"Elsewhere Lies its Meaning": The Vagaries of *Kalīla and Dimna*'s Reception

Matthew L. Keegan[1]

Freie Universität Berlin & Barnard College

mlkeegan@barnard.edu

AMEC Department, Barnard College, 3009 Broadway, New York, NY 10027

Abstract:

Kalīla and Dimna was translated from Pahlavi into Arabic in the 8th century AD by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, and it became an influential text in numerous literary cultures. Copyists in the Arabic manuscript tradition acted as coauthors, changing the text in ways both large and small. The modern scholarly tradition tends to see *Kalīla and Dimna* as part of a *Fürstenspiegel* genre or as an example of animal fables. What these categorizations overlook is the variegated medieval reception of the text, which was more multifaceted than is generally appreciated. The unruliness of the text's reception is the theme of this article, which explores the ways in which medieval readers categorized and reinterpreted

Kalīla and Dimna over centuries, with special attention to Ibn al-Habbāriyya's late 11ᵗʰ-century dramatization of the divergent interpretations of *Kalīla and Dimna*. The article reveals that the interpreters of this text reconfigured its generic affiliation, making it a Quranic competitor, a repository of proverbs, an allegory for the soul, a source of law, and a model for storytelling that imparts practical wisdom.

Article:

لكن لنا فضل عليكم سابق	قال الهندي وهو صادق
يقضي لنا بحكمة وفطنه	تصنيفنا كليلة ودمنه
	...
لو كنت ذا علمٍ به معناهُ	قال له الفُرْسي في سواهُ

The Indian said, speaking sincerely:

But we have something older and superior to you —

Our book *Kalīla and Dimna,*

Which provides us with wisdom and prudence

...

The Persian said to him:

    Elsewhere lies its meaning, if you had knowledge of it.

    - Ibn al-Habbāriyya[2]

Kalīla and Dimna is not a text that one can describe succinctly and straightforwardly using the familiar genres of European literature. Nevertheless, scholars continue to rely on these labels to make sense of the text. Recent studies describe *Kalīla and Dimna* variously as "secular wisdom literature," as "beast fables," as a "Mirror for Princes," or as an early example of "imaginative literature" in Arabic.[3] Robert Irwin notes that there is no word that corresponds with our term "fable" or "beast fable" in Arabic, but he assures us that "the medieval reader could open a book of beast fables confident

2   Ibn al-Habbāriyya, *al-Ṣādiḥ wa-l-Bāghim*. Beirut: al-Maṭbaʿa al-Adabiyya, 1886, p. 25.

3   Karla Mallette, "The Secular Wisdom of *Kalīla and Dimna*", in: Ken Seigneurie (ed.), *A Companion to World Literature*, Hoboken: Wiley, 2020, pp. 1-9. Neguin Yavari, *Advice for the Sultan: Prophetic Voices and Secular Politics in Medieval Islam*. London: C. Hurst & co., 2014. Shawkat Toorawa, *Ibn Abī Ṭāhir and Arabic writerly culture: A Ninth-Century Bookman in Baghdad.* New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 80. For a useful overview of these views and others, see Marianne Marroum, "Ibn al-Muqaffaʿʾs *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and Boccaccio's *On Poetry*" in: Lale Behzadi / Vahid Behmardi (eds.), *The Weaving of Words: Approaches to Classical Arabic Prose*, Beirut: Ergon Verlag Würzburg, 2009. Idem., "*Kalīla wa Dimna*: Inception, Appropriation, and Transmimesis", in: *Comparative Literature Studies* 48 (2011), pp. 512 - 540. Ulrich Marzolph, "Kalīla wa-Dimna", in: Lotte Baumann et al. (eds.), *Enzyklopädie des Märchens*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993, vol. 7.4-5, pp. 888-895. Carl Brockelmann, "Fabel und Tiermärchen in der älteren arabischen Literatur," *Islamica* 2 (1926), pp. 96-128.

that his expectations would not be disappointed".[4] I am not so sure. Irwin admits that

book catalogue made in the 10th-century AD by the bookseller Ibn al-Nadīm treats the

text "higgledy-piggledy" as part of "prose fiction," by which he means that it is found

next to the *Thousand and One Nights* in a section devoted to nighttime stories (*asmār*)

and tall tales (*khurāfāt*).[5] In spite of this apparently haphazard placement, Irwin remains

certain that medieval readers had relatively stable generic expectations. My contention in

this article is that no such stability existed and that the multifarious reception of *Kalīla*

and Dimna reflects a contestation over the text's categorization. An exploration of the

contestation over *Kalīla and Dimna* provides an introduction both to the text itself and to

the terrain of medieval Arabic writing and genre-thinking, which requires us to

provincialize our own generic landscapes and categories of analysis.

The conversation between the Indian and the Persian quoted in the epigraph above

is from *al-Ṣādiḥ wa-l-Bāghim* (*The Crowing Cock and the Groaning Gazelle*), a 12th-

century narrative poem by Ibn al-Habbāriyya. The text evinces a recognition of the

complex dynamics of *Kalīla and Dimna's* reception by narrativizing a debate over its

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4   Robert Irwin, "The Arabic Beast Fable", in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtland Institutes* 55 (1992), pp. 36 - 50, here p. 36. The notion of Classical Arabic genres in general as a "cercle rigide" is found in Abdelfattah Kilito, *Les Séances: Récits et codes culturels chez Hamadhânî et Harîrî*. Paris: Sindbad, p. 73. Kilito notes elsewhere that in classical Arabic, "genre is a highly specific and determined category, so much so that authors were perhaps nothing but products of their genre". Idem., *The Author and His Doubles*, trans. by Michael Cooperson, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001.

[5] All dates are given in the Christian calendar due to its common and ostensibly secular usage, which makes it familiar to a wider array of readers, although the Islamic or Hijrī calendar will be used when discussing manuscript dates. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist li-l-Nadīm*, ed. by Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid, London: Islamic Texts Society, vol. 3, pp. 321 – 324.

meaning. Authors like Ibn al-Habbāriyya understood that different audiences could categorize the text differently, with some treating it as practical political advice while others might see it as a more metaphysical meditation on fate. It was not the case that *Kalīla and Dimna* belonged to some stable, transcultural genre and that Ibn al-Nadīm and others haphazardly misconstrued it. Rather, readers of the Arabic version of *Kalīla and Dimna* self-consciously contested the origins, significance, and genre of the text. Indeed, it is not simply a matter of two systems of generic categories being incommensurable but rather a matter of generic heterogeneity and promiscuity. We know that readers contested and reconfigured *Kalīla and Dimna*'s place within the Arabic textual universe because writers like Ibn al-Nadīm and many others inscribed these contestations in their own writings, some of which I analyze below. This article thus seeks to understand the unruliness of *Kalīla and Dimna*'s transmission, reception, and interpretation in Arabic as a way of rethinking genre and Arabic textuality in the pre-colonial period. I will return to Ibn al-Habbāriyya's *Crowing Cock* in the final portion of this essay to situate this unstudied text as a meditation on genre and fictivity.
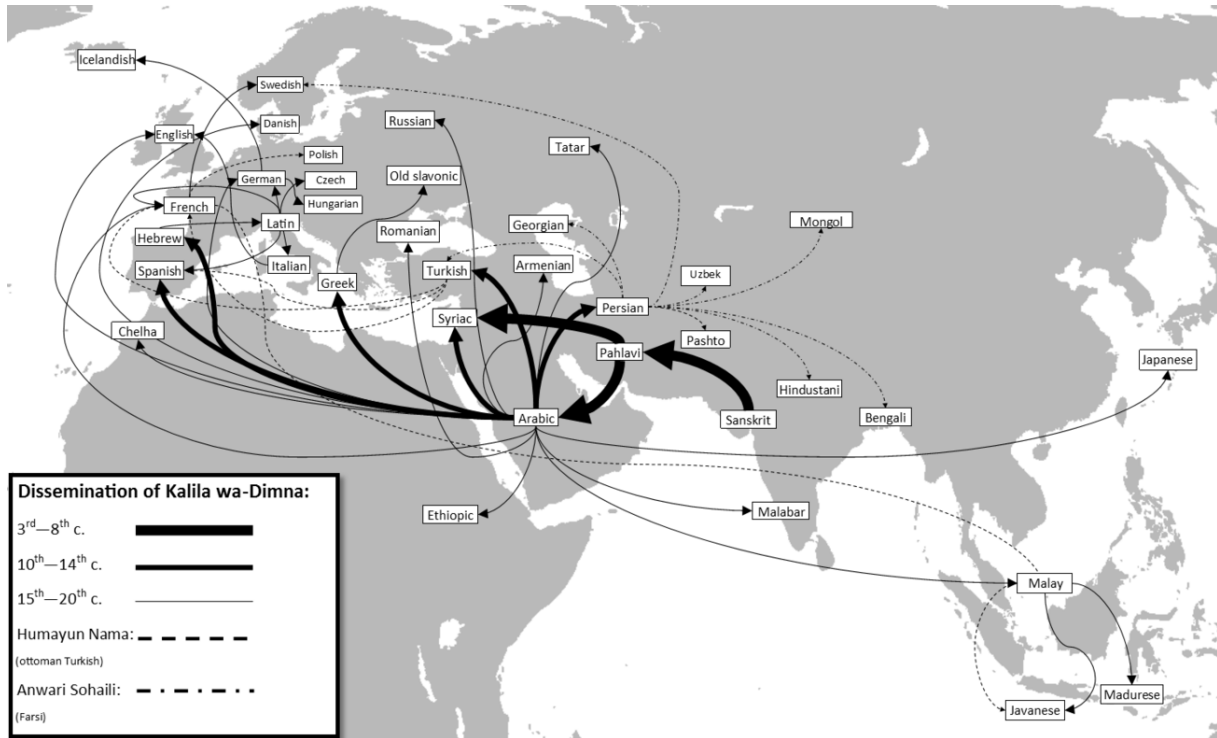
Kalīla and Dimna, an Unruly Classic

