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Introduction

A jackal who had fallen into a vat of indigo dye decided to exploit his marvelous new appearance and declared himself king of the forest. He appointed the lions and other animals as his vassals, but took the precaution of having all his fellow jackals driven into exile. One day, hearing the howls of the other jackals in the distance, the indigo jackal's eyes filled with tears and he too began to howl. The lions and the others, realizing the jackal's true nature, sprang on him and killed him.

This is one of India's most widely known fables, and it is hard to imagine that anyone growing up in an Indian cultural milieu would not have heard it. The indigo jackal is as familiar to Indian childhood as are Little Red Riding Hood or Snow White in the English-speaking world. The story has been told and retold by parents, grandparents, and teachers for centuries in all the major Indian languages, both classical and vernacular. Versions of the collection in which it first appeared, the *Pañcatantra*, are still for sale at street stalls and on railway platforms all over India. The indigo jackal and other narratives from the collection have successfully colonized the contemporary media of television, CD, DVD, and the Internet.

I will begin by sketching the history and development of the various families of *Pañcatantra* texts where the story of the indigo jackal first appeared, starting with Pūrṇabhadrā's recension, the version on which this inquiry is based. This is followed by a review of previous scholarship on the *Pañcatantra*, including attempts to ascribe "meaning" to the text. I

conclude this opening chapter with an outline of the questions that I intend to address in this study: Why did the indigo jackal fall from power, and why was his demise inevitable? What social forces are at work here? What discourses give shape and structure to this narrative? What enables these discursive statements to function effectively?

The traditional account of the *Pañcatantra*'s origins given in Pūrṇabhadra's recension begins in a city called Mahilāropya. There lived a king by the name of Amaraśakti, whose three foolish sons were averse to education. When the king asked his advisers what could be done to awaken the princes' intellectual faculties, they replied that the mastery of grammar alone took twelve years; only then could one begin to study the treatises on spiritual and worldly affairs. They added that as life was short and the obstacles to learning were many, some more expedient path should be found. Accordingly, they recommended an elderly *brāhmaṇa* by the name of Viṣṇuśarman who was famed for his learning. Viṣṇuśarman was duly summoned, and the king asked him to educate the boys in return for a grant of 100 parcels of land. The *brāhmaṇa* replied that, as an octogenarian for whom sensual pleasures no longer held any attraction, he had no desire for wealth. But he accepted the king's proposal and undertook to educate the princes in the science of worldly conduct by amusing them with stories. Asking that the date be noted down, Viṣṇuśarman declared that if he had not fulfilled his promise within six months, "then it would befit your majesty to show me your buttocks" (PT 2.9–10). Amazed at the *brāhmaṇa*'s unconventional pledge, the king nevertheless placed the princes in his care. Viṣṇuśarman took the boys to his own home, where he composed five books, or *tantras*:

1. "Separation of friends," in which a jackal manipulated the friendship between a lion and a bull to enhance his own position
2. "Winning of friends," illustrating the collaboration of a crow, a mouse, a turtle, and a deer
3. "The crows and the owls," in which a colony of owls was led to destruction by a crow who pretended to be their ally
4. "Loss of one's gains," in which a monkey, lured from a tree by a crocodile, saved himself by trickery
5. "Ill-considered actions," in which a misguided barber, expecting a miraculous reward, struck and killed some mendicant monks.

Each *tantra* serves as a frame in which numerous substories and proverbial verses are embedded. Having studied these stories, we are told, the princes

gained an unparalleled mastery over worldly conduct, and “from that time onward, this treatise by the name of *Pañcatantra*, which has as its purpose the edification of the young, has spread across the surface of the Earth” (PT 2.15–16).

As we shall see, this is hardly an exaggeration.¹ By the sixth century CE the *Pañcatantra* had been translated into Pahlavi at the court of the Persian King Khusru Anushirwan (Chosroes I) at Ctesiphon in modern Iraq. The Pahlavi version was translated into Syriac, the sacred language of Christianity in the areas now incorporated in southeastern Turkey, Syria, and Palestine. The Pahlavi text, now lost, was translated into Arabic in about 750 CE by Ibn al-Muqaffa^c, a Persian Zoroastrian convert to Islam, under the title *Kalilah wa Dimnah*. This work, the first masterpiece of Arabic narrative literature, enjoyed great popularity and is known from numerous manuscripts and printed versions. The Arabic version was of central importance to the spread of the *Pañcatantra*, because it was the source, directly or indirectly, of all further translations into the languages of the Middle East and Europe. *Kalilah wa Dimnah* spread throughout the Arabic world, and by the end of the eleventh century, the Arabic had given rise to a Greek translation known as *Stefanites and Ichmelates* by Symeon, son of Seth, a Jewish physician at the Byzantine court (Jacobs 1888: xxv; Sjöberg 1962; Condylis-Bassoukos 1995).

Persian translations of the Arabic dating from the twelfth century culminated in an important version of the tales known as *Anwāri subhailī* (later translated into English under the title “Lights of Canopus”), which spread back to India, and to Afghanistan, Georgia, and Turkey. By the twelfth or thirteenth century, Symeon’s Greek version had given rise to an Old Slavonic (Bulgarian) translation. A century later, the Arabic *Kalilah wa Dimnah* had been translated into Old Spanish by the college of Jewish translators, who specialized in Arabic works of science, at the court of King Alfonso the Good in Toledo. This marks the first appearance of the text in Western Europe (Jacobs 1888: xxv).² In about 1270, a Hebrew version from the same or a similar source was translated into Latin by John of Capua (in southern Italy), a Jewish convert to Christianity, under the title *Directorium vitae humanae* (“Book of rules for human life”).

