



BRILL

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# The Order of Fruits in Comparison – Nature Poetry in al-Şafadī's (d. 764/1363) Work on Similes

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## Abstract

Research on “nature poetry” has so far mainly focused on the topics of flowers, garden and the spring in Arabic poetry up to around 1100. The Mamluk *litérateur* al-Şafadī (d. 764/1363) presents in his work on similes *al-Kaşf wa-l-tanbīh ‘alā l-waşf wa-l-taşbīh* (The Revelation and Instruction on Poetic Description and Comparison) as a conclusion to be drawn from his theory, an anthology with poetic examples taken exclusively from the realm of nature including many specific fruits next to many kinds of flower. Through comparison with earlier works on similes, analysing their presentation of nature in general, and fruits more specifically, and of the mulberry as a specific example, this contribution tries to understand for the first time the role of nature poetry in the centuries after 1100 and possibly tries to explore the reasons behind changed interests. Trying to figure out the ordering principles of different works will help us explore these questions. Of course, this is only one first step into a broad field, and not only of flowers and fruits.

## Keywords

nature poetry – Mamluk literature – description and comparison (*waşf wa-l-taşbīh*) – epigrams – fruit poems – natural history – mulberry

## 1 “Nature Poetry”

Some scholars investigated “nature poetry” in pre-modern Arabic literature, at least up to around 1100.<sup>1</sup> We should be aware that this term is problematic since it was not used by Arab literati or literary theorists. It is a Western term applied by modern scholarship to pre-modern Arabic literature. From this research on the theme of “nature” in Arabic poetry, the following picture emerges: In ancient Arabic poetry, nature is mainly seen from a Bedouin perspective, populated by animals like camels and gazelles, and by plants such as the moringa or the toothbrush tree, but also by wildflowers that blossom after a downpour.<sup>2</sup> The Quran describes a rather different kind of nature, with greens and water in the garden of paradise and pointing to farm animals and useful plants as God’s mercy.<sup>3</sup> Scholars emphasize that from the 3rd/9th century at the latest, the poets’ attitude toward nature changed with changes in the way of life, moving toward the “romanticised” attitude of city dwellers describing idyllic nature<sup>4</sup> and also man-made gardens with flowers such as rose and daffodil, anemone and basil, and that from the 4th/10th century onward this kind of nature was treated in independent poems.<sup>5</sup> As early as the 5th/11th century, the Arab literary theorist Ibn Rašīq (d. 456/1064 or 463/1071) singles out the Aleppo poet al-Šanawbarī (d. 334/945) as the best-known poet for descriptions of flowers and birds.<sup>6</sup> These kinds of poems focus on gardens with flowers in spring. Often, surprising comparisons prompt the aesthetic pleasure experienced in these descriptions. In addition, previous research has highlighted the importance of nature depictions specifically in Andalusian literature, with a focus

1 At least overviews of Arabic literature in the German language usually present a chapter on “nature poems”, like Wagner, *Grundzüge der klassischen arabischen Dichtung*, 11, p. 138–150 and Walther, *Kleine Geschichte der arabischen Literatur von der islamischen Zeit bis zur Gegenwart*, p. 68–70; in English overviews, “nature poetry” is not highlighted as a separate section, but addressed under the heading “description” (*waṣf*), like in Badawi, “Abbasid Poetry and Its Antecedents”, p. 164–166 or in Allen, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*, p. 98–102. The only monograph on which they all rely is the book by Schoeler, *Arabische Naturdichtung: Die Zahriyāt, Rabī‘iyāt und Rauḍiyāt von ihren Anfängen bis aš-Šanawbarī. Eine Gattungs-, Motiv- und Stilgeschichtliche Untersuchung*; an initial discussion is the article by Von Grunebaum, “The Response to Nature in Arabic Poetry”.

2 Schoeler, *Naturdichtung*, p. 11–39.

3 Hämeen-Anttila, “Paradise and Nature in the Quran and Pre-Islamic Poetry”.

4 Papoutsakis, “Dattelpalmen”, p. 876; Von Grunebaum, “Response to Nature”, p. 145.

5 Schoeler, *Naturdichtung*, p. 42–341.

6 *Ivi*, p. 275–6.

on the poetry by Ibn Ḥafāḡah (d. 533/1138) emphasising his way of humanising nature through comparison.<sup>7</sup>

However, research has so far not addressed the question of nature in later pre-modern Arabic literature, that is, literature that was composed during the seven centuries between 1100 and 1800. This is the case, even though already Gregor Schoeler was aware that it was not until this later period that terms such as *zahrīyyāt* (flower poems), *rawdīyyāt* (garden poems) or *rabi'īyyāt* (spring poems) were used at all, referring to the *Dīwān* by the poet Ṣafī l-Dīn al-Ḥillī (d. 749/1349).<sup>8</sup>

A contemporary of Ṣafī l-Dīn al-Ḥillī is the Mamluk literary figure and chancery stylist al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363) who also dealt intensively with literary theory.<sup>9</sup> He wrote books on several stylistic figures, including the most popular ones of his time, paronomasia (*al-ġinās*) and double entendre (*al-tawriya*),<sup>10</sup> as well as for example on a minor, but predominantly modern device like *al-qawl bi-l-mūġib*, which was transferred from legal argumentation theory to literary texts. Yet al-Ṣafadī also wrote a book on the old but quite central stylistic device, namely the comparison (*al-tašbih*).<sup>11</sup>

His work on similes is entitled *al-Kašf wa-l-tanbīh 'alā l-wašf wa-l-tašbih* (The Revelation and Instruction on Poetic Description and Comparison) and shows how closely the poetic genre of “description” was linked to the stylistic device of comparison.<sup>12</sup> As in several of his other books, al-Ṣafadī presents his discussion

7 Bürgel, “Man, Nature and Cosmos as Intertwining Elements in the Poetry of Ibn Khafāja”; Jayyusi, “Nature Poetry in al-Andalus and the rise of Ibn Kḥafāja”; Hadjadji, Miquel, *Ibn Khafāja l'Andalou: l'amant de la nature*; Tito Rojo, “Jardín, significado y poesía en al-Andalus”; Schippers, “Flower Poems in Arabic, Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew Andalusian Poetry”; Jai, “La description de la nature dans la poésie andalouse”; Aburqayeq, “Nature as a Motif in Arabic Andalusian Poetry and English Romanticism”.

8 Schoeler, *Naturdichtung*, p. 7, claiming that the *Dīwān* of Ṣafī l-Dīn al-Ḥillī has a chapter on “*zahrīyyāt wa-rabi'īyyāt*” (sic.). In fact, Ṣafī l-Dīn al-Ḥillī titles his 7th chapter “*fi l-ḥamriyyāt wa-nubaḍ mina l-zahrīyyāt*”, at least according to the edition (Beirut, Dār Ṣādir li-l-ṭibā'a wa-l-naṣr, 1962) that Gregor Schoeler also used. Thus, when Gregor Schoeler is using this 8th/14th-century terminology in the title of his study of Arabic poetry up to the 4th/10th century, he is somewhat misleading us.

9 Rowson, “al-Ṣafadī (1297–23 July 1363)”.

10 Rizzo, *New Perspectives on Tawriya: Theory and Practice of Ambiguity*.

11 al-Ṣafadī, *al-Kašf wa-l-tanbīh 'alā l-wašf wa-l-tašbih*; for the literary figure in general in the Arab tradition, see, Van Gelder, “Tashbih”.

12 See also Arazi, “Wašf”; pairing *wašf* and *tašbih* was already used by Abū Manṣūr al-Ṭā'libī (d. 429/1039) in the title of his *Kitāb Makārim al-aḥlāq wa-maḥāsīn al-ādāb wa-badā' al-awṣāf wa-ġarā'ib al-tašbihāt* (The Book of Noble Character and Excellent Conduct, of Admirable Descriptions and Curious Similes), see Orfali and Baalbaki, *The Book of Noble Character*, 6–7.

of comparison in two prefaces (*al-muqaddima al-ūlā* and *al-muqaddima al-tāniya*) followed by a concluding anthological section, called *al-natīġa*. These prefaces are very long and cannot be understood as “forewords”, instead the combination of the terms *al-muqaddima al-ūlā*, *al-muqaddima al-tāniya* together with *al-natīġa* refers to the philosophical technical vocabulary for a syllogism consisting of two premises and a conclusion. Thus, it becomes clear that al-Şafadī presents his discussion of the stylistic device as two theoretical premises from which the anthology with its verse examples can be concluded. He divides the first premise into 10, the second into 24 and the conclusion into 65 sections.

