

The Zoological Chapter of the
Kitāb al-Imtā' wal-Mu'ānasa
of Abū Ḥayyān al-Tauhīdī
(10th century)

(Translated from the Arabic and annotated)

I. INTRODUCTION

1) The author (1)

Medieval Arabic literature can boast of an imposing array of first rank writers whose memory was amply preserved by numerous biographers and whose works, or at least the principal ones, were widely used and excerpted and often copied, so that they have come down to us, in spite of the vicissitudes of time, in quite a number of MSS. Not so was the lot accorded by posterity to ABŪ ḤAYYĀN AL-TAUHĪDĪ and his literary work. In spite of his outstanding ability as a writer, philosopher and man of letters he and his works fell almost entirely into oblivion in the centuries following his death. The reasons may be variously explained. It should be pointed out, e.g., that ABŪ ḤAYYĀN came to be considered as one of the outstanding heretics in Islam (2) and that he was an unsociable character inapt to make headway in the society of his time (3) and so lay the foundation of posthumous fame. Be it as it may, the fact remains that until recently little attention was

(1) See C. BROCKELMANN, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* I², p. 283; § 1, p. 435-36. IBR. KEILANI, *Abū Ḥayyān at-Tauhīdī... Introduction à son œuvre*, Beyrouth 1950. MUHYI AL-DIN, 'A., *Abū Ḥayyān al-Tauhīdī...* Cairo 1949 (Arabic).

BROCKELMANN's list of works and text editions can now be augmented, in addition to the Cairo edition of the *Kitāb al-Imtā'* (1939-44, 3v.), by the following:

1. *Trois épîtres d'Abū Ḥayyān at-Tauhīdī*, éd. par IBR. KEILANI. Damas 1951.
2. *Divinae invocationes*. Ed... 'Abdurrahmān Badawi. Pars I, *Cahira* 1950.
3. *Al-Hawāmil wal-Shawāmil li-Abī Ḥayyān al-Tauhīdī wa-Miskawaihi*. Ed.

A. Amin and A. Saqr. Cairo 1951.

(2) See IBR. KEILANI, *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 78ff.

(3) See *ibid.*, pp. 9, 34, 39.

of its life increase). Its left tooth is a good remedy for shivering fever (*nāfiḍ*) (5). It is reported that it copulates sixty times at one move and in one place (6).

99. The rhinoceros (*himār wahshī*) (1) is a cross between a mare and an elephant. It has a horn growing from its nose (2) [that looks] like a [drawn] sword (3). When striking at a tree it fells it with it (4). It fights with the elephant and slits its belly open with its horn (5). No female of this species has ever been sighted (6).

100. In the sea there is a fish called *būs* which is engendered by p. 175 a thunderbolt hitting the sea. If [meat of] that fish is placed between two [persons] and both eat from it, they will love each other, neither will bear rancour to the other, and they will be united in the best of friendship (*).

101. The otter (1) always has its tail lying on its back in a bent and twisted position. It feeds on terrestrial plants (2). [As] it is greatly terrified by fire, hunters [usually] set out for its (3) resting-place by night with firebrands in their hands. The animal, frightened by the fire, will not move until it is caught (4) ... (5).

HA 558a₂₄; Tim. 42. (5) Cf. Tim. 42 no. 12 (the first tooth of the left jaw).

(6) Cf. Tim. 42 no. 11.

No. 99. (1) According to all parallels (see next note) one should read *himār hindī* instead of *himār wahshī*. (2) Par.: HA 499b₁₈ (Indian ass one of the few animals which are single-horned); Jah. VII 123₁₋₂ = Nih. IX 315₁₀₋₁₁ (*karkadann*; has a thick, not long horn on its forehead; ARISTOTLE mentions the animal but calls it Indian ass); GH 191 no. 54 (ass in India; on the authority of ARISTOTLE). Cf. also WÜSTER 25 (ox in India); AL-QALQASHANDI, *Subh al-A'shā* II 37-38 (*karkadann* = *himār hindī*). (3) Par.: Tim. 44. (4) Delete *wa* before *bihi* (5) Cf. Tim. 44. Jah. VII 128₂: The *karkadann* gores an elephant and raises it with the horn that is fixed in the middle of its forehead. (6) Par.: Tim. 44.

