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Unfinished hyperboles!
Adam's footprint in Sri Lanka
and wonder on the edge of modernity

Vivek Gupta

Wandering along the coast of St Andrews where the manuscript discussed in this chapter now resides, we encounter the horizon line separated by the sky and the North Sea. What creatures and places fold into this line? Thanks to our phones we can easily answer this question: whales, dolphins and the Nordic countries. However, before this information age, knowing what lay beyond the horizon involved a restricted interplay of the known, unknown and myth.[1] One extraordinary narrative that circulated across the Muslim scholastic world describes a hilltop on the island of Sarandip/Sarandib, today's Sri Lanka, where the first man, the Prophet Adam, descended to earth. An eighteenth-century Hindustani scholar, Ghulam ʿAli Azad Bilgrami, cited a variety of religious and literary sources that expounded on the significance of Adam's arrival in Sri Lanka in his work *The Coral Rosary of Hindustan's Traditions*. On this island at the tip of Hind, the Prophet Muhammad's light shone through Adam, Adam brought the black stone of Mecca, and he planted a tree on the hill from which Moses's staff grew.[2] Bilgrami wove together various sources – from the historian al-Tabarī (d. 923) to his favourite theologian Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī (d. 1505) – to narrate Sarandip as a site of divine revelation. For his sources and readers, the island of Sarandip and the fabled peak of Adam's descent lay beyond the horizon.

The stories that we tell to fill the liminal space of a horizon mirror how scholars today contend with the fragmented archives for the study of the Indian Ocean world. How to imagine the places beyond here, the horizon, and the people and things that travelled its many routes? It is not the scarcity of sources, but rather how to listen to, juxtapose and interpret texts, objects and text-objects. For generations, economic and social historians led the field of Indian Ocean studies by shedding light on connected histories where people and commodities circulated far distances.[3] Many affective and literary works, such as books of wonder, have not been examined within Indian Ocean frameworks because they often do not contain the kind of empirical data used to establish historical events verifiable by the archaeological record.[4] Multiple strands of historiography also bear heavily on Indian Ocean material culture even if they do not statedly centre Oceanic flows. Scholarship on Indo-Islamic art and architecture,

for example, implicitly sheds light on Indian Ocean culture because of the emphasis on long-distance circulation and exchange between the Islamic world and South Asia.[5] For sure, many objects that have not been studied through an Oceanic lens of the shifting seas, such as the manuscript of this study, lend themselves to such a framing by virtue of their content.

This chapter focuses on a densely illustrated monumental manuscript held at St Andrews that I attribute loosely to North India at the turn of the nineteenth century (*c.* 1780–1820), a milieu in which there was a significant amount of interregional movement of cultural practitioners within Hindustan and a time right on the edge of modernity.[6] The St Andrews book consists of 132 folios (41.9 × 30.5 cm) and it escapes neat generic categorization.[7] It collates two distinct texts. First is a Persian version of Muhammad bin Abi Bakr al-Damamini's *'Ayn al-Hayat* (*Source of Life*, Gujarat, *c.* 1420), an adaptation of an Arabic book of animals, the *'Aja'ib al-Dahr* (*Wonders of the Universe*) of Kamal al-Din Muhammad ibn Musa al-Damiri (1341–1405).[8] Alone, the *'Ayn al-Hayat*'s composition and circulation has implications for intellectual flows across the Indian Ocean. Al-Damamini was born in Alexandria, Egypt, studied in Yemen, worked in Gujarat and died in the city of Gulbarga in the Deccan.[9] His commentaries on Arabic grammar texts earned him favour at the Indian sultanates.[10]

The St Andrews book's second text is a Persian wonders-of-creation cosmography's sections on seas and islands and their wonders. The wonders-of-creation book, cosmography or natural history, all terms used to describe the *'ajā'ib al-makhlūqāt*, provides visions of how oceans fit within a macrocosm and how they could be experienced. The meaning of the English word wonder approaches the kinds of spectacular experiences one often hears within travel literature. However, premodern scholars conceived of wonderment, or *ta'ajjub*, as a full programme of affect and encountering the cosmos. The sections included in the St Andrews book are not in the exact words of Zakariyya' al-Qazwini's thirteenth-century *Wonders of Creation and Rarities of Existence*, but they resonate with some of Qazwini's tropes. Only with Karin Rührdanz's recent discovery of Fatih 4174 in the Süleymaniye Library have we been able to determine that Qazwini first composed a Persian cosmography in 1261, before he adapted the work in Arabic when he was working for Juvaynī, the Ilkhanid governor of Baghdad.[11]

Whether the St Andrews book was commissioned as a freestanding compilation of these two works remains an open question. Unlike the cosmography, the former text on animals does not represent a significant corpus of illustrated manuscripts. Nevertheless, a maker consciously selected these two texts because of their thematic overlap in the realm of the natural world. Through complementing each other, their aggregation evokes the curatorial function of an anthology (*majmū'a* or *sangraha*) and album (*muraqqa'*).[12] By mapping parts of the world and cataloguing its inhabitants, the book also reminds one of geography and cosmography.[13] Where the cosmography's section begins, we see a note at the top of the page mentioning that it was valued to be either 4 or 40 rupees.[14] The note suggests that this book entered a bazaar context at some point in its life. There, individual parts of the book would have been sold to customers.

While the compiler could have selected a cosmography's section on animals to accompany the *'Ayn al-Hayt*, a scholar may have found this redundant. Instead, they decided to give the reader a tour of the seven seas' wonders, or *'ajā'ib*, of a cosmography. These wonders include the Western Sea (*baḥr-i maghrib*, ff. 93a–97a), the Atlantic and the Mediterranean (*baḥr-i muẓlim* and *baḥr-i rūm*, ff. 97b–107b), the Chinese sea (*baḥr al-ṣīn*, ff. 108b–117a) and the Indian sea (*baḥr al-hind*, ff. 117b–132b). The Persian and Zanzibar seas would have followed. The islands start to run out of order and ascriptions of wonders to some seas start to sound irregular for a cosmography around the section that begins with the Chinese sea.

For any attempt to pin down this book's genre, it is emphatically unfinished.[15] Its blank spaces for text or image, doodles, preparatory sketches, under- and overdrawings allow scholars to understand how this object was a work in progress. Yet, the concept of finish is undertheorized for such manuscripts.[16] For early Indian rock-cut architecture, Vidya Dehejia and Peter Rockwell have proposed a 'flexible concept of finish' where patrons desired functional buildings that did not necessitate refinement and finesse in all the structure's necessary parts.[17] Like a monument, a manuscript's mutability invites constant interventions. We must be especially cautious not to overdetermine this book's finish because it could have been made in parts to be sold off to different customers.