What is striking with regard to the theme of “nature” is the fact that the entire poetic examples that al-Şafadī draws as a conclusion from the first two premises about comparison are, without exception, taken from nature.<sup>13</sup> Primarily he presents flowers and fruits as subjects of comparison. Any kind of objects or parts of the human body for example seem not to be part of his conclusion from his theory of comparison. Instead, among the 65 sections we find celestial bodies and natural phenomena (11 sections), individual flowers (22 sections), introduced by a separate section on the garden in general, followed by different kinds of fruit (20 sections) and other plants like sugar cane, grain, greens, and eggplant, as well as sections on sweets, food, and water bubbles (which occur when wine is mixed with water), a section on baths, on twigs, and one on songbirds and a last one on water birds. These 65 sections follow one after the other, not in alphabetical order nor are they grouped together by overarching headings. The poems he gathered in 22 sections describing different flowers can arguably be connected to such “flower poems” called *al-zahriyyāt* by his fellow poet Şafī l-Dīn al-Ĥillī, but al-Şafadī does not use this category. Yet it seems that he saw a close connection between comparison and flower poems. Al-Şafadī, however, also gathered at least 20 sections with poems on various fruits, namely:<sup>14</sup>

TABLE 1 Fruits in al-Şafadī’s anthology of similes

<i>al-nāranġ</i>	bitter orange	31 poems, 4 own
<i>al-utruġġ</i>	citron	18 poems, 1 own
<i>al-tūt</i>	mulberry	5 poems

13 We have a hint that al-Şafadī published a second volume with examples for comparison, but no manuscript has been found so far even after much research; see al-Şafadī, *al-Kaşf*, p. 39, 47.

14 al-Şafadī, *al-Kaşf*, p. 342–383.

TABLE 1 Fruits in al-Şafadī's anthology of similes (*cont.*)

<i>al-mišmiš</i>	apricot	9 poems
<i>al-tuffāḥ wa-l-luffāḥ</i>	apple and mandrake	10 poems
<i>al-kummatrā</i>	pear	3 poems
<i>al-baṭṭiḥ</i>	watermelon	9 poems
<i>al-ṭal' wa-l-ruṭab wa-ġayruhumā</i>	palm spadix, ripe dates, etc.	23 poems
<i>al-ruḥmān</i>	pomegranate	7 poems
<i>al-safarġal</i>	quince	8 poems
<i>al-ḥawḥ al-zuhrī wa-ġayruhu</i>	peach and the like	5 poems
<i>al-iġġāš wa-l-qarāsiyā</i>	plum and cherry plum	4 poems
<i>al-za'rūr wa-l-nabaq</i>	hawthorn and buckthorn	4 poems
<i>al-'unnāb</i>	jujube	7 poems
<i>al-tīn</i>	fig	9 poems
<i>al-'inab</i>	grape	13 poems
<i>al-mawz</i>	banana	3 poems
<i>al-ġillawz wa-l-ballūṭ</i>	hazelnut and acorn	3 poems
<i>al-ġawz wa-l-lawz</i>	walnut and almond	9 poems
<i>al-fustuq</i>	pistachio	7 poems

In particular this long list of various fruits attracted my attention. In al-Şafadī, flowers are treated first, but then poems about fruits are presented in almost the same abundance and detail. Fruits thus have a similar status in al-Şafadī's work as poems about flowers. So far, research on nature poetry has not considered the subject of fruits as a specific topic. We know, that in old Arabic poetry, dates in particular are praised for their economic benefits.<sup>15</sup> And in the Quran, fruits in general (*tamarāt*) are emphasized as a God-given sustenance.<sup>16</sup> Particular fruits the Quran mentions include olives, dates, grapes, pomegranates and figs.<sup>17</sup> Yet, where do all those fruits in al-Şafadī's collection come from?

15 Papoutsakis, "Altarabische Dichtung über Dattelpalmen aus dem *Kitāb al-Fuṣūṣ* ('Buch der Ringsteine') des Şā'id al-Baġdādī (ca. 335–417/945–1026)".

16 *E.g.*, Qur 2:22: "He is the One Who has made the earth a place of settlement for you and the sky a canopy; and sends down rain from the sky, causing fruits to grow as a provision for you".

17 Qur 16:11: "Thereof He causes crops to grow for you, and olive trees, and date palms, and grapes, and all kinds of fruit: in this, behold, there is a message indeed for people who think!"; Qur 55:68: "In both of them [gardens of paradise] will be fruit and date-palms and pomegranates."; Qur 19:25: "Shake [Mariam after giving birth] the trunk of the palm-tree towards thee: it will drop fresh, ripe dates upon thee."; Qur 95:1: "By the fig and the olive".

To what ordering principles is his anthology committed, in general and with regard to the order of fruits? What kind of poems are presented? How can we understand this collection of al-Şafadī's examples of the stylistic device of comparison that focuses exclusively on nature? Can conclusions be drawn about the meaning of "nature poetry" in the centuries from the 6th/12th onward? We will try to answer these questions through comparison with other works on similes using the presentation of nature in general, and fruits more specifically, and presenting in detail the case of the mulberry as an example. Trying to figure out the ordering principles of different works will help us explore these questions. Of course, analysing al-Şafadī's work on similes is only one first step into a broad field that still needs to be widely explored.

## 2 *Tašbihāt* Works

Al-Şafadī is not the first to give poetic examples of good comparisons and to list them in small chapters according to the subject of comparison (*al-mušabbah* or *primum comparationis*). In what follows, therefore, I would like to compare his anthology with previous *tašbihāt* works in order to highlight the significance of examples taken from nature and specifically from the realm of fruits in these works. Al-Şafadī himself points out that he drew on earlier *tašbihāt* works for his selection and the first author he refers to is Ibn Abī 'Awn.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.1 *Ibn Abī 'Awn (d. 322/933) and His Kitāb al-Tašbihāt*

Ibn Abī 'Awn (d. 322/933), who worked in Baghdad for the Abbasid court as a secretary, known as al-Kātib al-Baġdādī, composed a *Kitāb al-Tašbihāt* (Book on Comparisons) in the early 4th/10th century.<sup>19</sup> He divides his anthology into 91 sections starting with comparisons to the Pleiades.<sup>20</sup> However, the majority of subjects chosen by Ibn Abī 'Awn stem from the realm of love poetry, such as human body parts or emotional states. Objects are also treated, especially weapons. If we exclude man, then about 15 sections are devoted to nature, which makes a total of about 16.5% of the entire work, including in particular the first chapters devoted to the Pleiades, the morning light, the chameleon,<sup>21</sup>

18 al-Şafadī, *al-Kaşf*, p. 52: "*fa-ħtartu mina l-tašbihāti llatī ġama'ahā Ibn Abī 'Awn. ...*".

19 Ibn Abī 'Awn al-Kātib, *al-Tašbihāt*; on the author, see M.A. Mu'īd Khan, "Ibn Abī 'Awn, a litterateur of the third century"; Mu'īd Khan, "Ibn Abī 'Awn".

20 On this topic see Kunitzsch, Ullmann, *Die Plejaden in den Vergleichen der arabischen Dichtung*.

21 On this topic see Diem, "Die Beschreibung des Chamäleons in Vergleichen in der arabischen Poesie".

the horse, hunting, the snake, the lightning flash, and the mirage. Later on, separate sections on rain clouds and the garden, on the daffodil and the palm tree are presented, as well as on waters and fire, or the length of the night. Yet, we should be aware that the category of “nature” is not Ibn Abī ‘Awn’s. His 77th section is about food, with individual poems on fish, almond, chicken, eggplant, grapes, and guests. Regarding fruits, the only ones mentioned are grapes, and they are only mentioned in the context of edibles. Other fruits do not appear in this book at all.

