



Wâq al-wâq: Fabulous, Fabular, Indian Ocean (?) Island(s) ...¹

SHAWKAT M. TOORAWA
Cornell University

The southwest Indian Ocean has been known to the Arab-Islamic world for several centuries. The name given to it by classical and medieval Arab geographers, navigators, and authors, is *Wâq al-wâq* (hereafter *Waqwaq*),² a name describing an imaginary is/land or complex of is/lands whose geography and cartography have long piqued the interest of scholars (see Figure 1).³ My own interest arose from my move to the Mascarene island of Mauritius in 1993.⁴

The Mascarenes (Port. Mascarenhas, Fr. Mascareignes) are a group of islands in the southwest Indian Ocean, consisting of: Mauritius; Rodrigues, a dependency about 330 miles northeast of Mauritius; and Réunion, a French DOM (*département outre mer*), about 150 miles west of Mauritius. Discovery of the Mascarenes is credited to the Portuguese in the early sixteenth century. As they apparently did not call at the islands when they first rounded the Cape of Storms (later renamed the Cape of Good Hope), it is possible that it was not until April 22, 1498, when Vasco da Gama took on board the *São Gabriel* a Gujarati pilot and Arab interpreters, that the Portuguese first learned of the existence of the Mascarenes. Actual discovery has been plausibly dated by the late Mauritian historian, Alfred North-Coombes, to early 1500, and credited by him to the man who was also the first European discoverer of Madagascar, Bartolomeo Dias's brother, Diogo Dias.⁵ (Albert K. Kammerer, who demonstrated that Diogo Dias was the first Portuguese discoverer of Madagascar, notes that this goes curiously unmentioned in Portuguese chronicles prior to the discovery.⁶) This view revises that of the Marquis de Visdelou-Guimbeau.⁷

Practically every history of Mauritius asserts — or inherits in error the postulation — that the Mascarene islands were discovered by Arab traders.⁸ This claim is based on the erroneous belief that the islands appear clearly on a map by the twelfth century geographer al-Sharif al-Idrisi: they do not.⁹ The first maps to show the Mascarenes are, in fact, European, beginning with the 1502 map of Alberto Cantino, based on information very likely obtained by the Portuguese from Indian Ocean navigators or, in Visdelou-Guimbeau's words, 'information obtained on the African coast, which they could not themselves verify.'¹⁰

On Waldseemüller's 1507 map, 'Mauritius' appears under the name *dina aroby*, 'Réunion' under the name *diba margabin*, and what has been conjectured to be Rodrigues under the name *dina morare* (see Figure 2). There are numerous problems with these identifications: the islands are not accurately located on

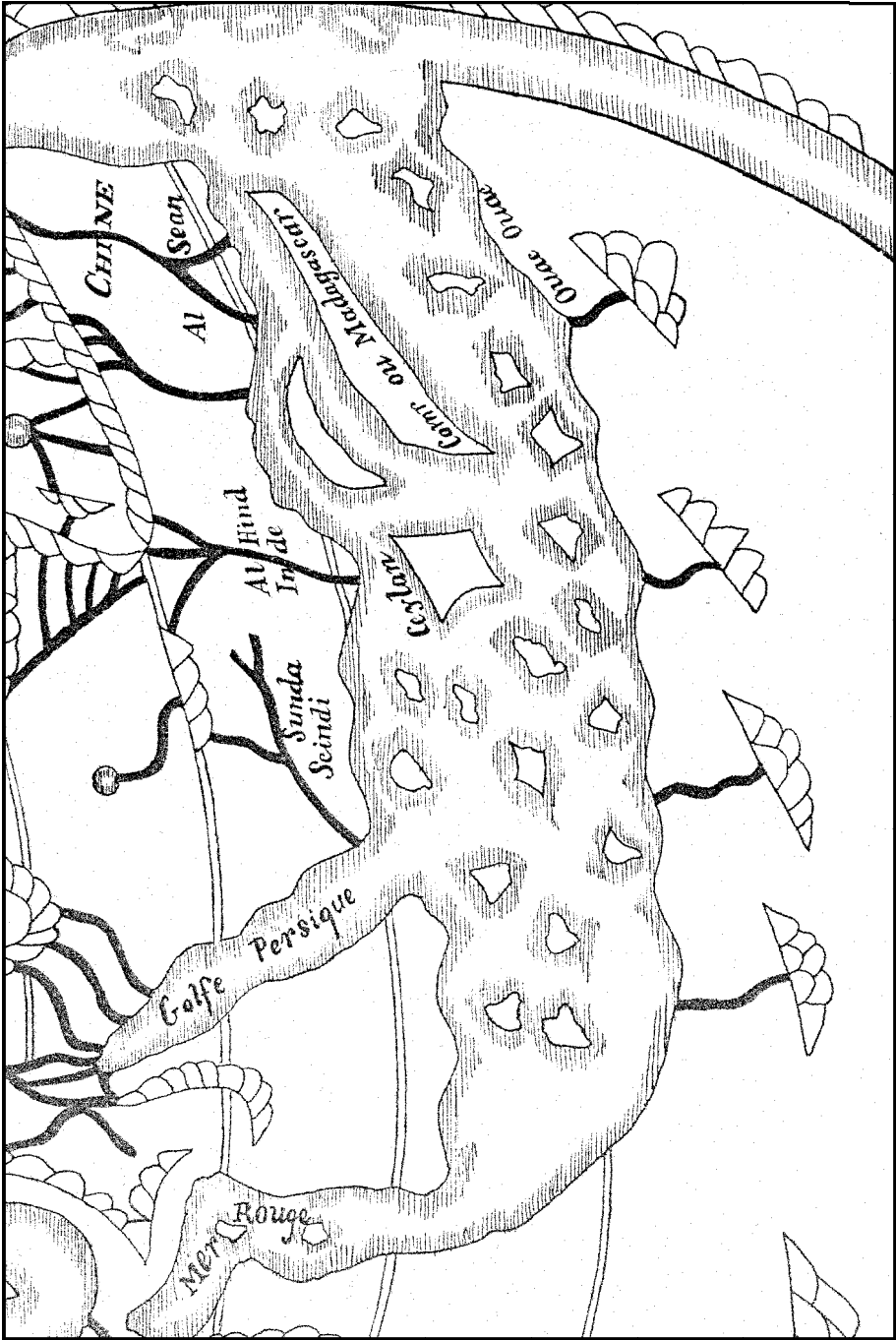


Figure 1. A representation (in French) of the Indianoceanic part of al-Idrisi's 1154 map