Before going further, I will provisionally describe *Kalīla and Dimna* as a collection of sometimes-interlaced narratives featuring talking animals and fictive humans. These stories are embedded within a frame story in which a wise man narrates the tales to an Indian king. The problem of categorizing *Kalīla and Dimna* is

compounded by the fact that the text itself is so heterogenous and was produced and reproduced in such varied intellectual contexts. It finds its roots in the Sanskrit *Panchatantra* and *Mahahbharata*. Before the rise of Islam, these Sanskrit tales were translated into Pahlavi (Middle Persian), at which point they probably first came to be called *Kalīla and Dimna*, named after the main characters of the first story cycle. From Middle Persian, the stories entered Syriac and Arabic. The Arabic translation was undertaken in the 8th century by the bureaucrat Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, a man who was deeply familiar with both Persian wisdom literature and the emerging Arabic-Islamic tradition. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation-adaptation of the text proved very influential.[6] It was extensively copied, occasionally versified, and fruitfully translated or adapted into dozens of languages (see image 1), including the New Persian language, which was written in the Arabic script.

[Image credited to the "Kalīla and Dimna - AnonymClassic" ERC project in Berlin]

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6   Michael Cooperson, "Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ", in: Michael Cooperson / Shawkat Toorawa (eds.), *Arabic Literary Culture, 500-925*, Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2005, pp. 150 – 163. Dagmar Riedel, "Kalila wa Demna i. Redactions and Circulation", in: *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online*, consulted 23 February 2021.

Dissemination of Kalila wa-Dimna:

3rd—8th c. ▬▬▬▬

10th—14th c. ▬▬▬▬

15th—20th c. ─────

Humayun Nama: ▬ ▬ ▬ ▬
(ottoman Turkish)

Anwari Sohaili: ▬ · ▬ · ▬ · ·
(Farsi)

This tale of cultural transmission begs the question: Is *Kalīla and Dimna* really a single text? I would suggest that it would be better to understand my use of the term "text" throughout as a shorthand for the phrase "textual field," a term that I draw from the work of Christina van Ruymbeke.[7] As she points out, the various translations often reshaped older material and added new material, but it is also the case that copyists working exclusively in Arabic inserted and reshaped the text. The titular story of *Kalīla and Dimna* is illustrative of translational transformation because it undergoes a major alteration when it enters Arabic. This story centers on two jackals, one named Kalīla and the other Dimna, who live in a kingdom ruled by a lion. Dimna aspires to become the

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7   Christine van Ruymbeke, *Kashefi's Anvar-e Sohayli: Rewriting Kalila and Dimna in Timurid Herat*. Leiden: Brill, 2016, p. xiii.

lion's advisor and succeeds in doing so by allaying the lion's fears over a bellowing sound he hears. The lion assumes that the loud noise must come from a large and powerful animal, but Dimna offers to investigate for the king and discovers that the noise issues from a bull named Shanzabeh, whom he brings to the lion. To Dimna's dismay, the bull becomes the new favorite of the lion, and Dimna decides to use chicanery and his rhetorical skills to convince the lion and the bull, each of whom he speaks to separately, that they have been betrayed by the other. The lion and bull fight, and the bull is killed.[8]

Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's Arabic version includes a new narrative sequence in which Dimna is put on trial for his crimes. Although Dimna does eventually receive his come-uppance, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's trial scenes are hardly a moralizing tale about truth and justice prevailing. Instead, Dimna uses his substantial rhetorical talents at the trial to cast aspersions on his critics and upend the case against him. He nearly succeeds, and it is only the machinations of the lion's mother and the circumvention of judicial procedure that lead to Dimna's conviction.[9]

The trial of Dimna is the most obvious example of translation's transmogrifying power, but there are many others. For example, Naṣr Allāh Munshī (fl. 12th century AD) composed a Persian translation on the basis of an Arabic version that had its roots in Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation. Munshī states in his preface that the text was best to have the

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7   Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAzzām and Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (eds.), Cairo: Hindāwī, 2014, pp. 73 - 105. ʿAzzām first published his edition in 1941, and it has been reprinted many times. The 1941 edition is exceedingly rare, whereas the Hindāwī reprint is freely available online and thus allows readers to quickly reference the passages quoted here and cross-reference in other editions to which they have access.
9   Ibid., pp. 106 - 124.

book "translated and expanded and have Quranic verses, sayings of the Prophet, lines of poetry, and proverbs added to give new life to this book, which is a condensation of several thousand years of wisdom".[10] The effect of Munshī's embellishments and expansions is that Indian sages quote Islamic scriptures and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad in a kind of anachronistic transculturation. However, these anachronisms do not signal that time is out of joint because, for Munshī, the text is fundamentally open to enlivening adaptation. The accumulation of wisdom and the parallels between Islamic ideas and pre-Islamic Indian ones is thereby explored fictively.

It might seem prudent to evade all this instability and transcultural complexity by restricting one's attention to the Arabic version of *Kalīla and Dimna*, but the complications do not thereby disappear.[11] Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ died in 757, and the earliest extant Arabic manuscript of *Kalīla and Dimna* was copied in 1221, a gap of almost five centuries. As Beatrice Gruendler's ongoing European Research Council project *AnonymClassic* has shown, the degree of manuscript variation between the various exemplars is quite high. Reconstructing an authorial original is out of the question. In fact, it is worth considering the copyists of these manuscripts as "co-authors" who would

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10   Naṣr Allāh Munshī, *Kalīla and Dimna*, trans. by Wheeler Thackston, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2019, p. xxvi. Naṣr Allāh Munshī, *Kalīla va Dimna*, Mujtabā Mīnuvī (ed.), Tehran: Chāpkhānah-i Dānishgāh, 1964, p. 18. Munshī's Persian version was then translated back into Arabic, as shown in a forthcoming article by Theo Beers and Khouloud Khalfallah in *Journal of Abbasid Studies*.
11   Beatrice Gruendler, "Les versions arabes de *Kalīla wa-Dimna:* une transmission et une circulation mouvantes", in: *Énoncés sapientiels et littérature exemplaire: une intertextualité complexe*, Marie-Sol Ortola (ed.), Nancy: PUN Éditions Universitaires de Lorraine, 2013, pp. 387–412.

add, subtract, and reformulate material while generally maintaining the salient plotlines of the story cycle. As Gruendler has shown, it is not the case that these copyists were producing new texts from memory or that they were entextualizing an oral tradition. Rather, the evidence shows that copyists had exemplars at hand and made alterations large and small, such that *Kalīla and Dimna*'s *mouvance* should be understood as a *mouvance par écrit*.[12] This mode of transmission is distinct from the mix of oral and written transmission that was found in popular epics like *Sīrat ʿAntar* and *Sīrat Dhāt al-Himma*, which also have a high degree of manuscript variation.[13] In other words, even when we restrict our attention to the Arabic versions, it is important to keep in mind that we are not dealing with a stable textual tradition with an urtext but rather with an unruly textual field.

It should also be noted that this degree of manuscript variation is not typical of Arabic manuscript culture in general and that Arabic manuscripts were subjected to different degrees of textual control by copyists, collators, and readers. For example, a high degree of textual stability and editorial control over copyists can be found in the 12th-century *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī, a collection of trickster tales that claims in its

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12   Beatrice Gruendler, "Relation and redaction", (forthcoming).

13   Rachel Schine, "Nourishing the Noble: Breastfeeding and Hero-Making in Medieval Arabic Popular Literature", in *al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* 27 (2019), pp. 165–200, here pp. 171–173. Idem., "A Mirror for the Modern Man: The *Siyar Šaʿbiyya* as Advice Literature in Tunisian Judeo-Arabic Editions", in: *Arabica* 65 (2018), pp. 392–418, here p. 399. Peter Heath, "Styles in Premodern Arabic Popular Epics", in: *In the Shadow of Arabic: The Centrality of Language to Arabic Culture, Studies Presented to Ramzi Baalbaki on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday*, Bilal Orfali (ed.), Leiden: Brill, 2011, pp. 413–441.

introduction to be generically affiliated with the tales of talking animals.[14] Al-Ḥarīrī's

Maqāmāt sits at one end of a spectrum of textual stability in Arabic manuscript culture

while *Kalīla and Dimna* sits rather near the opposite end, even though the two texts both

traffic in fictive storytelling. Their shared fictivity suggests that we should not assume

that a high degree of textual variation is dependent upon the formal features of the text or

its generic categorization alone. The reasons for these differences in textual stability are

not yet well understood, but it seems likely that one and the same copyist might

creatively intervene in a text like *Kalīla and Dimna* while avoiding those same

interventions in a text like the *Maqāmāt*. Perhaps creative interventions were frowned

upon in texts that were, like the *Maqāmāt*, part of the Islamic scholarly and educational

traditions. As Guy Burak has suggested, collation and editorial work could even function

as an ethical act of devotion for certain works circulating in Islamic manuscript

cultures.[15] Perhaps *Kalīla and Dimna*'s anonymous authorship, the contexts of its

reception, and its origins as a translated work play some role in the higher degree of

manuscript variation, but, at this stage, speculations about why this text was considered

open to rewriting and adaptation are entirely tentative.