## 2.2 *Ibn al-Kattānī (d. 420/1029) and His Kitāb al-Tašbihāt*

In the early 5th/11th century, Ibn al-Kattānī (d. 420/1029), a physician and astrologer at the court of the ‘Āmirids in Córdoba, compiled an anthology of similes in which he pays special attention to examples by Andalusian poets, *Kitāb al-Tašbihāt min aš‘ār ahl al-Andalus* (Book on Comparisons with Andalusian poetry).<sup>22</sup> While al-Šafadī does not name this author among those from whom he selected material, his work will nevertheless be considered here in order to show more clearly a development regarding the role of nature as examples for the stylistic device of comparison. Ibn al-Kattānī divides his anthology, similar to Ibn Abī ‘Awn and al-Šafadī, thematically into many small chapters, in his case 66. He starts with themes from the natural world: Beginning with celestial bodies and weather phenomena (1–5), moving on to nature artificially created by man with gardens, roses, songbirds, waters, castles and waterwheels (6–11), followed by sections on edible fruits, wine and other objects connected to a banquet (12–18), moving further to themes of love (19–35), followed by various “nature” topics such as fire, winter, desert, mirage, sea, hunting, snakes and horses (36–43), followed by sections on weapons and war (44–51), concluding with different writing utensils, virtues and blameworthy things, old age and death (52–66). The arrangement of these 66 chapters thus follows a certain systematic order, within which about 20 sections refer to topics from nature. Nature thus occupies about 30.5% of the space in this anthology of good comparisons, and thus already considerably more than in the work by Ibn Abī ‘Awn.

The 12th chapter is devoted to edible fruits and the like (*fī l-ma’kulāt mina l-fawākih wa-ġayrihā*)<sup>23</sup> and contains 13 poems dealing with grapes (2x), mulberries, pomegranates (2x) and peaches, interspersed with a poem on fish, two on cooked food, followed by a poem on fruits as a gift, a ten-liner on pears, and one poem on the artichoke. Ibn al-Kattānī, like Ibn Abī ‘Awn, thus presents

<sup>22</sup> Ibn al-Kattānī, *Kitāb al-Tašbihāt*; Hoenerbach, *Dichterische Vergleiche*.

<sup>23</sup> Ibn al-Kattānī, *Kitāb al-Tašbihāt*, p. 84–88; Hoenerbach, *Dichterische Vergleiche*, p. 74–77.

comparisons of fruits in the context of edibles, including the following epigram about mulberries.<sup>24</sup>

وقال علي بن أبي الحسين في التوت  
أبدى لنا التوت أصنافاً من الحبش  
جعد الشعور من الأطباق في فرش  
كأن أحمرها من بين أسودها  
بقية الشفق البادي مع الغبش

‘Alī b. Abī l-Ḥusayn said about mulberries:

The mulberries show us rows of Abyssinians with frizzy hair in the beds of their plates,

As if their reds among their blacks were the rest of the day’s gleam mixed with the night’s gloom.

The natural fruit is described in the context of a meal and is thus part of human culture. In this poem, mulberries lie on a plate, although this scene only becomes clear within the first comparison in the conflation of beds and plates to “beds of plates”. Indeed, in the first verse, the mulberries are compared to people, specifically dark-skinned people (because the mulberries are black) who also have frizzy hair (because mulberries have a frizzy surface), and who are lying in their beds, in fact, on beds of plates (because plates are flat and the berries lie on them). Such a comparison is called a compound comparison according to al-Ṣafadī’s theory, whereby the fruits are described in greater detail clarifying their colour and their shape as well as their position. In the second verse, the mixture of red within black is compared to the natural phenomenon of dusk: the rest of the day’s glow in the night’s darkness. Again, we find a compound comparison comparing fruits with natural phenomena with regard to their mix of colours.

### 2.3 *Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī (d. 613/1216 or 623/1226) and His Tašbihāt Work*

Another anthology of comparisons was put together by Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī, an author to whom al-Ṣafadī himself refers as a source.<sup>25</sup> Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī was active in the Ayyubid chancellery in Cairo and Damascus<sup>26</sup> and is thus geographically and temporally closer to al-Ṣafadī than the Andalusian Ibn al-Kattānī, whom he does not name. The work entitled *Ġarā’ib al-tanbihāt ‘alā ‘aġā’ib al-tašbihāt* (Special Teachings about Wonderful Comparisons) is like

24 Ibn al-Kattānī, *Kitāb al-Tašbihāt*, p. 85; Hoenerbach, *Dichterische Vergleiche*, p. 75.

25 al-Ṣafadī, *al-Kašf*, p. 52.

26 Ed., “Ibn Zāfir”.



the other *tašbihāt* works an anthology of outstanding comparisons arranged by topic, roughly following the order established by Ibn al-Kattānī. However, it distinguishes between six major chapters: 1. Celestial Bodies, 2. Waters, 3. Flowers, Fruits, Plants, 4. Wine Poetry, 5. Love Poetry, and 6. Miscellaneous.<sup>27</sup> Through these headings the systematic order behind this arrangement becomes clearer: The examples begin with topics from nature, in a sense from top to bottom: Heaven, Water, Earth, followed by topics more closely aligned with literary themes: Wine and Love, followed by a catch-all: Miscellaneous. The first three of these chapters are devoted to nature and comprise about 70% of the entire work, which is a big surplus compared to Ibn al-Kattānī.<sup>28</sup>

With regard to the position and number of fruits, Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī differs significantly from Ibn al-Kattānī. Ibn al-Kattānī still dealt with examples of comparisons of fruits in the context of edibles in a manner similar to Ibn Abī ‘Awn, citing poems on five different fruits. Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī on the contrary around the year 1200 presents a separate subsection on fruits (*al-aṭmār*) – detached from the aspect of eating – as the second section of the third chapter after flowers and before other plants, in which he compiles poems that compare many fruits, more or less one after the other.<sup>29</sup>

27 Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī l-Miṣrī, *Ġarā’ib al-tanbihāt ‘alā ‘ağā’ib al-tašbihāt*.

28 I am aware that we have many more literary anthologies that might not use the word *tašbih* in their titles and yet present similar material including “nature” that were already composed in the 4th/10th century like *al-Muḥibb wa-l-maḥbūb wa-l-mašmūm wa-l-mašrūb* (Lover and Beloved and Scents and Drinks) by al-Sarī l-Raffā’ (d. 362/972–3) that is described as “anthology of the ma’ānī-catalogue type, i.e. a topically arranged selection of poetic fragments with descriptions of the various parts of the beloved, of the lover, of spring, and of wine”; see Heinrichs, “al-Sarī b. Aḥmad b. al-Sarī al-Raffā’”, p. 56a; al-Sarī b. Aḥmad al-Raffā’, *al-Muḥibb wa-l-maḥbūb wa-l-mašmūm wa-l-mašrūb*; one of these four parts deals with “nature”, i.e. ca. 25%. His younger contemporary Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī (d. ca. 400/ 1010) composed the *Dīwān al-ma’ānī* (Official Collection of Meaningful Topics), another catalogue of literary themes, divided into 12 chapters, three of which deal with “nature” themes, i.e. again ca. 25%. On the author see Gruendler, “al-‘Askarī, Abū Hilāl”; Abū Maṣṣūr al-Ṭa’alibī (d. 429/1039) who already pairs the words *wasf* and *tašbih* presents in this part of his Book of Noble Character four chapters on 1. Handwriting and eloquence, 2. Spring and the rest of the seasons, 3. Night and days and the upper phenomena, and 4. Love, two of which deal with “nature”, i.e. ca. 50% of the whole; see Orfali and Baalbaki, *The Book of Noble Character*.

29 Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī, *Ġarā’ib al-tanbihāt*, p. 101–120.