By way of a metaphor, the unfinished condition of the St Andrews book invites considerations of the study of the Indian Ocean and wonder on the edge of modernity. Four pages from the end, the scribe only just filled in a few words on the chapter on the wonders of the Indian sea. Many of the other seas receive much fuller treatment. On one page on the Indian sea, we find three lines of thin *shikasta* Persian text saying that the Indian sea has a deadly whirlpool (*dardūr*) in it with a ferocious snakefish (Figure 12.1).[18] A designer had prepared the page for illustration. A thin ochre ribbon border with red and pink flowers demarcates the text only at the top, whereas the image would occupy the rest of the page. A draughtsperson started to trace a spiral for the water and the body of a spikey beast. An artist began to delineate the head of the animal in black ink. Like the archives for Indian Ocean studies, this page presents a transient and unfinished picture. As such, Indian Ocean scholars must be willing to confront the instability of their archives.[19] We can anticipate the large hyperbolic image of a wondrous beast that it would have shown, but the makers cast this book aside for other pursuits. The long eighteenth century was a period of increasing modernity and the onslaught of European colonialism.[20] Who had time to wonder in such tumultuous times?

Following currents in cultural production during the long eighteenth century, I argue that this the St Andrews book's exaggeration resists what Travis Zadeh has recently called 'wonder's end', that is, when European colonialism, reason and empiricism quieted a premodern Islamicate understanding of enchantment.[21] I begin by situating the St Andrews book in the landscape of currents to both codify and respond to the past in this period of political upheaval. Then, I take two examples of how the book embellishes more stable forms of codifying wonders from its second half excerpted from a Persian cosmography. The first example considers how the makers

Figure 12.1 Incomplete sections on the Indian sea, excerpt from a Persian cosmography, Northern India, *c.* 1780–1820, 41.9 × 30.5 cm, St Andrews MS32(o) f. 132a.

dealt with iconic images of standalone animals that one would encounter in a wonder book. Returning to the case of Adam in Sarandip, the last example treats a hyperbolic image of divine encounter.

Adapting the eighteenth-century vernacular in a Persian manuscript

Whereas Qazwini's concept of wonder as a sustained querying the cause of the unknown found sensitive expression in medieval manuscripts, artists exaggerated the thrust of his natural philosophy by the turn of the nineteenth century in the St Andrews book.[22] This book shows evidence of eighteenth-century trends of 'mobility, mercantile imperialism, and eclecticism', which manifest in its negotiation between historicizing vernacular elements and its break from the genre conventions of its Persian sources.[23] The manuscript's layout and narrative strategies resonate with northern Indian vernacular practices. By the late eighteenth century, Persian had become deeply vernacularized in South Asia and took on a range of administrative and literary uses.[24] Its use in this book therefore is unsurprising. However, I know of no comparable Persian books that express such a clear eighteenth-century sensibility common to vernacular illustrated texts in materiality. As the St Andrews book includes earlier Persian texts fashioned afresh, it both codifies and responds to the past.

The design of the St Andrews book's pages suggest that its makers participated in a translocal vernacular culture. The vertical page layouts relate to earlier traditions of illustrated Indic poetry collections (Figures 12.2 and 12.3). During the late sixteenth century, painters of Brajbhasha and Sanskrit poetry themselves started to adopt vertical page layouts because of their encounters with Islamicate books.[25] The designers of the St Andrews book would have likely understood how using a thin space for text at the top, and a full-page painting below, engaged with vernacular painted poetry (Figure 12.3). The rushed text scribbled in a *shikasta* script, although literally above images, becomes secondary to the immersive painted details enveloping the reader below.
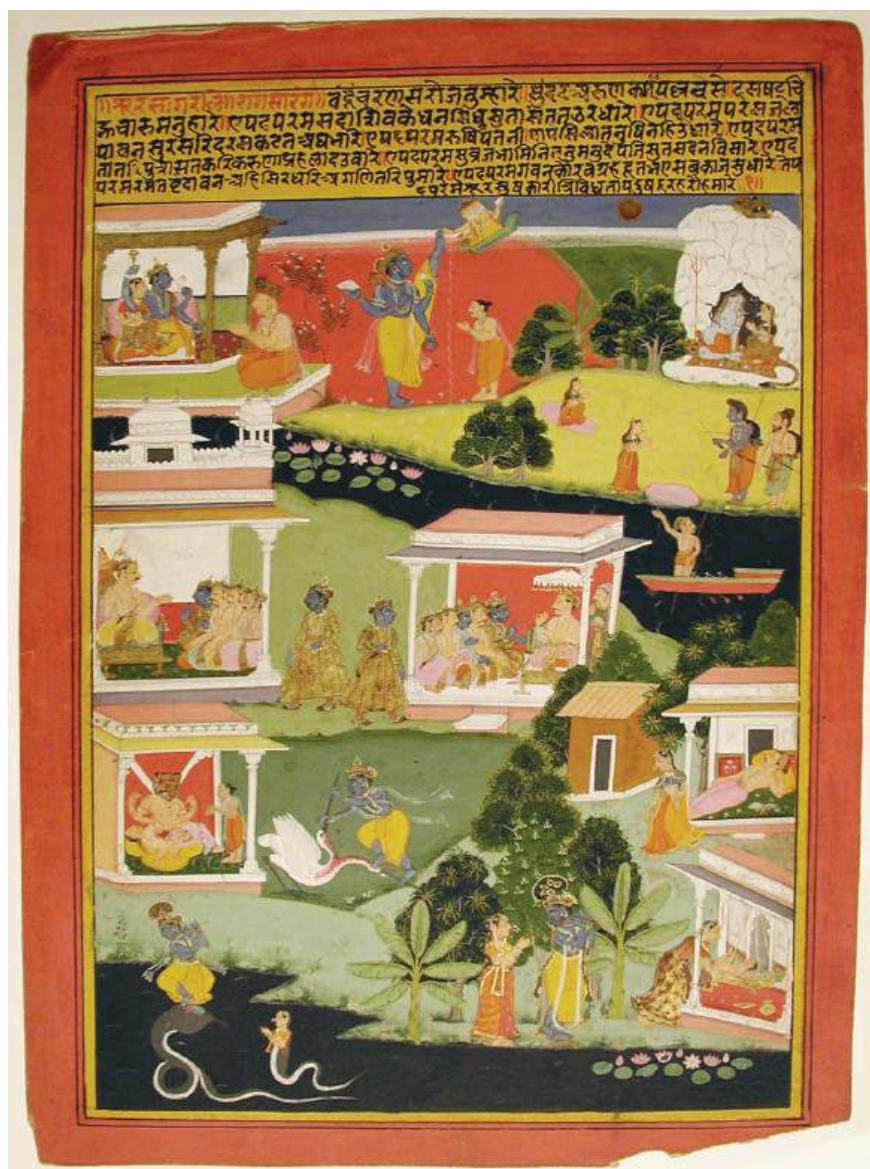
The organization of space on the picture plane further reveals how the St Andrews book's artists were familiar with, if not themselves, illustrators of Indian vernacular and Sanskrit texts. Compare a page of an illustrated Brajbhasha devotional (*bhakti*) poem, the *Sūrsāgar* of Sūrdās, made at the Rajasthani court of Udaipur at the beginning of the eighteenth century with an image from the St Andrew's book depicting the island of Ṭayuran (Figures 12.2 and 12.3).[26] Horizontal and curving rivers between landmasses divide the space and create separate events.[27] Towards the top of the St Andrews painting monkeys climb rocks and at the bottom landform they approach the shore where two human visitors drift on a boat. The Udaipuri painter shows the blind poet, Surdas, singing his verses to Krishna and Radha in the top right of the painting and all of Krishna's manifold feats – too many to count – in an animated narrative sequence. The St Andrews makers' use of the page's surface thus aligns with Indian vernacular traditions.

