



Title:

**A Redactor at Work.
Discoveries in MS Vat. Borg. ar. 213 of Kalīla wa-Dimna**



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1. Introduction

›Kalīla wa-Dimna‹ has animated readers for centuries to »talk back«. ¹ The administrative scribes (*kuttāb*) of the early Abbasid era (mid-eighth to tenth century) culled its pithy sayings to ornate their own epistles with them. The sayings also served as basis for a counter-analogy and a new narrative. ² Copyist-redactors in later centuries (thirteenth to early nineteenth) who came across different versions combined these judiciously to round out the narrative. Yet another redactor took only the enframed tales and made them into a collection (MS Paris BnF arabe 3593). These responding readers cut, added, and rewrote. ³ As a result, ›Kalīla wa-Dimna‹ is a work in motion, and one cannot read one version without thinking of the same passage in others (where it is precisely *not* the same). The process of reading becomes horizontal, across versions, as well as vertical, in the sequence of the narrative. Readers' interference is facilitated, or rather provoked, by the text's architecture, clearly subdivided into chapters, made up of dialogue scenes with enframed tales that in turn enframe further tales and so on. All this is interspersed with analogical images (*amthāl*, sg. *mathal*) and wise sayings (*ḥikam*, sg. *ḥikma*). ⁴ Most of these elements are self-contained, detachable, and ready to be recombined at will. Some junctures are marked in the text by formulae and, in many manuscripts, visually high-lighted with rubrications of the changing speakers, select key terms, and the titles of sub-stories. Paragraph symbols define smaller units of meaning at sentence level. Illustrations present in a large portion of the manuscripts (and mostly depicting scenes from sub-stories) also help to navigate the text. ›Kalīla wa-Dimna‹ is a playing field especially for redactors, that

- 1 This publication has been made possible via the Kalīla and Dimna-AnonymClassic research project at Freie Universität Berlin. The AnonymClassic project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement no. 742 635. See also Beatrice Gruendler et al., An interim report on the editorial and analytical work of the AnonymClassic Project, in: *Medieval Worlds: Comparative and Interdisciplinary Studies* 11, 2020, pp. 241-79, doi 10.1553/medievalworlds_no11_2020s241. For a brief description of the project and of ›Kalīla wa-Dimna‹, see Beatrice Gruendler, *The Arabic Anonymous in a World Classic (Acronym: AnonymClassic): Presentation of a Research Project*, in: *Geschichte der Germanistik* 51/52, 2017, pp. 156-57.
- 2 The former is the ›Muḥāḥāt amthāl Kitāb Kalīla wa-Dimna bi-mā ashbahahā min ash'ār al-'arab‹ by Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad al-Yamanī, the other ›al-Namir wa-tha'lab‹ by Sahl b. Hārūn.
- 3 All those who transformed the work in some way, from anthologists to redactors, are referred to as readers, since they all share this first step, irrespective of the ultimate outcome of their engagement.
- 4 The basic meaning of *mathal*, »likeness, analogy«, varies in scope; it can stand for the chapter-size parable, the shorter sub-story told as parable within a chapter, and the sentence-long analogical image. The word further means »example« and »proverb«.

is, those who produced (their own) versions of the entire text; calling these (often very creative) individuals »copyists« would be a misnomer.

However, how did the redactors proceed? One can detect their work only by analysing their finished products.⁵ The manuscript discussed here, Vatican Borg. ar. 213 (hereafter Vatican 213), offers a unique window on the technique of one (anonymous) redactor, the stages of whose work are preserved side by side, as culled and reworked passages, marginalia, and crossed-out and cropped pages.⁶ There are three distinct phases of his work, detectable in different parts of the manuscript.

2. *The contents of Vatican 213*

Manuscript Vatican 213 contains the same elements as other manuscripts of ›Kalila wa-Dimna‹, such as table of contents, prefaces, and chapters, however some of these in up to three versions, which makes this manuscript unique. The handwriting alternates between two sizes, veering between twenty-two and thirty-five lines per page. The size changes at times gradually over several pages and at others between pages or abruptly in the middle of a page (e.g. fol. 39r/pdf 83). Some pages in larger script appear to be clean-copied, and many pages of the initial notebook-section are in smaller script, but this is not consistent. The similar letter shapes of both hands, even though more carefully traced in the larger script, identify the writer as the same person.⁷

The binding separates three parts by intervening blank pages (fol. 18r/pdf 41-fol. 18v/pdf 42, fol. 57r/pdf 119-fol. 57v/pdf 120, and fol. 111r/pdf 227-fol. 111v/pdf 228).⁸ The parts' sequence is established by the (modern) binding and not

