainty. As suggested above, he may have heard a telling of the *Hundred and One Nights* 'Ebony Horse' or of the *Hikayat*'s 'Ebony Horse'. He may have read a copy of the Oudot chapbook in Aleppo or in any of the other entrepôts where French merchants congregated and which he and Paul Lucas visited. Diyâb may have been exposed to both the European chapbook and the Arabic manuscript tradition. What is clear is that his telling draws far more on the *Hundred and One Nights* tradition than on the European chapbook tradition,[32] in which respect Diyâb's telling differs fundamentally from his 'Two Jealous Sisters' tale, which draws so heavily on a pre-existing tale in Straparola's *Nuictz Facétieuses*.[33] The orientalising additions, however, seem to be inventions of his own to address European expectations or to communicate shared cultural prejudices.

This modest article is an attempt to answer some of the questions posed by Muhamed Abdel-Halim[34] and to expand the concept of Diyâb's narratives in Galland's journal beyond *résumés*[35] or oral-and-therefore-folkloric tales,[36] and it does so by introducing newly discovered literature[37] and by examining motifs shared by *The Arabian Nights* and medieval European literature.[38] Only detailed studies of one such tale after the other can illuminate the histories of folk narrative in general and of the *Thousand and One Nights* in particular.

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Notes

1. Fifty-four years after Hannâ Diyâb returned to Aleppo from Paris (at which time he was 75), he composed an autobiography. Since he left France in late 1709, he would have reached Aleppo during the winter of 1709-10. This dates his birth either in 1688 or 1689. I am indebted to John-Paul Ghobrial both for information from Sbath 254 and for discussions about Diyâb and his life. The manuscript's title, when it was catalogued in the library of Paul Sbath, was translated as *Voyage d'un maronite alépin en compagnie et au service de Paul Loucas, pèlerin français*. It is now housed in the Vatican Library as Sbath ms 254. Martin (1979), 471; Lentin (1997), 975.
2. Bauden (2011), 48.
3. Ibid.
4. Martin (1979), 473.
5. Lucas (1712), vol. 2, 222-4.
6. Diyâb in Bauden (2011), 49.
7. See Galland's journal notation for 12 January 1709.
8. This and subsequent references to Galland's journal entries come from Bauden and Waller (eds), *Le Journal d'Antoine Galland (1646-1715): La période Parisienne. Volume I (1708-1709)*. Dated entries, easily located, are not further identified by volume and page number.
9. Subsequently translated, edited, and expanded, it became – as 'Aladdin' – one of the best known, most often reprinted, and most frequently performed tales in the *Arabian Nights*.
10. We do not know if the tales he told Galland on 25 March are among those noted in Galland's May and June journal entries. If not, then the number of tales he told Galland is higher than the fourteen journal entries plus 'Aladdin'.
11. Bottigheimer (2014).
12. Mohamed Abdel-Halim normalised spelling and grammar of 'The Two Jealous Sisters' in the appendix of his 1964 *Antoine Galland: Sa Vie et Son Oeuvre*, which unfortunately distanced scholars from meaningful evidence. It was long assumed that Galland noted down from memory all of Diyâb's tales in Arabic. Close textual analysis of Diyâb's 'Two Jealous Sisters' tale strongly suggests 1) that Hannâ Diyâb told that tale in French because 2) patterns of errors in the recording can only have been caused by a hasty on-the-spot notation: see Bottigheimer (2014), 304-6. It is possible that some of Diyâb's other tales were also recorded in this manner, but that determination must await analysis of the entire body of Diyâb's tales. On this point see Bauden, 98.
13. Bauden and Waller (2011), 331-3. Galland's journal entries recording the stories that Hannâ Diyâb told in French effectively mark him as the first folk narrative field researcher on record. Full annotation of the Hannâ Diyâb texts will appear in a forthcoming study of the overall relationship between his stories, their background and origins, and the *Arabian Nights* corpus.
14. Galland included the story in volume 11 of his *Mille et Une Nuits*. It has since been classified in the

Aarne-Thompson-Uther Tale-Type Index as ATU 575.