The unruliness of the *Kalīla and Dimna* textual field has, I believe, dampened

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14   Matthew L. Keegan, "Commentators, Collators, and Copyists: Interpreting Manuscript
Variation in the Exordium of al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt*", in: Joseph E. Lowry and Shawkat Toorawa
(eds.), *Arabic Humanities and Islamic Thoughts: Essays in Honor of Everett K. Rowson*, Leiden:
Brill, 2017, pp. 296–316.
15   Guy Burak, "Collating *the Signs of Benevolent Deeds: Muḥammad Mahdī al-Fāsī's
Commentary on Muḥammad al-Jazūlī's Dalāʾil al-Khayrāt and Its Ottoman Readers*", in
Philological Encounters 4 (2019), pp. 135–157.

scholarly interest in studying the text.[16] It is, on the one hand, undoubtedly one of the central texts in the multifaceted field of *adab* (roughly: *belles lettres* and *paideia*, including the mastery of poetry), but, on the other hand, it is so unruly that attempting to study "the original text" or accessing that unique original through philological methods quickly becomes absurd. The editions that do exist are often based on late manuscripts, bowdlerized, or both.[17] Louis Cheikho produced an edition in 1905 based on a 14th-century manuscript, the oldest known exemplar at the time. His edition includes notes about variations and additions from other manuscripts and maintains the idiosyncrasies of orthography and grammar that appear in the manuscript, whereas the 1941 edition of ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAzzām is based on an even earlier manuscript, but the text has been "corrected" by the editor to conform with standard Arabic grammar and orthography.[18]

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[16]   Compare the case of the *Thousand and One Nights*. The publication of the earliest extant manuscript by Muḥsin Mahdī in 1984 offered a "proper edition," as the translator Husain Haddawy put it when he produced a new translation in 1990. *Kitāb Alf Layla wa-Layla min Uṣūlihi al-ʿArabiyya al-Ūlā*, Muḥsin Mahdī (ed.), Leiden: Brill, 1984. *The Arabian Nights: Based on the Fourteenth-Century Manuscript Edited by Muhsin Mahdi*, Husain Haddawy (trans.), London: Norton, 1990, p. xviii. The accustomed forms of literary analysis could then take place on the basis of a stable, unique text, unencumbered by accretions and much later European inventions. Paulo Lemos Horta, "*The 1001 Nights* as World Literature: Cultural Appropriation and Collaboration", in: *A Companion to World Literature*, Ken Seigneurie (ed.), London: Wiley, 2019, pp. 1–12, here p. 2.

[17]   For an overview of these editions, see François de Blois, *Burzōy's Voyage to India and the Origin of the Book of Kalīlah wa Dimnah*, London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1990, pp. 3–4.

[18]   ʿAzzām's edition is based on a manuscript at the Süleymaniye library with the shelf mark Ayasofya MS 4095, dated in its colophon to the beginning of the month of Jumādā al-Thānī in the year 618 after the Hijra, corresponding with the end of July, 1221 in both the Julian and Gregorian calendars. Louis Cheikho's edition of 1905 (not to be confused with the expurgated school textbook that he produced later) based his edition on a manuscript from Lebanon dated to the 6th of Rajab in the year 739 after the Hijra, corresponding to January 18, 1339 of the Julian calendar. Note that there has been some confusion about the date of Cheikho's manuscript due to a misprint of the date in the French introduction to the text. The correct date is found in the Arabic colophon. *La Version Arabe de Kalîla et Dimnah d'après le plus ancien Manuscrit arabe*

With all these uncertainties and textual problems, the philologically-oriented field of Oriental studies in the 20th century generally preferred to study texts with "proper" editions associated with clear origins. The high degree of variation among *Kalīla and Dimna* manuscripts and the inability to trace an "original" has proven rather discouraging, and scholars who did study this text tended to focus on the transformations that took place *between* languages rather than changes that took place among different manuscripts.[19]

This essay offers a different approach by taking the messy and contested reception of *Kalīla and Dimna* as its object of inquiry. In particular, I examine how various interpreters of *Kalīla and Dimna* reconfigure its generic affiliation, making it a Quranic competitor, a repository of proverbs, an allegory for the soul, a source of law, and a model for storytelling that imparts practical wisdom.

The Scripture of *Kalīla and Dimna*

Let us begin with the tantalizing idea that *Kalīla and Dimna* is a scriptural alternative to or competitor with the Quran. The Quran challenges anyone who denies that it is of divine origin, claiming that it is Muhammad's invention, to "bring ten invented verses like it if you are truthful, calling upon whosoever you can besides God"

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daté, Louis Cheikho (ed.), Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1905, here p. 246. Beatrice Gruendler, "Les versions arabes de *Kalīla wa-Dimna*", p. 396. See above note 11.

19   van Ruymbeke, *Kashefi's Anvar-e Sohayli*, pp. xvii-xviii. See above note 7. This situation is beginning to change with the establishment of Beatrice Gruendler's AnonymClassic project at the Freie Universität Berlin.

(Quran 11.13). The Quran's aesthetic uniqueness — its inimitability (*iʿjāz*) — was considered by theologians to be proof of its divine origin, the most famous arguments being those of ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī (d. 1078 or 1081).[20] However, this claim paradoxically situated scripture as an aesthetic ideal to be imitated, even if achieving true parity was ruled out.[21] The Quran tells us that the Prophet's opponents accused him of forging the revelation himself and argued that the Quran was similar to the texts they already had on hand, saying "this is nothing but the legends of the ancients (*asāṭīr al-awwalīn*)" (Quran 8.31). The Arabic term "legends (*asāṭīr*)" conveys the sense that these stories are fabricated, false, or lacking any foundation, which means that equating the Quran with them implied both the scripture's redundancy and its falsity. For exegetes, the hermeneutical question associated with this verse was more or less historical: What kinds of discourses were being referred to when the revelation's enemies claim that it is merely "legends of the ancients" (also Quran 6.25; 16.24; 23.83; 25.5; 27.68; 46.17; 68.15; 83.13)?

Exegetes proposed several answers to this question, an interpretive multiplicity and abundance that was common for Quranic exegesis. One of the more surprising suggestions was that these "legends of the ancients" were none other than the stories in

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[20] Margaret Larkin, "The Inimitability of the Qur'an: Two Perspectives", in: *Religion & Literature* 20 (1988), pp. 31–47. Lara Harb, "Form, Content, and the Inimitability of the Qurʾān in ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's Works", in: *Middle Eastern Literatures* 18 (2015), pp. 301–321. For a short introduction and bibliography on this topic, see Lara Harb and Alexander Key, "ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī: Introduction", in *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 5 (2018), pp. 3–10.

[21] Matthew L. Keegan "Throwing the Reins to the Reader: Hierarchy, Jurjānian Poetics, and al-Muṭarrizī's Commentary on the *Maqāmāt*", in: *Journal of Abbasid Studies* 5 (2018), pp. 105–145.

Kalīla and Dimna. It is an odd proposal in some ways, given the difference in form and content between the hortatory Quran and the narrative *Kalīla and Dimna*. Nevertheless, the exegete al-Wāḥidī (d. 1076) claims that a certain opponent of the Prophet tried to undercut the Quran's uniqueness by purchasing a copy of *Kalīla and Dimna* from the ancient city of al-Ḥīra:

كان النضر بن الحارث خرج الى الحيرة تاجرا فاشترى أحاديث كليلة ودمنة وكان يقعد مع المستهزئين والمقتسمين وهو منهم فيقرأ عليهم فلمّا قصّ رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلّم شأن القرون الماضية قال النضر لو شئت لقلت مثل هذا إن هذا إلا ما سطر الاولون في كتبهم...