By the fifteenth century this version had been translated into German by the cleric Antonius von Pforr of Rottenburg, near Stuttgart, as the *Buch der Beispiele der alten Weisen* or “Book of examples of the old ways.” His style is said to have been “of great vigor and beauty” (Hertel 1915: ix). This, incidentally, was one of the first books in Europe to be printed with the newly introduced technology of movable type. It was highly

popular in medieval times, and appeared in twenty-one editions between 1480 and 1860.

The first Czech and French versions date from the sixteenth century, and in 1552, Anton Francesco Doni's Italian translation of *Directorium vitae humanae* appeared in Venice under the title *La Moral Filosofia*. This was the source of the first English version of the tales, translated by Sir Thomas North, and published as *Morall Philosophie of Doni* in 1570. His retelling of the stories has been described as a "gem of racy Tudor English" (Lanman in Hertel 1915: ix).

An influential French translation of the Persian *Anwāri Suhailī* by G. Gaulmin and Dāwūd Sa'īd, entitled *Livre des lumières ou la Conduite des roys*, appeared in 1644, and was reprinted in 1698 as *Fables de Pilpay*. The *Anwāri Suhailī* also gave rise, via a Turkish intermediary, to another French translation entitled *Contes et Fables indiennes de Bidpai et de Lokman* (1724–1778). The name Pilpay or Bidpai found in this title, which probably first appeared in the Arabic translation as Baydaba, is the name of the ascetic who was the narrator of these tales in all subsequent non-Indian versions, occupying the role originally filled by Viṣṇuśarman in the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra*. Since the time of Benfey, there has been speculation on the meaning of this name (Benfey 1966 [1859]: 32). Scholars have repeated—uncritically—the claim that "Bidpai" might be derived from the Sanskrit *vidyāpati*, "master of knowledge," the chief scholar at a court, or perhaps from the common *brāhmaṇa* title *vājapeyi* (see, for example, Olive 1997: xliii). As mentioned earlier, the Pahlavi recension is no longer extant, but in the Syriac translation of that text the ascetic's name is rendered as Bīdūg, which seems even more remote from *vidyāpati*. Whatever it originally meant, the names Bidpai and Pilpay have become intimately associated with the collection in Europe.

Stories akin to those in the *Pañcatantra* reached Southeast Asia at a very early date. A stone relief in the Buddhist temple of Candi Mendut in Central Java (c. 800 CE) clearly depicts Story 1-16 "Two geese and tortoise" (Klokke 1993: 77 and 165). Laotian and Thai versions of the *Pañcatantra* were written no later than 1200 CE (Huilgol 1987: 5), and sometime between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, stories from the *Pañcatantra* appeared in the Old Javanese *Tantri Kāmanandaka* (Zoetmulder 1974: 438). The stories became so popular in Bali that *tantri* became the Balinese word for "fable" (Hooykaas 1929: 10). Stories from the *Pañcatantra* reached Southeast Asia by two separate paths in premodern times: first from South India in their original Hindu form, and later in Islamicized form via Persian and Arabic intermediaries as *Hikajat Kalilah dan Dimnah* (Santoso 1971: 15).

To return to the collection's later development in Europe, the basic stories from the *Pañcatantra* were at one time well known in English. The names of the various versions reflect their different genealogies and the long and twisted paths by which each reached England: *The Fables of Pilpay* (Persian and French), *Lights of Canopus* (Persian), *The Morall Philosophie of Doni* (Hebrew, Latin and Italian), and *Kalilah and Dimnah* (Arabic). Joseph Jacobs, in his introduction to North's translation, notes no fewer than twenty translations into English of the various versions of the stories (Jacobs 1888: xxviii).

The British Library catalog lists nine popular editions of the *Fables of Pilpay* published in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The tales were sufficiently well known for the essayist Charles Lamb to make a passing reference to "Pilpay, or some Indian author" in "The Wedding" (Lamb 1954[1833]: 282). But as popular literature in the English, they have since faded from sight. The British Library lists only three editions from the nineteenth century and none since 1887 (that of F. Warne and Co, publisher of *Peter Rabbit*). Perhaps the public's appetite for fables of this kind was satisfied by a diet of Aesop alone. Free from the *Pañcatantra's* complicated narrative structure, Aesop certainly provides more digestible fare.

The stories from the *Pañcatantra* may have slipped from popularity in the English-speaking world, but they are still recognized elsewhere in Europe. Jean de la Fontaine (1621–1695) published twelve books of fables between 1668 and 1694, containing 238 stories drawn mainly from Aesop and Phaedrus, with a sprinkling of stories from "Pilpay" (La Fontaine 2001: 165). As part of La Fontaine's collection, stories from the *Pañcatantra* are still part of a living tradition in France and other parts of Europe, including Russia.

A recent English translation of a selection of La Fontaine's fables (2001) contains at least three stories which are immediately recognizable from the original *Pañcatantra*. These have reached us through French, Persian, Arabic, and Pahlavi translations of a Sanskrit original. This edition of La Fontaine represents an unbroken literary tradition stretching back at least sixteen centuries. In the process of translation and retelling, introductory chapters and individual stories have been added and subtracted, and the stories have also been tuned to local circumstances. The jackals have become foxes, and dervishes superseded *brāhmaṇas*. In spite of these changes and the stories' peregrinations through many centuries, continents and cultures, their origins in the *Pañcatantra* are often unmistakable, and some are instantly recognizable from their titles alone: "The tortoise and the two ducks," "The ass in the lion's skin," and so forth. Some of the

stories in the *Pañcatantra* are also found in the narratives recounting previous lives of the Buddha known as *Jātaka* tales. As such, they have passed through Buddhist, Hindu, Zoroastrian, Christian, Jaina, Muslim, and Jewish hands.