- 5 This is achieved in the AnonymClassic Project with a synoptic edition that permits placing any number of digitized manuscripts side by side, segmented into matching passages that are automatically aligned for comparison. On the LERA editing tool, see Susanne Schütz and Marcus Pöckelmann, LERA – Explorative Analyse komplexer Textvarianten in Editionsphilologie und Diskursanalyse, in: Book of Abstracts of the Third Annual Conference of Digital Humanities for German-Speaking Regions, Leipzig 2016, pp. 249-3. <http://dhd2016.de/> and <https://dhd-blog.org/?p=6779>. The tool has been adapted to Arabic text by Mahmoud Kozac.
- 6 See fig. 1. and the permanent link to the manuscript, https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Borg.ar.213, Giorgio Levi della Vida, *Elenco dei manoscritti arabi islamici della biblioteca vaticana*. Vaticani, Barberiniani, Borgiani, Rossiani, Città del Vaticano, 1935, p. 268, and Eugène Tisserant, *Inventaire sommaire des manuscrits arabes du fonds Borgia à la Bibliothèque Vaticane*, separate republ. from *Miscellanea Francesco Ehrle*, V, Rome 1924, p. 21. The discovery and first analysis of the manuscript's composition was made by Dima Mustafa Sakran. On the dating, see section 3 below.
- 7 Characteristics are a particular ligature for the eulogy *ta'ālā* with *lām* and *yā'* taking the shape of a *lām-alif* lying on its side; the initial *sin* is written as a diagonally descending stroke; the upper stroke of the *kāfis* added in a second movement and crosses the preceding *lām* or *alif* or touches it at the top in a T-juncture; *kāf* and *alif* are written as ligature joined at the top, forming a B-like shape, for instance in the frequent word *kāna*, »he was«, whose *nūn* is written as a closed circle, just to name the most salient features.
- 8 See fig. 2 for an overview of the manuscript's structure. Since the manuscript has been studied in digitized form, the pdf numbers are given as well and solely used in fig. 2. This acknowledges the fact

باجبازيزر ربه الشيب
 قالوا لا يرحم الا بالعلم والخبر هو الشبح والعامل هو
 القوم وانما يطلب الرجل العمل ليتنفع به ويترفع به انما
 هو لم يستعمله لم يتنفع به ولا يترفع به
 فيضيق لمن طلب ان يكون له غاية ونهاية يعقد عليها
 فانه يتألم كلما يكون له غاية يجزي اليها ونهاية يعقد
 عليها خاب رجاءه ونسب مقصوده
 ويتيق للعامل ان يكون لا غيرته موقرا فانه ينقل
 تعلوقه بالدنيا قلت حسرتة عند مفارقتها
 ويقال امران يجردان وهما النسك والماله الحلال
 ولا ينبغي للعامل ان يقطع ما ليس من رزقه الله فينال
 فيما ساق القدر اليه رزقا هينا وهو غائل عنه لا يدرك
 به ولا يعلم وجهه
 وينبغي للعامل ان يترك انسانا سعيه فمن كان سعيه
 له نياة خيانه عليه ومن كان سعيه لا يتردد خيانه
 له وعليه
 ويقال نقده لم يبق عيب على صاحب الدنيا اصلاحها
 وابدال نفسه بها من امر دينه ومن امر
 محيسته ومنها امر ما بينه وبين الناس
 وقد قيل في امر من كانت فيه لم يسقم له وهي
 التباينة العجل وتضع العرض والتصديق كل خطا
 والتكذيب كل عا