any of the maps that so name them (Alberto Cantino, 1502; Nicolas Canerio, 1502–04; Martin Waldseemüller, 1507 and again 1513; Johannes Ruysch, 1508; and the Frankfurt globe of c 1513); they vary in the names they ascribe (e.g. *dina/diba*, *morare/mozare/noraze*), either because of errors of transcription or imperfect knowledge; and the first part of what appear to be compound names is manifestly Sanskrit(ic), not Arab(ic), from *dwip*, meaning island. Arab-Islamic navigators and cartographers do not, in any surviving writings or maps, mention, or recognizably show the Mascarene islands.¹¹ This is corroborated by the fact that Muslim and European navigators state in their writings and observations that the Indian Ocean was always crossed following a *northerly* route.

Waqwaq is mentioned in more than 20 medieval Arabic sources. Several mention one, two, even three distinct locations, but it is the tenth-century historian al-Mas'udi who first draws attention to what we might call the Indian Ocean Waqwaq. He states that Waqwaq is located beyond the 'land of the black people' (*zanjbarr*) and Sufala.¹² This places Waqwaq squarely in *al-Bahr al-Muhit*, the 'Encompassing Sea.' This conception of a surrounding ocean in Arab-Islamic geography and cartography is inherited from the Greek idea of a circumambient ocean. The eleventh-century Muslim geographer al-Biruni even conjectured that the Indian Ocean communicated with the Atlantic Ocean.¹³ Indeed, *al-Bahr al-Muhit* frequently meant the Atlantic.

The usual names given to the waters around Waqwaq were *Bahr al-Hind* and *al-Bahr al-Hindi*, the 'Indian Sea,' *Bahr al-Zanj* and the less common *Bahr al-Habashi*, the 'Sea of the Blacks,' and *Bahr Faris*, the 'Persian Sea.'¹⁴ The uncertainty about this sea's name is underscored by the very name of the waters further south into which the *Bahr al-Hind* appears to melt: the *Bahr al-Zulmah* (or *Zulumat*), the 'Sea of Obscurity.'¹⁵ Of this sea, al-Idrisi — who flourished in Palermo at the court of Roger II of Sicily — writes in the *Nuzhat al-mushtaq fi ikhtirâq al-afaq* [*The Yearner's Avocation, on Foreign Exploration*], better known as *Kitab Rujar* [*The Book of Roger*] after his patron:¹⁶

In it are a number of islands, some of which are visited by merchants, others of which are not by virtue of the difficulty of access, the [terrifying] power of the [ir] waters [for navigation], the unpredictability of the winds, and the savagery of their peoples who maintain no contact with any of their known neighbouring populations.

Mariners driven off course were said to be tossed forever in the Sea of Darkness, sometimes said to join *al-Bahr al-Zifti*, the 'Black' Sea or 'Sea of Pitch' in Northern Asia. This is reminiscent of the continual fog and darkness in the Northern Sea reported by the mid-fourth-century Avienus about the voyage of Carthage's pioneering Atlantic navigator Himilco in the *Ora Maritima*, a description of the Atlantic, Mediterranean and Black Sea coasts.¹⁷ *Al-Bahr al-Zifti* is reminiscent also of the 'Gravelly Sea' described by John Mandeville in his *Travels*.¹⁸ Indeed, one scholar has corresponded certain of Mandeville's descriptions with those of al-Idrisi.¹⁹

It is, incidentally, in names such as Sufala, cognate with the Arabic for 'low,

bottom, downward,' and *Bahr al-Zulumat*, that we find an onomastic confirmation of the fabular nature of Waqwaq's cartography.

* * *

In spite of its cartographic ambiguities, the Arabic sources all place Waqwaq either in the region of Madagascar and the Mascarene Islands and/or further east, in the Sea of Japan. This positioning was made easy by an infamous geographical error originated by Ptolemy: the belief that a southern land mass connected Africa and China, effectively making the Indian Ocean a lake (see Figure 3). This cartography necessitated, moreover, an east-west alignment of Madagascar.

Such confusion was common in classical and medieval cartography, as much a function of ignorance as of inherited error. In one map of al-Idrisi, for instance, the sequence of letters Q-M-R is understood, and has been understood, on the one hand to refer to Indochina/Malaya on the strength of the reading 'Khmer,' and on the other to refer to the Comore Islands/Madagascar.²⁰ This geographic error, connecting Asia with China, explains why al-Idrisi locates Zabaj, which is the Indonesian island of Sumatra, opposite the land of the Zanj, or East Africa. It also accounts for the attempts by the late nineteenth/early twentieth-century Dutch orientalist de Goeje to locate the so-called eastern Waqwaq in Japan.

De Goeje relies to a great extent on the accounts recorded in the early tenth-century *Wonders of India* ('*Ajaib al-Hind*) of Buzurg ibn Shahriyar, a sea captain from Ramhurmuz. Buzurg ibn Shahriyar's *Wonders of India* is of interest not only for its early date but also for its fusion of the marvels of Antiquity with the marvels of God's creation. This fusion gave rise to a new literary genre, that of '*ajaib*, marvels, a genre which reached its full development in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century cosmographies, such as the *The Wonders of Creation* ('*Ajaib al-makhlûqat*) and *Local Traditions and Human Conditions* (*Athar al-bilad wa akhbar al-'ibad*) of al-Qazwini, which 'increasingly neglect geography; what remains are collections of entertaining stories.'²¹ Indeed, C.E. Dubler believes that the Sindbad cycle, introduced into '*ajaib* works in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, is in fact a literary adaptation of the accounts of Buzurg ibn Shahriyar.²²