By the end of the nineteenth century, well before the advent of modern publishing and distribution, the *Pañcatantra* as a whole, in part or as individual stories, was found in translation from Iceland to Bali, and from Mongolia to Ethiopia, in over two hundred versions and in more than fifty languages (Hertel 1914: 451–452). It is little wonder, therefore, that few writers on the subject have been able to resist the cliché that the *Pañcatantra* was the most popular and widely distributed work of literature in the pre-modern world.³ The *Pañcatantra*'s claim to have 'spread across the surface of the Earth' is fully justified.

THE TEXTUAL FAMILIES OF THE SANSKRIT *PAÑCATANTRA*

It is possible, but by no means certain, that there was a single, original Sanskrit text from which all other versions of the *Pañcatantra* are ultimately descended, but no such text has survived. The old doyens of *Pañcatantra* studies, the German, Johannes Hertel (1872–1955), and the American, Franklin Edgerton (1885–1963), believed that there was such an "Ur-text." They also largely agreed that the major Sanskrit versions of the *Pañcatantra* belong to four textual families: the Pahlavi, Southern, *Bṛhatkathā*, and Northwestern traditions. They disagreed on which tradition had primacy, which was closer to the "original," which most faithfully preserved the Ur-text, and they disagreed on the ways in which the various traditions were related to one another. Hertel championed a Northwestern manuscript known as the *Tantrākhyāyika* as the closest to an original *Pañcatantra*. Edgerton, in attempting to reconstruct the original from existing manuscripts, drew more heavily on the Southern *Pañcatantra*. The two competing *stammbäume* may be consulted at Hertel 1912a: 5 and Edgerton 1924: 48. This complicated debate was usefully summarized by Sternbach (1971: 30–31), and was furthered by Geib (1969) and Maten (1980–1981).

The "Core" Features Common to Most Versions

Contemporary theoretical approaches provide a productive new way of looking at the problem of textual families. In exploring the networks of

motifs in Tamil folktales, Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi applied Wittgenstein's metaphor of "family resemblance" to identify stories "held together by overlapping similarities." The motifs in individual stories are "polythetic," or "multiply arranged" (Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi 1997: 111).

Previous studies of the Sanskrit *Pañcatantras* have focused on differences between the various versions. The secondary literature gives the impression that a great gulf exists between the Southern *Pañcatantra* and the *Tantrākhyāyika*, for example; that they were very different texts. I was struck, however, by the great amount that they have in common—the extent to which they share a common "core" set of stories and a similar structure. It is easy to forget that the features which are common to the many varied *Pañcatantras* and which bind them together are much more numerous than those that separate them. We may adapt Eichinger Ferro-Luzzi's approach to yield a novel way of regarding the *Pañcatantra*. It is no longer necessary to define the genre by any single uniting feature, but we may discern among its component members a "family resemblance." As the individual stories are "multiply arranged" within each collection, the *Pañcatantra* genre as a whole also forms a "polythetic network." It may be viewed as a textual system, genre or family in which shared similarities are emphasized, rather than one defined by differences.

Sternbach produced a concordance of stories for the various versions of the *Pañcatantra* in this polythetic network. He identified, in addition to the introductory story (*kathāmukha*), a total of ninety-one stories that appear in one or more of the main Sanskrit versions (Sternbach 1971: 63ff). Based on his concordance, we can readily determine which stories are found in each version. We can also identify a set of stories that occurs in most, if not all, of the early important versions. Sidestepping the debate over which stories are "original" and which are "later interpolations," I will use the term "core stories" to describe this set. These are presented in appendix 1.

While Sternbach's tables are useful for identifying stories with texts, they conceal an important fact about the structure of the stories. Not only is the basic division into five *tantras* common to all versions (except the *Hitopadeśa*); the pattern of embedding specific stories within others is also shared. For example, Story 1-06 "Heron, fishes and crab" is nearly always embedded in Story 1-05 "Crows and serpent." The level of embedding is indicated in appendix 1 by the degree of indentation from the left.

I make no specific claims for the core set, other than it constitutes the "family resemblance" that is shared by many versions. I am not suggesting that it comprises the heart of some "original" *Pañcatantra*; I am

merely using this set as a productive hermeneutic device for comparing the different texts.

In the following summary, I will describe each of the main Sanskrit versions of the *Pañcatantra* in relation to the core set and to the common structure. I will also note the appearance of additional stories, and the transposition of stories from one part of the text to another. This, however, is only part of the picture. The wording and length of individual stories varies considerably from one version to another. The wording of a story, even in two closely related *Pañcatantras*, such as the *textus simplicior* and *ornatior*, may be quite different. Redactors did not always copy a preexisting text word for word. Sometimes it seems as if they intentionally set out to reword every sentence. Even though two versions may contain a similar set of stories, the actual wording of the texts may be radically different.

In all the early versions of the *Pañcatantra* the fourth and fifth *tantras* are much shorter than the first three. In the *Tantrākhyāyika*, for example, the last two *tantras* are barely one-fifth the length of the first three. Even after they were considerably enlarged in later texts such as the *textus simplicior* and *ornatior*, these two sections are still much shorter. Only in the *Hitopadeśa* are all chapters of roughly equal length, but this text is, in any event, marginal to the *Pañcatantra* genre, having abandoned the common fivefold structure in favor of a fourfold one.

