

A Comparative Study of the Talking Tree Motif in Persian Versions of Qazvini's *Wonders of Creation* (Ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt)*

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A tree is one of the most beautiful creations in the world. The development of mythical concepts and the prevalence of some beliefs about it have led to certain connotations and the emergence of specific beliefs in human thought. Among trees, there is the talking tree (Waqwaq), which has a long history and has been mentioned in various books, including reliable geographic sources such as Qazvini's the *Wonders of Creation*. The article examines the pictorial motif of talking tree in the Persian version of Qazvini's *Wonders of Creation* and considers the similarities and differences of its presentation in Persian versions as well as the origin of its aesthetic principles. The results of the research show that all versions have human heads or a statue on the tree. Among them, the *Wonders of Creation* 1816 AD has a female motif and depicts a female statue on the tree. The head motif in the *Wonders of Creation* of 1550–1560 AD is male and illustrates masculine statues on the tree. The head motif in the *Wonders of Creation* 1566 AD, the *Wonders of Creation* of the 16 century AD, the *Wonders of Creation* 1651 AD and the *Wonders of Creation* 1695 AD and the two heads in the *Wonders of Creation* 1822 AD was male and only depict human heads on the tree, not the full body. In some versions, in addition to human heads, animal heads are also portrayed on the tree. What is interesting is the presence of the head of legendary animals and birds such as Dragon and Simurgh.

Keywords: Persian version, *Wonders of Creation*, Zakariya al-Qazvini, talking tree, Persian painting, Iran, Waqwaq.

Introduction

The scope of art is so vast that it covers everything ranging from reality to fantasy, nature, the internal and external world, social life, etc. An artist can apply his or her skills to create an illustration that inspires an aesthetic feeling. From the very beginning, Persian miniature exhibited a special aesthetic experience with its use of pure colors and special forms, freedom from adherence to nature, applying delicacies and its close connection to literature. Surprisingly, any subject that comes into Persian miniature,

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its factual and real aspect takes on an imaginal character. As symbolic as it is, accepting it is not out of the question and it appears that it is actually possible in the real world. On the other hand, due to the interplay between Iranian literature and miniature, motifs such as a talking tree (Waqwaq¹) that have appeared in written works over many centuries have grown alongside the imaginative world of Persian miniature. Every artist started making artwork depending on the virtuosity that dominated the time, their unlimited mental imagination and what literature provided them. In addition, ancient beliefs and thoughts about trees and their value and validation have existed from the earliest times, and have been preserved from generation to generation. As a result of emphasizing it, the talking tree motif (Waqwaq motif) has been shaped and promoted in various art fields. The purpose of this research is to analyze the pictorial motif and also to identify differences and similarities in the illustrations of the talking tree in Persian versions of Qazvini's *Wonders of Creation*. Accordingly, the research questions are: 1. What is the pictorial motif of the talking tree in the Persian version of *Wonders of Creation*? 2. What are the differences and similarities in the talking tree motif in the Persian versions of *Wonders of Creation*? 3. What is the origin of aesthetic principles in the talking tree motif? By considering the aesthetic aspect of the works, comparing and matching the illustrations with the original text, the illustrations are analyzed. Given that other Persian language versions have also been illustrated in India, the statistical population of this study consists of Persian language versions illustrated in Iran and India. It should be noted that various research has been conducted from a historical aspect, and examining imaginary creatures such as the devil and the Giant in the *Wonders of Creation* have achieved valuable results. In contrast to previous research, the present emphasizes the identification of the legend of the talking tree and attempts to provide a rational analysis of the talking tree motif in each version. At the end of the article, the similarities and differences between the works are reviewed and presented in a table.

Methodology

The research method is descriptive-analytic and uses a comparative approach and documentary sources. The library method and the observation of works are used to collect information. The statistical population of this research includes 17 illustrations of 10 versions of Qazvini's *Wonders of Creation*, related to different historical periods that have been illustrated in Iran and have been analyzed using qualitative method.

Research Background

A review of research conducted to date demonstrates that many works involve introducing the version of *Wonders of Creation* or adapting motifs of demons and goblins into the illustrations, but none of them emphasized the talking tree motif in this version.

Valuable research has been carried out by European and Russian authors on Iranian painting, focusing more on historiography and analysis of the structure of Iranian painting. Among the studies conducted in the form of books and articles inside and outside Iran related to the subject of this article, the following can be mentioned:

¹ This word has different spellings in English. For the sake of consistency, "Waqwaq" is used throughout the article.