No. 100. Such a property is ascribed in Qazw. 130 to the fish called *al-yass* (? vowel not indicated). ARISTOTLE states (HA 505b₁₂) that the so-called 'shipholder' (cf. below, no. 106) is used as a charm to bring luck in affairs of law and love. According to GH 227 no. 53 a remedy for love and hatred is prepared from the flesh of this fish. Cf. also Tim. 50, on elops.

No. 101. (1) *Kalb al-md'*; cf. BNG 75 no. 107. The term, according to Qazw. 142₂₃₋₂₄, is also a name for the beaver (= BNG 38 no. 6). (2) According to Qazw. 143₂ it feeds on fish and crabs. (3) Here and in the following the Arabic text, for grammatical reasons, seems to refer only to the female animal. This circumstance probably finds its explanation in the statement of Qazw. 142_{below} that it is the female which is hunted for its coat, while the male's coat is unfit for making a fur garment. The male, though, is also said to be hunted for his testicles (142-43), but here a confusion with the beaver (cf. below, no. 119) has taken place. (4) Par.: Tim. 48 (beaver). (5) The following sentence is unin-

having come near the sheep, it swerves to another side that is free from the dogs' watch and snatches as many sheep as it can (4).

p. 184 131. If the female of the wild ass (*ḥimār al-wahsh*) has born male young, the father-ass comes, pulls out their testicles and bites them off with his teeth (1), lest the young become his rivals (2) and make him share some she-ass with them (3). Yet the female usually drops her young one in a hidden place (4) [and keeps it there] until its body becomes strong, its hooves harden and it is able, by running, to save itself from the stallion (5). It is for the said reason that stallions of this species are few (6).

132. The unicorn (*harish*) (1) is a small animal, the size of a kid (2), and very calm (3). Yet it has so much bodily strength and is so fleet of foot as to baffle the hunter (4). Moreover, in the middle of the head it has one horn (5), upward (6) and straight, with which it gores any animal so that none overpowers it. One can contrive to catch it by making a clean (not menstruating)

same cunning of the wolf seems to be alluded to in Jah. IV 228₁₄₋₁₅ (read *yanbahūhā* instead of *yadhbahūhā*); but cf. *ibid.* II 203₆₋₈, 277₈₋₁₀, where it is said that the wolf mostly preys on sheep towards morning, because at this time the dogs are sleepy and stop barking.

No. 131. (1) Par. : Nih. IX 326-27 (he-ass bites off the penis of the young one); WÜSTER 21 (from the *Trésor*). (2) The Arabic text reads *li-kailā tuṣādā au...* 'lest they be hunted out of...', which makes no suitable sense. The above translation presupposes its emendation to *li-kailā tuḍarrāhū wa...* (3) Par. : BNG 42-43; Titr. 30 (lest another one should rule the troop). (4) Par. : PLINY VIII 108. (5) Par. : BNG 43 no. 15; Qazw. 378_{4sqq.} Nih. IX 327_{1sqq.} (female flees with her young one from the male and breaks one of its legs, in order that it may stay in that place; when the leg is healed, the young one is strong enough to defend itself); Dam. (J) I 577 (similar to Nih.). (6) This is the evident meaning of the Arabic text, the statement referring to the previous account that the fathers castrate their male young. The parallel in BNG 43 no. 15, on the other hand, emphasises that owing to the behaviour of the females some uncastrated males of this species are left. Such a meaning, however, though logically well connected with the preceding sentence, could be gained from the Arabic text only with difficulty.