The manuscript's size and compositional contortions also remind one of large-scale cartographic paintings and mercantile letter scrolls made in northwest India during the long eighteenth century. The St Andrews book's artists played with scale and perspective to conjure aesthetic encounters with places. An entry from the book's second half devoted to an island of a ruler with four thousand women and much wealth and splendour magnifies the monarch and his women and dwarfs all the surrounding fort and urban architecture, landscape and seas (Figure 12.4).[28] Two boats
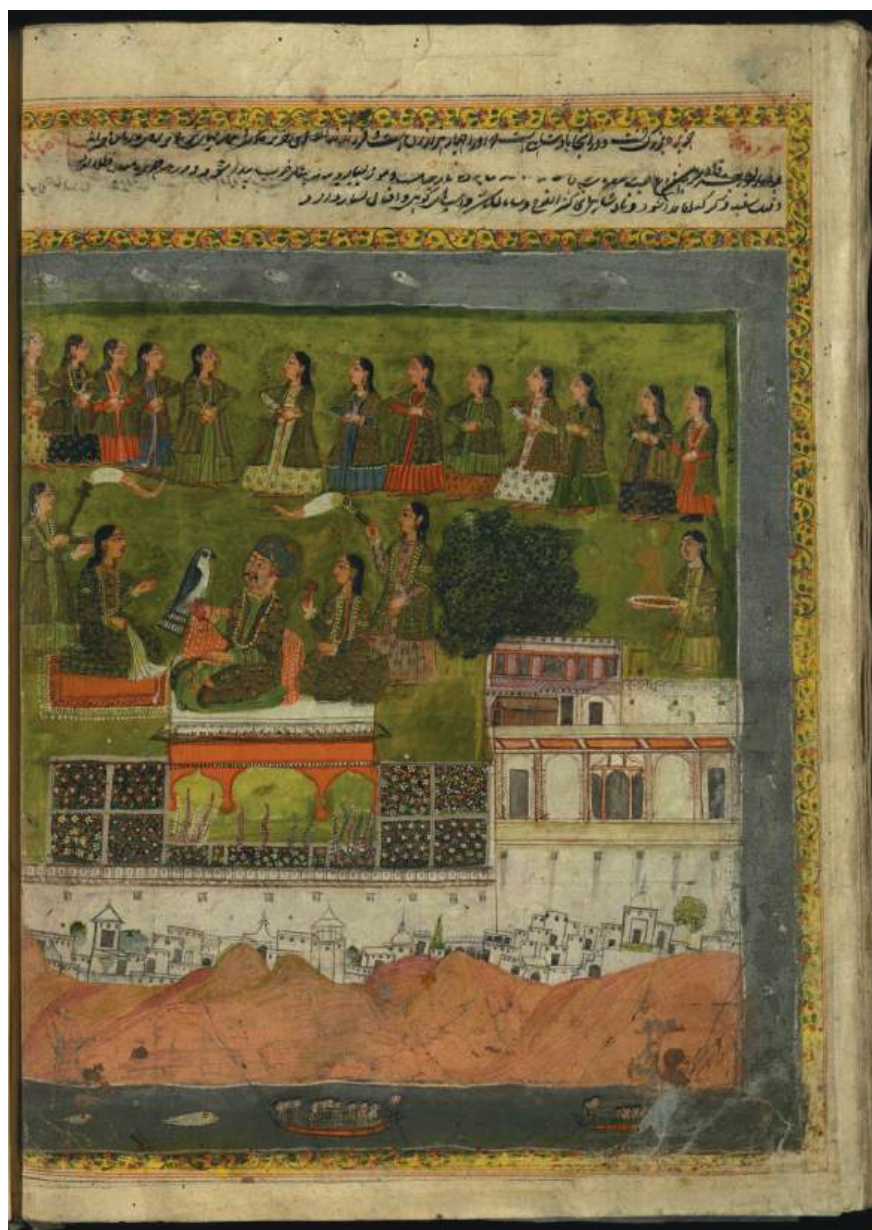
Figure 12.2 Island of Tayuran, excerpt from a Persian cosmography, Northern India, *c.* 1780–1820, 41.9 × 30.5 cm, St Andrews MS32(o) f. 115b.
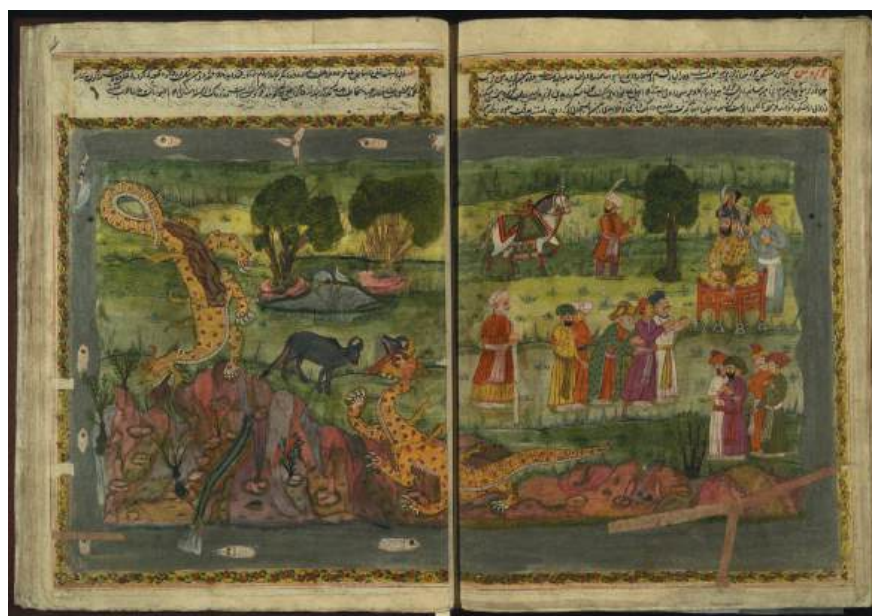
Figure 12.3 'In Praise of the Lord's Sacred Feet (*Bandaun carana saroja tihāre*)', folio from a dispersed *Sūrsāgar*, Mewar, *c.* 1700, 32.8 × 20.8 cm, San Diego Museum of Art, Edwin Binney 3rd Collection, 1990.610.

Figure 12.4 Excerpt from a Persian cosmography, Northern India, *c.* 1780–1820, 41.9 × 30.5 cm, St Andrews MS32(o) f. 119b.