1. Ajand, Yaghoub (2014). In his book entitled *Seven Principles of Decoration of Iranian Art* [1], conventional principles in the foundations of Iranian traditional arts in the post-Islamic era are represented and the seven principles of Iranian painting are examined. In the book, the Waqwaq motif is referred to as the sixth principle of Persian miniature and painting, and its emergence in Persian miniature is discussed.
2. Binyon, Laurence, James Vere Stewart Wilkinson, and Basil Gray (1993). *Persian Miniature Painting: Including a Critical and Descriptive Catalogue of the Miniatures Exhibited at Burlington House* [2]. In this study, Iranian thought and imagination mediates between Western spirit (focus on human beings) and Eastern spirit (focus on *landscapes*) and emphasizes that the Iranian worldview is basically imaginary and enjoys what is strange. It is claimed that Iranian painters do not intend to achieve realism.
3. Delavarei, Diana (2015). In her dissertation entitled “Analyzing and Investigating Illustrations of the Ancient Manuscripts of Qazwini’s *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing Ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt wa gharā’ib al-mawjūdāt* in the Munich Library Emphasizing the marine creatures” [3], the illustrations of imaginary creatures and animals in the chapter “Wonders and Marine Animals” of this version is discussed.
4. Kianinejad, Ashraf (2014). In her article entitled “Introducing and Studying the Illustrated Manuscript of Qazwin’s Wonders of Creation at the University of Cambridge” [4], which belongs to 1625 AD, images in four sections of planets, angels, islands, and industries are examined in terms of basic rules and principles including composition, color, human characterization, creation of space in the images and the artist’s attitude to the subjects.
5. Taheri, Alireza, and Maryam Zand Haghighi (2012). In their article entitled “Picture of Demon, Giant and Jinn in the Qazwini’s Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing” [5], a detailed description of the appearance and behavioral structure of these creatures is considered, especially the three species of Demon, Giant and Jinn and their types and names. In some cases, their traditional, narrative and religious roots have also been elaborated upon.
6. Grabar, Oleg (2003). *Mostly Miniatures: an Introduction to Persian painting* [6], is an attempt to discuss Iranian painting aesthetically. The author compares Iranian paintings and paintings in Christian lands and introduces Iranian painting as a kind of abstract painting that does not have specific principles but is accepted with certain rules among artists and their supporters.
7. Nazarli, Mais M. D. (2006). *The Dual World of Iranian Miniatures* [7]. This book provides a practical interpretation of Safavid paintings. It specifically examines the unique miniatures of the book in the Safavid period and Tabriz school. The author’s goal is to discover the hidden meaning depicted in miniatures and the language used in these meanings.
8. Atila, Oya (2016) in his article, entitled “Waqwaq Style” [8], investigated the system of motif positioning on a spiral pattern and has analyzed examples from different Iranian and Arabic versions, and finally, by comparing the samples, mentions their differences and concludes that this motif has not been common in religious works.

9. Kumar, Ann (2011). In the article entitled “The Single Most Astonishing Fact of Human Geography: Indonesia’s Far West Colony” [9], the land of Waqwaq and its people as well as how this myth emerged (the Genesis of a Myth) is explored. The problems of Arab geographical knowledge in transmitting information about the introduction of Arab lands in the third and fourth centuries, 10th and 11th AD, is described.

The Land of Waqwaq and the Genesis of a Myth

Some ancient geographical books have spoken of the land of Waqwaq and the people of that area. Also, the wonders of that land have been described. In 10th century AD, a tree with human fruit appeared in ancient Arabic literature in a book entitled *Al-Bed’ va Al-Tarikh* by Motahar ibn Taher Maghdasi, who described a tree with a wonderful character that grew in India. He considered this myth to be ancient. Waqwaq, according to Muslim geographers, mentions two islands, one in western India and the other near China. It is said that Waqwaq near China is the Sumatra Island and the Waqwaq in West India is the island of Madagascar [10, p. 3172]. It is also stated in *Mo’in Encyclopedic Dictionary* that the islands of the eastern Waqwaq are located in eastern China and the Waqwaq tree, which was mentioned first in Chinese texts, is one of the myths of that nation [11, p. 2185]. Mohammad Hossein ibn-khalaf Tabrizi wrote: “Waqwaq is the name of an island from the islands of the sea and some say that it is the name of a mountain, which is a gold mine, and there is a tree in the mountain whose fruits look like human and other animals and out of those faces comes a strange voice, talking and answering and when they fall from the tree or are picked, they do not sing and speak anymore; others have said that it is the name of a tree in India that blossoms every morning and falls at night” [12, p. 1462]. Ibn Khordadbeh is also one of the earliest Muslim geographers to have mentioned Waq Island [13, p. 16], and in his opinion the land of Waqwaq is located in eastern China, where gold is abundant, even people in that land make dog collars and monkey rings out of gold. It is said that there are woven fabrics of gold for sale and Ebony is good there [14, p. 67]. Another twelfth-century work, *Al-Jughrafiya*, relates the way young girls grow on this tree, from their feet upwards, and places Waqwaq at the end of the inhabited world to the east. Qazvini repeats this story and says that Al-Mubarak of Siraf traveled to this land and saw the queen seated on the throne naked, surrounded by four thousand virgin slaves, also wearing no clothes. The fabulous Waqwaq tree is depicted in Islamic art with both male and female “fruit” [9, p. 78].

Nuzhat al-qulūb talks about this legendary land: “The first gulf is China and Parana-China Sea which is the largest of all the gulfs and it has a great pelagic zone toward China and in this gulf there are three thousand and seven hundred islands. It is famous for the islands of Waqwaq, which reaches over a hundred islands and there, if the wind shakes the leaves of the trees, they will make a ‘Waqwaq’ sound, and those islands are known by this name” [15, p. 229]. Ibn Lakis notes: “He has witnessed tremendous acts by the people of Waqwaq. It is thus that in 945 AD (945–6) they came upon Kanbalu in a thousand ships and fought them with the utmost vigor, without however achieving their end, as Kanbalu is surrounded by a strong defensive wall around which stretches the water-filled estuary of the sea, so that Kanbalu is at the center of this estuary, like a fortified citadel. They said that they had come from a distance of one year’s sailing, that

they had pillaged islands.” If these people spoke the truth and if their account was accurate, this would confirm what Ibn Lakis said of the islands of the Waqwaq: that they are situated opposite China [16, p. 141].

Sharif al-Idrisi, a twelfth-century Sicilian geographer, made the earliest Arab atlas [I]. It depicts the islands of Waqwaq, a colorful land with plentiful gold and trees with blossoms of girls, in the sea off China. Raymond Mauny notes that there are two main categories of Waqwaq, one from the “Far East” and the other from South East Africa. It is the former group with which we are concerned. It would take one year to sail from East Africa to these islands. Mauny concludes that there is no doubt that the Waqwaq archipelago is Indonesia [9, p. 77].