Most versions of the *Pañcatantra* have an introduction similar to the one recounted at the beginning of this chapter, which describes how the five *tantras* were created by a *brāhmaṇa* for the sons of a king. As we saw above, the five *tantras* are narrative units of varying length which function as frame-stories for multiple shorter narratives embedded within them. The practice of embedding stories within a narrative framework (as in the *Decameron* or *Canterbury Tales*) is a very common feature of Sanskrit literature. While some scholars have attempted to trace this practice back to the *Vedas* (Witzel 1987, Hämeen-Anttila 2003), it is certainly common in many later genres. The *Mahābhārata*, for example, exists within two levels of framing. The inner framing device is the original recitation of the epic by Vyāsa's pupil Vaiśampāyana at the snake-sacrifice of Janamejaya. This event was witnessed by the *brāhmaṇa* Ugraśravas, who later recounted the event to the ascetics in the Naimiṣa Forest. This constitutes the second level of framing (Hiltebeitel 2001: 92). Embedding of substories within a frame is almost a *sine qua non* for *kathā* literature: the *Vikramacarita*, the *Veṭālapañcaviṃśatikā* and the *Śukasaptati* all follow this pattern. In the later versions of the *Pañcatantra*, the embedding became increasingly intricate. Lanman was moved to lament that Pūrṇabhadra employed the

practice with “a most objectionable freedom and complexity” (Lanman, in Hertel 1915: xiv). Keith found it “highly inconvenient” (Keith 1920: 244). Writing of the frame structure of the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, American author John Barth observed that, “like the complexity of termite tunnels or lymphatic cancer, it is more dismaying than delightful from the human point of view” (Barth 1984: 86). Barth would have enjoyed the *Pañcatantra* even less than the *Kathāsaritsāgara*.

Let us now turn from the overall structure to the individual narrative units. Most embedded stories in the *Pañcatantra* begin when one character recites a verse relevant to the situation at hand. A second character then asks “How is that?,” to which the first responds with a story, concluding with the opening verse. The stories are generally humorous, irreverent, bawdy, and violent. Typically, they show how foolish characters are undone by their own stupidity or how weak characters overcome powerful adversaries by means of cunning. In addition to the *Jātakas*, many of these stories are also found in other collections such as the *Mahābhārata*, *Śukasaptati*, *Vetālapañcaviṃśatikā*, *Vikramacarita*, and in oral traditions.

The proverbial verses which are distributed throughout the prose sections are an important feature of the *Pañcatantra*. These are found in all Sanskrit versions of the *Pañcatantra*, except the two short “*Bṛhatkathā*” versions, which are themselves entirely in verse. The number of verses ranges from about 340 in the Southern *Pañcatantra* to over 1,000 in the *textus simplicior* and Pūrṇabhadra’s recension. Sternbach undertook exhaustive research into what he termed these “*kāvya* portions” of *kathā* literature, and showed that:

many of these stanzas were borrowed from other works of Sanskrit literature, e.g. the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra*, etc., but it is very difficult to prove their origin. They were most often, even if found in other works of Sanskrit literature, not borrowed directly from them, but more likely from the floating mass of oral tradition. (Sternbach 1971: 27)

The Sanskrit Families of the *Pañcatantra*

We will now turn from the common features shared by most of the main versions to examine the four main textual families: the Pahlavi, Southern, *Bṛhatkathā*, and Northwestern traditions. The relationships among members of a given family are relatively clear, but the relationship between the

various families is much more complex and has been the subject of an academic discussion that goes back 100 years. How are the families related to one another? Is one the descendant of another? Are some families the fraternal descendants of a common ancestor? Which is closer to the supposed “original” *Pañcatantra*? These questions are fraught with difficulty, and the answers given by Hertel, Edgerton, Geib, Maten, and Olivelle are still somewhat inconclusive. Indeed, it is no longer clear that this basically philological question is still meaningful. I will therefore restrict myself to providing an outline of each of the main textual families.

The Pahlavi Family

An early version of the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra* (or possibly a compendium of Indian stories containing the *Pañcatantra*) was, as mentioned above, translated into Pahlavi, by a physician named Barzawayh at the court of the Persian king, Khusru Anushirwan.⁴ How long had the *Pañcatantra* been in existence in India before it was translated into Pahlavi? One can only guess, but long enough, we can assume, for it to have become well known, well regarded and at least moderately widespread. Khusru reigned between 531 and 579 CE, and most scholars seem to think that it would have taken at least 200 years for a text to acquire that kind of stature, so they posit a date of 300 CE as a possible *terminus a quo* for the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra*. This is obviously little more than guesswork. It has been observed that the pronunciation of the European words *denarius* and *δηνάρια* changed to *δινάρια* in the second century CE or later. Logically, *Pañcatantra* stories containing the loanword *dīnāra* must also be of the second century CE or later (Lanman’s preface to Hertel 1915: x). Neither the Pahlavi text nor its Sanskrit original are extant, but we know of their existence from later translations into Syriac and Arabic, to which we shall now turn.

The Syriac

The most accessible account of the Syriac version is given by Keith-Falconer (1885). He supplies the following details about its authorship:

‘Ebed-Jesu, bishop of Nisibis, mentions in his catalogue of Syriac writings a certain “*Būd* (or *Bōd*) *pediodeuta*” as having composed various works, principally against the Manichæans and the Markion-

ites. This person, he says, was entrusted with the oversight of the Christians in India and Persia, and lived about 570 A.D. He further adds: “and it was he who translated from the Indian the book of *Kalīlag and Damṇag*.” (Keith-Falconer 1885: xlii–xliii)

Keith-Falconer unhelpfully glosses *pediodeuta* as “a chorepiscopus.” We must turn to the OED to discover that this was a “country or suffragan bishop of the early church appointed to superintend churches at a distance from the city where the bishop of the diocese resided.” This is all we know about Būd, although Keith-Falconer deduced that he was a Persian who knew Syriac, rather than a Syrian who knew Persian. ‘Ebed-Jesu was evidently mistaken about Būd’s role, as he translated the *Pañcatantra* into Syriac from the Pahlavi, not from the “Indian” as he stated. The above quotation and the mention of King Khusru are significant because they are the only firm dates available to us in reference to any early *Pañcatantra* text.