Figure 12.5 Island of the *tannīn*, excerpt from a Persian cosmography, Northern India, *c.* 1780–1820, folio: 41.9 × 30.5 cm, St Andrews MS32(o) ff. 104b–105a.

of miniaturized British agents wearing tiny black hats approaching the island from below signify the colonial context of this king's court.[29] We are permitted to peer into his quarters where we can absorb many luxurious details of his pleasurable life. This perspectival play lets us map and experience his entire surroundings through his eyes. Here, scalar manipulations allow us to feel the ambience of an island with a focus on the royal scene.[30] As a whole, the image enables us to feel what Dipti Khera calls the 'mood of a place'.

Immersive pictures of seas and islands throughout the St Andrews book also recall some of the mercantile letter scrolls studied by Khera.[31] On the island of the ruler with his many women, the sea full of fish outlines the full page except for the book's gutter, creating a horizon beyond our view. We might anticipate scrolling forward to the left like the direction of reading Persian. In some cases, entries on islands stretch across the entire bifolio with the sea engulfing the whole book (Figure 12.5, cf. Figure 12.12).[32] For other entries, various real and fantastic creatures swim across an entire background of flowing strokes of silver (Figure 12.8).[33] For entries on islands, water floods around the entirety of a landmass, sometimes occupying a whole folio. The ribbon border of a scroll of red and pink flowers against a thin ochre ground resembles many of the borders seen in illustrated invitation scrolls (*vijñaptipatra*) made for Udaipuri merchants, especially one dated 1830.[34] A designer laid out these borders in varied plans, including in ones like Rajput painted poems, to allow artists to

make creative choices for their paintings. These details coupled with the price note of the cosmography support the argument for this book's bazaari production.

The makers of the St Andrews used a scrolling narrative strategy found in Indian visual culture to push the images from the Islamicate cosmographical tradition to hyperbole. Its entry on the island of the dragon exemplifies this (Figure 12.5). Qazwini's *Wonders of Creation* in both Persian and Arabic and the few lines of the St Andrews manuscript tell consistent stories of this island.[35] The island is visited by a dragon (*tannīn*, *azdahā*) who consumes all its cattle, and when there are no cattle to be found, it wreaks havoc.[36] The mythologized hero Iskandar (Alexander the Great) rescues the island's inhabitants by stuffing the skin of cattle with explosives so that when the fire-breathing dragon would eat these decoys he dies of a burning in his stomach. One inexplicable difference between the two texts is that Qazwini's dragon island falls in the section on the Indian sea, but it appears in the Western Sea in the St Andrews book.[37]

Whereas the Qazwini manuscripts often include a restrained narrative image, the St Andrews manuscript animates the story in pictures event by event. From the earliest copy of Qazwini made in thirteenth-century Wasit to the seventeenth-century Deccan, we encounter images of a single dragon taking its first bite of the decoy for the illustration of this island (Figure 12.6).[38] The picture benefits from a poetics of anticipation by leaving the viewer to predict what happens after the decoy explodes. Without textual explanation, the St Andrews bookmakers disclose their awareness of this trope by incorporating a massive painting of a single dragon consuming cattle in the first text on animals a few pages after the entries on cattle in al-Damamini's work.[39] Completely unlike this recurrent trope, in its entry devoted to the island of the dragon, the painters of the St Andrews book packed the painting with narrative events (Figure 12.5). The bifolio unravels like a scroll if we move from right to left. We see Iskandar being summoned by the natives, the dragon consuming a cattle decoy and then falling from a fire in its belly. Dehejia identifies this strategy as continuous narrative where successive events of an episode are shown in a single frame without dividers and with a repeated character.[40] Except here, this approach is largely unattested within the Islamicate manuscript corpus, however it appears frequently in early Buddhist art and Brajbhasha and Sanskrit illustrated poetry (Figure 12.3). Again, the artist drew on visual strategies from vernacular traditions, laying bare the wonders of the seas and their myths.

The St Andrews book thus departs from the generic conventions of the Islamicate cosmography and illustrated encyclopaedia. Its creators participated in producing eighteenth-century vernacular practices in Persian resulting in an eclectic genre-bending book. Alongside the St Andrews book, makers continued to conceive of illustrated manuscripts and lithographs which riffed on the past far less radically over the course of the long eighteenth century.[41]

All in all, wonder did not end at the end of the eighteenth century. It merely found other channels of expression. The visual explicitness of the St Andrews book resists the end of marvelling at the cause of God's creations. On one hand, its hyperbole makes the reader do less work to fill in gaps. On the other, it makes the book work harder to elicit an experience of wonder in the viewer. The artists wanted their viewers to delight

Figure 12.6 The *tannīn*, black-horned rabbit (gift of Iskandar) and human-faced fish, *Wonders of Creation and Rarities of Existence* of Qazwini, Wasit, Iraq, 1280, 30 × 20.2 cm, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek MSS cod. arab. 464, f. 63a.

in the narrative events. Let us now turn to two cases of how the book filled horizons with excessive visions.

<div align="center">

Enough trees, they painted the forest!
Hyperbolic kingdoms

</div>

The pace of the paintings vis-à-vis textual entries in the St Andrews manuscript differs significantly from cosmographies. Premodern Qazwini manuscripts contain long sections devoted to the animal, vegetal and mineral kingdoms. Individual illustrations frequently accompany plant and animal entries, which become repetitive if read in sequence. For such images, Persis Berlekamp instructs us to see the forest for the trees and notice how a diverse kingdom fits within a broader macrocosm of God's creation.[42] The sections on seas and islands across the Qazwini corpus in eighteenth-century Hindustan have iconic images of animals, mostly represented alone for the viewer to

Figure 12.7 Sea creatures, fragmentary ʿAdil Shahi translation of Qazwini's *Wonders of Creation*, Deccan, late eighteenth or nineteenth century, folio: 35.5 × 21 cm, National Library of Medicine, Washington, DC, P29, ff. 37b–38a.

Figure 12.8 Island of Qis, excerpt from a Persian cosmography, Northern India, *c.* 1780–1820, folio: 41.9 × 30.5 cm, St Andrews MS32(o) ff. 99b–100a.

contemplate (Figure 12.7).[43] In the St Andrews codex, this occurs, but the makers also situate animals in specific contexts with backgrounds and companions, quite unlike early Qazwini manuscripts where one may only encounter the animal or plant alone. The texts take up far less space than the image and function more like captions to jog one's memory unlike lengthy encyclopaedia entries which can slow down the pace of experiencing wonders.