In one passage Buzurg reports that one person entered the Waqwaq territories in order to conduct trade and discovered it to consist of large islands populated by industrious, accomplished but treacherous and cunning people who resembled the Turks.²³ These are the same people who are purported to have launched an attack on the town of Kanbalu with a fleet of 1000 vessels. De Goeje infers that if Waqwaq could launch a massive fleet, it must have been powerful; and if its people were also industrious and cunning, and resembled the Turks, then Waqwaq had to be Japan. De Goeje also tries to show that the name for Japan in the Cantonese dialect is 'Wo-kwok,' pronounced in Japanese 'Wa-koku,' i.e. clearly, for him, the name Waqwaq.²⁴

Two other characteristics mentioned by most accounts of the island(s) of Waqwaq are the abundance of gold, and the presence of high quality ebony. De Goeje, in arguing for a Japanese location, is at pains to show that the former

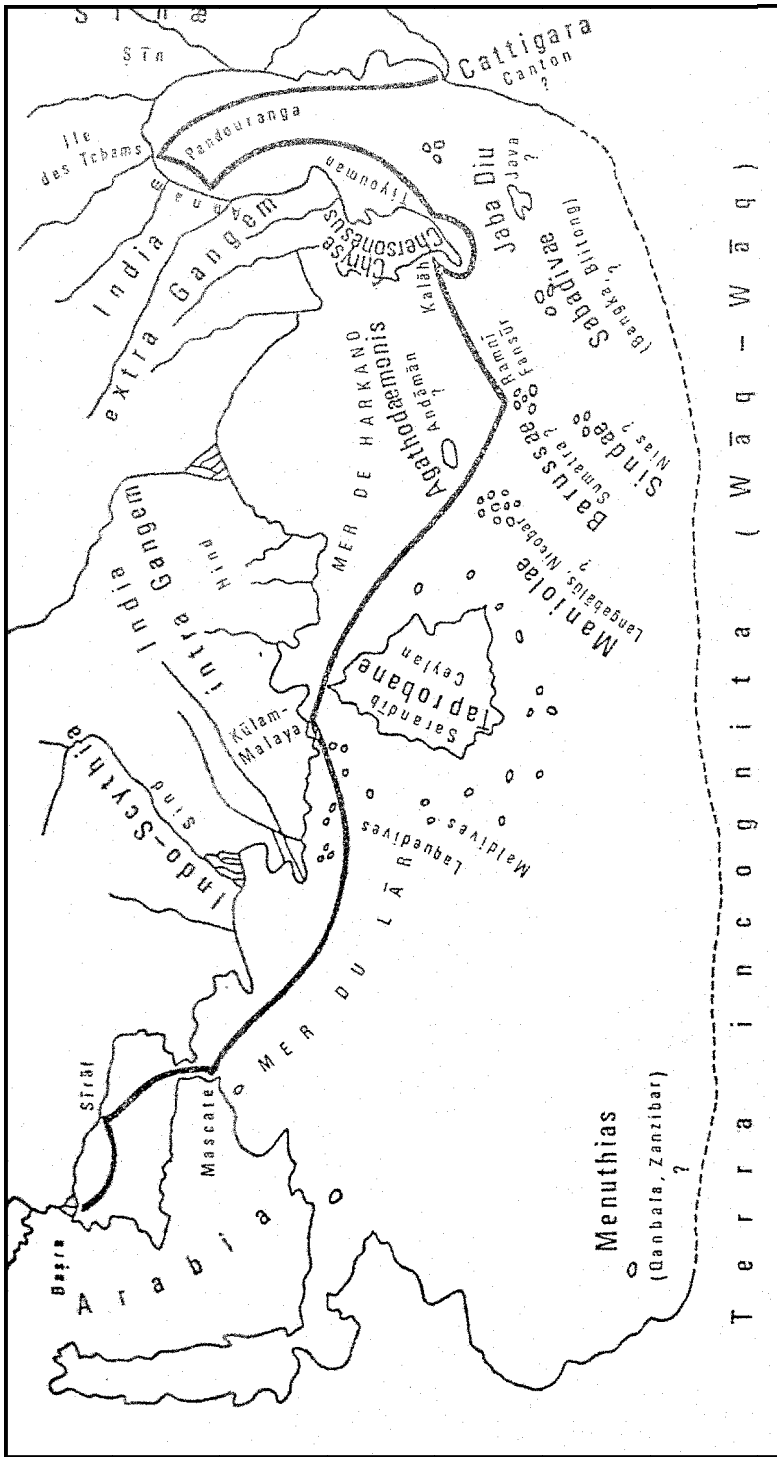


Figure 3. Ptolemy's Indian Ocean world, with possible Arab-Islamic equivalents

was at one time widely available in Japan, and that *Diospyros ebenum* is attested also there ...

Indeed, one of the interesting particularities of Waqwaq is its fauna and flora, described in detail in Buzurg's *Wonders of India*, including large scorpions, a sex-changing rabbit, and the colorful, phoenix-like *samandal* bird.²⁵ The twelfth-century Marvazi mentions a different kind of flying creature. Here is the text as translated by Minorsky:²⁶

I have read in the *Kitab al-Bahr* ("Book of the sea") that in the island of Waq-Waq, where ebony grows, there is a tribe whose nature is like that of men in all their limbs, except the hands, instead of which they have something like wings, which are webbed like the wings of a bat. They, both males and females, eat and drink while kneeling. They follow the ships asking for food. When a man makes for them, they open these wings and their flight becomes like that of birds, and no one can overtake them.

On the subject of island birds, it is interesting to note that North-Coombes, the Mauritian scholar mentioned above, believes that when the famous fifteenth-century Indian Ocean navigator Ibn Majid mentions an island by the name of 'Tiri Rakha,' the island of Rodrigues is meant.²⁷ He, and G.R. Tibbetts, the editor and translator of Ibn Majid's main work, suppose the name to be from the Arabic for 'rukh bird.' The *rukh*, or roc, is a giant bird of Arabic legend, mentioned, among other places, in the *Thousand and One Nights*, a text we shall be encountering again ... The possible 'affinity' between this bird and the *Leguatia gigantea* a now-extinct bird native to Rodrigues, unnoticed by North-Coombes, is quite uncanny as the *Leguatia gigantea* or Solitaire, resembles a bittern, which in Arabic goes by the name *al-waq!* Vérin, basing himself on a passage in the *al-'Umda al-mahriyah fi dabt al-'ulum al-bahriyah* of the sixteenth-century Sulayman ibn Ahmad al-Mahri, another famous Indian Ocean navigator, suggests that Tiri Rakha in fact refers to the whole Mascarene group rather than Rodrigues alone.²⁸ He passes over in silence any 'relationship' between the Solitaire and the word 'rukh.'