The words *Kalīlag* and *Damṇag* of the title are the Syriac equivalents of *Karaṭaka* and *Damanaka*, the names of the two jackals in the first *tantra* of the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra*.

The Syriac version is known from a single manuscript discovered in a monastery in Mardin, Turkey, in 1870. It was first edited and translated into German by Bickell (1876), and later by Schulthess (1982 [1911]). The Syriac text consists of ten chapters including the five *tantras*. Apart from the fact that these have been reordered and interspersed with material from other sources, the *Pañcatantra* material in the Syriac version closely resembles the core set. This material is similar to the *Tantrākhyāyika* in terms of stories, verses, structure, and length. The *Pañcatantra* material in Schulthess’s edition has been cross-referenced with the parallel passages in the *Tantrākhyāyika*.

There is, however, one important difference between the Syriac and all the Sanskrit versions of the *Pañcatantra*: it takes the form of a discourse between a king named Dabdahram and a philosopher, Nadrab (Keith-Falconer 1885: 1). Each of the ten chapters begins with the king asking the philosopher a question, just as Yudhiṣṭhira questioned Bhīṣma on his bed of arrows in the *Śāntiparvan* of the *Mahābhārata*. Thus the whole *kathāmukha*, which is so characteristic of most Sanskrit versions, is absent. Perhaps this lack of a strong introductory frame-story enticed later authors, such as the creator of the Arabic version (see below), to supply their own. Later versions certainly exhibit a rich variety of introductory sequences to explain how the stories came into existence.

It is not clear when the arrangement of the text as reflected in the Syriac version took place. The tenth chapter, possibly of Persian origin, may have been added after the collection left India. But did Barzawayh acquire a preexisting Sanskrit work that was in effect a compendium of the *Pañcatantra tantras*, three stories from the *Mahābhārata* and the story of “Bilār”? Did he then translate the whole into Pahlavi? Or did he compile the stories from diverse sources into their present form? These questions remain open.

The Arabic

Two centuries after Būd translated the Pahlavi stories into Syriac, ‘Adballah ibn al-Muqaffā’ reworked the Pahlavi translation into an Arabic version under the title *Kalilah wa Dimnah*. As with the Syriac, this title is also a rendering of the names of the two jackals from the first *tantra*, Karāṭaka and Damanaka. Ibn al-Muqaffā’ was born to a noble family in Fars in about 720. He served as secretary to various governors and amassed a considerable fortune. As the result of his involvement in a failed political intrigue in about 756, he died a terrible death: his limbs were cut off one by one and were thrown into a blazing furnace (see *E. J. Brill’s First Encyclopaedia of Islam 1913–1936*, Leiden: E. J. Brill [1987]; and *The Encyclopaedia of Islam New Edition*, Leiden: E. J. Brill [1971]). Ibn al-Muqaffā’ has been described as “one of the most prominent exponents of the intellectual awakening and literary development enjoyed by Arabic prose in the period between the 8th and 11th centuries” (Jallad 2004: 14). *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, the first masterpiece of Arabic narrative literature, enjoyed great popularity and is known from numerous manuscripts and printed versions. I have based the following account on Jallad’s translation (2004).

Kalilah wa Dimnah begins with four chapters of Arabic and Persian origin. The first, written by the translator Ibn al-Muqaffā’, serves as a general introduction, peppered with parables, on the importance of knowledge. The second chapter was written by one ‘Ali ibn al-Shah al-Farisi. Like the *kathāmukha* of the Sanskrit *Pañcatantras*, it provides a fictional account of the book’s origins. It describes how Alexander the Great conquered India and installed a vice-regent to rule in his stead. That appointee was overthrown by a tyrannical king known as Dabshalim. A “Brahmin philosopher” by the name of Baydaba came forward to moderate the king’s behavior, but was imprisoned for his efforts. Dabshalim had a change of heart and engaged Baydaba to write a book of good counsel “to immortalize himself, and to describe the history of his reign” (Jallad 2004: 54). That book was *Kalilah wa Dimnah*. Baydaba feared that the work might be

smuggled out of India to Persia, and suggested that it be locked in the royal treasury. Word of the book eventually reached the Persian king, Khusru Anushirwan, who dispatched his personal physician Barzawayh to obtain a copy.

The third chapter describes Barzawayh's mission to India. He befriended the treasurer and was permitted to translate the book into Persian. Barzawayh returned to Persia and read the precious text before the royal assembly. He would only accept one reward: that the king's vizier, Buzurjmihir ibn al-Bakhtikan, might write a chapter describing Barzawayh's mission. In fact, all Buzurjmihir ibn al-Bakhtikan wrote was a one-sentence introduction to an autobiographical essay by Barzawayh, which constitutes the fourth chapter. It is interesting to note that this chapter also contains the famous story of the "Taste of honey" from the *Mahābhārata* (11.5–6) (Jallad 2004: 76–77).

This long introductory section is followed by six chapters, five of which were the original five Sanskrit *tantras*. Then come three other Indian stories from, or also preserved in, the *Mahābhārata*, which we noted in the Syriac version above, and two of Persian or Indian origin that have apparently dropped out of the Indian repertoire altogether (Keith-Falconer 1885: xxxviii). The final three chapters consist of an Arabic story, one of the embedded stories from the *Pañcatantra* ("The traveler and the goldsmith," i.e., Story 1-09 "Grateful beasts and thankless man") and another story of unknown Indian origin. Some manuscripts include three additional chapters, of Persian and Arabic origin.