When the makers saw a chance to clarify how the cosmography aggregates animal kingdoms, they exercised no restraint. For the aquatic kingdom, the St Andrews book states that on the island of Qis, every day a different kind of fish appears (Figure 12.8).[44] In one year, 360 kinds of fish appear in various colours and forms. After a year passes, the cycle repeats. While the text says little about this fabulous aquatic life, the painting overwhelms the viewer. More than seventy different sea creatures swim upstream the two pages. We see them from a bird's eye view, which simulates the experience of swimming alongside them in a boundless sea. In a contemporary cosmography, we can compare how the makers of an encyclopaedia relegated each of these creatures to their own individual entries (Figure 12.7).[45] A patient looker of the St Andrews manuscript could identify each sea creature by cross-referencing an encyclopaedia. Instead of a slow sail through the many sections of a cosmography, this image performs the endpoint of Berlekamp's argument for the reader. We plumb the depths of the seas in one deep dive and ponder how it fits within the larger cosmos.

Unlike medieval cosmographies where even the mundane could be subject to slow contemplation, the St Andrews manuscript's wonders pull an emotional response out of its beholder. The sea of fish is not the only illustrated kingdom in this book: it also shows a world of hybrid creatures (f. 104b) and birds on the island of Tinnis (ff. 98b–99a). Had they finished their project, perhaps the artist would insert kingdoms of land-animals (*al-barr*) and plants (*al-nabāt*) into entries on other islands. The book's possible mercantile milieu may have led the makers to entice an interested buyer who may not be familiar with the repetitive pace of the cosmographical tradition.[46]

An awareness of India's place in a larger and more sociopolitically networked world may have led the makers of this the St Andrews book to fully perform the drama of the seas, rather than innovate strictly within a tradition.
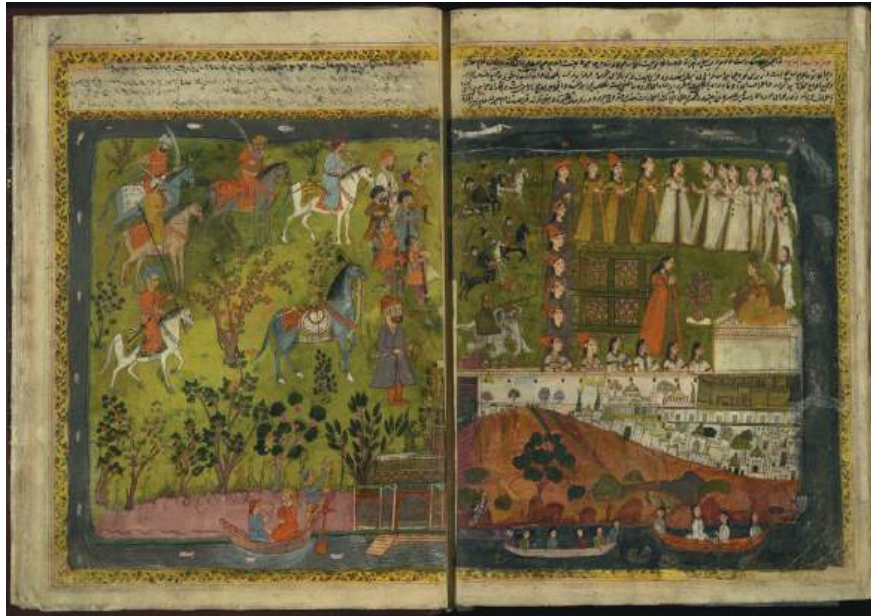
Effusive images of Sarandip

Let us take a final example of how the artists of the St Andrews manuscript envisioned an island from the Indian sea, namely the island of Sarandip. Qazwini recycles much of the same lore in his entry on the Indian sea in the *Athar al-Bilad wa Akhbar al-ʿIbad* (*Traces of Lands and Accounts of Worshippers*) and his cosmographies.[47] In both his Persian and Arabic *Wonders of Creations*, he starts by proclaiming that the Indian sea is the greatest and most expansive.[48] He situates it vis-à-vis the seas of Zanzibar (Zānj) and Greater Iran (Fārs) and speaks of how its location relates to celestial movements. Then, he turns to its islands, which read like a textual archipelago, including Barṭaʾiyl, Salāmiṭ, the Palace, Thulth, Java (Jābah), Nicobar (Lankālūs) and the Dragon. The myths in these entries pull readers into the experience of the sea. Some of the stories entertain: 'On the island of al-Salāmiṭ, they have hyacinths, sandalwood and camphor. It is said that some fish come out of the sea and mount upon the fruits of trees, suck out the juice and then they fall drunkenly. Then, the people come and take the fallen fish.' Other stories haunt the reader: the island of the Palace 'contains several kinds of corpses. It is said that many of the ancient Persian kings came and entered this palace, and they went to sleep there. Their bodies froze until they could not move and some of them boarded their ship and others died.' Just as Azad Bilgrami recounted several centuries later, Qazwini reports that the island of Sarandip is where Adam left his first footprint on earth when he landed from the heavens.

The St Andrews manuscript bears two entries, one bifolio and one single folio, devoted to Sarandip.[49] The bifolio's text describes Sarandip to have many cities. It was the site of Adam's descent (*habūṭ*) to earth, whose footprint still shines (Figure 12.9). The entry mentions that the island has a 'mountain of many kinds jewels like small pebbles' (*kūh-i jawaharāt gūnāgūn misl-i sang rīzih*) and its waters have many pearls.[50] It calls the ruler, or *pādshāh*, a *ṣanamī*, which literally means that they are an idol, but here it likely connotes that they are a beautiful woman. This *pādshāh* convenes her *majlis* and barters jewels. The entry continues, 'There is no island like this one in the sea and some say that Adam's tomb is in the environs of this town'.

In contrast to its pithy entry on Sarandip, the bifolio's painting impresses upon the reader a sense of the island's splendour with expressive detail. The painting occupies

Figure 12.9 Island of Sarandip, excerpt from a Persian cosmography, Northern India, *c.* 1780–1820, folio: 41.9 × 30.5 cm, St Andrews MS32(o) ff. 117b–118a.

approximately 40 × 60 cm across an entire open book, a horizontal layout evocative of the palmleaf. The picture draws one's eyes to the seated queen towards the right of the page who gestures to her female guest. In the background, the queen's retinue holds trays, presumably with jewels for trade. Further behind these women, foot soldiers sport European hats. The courtly scene dwarfs the fort walls and palatial architecture outside. On the left, horseman gaze upon the queen's actions from a forest of trees. Across the bottom of the pages, some foreign travellers sail away, and some are docked toward the left. Mentioned quickly in text, this idol of a queen commands the gaze of those near and far. The sea brims with fish and surrounds Sarandip. Water flowing around the perimeter of the open book makes the island appear taller on the page. The framing water guides our experience of peering into the various spaces – court, fort and forest – of this island. This vision of islandic opulence sets the mood of Sarandip.