TABLE 2A Subsection on fruits (*al-aṭmār*) in the work on similes by Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī

<i>al-utruǧǧ</i>	citron	10 poems
<i>al-nāranǧ</i>	bitter orange	13 poems
<i>al-tuffāḥ</i>	apple	3 poems
<i>al-luffāḥ</i>	mandrake	4 poems
<i>al-mišmiš</i>	apricot	4 poems
<i>al-ʿinab</i>	grape	5 poems
<i>al-karma</i>	vine	1 poem
<i>al-ḥawḥ</i>	peach	3 poems
<i>al-ṭalʿ</i>	palm spadix	6 poems
<i>al-naḥīl</i>	date palm	2 poems
<i>al-balaḥ</i>	fresh date	2 poems
<i>al-busr</i>	unripe date	4 poems
<i>al-ǧummār</i>	palm heart	2 poems
<i>al-naḥl</i>	date palm	3 poems
<i>al-mawz</i>	banana	3 poems
<i>al-rummān</i>	pomegranate	6 poems
<i>al-safarǧal</i>	quince	3 poems
<i>al-kummaṭrā</i>	pear	3 poems
<i>al-tīn</i>	fig	6 poems
<i>al-nabaq</i>	buckthorn	2 poems
<i>al-tūt</i>	mulberry	1 poem
<i>al-lawz al-aḥḍar</i>	unripe almond	1 poem
<i>al-yarbūǧ</i>	plum	1 poem

The Egyptian Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī thus compiled a similarly extensive corpus of poems on fruits as on flowers around 1200, distinguishing at least 17 different types of fruits, which, however, are not divided into sections with their own headings, as is the case with al-Ṣafadī, but treated together under the heading “fruits”.

Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī presents a further section within his third chapter under the heading *sāʾir al-nabāt wa-l-abqāl* (remaining plants and greens),<sup>30</sup> In it, he presents poems that perhaps could have been classified under “fruits” as well, namely:

30 *Ibid.*, p. 121–128.

TABLE 2B Subsection on *sā'ir al-nabāt wa-l-abqāl* (remaining plants and greens)

<i>al-baṭṭīḥ</i>	watermelon	5 poems
<i>al-ʿunnāb</i>	jujube	3 poems
<i>al-ṣanawbar</i>	pine	1 poem
<i>al-fustuq</i>	pistachio	3 poems
<i>al-lawz</i>	almond	1 poem
<i>al-ġawz</i>	walnut	1 poem
<i>al-qasṭal</i>	chestnut	1 poem
<i>al-fūl al-maslūq</i>	cooked beans	1 poem
<i>al-bāḍiṅġān</i>	eggplant	5 poems
<i>al-ḥašḥāš</i>	poppy	2 poems
<i>qaṣb al-sukkar</i>	sugar cane	1 poem
<i>zahr al-kattān</i>	flax flower	1 poem
<i>al-salġam</i>	rape	3 poems
<i>sanābil al-qamḥ</i>	wheat ears	1 poem
<i>ḥabb al-burr</i>	wheat grain	1 poem

Comparing these two sections with the 20 chapters that al-Ṣafadī gathered with fruit poems, we start to understand where all these come from. All in all, almost all the fruits listed by al-Ṣafadī are already represented in the *Tašbihāt* work of Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī at least by one poem.<sup>31</sup> Al-Ṣafadī has made some changes with regard to the order of the fruits and has many more poems and some more fruits while also leaving out for example the unripe almond, the plum, as well as the pine.

31 Of course, we could also ask from where Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī has imported these fruits, but this is yet another story. For sure, some of them are already present in works of the 4th/10th century like in al-Sarī l-Raffā's anthology, where he presents in his third part under the heading *al-mašmūm* (fragrants), ca. 12 flowers and in between those flowers four kinds of fruits (namely bitter orange, citron, apple, and quince); see al-Sarī l-Raffā', *al-Muḥibb wa-l-maḥbūb wa-l-mašmūm wa-l-mašrūb*, 111, p. 114–119 and p. 129–134; Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī grouped in his 7th chapter already ca. 14 fruits (among them apple, pomegranate, bitter orange, citron, plum, olives, dates, water melon, apricot, fig, pistachio), that, however, are not completely ordered by sort; see *Diwān al-maʿānī*, p. 748–768. Neither of these authors are mentioned as sources by al-Ṣafadī in his preface to his book on comparisons. On the contrary, al-Ṣafadī mentions al-Taʿālibī among his sources, who presents in his 2nd chapter on Spring and the rest of the seasons, however, only poems on citron, bitter orange and apple; see Orfali and Baalbaki, *The Book of Noble Character*, p. 149–151.

Among these poems, as the only example of a comparison for mulberries, Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī presents the following epigram:<sup>32</sup>

قوموا إلى التوتِ سراعاً وانشطوا فإنه على الأذى مسلطٌ  
 كأنه إذ لاح في أطباقه نُهْمَانٌ بِعندَمٍ مُنْقَطٌ

Go quickly to the mulberries and with vim and energy, for they overwhelm damage!

When they gleam on the tray, they are like the black seal stone dotted with red brazilwood.

This epigram calls for the fruits to be harvested because of their medical benefits in averting harm. In the second verse they shimmer on a serving tray. Once again, fruits are connected to culture and depicted as useful for mankind. The comparison is a composed comparison specifying the mixture of colours among the mulberries, little red dots among a black mass. Fruits are compared with other objects from nature.

### 3 Natural Histories

Looking at the order of things, Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī divides the comparisons of plants that he gathered into three sections: Flowers, Fruits, and the Rest. What criteria underlies such a distinction? In a natural history such as the 7th/13th-century encyclopaedia *ʿAǧāʾib al-maḥlūqāt wa-ǧarāʾib al-mawǧūdāt* (The Wonders of Creation) written in Iraq by the Persian author Zakariyyāʾ al-Qazwīnī (d. 682/1283), plants (*al-nabāt*) are presented as one of the three kingdoms of nature – Minerals, Plants and Animals – and are divided into two categories: Trees (*al-šaǧar*), defined as “all plants with trunks”, and herbs (*al-nuǧūm*), defined as “all plants without trunks”.<sup>33</sup> This seems to be a crude yet botanical distinction. Within these two categories, Zakariyyāʾ al-Qazwīnī then arranges the plants alphabetically.

According to this categorisation, all fruit trees, as well as the various nut trees whose fruits Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī classified among the rest of the plants, are found in the first category “trees, *i.e.* plants with trunk”, while, for example,

32 Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī, *ǧarāʾib al-tanbihāt*, p. 119.

33 Von Hees, *Enzyklopädie als Spiegel des Weltbildes. Qazwīnīs Wunder der Schöpfung – eine Naturkunde des 13. Jahrhunderts*, p. 103; al-Qazwīnī, *ʿAǧāʾib al-maḥlūqāt wa-ǧarāʾib al-mawǧūdāt*, Cod. Arab. 464, fol. 113v and fol. 127r.

the watermelon that Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī classified as well among the rest, is classified by Zakariyyā' al-Qazwīnī as a “plant without trunk” under “herbs”, in addition to, for example, some flowers that are treated in the natural history as well and that for Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī are worth their own category. The interest of Zakariyyā' al-Qazwīnī, a lawyer by training, is focused on both natural history and medical information about the individual plants and he attaches particular importance to the accompanying illustrations of each plant. Taking the mulberry as our example, he presents an illustration of the mulberry tree and writes:<sup>34</sup>



The mulberry tree is among the most valuable trees because the silkworm eats from it. There is the sweet mulberry, which is also called *al-firṣād* (mulberry) and the sour one, which is called *al-šāmī* (the Syrian). The author of Agriculture writes: If one plants the squill under a mulberry tree, it becomes vigorous and grows better. The leaves of the sour mulberry are useful for angina and diphtheria, and its juice is useful in case of a tarantula bite. The leading scholar [Ibn Sīnā] says: Rinsing with the juice of the leaves of the sour mulberry is useful for toothache. Putting the black mulberry on a scorpion's sting will immediately stop the pain. If the hand has been stained with the black mulberry, this staining can be removed by washing with the white mulberry. The bark of the mulberry along with Persian manna cleanses the stomach of pumpkin seeds. The leading scholar [Ibn Sīnā] says: The bark of the mulberry is an antidote for hemlock.