In addition to the new prefatory material and the new stories of Middle Eastern origin, a major departure from the core model is the addition of a new section dealing with Dimnah (Damanaka), in which he was put on trial and punished for his duplicity in the first *tantra*. Perhaps Ibn al-Muqaffa', like Nārāyaṇa who compiled the *Hitopadeśa*, felt that the jackal could not be permitted to get away with such perfidy.

The Syriac reads like a translation, but the Arabic is a very loose retelling, and includes many non-Indian elements, such as references to angels and "fearing God" (Jallad 2004: 214, 157). In other respects, the contents of the *Pañcatantra*-derived chapters are very close to the core set.

I have described the Arabic translation in some detail because it was the basis for all subsequent translations in the Middle East and Europe. Unlike the Syriac, which lay sterile and forgotten in a monastic library, the Arabic text went forth and multiplied: it exerted a huge influence through its literary progeny, which not only dispersed north and west, but reached back south and east into India and Southeast Asia.

The Sanskrit Original of the Pahlavi Translation

Despite the rearrangement of the stories and addition of new material, both the Syriac and Arabic versions contain the core set of five *tantras* and the thirty or so embedded stories common to all the older versions of the *Pañcatantra*. This suggests that both the lost Pahlavi version and the lost Sanskrit original on which it was based also contained the core stories and common structure.

As Story 4-07 “Ass in tiger skin” is missing from the third *tantra* in the both the Syriac and Arabic translations, it was therefore probably not in the original Pahlavi version or its Sanskrit precursor. The Pahlavi family is the only branch of the *Pañcatantra* from which this story is missing. The story entitled “The traveler and the goldsmith” (i.e., Story 1-09 “Grateful beasts and thankless man”), which occupies a chapter in its own right in the Arabic, is not found in the core set of *Pañcatantra* stories, but makes an appearance later in Pūrṇabhadra’s recension.

The Southern Family

This family embraces the main versions of the *Pañcatantra* found in southern India and Southeast Asia. The most important member of the family is known as the Southern *Pañcatantra*.

The Southern Pañcatantra

Numerous manuscripts of this version in various scripts have been found all over southern India (Hertel 1914: 35). Artola prepared a checklist of eighty-nine such manuscripts (Artola 1957). A critical edition was published by Hertel in 1906 under the title, *Das südliche Pañcatantra: Sanskrittext der Rezension β mit den Lesarten der besten Hss. der Rezension α* (Hertel 1906). The Southern *Pañcatantra* is one of the shorter *Pañcatantras*: Hertel’s critical edition is only about fifty-eight pages long and contains 341 verses.⁵ The author of the southern version stated that he shortened the text intentionally:

For the instruction of the young who have little intelligence and who may be put off by a longer composition, this work, called the *Pañcatantra*, is told in an abbreviated form. Even though written elsewhere, verses are introduced here where appropriate. Because they are few, this does not lead to the problem of lengthening the text. (SPT 3.3–6)

Southern *Pañcatantra* is less than half the length of the *Tantrākhyāyika*, and has significantly fewer verses than the 530 found in that text. Sternbach found that “a great number” of verses in the Southern *Pañcatantra* are also in the *Tantrākhyāyika* (Sternbach 1971: 35).

Even though the Southern *Pañcatantra* is much shorter and has fewer verses, its basic structure and content do not diverge far from the core set. It contains all the core stories with a single addition: the first *tantra* includes the story “Cowherdess and her lovers,” which is not found in the other families. In the southern *Pañcatantra* the king is called Sudarśana, and his court is in Pāḷiputra, the name of city in Northern India. In the northwestern versions of the *Pañcatantra*, the court of King Amaraśakti is, as we shall see, located in the “southern lands” in a city called Mahilāropya. One other minor difference is that the monkey’s adversary is not a crocodile, but a porpoise in the fourth *tantra* of the Southern texts. I know of no translation of the Southern *Pañcatantra*, other than a very early French one by Dubois (1826).

Edgerton maintained that the Southern *Pañcatantra* contained three-quarters of the prose of the “original” *Pañcatantra* and preserved the original text “more accurately than the *Tantrākhyāyika*,” the candidate championed by Hertel. Edgerton held that “Nearly the whole of the text may be regarded as representing the contents of the original *Pañcatantra*” (Edgerton 1924: 18–19).

Nepalese Verse Version

This manuscript from Nepal, which contains most of the verses from a text similar to the Southern *Pañcatantra* but lacks the prose sections, is described briefly by Hertel (1914: 37–38). The wording of individual verses in the Nepalese version differs from the Southern recension, but both Hertel and Edgerton agree that the version from which the verses were extracted and the Southern *Pañcatantra* were offshoots of a common archetype. This archetype apparently also served as the basis for the *Pañcatantra* stories included in the *Hitopadeśa*. Olivelle makes the interesting point that “The connection between Nepal and south India, revealed also in the case of manuscripts of other works, was facilitated by the employment of south Indian Brahmins in the royal temples of Nepal” (Olivelle 1997: xlii).

The Hitopadeśa

The *Hitopadeśa* (“good counsel,” “appropriate advice”) is a substantial reworking of the *Pañcatantra* by an author called Nārāyaṇa, who probably

lived between 800 and 1373 CE (Hertel 1914: 39). Edgerton said, “This is a version connected especially with Bengal, where it is very popular, and where it presumably originated. At any rate it has supplanted all other Pañcatantra versions in popular favor there” (Edgerton 1924: 20). I assume by “very popular” he means that many manuscripts were found there. The author Nārāyaṇa says of the *Hitopadeśa* that it “was written, having drawn on the *Pañcatantra* and another work” (Hit. 18). As mentioned above, the *Hitopadeśa* shows some influence of the Southern *Pañcatantra*. The king who commissioned Viṣṇuśarman to teach his sons was named Sudarśana, not Amaraśakti, and his court was in Pāṭaliputra. The *Hitopadeśa*, like the Southern *Pañcatantra*, also contains the story of the cowgirl and her lovers.