المراد به وهي المزة والصفحة والدم والبلغ يتخاف من
 العاصم الغائبه والاضرام والوصول والسباع وطول
 الايام في الفضل من الخ والبرد والاضمار والرياح
 والتهرج والسيلان الطمان والقرين الرزي وغير ذلك
 هو كسوف الخليفة واقصاه وهو على منزلة لا يتكلم منها
 ثم خصصت بعد ذلك ان ما هو احدث له على نفسه
 هذا ثم جعلت لنفسه في الحياة وتبينت الخلق لها الا
 وهو على ضعف الراي قليل المعرفة فانهم اهلها
 وعليه ينبغي ان يتخارج في خاتمة نفسه ويؤمن الخلق
 به وان فرق في ذلك فهو على قليل الراي لا يعطوله
 وتكررت فوجدت المانع من ذلك انه سعة حقيق من الظاهر
 والوبراب والسبع والتبيل والشعر لعله تتبثر في سائر
 الانقطاع ونقاد الله فانهم لاشعيا اشد به الا شقة
 ينقل رجل اضطره الخوف والامع الى غير خدي فيرث
 بعضهم ناسية على ضميرها بل عن ساجدي في ذلك فوجدت
 وجلاء في انساها وانما هو ياربع الثاني قد اخرجت رهن
 نحوه ونظر الى الخلقه انما انما يتخارج فاه من انما لم يسقط الله
 فيست بعد رفرع رهن الى العطين الذين هو ما نساك فخط من امر
 انظر عن من في الرزق ايضا وجرد الوداد وهما رقصان العصاة
 خليا به لا يقتربها ونسبها هو كذا وهو يوم كماله لنفسه
 اذا انصرف فبين غملا طبع فيه واخذت كبر العجل
 في رزقته فيه عما انفق في امره واخرته ونسب ما هو فيه من
 الصغرية فلم ينزل سلبها لاهيا يلجب حتى ذلك تسبعت
 الدنيا

فقال له يا رجل انما يرحم الا بالعلم والخبر هو الشبح والعامل هو القوم وانما يطلب الرجل العمل ليتنفع به ويترفع به انما هو لم يستعمله لم يتنفع به ولا يترفع به فيضيق لمن طلب ان يكون له غاية ونهاية يعقد عليها فانه يتألم كلما يكون له غاية يجزي اليها ونهاية يعقد عليها خاب رجاءه ونسب مقصوده ويتيق للعامل ان يكون لا غيرته موقرا فانه ينقل تعلوقه بالدنيا قلت حسرتة عند مفارقتها ويقال امران يجردان وهما النسك والماله الحلال ولا ينبغي للعامل ان يقطع ما ليس من رزقه الله فينال فيما ساق القدر اليه رزقا هينا وهو غائل عنه لا يدرك به ولا يعلم وجهه وينبغي للعامل ان يترك انسانا سعيه فمن كان سعيه له نياة خيانه عليه ومن كان سعيه لا يتردد خيانه له وعليه ويقال نقده لم يبق عيب على صاحب الدنيا اصلاحها وابدال نفسه بها من امر دينه ومن امر محيسته ومنها امر ما بينه وبين الناس وقد قيل في امر من كانت فيه لم يسقم له وهي التباينة العجل وتضع العرض والتصديق كل خطا والتكذيب كل عا

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Figure 1: MS Vatican Borg. ar. 213, top left to right: fols. 7r/pdf 19; 11v/pdf 28; bottom left to right: fols. 13r/pdf 31; 17r/pdf 39. © Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

necessarily original. The internal order of the second and third sections is guaranteed by catchwords, in the first section, however, these appear only in two of the prefaces.⁹

To briefly describe the parts: **the first** (fol. 3r/pdf 9-fol. 17v/pdf 40) is a notebook-like assemblage of snippets selected from across the entire work. The notebook also contains two tables of content, abbreviated versions of three prefaces (Lv, Im, and Bu),¹⁰ and two cropped folios. **The second part** (fol. 19r/pdf 43-fol. 56v/pdf 118) contains all of the stable chapters¹¹ of ›Kalīla wa-Dimna‹ in shortened form. Such an abridged version of ›Kalīla wa-Dimna‹ has not been found in any other manuscript so far. Analysis suggests that the short versions are abridgments of the long versions of the same manuscript. This is ascertained for the chapters Rd to Ag by internal comparison (for an example, see section 5 below). The prefaces in the notebook (Lv, Im and Bu) and the first two short versions of chapters (Lo, and Di) are only found in abridged form and have no equivalent among the long versions. **The third part** of the manuscript (fol. 58r/pdf 121-fol. 110v/pdf 226) looks similar to any other manuscript of the work. The three parts will be referred to in the following as »notebook«, »short versions«, and »long versions«.