In contrast with other geographers, Abū Rayḥān Al-Bīrūnī claims that the “Island of Waqwaq is one of the islands of Qomeir and that’s just the name of the island and as the people think it is not a tree whose fruit resembles a human head. But Qomeir are short, pale people. They look like Turks in appearance and their rituals are like Indians and have split ears. The residents of Waqwaq Island are black and people are more interested in them. Until now, it is known that Waqwaq refers to islands located in the China Sea and famous Muslim writers have written about them and described them” [17, p. 164]. Therefore, it has been considered in the art of different ethnic groups, such as people of India, China, Japan, Thailand, Turkey and Iran especially in the field of painting and miniature of which many examples can be seen that will be mentioned below.

Qazvini’s *Wonders of Creation* (Ajā’ib al-makhlūqāt wa gharā’ib al-mawjūdāt)

Marvelous writing is a general name for a literary custom that appeared in Persian literature between the 11th and 15th centuries AD. It is, on the one hand, related with geographical books and books of travel, especially sea-travels, and, on the other hand, with books of Greek and Roman Physics, especially Aristotle’s Physics [18, p. 70]. Writings related to this type of literature are part of the general interest of Muslim scholars who have studied natural phenomena including animals, plants and minerals, as well as historical monuments and buildings of countries including Egypt, Mesopotamia and ancient Iran. What aroused this interest in Muslims is the existence of ancient heritage, especially the heritage of ancient Greece, and the wonderful stories of the Holy Qur’an, such as the Companions of the Cave (Seven Sleepers) and other verses that constantly invite man to think about the signs of divine creation [18, p. 70]. The most famous book of this type is *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* by Zakariya Qazvini. Abu Yahya Zakariya’ ibn Muhammad al-Qazvini was born in 1203 AD in Qazvin. He continued his higher education in Baghdad and excelled in intellectual and transmitted sciences prior to becoming one of the famous Shafi’i jurists. His proficiency in natural sciences became so widespread that European scholars called him Apollonios of Tyana² of Arab [19, p. 5]. His most famous work is *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing*, written in 13th century AD. Qazvini first wrote this book in Arabic.

² Pythagorean philosopher and occult scientists in the first century AD.

In writing this book, Qazvini mainly used the works of his predecessors. Qazvini's sources in the book's compilation include *Canon of Medicine* of Avicenna³, Abu Rayhān Al-Biruni⁴, and Al-Jahiz's⁵ *Al-Hayawan* (Book of the Animals) [5, p. 27].

Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing is related to cosmology and consists of two parts. In the first part, he talks about celestial bodies such as the moon, the sun, and the stars, and discusses the inhabitants of heaven and angels, mentioning the Arabic and Syrian calendars and timepiece problems. The second part is terrestrial, which starts with an article about the four elements. He divides the earth into seven regions or climates according to Ptolemy's hypothesis, enumerates seas and rivers, and explains the cause of earthquakes and the formation of mountains and valleys. He then goes on to describe in detail the three worlds of nature, which are the world of animals, the world of plants, and the world of minerals. Then, he reaches the human world and the description of the racial and tribal characteristics of human beings. He also discusses jinns and giants. According to many informants, this book is the first regular and considerable work on the cosmic chronology in Islamic countries. For this reason, it was fully considered and interested in the Islamic world at that time. The original book, which is in Arabic, and its Turkish and Persian translations were made into manuscripts in relatively large numbers and some were later published [20, p. 528]. Ten versions of this book have been illustrated in various Iranian and Indian art periods and they are the subject of this research.

Backgrounds of the formation of the talking tree motif in Islamic art

Considering the content expressed related to the tree motif, especially the talking tree and the Waqwaq motif in Eastern culture, particularly in the rituals and sacred texts of different ethnic groups as well as its status in Iranian painting, it can be concluded that this legendary motif has spread in Islamic art due to several reasons:

1. The close connection between literature and painting.
2. The importance of narrative culture in Iran.
3. The close connection between different branches of Islamic arts and their influence on each other, on the one hand, and the symbolic view of artistic elements even in the illustration of religious works, on the other hand.
4. The prohibition of portraiture in Islam, which led to illustration, is one of the most important reasons that can be mentioned. In fact, Islam's prohibition against portraiture and painting of the living model resulted in portraiture giving way to illustration. The illustration of stories and legends is not hindered because it is not designed from a living model and in connection with oral literature and mystical literature, it should have a high position and cause the emergence of creativity by artists in different periods.
5. The visits of Iranian and Arab scientists, tourists, sailors and geographers from different lands and their familiarity with different cultures, myths and legends and description of what they have seen and heard in their books is another thing that can lead to such a motif, especially in the field of painting.

³ Iranian physician, mathematician, astronomer and philosopher and one of the most famous and influential scientists in the world (980–1037 AD).

⁴ Iranian scientist, mathematician and astronomer (973–1048 AD).

⁵ One of the well-known Arab writers famous for his skill in literary techniques (776–868 AD).

6. The migration of artists from one country to another. Therefore, the transfer of ideas, stories, and myths, and thus the transfer of motifs and arrays, seems possible.
7. The tendency of cultures to overcome and influence each other is one of the cases that can be considered as weaker possibilities.
8. The belief of the people of ancient times in myths and legends and their belief in the existence of the transcendental.

Analyzing and matching the talking tree motif in the versions

1. The version of the *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* of 1550–1560 AD

A version of Qazvini's *Wonders of Creation* is kept in the Nasli Heeramaneck Collection and its history seems to have been illustrated in the Safavid dynasty. The illustrations in this version are very simple and the book has been written in Nastaliq script. The page layout system is such that it shows the placement of text and illustrations within a box with two blue and red lines [II].