I have referred to the editions of the Sanskrit text by Johnson (1864), Peterson (1986 [1887]) and Kale (1998 [1896]). The latter contains a serviceable translation.

The *Hitopadeśa* is much tidier than most versions of the *Pañcatantra*: it has four chapters of similar length (about forty pages), each of which contains between nine and twelve embedded stories. The first chapter, “Acquisition of friends” (*Mitralābhaḥ*), is similar to the second *tantra* in the *Pañcatantra*. The second, “Separation of friends” (*Suhyrdbhedah*), is the equivalent of the first *tantra*. The third chapter, “War” (*Vigrahaḥ*), which describes a battle between geese and peacocks, bears many similarities to the third *tantra*, “Crows and owls.” The final chapter, “Peace” (*Samdhiḥ*), describes the end of that conflict, a frame-story which has no parallel in the *Pañcatantra*. There are about 660 verses spread evenly among the four chapters. Sternbach traced the sources of these verses to the *Pañcatantra* and other *nīti*- and *dharmasāstras* (Sternbach 1960: 20).

Of the seventy-one motifs in the *Hitopadeśa*, fifty-six are found in the *Pañcatantra* (Sternbach 1960: 20). In some cases even the order in which they appear is the same. Where stories are common to both, they appear to have been substantially rewritten in the *Hitopadeśa*, that is, the wording in the *Hitopadeśa* differs radically from that of the various *Pañcatantras*. In spite of this, the general thrust of the stories remains the same.

Offshoots of the Southern Pañcatantra

Like the Arabic *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, the Southern *Pañcatantra* was a particularly prolific parent. Its numerous offspring have been studied by Artola (1957): some are direct translations into vernacular languages, others are abridgements, expansions or reworkings of *Pañcatantra* materials. Artola has identified two Malayalam, three Tamil and four Telugu recensions

dating from before the end of the sixteenth century, and two Kannada editions (Artola 1957: 235–261).

A detailed discussion of the offshoots of the Southern *Pañcatantra* lies beyond the scope of this book, but there are two points that I would like to make. First, the Tamil *Tantropākhyāna* has a “thousand-and-one-nights” type introduction, in which a servant-girl narrated a story every night to save a minister’s daughter from the king’s bed (Huilgol 1987: 22). This version was the basis for the later Thai, Laotian, and Javanese *Pañcatantras* (see Venkatasubbiah 1934, 1965, 1967, and 1969). For an exhaustive investigation of all the offshoots of the Southern *Pañcatantra*, see Hertel 1914: 250–337.

“*Bṛhatkathā*” Versions

Most scholars (e.g., Lacôte 1908) accept without question the existence of a collection of stories called *Bṛhatkathā* (“The great story”), attributed to Guṇādhya, and written in a Prakrit dialect called *Paiśācī* (MMW: *paiśācī*: “belonging to the *Piśācas* . . . , a sort of jargon spoken by demons”). It is thought that the original *Bṛhatkathā* did not include the *Pañcatantra*, but that material was added in a later version, which was created in northwestern India or Kashmir (Edgerton 1924: 23). Neither the original *Bṛhatkathā* nor its northwestern derivative are extant.⁶

The fact that the “original,” complete *Bṛhatkathā* was supposed to be a vast work in an obscure language, of which we now have only two shortened relics, sounds to me like a deliberate attempt to mythologize the text’s origins. I suspect that the original *Bṛhatkathā* may never have existed, and we should at least treat such “truth claims” with some skepticism.

There are, however, two collections of stories, both written in Sanskrit verse, both containing abbreviated versions of the *Pañcatantra*, and both claiming descent from an original lost *Bṛhatkathā*: these are the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* (“A bouquet from the *Bṛhatkathā*”) by Kṣemendra (c. 1037 CE), and the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (“An ocean of rivers of stories”) by Somadeva (c. 1063–1081 CE). Both are from Kashmir, which at that time was an active centre of Sanskrit learning and literature (Speyer 1908: 21; Pollock 2003: 92).

The versions of the *Pañcatantra* in these two texts have much in common: they are much shorter than all the others; they are composed entirely in verse; they contain no additional verses; they lack the *kathāmukha* set

in Amaraśakti's court; and they launch straight into the first *tantra*. Despite these peculiarities, the basic structure of all five *tantras*, and to a large extent the embedded stories and the order in which they appear, approximate the core set. A comprehensive description of these two versions is found in Tawney (1926, vol. 5: 210–216).

The Kathāsaritsāgara

I have referred to the text of the *Kathāsaritsāgara* edited by K. N. Śarmā, which was published by Bihāra-rāṣṭrabhāṣā-pariṣad in Patna, 1960. The only complete English translation is that made by C. H. Tawney, under the title, *The Ocean of Story*, in ten volumes, edited with introductory material and appendices by N. M. Penzer, published in London, 1924–1928. A selection of stories from the *Kathāsaritsāgara* was translated by Sattar (1994).

The *Pañcatantra* as it appears in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* is narrated by a minister named Gomukha to a prince, Naravāhanadatta, to illustrate the proposition that:

[A] man who displays prudence is never harmed. Even in the case of animals prudence produces success, not valour. (Tawney 1926, vol. 5: 41)

As mentioned above, this version of the *Pañcatantra* is very short and contains only 569 verses (40 pages of Sanskrit text), with twenty-seven embedded stories.

Comparing the *Kathāsaritsāgara* version with the core set, the structure of the first and third *tantras* are similar; that is, the same embedded stories appear in roughly the same order, but it lacks the *kathāmukha* and the three “self-inflicted injuries” (Stories 1-04a, b and c) of the first *tantra*. The fifth *tantra* consists of the frame-story alone, and lacks Story 5-00 “Barber who killed the monks” and Story 5-07 “*Brāhmaṇa* builds air-castles.” Only the simplest outlines of the plots of the five frame-stories and the embedded stories are given.

