

Fantastic in the Light of Historical Heritage: The Book of Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar of the sixth century AH corresponding to the twelfth century AD

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Introduction:

The Islamic historical heritage contains an infinite number of compositions that are characterized by their diversity and their hybridity in terms of the magnificent style of introducing historical material. It is no wonder that we find some of these compositions are being relied, in their narrations, on the methodology of the annuals, topics or military campaigns, and some others direct their attention to individuals, classes or families, in addition to lands as a result of the natural link between time and place in the study of historical event.

These writings contain rich and varied historical material to the point where they rise to be a source of renewed studies that are aimed at researching and scrutinizing their texts in the light of the data presented. This cultural inventory has not lost sight of the early authors' interest in recording all that is "Fantastic", whether they saw it with their own eyes or knew it by receiving it from others, which is evident in the contents of their books, and sometimes it is explicitly manifested in the titles of their compositions.

The notion of Fantastic and extraordinary have won the attention of scholars in terms of its significance and function in the cultural heritage, including this study, which strives to complete this episode of studies, taking into account the paramount importance of initiating a serious attempt to reveal the concept of Fantastic and its manifestations in the Islamic historical heritage through a book in which this term manifested in its title. This book goes by the name of *Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar: Description of Mecca, Medina, Egypt and Morocco*. This book dates back to the sixth century AH. corresponding to the twelfth century AD. and it was honored to be published by Dr. Saad Zaghoul Abdel Hamid in 1958 who decorated it with meaningful comments.

Research Problem:

The problem of this study is based primarily on the following research questions listed as follows:

- What is meant by "Fantastic" and how does it relate to the term of "unfamiliar" and other similar terms?
- What is the rank of the term Fantastic in the Islamic intellectual heritage?
- What is the cognitive classification of the book "Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar" within the Islamic intellectual heritage? How was the author's approach to writing about the Fantastic? What are the manifestations of the Fantastic in the book?

The importance of the research:

This research is significant due to the importance of the historical heritage, which is full of cultural legacies and monuments that should be highlighted and marked through the historical method.

Research Objectives:**The research aims to achieve the following objectives:**

1. To shed light on the concept of the Fantastic and how it relates to words of similar significance.
2. To highlight the status of the Fantastic in the Islamic intellectual heritage through the book of "*Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar: Description of Mecca, Medina, Egypt and Morocco*".

Research boundaries:

A) Spatial boundaries: Mecca, Medina, Egypt and Morocco;

B) Temporal boundaries: They include what the author of the book, who lived in the sixth century AH. corresponding to the twelfth century AD, saw and heard.

Research Methodology:

The research employs the historical methodology that is based on applying extrapolation, critique and analysis of historical texts to the book to reach the manifestations of the Fantastic in the historical heritage.

Research Chapterization:

The study will be divided into three basic chapters. The first chapter deals with the definition of the concept of the Fantastic in language and meaning and the status of the Fantastic in the Islamic intellectual heritage. The second chapter deals with the study of definition in the light of the book "*Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar: Description of Mecca, Medina, Egypt and Morocco*", its author and the author's approach to mention the Fantastic in the book. The last chapter deals with the study of the manifestations of the Fantastic in the historical heritage in the light of the book of "*Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar: Description of Mecca, Medina, Egypt and Morocco*". This chapter is the practical part of the study which will trace the phenomenon of the Fantastic in the book and analyze it to reach the manifestations of the Fantastic in the historical heritage.

First: A. Definition of the concept of the Fantastic in language and meaning:

The definition of Fantastic in language: The word Fantastic appeared in the dictionaries of the Arabic language in various derivations. It is derived from the linguistic root (ب - ج - ع). The most prominent of these derivations came in the *Dictionary of Language Standards*, which defined this term as follows: "the Fantastic is to exhibit a sort of wonder from something, which is unfamiliar, especially if it becomes great and enormous. Fantastic and unfamiliar always call for exclamation and surprise. Extreme unfamiliarity goes beyond the limits of Fantastic. It is said that Fantastic is the person who shows the features of Fantastic. Extreme Fantastic is the intensity of the Fantastic. It is said he gets surprised and marveled at what he sees.

The words Fantastic and extraordinary are apparently one word that makes no difference. Thus, the Fantastic will be as extraordinary as it triggers wonder in the self.

The linguists used the word Fantastic to skew a number of other words, which indicates their connection in meaning. Through these words, we can learn more about the concept of Fantastic. Of these words, there are words, such as: unfamiliar, adorable, superstition, funny, old-fashioned, primitive and supernatural.

The notion of Fantastic relates to the effect it has on the soul, such as wonder, arrogance and glorification of something unusual. In the book named "*Taj al-Arus Min Jawahir al-Qamus*", (crown of the bride from jewels of the dictionary) the Fantastic is defined as: "a puzzlement that an individual might feel for reasons that are necessarily due to his/her ignorance of something. But it is not a reason for itself, but a state according to who knows the reason and who does not know it? Therefore, people say: Everything is Fantastic."