### 3.1 *Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Wāṭwāṭ (d. 718/1318) and His Encyclopaedia of Natural History*

Al-Ṣafadī in his preface to his *al-Kaṣf wa-l-tanbīh ‘alā l-waṣf wa-l-tašbīh* does not refer to Zakariyyā' al-Qazwīnī as a source, who, after all, had no literary

34 al-Qazwīnī, *‘Aġā’ib*, Cod. Arab. 464, fol. 116r.

interests at all. Instead, he refers to another Egyptian author named Ğamāl al-Dīn al-Wāṭwāṭ (d. 718/1318),<sup>35</sup> an elder contemporary of al-Ṣafadī who worked as a bookseller and was the author of anthological works, including an encyclopaedia entitled *Mabāhiġ al-fikar wa-manāhiġ al-‘ibar* (Delightful Concepts and the Paths to Precepts).<sup>36</sup> He divides this work into four independent parts: 1. Heaven, 2. Earth, 3. Animals, and 4. Plants.<sup>37</sup> Ğamāl al-Dīn al-Wāṭwāṭ’s work thus deals exclusively with topics that fall within the realm of “nature” and in this sense it is, like the work of Zakariyyā’ al-Qazwīnī, an encyclopaedia of natural history. In it, however, Ğamāl al-Dīn al-Wāṭwāṭ combines agricultural knowledge with a literary anthology, separating the anthological sections from the agricultural information in each entry with the words “*al-waṣf wa-l-tašbīh* (description and comparison)”. For al-Ṣafadī, therefore, this belongs to the *Tašbīhāt* works to which he refers as a source for his book on the theory and practice of similes. From this perspective, Ğamāl al-Dīn al-Wāṭwāṭ’s work is thus a *Tašbīhāt* work that, dressed as an encyclopaedia of natural history and combined with agricultural information, cites 100% of its examples from nature for the stylistic device of comparison.

The fourth book on plants is divided by Ğamāl al-Dīn al-Wāṭwāṭ into nine sections, three of which are devoted specifically to plants with fruits (*al-nabāt alladī li-tamrihi ...*), distinguishing between those that have rind (*qišr*), those that have stone (*nawan*), and those that have neither rind nor stone; before these sections on fruits, legumes and greens are treated separately, and after the fruits, follow sections on fragrant plants, flowers included, and plants whose resins are used.<sup>38</sup> This kind of categorisation seems to be strongly based on criteria of use. With regard to fruits, Ğamāl al-Dīn al-Wāṭwāṭ presents poems on the following fruits, each introduced with its own heading:<sup>39</sup>

35 al-Ṣafadī, *al-Kašf*, p. 52.

36 al-Wāṭwāṭ, *Manāhiġ al-fikar wa-mabāhiġ al-‘ibar*.

37 Muhanna, *The World in a Book: Al-Nuwayri and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition*, p. 43–44.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 44: “The Fourth Book, on Plants: 4.1 On the creation of plants; 4.2 On the soil that is suitable to plants; 4.3 On the farming of pulses and legumes; 4.4 On the farming of different types of greens; 4.5 On the farming of plants whose fruit have peels; 4.6 On the farming of plants whose fruit have stones; 4.7 On the farming of plants whose fruit have neither peel nor stone; 4.8 On the farming of different types aromatic plants; 4.9 On the trees productive of mannas and gum resins”.

39 al-Wāṭwāṭ, *Manāhiġ al-fikar wa-mabāhiġ al-‘ibar*, II, p. 333–419.

TABLE 3 Subsections 5–7 from Book Four on plants in al-Wāṭwāt's encyclopaedia

**4.5 with rind**

## 4.5.1 with hard rind (shell)

<i>al-lawz</i>	almond	4 poems
<i>al-ġawz</i>	walnut	4 poems
<i>al-ġillawz</i>	hazelnut	2 poems
<i>al-ballūṭ</i>	acorn	1 poem
<i>al-fustuq</i>	pistachio	7 poems
<i>al-ṣanawbar</i>	pine	2 poems

## 4.5.2 with a soft rind (peel)

<i>al-rummān</i>	pomegranate	15 poems
<i>al-mawz</i>	banana	6 poems
<i>al-nāranġ</i>	bitter orange	13 poems
<i>al-laymūn</i>	lemon	4 poems

**4.6 with stone**

<i>al-naḥl</i>	date palm	17 poems
<i>al-nāraġīl</i>	coconut palm	1 poem
<i>al-zaytūn</i>	olive	1 poem
<i>al-mišmiš</i>	apricot	6 poems
<i>al-ḥawḥ</i>	peach	3 poems
<i>al-iġġāṣ wa-l-qarāsiyā</i>	plum and cherry plum	4 poems
<i>al-zaʿrūr</i>	hawthorn	1 poem
<i>al-ʿunnāb</i>	jujube	5 poems
<i>al-nabaq</i>	buckthorn	6 poems
<i>al-sibistān</i>	cordia	---
<i>al-ḥarnūb</i>	carob	---

**4.7 without rind and without stone**

<i>al-karam</i>	vine	9 poems
<i>al-tīn</i>	fig	8 poems
<i>al-tūt</i>	mulberry	3 poems
<i>al-tuffāḥ</i>	apple	11 poems
<i>al-kummatrā</i>	pear	4 poems
<i>al-safarġal</i>	quince	6 poems
<i>al-utruġġ</i>	citron	13 poems
<i>al-luffāḥ</i>	Mandrake	3 poems

Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ thus distinguishes 30 different kinds of fruit divided into sub-categories. Almost all of them were already treated by Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī, only ordered differently. Al-Ṣafadī takes up hazelnut and acorn, pear and cherry as well as hawthorn from al-Waṭwāṭ that were not treated by Ibn Zāfir, but excludes cordia and carob, two kinds for which al-Waṭwāṭ does not present any poem and also leaves out pine, lemon, coconut, and olive, that were, apart from pine, not treated by Ibn Zāfir as well. On the other hand, al-Ṣafadī includes, for example, watermelon that is not present in Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ's list of fruits. All in all, with regard to the selection and especially the order of fruits, al-Ṣafadī has more in common with Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī than with al-Waṭwāṭ.

Regarding the mulberry, which serves as our example here, Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ cites three poems. The first is precisely the same one that Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī presents as his only example describing this fruit, which is also cited by al-Ṣafadī. Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ then quotes a poem by an anonymous Andalusian poet, though not the one Ibn al-Kattānī knew:<sup>40</sup>

وَذَلِكَ فَأَلُّ مَا عَلِمْتُ صَدُوقُ	تَفَاءَلْتُ بِالتَّوْتِ التَّائِي لَزُورَةٍ
لَهُ مِنْظَرٌ بِالْحُسْنِ مِنْهُ يَرُوقُ	فَأَهْدَيْتُهُ غَضًّا حَكِي حَدَقِ الْمَهَا
وَذَا لِاحْمَرِّ اللُّونِ مِنْهُ عَقِيقُ	فَذَا سَبَّحٌ مَا إِنْ يُرَى كَاسُودَادِهِ

I considered mulberries as a good omen that a visit would come about: –

I had learned that this omen was truthful.

Therefore, I made them a gift, fresh/downcast, resembling the eyes of antelopes: – Their sight pleases because of their beauty.

This one is jet-black – you have not seen anything blacker! And that one is – because of the redness of its colour – a carnelian!

In this poem, mulberries are first introduced as a fitting gift to a loved one. The fresh fruit that is presented as a gift is compared to the eyes of oryx antelopes because of their deep black colour. Thus, nature is compared with nature, specifically plants with parts of animals. The proverbial beauty of antelope eyes is thus transferred to the mulberries. In the following verse, the beauty of the combination of deep black and dark red is described without formulating an explicit simile, which is, however, intended. In order to explicate the colourful playfulness two sides are evoked: There is jet and carnelian. These objects of

<sup>40</sup> *Ivi.*, II, p. 402.



comparison also come from the natural kingdom, in this case minerals. The same poem is cited by al-Şafadī, who presents it as his third example.