Sexuality has an important role to play in the flora of the island(s) of Waqwaq, notably in the eponymous Waqwaq tree, located by some, but not all authors on the homonymous Waqwaq island(s). I, and others, have written about this fabulous tree elsewhere.²⁹ Suffice here to quote the rather graphic description of the tree by the fifteenth-century author Ibn al-Wardi:³⁰

On this island are trees that bear as fruit women: shapely, with bodies, eyes, hands, feet, hair, breasts, and vulvas like the vulvas of women. Their faces are exceptionally beautiful and they hang by their hair. They come out of cases like big swords, and when they feel the wind and sun, they shout 'Waq Waq' until their hair tears.

Beyond these trees are even more desirable women with whom intercourse leads, from sheer exhaustion, to death and, presumably, to Paradise. This is reminiscent of Vespucci's remarks in a letter to Lorenzo de' Medici, describing

his interaction with the men — and women — he encountered in South America.³¹

In my opinion, if there be any earthly Paradyse in the worlde, it can not be farre from these regions of the south

This is a familiar mingling of South, West, and Paradise. As Wilson Washburn has noted, one of the Christian myths circulating in the Middle Ages:

located a Golden Age of primitive goodness in the distant West. The classical fables of the Isles of the Blest, or Hesperides, the promised lands of the Saints of St. Brendan and the terrestrial paradise in which Adam and Eve had lived ... were all located beyond the Western horizon.³²

The isles of St. Brendan unwittingly resonate the Mascarene Ile St. Brandon, the largest island of the Cargados Carajos Shoals, some 300 miles north-northeast of Mauritius. Two Christian islands are mentioned in an annotated enumeration of islands by the sixteenth-century Richard Eden, one inhabited only by women, the other only by men, and mentioned immediately after the islands of Madagascar and Zanzibar, and immediately before 'the greate Empyre of Cathay':³³

Of the two Ilandes, in one of the which dwell onely men, and in the other onely women

In the main sea, there are two islands, distant the one from the other about eight or nine leagues toward the south, situated between Aden and Calicut. In one of which dwell only men without the company of women, and is called the Island of Men. And in the other dwell only women, without men, and is called the Island of Women. They are Christians and contract matrimony. The women never come to the Island of Men, but the men are accustomed to visit the women once in the year, and tarry with them three months continually, every man with his own wife in his own house: after which time they return again to their own Island, where they remain all the year after. The women keep the men children with them until they be 15 years of age, and then send them to their fathers. The women have nought else to do, but to take charge of their children, and to gather certain fruits. But the men labour and have care how they may find their wife and children. They are exercised in fishing, and sell fishes both new taken and old dried, to merchant strangers, whereby they receive great commodities.

The notion of gender-separated islands and islands of women is not foreign to the Arab-Islamic literary and geographical imagination. In his allegorical *Life, Son of Certainty* (*Hayy ibn Yaqzan*), the twelfth-century Andalusian philosopher Ibn Tufayl, writes of an Indian (Ocean) island beneath the equator where men are born without the need for a mother or father.³⁴ And an island of women is described at great and homicidal length in the *Wonders of India*.³⁵