The composition of the work is also static, and all visual elements are drawn in vertical mode. Although the text of the page refers to the queen and virgin slaves as well as the abundance of gold, the painter did not illustrate any of the above. He only illustrated the tree and was not very loyal to it. Even though the author describes the people of Waqwaq Island with red hair, the painter did not refer to it in his paintings and limited himself to illustrating people on a tree. Regarding the illustration features such as the proportion of figures' head size to the body, round and wide chins, slim figures with long necks, soft and curved lines in design, drawing trees in a special way and the lack of background, it can be said that the version was illustrated at Mashhad⁶ Art Workshop during the time of Prince Ibrahim Mirza. The mentioned image depicts two trees, one large and leafy with two human beings among the leaves so that only their upper body can be seen. The other tree is thin with few leaves around which two bare bodies are standing. The Waqwaq tree is pictured at the top left of the illustration. Although the original version does not mention the gender of the fruits, in the picture the fruits are shown as male and embodied in conversation mode. The shapes of the leaves on the tree are surrounded with black lines and generally stippling (delineation) with a black line can be seen in the works. The text is written in Nastaliq script. The painter has simply painted a few plant bushes in the background to depict nature, portraying the subject in its simplest form, even avoiding the details of nature. There is a certain obscurity in the work.

2. The version of the *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* of 1500–1599 AD

Another version of Qazvini's *Wonders of Creation*, of which there is not much information available, is preserved in the National Library of Iran. This version is written in Nastaliq script and its page size is 31 × 21 cm. The illustrations in this version are very simple and are often illustrated against a blue, orange, and in some cases brown background.

⁶ Ebrahim Mirza (nephew of Shah Tahmaseb) after taking over the government of Khorasan, built a workshop in Mashhad and hired artists from Khorasan and Tabriz.

All pages follow the same layout system and there is a large frame for the whole page with blue, red, green and gold lines, and a smaller frame with the same lines for text and illustration that merge into two frames in the back of the book [III; IV].

The positioning of the elements in both images is vertical and the illustrations are static in a composition that is somewhat arid and soulless. The text of the version describes the island as a land full of wonders that has no limit and he knows that through astronomy it can be achieved. According to the text of this version, the painter depicts an illustration of a queen and four virgins around her as a sign of 4,000 beautiful virgins, but avoids the details of nature and even uses minimal elements to create space. In source [IV], the painter depicts the Waqwaq tree which, according to the author, produces sounds like Waqwaq and the islanders understand its conversation. From its song, the islanders take flight, which is a strange description of the tree. There is no such description of the tree in any of the Persian-language versions illustrated in Iran. Since this version cannot belong to a particular period or school, it is difficult to discuss the aesthetic system of the period or the school in which the version is illustrated; but the aesthetics in painting of these two images shows arid and soulless figures with elongated upper and slim lower bodies. The faces are depicted as soulless and without any detail. As shown in source [IV], fourteen human heads are drawn on the tree, seven of which are in branches on the right-side and the other seven on the left. This is reminiscent of the aesthetic system based on balance in the work. All faces have been depicted as mouthless with closed eyes and it is strange as the text proclaimed that Waqwaq sound was heard from the tree. Here the painter seems to have acted based on his own perceptions of the tree and depicted the heads in this way. All the faces on the tree are in full-face mode and have no definite gender.

3. The version of the *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* in 1566 AD

This version which is kept at Cambridge University Library is written in Persian and contains quotations in Arabic and a text written in gold. It is written in beautiful Nastaliq script, and some of the important words or titles are written in Thuluth script with red, white, and golden ink. According to the history of the version and its visual features, it is known that it was transcribed in the Safavid period during the time when Qazvin was the artistic capital of Safavids. The entire text and images are framed by three lines, the thin outer line is drawn in azure and the thick middle line and the inner narrow line are drawn in gold [V].

The composition of the work is based on the spiral motion. This type of composition and multiplicity of events in the image created stimulus and dynamics in the work and is one of the illustration's strengths. The image is full of color, decorations and details to the extent that the island's crown is made of decorative petals, and this demonstrates the painter's aesthetic virtue. As it can be seen in source [V], in most of the work, the painter was completely faithful to the text and what the author described, including the queen sitting on the bed, her nakedness and the virgin slaves, dogs, and monkeys with gold collars precisely depicted. But in illustrating the tree he did not adhere to the text and depicted it based on his own perception as there is no mention of human or animal heads on the tree in the text of this version. The painter depicted the faces of people in three-quarter view. Tall limbs with an elongated upper body, colorful and elaborate skirts that are slightly

ruffled are depicted. It should be noted that the illustrations in this version are extremely decorative with beautiful colors and strong designs. The faces are carefully drawn and there are hints of a Mongolian painting influence in them; this point illustrates the desirable perfection of the aesthetics from that period. The talking tree is located at the top of the frame and left of the illustration, the painter has drawn the tree with a solid and steady trunk and numerous branches, the ends of each branch leading to human and animal heads. A total of nineteen heads are drawn on the tree, including four human heads, six demoniac heads, one dragon head, two fox heads, one rabbit head, one horse head, four hybrids and an unknown. In regard to the multiplicity of human and animal heads on the tree, it can be said that the painter may have sought to represent the unclear Waqwaq song of these heads. The color option in drawing this tree includes blue, orange, white, brown, cream and gray, each head is painted in a specific color in accordance with their gender. For example, the heads of the demons and dragons due to their nonexistence, based on the painter's mentality, are painted in an expressionistic form with a midnight blue. But the heads of animals such as horses and human heads are colored naturally. In illustrating human heads, the fundamental principle of diversity has been emphasized. They all have large eyes. In contrast, painting the faces of the story's women is less diverse and quite different from painting the faces of men on the tree. The only difference between a queen and a virgin slave is her throne, which separates her from others. Using the original text of the story alongside the image is a feature of Iranian painting. The elegance of the Nastaliq script along with the elegance of this version's images is concordant and striking. In addition, the scene depicted by the artist relates to the text of the book which is provided as an inscription that runs up and down the page.