Al-Naḍir b. al-Ḥārith used to go to al-Ḥīra as a merchant and purchased

the narratives (*aḥādīth*) of *Kalīla and Dimna*. He would sit with the

mockers and gamblers with whom he associated, and he would read it

with them. When the Prophet narrated the circumstances of past ages,

al-Naḍir replied: "If I wished, I could have said something like this. This

is nothing but what the ancients composed (*saṭṭara*) in their books".[22]

The implication of this story is that al-Naḍir understood the term "legends of the ancients" to refer to stories written *by* past communities and not legendary histories

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22   al-Wāḥidī, *al-Wasīṭ fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-Majīd*, ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd et al. (eds.), Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1994, vol. 2, p. 455. Cf. al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (ed.), Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risāla, 2006, vol. 9, p. 495.

written *about* them. A later exegete from al-Andalus named Ibn ʿAṭiyya (d. circa 1147) seems to have realized that *Kalīla and Dimna* on its own would not have been a suitable competitor to the Quran. He suggests that al-Naḍir would travel to Persia and al-Ḥīra where he heard "the stories and gospels of the monks, the reports of Rustam and Isfandyār".[23] Variations of this exegetical story about al-Naḍir's acquisitions from al-Ḥīra abound, sometimes suggesting that he also brought back stories of Khusrau and Caesar, but these variations nevertheless reveal a widespread suggestion that opponents of the Prophet's mission compared *Kalīla and Dimna* to the revelation to deflate its divine authority.[24] The reappearance of more or less the same story in exegetical works across time and space also illustrates the intricately networked nature of the Islamic exegetical tradition.[25]

Although we know that *Kalīla and Dimna* entered Arabic in the 8th century and not during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad, it is significant that these exegetical stories all claim that the original *Sitz im Leben* of the Arabic *Kalīla and Dimna* was the Lakhmid city of al-Ḥīra. During the pre-Islamic period, al-Ḥīra contained a linguistically diverse population who made use of pre-Classical Arabic, Aramaic dialects, and Middle

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23   Ibn ʿAṭiyya, *al-Muḥarrir al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-ʿAzīz*, Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2002, p. 793. For a version of the story of Rustam and Isfandyār, see Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, Dick Davis (transl.), New York: Penguin, pp. 479-531. On different versions of the same tale and textual references to the Persian, see Dick Davis, "Religion in the *Shahnameh*", in: *Iranian Studies* 48 (2015), 337-348.
24   For example, al-Nīsābūrī, *Tafsīr Gharāʾib al-Qurʾān wa-Raghāʾib al-Furqān*, Zakariyya ʿUmayrāt (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1996, vol. 3, p.395.
25   Walid A. Saleh, "Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of *tafsīr* in Arabic: A History of the Book Approach", in: *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12 (2010), pp. 6–40, here p. 18.

Persian. As Isabel Toral has argued, al-Ḥīra was a site of "transculturation" because it had material and cultural links to both the Arabian Peninsula and the Sasanian capital in Ctesiphon.[26] The exegetical story of al-Naḍir thus plays upon the plausibility of al-Ḥīra as a conduit for Persian cultural materials — specifically history, legends, and *Kalīla and Dimna*.

The formal features of the Quran and *Kalīla and Dimna* are, as I have said, radically different.[27] The Quran presents parables and fragments of stories about past communities as part of its exhortations but rarely narrates any story from start to finish. The Quran's language is rhythmic and rhyming, while the Arabic versions of *Kalīla and Dimna* are generally in rather plain prose. Given such differences, why would these exegetes see *Kalīla and Dimna* as a competitor to the Quran or, to put it more cautiously, why would they transmit a story in which this idea was put forward? Did they expect their audience to recognize *Kalīla and Dimna* as a kind of alternative scripture?

One explanation for why *Kalīla and Dimna* was described as a competitor to the Quran is that its translator Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ was rumored to have written a parodic emulation of the Quran designed to undermine the unique status as the divine revelation. Fragments that sound a bit like the Quran are attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, although some medieval theologians had their doubts as to whether they ought to be ascribed to

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26   Toral-Niehof, "Late Antique Iran and the Arabs", in: *Journal of Persianate Studies* 6 (2013), pp. 115 - 126, pp. 123 - 4.
27   Beatrice Gruendler has recently suggested that *Kalīla and Dimna* and the Quran are both marked by a high degree of self-referentiality. *The Rise of the Arabic Book*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020, p. 158.

him.[28] It seems possible that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's famous association with the Arabic *Kalīla and Dimna* led some to think that the animal stories *were* his Quranic parody.

However, a more likely explanation for seeing *Kalīla and Dimna* as a Quranic competitor is that both texts offer guidance and wisdom. Evidence for this view comes by way of a text authored in the 10th century by a Shi'ite author named Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Yamanī (d. circa 1010). He wrote a book called *Muḍāhāt Amthāl Kitāb Kalīla wa-Dimna* or *The Analogues of Kalīla and Dimna's Proverbs*. The stated aim of his book is to show that the proverbs or short wisdom sayings contained in *Kalīla and Dimna* are redundant as a resource for wisdom because they are already found in Arabic poetry.[29] According to al-Yamanī, the people of his era are infatuated with *Kalīla and Dimna* but overlook the fact that this wisdom exists in an authentically Arab form. He tells his reader that he wants to refute those who think that *Kalīla and Dimna* "runs along the same course as the book of God (*yajrī majrā kitāb Allāh*)".[30]

Al-Yamanī, like the exegetes discussed already, also seems to see *Kalīla and Dimna* as a threat to the Quran's unique status or at least suggests that there are those who

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28   Josef van Ess, "Some Fragments of the *Muʿāraḍat al-Qurʾān* Attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ", in: *Kleine schriften: Collected Short Writings of Josef van Ess*, Hinrich Biesterfeldt (ed.), Leiden: Brill, 2017, pp. 951–968. Al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013) dismisses the claims that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ intended any of his books to be competitors to the Quran. al-Bāqillānī, *Iʿjāz al-Qurʾān*, Sayyid Aḥmad Ṣaqr (ed.), Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1953, p. 32.

29   It should be noted that al-Yamanī's verses, which he ascribes to particular pre-Islamic and early Islamic poets, are not always attested elsewhere and may be spurious. Al-Yamanī seems to be aware of this potential problem when he states that he names the poets precisely so that an ignorant person will not dare to think that he has wrongly imputed verses (*naḥl*). al-Yamanī, *Muḍāhāt Amthāl Kitāb Kalīla wa-Dimna bi-mā Ashbahahā min Ashʿār al-ʿArab*, Muḥammad Yūsuf Najm (ed.), Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1961, p. 3.

30   Ibid.

erroneously believe that it is somehow equivalent to the book of God. To understand al-Yamanī's argument, we must examine his book's introduction in some detail. Problematically, there is a high degree of variation between the introductions in the two manuscripts upon which the edition is based. There is a manuscript of the *Analogues* from the Vatican dated to 1458 and an undated manuscript from the Firestone Library in Princeton. The authorial introductions are so different that the editor doubts that they are based on the same *Vorlage*, but it seems as though the Princeton manuscript has been expurgated of both al-Yamanī's Shi'ite sympathies and his more explicit criticisms of *Kalīla and Dimna*. Ridding a manuscript of passages that might be problematic to a new Sunni readership is not unlikely, so I rely here on the Vatican manuscript. It should be noted, however, that although I refer to the authorial introduction in the Vatican manuscript as al-Yamanī's introduction, the extent to which the content and specific wording of this 15th-century manuscript can be definitively associated with al-Yamanī and the 10th century is left open to question.

Al-Yamanī begins by pointing out that every community produces wisdom and parables, and that much of this wisdom is the result of translation — literally "transmission (*naql*)" — from one language to another, an activity that he tells us is supported by kings and carried out by scholars.[31] What makes the Arabs distinct in his view is that, for every piece of wisdom found in another culture by virtue of translation and collaboration, the Arabs had autochthonously invented ones that expressed the same

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31   Ibid., p. 1.

meaning. By arguing for the autonomy of Arab genius, al-Yamanī is seeking to refute a group known as the Shuʿūbiyya who celebrated Persian heritage over and above that of the Arabs.[32]

Al-Yamanī also wishes to highlight the dissimilarity between the Quran and *Kalīla and* Dimna, which he achieves by recounting the conversion and circumcision of al-Ḥasan b. Sahl (d. 850 or 851), a man of Persian descent who acted as a secretary and a governor for the Abbasid caliph al-Maʾmūn (d. 833). The story says that a certain Jibrīl b. Bakhtīshūʿ came to al-Ḥasan while he had a Quran in his hands and asked him about how he found the holy scripture. He replied: "It is pleasing, but something like *Kalīla and Dimna* is not found here".[33]

At this point in al-Yamanī's introduction, there begins a series of surprising claims that are counterintuitive in the extreme. First, al-Yamanī argues that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ was not the translator of *Kalīla and Dimna* but rather its author. He claims that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ perused the poetry of the ancient Arabs looking for wisdom sayings and then turned them into prose, composing the tales of *Kalīla and Dimna* around this core of wisdom material (*akhadha mā fī ashʿār al-mutaqaddimīn min al-ḥikam fa-natharahā wa-allafa ʿalayhā Kalīla wa-Dimna*).[34] In spite of this apparent attack on both Ibn al-

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32   Ibid., pp. 1–2. Sarah Bowen Savant, "Naming Shuʿūbīs", in: *Essays in Islamic Philology, History, and Philosophy*, Alireza Korangy, Wheeler M. Thackston, Roy P. Mottahedeh, and William Granara (eds.), Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016, 166–185.
33   The text states that the dialogue took place in Persian, and the author is giving us an interpretation (*tafsīr*) of it in Arabic. The dialogue even follows typical Persian word order, placing the verb at the end: *wa-mithl Kalīla wa-Dimna lā yulqā*. Al-Yamanī, *Muḍāhāt*, p. 2. See above note 30.
34   Ibid., pp. 2–3.