The notebook is the most puzzling part of Vat 213, notably the fols. 12r/pdf 29-17v/pdf 40, which are crossed out with diagonal lines, though their content remains legible. Although the crossed-out pages are easy to identify, the original beginning and end of what we refer to as a notebook is uncertain, and it might be incomplete. When and how these discarded sheets found their way into the codex is unknown, perhaps by the act of someone other than the redactor. These crossed-out pages, but also others in the notebook, give the impression of having served as working notes for the redactor: the script is careless, and many margins are crammed with writing in all directions in disorderly fashion.¹² Two tiny paper slips (*tayyāra*) with writing on only one side are attached to the manuscript in two places (pdf 11-12 between fols. 3 and 4 (foliated »3A«) and fol. 13/pdf 31-32). The notebook breaks off at fol. 17v/pdf 40 in the middle of the text and is followed by a bound-in blank sheet. Such traces of redactional work hardly occur in the short and long versions of the manuscript (except for marginalia on fols. 23r/pdf 51, 29r/pdf 63, and 108v/pdf 222). This indicates that the notebook was meant as an interim phase, not a finished product.

that the present study (as many others today) is based on a digital copy, and not the physical codex, a distinction emphasized by Lambertus Willem Cornelis Van Lit, *Among Digitized Manuscripts: Philology, Codicology, Paleography in a Digital World*, Leiden/Boston 2020.

- 9 Fols. 4v/pdf 14 (Lv) and 7v/pdf 20, 8v/pdf 22, 9v/pdf 24, 10v/pdf 26, and 11v/pdf 28 (Bu).
- 10 The chapter title abbreviations, which follow François de Blois, *Burzōy's voyage to India and the origin of the book of Kalīlah wa Dimnah*, London 1990, are explained in fig. 2.
- 11 There are fourteen stable chapters, all of which appear in Vat 213. The three rare chapters are »The King of the Mice«, contained in the Older Syriac and Greek versions and few Arabic manuscripts, as well as »Dove and Fox« and »Kingfisher and Whimbrel« contained in few Arabic manuscripts and the Hebrew, Latin, and Castilian translations; see de Blois (note 10), p. 62.
- 12 Fols. 10r/pdf 25, 11v/pdf 28 (fig. 1 top right), 12r/pdf 29, 16v/pdf 38, and 17r/pdf 39 (fig. 1 bottom right).

16	Lv	13	12	11	ToC	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1		
32	31	30	28							Bu	20	19	Im	17	
			Lo	43	42	41	40	39	38	37	ToC	34	33		
64															
80												Di	66		
96	At	94			Oc	89	88						Rd	81	
	Lj	110	Kb		Mc	105							Kd	99	Aw
						Rd	121	120	119	Ag	Lh	Ks	Tg		
					Oc	140	139								
176	Kd	Aw	171				168	At	165						
		206	Lj	203			Kb	198					Mc	193	
	Lh	221					Ks	216	Tg	212					
									231	230	229	228	227	Ag	

Symbols and abbreviations of chapter titles

ToC	Table of contents	Lo	Lion and Ox	Mc	Mouse and Cat
x	Empty page	Di	Trial of Dimna	Kb	King and Bird
x	Cropped folio	Rd	Ring-Dove	Lj	Lion and Jackal
x	Crossed-out page	Oc	Owls and Crows	Tg	Traveller and Goldsmith
Lv	Burzoy's Voyage (long version)	At	Ape and Tourtoise	Ks	King's Son and His Companions
Im	Arabic Preface	Aw	Ascetic and Weasel	Lh	Lioness and Horseman
Bu	Life of Burzoy	Kd	King and Dreams	Ag	Ascetic and Guest

Figure 2: Structure of MS Vatican Borg. ar. 213

As to their content, the notebook's pages present no continuous text, but rather passages from different chapters of ›Kalīla wa-Dimna‹. Despite their piecemeal appearance, these extracts follow a logic: they are arranged in clusters per chapter, and mostly observing a common chapter sequence.¹³ The excerpted prefaces and chapters are Lv (fol. 17r/pdf 39), Lv continued and Im (fol. 17v/pdf 40), Lo (fol. 12/pdf 29-30), Oc and At (combined in fol. 14r/pdf 33), Rd (14v/pdf 34, fol. 16r/pdf 37 top), Kd (fol. 16r/pdf 37 bottom), and Kb, Tg, and Ks (combined in 16v/pdf 38). Chapters Di, Aw, Mc, Lj, Lh, and Ag either received no excerpts, or these pages were lost. The respective chapter titles, heading each selection and usually placed at the top of a page, and the beginnings of each passage are written in red ink. These text pieces take up between half a page and two pages per chapter, and they show internal connections by theme and motif. These snippets may have been collected to be used as quotations in other works. Such excerpting from ›Kalīla wa-Dimna‹ took place as early as the ninth century, notably of its wise sayings and analogical images, the smallest self-contained and detachable parts. But the evidence of the codex as a whole suggests otherwise; the redactor's purpose appears to have been to produce the abridged versions. The artless script and *mise-en-page* have the character of a manuscript produced for personal use.