Al-Waṭwāṭ, for his part, cites as a third example a poem by Ibn al-Rūmī (d. 283/896) in which the word mulberry does not appear at all. The epigram thus represents a kind of riddle that al-Şafadī does not include in his collection:<sup>41</sup>

وَمُخْتَضِبَاتٍ مِنْ نَجِيعِ دِمَائِهَا إِذَا جُنَيْتَ مِنْ بُكْرَةِ الْغَدَوَاتِ  
تَكَادُ بَأْنَ تَطْغَى إِذَا مَا لَمَسْتَهَا فَأَرْحَمُهَا مِنْ سَائِرِ الثَّمَرَاتِ

Dyed ones from their wholesome blood when you harvest them in the early morning.

They almost flow over when I touch them. – So, I have pity on them before the other fruits.

In this epigram again, the harvest is staged. However, no simile is introduced to emphasise the black colour or the particular colour play between (a lot of) black and (little) red; instead, in this poem the softness of the mulberries is described that makes them lose their juice even through slight pressure when picked. In fact, this epigram describes these fruits without the use of any simile.

### 3.2 *Al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333) and His Encyclopaedia of Natural History*

It was not only al-Şafadī who used Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ's work for his own. Another contemporary, the financial administrator al-Nuwayrī, follows the template of al-Waṭwāṭ much more closely for his natural history-based encyclopaedia, which he compiled as a multivolume introduction to his work on history.<sup>42</sup> Although al-Şafadī does not name this author as a source, he most likely used al-Nuwayrī's work as well as a source for his anthology of similes. Al-Nuwayrī presents a Book on Plants as the fourth book of his introduction after Heaven and Earth, Man, and Animals and starts it, as al-Waṭwāṭ does, with an initial chapter on the origin of plants and the quality of soils, already introducing edible plants like vegetables.<sup>43</sup> Among the vegetables,

41 *Ibid.*, II, p. 402–403.

42 al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*; Muhanna, *The World in a Book: Al-Nuwayrī and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition*.

43 Muhanna, *World in a Book*, p. 32: "Plants: 4.1: Plant origin, soil, foodstuffs, vegetables 3 chapters; 4.2: Trees and fruit 3 chapters; 4.3: Aromatic flowers 2 chapters; 4.4: Gardens, flowers, resins, mannas 4 chapters; 4.5: Perfumery, distillates, sexual medicines 11 chapters".

the watermelon is treated.<sup>44</sup> Thereafter, a chapter on trees that have fruits (*al-ašġār ... li-tamrihi*) follows, which, in the manner of al-Waṭwāt, is divided into those fruits that have a rind (*qišr*) that cannot be eaten and those that have a stone (*nawan*) that cannot be eaten and those whose shell and stones are edible.<sup>45</sup> Al-Nuwayrī thus makes it very clear that the criterion of this subdivision relates to the consumption of these fruits and thus is based on their usefulness to mankind.

Al-Nuwayrī does not present agricultural information on the individual plants as al-Waṭwāt does, but instead places much emphasis on presenting their medical benefits, being more detailed than, for example, Zakariyyā' al-Qazwīnī.<sup>46</sup> Following the medical information, al-Nuwayrī then offers an anthological selection of poems, "how poets described it [the particular plant] and to what they compared it (*mā waṣafahu bihi l-šū'arā'u wa-šabbahūhu*)."<sup>47</sup> That is, al-Nuwayrī also emphasises the fact that the stylistic device of comparison is prominent in such descriptions, and thus, from this point of view, his work is also a *Tašbihāt* work. In his treatment of the fruits, there are only isolated differences in the order compared to Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāt; the differences in the selection of the individual poems, on the other hand, is greater.<sup>48</sup>

TABLE 4 Subsection 2 on trees and fruit from Book Four on plants in al-Nuwayrī's encyclopaedia

4.2.1 with rind that you do not eat			indication of more (+) or less (-) poems in comparison with al-Waṭwāt, or equal number (=)
<i>al-lawz</i>	almond	5 poems	+
<i>al-ġawz</i>	walnut	3 poems	-
<i>al-ġillawz</i>	hazelnut	2 poems	=
<i>al-fustuq</i>	pistachio	9 poems	++
<i>al-ballūṭ</i>	acorn	1 poem	=
<i>al-šanawbar</i>	pine	4 poems	++
<i>al-rummān</i>	pomegranate	11 + 4	=
<i>wa-l-ġullanār</i>	and flower	poems	

44 al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, XI, p. 26.

45 *Ivi*, XI, p. 58, 79 and 97.

46 See for example his discussion of the medical benefits of mulberries, *ivi*, XI, p. 106–107.

47 See for example *ivi*, XI, p. 59.

48 *Ivi*, XI, p. 59–121.

TABLE 4 Subsection 2 on trees and fruit from Book Four on plants (*cont.*)

<i>al-mawz</i>	banana	10 poems	++++
<i>al-nāranǧ</i>	bitter orange (- med.)	19 poems	++++++
<i>al-laymūn</i> 4.2.2 with stone that you do not eat	lemon (- med.)	3 poems	-
<i>al-naḥl</i>	date palm	23 poems	++++++
<i>al-nāraǧīl</i>	coconut palm	1 poem	=
<i>al-zaytūn</i>	olive	1 poem	=
<i>al-ḥarnūb</i>	carob	1 poem	+
<i>al-iǧǧāš wa-l-qarāsiyā</i>	pear and cherry	3 poems	-
<i>al-zaʿrūr</i>	hawthorn	2 poems	+
<i>al-ḥawḥ</i>	peach	5 poems	++
<i>al-mišmiš</i>	apricot	6 poems	=
<i>al-ʿunnāb</i>	jujube	5 poems	=
<i>al-nabaq</i> 4.7 without rind and without stone	buckthorn	5 poems	-
<i>al-ʿinab</i>	grape	13 poems	++++
<i>al-tīn</i>	fig	7 poems	-
<i>al-tūt</i>	mulberry	3 poems	=
<i>al-tuffāḥ</i>	apple	19 poems	+++++++
<i>al-safarǧal</i>	quince	8 poems	++
<i>al-kummaṭrā</i>	pear	3 poems	-
<i>al-luffāḥ</i>	mandrake	3 poems	=
<i>al-utruǧǧ</i>	citron	16 poems	++

Mostly he has gathered more material, citing from one up to eight more poems than al-Waṭwāt; in a few cases he has one poem less or the same number of poems as al-Waṭwāt.

Al-Ṣafadī did not adopt the order of fruits from al-Nuwayrī which is mainly the one al-Waṭwāt presented. However, it is clear that al-Ṣafadī takes individual poems from al-Nuwayrī's collection that he compiled beyond al-Waṭwāt, as our case study on the mulberry clearly shows. On the mulberry, in fact, al-Nuwayrī, like al-Waṭwāt, offers three poems: He takes the second and third from him, but in the first place presents a “new” epigram that al-Ṣafadī includes in his collection of five mulberry poems. This epigram, that al-Nuwayrī has selected

beyond al-Waṭwāt, is by the 5th/11th-century Andalusian poet Ibn Šaraf al-Qayrawānī (d. 460/1067),<sup>49</sup>

أُنظِرْ إِلَى تَوْتِ الْجَنَانِ الَّذِي      وافى به الناطور في جام  
يحكي جراحاً دمها سائلٌ      لدى جسومٍ من بني حام

Look at the mulberries of the gardens, which the guard brings in a bowl!  
They resemble wounds from which blood runs, on bodies of the descendants of Ham.<sup>50</sup>

The epigram describes a garden scene in which mulberries are offered in a bowl. Fruits are to be eaten. The second verse compares them in a complex comparison that develops its own narrative about dark-skinned people bleeding. On the one hand, this comparison targets the black colour of these fruits, and on the other, the juice that pours from them. Here, too, the play on colour of black and red is in the foreground, but it does not refer to individual red mulberries among many black ones, but to the juicy black fruits from which their red juice runs. The complex object of comparison is a human being.