The meaning of the word Fantastic in the inherent derivative lexicon named "*Alma'jm Alashtkaki Almousl*" is that it refers to the strangeness of the thing, and that Fantastic is strange and unusual and that extraordinary is very strange for coming out of what they are familiar with.

Based on the foregoing, we conclude that the concept of Fantastic is a relative concept according to the historical age, and that what was known at one time that falls within the basics of the concept of Fantastic may lose this characteristic at a later time. What struck the ancestor might not be surprising for the successor! Therefore, when examining the concept of Fantastic, it is necessary to determine its historical framework and to get far away from generalization and exclusivity to a single model to explore the manifestations of the Fantastic in the chosen historical text.

B. The status of Fantastic in the Islamic intellectual heritage:

The origin of the word heritage from "inheritance", because it is derived from inherited. Here, the letter "و" has been replaced to "ت T" because it is one of the letters of the substitution because the majority of linguists believe that the letter "tied taa (T)" is heavy at the beginning of the word. This word means every old thing inherited from parents and grandparents. The Dictionary of Contemporary Arabic states that: "All what our ancestors left of scientific, artistic and literary legacies, whether material such as books and monuments, and others, or moral views and patterns and customs of civilization transmitted through generation after generation."

The concept of heritage and Fantastic has been mentioned in the Qur'an in a number of verses which has drawn attention to their importance and status in the human psyche and in the evaluation of events and people.

The concept of Fantastic had an impact on the Islamic intellectual heritage, where it was abounded with many titles of literature in various types of sciences, whether religious, literary, historical or geographic, which was interested in monitoring the Fantastic in its science, such as the books "Aleajayib Alarbe" and "Eajayib Albahr" by Ibn al-Kalbi (d. 204 AH), The Book of "Aleajayib" by Abu Al-Fayyad Thouban Al-Akhmami, known as the Egyptian Dhul Nun (d. 245 AH.), the book of "Eajayib Aldunya" by Masoudi (d. 346 AH), "Eajayib Albuldan" by Abu Dalaf al-Yanbu'i (d. 385 AH), the book "Almerb Ean Bed Eajayib

Almaghrib" by Abu Hamid Mohammed Almazni Granati (d. 565 AH), and " Eajayib Almalakut" by Ksaai (d. 5 AH), and others.

We find a lot of literary compositions in our Islamic heritage, which included the notion of the Fantastic in its content, although not explicitly mentioned in its title, for example: Resalat Al-Ghufran, meaning The Epistle of Forgiveness composed by Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'arri (d. 446 AH) and Risālat al-tawābi' wa-al-zawābi' composed by Ibn Shahīd al-Andalusī (d. 426 AH). It turns out that this early interest in writing down all the Fantastic is due to not only the influence of the Holy Quran in drawing attention to that psychological feeling, but also to the historians' fear of losing the news of the Fantastic and unfamiliar.

Second: A) A brief summary of the book of Clairvoyance in the Fantastic of the Lands:

The study was based on the book of *Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar*: Description of Mecca, Medina, Egypt and Morocco, published and commented by Saad Zaghoul Abdul Hamid, the first edition, House of Public Cultural Affairs, Baghdad, 1986.

There are those who classified this book among the books of geographical heritage on the basis that it takes care of the mention of countries and their location, climate and topography. However, this is not true based on the definition of the author of his book, where he pointed out in his introduction that what he composed is a collection of news, stories and jokes and that authorship in history is the best that is offered to the nobles to take advantage of the biographies of the former Arabs and foreigners and knowing each ancient heritage. "Otherwise, the other would not have been informed of the former and would not know the news of sects and countries."

The book of *Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar* is the intellectual heritage of the Almohad State, founded by Muhammad ibn Toumert (died near 524 AH / 1130 AD), whose borders were widened and included at its height Morocco and Andalusia. The book was written during the reign of the Almohad Prince Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Yusuf al-Mansur (554-595 AH / 1160-1199 AD).

Unfortunately, the name of the author has not been identified, and we do not know about him except what is deduced from the occasional references in the book as it is likely that he is from Marrakesh because of the abundance of information he mentioned about Marrakesh and the accuracy of details about it.

B) The author's methodology in the mentioning of Fantastic in the book:

The author stated in his introduction that his method of authorship is based on collecting various texts and narrations and then criticizing and verifying their validity, then proving what they wrote down in the book and deleting false news. In this regard, the author said in his book: "I meant in so many occasions to scrutinize and verify the facts included and disregarded the false news."

It is noteworthy that the author, while referring to the Fantastic in his book, followed various methods to indicate its validity and its commitment to the method set by him, which is that he would not write down in the book only what was provided true in terms of occurrence or existence under concrete evidences.

One of the most prominent methods in this is to cite the Holy Quranic verses and Hadith proved narrated by the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, in addition to the statements of the competent scholars and poetic verses as well as inference on the basis of the experience of famous Islamic world.

One of the methods of the author to demonstrate the validity of what he mentioned is to refer some Fantastic news to oral sources described as trustworthy. Examples include: "A trustworthy person informed me," "A trustworthy person told me," say, "Trustworthy people informed me," and "A trustworthy trader told me". It may refer when referring to oral sources to their knowledgeable or social status so as to mark their narration from the very beginning as valid in order to avoid any incident of permeating doubts to the souls of readers which might result in their hesitation in believing their validity.