The second entry for Sarandip expands on the miracle of Adam's footprint (Figure 12.10).[51] Whereas the text is only one line and says that Adam's peak is a site of pilgrimage, the image is considerably more immersive. The painting enchants viewers with a wild landscape interrupted by Adam's massive footprint. The artist envisions it as a round, reddish foot with five toes imprinted into a rock cliff. It far outsizes all other figures in the painting and matches the scale of the palace towards the bottom right of the painting. A staircase reminiscent of those in rock-cut Buddhist sites gives a pilgrim access to the footprint up close. A tiger stares directly at the peak, while visitors cruising towards Sarandip crane their necks from boats. Such a monumental

Figure 12.10 Island of Sarandip, excerpt from a Persian cosmography, Northern India, *c.* 1780–1820, 41.9 × 30.5 cm, St Andrews MS32(o) f. 119a.

Figure 12.11 Adam on the island of Sarandip, 'Adil Shahi translation of Qazwini's *Wonders of Creation*, Deccan, 1625–50, 31 × 21 cm, British Library, Or 1621 f. 136b.

Figure 12.12 Hanuman arrives at the Island of Lanka and admires the city from the bottom of the mountain in book 5 of Jagat Singh's *Rāmāyaṇa*, attributed to the Deccan painter, Udaipur, 1649–53, 23 × 39.9 cm, British Library, IO. San 3621, f.1.

representation of Adam's footprint is unprecedented for the Islamicate manuscript tradition, although other large-scale images occur from the very beginning of the cosmographical corpus.[52] In cosmographies, the entry on Sarandip often features a figural representation of Adam (Figure 12.11).[53] A seventeenth-century painting from a Deccani copy of the 'Adil Shahi translation of Qazwini focuses entirely on an elderly portrayal of Adam with a group of craggy rocks behind him. Painters frequently assimilated Adam's iconography into that of other prophets by showing him veiled or with a flaming areole.[54]

Viewed at the turn of the nineteenth century in Hindustan, artists probably anticipated this image's multiple resonances across religious groups. For Ronit Ricci, Adam's descent to Sarandip put Sri Lanka on the map as a paradigmatic site of exile, where one is banished from 'the realm of the divine to human life and suffering'.[55] Narratives across many languages and genres strengthened the association between Sarandip and the Prophet Adam, *nabī Ādam*.[56] However, Buddhists and Hindus have ascribed the footprint to Buddha, or Shiva and Hanuman respectively.[57] The popularity of the Buddha's footprint as his iconic sign may have guided the artist's exaggerated representation of Adam's miraculous trace.[58] Furthermore, in light of its many citations of Hindu iconography and vernacular culture, the notion of Lanka as the island fortress of the demon king Rāvaṇa where he imprisons Sītā in Hindu mythology would have also held currency for the makers of this manuscript.[59] Like the image from the St Andrews manuscript, Hindustani artists showed Lanka as a fertile island with a

golden fortress (Figure 12.12).[60] A Deccani painter who illustrated a *Rāmāyaṇa* for the ruler Jagat Singh of Udaipur in the middle of the seventeenth century maximized the horizontality of the palmleaf layout by streaming water around an island that appears to emerge from the page. Such a method of bringing this island of exile to life relates to how the St Andrews manuscript makers chose bifolio paintings to depict islands.

The St Andrews book's images of Sarnadip leave no ambiguity: it is a magnificent site and the story of Adam's descent to Sarandip is one to be remembered by his enormous footprint. It is as if the artists took all Bilgrami's textual attestations of the ultimate significance of Sarandip and put it in images to behold. Or, the visual culture of Adam's footprint along with the popularity of local myths of Buddha and Shiva's traces persuaded scholars such as Bilgrami of its lasting wonder.

Conclusion

Cosmographers spared no ink on mythologizing what lay beyond their horizons. Around the end of the eighteenth century a bookmaker in North India used multiple vernacular sensibilities, including illustrated poetry, mercantile scroll letters and narrative strategies, to exaggerate forms of codifying wonder from the Islamicate manuscript tradition. Their manipulations of the picture plane and scale allowed viewers to feel the mood of distant lands and seas even though they likely did not live on the littoral. They selected two works on the theme of natural wonders possibly to sell to local merchants or travellers from abroad, but never finished their project.

Made at the temporal threshold when colonial and mercantile modernity manifests in earnest, the St Andrews book instructs us that wonder will always remain unfinished, and makers will continue to strive to pull audiences beyond the horizon no matter how much is known. The tension between the book's hyperbole and lack of finish reminds us that no matter how much knowledge we have about our horizons, they remain penumbral. Even today, as we step out of the library where the St Andrews is book now kept and look to the North Sea, we might be able to determine exactly what lays beyond, but we still let our imaginations run wild.

Notes

1. For recent discussions of the horizon and imagination see Shahzad Bashir, *A New Vision for Islamic Pasts and Futures* (Cambridge, MA, 2022), and for the horizon in art history see Lukas Burkart and Beate Fricke (eds), *Shifting Horizons: A Line and Its Movement in Art, History and Philosophy* (Basel, 2022).
2. Ghulam 'Ali Azad Bilgrami, *Subhat al-marjan fi athar Hindustan*, vol. 1, ed. Muhammad Fadl al-Rahman al-Nadwi al-Siwani (Aligarh, 1976–80), 7–57; Carl Ernst, 'India as a Sacred Islamic Land', in *Religions of India in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton, NJ, 1995), 556–64, and Vivek Gupta, 'Arabic in Hindustan: Comparative Poetics in the Eighteenth Century and Azad Bilgrami's *The Coral Rosary*', *Journal of South Asian Intellectual History* 4:2 (2021), 201–2.

3. Representative literature includes K. N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge, 1985), and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* (New Delhi, 2005). Nancy Um, *The Merchant Houses of Mocha: Trade and Architecture in an Indian Ocean Port* (Seattle, WA, 2009), and Elizabeth Lambourn, *Abraham's Luggage: A Social Life of Things in the Medieval Indian Ocean World* (Cambridge, 2018), have greatly expanded our understanding of the Ocean's material culture.

4. Scholars have previously pointed out the importance of these works. Daud Ali's research on a Sanskrit text on automata also considers how concepts of wonder circulated across the Indian Ocean. See 'Bhoja's Mechanical Garden: Translating Wonder across the Indian Ocean, circa 800–1100 CE', *History of Religions* 55:4 (2016), 460–93. Emilie Savage-Smith and Yossef Rappaport's study of the *Book of Curiosities* mines an eleventh-century Arabic work made for the Fatimids for what it reveals about cartography, but this manuscript is an extraordinary object. See Emilie Savage-Smith and Yossef Rappaport, eds. and trans., *An Eleventh-Century Egyptian Guide to the Universe: The Book of Curiosities* (Leiden, 2014).

5. Alka Patel, 'Communities and Commodities: Western India and the Indian Ocean, Eleventh–Fifteenth Centuries', *Ars Orientalis* 34 (2007), 7–17.

6. Close similarities for the paintings in the manuscript come from locations including Kashmir and the northwest Indian courts of the late eighteenth century. For Kashmir, see the Rajaur *Shahnamah* in Barbara Schmitz, 'Painting in Kashmir in the Eighteenth Century', in *Objects, Images, Stories: Simon Digby's Historical Method*, ed. Francesca Orsini (New Delhi, 2022). A sun insignia on the outer back binding in gold evokes Rajput symbols of power; however, it may not be original to the codex.