#### 4 Fruits as an Example of Nature Poetry in al-Šafadī's Work

We began by asking ourselves where all the fruits in al-Šafadī's anthology come from that he presents as part of his conclusion to his theoretical reflections on the stylistic device of comparison, and how he orders them, and what place they have in his anthology, and what this may say about nature poetry from the 6th/12th century onward. First, we have been able to show that the percentage of nature themes in anthologies specifically devoted to similes has been steadily increasing since the 4th/10th century, from about 16.5% in Ibn Abī 'Awn (Iraq, d. 322/933)<sup>51</sup> to about 30.5% in Ibn al-Kattānī (Spain, d. 420/1029) to about 70% in Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī (Egypt/Syria, d. 613/1216 or 623/1226) up to about 100% in al-Šafadī (Egypt/Syria, d. 764/1363). The theme of nature seems to have gained importance in connection with similes, far beyond the poetry of flowers.

49 *Ivī*, XI, p. 107; on the poet see Hämeen-Anttila, "Ibn Sharaf al-Qayrawānī".

50 Ham is the youngest son of Noah, who was considered the forefather of African tribes in particular.

51 And as pointed out, ca. 25% in al-Sarī al-Raffā' as well as in Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī's *Dōwān al-ma'ānī*; see fn. 28.

Using the example of fruits, we were able to show that around the year 1200 the Ayyūbid secretary of state Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī took the decisive step of giving poems on individual fruits equal space in his *Tašbihāt* work alongside poems on individual flowers. Fruits thus become a subject in their own right, detached from a chapter dealing with edibles, as was the case with Ibn Abī ‘Awn and Ibn al-Kattānī. Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī gives this topic its own heading: *al-aṭmār* (fruits), distinguished from *al-azhār* (flowers) and *sā’ir al-nabāt wa-l-abqāl* (remaining plants and greens). We were able to show that, however, the distinction between fruits and remaining plants in particular appears problematic from a natural history perspective.

About a hundred years after this *Tašbihāt*-work, and almost contemporary to al-Ṣafadī’s work, encyclopaedias of natural history were composed in Egypt and Syria, that accordingly deal exclusively with natural topics, combining agricultural or medical knowledge with a literary anthology. So far, these works have not been associated with *Tašbihāt*-works in the first place. However, as we have been able to show, both al-Waṭwāṭ and al-Nuwayrī devote their literary collection specifically to poems describing things by means of simile arranged along the order of their natural histories. Precisely for this reason, al-Ṣafadī cites the work of Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Waṭwāṭ as a source for his anthology of similes and most likely draws on al-Nuwayrī’s collecting activities as well.

Al-Ṣafadī, however, frames his anthology of similes in a completely different framework, namely as a conclusion from the theory on comparison. He does not use any natural history concept or organising principle to guide his work on the stylistic device of comparison, and yet al-Ṣafadī focuses exclusively on themes from nature in contrast to the older *Tašbihāt*-works, which in the 4th/10th century hardly feature any themes from this realm; and even around 1200, Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī collects in his work not only celestial bodies, bodies of water and plants but also poems that work with similes on wine poetry, love poetry, and miscellaneous. Thus, al-Ṣafadī seems to have been influenced by the anthologies of his older contemporaries, which were framed in terms of natural history. However, he arranges his collection in such a way that the natural history reference is lost. After all, he completely dispenses with botanical, agricultural, or medical information.

For his anthology on similes, al-Ṣafadī also refrains from any categorical subdivisions, as is the case not only in the encyclopaedias of natural history but also in the *Tašbihāt*-work by Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī. Al-Ṣafadī may have wanted to focus entirely on the literary aspects and may also have perceived the difficulties of such classifications. He subdivides his anthology simply into 65 sections similarly to what Ibn Abī ‘Awn had done. However, very different from Ibn ‘Abī Awn, these sections are ordered. Like Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī, al-Ṣafadī begins with

celestial bodies and natural phenomena, then skips the latter's second chapter on waters, rivers and ponds to turn directly to plants, which he now does not divide into categories, but remains roughly connected to Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī's order by first presenting individual flowers, then individual fruits, and still other plants each in separate chapters.

The sections with fruit poems are with some liberty more or less arranged in the order of Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī. Some are dedicated to two varieties. These include, for example, *al-tuffāḥ wa-l-luffāḥ* (apple and mandrake),<sup>52</sup> and this sounds as if rhyme caused this combination, and thus a literary category may have served as an organising principle for al-Şafadī. In al-Waṭwāt and al-Nuwayrī, poems about mandrake do not directly follow those about apples; but in Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī this is the case.<sup>53</sup> Fruits that have been bundled include *al-iġġāş wa-l-qarāsiya* (plum and cherry plum), which al-Waṭwāt also treats together and al-Şafadī probably adopted this from him,<sup>54</sup> but then also bundles *al-ġillawz wa-l-ballūṭ* (hazelnut and acorn),<sup>55</sup> and *al-za'rūr wa-l-nabaq* (hawthorn and buckthorn),<sup>56</sup> maybe avoiding separate sections with only one poem, and finally *al-ġawz wa-l-lawz* (walnut and almond),<sup>57</sup> which again may have rhyme reasons. In total, he presents 25 different types of fruit, all of which except for *al-iġġāş wa-l-qarāsiya*, *al-ġillawz wa-l-ballūṭ*, and *al-za'rūr* also already appear in the work of Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī.

In the treatment of a single fruit, we observed that over the centuries more and more material was collected, but that it was always reassembled and existing material was also sorted out again. Al-Şafadī probably had the impulse to continue and expand this collecting activity. Particularly striking in this regard is his section on bitter orange,<sup>58</sup> the first fruit he is presenting, since he has collected 31 poems on the bitter orange, a good third more than al-Nuwayrī with 19 and more than twice as many as al-Waṭwāt and Ibn Zāfir with 13 poems each.<sup>59</sup> At the end of this section, al-Şafadī proudly presents four epigrams of his own,<sup>60</sup> and also in the following chapter on the citron he quotes an epigram written by himself in conclusion.<sup>61</sup> After these two sections, however, none of

52 al-Şafadī, *al-Kaşf*, p. 356–358.

53 See tables 1–4 above.

54 al-Şafadī, *al-Kaşf*, p. 369–370; al-Waṭwāt, *Manāhiġ al-fikar*, II, p. 377–378.

55 al-Şafadī, *al-Kaşf*, p. 379–380.

56 *Ivī*, p. 370–371.

57 *Ivī*, p. 380–382.

58 *Ivī*, p. 342–348.

59 See tables 1–4 above.

60 al-Şafadī, *al-Kaşf*, p. 348.

61 *Ivī*, p. 352.

those on different fruits include his own poetry. It is interesting to see that many of these fruits were in part already present in the 4th/10th century, but only become visible as a unit from the 7th/13th century onwards, and this as a result of the collecting and sorting activities during these “later centuries”. However, the example of the mulberry also shows that many of those poems compiled here were written only in the 5th/11th century and later.

Al-Şafadī has gathered five poems in his section on the mulberry (*tūt*),<sup>62</sup> offering two more than al-Waṭwāṭ and al-Nuwayrī. He has thus included poems from additional sources. He first cites the poem of an anonymous poet, which Ibn Zāfir al-Azdī had cited as the only mulberry poem. It must therefore have been written before about 1200.<sup>63</sup>

In second place, al-Şafadī brings a single verse by the Iraqi poet al-Maḥzūmī (late 4th/10th or early 5th/11th century), which he probably selected from al-Ta‘ālabī’s general anthology – al-Ta‘ālibī is one of the source authors al-Şafadī refers to – in which the term *firşād* is used for mulberries:<sup>64</sup>

هَلُمَّ فِيسَاعِدٍ فِي تَحِيَّةِ فِرْصَادٍ      كَأَنْجَازِ نَمْلِ يَجْتَمِعْنَ عَلَى زَادٍ

Come and help with greeting the mulberries! They are like hindquarters  
of ants gathering on the travel provisions.

This verse begins with a call to greet the mulberries, which are then described in more detail through a compound comparison that itself expands into a scene of its own, referring to the shape (small roundish) and, of course, the colours (black to reddish brown) of the mulberries, which are here compared to animals.

The third example is the three-liner by an anonymous Andalusian poet, which al-Waṭwāṭ and al-Nuwayrī also cite and thus must have been written before about 1300.<sup>65</sup>

This is followed by the poem of the 5th/11th century Andalusian poet Ibn Šaraf al-Qayrawānī, which was added by al-Nuwayrī to the collection of mulberry poems.<sup>66</sup>

62 *Ivī*, p. 352–353.