Muqaffaʿ and his text, al-Yamanī insists that he is not aiming to censure *Kalīla and Dimna* for the proverbs (*amthāl*) that it contains but rather to make clear that *Kalīla and Dimna* is no match for the book of God.[35] He also wishes to correct those partisans of Persian culture (the aforementioned Shuʿūbiyya) who ostensibly believe that "the non-Arabs were unique" in their pursuit of wisdom and proverbs. Such people claim that the Arabs "had no wisdom (*ḥikma*) before the appearance of their Prophet".[36]

Thus, al-Yamanī views *Kalīla and Dimna* to be a repository for Arab wisdom that is being passed off as Persian and packaged in new narrative form. He dismisses the stories themselves as extraneous "stuffing," in which those pearls of wisdom are embedded. Again, the narratives are, for him, unnecessary, since the true content of *Kalīla and Dimna* is found in its proverbs and not in its stories. He tells us that he extracted the proverbs of *Kalīla and Dimna* without this stuffing and wrote them all down, finding that these kernels only took up ten folios.[37] Al-Yamanī states that the narrative stuffing is like the "foam (*zabad*)" referred to in Quran 13.17. It is useful to quote the whole of this Quranic passage here because, although al-Yamanī only quotes a small part of it, the portion that he does not quote refers to God as a maker of *amthāl*, a word that I have heretofore translated as "proverb," but which actually has a much broader signification that encompasses allegory, metaphorical speech, and other forms of similitudes. The full verse runs as follows:

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35   Ibid., p. 3.
36   Ibid.
37   Ibid.

أَنزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَسَالَتْ أَوْدِيَةٌ بِقَدَرِهَا فَاحْتَمَلَ السَّيْلُ زَبَدًا رَّابِيًا وَمِمَّا يُوقِدُونَ عَلَيْهِ فِي النَّارِ

ابْتِغَاءَ حِلْيَةٍ أَوْ مَتَاعٍ زَبَدٌ مِّثْلُهُ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّـهُ الْحَقَّ وَالْبَاطِلَ فَأَمَّا الزَّبَدُ فَيَذْهَبُ جُفَاءً ۖ وَأَمَّا مَا يَنفَعُ

النَّاسَ فَيَمْكُثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَذَٰلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّـهُ الْأَمْثَالَ

He [God] sends down water from the sky, and the valleys flood according

to their capacity. The flood carries swelling foam (*zabad*). When they heat

the fire [for smelting] to make ornaments and tools, there arises a foam like

it. Thus, God strikes [a similitude] of Truth and Falsehood. As for the foam,

it disappears as something cast off. As for what benefits people, it remains

in the earth. In this way, God strikes similitudes (*amthāl*). (Quran 13.17)

Al-Yamanī quotes this verse of the Quran both because it expresses his sense that the

narrative prose is chaff that needs to be separated from the wheat and because the verse

portrays God as one who produces similitudes or proverbs (*amthāl*). Thus, even in al-

Yamanī's account, both *Kalīla and Dimna* and the Quran are books that contain wisdom

in the form of *amthāl*. The idea that the *amthāl* of the Quran and those of *Kalīla and*

Dimna are fundamentally similar can also be found in the extensive exegetical work of

the theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209). He links together the *amthāl* of the Quran,

of *Kalīla and Dimna*, of the pre-Islamic Arabs, and of Jesus. For him, these are all

meaningfully related kinds of discourse because they are all *amthāl*. Al-Rāzī notes that

the Arabs are particularly famous for making *amthāl* out of the lowliest things like the

locust and the gnat, but his survey of the phenomenon suggests that *amthāl* were seen as transferrable, translatable discourses, crossing boundaries of culture, religion, and language.[38] As for al-Yamanī, by proving to his own satisfaction that the proverbs of *Kalīla and Dimna* contain wisdom that was already known to the Arabs, he is also trying to demonstrate that the Quran's first audience was impressed by the revelation not because they lacked wisdom, which they therefore heard for the first time from the mouth of the Prophet Muhammad. Rather, in his view, they found the Quran's wisdom to be superior to that wisdom that they already possessed. This point is likewise important for refuting the claims of the Shuʿūbiyya that the Arabs were uncultured and uncivilized prior to Islam.

In spite of all his criticisms, al-Yamanī also offers praise for *Kalīla and Dimna* and the kind of necessary wisdom it provides. According to al-Yamanī, the wisdom of this text is about *siyāsa*. The word *siyāsa,* which usually means "politics" in modern Arabic, originally referred to the tending of animals. It therefore has the more general sense of "regulation" or "management".

لكني أقول بعدل من القول ما كان أتم منفعة هذا الكتاب وأكمل أدبه في أمور الدنيا والآخرة واشدّ

حاجة الخاص والعام إليه في سياسة المرء نفسه في حال دنياه وأخراه وسياسة خاصته وسياسة

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38   The discussion is part of his commentary on Quran 2.26–27. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Fakhr al-Rāzī al-Mushtahir bi-l-Tafsīr al-Kabīr wa-Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981, vol. 2, pp. 145–146.

خدمة الملك وسياسة الملك وإقامة العدل وما ثبتت به صحته في العقل.

But in fairness, I state: How perfect is this book's benefit and how complete is its [guidance about] conduct (*adab*) for matters of this earthly life and the hereafter! How great is the need for it among both elites and non-elites for the purpose of man's management (*siyāsa*) of himself in matters of his earthly life and his hereafter, for managing his companions, for managing his service to the king, for the king's management [of others], and for upholding justice and what the intellect deems correct![39]

These four layers of management, ranging from management of the self to management of the kingdom suggest that al-Yamanī did indeed view *Kalīla and Dimna* as a book of advice and practical guidance, but he seems to have believed that it operated on what we might call the ethical, social, and political levels. This multi-layered notion of *siyāsa* may have its roots in Platonic and Aristotelian thought in which regulating the self, the household and the polity are related activities.[40]

The important point for al-Yamanī is that the Quran's wisdom surpasses the wisdom found in *Kalīla and Dimna*, as well as the wisdom that circulated among other

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39   al-Yamanī, *Muḍāhāt*, pp. 3–4.
40   Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004, pp. 149–150.

civilizations through translation prior to Islam. The Quran provides "inimitable wisdom for the community (*al-ḥikma al-muʿjiza li-l-umma*)," such that it "silences the tongues from uttering wisdom except for those who come from communities who inherit [the Quran's] knowledge".[41] In other words, the Quran is likewise concerned with wisdom and *siyāsa*. It is simply that the Quran is superior to *Kalīla and Dimna* in the *siyāsa* that it offers.

Kalīla and Dimna was also imagined to be a competitor to the Quran in another way. Just as the Quran is one of the principle bases for Islamic legal thought, *Kalīla and Dimna* was imagined to have served as a legal precedent according to an anecdote in al-Tawḥīdī's (d. 1023) anthology entitled *Baṣāʾir wa-l-Dhakhāʾir* (*Insights and Treasures*). The anecdote concerns the founder of a short line of governors in Khurasan whose proper name was Ṭāhir b. al-Ḥusayn (d. 822) but whose nickname was "The Ambidextrous Man" or, literally, "The Man with Two Right Hands".

جلس ذو اليمينَيْن يومًا من الأيام للمظالم فعُرِض عليه رقعةُ رجلٍ ادّعى أجرةً على رجل آخر وأحال المدّعى على رجل آخر. فوقّع: يُرجع إلى الفصل الثاني من كتاب كليلة ودمنة. فرُجِعَ إلى ذلك الفصل فوُجد فيه أجرةُ الأجير على من استأجره فعُمِل بذلك.

One day, the Ambidextrous Man held a session of the court of appeals. A petition was presented to him of a man who claimed his wages from

41   al-Yamanī, *Muḍāhāt*, p. 4.

another man. [The responsibility to pay] the claimed wages (*al-mudda ʿā*) had been transferred to another man.

[The Ambidextrous Man] made [the following] ruling: "One should consult the second chapter of the book of *Kalīla and Dimna*". The second chapter was consulted, and it was found that the wages of the hired man is required of the person who hired him, so it was ruled accordingly.[42]

The passage to which the judge refers as a precedent comes from one of the prefaces or "introductory chapters" of *Kalīla and Dimna*, namely the autobiography of Burzoy. There are two prefaces about the sage Burzoy in which he takes a voyage to India to find and bring back precious book of wisdom called *Kalīla and Dimna*.[43] In one of these, which is presented as an autobiographical account, a proverb about asceticism is proffered, which states that someone who enjoys passing pleasures rather than lasting benefits is like someone who hires a man for a day's work so that he can pierce a valuable jewel for a hundred dinars. When the hired man arrives, he comes upon some musical instruments, which the employer asks him to play. The hired man plays music until evening and then asks for his reward. Although the original job remains undone, the man

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42   al-Tawḥīdī, *al-Baṣāʾir wa-l-Dhakhāʾir*, Wadād al-Qāḍī (ed.), Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1988, vol. 1, p. 70. Thank you to Elias G. Saba for checking my interpretation of the legal problem at hand.
43   For an outline of these prefaces, see the study of François de Blois on the longer, non-autobiographical version of this story. *Burzōy's Voyage*, pp. 24–33. See above note 17.

who hired him was still responsible for pay the man's wage.[44]

One might expect a Muslim judge like the Ambidextrous Ṭāhir to draw on the precedents of the Quran and the exemplary conduct (*sunna*) of the Prophet and his Companions. *Kalīla and Dimna* was certainly not part of the Islamic legal tradition that was emerging at this time, although it should be noted that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ did compose a treatise on imperial governance in which he engages with questions of Islamic legal epistemology.[45] Nevertheless, *Kalīla and Dimna* was seen as a guide to managing affairs (*siyāsa*), both on the individual level and the societal level. The significance of the anecdote about Ṭāhir is difficult to discern. Like Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, Ṭāhir was well versed in both Arabic and Persian, so perhaps his use of *Kalīla and Dimna* rather than the Quran and other Islamic legal sources to render his judgment is designed to elicit from the reader a sense of disapproval or, perhaps, a bit of laughter. Whether he actually used *Kalīla and Dimna* as a legal precedent or not, this anecdote is part of a broader discourse that set up *Kalīla and Dimna* as a competitor to the Quran. By contrast, other readers seem to have understood it not as a competitor but as a necessary support for religion. In his Persian translation of the Arabic *Kalīla and Dimna*, Munshī claims that this is the best book aside from the books of Islamic law.[46]

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44   Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, p. 66. See above note 7.
45   Joseph E. Lowry, "The First Islamic Legal Theory: Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ on Interpretation, Authority, and the Structure of the Law", in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128 (2008), pp. 25–40.
46   Munshī, *Kalīla va Dimna*, p. 18. See above note 10.