4. The version of the *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* in 16th century AD

This version belongs to the Safavid period and was illustrated in the Qazvin School. It is now preserved at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts [VI; VII].

The version is written in beautiful Nastaliq script and the page layout system is combinatorial. The creativity of the artists in the arrangement has made the composition beautiful and easy to read. As it can be seen in sources [VI; VII], something occurs in every part of the illustration. The composition of the work is based on the spiral system and the painter according to the version's text has illustrated everything the way the author describes it, such as the nakedness of the people of the Waqwaq land, a woman's rule over it, the virgins, camphor or bamboo tree, and the Waqwaq tree, white people living on trees and black people with curly hair. As shown in the two aforesaid images, the artist has even shown very curly hair of blacks' hair with complete skill and has not overlooked the smallest details of the text. But what is strange is the depiction of the Waqwaq tree with animal and human's heads, because despite the painter's complete adherence to the version's text, he acted contrary in painting the tree and has depicted animal and human's heads on the tree without regarding the text and using his imagination. Although some figures are shown from head-on, all faces are illustrated from the three-quarter view. Thin and tall figures with round faces, a lack of representation of the figures in the background and lack of attention to details in the drawing of the figures refer to the aesthetic system of the Qazvin school of painting, which can be clearly seen in sources [VI; VII]. In terms

of color combination, glittery golden, along with bright orange and a variety of cool and warm colors used in the illustration are other characteristics of the version's images that perfectly adhere to the features of the Qazvin School. In the background of the illustration and almost in the center of the frame, there is a huge tree under which the queen of the island is seated. The tree is illustrated with long and narrow branches with sparse leaves and a variety of animal heads such as elephants, foxes, cheetahs, deer, lion, buffaloes, rhinos, rabbits, and other hybrid creatures that include dragons or mythical birds such as Simurgh and unknown creatures that cannot be identified. There are a total of nineteen heads on the tree, one of which is human and the other animal. It seems that the illustrator intended to represent different species of animals and as a result, he placed many heads on the tree. All of the heads are painted with quiet colors such as gray, light and dark brown, cream and white. In this version, the existence of horned animals such as a rhino, buffalo and deer, which have not been seen in other versions, is noteworthy. With the exception of elephants, cheetahs and dragons, all heads are depicted with closed mouths.

5. The version of the *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing in 1613 AD*

A summarized version of the *Wonders of Creation* has been written by Fakhr al-Din Hamza Ibn Ali Azari at Khorasan governor's workshop called Hossein Khan Shamloui Biglerbaigi, in beautiful Nastaliq script. It contains 14 images in the early Safavid painting style and is now kept in Walters Art Museum. Throughout the pages, the illustration and text are enclosed within a frame in Prussian blue, green, gold and red lines, and on some pages, illustrations are drawn outside the frame. On the pages, the frame that contains the titles is decorated by gold and blue colors, and it is adorned with Arabesque motifs (Fig. 1).

The work is based on vertical elements and hence the composition of this image is static. The text and illustration are interconnected within the page, but the illustration stands alone and the artist has mentioned only two verses at the top and bottom of the page. The poem at the top right reads: "Whoever landing there for one night / will hear Waqwaq call among all calls".

The verse at the bottom of the page reads "With the help of torches / caravan will pass through at night". In accordance with the verses, the illustrator uses dark blue to accentuate the nighttime and the caravans are passing with bright torches through a forest with a wonderful tree. In another page of this version, there are verses in description of the tree as follows:

There is a type of tree in India
It has an eyebrow, eye and ear
The birds of India eat its core
It bears fruit once in two years
The leaves that grow on the tree
The face on the leaf looks as if
The wind passing through the leaf
People who are present in there
Due to their knowledge, Indians
Anyone standing beside the tree

its fruit is like a human head
It has everything, but it just doesn't talk
because they eat only cores
and the fruit is called Waqwaq
look like the face of a man
it is a human going to talk
a sound is heard so ambiguous
all hear a Waqwaq song
interpret the song and its secrets
from wild animals safe he will be



Fig. 1. Tree of Waqwaq. Summary of Qazwini's *Wonders of Creation* (Aĵā'ib al-makhlūqāt wa gharā'ib al-mawjūdāt) version with meaning preserved. Herat and Khorasan. 17 × 29.5 cm. The early Safavid dynasty. 1613 AD [VIII]. The Walters Art Museum, W. 652, online description © 2011 Walters Art Museum, used under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 license: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

In these verses, there is new information about the talking tree that was not mentioned in earlier texts. The discussed image is full of motifs and colors, with tall and old trees, fragmented cliffs, bright blue skies, twisting clouds outside the frame and the land covered with flowers and plants exhibiting a poetic space. The variety of harmonious colors, soft and curved lines and white spots give the scene a vibrant mode. Slim figures with long necks and round faces, small figures, and the dominance of landscape and nature over man show the aesthetic perfection in the illustrations of this version at the Khorasan Art Workshop. A tree with a trunk and numerous branches that have small, thin leaves resembling a pistachio tree, are decorated with colorful bright yellow and orange leaves which provides brightness to the tree. In addition, the heads on the tree look like bright spots that shine on the tree. The illustrator portrays the heads on the tree as torches producing a Waqwaq sound, and the caravans hear the sounds of the heads on the tree in the silence of the night. Therefore, the heads on the tree in this version are more like fruit than other versions. However, the small size and poor quality of the image make it impossible to identify faces and the gender of the heads. Nevertheless, the illustrator's creativity and power to visualize the verses is admirable.