7. I call this manuscript the St Andrews book throughout this chapter. The circumstances of precisely how and when this manuscript entered the St Andrews collection require further study. A note on the verso of an end flyleaf states that it is 'probably the volume referred to in the University Court Minute of 17 March 1932. It was intimated that M. Le Maitre, St. Salvator's [Hall at St Andrews], had presented to the University Library a manuscript Persian volume with illustrations.' A page of Persian calligraphy on the second flyleaf dated 1263 AH/1846 CE might indicate a *terminus ante quem* for the book. A note on the first flyleaf states that it was conserved and rebound in 1965.

8. A paratextual note indicates the first text's name, see St Andrews MS32(o) f. 3b. More commonly known as the *Ḥayat al-Hayawan* (Life of Animals), al-Damiri's *'Aja'ib al-Dahr* survives as an alphabetical compendium of the animals in the Qur'an. Its adaptation, the *'Ayn al-Ḥayat*, was composed by al-Damāmīnī, an Egyptian who travelled to Yemen and completed his work in Gujarat in 1420. See Fuat Sezgin and Mazin 'Amawi, *Kamalāddīn Muḥammad Ibn Mūsā ad-Damīrī (d. 808/1405) and His Kitāb Ḥayat al-ḥayawān: Texts and Studies* (Frankfurt, 2001) on the former Arabic text, and *Kitaab <mark>'Ayn al-Hayat li</mark>-Muhammad bin Abi Bakr al-Damamini: Mukhtasar Kitab Hayat al-Hayawan al-kubra lil-Damiri* (Riyadh, 2014) for the second text.

9. Christopher Bahl, 'Histories of Circulation: Sharing Arabic Manuscripts across the Western Indian Ocean, 1400–1700', PhD thesis, SOAS, University of London 2018, 76–114, summarizes his career in detail.

10. Cosmographies were adapted into Persian in the sultanate world. See Vivek Gupta, 'How Persianate Is It? A World-Making Book Transcreated from Iraq to India', in *Persian Cultures of Power and the Entanglement of the Afro-Eurasian World*, ed.

Matthew P. Canepa (Los Angeles, CA, 2023), 239–40, and 'Remapping the World in a Fifteenth-Century Cosmography: Genres and Networks between Deccan India and Iran', *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 59:2 (2021), 152n11.

11. See Karin Rührdanz, 'Zakariyyā al-Qazwīnī on the Inhabitants of the Supralunar World: From the First Persian Version (659/1260–61) to the Second Arabic Redaction (678/1279–80)', in *The Intermediate Worlds of Angels: Islamic Representations of Celestial Beings in Transcultural Contexts*, ed. Sara Kuehn, Stefan Leder and Hans-Peter Pokel (Beirut, 2019), 384–402.

12. For anthologies see David Roxburgh, 'The Aesthetics of Aggregation: Persian Anthologies of the Fifteenth Century', *Princeton Papers: Interdisciplinary Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2001), 119–42, and Kathryn Babayan, *The City as Anthology: Eroticism and Urbanity in Early Modern Isfahan* (Stanford, CA, 2021). For albums see Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600: From Dispersal to Collection* (New Haven, CT, 2005).

13. On geography see Travis Zadeh, *Mapping Frontiers across Medieval Islam: Geography, Translation, and the 'Abbāsid Empire* (London, 2011), and on cosmography, see Persis Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos in Medieval Islam* (New Haven, CT, 2011).

14. St Andrews MS32(o) f. 93a.

15. The manuscript is notably unfinished on ff. 30b–33b, 39b–40a, 49b, 60b–77a, 82a, 88b, 108a-b, 124a-b, 125b–132b. All paintings in the manuscript appear as the product of a single workshop or painter; however, one full-page painting on folio 77b, showing a royal elephant fight, departs from the rest of the illustrations as it is far more finished. Sketches of six elephants on the folio's recto attest to how the painting may have inspired a later viewer. I distinguish textual genre from manuscript genre as a method of studying these text-objects as wholes. See Vivek Gupta, 'Remapping the World in a Fifteenth-Century Cosmography'.

16. Ainsely Cameron's work on the Truelove and Harris collection is one case of thinking about finish in Indian painting. See her *Drawn from Courtly India: The Howard Truelove and Conley Harris Collection* (Philadelphia, PA, 2015).

17. Vidya Dehejia and Peter Rockwell, *The Unfinished: Stone Carvers at Work in the Indian Subcontinent* (New Delhi, 2016).

18. St Andrews MS32(o) f. 129a. Folio 129b was also meant to show the wonders of the Indian sea and depicts the sketches of four aquatic animals.

19. Lambourn, *Abraham's Luggage*, demonstrates the potential of a micro-study of a single luggage list from the Geniza archive and the presences and absences the list proffers to historians.

20. Travis Zadeh, *Wonders and Rarities: The Marvelous Book That Traveled the World and Mapped the Cosmos* (Cambridge, MA, 2023), 20–23, on wonder in this period, and Nebahat Avcıoğlu and Finbarr Barry Flood, 'Introduction: Globalizing Cultures: Art and Mobility in the Eighteenth Century', *Ars Orientalis* 39 (2010), 7–38.

21. Zadeh, *Wonders and Rarities*, 20–3. For this premodern understanding of wonder see also Michelle Karnes, *Medieval Marvels and Fictions in the Latin West and Islamic World* (Chicago, 2022), 1–26.

22. For the earlier corpus of natural histories or cosmographies see Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos*.

23. Avcıoğlu and Flood, 'Introduction: Globalizing Cultures', and Chanchal Dadlani and Holly Shaffer, 'The Mughals, the Marathas, and the Refracted Long Eighteenth Century: A Dialogue', *Journal18* 12 (Fall 2021).

24. Elizabeth Thelen, *Urban Histories of Rajasthan: Religion, Politics and Society (1550–1800)* (London, 2022).

25. Jinah Kim calls the palm-leaf layout the *pothi*, which is a Hindi and Sanskrit word for book. See Kim, *Garlands of Visions: Color, Tantra, and a Material History of Indian Painting* (Oakland, CA, 2021), 5–7; Tyler Williams, "If the Whole World Were Paper…A History of Writing in the North Indian Vernacular," *History and Theory* 57 no. 4 (December 2018): 81-101. See also Francesca Orsini, *East of Delhi: Multilingual Literary Culture and World Literature* (New York, 2023), 24–5; Nachiket Chanchani and Jahnabi Barooah Chanchani, *The Amruśataka and the Lives of Indian Love Poems* (Mumbai, 2022), 31–36, is a recent study of an entire illustrated manuscript in this layout, and Vivek Gupta, 'How Persianate Is It?', 243–5, is a discussion of these exchanges in layout.

26. The most thorough analysis of this painting and others from its context appears in John Stratton Hawley, *Sūrdās: Poet, Singer, Saint* (New Delhi, 2018), 205–304.