Moreover, the criterion of familiarity is one of the criteria adopted by the author in his methodology to authorship. This criterion requires any incident or narration to be commonly and unanimously known to and agreed by the concerned people. He pointed out that: "I did not mention anything of what was written in my book, except for the things unanimously agreed by the majority, eyewitnesses and people who received these things by hearing that they are valid," and said: "It is common and undeniable."

It is also clear the author's keenness to show his interest in thinking and reasoning by providing evidence and argument in the news. Based on this, we have observed the diversity of the author's methodology in the narration of information which arouses enthusiasm in the souls of readers and keeps boredom away from them, with a focus on believing events without repeated need for interpretation because they are Fantastic of which it is difficult to capture their essence.

Third: The manifestations of the Fantastic in the light of the book *Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar*:

By tracking what was mentioned in the book *Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar* and extrapolating the texts that mentioned the notion of "Fantastic" and the words indicating it, we found that the "Fantastic" was represented in the book as follows:

1. Fantastic with respect to the ancient cities:

The author was interested in referring to the ancient cities, which described the depth of their chronological history as "eternal". We see this in many places.

2. Fantastic with respect to urbanism:

The author talked about the physical evidence of previous civilizations, whether clear and specific such as mosques, churches, palaces and towers, or mentioned in a general term towards the word buildings, blocks and monuments.

3. Fantastic with respect to natural resources:

In the book *Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar*, there are many geographical indications related to the terrain forms of mountains, deserts, forests, rivers and springs, in addition to the natural resources related to them, including plant, animal and mineral wealth.

4. Fantastic with respect to persons:

The author of the book *Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar* drew the attention of the reader to some people by pointing out their ability to bring the Fantastic in their works.

5. Fantastic with respect to people's habits:

The book mentioned the Fantastic in customs and cultural heritage of some societies.

6. Fantastic with respect to the world of jinn and witches:

The jinn and the associated Fantastic had a clear presence in the book *Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar*.

7. Fantastic with respect to arousing meditation:

Meditation invites us to reconsider the familiar and the unfamiliar as reflection and meditation are the key to science. The author was interested in the call to meditate on the Fantastic and the types of creatures and their effects.

8. Fantastic to Glorify the Almohad State:

The era in which the book was written is the era of Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Yusuf al-Mansur Almohad (554-595 AH / 1160-1199 AD), it was one of the finest times of the Almohad State. In this era, the most famous military tournaments in the regions of Morocco and Andalusia were achieved after they had claimed victory in the battle of Ark.

The author did not take away the pragmatic attitudes by linking the Fantastic to the achievements of the Almohad state. For example, the author recounted the victory of Salah El Din over the Crusaders and that was due to the blessing of his contact with the Almohads.

The author described Marrakesh, saying: "This charming city was honored to have this dear thing and became more famous as it had witnessed the construction of high-rise buildings and a magnificent lighthouse", adding that: "This charming area has been blessed with chains of shops that are like a mirror that reflects the Fantastic of the world's parks, especially in fertile years and moderate seasons. This is besides a coastline of about two miles long and about a mile full of human beings: here are the canyons in the valley that sings with their passengers, and here is the lighthouse overlooking them and delicious fruits, olive groves and vineyards and the domes for Sadat,'s sitting, may Allah Almighty bless him with victory. This is the mosque and the lighthouse that stands out above the city limits." The author further added that: "All these came with the blessing of this man's response to the obedience of the Imam - may Allah Almighty bless his life - who sent the messengers to speak of the priceless resources found in those countries."

In the light of the earlier manifestations of the Fantastic in the book of *Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar*, it is clear to us that the author did not have his clear limits in determining the essence of the notion of the Fantastic as he wrote down his information randomly in various places. However, this cannot be limited to the above, but the book included references to the Fantastic in its broadest sense of mentioning the blessings of some personalities and reference to the earliest things and people, and talked about the reasons for the naming of certain geographical positions.

The mention of the concept of "Fantastic" has created enthusiastic moments punctuated by different psychological reactions, some positivity towards feelings of suspense and pleasure or negative feelings such as alarm, intimidation and disgust.

Conclusion:

After this tour in the book of *Alaistibsar Fi Eajayib Al'amsar*, several points are worth highlighting:

- It is clear to us that there are many cultural accumulations and elements of civilization inherited by the inhabitants of the lands mentioned in the book. This is due to the fact that those areas have seen multiple civilizations.
- These wonders and oddities reflected some of the rituals, customs and historical facts known to some nations.
- The book is full of diverse information, including religious, historical and geographical areas. The presentation of the scientific materials included and the mentioning of the Fantastic narrations that fly with the reader into a space far from reality.
- The author used multiple methods to indicate the validity of what is mentioned in the book and cite all that shows confidence and prompt the reader to believe and to avoid any doubt.
- The author did not have clear boundaries in determining the nature of the Fantastic and it was manifested in a random manner in various places, thus, they became diverse according to the historical and geographical context of the book.

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