No. 132. (1) Two different explanations of the term, neither of which suits the following account, are given by AL-DAMĪRĪ on the authority of AL-JAUHĀRĪ (Dam. (J) I 525) : a kind of serpent, the rhinoceros. The above translation follows Old French parallels (see next notes). AL-JĀHĪZ deliberately omitted treating the *harish*, because it was fairly unknown (Jah. VI 27 below). (2) Par. : Qazw. 392₂₀. According to Old French sources (WÜSTER 238) it resembles the horse (*Trésor*) or the goat-buck (PHILIPPE DE THAON). (3) In Old French literature it is described as *une fiere beste* (WÜSTER 238). (4) Cf. Qazw. 392₂₁. (5) Qazw. 392₂₀₋₂₁ : a horn like that of the rhinoceros. (6) Dam. (J) I 525, quoting ABŪ ḤAYYĀN, has *solid*

virgin maid (7) appear in its sight. On seeing her it will leap up to her breast as if intending to suck. This is a predilection it has which is deeply rooted in its nature. Once having got to the maid's bosom she has to suckle it at her breast even though it is devoid of milk, until the animal becomes like one who is dizzy from wine or slothful from sleep. The hunter may approach it in this condition and tie it up firmly, since, owing to this device, it will be calm (8).

133. The deer (*ayyil*) is an enemy of the serpents (1). If a serpent flees (2) from it and hides in the cranny of a rock, the deer fills its mouth [with water], from a pool or wherever it finds [it], and spirts it into the fissure. Then it drags the serpent to itself by force, in order to kill it (3). If the serpent is above, it pulls it down; and likewise, if it is below, [it drags it upwards] (4). If the deer is hungry it eats of the serpent as much as it can (5), and if not hungry, kills it and leaves it (6). The serpents, then, that possess deadly poison which kills everything that it strikes or into p. 185 whose body it penetrates, become the food of deer, which suits them and is found to be tasty by them (7).

134. If a house in which there are serpents is fumigated with the smoke produced by burning the horn of a deer, the serpents will all flee out of fear (1). The deer itself, however, is cowardly and extremely timorous. When eating a serpent it starts at the tail

(i.e. not hollow; *musmat* instead of *muntaṣib*). (7) Dam. (J) I 525, quoting ABŪ ḤAYYĀN, has *fatāh 'adhrā' au ḥabiya* = a virgin maid or a girl; WÜSTER 238: *une vierge pucele*. (8) Par. to whole passage: BNG 43 no. 16; Dam. (J) I 525 (quotation from ABŪ ḤAYYĀN); WÜSTER 238; LANGLOIS 390.

No. 133. (1) Par.: BNG 43 no. 17. (2) Read *farrat* instead of *qarubat*, in accordance with the parallel in BNG. (3) Par.: BNG 43 no. 17; Nih. IX 324-5 (the water makes the serpent put its tail out of the hole). Differently PLINY VIII 118: They track out their holes and draw them out by means of the breath of their nostrils; so also Qazw. 382 (s.v. *bagar al-wahsh*) and LANGLOIS 383. Cf. also WÜSTER 37, 198-99. (4) This obscure account also in BNG 43-44, with the addition that the deer uses its breath for this purpose; cf. previous note. (5) Read *afāqa* instead of *afāba*. (6) Par.: BNG 44 no. 17. (7) Par.: BNG 44 no. 17. Old French sources report (WÜSTER 37; LANGLOIS 383) that the serpent serves the deer as a remedy (cf. above no. 87 note 2); by eating it it becomes rejuvenated, and this is the reason why the deer lives so long. Other sources state that the deer fears the poison of the serpent; see below no. 134 note 3.

No. 134. (1) Par.: BNG 43 no. 17; Qazw. 382 below (s.v. *bagar al-wahsh*); Dam. (J) I 225 (insects and other animals of a poisonous nature). Cf. also HA