6. The version of the *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* in 1816 AD

This manuscript was transcribed in November 1816 AD and contains 416 images. It is kept in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz. In the first several pages, a man named Rokn al-Din Kojar Khan bin Bahadorkhan Ibn Taher was introduced as calligrapher of the version written in Nastaliq script. The text is written in black ink and some words are written in red ink. Also, all pages are framed with a narrow blue line and a broad golden line (Fig. 2). The date of this version and its illustrating style indicate that it belongs to the Qajar period. During this period, Iranian paintings underwent extensive changes. In fact, the painters of Qajar period incorporated perspective methods with the aesthetics of Iranian painting and included European elements into Iranian ornamental paintings (see Fig. 2). In the image, we encounter an objective and perceptual space as a result of the artist's effort to represent weight, mass and dimension. Similarly, due to the vertical placement of elements, the composition of the image is static. When the text was reviewed, no difference was found in terms of content with other manuscripts. The artist adhered to the text in illustrating the story's persons and painted them naked on the trees, but the illustration of the trees does not resemble the character of the tropical trees that the author implicitly refers to. The trees in this image are thin and sparse. In addition, the author describes people who have a lot of hair on their body, but they are depicted as having hairless bodies. The figures of women are represented in the form of Lotto boys in Renaissance paintings, however, the way they stand and sit as well as their eyes indicate that they are Iranian. In general, the artist has refused to deal with the details of nature and has limited himself to a few swirling brushstroke movements to depict nature.



Fig. 2. Residents of Waqwaq Island. Qazwini, Zakariya Ibn-Muhammad. *Wonders of Creation* ('Aghā'ib al-mahlūqāt wa-ġarā'ib al-mauḡūdāt) version with the handwriting of Rokn al-Din Araf Kojar Khan Ibn Bahador Khan Ibn Taher Khan. Qajar School. 30.5 × 19.5 cm. 1816 AD. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin — Preußischer Kulturbesitz. Petermann I 394. https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN742546225&PHYSID=PHYS_0101&DMDID=&view=overview-toc [IX, f. 47 r]

7. The version of the *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* in 1625 AD

Another version of Qazwin's *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* in 1625 AD is illustrated and held at the library of McGill University. This version is arranged in beautiful Nastaliq calligraphy and written in Persian. The information in the version indicates that it is dedicated to Isa al-Din Shapur bin Uthman. The book has a uniform layout in which the text and image are enclosed in several frames in blue, red and gold. The size of the text box is 17 × 9.5 cm. The name and profile of the artist or artists of this version are not known. The image space displays a small number of figures along with the text of the version, which does not indicate a specific time and place. All the figures, except for the queen figure, which is located in the center of the image, are vertical and standing and this has resulted in the composition of the work being static and focused. This version also depicts a picture of the queen of Waqwaq Island and the island's indigenous peoples [X; XI]. The text of this version is in Persian. As can be seen in source [X], the artist depicts a naked man and woman with long hair on their heads and bodies, as described in the text of the version, but none of the other items in the text has been depicted such as placing them on a tree, rhinos and buffaloes, camphor trees, bamboos and logwood tree. On another page of this version, shown in source [XI], the artist shows the Queen of the island with an imperial crown sitting on a gold throne. The quality principles dominating this image include the symmetry used in the drawing of the figures, and this provides balance in the image. As shown in source [XI], the queen is in the center and the maidens surround her. A strong design, proportions and three-dimensional figures as well as the use of soft colors are among the elements that dominate the image. In this version, there is no image of the famous tree of the island, while the text of the version refers to it. The design qualities include shapely bodies with soft and curved lines, a lack of elegance in the design of female figures and an emphasis on the femininity of the statues by showing the special organs of women and in men by portraying their beards. Particular attention is paid to the stagnant staring faces, shapely faces with black eyes and eyebrows and the three-quarter and profile view, smooth and drooping hair, lack of variety in skin color and a lack of facial expressions that portray an inner state.

8. The version of the *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* in 1651 AD

Another version of Qazwin's *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* can be found in the British Museum. The version was created during the reign of Mohammad Adel Shah, the ruler of Vijayapura (Bijapur), and stands out due to its beautiful images [XII; XIII].

The version is in Persian in the Naskh script. All the pages are adorned with two blue and gold frames that include text and images, and the structure of the work is such that outside the main frame, in the margins of the paper, diagonal contents are written including questions and answers about Sofia, Mystics and the essence of God. The identity of the illustrators in this version is unknown. Source [XII] has a dynamic composition because the statues sitting on the tree are each in a different position on the branches and each looks in a different direction. In source [XIII], the talking tree is located exactly in the center of the frame and its branches are stretched around it, creating a static and

dynamic composition. In this version, unlike the previous two, there is no image of the queen and the maidens. In contrast, the painter has focused his efforts on depicting the island's people and its famous trees. As can be seen in the source [XII], there are people on the tree, men and women, who are nude according to the text of the version. They are in different positions and their bodies are slightly three-dimensional. It is clear that the artist was not greatly concerned with the proportions of their limbs because the upper body and the hands are depicted much higher than the lower body. In another page of this version, which can be seen in source [XIII], the artist has depicted an old tree with numerous branches and oblong and green leaves, which is beautifully illustrated. This tree is located in the center and human heads are present that appear to be male. Hairless heads with a similar depiction of the face follow a single aesthetic system in which the eyes are large and languishing, the nose is profiled and the gazes are directed towards one side. The dominant artistic elements in the image indicate vivid and mature (ripe) colors such as orange, red, green and gray, which together produce color harmony and finally show a beautiful color contrast. Furthermore, the lines are used in extreme decisiveness and the design provides the effect of stability. Thus, the design quality in this version is very strong.