15. The prince is the king's son, and brother to the princess to be bartered for the horse.
16. Interjected verses often interrupt the narrative flow of traditional Arabic tales. Hannâ Diyâb's mention of the practice of inserting verses into the ongoing narrative demonstrates his familiarity with Muslim storytelling style.
17. I thank Sophie Raynard for her help with puzzling structures and vocabulary.
18. In 1911, Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes translated this manuscript into French (rpt 1982). In 1979, Mahmûd Tarshûnah produced a critical edition of the 1776 ms.
19. I owe thanks to Robert Irwin for the geographic location. An English translation by Malcolm C. Lyons of the preserved first volume of the *Hikayat* will appear in autumn 2014 as *Tales of the Marvellous*. Ulrich Marzolph dates the Arabic manuscript of the *Hikayat* as 15th century (10).
20. Ott (2003).
21. Martin (1979).
22. In this connection I remind readers that 'The Ebony Horse' entered the *Nights* tradition with its 1717 publication in Galland's *Mille et Une Nuits*, only later becoming part of the Arabic *Nights* repertoire. More on this below.
23. An Arabic-language critical edition was published in 1979. See Tarshûnah (ed.) (1979). Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes translated the 1776 manuscript, which he augmented with later Tunisian manuscripts.
24. A representative sample of Hannâ Diyâb's choices of Tunis content over the French Oudot chapbook content includes the following:

Tunis: mounting horse at king's behest	Oudot: at visitor's behest
Tunis: horse lands on palace terrace	Oudot: on tower
Tunis: princess is awakened	Oudot: princess wakes up
Tunis: prince leaves princess in a building	Oudot: in a garden
Tunis: king encounters princess and abductor	Oudot: royal falconers do so

25. Diyâb substituted a 'Eunuchs' (sic) with an unsheathed sabre for the 'Geant' with an unsheathed sabre of the French chapbook.
26. Negatively focused orientalising also played a role in Diyâb's telling of 'The Two Sisters Jealous of Their Cadette'. See Bottigheimer (2014).
27. Galland (2004), vol. 3, 233-4.
28. Ibid., 258.
29. On changes Galland made to Diyâb's tellings, see also Larzul (2007).
30. Miquel and Benscheikh (eds) (2006), vol. 3, 81 et seq.
31. Lyons (trans.) (2008), vol. 2, 128, 142. The Calcutta II recension incorporates 'The Ebony Horse'. It was acquired in Rosetta during the French Expedition into Egypt by Jean Joseph Varsy, a French merchant resident there. Varsy subsequently brought the manuscript to France, where it now lies in the Bibliothèque Nationale (MSS fonds arabe 3602-5) and forms the basis of Calcutta II (Hammer-Purgstall (1828), vol. 1, xxxviij). That it came from Rosetta may be relevant to the history of the tale, since one may speculate that the Calcutta II *Nights* manuscript could conceivably have incorporated the tale from the North African *Hundred Nights* documentary tradition.
32. In this article, I have assumed that the earliest *Hundred and One Nights* telling of the enchanted wooden horse story in the 1776 Tunis manuscript corresponds to and stands for a narrative tradition that existed at the time Diyâb told his tale. No telling of the horse tale precedes Diyâb's telling. My historical assumption must therefore be balanced against textual chronology: 1709 (Diyâb's telling) >1717 (publication of Galland's horse tale in French) > 1776 (Tunis manuscript). Could the 1717 publication have influenced the 1776 manuscript? In three instances (prince mounts horse at his father's behest, horse lands on palace terrace, king encounters princess and her abductor), the Galland version overlaps with the Tunis MS, which allows a surmise that Galland's version influenced the Tunis manuscript. In three other instances, however (prince leaves princess in a garden rather than

in a building, king beheads princess's captor, prince uses perfumes to escape with princess), Galland's and Diyâb's versions differ from the Tunis manuscript, while in a far larger number of instances, Diyâb innovations that are incorporated into Galland's telling do not appear in the Tunis manuscript. On balance, then, the Tunis manuscript may be understood to render a version anterior to and independent of the Galland version.

33. Bottigheimer (2014).
34. Abdel-Halim (1964), 273-4.
35. Chraïbi (2011).
36. Gerhardt (1963), 300; Chraïbi (2008), 18.
37. Ott (2003).
38. Tuczay (2005).

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Clamades. See *Histoire Plaisante* ...

Histoire Plaisante et recreative dv noble et excellent Cheualier Clamades, & de la belle Clermonde ensemble leurs estranges aduentures. Avec les faits & gestes des Roys, Princes & grands Seigneurs qui sont contenuz en la presente histoire. Troyes, Chez Nicolas Ovdot, Imprimeur demeurant en la ruë nostre Dame, à l'Enseigne Chapon d'Or. [Oxford Bodleian 1529 Douce R.365].

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