Arabic accounts of an Island of 'Amazons' place it in the Far East. This

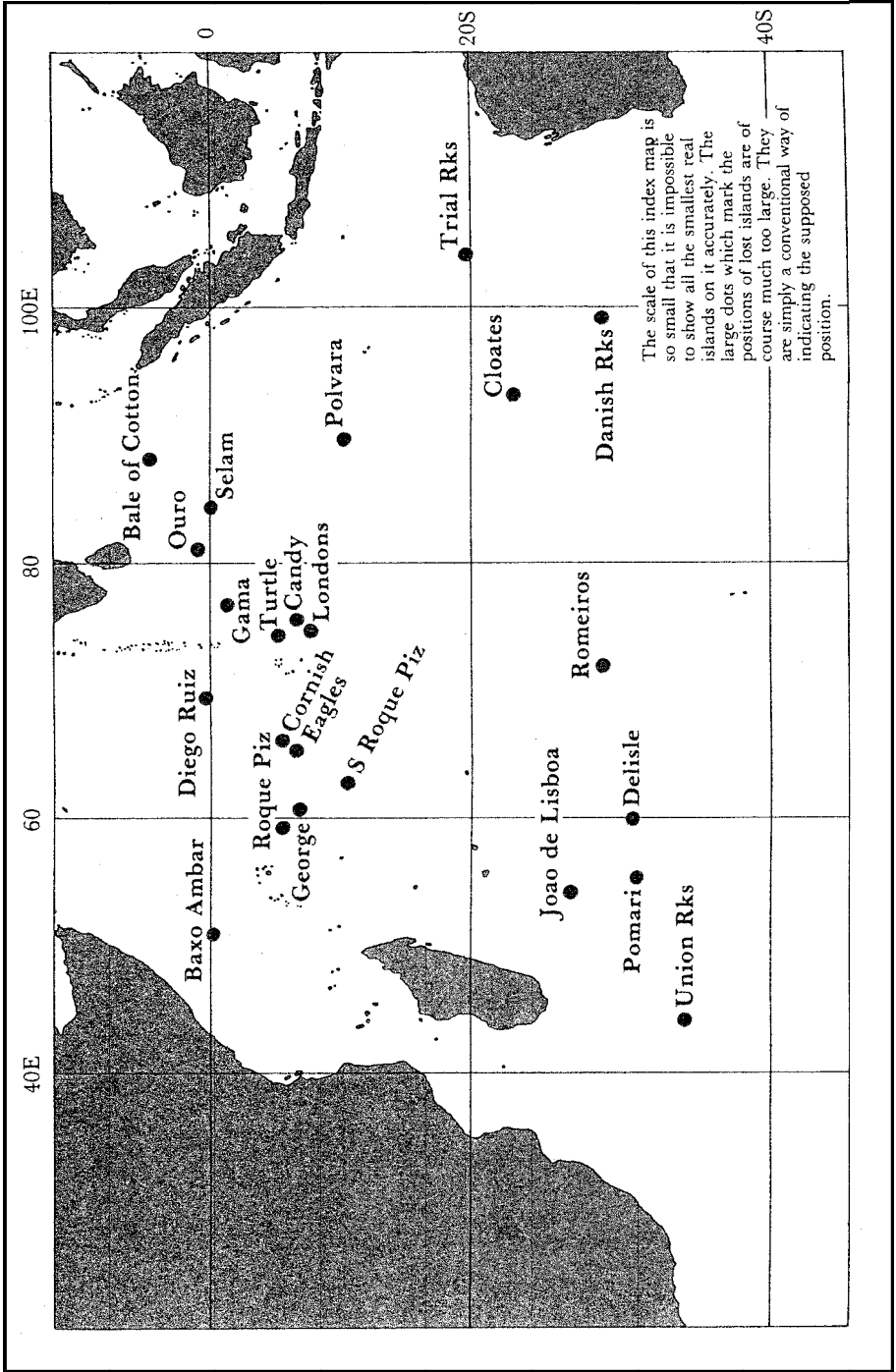


Figure 4. 'Lost islands' of the Indian Ocean, as cataloged by Stommel

location may be borrowed from Chinese accounts that place a realm ruled by women somewhere in the ocean, grafting it onto another account that credits the Queen of Japan with a military force of 1000 women.³⁶ In the Western imagination it is associated with the female warriors who lived on the banks of the River Thermodon in the region of the Black Sea in Pontic Asia Minor and who fought at Troy, but has associations also with a mythical tribe of warriors said to inhabit South America. In the cosmography of the American comic-book heroine *Wonderwoman*, this tribe inhabits an island in the Atlantic. Strabo, who wrote sometime before 21 BCE, mentions a similar island.³⁷ Antiquity has numerous legends connecting women and islands. In Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander Romance*, the Amazons keep their men, whom they need in order to perpetuate, across a river.

Al-Qazwini, Ibn al-Wardi and the fifteenth- to sixteenth-century Ibn Iyas all place the fabled race of women in ... Waqwaq. A parallel island of men, necessary to offset biological extinction, such as the one mentioned by Richard Eden, is mentioned by the fourteenth-century al-Dimashqi.³⁸ A City of Women is also mentioned, in the larger-than-life accounts of al-Qazwini.³⁹ Unlike Buzurg ibn Shahriyar's uncertainties about Waqwaq, al-Qazwini's narrator, al-Tartushi, asserts 'The City of Women is a certainty, of which there is no doubt.'⁴⁰ (A parallel city is described by Christine de Pisan in her fifteenth-century *Cité des dames*, borrowed from the *Decameron* of Boccaccio.)

In the Arabic accounts of an Island of Women in the Sea of China, where no man ever goes, the women impregnate themselves from the wind, or by eating — significantly — the fruit of a certain tree, and giving birth only to women. A lone merchant is said to have landed on this golden island, driven off course by strong winds. With the assistance of one of the women, he is able to escape and find his way to China where he then tells his tale. The ruler, impressed by the account, sends ships to seek out this island, but a three-year search turns up nothing.⁴¹

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Whether the name of an island, a complex of islands, or even a tree, Waqwaq always insists on that aspect of its referent which is (geographically) fabulous and fabular.⁴² There is a convincing piece of evidence that Waqwaq is simply the name given to the conceptual limit of the known world in the statement made by Hasan al-Basri's eventual guide, the Shaykh 'Abd al-Qud-dus, in the *Thousand and One Nights* — Hasan is trying to reach Waqwaq in order to get back his wife who has fled to her home with their two sons:⁴³

My son, relinquish this most vexatious affair; you could not gain access to the Islands of Waqwaq even if the Flying Jinn and the wandering stars assisted you, since between you and those islands are seven valleys, seven seas and seven mountains of vast magnitude.

There is a similar quest for a spouse in the fourteenth-century *Adventures of Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan* (Sirat Sayf ibn Dhi Yazan), when King Sayf is urged by his wronged and distraught wife to pursue her and her son:⁴⁴

'You seized me first, then afflicted me with grief and deserted me to take other women. But what has been has been. If you have any valor and resolve, and if you truly love me, then pursue me to the City of Maidens in the islands of Waq al-Waq.' With that she clasped her son beneath her garment at her breast and vanished through the air ...

The thirteenth-century litterateur, Yaqut, one of the most systematic recorders of geographical information, appreciates Waqwaq's fabular, fabulous nature. He defines Waqwaq as follows in his *Geographical Encyclopedia (Mu'jam al-buldan)*:⁴⁵

Al-Waqwaq, written with two q's. Al-waqwaqah [is a word] meaning the baying of dogs. Al-waqwaq means excessive talk and is also a place beyond China [*bilad fawq al-sin*], mentioned in fables and superstitions [*khurafat*].

This appearance in fables and superstitions would extend, seven centuries later, even further than Yaqut could possibly have imagined. The islands of Waqwaq appear as a 'card' in the Arabian Nights 'expansion' of a fantasy game called 'Magic.' The following is a description by one of the game designers:⁴⁶

In regard to the 'Islands of Wakwak' stories in 'Magic', apart from the name and maybe an incidental reference in the flavortext ("The Isle of Wak-Wak, home to a tribe of winged folk, is named for a peculiar fruit that grows there. The fruit looks like a woman's head, and when ripe speaks the word 'Wak' "), and in card mechanic (a flying creature can do no damage for the rest of the game turn), we have not done any additional work on this concept, as the original designers of 'Magic: the Gathering' devoted an entire set to the Arabian Nights concepts, and since then we have not wanted to incorporate earth references into our game properties.