9. The version of the *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* in 1695 AD

This version of Qazwin's *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing*, now preserved in Berlin, describes the talking tree in contrast to other versions. It was illustrated in 1695 AD, is written in Persian with a Diwani script and has a different visual style from other versions. The page layout consists of two pages which can be seen in Fig. 3 and Fig. 4, places images in between the text without separating the text and images from each other or from the space around the page. In these two images, the dominance of the image over the text is noticeable because the images are very vivid and impressive, and the choice of the Diwani script is in harmony with the version's type of illustration. No information about the illustrators of this version is available, but Rokanuddin Arf Kojarkhan Ibn Bahadur Khan Ibn Tahir Khan Afghan Sarvani, a descendant of Shah Suleiman, was its calligrapher. The composition is static and dynamic in both images due to vertical elements that predominate the image. The image's dynamics are intensified despite the heads on the tree each looking in one direction. On one of the pages of this book (see Fig. 3), people are depicted as naked on a tree, as the text of their version describes. In another image from the last pages of the book (see Fig. 4), a tree is described in the following manner: "It is a huge tree and its fruit is like a human head, when night falls, their heads fall to the ground, and when day falls, they hide right there". This version speaks explicitly of a tree whose fruit resembles a human head and describes it as if they are alive because it speaks about their falling and hiding — actions that are specific to living things. One of the visual arrangements used in Fig. 3 is placing the image in the middle of the page, which results in focus within the page. The artist also left some forms without color to emphasize the importance of the subject by maintaining a positive and negative space. In addition, the design of the work has stability and shows the mastery of the artist. In Fig. 4, the dominance of the image over the text can be seen as it takes up more space on the page. The tree is located on the right side of the page and has a thin stem and several leaves. On each tree branch there is a human head that appears to be male heads. The inscription inside the



Fig. 3. Residents of Waqwaq Island and Tree of Waqwaq. Qazwīnī, Zakariyā Ibn-Muḥammad. *Wonders of Creation* ('Aḡā'ib al-maḥlūqāt wa-ḡarā'ib al-mauḡūdāt) version. Calligrapher: Rokanuddin Orf Gujar Khan Ibn Bahadur Khan Ibn Tahir Khan Afghan Sarvani. India. 1695 AD. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin — Preußischer Kulturbesitz. Ms. or. fol. 318 [XIV, f. 86 r]. https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN735128308&PHYSID=-PHYS_0185&DMDID=&view=overview-toc



Fig. 4. The Tree of Waqwaq. Qazwīnī, Zakariyā Ibn-Muḥammad. *Wonders of Creation* ('Aḡā'ib al-maḥlūqāt wa-ḡarā'ib al-mauḡūdāt) version. Calligrapher: Rokanuddin Orf Gujar Khan Ibn Bahadur Khan Ibn Tahir Khan Afghan Sarvani. India. 1695 AD. Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin — Preußischer Kulturbesitz. Ms. or. fol. 318 [XIV, f. 375 r]. https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN735128308&PHYSID=PHYS_0763&DMDID=&view=overview-toc

image states that “The *Jananjeh* is a huge animal, its head like an elephant and its legs like an elephant; it has two arms with which it flies. It is on the island of China.” As can be seen in Fig. 4, a large creature can be seen under a tree with fruits in the shape of a human head that has an elephant-like head and a bird-like body. This mythical tree and animal beneath it are imaginary forms described by the author and depicted by the painter. The design qualities of the images in this version include fat and shapely bodies, dynamic faces due to the display of surprise and astonished mood, as well as smooth and thinning hair and a lack of transparency of the sex of the heads. In contrast to Fig. 3, the portrayal has round faces and arched eyebrows with big eyes and a profiled face and curly hair.

10. The version of the *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* in 1822 AD

Another version of Qazvini's *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* has been obtained, the origin of which is in doubt. Experts attribute it to Indian art and its date is estimated to be 18th century AD [XV; XVI]. The text of this version is written in Persian and in beautiful Nastaliq script. The work's structure is a combination of text and image. As a general rule, all the pages are decorated with a box and a golden border that includes text and image. Its technique is matte ink and watercolor on ivory colored paper that is 34 × 24 cm in size.

The artist or illustrators of this version are unknown, but on the last page of the version, a person named Malek Wahab is introduced as its supporter, and the name of "Abdullah Vald Ali Beyk Damavandi" is visible. The composition of sources [XV; XVI] is static and symmetrical. This version also explicitly mentions the existence of a tree with animal heads, and the source [XVI] depicts this. In the image, the presence of two talking trees is noticeable, while in previous versions, only one talking tree was portrayed. In source [XVI], the artist uses the feature of symmetry to balance and place the talking trees with the girls and the narrator on either side of the queen. Graceful and eye-catching colors such as pale purple for the hill behind the queen and colorful flower bushes under the colored stones add to the elegance and beauty of the image. The artist has given a sense of depth and dimension to the space by planning the image and coloring from dark to light. The first plan, which includes the main story, is the location of the queen, trees and the talking tree. The second plan is a pale purple hill adorned with green and red flower bushes, and the third plan is a paper-colored background reminiscent of distant lands. As can be seen in source [XVI], the artist depicts two thin tree stems with sparse foliage, on which various human and animal heads with different colors can be seen. On the tree on the right, there is a picture of three animal heads, the sex of which cannot be distinguished due to the poor quality of the painting and the small size of the motifs. On the tree depicted in the center, which is depicted with more branched and more foliage than the other tree, there are 5 heads, among which there are two human heads and three animal heads, the sex of which is unknown. Human heads, which appear to be male heads, appear with different dark and light skin colors. The visual elements that dominate the mentioned images are rich and varied colors, complementary colors such as blue, orange, red and green, and delicate decorations that add to the beauty of the work. Also, slim bodies with an elongated upper body, with cheerful and open faces in three-quarter view, round faces and thin, wavy and long hair shoulder length, pleated skirts with delicate patterns and motifs emphasizing both human and nature elements are among the design qualities of this version.