The Animal Allegory of the Soul

For other readers, *Kalīla and Dimna* was understood to impart a different type of wisdom by way of allegory, namely the wisdom associated with the Islamic philosophical tradition. The evidence for this allegorical interpretation is indirect and comes from a 12th-century work of Quranic exegesis by the aforementioned exegete Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), who was one of the most important theologians, exegetes, and ethicists in Islamic history. For him, every passage in the Quran was so densely layered with meaning that it could lead to dozens if not thousands of hermeneutical explorations, and although the Quran is shorter than the New Testament, al-Rāzī's commentary runs over thirty volumes in its print edition. The reference to *Kalīla and Dimna* appears in al-Rāzī's discussion of a certain passage in the second chapter of the Quran. There, God tells the angels that he will place a viceroy (*khalīfa* or caliph) on the earth, referring to Adam. The angels object, asking if God really wishes to put someone on the earth who will sow corruption and shed blood while the angels are ceaselessly praising God. God replies that he knows what the angels do not and proceeds to teach Adam "all of the names" (Quran 2.31, cf. Genesis 2.20). When God tests the angels about the names, they cannot respond and admit God's wisdom. God then instructs Adam to teach the angels the names and commands the angels to bow down to Adam in obeisance. These names are variously interpreted to refer to the names of all things, the names of the angels themselves, or the

names of the Divine.[47]

This passage, in which God teaches Adam the names of all things, offers al-Rāzī an opportunity to discuss the place of angels in the cosmos and their subordination to the pinnacle of creation (namely, human beings) in spite of the angels' awesome power and the important role of Gabriel as messenger to the Prophets. Al-Rāzī then refers to the opinion of the philosophers, with whom he differs because they "agree that the heavenly souls (*arwāḥ*) called angels are superior to human souls".[48] He goes on to offer the philosophical evidence for this position, which is based upon a kind of Islamic Neoplatonism in which existence descends from the First Principle through a number of spheres before entering the material world. According to this view, whereas the souls of "angels" are simple and immaterial, human beings are bound up with bodies.

Al-Rāzī attributes to the philosophers the view that human souls are "like shadows beneath the throne of their Lord" until "the First Principle commands them to descend into the world of bodies and the snares of materiality".[49] The souls adhere to these bodies; they begin to love them and have affection for their material existence. Then the First Principle sends down the most noble and perfect human soul to save these souls from their snares. Al-Rāzī claims that "this is what is meant (*hādhā huwa al-murād*) in the chapter on the ring dove that is recounted in the book of *Kalīla and Dimna*".[50] In other

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[47]   Mustafa Shah, "Classical Islamic Discourses on the Origins of Language: Cultural Memory and the Defense of Orthodoxy", in: *Numen* 58 (2011), pp. 314–343, here pp. 326–328.
[48]   al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr*, vol. 2, p. 247. See above note 39.
[49]   Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 248–249.
[50]   Ibid., vol. 2, p. 249.

words, al-Rāzī claims that the chapter on the ring dove is, in fact, an allegory for the soul's descent into the material world and its eventual extrication from it.

The "Chapter of the Ring Dove" in *Kalīla and Dimna* recounts the story of a group of doves who are caught in the snare (*shabaka*) set by a hunter who has spread seeds to attract them to their doom. In response, the doves all try to free themselves individually. The queen of the tribe — the ring dove — tells them that they must work together toward a common goal if they are to free themselves. Through cooperation and coordinated action, the doves are able to fly away while still ensnared in the hunter's nets. The hunter follows them, but he eventually gives up hope when they conceal themselves for a time. The ring dove then calls to her friend the rat and convinces him to gnaw through the nets of all of her friends to free them before he finally helps her to escape.

As with other chapters in *Kalīla and Dimna*, the "Chapter of the Ring Dove" begins with the Indian king Dabshalim summarizing the topic of the previous chapter and asking his philosopher-advisor Baydabāʾ (in European translations known as Bidpai) to discuss a new topic. In this case, the king asks for a story about "the brotherhood of sincerity (*ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*), how began their friendship and their enjoyment of one another".[51] The king is not looking for an allegory about the soul, but readers of these stories from the 11th century onwards would have been familiar with texts treating birds as allegories for the soul. This is because Avicenna (d. 1037), the most influential philosopher to write in Arabic, had written *Risālat al-Ṭayr* (*The Epistle of the Bird*) in

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51   Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, p. 123. See above note 7.

which he allegorizes the soul's descent into the material realm as a bird being caught in a net and then learning to escape by mastering the passions.[52]

There are many similarities between Avicenna's allegory and the "Chapter of the Ring Dove," which suggests that Avicenna may have adapted the narrative of *Kalīla and Dimna* for his epistle. In other words, Avicenna reinterpreted the "Chapter of the Ring Dove" as an allegory of the soul by adapting and rewriting it in a philosophical idiom. In fact, there are similarities between Avicenna's epistle and this chapter from *Kalīla and Dimna* that go beyond the plot, which give further credence to the possibility that his epistle is, in fact, an adaptation. Avicenna begins his epistle with a lengthy encomium dedicated to true friendship and to brethren "who are drawn together by divine intimacy (*al-qarāba al-ilāhiyya*)".[53] He addresses his audience repeatedly in this introductory section as "the brotherhood of truth (*ikhwān al-ḥaqīqa*)," a term that clearly echoes the phrase "brethren of sincerity (*ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*)" found in *Kalīla and Dimna*.[54] In other words, *Kalīla and Dimna* and Avicenna's epistle share a similar plot and an overarching theme of friendship, but Avicenna reformulates the theme of friendship as a kind of spiritual connection that is intimately related to the taming of the passions and the

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52 The summary of Avicenna's epistle presented here is a greatly simplified reading of the text, but it should be remembered that, as Peter Heath points out, Avicenna's allegories were not intended to be philosophy for the masses. Their ambiguities and intricacies cannot be understood "without expert prior knowledge of Avicenna's system". Peter Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna (Ibn Sînâ): With a Translation of the Book of the Prophet Muḥammad's Ascent to Heaven*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1992, p. 160.

53 Ibn Sīnā, *Traités Mystiques d'Aboû Ali al-Hosain b. Abdallâh b. Sina ou d'Avicenne*, M.A.F. Mehren (ed.), Leiden: Brill, 1891, p. 42.

54 Ibid.

recognition of intimacy that supersedes material need.

We can see Avicenna's *Epistle of the Bird*, therefore, as a "version" of the "Chapter of the Ring Dove" that simultaneously recasts that chapter as itself a philosophical allegory. Avicenna's epistle may have simply crystallized a preexisting interpretation of this chapter of *Kalīla and Dimna*, or, alternatively, Avicenna may have been the source of this interpretation. Given that al-Rāzī was deeply familiar with Avicenna's philosophical writings, he may have seen Avicenna's epistle as the philosopher's "interpretation" of this section from *Kalīla and Dimna*. Whatever the case may be, it is clear from the foregoing analysis that al-Rāzī was familiar with the tradition of treating bird stories as allegories of the soul, a tradition inaugurated by Avicenna.

This tradition of bird allegories of the soul had wide-ranging influence and could be reinterpreted in different contexts for various purposes. For instance, a poem called "The Ode of the Soul" is also attributed to Avicenna and roughly follows the plot of his epistle, treating the soul as a bird that descends into the material realm. The ode then circulated in Isma'ili contexts where later scholars wrote commentaries on it.[55] In fact, this "Chapter of the Ring Dove" in *Kalīla and Dimna* is linked in other ways to the Isma'ilis, a philosophically-inclined branch of Shi'ism. The phrase "brotherhood of sincerity (*ikhwān al-ṣafāʾ*)," found at the beginning of the epistle, was adopted by an anonymous group of philosophically-inclined Muslims who called themselves the

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55   Toby Mayer, *Avicenna's Allegory of the Soul: An Ismaili Interpretation*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2016.