63 *Ivī*, p. 352–353; see above p. 8.

64 *Ivī*, p. 353; at-Ta‘ālibī, *Yatīma al-Dahr*, v, p. 30; about the author see *ibid.*, p. 29–33.

65 al-Şafadī, *al-Kašf*, p. 353; see above p. 11.

66 *Ivī*, p. 353; see above p. 13.

For the final poem, al-Şafadī presents as the most recent example a poem from the early 7th/13th century, once again a three-liner by the Aleppean poet Abū l-Maḥāsīn al-Şawwā' (d. 635/1237):<sup>67</sup>

لَسْتُ أَنسَى يَوْمَنَا فِي دَوْحَةٍ      زُنْخِرْتِ أَرْجَاؤَهَا ذَاتُ أَرْجٍ  
 وَبِهَا فَاءَاتٌ عَلَيْنَا سَرْحَةٌ      تَذْهَبُ الْهَمَّ وَتَأْتِي بِالْفَرْجِ  
 وَكَأَنَّ التُّوتَ فِي أَغْصَانِهَا      لَوْلُؤُوبَيْنِ عَقِيْقٍ وَسَبْجِ

I shall not forget our day at the great tree, whose entire space was adorned with fragrance!

A large, tall tree gave us shade there: It sent away sorrow and let joy come. It was as if the mulberries on its branches were like pearls, partly of carnelian and partly of gagate

This most recent poem first visualises, over two verses, a lush tree that spreads fragrance and provides shade, playing with the contrast to drive away sorrow and bring joy. The scene takes us to a pleasant place, which could be a garden but only in the third verse does it become clear that it is a mulberry tree, whose fruits are first compared in a simple comparison with pearls (due to their shape in combination with a shiny appearance) describing their appearance more specifically. Then it is said, again in a two-folded comparison referring to the mixture of the colours “black and red”, that some are made of carnelian, others of gagate. The first object of comparison is thus extended by a compound addition, whereby the picture remains harmonious, because all three (pearls, carnelian and gagate) come from the mineral kingdom. So here again fruits are compared with minerals.

## 5 Conclusion and Prospect

We started our thoughts with the observation that research on nature as presented in Arabic literature so far argued that in Abbasid literature the approach to nature changed to a romanticised attitude describing idyllic nature mainly in a garden during spring with wonderful flowers in contrast to the Bedouin view of their environment in pre-Islamic poetry. Keeping in mind the state of research that does not go beyond the 12th century we observed al-Şafadī's

67 *Ivī*, p. 353; about the author see Ibn Ḥallikān, *Wafayāt al-A'yān*, VII, p. 231–237.



collection of similes from the 14th century with its focus on topics from nature, among them many flowers, but as many fruits as well. We wanted to understand the role of nature in Arabic literature of this later period and possibly try to understand what kind of attitude towards nature it represents, being aware that this is but a very first step into the broad field of “nature poetry” after 1100.

Through the comparison of al-Şafadī’s collection of similes with earlier *tašbihāt*-works, we were able to show the growing importance of topics taken from nature in general in Arabic poetry over the centuries at least as represented in *tašbihāt*-works. This first step into the study of “nature poetry” after 1100 surely has shown that this is a field worthy of further studies yielding many fruits to be collected and interpreted. We can establish the fact that nature as a topic in Arabic literature during the so-called “later centuries” not only does exist, but gains in importance. We should therefore explore these treasures.

At this point in the state of research, it might be too early to point out reasons for the growing importance of nature in general in Arabic literature after 1100. However, through the lens of al-Şafadī’s collection of similes and its comparison with earlier works that he himself mentions as his sources, we detected an outspoken and evident connection between this kind of collecting practice and the contemporary popularity of encyclopaedias of natural history that do present literary examples of descriptions using similes as a major stylistic device in a cosmographic order. Because of these popular approaches using nature as an ordering principle, nature as a theme, and with it collections of many different kinds of items from nature, also became more central in the field of literature describing things by way of comparisons.

Could we describe at this early stage of research the attitude towards nature by poets of the “later centuries”? Of course, we will need many more studies of specific works to better understand it. What we have been able to highlight through the example of al-Şafadī’s collection of similes is that by the 14th century, fruits gained a similar importance in representing the art of simile as flowers. Starting from al-Şafadī’s collection of fruits as paradigms for similes, it became clear that fruit poems may have a long tradition going back to the 4th/10th century or earlier. However, they come to the fore as their own category only through the collecting and ordering activities of authors from the 6th/12th century onwards. One reason can be considered regarding the connection with the encyclopaedias of natural history, since with them the need to gather for each natural item a literary example became a drive. Yet, as we made clear, at least al-Şafadī sticks more closely to a literary ordering principle and therefore the reason for the abundance of poetic examples specifically describing so many different kinds of fruit is in need of a good explanation.

Research on nature in Arabic literature has so far tried to explain the focus of Abbasid poets on descriptions of gardens in spring with flowers, waters and birds as “romanticising” the urban view of nature. With regard to the “later centuries”, especially with regard to literature from the Mamluk period, a broadening of literary production in general has been noted so far – with regard to people involved, as well as genres produced; and, in connection to changes in society, a shift from court poetry to a kind of bourgeois poetry was noted, going together with a shift in aesthetics from representation to participation, and with a greater appreciation of everyday life as well as of individual lives.<sup>68</sup> Noticing then an increase in individual items and collecting not only flower poems but poems about different kinds of fruits can be understood in the context of the society and its literary production during the Mamluk period: We noted an increase in topics taken from nature and possibly a shift from more courtly flowers to more everyday fruits, and while the simile is aesthetically more on the side of representation, the long row of epigrams dealing with all sorts of fruits as well as the gathering of many epigrams describing the same fruit is pushing the collection of similes towards the side of participation.

With these ideas in mind, we could try to describe the attitude towards nature by such an author as al-Şafadī more closely. Taking the examples of the epigrams describing mulberries, I think it is still difficult since the majority of examples actually stem from the Abbasid period. However, we highlighted that fruits are first described in the context of banquets as edible luxuries. Mulberries were described in the context of harvesting, of a garden, offered on a tablet or in a bowl, and used as a present. They were compared to other natural items from the mineral realm such as precious woods and gemstones, or from the animal realm such as the hindquarters of ants or the eyes of antelopes or with humans such as Abyssinians or the descendants of Ham. Maybe it is of interest to note that the last example, the only one stemming from the 13th century, imbeds the description of mulberries in a love poem.

Our focus here has been on the collecting activities of *taşbihāt* works in particular. However, we can imagine very well, and we already have many hints, that these gathering activities not only stimulated further collecting practices, but also stimulated creativity in producing new poems on such topics. Al-Şafadī, for example, seems to have started with such a production, writing several poems of his own describing the bitter orange and the citron, as well as gathering more recent productions by other poets as he did in the case of the mulberry. He also proudly includes his one epigram about the citron in

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68 Bauer, “Mamluk Literature as a Means of Communication”; Bauer, “Ayna hādihā min al-Mutanabbi!” – Toward an Aesthetics of Mamluk Literature”.

his own *dīwān* of epigrams *al-Rawḍ al-bāsim wa-l-ʿurf al-nāsim* (The Smiling Garden and Redolent Breeze) in his chapter on the garden.<sup>69</sup> Other poets from the 7th/13th century onwards do treat many different fruits in their own poetry and prose, some of them having most probably been inspired by these collecting and ordering activities discussed here. To show this in detail, however, is another story to be told later, but we can already safely say that as soon as fruits become visible as a literary topic in their own right, they are produced in literature and proliferate.

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69 al-Šafadī, *al-Rawḍ al-bāsim wa-l-ʿurf al-nāsim*, p. 179. On the other side, he does not include epigrams on other specific fruits, even less a whole chapter on this category, and not even a chapter on flowers. Among his 46 chapters, only four are connected to the theme of “nature”, namely one on night, moon and stars, another on the garden, one on water and one on the horse.

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