In what might at first appear to be a more traditional appropriation/appearance, Waqwaq figures in a 1975 short story by a Moroccan writer, Mustafa al-Masannawi. This postmodern, Borgesian-Kafkaesque tale, divided into 10 numbered sections of unequal length, and accompanied by five appendices, evokes Waqwaq in a number of ways. In section three, a description is quoted, from *The Great Pharaonic Encyclopaedia*, and in sections five and nine, 'the noble Sheikh Ahmad al-Nisaburi' is quoted. Section seven consists of 'An extract from a radio broadcast from the Island of Waqwaq.'⁴⁷

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André Miquel has echoed Yaqut's belief and the character Shaykh 'Abd al-Quddus's belief that stories about Waqwaq are part of the fabulous hold that the sea has on the imagination of storytellers,⁴⁸ agreeing with Malti-Douglas that '... [T]he only real certainty about its location is precisely its uncertainty,'⁴⁹ and going on to write that, for him, Waqwaq can only be a place that is 'gigantic, distant and half-fabulous.'⁵⁰ By allowing for half that is not fabulous, however, Miquel appears to leave the interpretive door ajar.

In his ninth-century *Futuh Misr wa al-Maghrib* [*The Conquests of Egypt and North Africa*], Ibn ‘Abd al-Hakam describes the world as a bird in, stating that the right wing is Iraq, beyond which live a people called the Waq, beyond whom live another called Waqwaq, and beyond them a people about whom only God has any knowledge.⁵¹ The story of the world as a bird is a very common one in Arabic literature and very early appears as a story originating from the seventh-century figure, ‘Abd Allah b. ‘Amr ibn al-‘As. It is obvious that, at this very early stage, Waqwaq was regarded as an is/land not simply in the extreme east but at the very edge of the known.

Wherever Waqwaq is — and I do not mean to suggest that it is the Mascarene Islands, though the foregoing might have so adumbrated — it is evidently *different, ambiguous* places at different times. André Miquel’s door must thus be flung wide open. Perhaps it is simply that islands are always

in a way, at the ends of the earth, neither outside it, nor on it; liminal, neither visible from within nor without; at the sill of the world, on an invisible line where the world ceases to be, begins to be ...⁵²

Notes

1. Several ideas in this article were first ‘aired’ in ‘Where Women Grow on Trees’ (March 1995), which appeared as Toorawa, S.M. (1996) ‘Cartographies (of Silence), Orient/ation, and Sexuality: The Dis/covery of the Americas and the Mascarenes,’ in S. Crystal (ed.) *USA–Mauritius. 200 Years: History, Trade, Culture. Conference Proceedings*, pp. 43–71, Moka [Mauritius]: Mahatma Gandhi Institute Press; and in two unpublished papers: ‘Waqwaq Revisited and Resituated,’ presented at the 207th Meeting of the American Oriental Society, Miami, FL (March 1997), and ‘Waqwaq: Fabular Islands of the Southwest Indian Ocean,’ presented, with British Council funding, at the conference, ‘Islands: Histories and Representations,’ University of Kent, Canterbury (April 1999). I am grateful to Susan Crystal and Vinesh Hookoomsing for inviting me to the ‘USA–Mauritius’ conference; to Rod Edmond for inviting me to Canterbury; to Larry Bowman for comments at the former; to Roger Moss and Megan Vaughan for comments at the latter; and to Claude Allibert for sending me his articles at extremely short notice. Lastly, I must thank Ned Alpers for suggesting this article to Vinay Lal, and Vinay Lal for acting on the suggestion with warmth and interest.
2. Also *Wâqwâq*, *al-Wâqwâq*, and *Waqwâq*. For comprehensive discussions of Waqwaq, see ‘Wakwak’ (1936) in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (1st edn), Vol. 4, pp. 1105–1109, Leiden: Brill, reprinted 1987; and the updated article, ‘Wakwak’ (2000 [in press]) *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (New edn), Leiden: E.J. Brill, vol. 11 [hereafter *New EI*].

Note: (1) Transliteration from the Arabic is simplified throughout; specialists should have no trouble recognizing words and names. (2) Translations into English are mine, unless indicated otherwise. I am grate-

ful to my friend and colleague Michael Cooperson of UCLA for creative input in translating book titles.

3. See, e.g. Ferrand, G. (1904) 'Madagascar et les îles Uâq-Uâq,' *Journal asiatique*, 10(3/3) (May–June): 489–509; Ferrand, G. (1907) 'Les îles Râmny, Lâmery, Wâkwâk, Komor des géographes arabes et Madagascar,' *Journal asiatique*, 10(3/3) (November–December): 450–506; Miquel, A. (1967–75) *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11e siècle*, Vol. 2, *passim*, especially pp. 511–513, Paris and The Hague: Mouton; Tolmacheva, M. (1986–87) 'The African Waq Waq: Some Questions Regarding the Evidence,' *Fontes Historiae Africanae: Bulletin d'information*, 11/12: 9–15; Malti-Douglas, F. (1991) *Woman's Body, Woman's Word: Gender and Discourse in Arabo-Islamic Writing*, pp. 85–96, Princeton: Princeton University Press; and Allibert, C. (1991) 'Wakwak: végétal, minéral ou humain? Reconsidération du problème,' *Etudes Océan Indien*, 12: 171–189.
4. See note 1 above.
5. North-Coombes, A. (1979) *La Découverte des Mascareignes par les Arabes et les Portugais*, pp. 133–142, Port Louis: Mauritius Printing Specialists, reprised in North-Coombes, A. (1994) *La Découverte des Mascareignes par les Arabes et les Portugais: rétrospective et mise au point définitive*, Port Louis: Mauritius Printing Specialists.
6. Kammerer, A.K. (1944) *La Découverte de La Chine par les Portugais du XVIIe siècle*, p. 189, Leiden: E.J. Brill.
7. Visdelou-Guimbeau, G. de. (1940) *La découverte des îles Mascareignes par les Portugais*, New York: E. Cabella.
8. A notable exception is Vérin, P. (1983) *Maurice avant l'Isle de France*, Paris: F. Nathan.
9. In this connection, see Toorawa, S.M. (2000) 'Imagined Territories: Pre-Dutch History of the Indian Ocean,' in S.J.T.M. Evers and V.Y. Hookoomsing (eds) *Globalization in the South-West Indian Ocean*, pp. 30–38, Réduit [Mauritius] and Leiden: University of Mauritius/International Institute of Asian Studies (in press).
10. Visdelou-Guimbeau, *La découverte des îles Mascareignes*, p. 15.
11. But see 'Mauritius' (1989) *New EI* (New edn), Vol. 6, p. 848, for an Arabist who allows for the possibility.
12. al-Mas'udi (1966–79) *Kitab Muruj al-dhahab wa ma'adin al-jawhar*, C. Pellat (ed.), Vol. 2, p. 112, Beirut: Lebanese University; cf. Ferrand, G. (1913–14) *Relations de voyages et textes géographiques arabes, persans et turks relatifs à l'Extrême-Orient du VIIIème au XVIIIème siècles*, Paris: Ernest Leroux, reprinted (1986) Frankfurt: Institut für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften an der Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität. But see Tolmacheva, 'The African Waq Waq,' for a re-reading of the Mas'udi passage in question.
13. 'Geography, Islamic' (1985) in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, Vol. 5, pp. 391–395, New York: Scribner. On Islamic geography, see especially 'Djughrafiya' (1963) in *New EI*, Vol. 2, pp. 575–587; and Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*. On the Indian Ocean, see also Tibbetts,