27. For a detailed analysis of pictorial planes in Rajput painting see Molly Emma Aitken, *The Intelligence of Tradition in Rajput Court Painting* (New Haven, CT, 2010), 18–21. Putting water bodies at the edges of pages also resonates with the cartographic sensibilities of the *Anīs al-Ḥujjāj* pilgrimage manual. See Nancy Um, 'From Surat to Jidda: Picturing the Western Indian Ocean Port City', in *The Seas and Mobility of Islamic Art*, ed. Radha Dalal, Sean Roberts and Jochen Sokoly (New Haven, CT, 2021), 188–94.

28. St Andrews MS32(o) f. 119b.

29. Colonial hats appear in a scroll studied by Dipti Khera, see *The Place of Many Moods: Udaipur's Painted Lands and India's Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ, 2020), 152, figure 5.3. See also Khera, 'Arrivals at Distant Lands: Artful Letters and the Entangled Mobilities in the Indian Ocean Littoral', in *The Nomadic Object: The Challenge of World for Early Modern Religious Art*, ed. Mia Mochizuki and Christine Göttler (Boston, 2018), 576.

30. Khera, *The Place of Many Moods*, 61–5.

31. Ibid., 147–62, and 'Marginal, Mobile, Multilayered: Painted Invitation Letters as Bazaar Objects in Early Modern India', *Journal18* 1 (Spring 2016), www.journal18. org/527.

32. St Andrews MS32(o) ff. 104b–105a. See also ff. 99b–100a, 100a–101b, 117b–118a, 118b–119a. The unfinished ff. 127b–128a appear to be planned as such too.

33. St Andrews MS32(o) ff. 99b–100a.

34. Khera, *The Place of Many Moods*, 148–52.

35. Zakariyyāʾ ibn Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, *ʿAjāʾib al-Makhlūqāt wa Gharāʾib al-Mawjūdāt*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1848), 112–13; Süleymaniye Library Istanbul, Ms. Fatih 4147 f. 31a.

36. Samuel Lasman's work on the figure of the dragon in Persian literature furthers our understanding of how it propels narrative. See 'Predation, Mortality, and Alexander's Dragons', *Alexander's Monsters*, paper delivered at the British Library, 27 January 2023.

37. The sections on the Western Sea in the Arabic and Persian versions of Qazwini's cosmography do not contain the island of the dragon. See al-Qazwīnī, *ʿAjāʾib al-Makhlūqāt*, 123–7, Süleymaniye Fatih 4147 ff. 34b–35a. The St Andrews manuscript has four other entries showing dragons, and in three cases they ravage islands. See St Andrews MS32(o) ff. 103a, 111a and 112b–113a. The fourth image occurs on f. 29b where the story of an island may be implicit.

38. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MSS cod. arab. 464 f. 63a for the earliest image, and British Library, Or 1621 f. 137b for an image made in the Deccan, *c.* 1625–50. The Qazwini corpus also includes images of Iskandar enthroned for this entry. See British Library, Or 14140 f. 35b.

39. St Andrews MS32(o) f. 29b.

40. Vidya Dehejia, 'On Modes of Narration in Early Buddhist Art', *Art Bulletin* 72 (1990), 385–386.

41. Naval Kishore Press in Lucknow produced a lithographed version of the 'Adil Shahi translation of Qazwini's cosmography in 1866. See British Library 306.32.E.20. For a later manuscript copy of the 'Adil Shahi translation made around the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century, see National Library of Medicine, Washington, DC, P29.

42. Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos*, 54–57.

43. National Library of Medicine, P29 ff. 37b–38a.

44. St Andrews MS32(o) ff. 99b–100a.

45. National Library of Medicine, P29 ff. 37b–38a.

46. Fascinatingly this seems to resonate with a more contemporary context. A single folio sold by Alexis Renard Gallery, Paris, from the Armen Tokatlian and Pierre Le Tan collections in 2021, measuring 24 × 12.5 cm, shows how a later maker or seller cut up only the images from an Indian wonders-of-creation cosmography and put them on a single folio, so as to satisfy a buyer.

47. For the entry on Hind, see Zakariyyā' ibn Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, *Āthār al-Bilād wa Akhbār al-'Ibād*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1849), 84–87. For entries on the Indian Ocean, see al-Qazwīnī, *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt*, 110–14; Süleymaniye Fatih 4147 ff. 30b–31b.

48. al-Qazwīnī, *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt*, 110–14; Süleymaniye Fatih 4147 ff. 30b–31b.

49. The interrupting entry describes an island with peculiar men with fangs and human faces. The two entries on Sarandip fall on St Andrews MS32(o) ff. 117b–118a, and 119a.

50. St Andrews MS32(o) f. 117b.

51. St Andrews MS32(o) f. 119a.

52. For other large-scale images from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Islamicate manuscripts related to wonder, see Berlekamp, *Wonder, Image, and Cosmos,* 106–8, and A. C. S. Peacock, 'A Seljuq Occult Manuscript and Its World: MS Paris Persan 174', in *The Seljuqs and Their Successors: Art, Culture and History*, ed. Sheila Canby, Deniz Beyazit and Martina Rugiadi (Edinburgh, 2020), 163–79. Suitable comparisons that come to mind are images of the Prophet Muhammad's sandal relics, which have been popular in manuscript culture and printed media. Finbarr Barry Flood, *Technologies de dévotion dans les arts de l'Islam: pèrelins, reliques et copies* (Paris, 2019), 141–145.

53. British Library, Or 1621 f. 136b.

54. See the *Tarjumah-i 'Aja'ib al-Makhluqat*, National Museum, New Delhi, Ms. 58.48 f. 96a.

55. Ronit Ricci, *Banishment and Belonging: Exile and Diaspora in Sarandib, Lanka, and Ceylon* (Cambridge, 2019), 125.

56. Ibid.

57. Today, Adam's peak survives as a multi-confessional site of pilgrimage revered by Hindus (as Shiva's footprint), Buddhists (as Buddha's), Christians and Muslims. See ibid., 132–133.

58. During this period, Hindustani travellers to Burma made marvels of the new Buddhist topographies they navigated in Persian. These tales of Buddhist wonders

across the Indian Ocean in Southeast Asia may have guided the rendering of this image. See Arash Khazeni, *The City and the Wilderness: Indo-Persian Encounters in Southeast Asia* (Berkeley, CA, 2020), 21–72.

59. The manuscript's artists clearly knew of Hindu practices and visual culture. For an island called the Island of the Monastery (Jazīrat al-Dayr), the text describes this monastery as close to Constantinople and that pilgrims travel there to pray all day. The painters depict the site of pilgrimage as a Śaivite *liṅga* enshrined in a domed square chamber with Hindu priests bestowing garlands upon visitors and devotees bringing offerings (*prasād*) for their encounter with the *liṅga*. See St Andrews MS32(o) 106a.

60. Khera, *The Place of Many Moods*, 31, figure 1.3.

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