Brotherhood of Sincerity. They composed a collection of texts known as *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* (*The Epistles of the Brotherhood of Sincerity*) at some point in the course of the 9th-10th centuries, which reflect a Pythagorean-Neoplatonist outlook and became an integral part of the Isma'ili canon. They include a long epistle in which humans and animals debate whether animals should be enslaved to humans in which the king of the jinn sits in judgment.[56] It seems plausible that al-Rāzī therefore sees this chapter of *Kalīla and Dimna* as especially linked to this broader Islamic philosophical discourse that encompassed both Avicenna and the Isma'ilis. Furthermore, allegories about birds abounded in philosophically-inflected Sufi narratives. The Persian Sufi text entitled *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* (*Conference of the Birds*) by Farīd al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 1221), for example, describes the treacherous journey of a group of birds to seek out the Sīmurgh to become their sovereign. Led by the hoopoe, they travel through a number of valleys laden with allegorical significance. Only thirty birds survive the journey, only to discover that they themselves are the "*sī murgh*," (a phrase that literally means "thirty birds").[57]

In sum, it seems that the tradition of using animal allegories and particularly

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56   Carl Brockelmann, *History of the Arabic Written Tradition, Supplement Volume 1*, Joep Lameer (trans.), Leiden: Brill, 2017, p. 384. There are new editions and translations of *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*'s epistles appearing under the joint auspices of The Institute for Ismaili Studies and Oxford University Press. For example, Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ, *Epistle of the Brethren of Purity, 22: The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn: An Arabic Critical Edition and English Translation of Epistle 22*, Lenn E. Goodman and Richard McGregor (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Ignacio Sanchez, "Dramatic Irony and the Fate of Beasts in *The Case of Animals versus Man* of the Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ", in: *Journal of Abbasid Studies* (forthcoming).
57   Farīd al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār, *The Conference of the Birds*, Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis (trans.), New York: Penguin, 1984.

allegories involving birds as a way of imagining the soul's descent to the material realm inflected a certain strand of interpretation of "The Chapter of the Ring Dove". Although this allegorical reading is not explicitly present in the surviving Arabic versions of *Kalīla and Dimna* of which I am aware, the chapter is not simply about friendship as a means of survival. The characters in the Arabic versions also discuss "philosophical" topics, such as the nature of fate. When the ring dove calls out to the rat for help in escaping the net, the rat approaches and asks his friend, "What cast you into this predicament when you are so intelligent?" The ring dove replies, "Do you not know that every good and evil is fated... and it was the fates that cast me into this predicament?"[58] Whereas the rat seems to assume that a sound intellect is a sufficient defense against the vicissitudes of fate, the ring dove argues that these affairs are, in fact, out of our hands. If the ring dove is correct that we are at the mercy of fate, then is it really any point in deriving practical, political wisdom from a text like *Kalīla and Dimna*? These tensions in the *Kalīla and Dimna* textual field call into question any stable categorization of the text as a piece of secular wisdom or as a mirror for princes text. Indeed, another chapter in the text, "The Chapter of the King's Son and His Companions" is explicitly framed as a meditation on fate and divine providence (*al-qaḍāʾ wa-l-qadar*).[59] Although the *Kalīla and Dimna* textual field does purport to offer practical advice, its dialogues also call into question the effectiveness of that advice in a world governed by fate. Readers like Avicenna and al-Rāzī took those cues as license to interpret parts of *Kalīla and Dimna* as philosophical

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58   Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, p. 124.
59   Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, pp. 209–213.

allegories, thus categorizing the text within their universes of genre and textuality in ways that might seem novel or counterintuitive but that seem to have been obvious to some. As it turns out, this question of whether man is in control of his own destiny was one that exercised other readers of *Kalīla and Dimna*, as we saw in the quotation from Ibn al-Habbāriyya at the beginning of this essay, a point to which I will return later.

The Frivolous *Kalīla and Dimna*

Not all readers accepted that the "Chapter of the Ring Dove" was actually an allegory of the soul. Indeed, some insisted that the entirety of *Kalīla and Dimna* had no real substance but was simply a series of entertaining stories. The tenth-century Baghdadi bookseller Ibn al-Nadīm, for example, compiled an encyclopedic index (*fihrist*) of all the books in Arabic he knew to exist. In organizing his index, he also produced a taxonomy of knowledge as he saw it, a taxonomy that Irwin called "higgledy-piggledy".[60] For Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kalīla and Dimna* did not belong with philosophy or courtly writing, much less with scripture. Rather, the text could be found just before the section dealing with charlatan magic and jugglery in a chapter devoted to "nighttime stories and tall-tales (*asmār wa-l-khurāfāt*)".[61] According to Ibn al-Nadīm, the Persians were the first to write these tall-tales, but the eloquent authors among the Arabs translated and adapted these

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60   Irwin, "Arabic Beast Fable", p. 36.
61   Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist li-l-Nadīm*, vol. 3, pp. 321 and 333. See above note 5. Devin Stewart, "*Abū 'l-Faraj Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq Ibn al-Nadīm*", in: *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography 925-1350*, Terri DeYoung and Mary St. Germain, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011, pp. 129–141.

works into Arabic. He mentions first a text with the Persian title *Hazār Afsān*, which he

explains means "one thousand tall-tales," and which he describes as a series of tales told

by Shahrazad to a king who marries and then murders a new woman every night.[62] This

text is well known to modern readers as the *Thousand and One Nights* (*Alf Layla wa-*

Layla), but it is important to note two important facts. First, the *Nights* does not seem to

have been a widely circulating text in the pre-modern Islamic world, unlike *Kalīla and*

Dimna. It takes up far more space in the modern imagination than it did in the canon of

pre-modern Arabic literature. Second, the *Nights* was also subject to a high degree of

mouvance, much like *Kalīla and Dimna*, which means that the *Hazār Afsān* with which

Ibn al-Nadīm was familiar might have looked quite different from the earliest surviving

manuscripts of *The Thousand and One Nights* in Arabic.[63] Ibn al-Nadīm notes that he had

seen the book in its entirety several times that "it is, in actuality, a worthless book written

in a cold style".[64] It is impossible to say whether he was reading a very different version

of the *Nights* or whether his aesthetic values are so different from readers of the past few

centuries who have celebrated the *Nights* as an exemplar of World Literature.

In this same category of "tall tales," Ibn al-Nadīm includes *Kalīla and Dimna*, a

book that he says some people attribute to India while others attribute it to the Persians.

Although he says little about *Kalīla and Dimna* itself, the fact that he treats it together

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62   Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist li-l-Nadīm*, vol. 3, p. 321. See above note 5.
63   Ulrich Marzolph, "The Persian Nights: Links between the *Arabian Nights* and Iranian
Culture", in: *Fabula* 45 (2004), pp. 275–293, here p. 276. Aboubakr Chraibi, *Les milles et une
nuits: histoire du texte et classification des contes*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008. Muhsin Jasim
Musawi, *The Islamic Context of the Thousand and One Nights*, New York: Columbia, 2009.
64   Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, vol. 3, p. 322. See above note 5.

with *Hazār Afsān*, a text that he describes dismissively, is suggestive. The term "tall tales" implies that he considers them to be somewhat frivolous, fictive stories, devoid of serious content. Their purpose is, for Ibn al-Nadīm, entertainment and enjoyment.

This more dismissive view of *Kalīla and Dimna* as a merely entertaining text is also attested in a Hebrew text from the 14th-century. The text in question is a Hebrew translation by Kalonymus ben Kalonymus (d. after 1328) of the aforementioned epistle of the Brethren of Purity in which animals and humans argue their cases before the king of the jinn. Kalonymus writes in his introduction that one should not categorize this epistle of the Brethren of Purity together with *Kalīla and Dimna*, even though both feature talking animals. The only sort of person who would make such an error is "a foolish person who runs away from reason, one who is deprived of sense and cognizance".[65] Kalonymus also warns against lumping the epistle of the Brethren of Sincerity together with the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī, the fables of Sindbad, and what is like them. The fables of Sindbad, it should be noted, is not the story of Sindbad the sailor famous to readers of the *Nights* but of Sindbad the Philosopher who belongs to a narrative known as *The Seven Viziers*.[66] As for the *Maqāmāt*, it is the very same collection of trickster tales that was

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65   Kalonymus ben Kalonymus, *Iggeret Baʿalē Ḥayyīm*, Y. Toprovsky (ed.), Jerusalem, 1949, pp. 1–2. Thanks are due to Guy Ron Gilboa for bringing this text to my attention and translating the relevant passage for me.
66   Ibid. Bettina Krönung, "Fighting with Tales: 1 The Arabic *Book of Sindbad the Philosopher*", in: *Fictional Storytelling in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean and Beyond*, Carolina Cupane and Bettina Krönung (eds.), Leiden: Brill, 2016, pp. 365 - 379, p. 365. Bea Lundt, "Sieben weise Meister", in: *Enzyklopädie des Märchens: Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung,* Lotte Baumann et al. (eds.), Berlin: De Gruyter, 2007, vol. 12, pp. 654–60.

mentioned at the beginning of this article, the remarkable textual stability of which is quite distinct from the mouvance of *Kalīla and Dimna*. It is also a text that, in spite of Kalonymus's dismissive view, was also sometimes compared with the Quran.[67]

The problem with these narrative texts for readers like Kalonymous is presumably that they are frivolous, lacking the philosophical seriousness of the Brethren of Sincerity. Ibn al-Nadīm and Kalonymus dismiss the possibility of reading *Kalīla and Dimna* with the kind of interpretive depth and sympathy that we found in al-Rāzī and even al-Yamanī. Implicit in these contested categorizations is an ongoing polemic in which different readers and authors might make different claims about where *Kalīla and Dimna* belonged in the universe of Arabic textuality.

Ibn al-Habbāriyya and the Fictionalized Contestation of *Kalīla and Dimna*

The foregoing has shown that *Kalīla and Dimna* was not one kind of text and that its genre, at least as a historical question, cannot be uncovered through a formal analysis of the text itself. It is no longer possible to assume that medieval readers had settled ideas about *Kalīla and Dimna*'s genre. The disagreement between readers over the categorization of *Kalīla and Dimna* became a theme of literature in the 11th century in the hands of Ibn al-Habbāriyya, a versifier for the rich and powerful in Baghdad whose verses were quoted at the beginning of this article.