Another peculiarity of the *Kathāsaritsāgara* is that the five original *tantras* from the *Pañcatantra* are interspersed with numerous stories from other sources. The whole *Kathāsaritsāgara*, in keeping with the oceanic theme of its title, is divided into eighteen sections known as *lambaka* (“surges”?), which are further divided into *tarāṅgas* (“billows”). The five *tantras* of the *Pañcatantra* form the fourth to the eighth *tarāṅgas* of the tenth *lambaka*. The first *tantra*, Story 1-00 “Lion and bull,” constitutes an

entire *tarāṅga* itself. The four remaining *tantras* have been kept intact, but in each case, the *tarāṅgas* are “padded out,” before and after, with up to twenty-two short stories that illustrate the downfall of fools. These are not found in the *Pañcatantra*.

The Bṛhatkathāmañjarī

I have referred to the text of the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* edited by M. M. Shivdatta and K. P. Parab, first published in 1931 by Nirnaya Sagar Press in Bombay and reprinted in 1982 by Panini in New Delhi. Levi published a French translation of the first *lamkaba* (Levi 1886), but I know of no other translation of this work. Mankowski published a study of the *Pañcatantra* section of the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* (von Mankowski 1892).

The version of the *Pañcatantra* in the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* is even shorter than the one in the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. In total, the five *tantras* of the *Pañcatantra* are summarized in 312 verses. They extend to twenty-seven pages of Sanskrit text and contain thirty-five embedded stories (BKM 16: 256–567, pp. 561–587). Despite its brevity, the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* still conforms closely to the core set in terms of structure and content. It includes five additional stories not found in the core, all of which are found in the *Tantrākhyāyika*, suggesting that the compiler of the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* may have had access to a text resembling the *Tantrākhyāyika* as it is known to us. Several core stories, including the three examples of self-inflicted injury in the first *tantra* and Story 3-01 “Birds elect a king,” are not found in the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī*.

Western scholars have been highly critical of the *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī Pañcatantra*: the stories “are so condensed that they can hardly be understood”; they have “lost all their flavour”; and are but “a sapless remnant” (Speyer 1908: 18). Edgerton described them as “drastically abbreviated,” “mangled,” and “cut to the bone (to the great detriment of the result, artistically speaking)” (Edgerton 1924: 24–25). Kṣemendra “seems to have been as brief as possible” and in doing so, “castrated” the stories (Tawney 1926, vol. 5: 212). An alternative way of looking at these short versions is as forerunners of the modern condensed book from *Reader’s Digest*, or as a student’s crib sheet from Sparknotes.com. Speyer is correct in saying that some of the references to stories could hardly be understood by a reader who is unfamiliar with the original. The essence of Story 1-02 “Jackal and drum,” for example, is captured in a single verse (BKM 16.275). On the other hand, the text may serve to jog the memory of readers who already know the stories, prompting the pleasures of the longer versions.⁷

The Northwestern Family

The Tantrākhyāyika

The *Tantrākhyāyika* (“Little *tantra*-stories”) from Kashmir is a significant member of the Northwestern family, because the *textus simplicior*, the *textus ornatior* and the later mixed recensions are all ultimately derived from it or from a text like it. Hertel published the incomplete Deccan College manuscript of the *Tantrākhyāyika* under the title *Über das Tantrākhyāyika, die Kāśmīrische Rezension des Pañcatantra* (Hertel 1904). This was followed by an introduction to the *Tantrākhyāyika* with notes and a translation into the German: *Tantrākhyāyika: die älteste Fassung des Pañcatantra* (Hertel 1909). His critical edition of the *Tantrākhyāyika* was published in 1915, under the title *The Panchatantra: a collection of ancient Hindu tales in its oldest recension, the Kashmirian, entitled Tantrākhyāyika* (Hertel 1915). This was published without further introduction or notes and under dramatic circumstances.⁸

The basic features of the *Tantrākhyāyika* are as follows: taking Hertel’s main text of the *Tantrākhyāyika* and the additional material in the appendices from the manuscript he called β, there are about 140 pages of Sanskrit text, including about 530 verses. In addition to the thirty-four core stories, nine further stories are given, including, significantly for this inquiry, the first appearance in a *Pañcatantra* collection of Story 1-11, “Blue jackal.”

How is the *Tantrākhyāyika* related to the other versions of the *Pañcatantra*? Edgerton maintained that when Hertel first discovered the *Tantrākhyāyika*, he “hailed it as the genuine, original ‘Urtext’ of the *Pañcatantra* itself,” but that Hertel later moderated this view (Edgerton 1924: 14). Edgerton also quoted Hertel as saying that the *Tantrākhyāyika* “is the only version which contains the unabbreviated and not intentionally altered language of the author” (Edgerton 1924: 14). Irrespective of how much of the “original” *Pañcatantra* was preserved in the *Tantrākhyāyika*, Hertel regarded all other versions of the *Pañcatantra* (except the Sanskrit original of the Pahlavi) as “revisions” (*Überarbeitungen*) of the *Tantrākhyāyika* (Hertel 1914: 26). He accordingly placed the *Tantrākhyāyika* and its supposed antecedents at the head of his textual *stammbaum* for the whole *Pañcatantra* corpus (Hertel 1912a: 5). Edgerton disputed the pre-eminence that Hertel gave to the *Tantrākhyāyika*, saying that the difference between the *Tantrākhyāyika* and the other versions, in their relations to the original, “is a difference of degree and not a difference of kind” (Edgerton 1924: 16).