- G.R. (1971) *Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean before the coming of the Portuguese, being a translation of Kitab al-Fawaid fi Usul al-Bahr wal Qawaid of Ahmad b. Majid al-Najdi*, London: Luzac & Co. for The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland.
14. 'Bahr al-Hind' (1959) in *New EI*, Vol. 1, p. 930.
 15. On the Sea of Darkness, see 'Bahr al-Muhit' (1959) in *New EI*, Vol. 1, p. 934.
 16. al-Idrisi (1970) *Opus Geographicum = Kitab Nuzhat al-mushtaq fi ikhtiraq al-afaq*, E. Cerulli et al. (eds), Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, fasc. 1, p. 87; cf. Viré, F. (1988) 'L'Océan Indien d'après le géographe Abû Abd-Allah Muhammad Ibn Idrîs al-Hammûdî al-Hasanî dit Al-Şarîf AL-IDRISI (493–560 H/1100–1166), Extraits traduits et annotés du «Livres de Roger», in Paul Ottino et al. (eds) *Etudes sur L'Océan indien. Collection des travaux de l'Université de la Réunion*, p. 40, St. Denis: Université de la Réunion.
 17. The *Ora Maritima* preserves important material on geography and seafaring. See 'Avienus,' in *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. For Himilco, see Cary, M. and E.H. Warmington (1929) *The Ancient Explorers*, sect. 31.3, London: Methuen, reprinted (1963) Baltimore: Penguin Books.
 18. Mandeville, J. (1983) *The Tales of Sir John Mandeville*, C.W.R.D. Moseley (trans.), p. 169, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
 19. Deluz, C. (1988) *Le livre de Jehan de Mandeville: Une Géographie du XIVe siècle*, Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut d'études médiévales de l'Université catholique de Louvain, corresponds Mandeville's descriptions with al-Idrisi, *Opus Geographicum*, pp. 75–86. (She believes Vincent de Beauvais to be the intervening author.)
 20. Cf. Viré, 'L'Océan Indien,' p. 23, note 2.
 21. 'Adjaib' (1955) in *New EI*, Vol. 1, p. 203. For a discussion of the marvelous, see Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*, Vol. 2, pp. 484 ff., and Arkoun, M. et al. (1978) *L'étrange et le merveilleux dans l'Islam médiéval*, Paris: Editions Journal asiatique.
 22. 'Adjaib', in *New EI*, Vol. 1, p. 203.
 23. Buzurg ibn Shahriyar (1990) 'Aja'ib al-Hind, Y. al-Sharuni (ed.), p. 141, London: Riad El-Rayyees Books = Captain Buzurg ibn Shahriyar of Ramhor-muz, *The Book of the Wonders of India: Mainland, Sea and Islands*, G.S.P. Freeman-Grenville (ed. and trans.), p. 103, London and The Hague: East-West Publications.
 24. de Goeje, M.-J. (1882) 'Le Japon connu des Arabes,' in Buzurg ibn Shahriyar (1883–86) *Kitab 'Ajaib al-Hind (Livre des Merveilles de l'Inde)*, P.A. van der Lith (ed.) and L. Marcel Devic (trans.), p. 299, Leiden: E.J. Brill, reprinted from *Les Annales de l'extrême orient* (July 1882–June 1883), 5: 60–87.
 25. Buzurg, 'Ajaib al-Hind, pp. 73, 140 = Captain Buzurg, *The Book of the Wonders*, pp. 30, 101–102.
 26. Marvazi (1942) *Sharaf al-Zaman Tahir Marvazi on China, the Turks and India [= Tabai' al-hayawan]*, V. Minorsky (ed. and trans.), p. 160, London: The Royal Asiatic Society.
 27. North-Coombes, *La découverte des Mascareignes*, p. 26.
 28. 'Madagascar,' in *New EI*, Vol. 7, p. 941; Sulayman al-Mahri (1970) *al-'Umdah*

al-mahriyah fi dabt al-‘ulum al-bahriyah, Damascus: al-Matba‘ah al-Ta‘awuniyah.