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[67]   Matthew L. Keegan "Throwing the Reins to the Reader." See above note 21.

Ibn al-Habbāriyya, a poet who has received very little attention in modern scholarship, was born in Baghdad and died there in either 1115 or 1116.[68] He received patronage from one of the most powerful men of the age, Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 1092), and was especially known for his verses on wine and love, as well as poems lampooning his friends and rivals (*hijāʾ*). He also wrote three long narrative poems in the form known as *rajaz* couplets. The first of these poems in *rajaz* (or *urjūza*s) was his versification of *Kalīla and Dimna*, entitled *Natāʾij al-Fiṭna fī Naẓm Kalīla wa-Dimna* (*The Fruits of Wisdom in the Versification of Kalīla and Dimna*), and it is one of at least seven examples of Arabic authors versifying the text.[69] The second of Ibn al-Habbāriyya's narrative poems was a versification of Avicenna's philosophical allegory *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, which he augmented with a commentary to explain the work's allegorical significance.[70]

The third of Ibn al-Habbāriyya's narrative poems is the text mentioned at the beginning of this essay. It is an original composition, rather than an adaptation, which he calls *al-Ṣādiḥ wa-l-Bāghim.* The text begins by declaring itself both a work of *adab* and of knowledge or science (*ʿilm*), which he claims is a unique work. In particular, he notes that this text is not the versification of a prose work but is of the author's own invention

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68   Nefeli Papoutsakis, "Ibn al-Habbāriyya", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, Kate Fleet, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson (eds.). Consulted on 9 June 2020.

69   Louis Cheikho, "*Naẓm Kalīla wa-Dimna*", in: *al-Mashriq* 4 (1901), pp. 978–986.

70   Ibn al-Habbāriyya, "*Naẓm Risālat Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān*", in: *Risālat Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān wa-Risālat al-Ṭayr li-l-Shaykh al-Raʾīs Abī ʿAlī Ibn Sīnā wa-Naẓm Hibat Allāh Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Baghdādī wa-Qaṣīdat al-Shāʿir Ibn al-Habbāriyya al-ʿAbbāsī al-Baghdādī fī Naẓm Risālat Ḥayy b. Yaqẓān*, Sādiq Kamnūna (ed.), Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿAnī, 1984, pp. 75–96.

(*waḍaʿtuhu mukhtariʿan maʿnāhu*).[71] This statement is presumably designed to differentiate *The Crowing Cock* from his versification of *Kalīla and Dimna*. After extensive praise of Ibn al-Habbāriyya's patron, he begins his story with a first-person narrative. Ibn al-Habbāriyya's anonymous narrator begins his tale with a journey. The narrator sets out with a group of travelers from Basra to Mecca but becomes separated from his fellows. He sits afraid and alone when suddenly, out of the darkness of the night, two figures appear out of the darkness. The first is an older Indian man and the second is a middle-aged Persian man. The two men are arguing over the superiority and wisdom of their respective peoples.

The Indian man argues that the game of chess reveals the superior knowledge of India, and he argues that chess is an appropriate metaphor for life because "life is in proper management (*tadbīr*) and not a matter of destiny (*qisma*) and foreordained decree (*taqdīr*)".[72] The Persian replies that his countrymen are also wise and that they possess good governing practices (*siyāsāt*) and management (*tadbīr*). Most importantly, the Persians know that "life is according to what God bestows (*rizq*) and foreordained decree (*taqdīr*)".[73] For the Persian, backgammon (rather than chess) is the appropriate metaphor for life because, as the Persian points out, there are people whom the fates (*aqdār*) treat kindly in spite of their bad management (*khurq*). Others are possessed of learning, intelligence, and good management (*rifq*), but fate deceives them and gives them

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71   Ibn al-Habbāriyya, *al-Ṣādiḥ wa-l-Bāghim*, p. 11. See above note 2.
72   Ibid., p. 16.
73   Ibid.

misfortune.

The two men, echoing the ring dove and the rat in *Kalīla and Dimna*, continue to argue the question of whether humans are in charge of their own destiny or not. Both men cite historical examples from both the recent and more distant past to prove their points. They describe the various lessons and benefits of chess and backgammon before the Indian finally brings up a different piece of evidence for Indian wisdom. It is at this point that the Indian says, in the words quoted at the beginning of this article, that his culture has given the world *Kalīla and Dimna*. According to the Indian man's interpretation, it is a text full of "exhortation, knowledge, and wisdom," which dazzles those who possess understanding.[74]

The context of this debate suggests that the Indian man is offering up *Kalīla and Dimna* as an example of Indian political wisdom, which allows a man to manage his affairs more effectively. The Persian man does not deny that *Kalīla and Dimna* is a wise text, but he claims that its meaning lies elsewhere. The claim is somewhat strange because he implies that the meaning of the text lies *somewhere else*, that is, *in another text* or *another discourse*. The Persian man's suggestion that a text's meaning lies outside the text itself surprises the Indian man who asks if "elsewhere" refers to a story he has not heard. The Persian affirms that *Kalīla and Dimna*'s meaning lies in further stories and asks the Indian if he has heard the story of the ascetic and the cut-throat thief. The Indian man replies that he has not heard it, which leads the Persian to narrate the story, and this

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74   Ibid., p. 24.

is the first enframed narrative in *The Crowing Cock*. According to the Persian man, the true meaning of *Kalīla and Dimna* can only be discovered through the production of new stories. Ibn al-Habbāriyya presents *The Crowing Cock* as a work of the author's own invention, but it is simultaneously an adaptation that suggests itself as a key to uncovering the *real* meaning of *Kalīla and Dimna*.[75]

Ibn al-Habbāriyya's *The Crowing Cock* recognizes and dramatizes one of the central features of *Kalīla and Dimna*, namely the inability to produce a unified understanding of the text or a stable generic categorization for it. The pre-modern reception of *Kalīla and Dimna* was so multifarious that any attempt to pigeon-hole the text becomes impossible.

Conclusion

Both Ibn al-Habbāriyya and the many copyists who made manuscripts of *Kalīla and Dimna* were in the business of reinterpreting and adapting the versions of that text that they encountered in the world. The unruliness of the text, or rather of the textual field, operated both at the level of manuscript variations and generic categorizations. When Ibn al-Habbāriyya's fictive Persian man claims that "elsewhere lies its meaning," he is offering to explain the what kind of text *Kalīla and Dimna* actually is by telling his audience new stories. He hopes to reconfigure the place of the text within the universe of

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75   Ibid., p. 11.

textuality that exists in the mind of his interlocutor. The Indian reader has, in his view, misconstrued the text as one that conveys practical advice. What I would like to suggest is that this fictive frame story in Ibn al-Habbāriyya engages in the same sort of interpretive activities found in the gleanings discussed above and, indeed, in the same activities that the copyist-coauthors were undertaking when they added new material or reworded the text to align with their understanding of what it *ought* to mean.

Medieval readers, when they encountered *Kalīla and Dimna*, might have had a clear sense of their personal expectations about the text, which were shaped by the traditions of writing and reading in which they were embedded. However, we should not expect that two readers shared precisely the same expectations, even if they belonged to the same historical and cultural context. Indeed, two readers (or even the same reader in different discursive contexts) might have radically different notions of what texts hung together as a group or a "genre". What we see as "family resemblances" between two texts might have been relevant to some readers and irrelevant to others, as can be seen in the contrast between Ibn al-Nadīm and al-Yamanī.[76] The former categorized *Kalīla and Dimna* with the tales of the *Thousand and One Nights*, while the latter found the narratives to be extraneous stuffing out of which one could extract some wise sayings. The readers discussed above, who were also, of course, authors, were prepared to rewrite, reinterpret, reconfigure, and adapt *Kalīla and Dimna* in order to make it resonate with

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[76] On family resemblances, see Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, pp. 42–44.

their needs and expectations.

The generic landscape of the Arabic textual universe was not a schematic grid of well-known categories but a field of play and contestation, the contours of which are not readily apparent. As Geert Jan van Gelder has pointed out, the medieval theoreticians working in Arabic did not generally attempt to build systematic accounts of the various prose genres, although they made a series of "brave attempts" to categorize the genres and modes of poetry.[77] As such, to understand genre-thinking, we must rely upon gleanings like those above, in addition to material evidence, such as library catalogues and multiple-text or composite manuscripts, to see which texts actually travelled together.[78] Such evidence pushes back against both the application of European categories and the assumption that the formal features and family resemblances that we recognize as salient were, in fact, the ones that mattered.

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[77] Geert Jan van Gelder, "Some Brave Attempts at Generic Classification", in: *Aspects of Genre and Type in Pre-Modern Literary Cultures*, Bert Roest / Herman Vanstiphout (eds.), Groningen: Styx, 1999, pp. 15–31, here p. 24. My thanks to Kevin Blankinship for bringing this essay to my attention.
[78] Konrad Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus: Plurality and Diversity in an Arabic Library, The Ashrafīya Library Catalogue*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016, pp. 67–86. Idem., "The Development of Arabic Multiple-Text and Composite Manuscripts: The Case of *ḥadīth* Manuscripts in Damascus during the Late Medieval Period", in: *The Emergence of Multiple-Text Manuscripts*, Alessandro Bausi et al. (eds.), Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019.