After examining ten versions of *Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing* as the statistical population of this research and analyzing the qualitative principles, in Table, the dominant elements, form and structure of the illustration of each version are examined in relation to the text and the aesthetic system of the works in order to more clearly express the similarities and differences between the works.

Table. The comparative study of the talking tree motif in Persian versions

Row	Version title	Property of creating spaces	Composition structure				Position of the tree in the composition	The relationship of the illustration to the text (consistent / non consistent)	Motif Heads				Total heads
			Dynamic	Static	Symmetry	Spiral			Female	Male	No gender	Animal	
1	The version of the Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing of 1550–1560 AD	Conceptual	•				Left side	Relatively consistent	•				2
2	The version of the Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing of 1500–1599 AD	Conceptual	•				Center	Relatively consistent		14 Human heads			14
3	The version of the Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing of 1566 AD	Imaginational				•	The upper left	Relatively consistent	•	4 Animal heads			19
4	The version of the Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing of 16 th century AD	Imaginational				•	Left side	Relatively consistent	•				19

Row	Version title	Property of creating spaces	Composition structure				Position of the tree in the composition	The relationship of the illustration to the text (consistent / non consistent)	Motif Heads				Total heads
			Dynamic	Static	Symmetry	Spiral			Female	Male	No gender	Animal	
7	The version of the Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing of 1625 AD.	Conceptual	•			No tree	Relatively consistent						
8	The version of the Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing of 1651 AD.	Conceptual	•			Center	Consistent		•				13
9	The version of the Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing of 1695 AD.	Conceptual	•	•		Right side	Consistent		•				8
10	The version of the Wonders of Creation and Strange Things Existing of 1822 AD.	Conceptual		•	•	Right side and center	Consistent		•	•		•	8 6 animal heads whose sex is indistinguishable due to lack of quality

Prepared by: authors.

Conclusion

The wonder books are derived from ancient people's beliefs about the earth and resemble a reference book in natural sciences. In the meantime, Qazvini's *Wonders of Creation* is well-known and it has been repeatedly rewritten and illustrated in various periods. Based on the analysis of 10 versions of *Wonders of Creation* as the statistical population of this study and the matching of the qualitative principles and dominant artistic elements as well as the form and structure with respect to the content, it can be said that the illustrations examined on the subject of Waqwaq land and the talking tree have been illustrated with innovation. The illustrations in this book collection represent somehow the formal, informal and commercial style of each period.

In answer to the first research question, it should be noted that according to the analysis carried out, all versions have human heads or figures on the tree except for the *Wonders of Creation* of 1625 AD. Meanwhile, the version of *Wonders of Creation* of 1816 AD has a female motif and depicts female figures on the tree. The head motif in the *Wonders of Creation* versions of 1550–1560 AD is male and shows masculine figures on the tree. The head motif in the *Wonders of Creation* version of 1566 AD, the *Wonders of Creation* of 16th century AD, the *Wonders of Creation* version of 1651 AD, the *Wonders of Creation* version of 1695 AD and the number of two heads in the *Wonders of Creation* version of 1822 AD are male and show only human heads on the tree, not a full figure, as depicted in versions 1816 AD and 1550–1560 AD. Among the versions, only two versions of *Wonders of Creation* of 1500–1599 and *Wonders of Creation* of 1613 AD have no gender.

In response to the second research question, it can be said that in some versions, in addition to human heads, animal heads are also illustrated on the tree. These versions include *Wonders of Creation* of 1566 AD, *Wonders of Creation* of 16th century AD and *Wonders of Creation* of 1822 AD. Animal heads such as a rabbit, fox, cheetah and other cat-like creatures are commonly found in the two versions mentioned. But the variety of animal heads is greater in the *Wonders of Creation* version of the 16th century AD, and includes animals such as elephants, deer, buffalo and rhinos. What is interesting is the presence of legendary animals and birds such as a dragon and Simurgh. In the *Wonders of Creation* version of 16th century AD, there is only one Simurgh head. In the *Wonders of Creation* version of 1566 AD there is also a dragon head, something that is missing in the ten versions reviewed. Also, the number of unknown creatures' heads in the *Wonders of Creation* version of 1566 AD is higher and is a combination of a giant and cat, such as leopard or cheetah. In addition, due to the poor quality of the images of *Wonders of Creation* version of 1822 AD, the sex of the animal heads depicted on the tree could not be identified. Finally, it should be noted that there are four unknown creatures' animal heads in the 1566 AD version and *Wonders of Creation* version of 16th century AD.

In response to the third question the following can be mentioned:

1. Literature and literary themes: Since the themes of the paintings are inspired by literary creations, the interpretation and drawing of the talking tree is largely dependent on the descriptions by the poet and the writer, and in some cases the painter has even tried to embody this myth alongside the author. On the other hand, the common aesthetic, intellectual and ideological views of the poet and painter, as the prominent literati of his time, have led to the coordination of literary and visual methods.

2. The visual and scientific experience of geographers, scientists, and tourists and the books they have written influence the aesthetic principles.
3. Continuity in the selection of subjects of illustration.
4. The impact of the visual traditions of Iranian art: the specific worldview of Iranian art is one of the important issues considered as the source of illustration of works. Avoiding realism, the tendency to create a space with an imaginative nature in Iranian art, which has ultimately led to the creation of works with imaginational and multi-dimensional space, can be considered as another source of aesthetic principles in the talking tree motif.

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