29. On the tree, see, e.g. Ferrand, G. (1932) ‘Le Wâqwâq est-il le Japon?’, *Journal Asiatique*, 32: 193–243, reprinted in Ferrand, G. (1986) *Etudes sur la géographie arabo-islamique*, Vol. 2, pp. 370–420, Frankfurt: Institut für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften; Ackerman, P. (1935) ‘The Talking Tree,’ *Bulletin of the American Institute for Persian Art and Archaeology*, 4(2): 67–72; Malti-Douglas, *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Word*, pp. 85–96; Allibert, ‘Wakwak: végétal, minéral ou humain?’; Toorawa, ‘Cartographies of Silence’; my forthcoming ‘Where Women Grow on Trees: An Arab-Islamic Tree in the New World’; and the ‘Wakwak’ entry in *New EI*.
30. Ibn al-Wardi (1898–99) *Kharidat al-‘ajaib wa faridat al-gharaib*, Cairo: al-Matba‘a al-Amira al-Sharafiya, pp. 104–105.
31. Translation taken from Washburn, W.E. (1991) ‘Marvels, Maps and Monsters: Europe Eyes the New World,’ in I.B. Jaffe *et al.* (eds) *Imagining the New World: Columbian Iconography*, p. 13, Rome and New York: Instituto della Enciclopedia italiana.
32. Washburn, ‘Marvels, Maps, and Monsters,’ p. 5; see also Washburn, W.E. (1962) ‘The Meaning of “Discovery” in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries,’ *American Historical Review*, 68: 1–21, and especially Mollat du Jourdin, M. *et al.* (1984) *Le Monde de Jacques Cartier. L’aventure au XVIe siècle*, pp. 98–110, Paris/Montreal: Berger-Levrault/Libre-Expression (‘Le mythe de saint Brendan’).

For more recent imaginary islands, see Stommel, H. (1984) *Lost Islands: The Story of Islands That Have Vanished from Nautical Charts*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, especially pp. 123–128 (see Figure 4).

33. Eden, R. (1885) *The First Three English Books on America [?1511]–1555 A.D. Being chiefly Translations, Compilations, &c., by Richard Eden ...*, E. Arber (ed.), p. 24, Birmingham: Turnbull & Spears, reprinted (1971) New York: Kraus Reprint. (Note: I have modernized the spelling of the passage but not altered the syntax or punctuation.)
34. Ibn Tufayl (1974) *Risalat Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, F. Sa‘d (ed.), p. 117, Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida (Ibn Tufayl also mentions a tree there which bears women as fruit). See the perceptive analysis in Malti-Douglas, *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Word*, pp. 90–93; cf. Castellani, G.M. (1993) ‘L’autre monde ou l’utopie sexuelle,’ in C. Rizza (ed.) *La Découverte de nouveaux mondes: Aventures et voyages imaginaires au XVIIe siècle*, pp. 299–308, Fasano [Italy]: Schena.
35. Buzurg, *Kitab ‘Ajaib al-Hind*, pp. 57–62 = Captain Buzurg, *The Book of Wonders*, pp. 13–16. See Allibert, C. (1992) ‘L’île des femmes dans les récits arabes,’ *Etudes Océan Indien*, 15: 261–267. Cf. Pelliot, P. (1963) *Notes on Marco Polo*, Vol. 2, pp. 671–735, sect. Femeles (Island of Women), and Vol. 2, pp. 779–781, sect. Mogedaxo [Madagascar], Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve.
36. See al-Idrisi, *Opus Geographicum*, p. 69, Ibn al-Wardi, *Kharida*, p. 415, and al-Qazwini (1960) *Athar al-bilad wa akhbar al-‘ibad*, p. 300, Beirut: Dar Sadir, for a certain Queen Damhara who rules over Waqwaq, naked, in sandals of gold, and surrounded by 4000 female slaves. Cf. Gil, J. (1989) *Mitos y*

- utopías del descubrimiento: I. Colón y su tiempo*, pp. 39–40, Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
37. Strabo (1917–33) *Geography*, H. Jones (trans.), London/New York: W. Heinemann/G.P. Putnam's Sons; cf. Herm, G. (1976) *The Celts: The people who came out of the darkness*, p. 160, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
 38. See Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*, Vol. 2, p. 487.
 39. al-Qazwini, *Athar al-bilad*, p. 607. Cf. Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*, Vol. 2, pp. 494–495.
 40. al-Qazwini, *Athar al-bilad*, p. 607.
 41. al-Qazwini, *Athar al-bilad*, p. 33; cf. Ibn al-Wardi, *Kharidat al-‘ajaib*, p. 107. Analyzed in Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body, Woman's Word*, pp. 94–95, and Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*, Vol. 2, p. 490.
 42. See, e.g. Vincent, W. (1807) *The Commerce and Navigation of the Ancients*, Vol. 1, p. 568, London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, reprinted (1998) New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services. Cf. Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*, Vol. 2, p. 171, note 4.
 43. Lane, E.W. (trans.) (1927) 'How Hasan Captured the Bird-Maiden and the Adventures that Came after,' in *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment*, p. 796, New York: Tudor Publishing.
 44. *The Adventures of Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan: an Arab folk epic* (1996), L. Jayyusi (trans. and narr.), p. 241, Bloomington: Indiana University Press for the Project of Translation from Arabic.
 45. Yaqut (1896) *Jacut's Geographisches Wörterbuch*, F. Wüstenfeld (ed.), Vol. 6, p. 936, Leipzig: In Commission bei F.A. Brockhaus.
 46. E-mail from Scott Hungerford <baxter@wizards.com> dated July 16, 1997.
 47. al-Masannawi, M. (1989 [1975]) 'Abdullah Samsa in Waqwaq Island,' in M. Shaheen, *The Modern Arabic Short Story: Shahrazad Returns*, pp. 114–118, London: Macmillan.
 48. Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*, Vol. 1, p. 127.
 49. Malti-Douglas, *Woman's Body, Woman's Word*, p. 85.
 50. Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*, Vol. 2, p. 511 (emphasis mine).
 51. Ibn 'Abd al-Hakam (1922) *Futuh Misr wa al-Maghrib*, C. Torrey (ed.), p. 19, New Haven: Yale University Press.
 52. Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman*, Vol. 2, p. 485, citing Dagrón, G. and L. Marin (1971) 'Discours utopique et récit des origines,' *Annales ESC*, 26(2) (March–April): 315: '... en quelque sorte, sur la limite du monde, ni en dehors de lui, ni en lui, sur la frange indiscernable de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur, comme à l'ourlet du monde, sur cette ligne sans épaisseur où il cesse d'être monde, où il commence de l'être ...'