3. *The place of Vatican 213 in the textual tradition of Kalīla wa-Dimna*

Though unsigned and undated, the manuscript can be placed on the basis of its text close to two others. The short versions that lack a long counterpart in Vatican 213 (Lv, Im, Bu, Lo, and Di) reveal themselves upon inspection to be abridgments of full versions contained in Cairo al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya 66947 (hereafter Cairo 66947, datable before 1048 A. H. [1639 A. D.] by a reader's note), which is confirmed by numerous shared formulations not found elsewhere. The long versions of Vatican 213 likewise show close similarity to Cairo 66947 and Beirut, Université Saint-Joseph 01875 (dated to the eighteenth century). Both Vatican 213 and Cairo 66947 are next close to Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, arabe 5881 (hereafter Paris 5881, dated 1092 A. H. [1681 A. D.]), a version optimized by cross-copying, which received a fair share of verbatim copies, documenting its popularity. The making of Vatican 213 can therefore be placed in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, which slightly narrows the time span given by Eugène Tisserant (seventeenth or early eighteenth century).¹⁴

13 Among several documented chapter sequences, the present one (C) is the second most common. However, Oc and At are moved before Rd, for reasons explained in section 4. On these sequences, see Martin Sprengling, *Kalīla Studies*. I, in: *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 40, 1924, pp. 81-97.

14 See note 6.

4. The notebook-section

Despite its disorderly look, the notebook reveals itself upon close analysis as a thoughtful selection of passages from ›Kalīla wa-Dimna‹. It begins with the description of the book as a whole, condensed into a nutshell on the first cropped sheet glued to the verso of the table of contents at the notebook's beginning:

These chapters adumbrate (*tataṣarraf 'alā*) 360 topics (*abwāb*) of wise sayings that apply to kings, the welfare of their subjects, and extending advice to them, and about the love for good people, leaving the company of bad people, acquiring honor, abandoning evil things, and renouncing the world. 300 narratives (*uḥdūtha*) are enframed within each other in a well-formed manner (*yatadākhalu ba'dūhā fī ba'dīn tadākhulan muḥkaman*). Success lies with God (fol. 3Ar/pdf 12).

This description is found in slightly longer form in the incipit of a number of manuscripts, placed between two versions of a table of contents, the first a simple list of chapter titles, the second with brief synopses of each.¹⁵ The version of Vatican 213 is abridged, and the number of narratives is given elsewhere as 340. The notebook contains the above-mentioned longer table of contents in two versions. One version (fol. 15/pdf 35-36), written in a larger hand, is crossed out. The chapters are numbered here with ciphers, and each new description of a chapter starts on a new line, leaving a number of lines half empty. The other version, the one to which the above snippet is attached (fol. 3/pdf 9-10) is written in a smaller hand, reducing the loss of space though half-filled lines, and replacing the ciphers with numerals in words.

Among the prefaces, »The Long Voyage of Burzoy (Lv)«, and »The Life of Burzoy (Bu)« are longer than the one by the Arabic translator-adaptor, »The Chapter of Ibn al-Muqaffa' (Im)«. The last is extremely abridged, and the abridgment reworked. It reduces the entire preface to one folio (fol. 6/pdf 17-18). The text is closest to Cairo 66947 and next close to Paris 5881. Cairo 66947 already reduces Im by cutting a long portion with a sequence of sayings and a sub-story. The redactor of Vatican 213 may have taken his inspiration from there and cuts more drastically. The folio is written in small script but the last third of the verso is left empty. The format of the page is obviously used as a unit of meaning, because the next folio displays in larger script another run through the same preface from the beginning, selecting eleven further extracts. Of these, three are duplicates, but three others derive from a manuscript other than Cairo 66947 which lacks these (they appear in Paris 5881). The abridgment is done by cutting the preface's numerous ethical sayings as well as three sub-stories. The remaining parts, however, still preserve the three major points of the

15 Among them Cairo 66947, fol. 1v-2r and Paris 5881 and fol. 2v. Manchester 486 (dated 1040 A. H. [1632 A. D.]), p. 2, a near-verbatim copy of acephalous Pococke 400, dated 755 A. H. [1354 A. D.], places this description before the chapter synopses. The cropped folio has been glued close to the place where the contained passage usually appears. Its text reappears on the inner margin of 17r/pdf 39 (fig. 1 bottom right)..

preface: that the reader must reflect what he reads, act upon it, and in his actions respect people and God's limits. The second run-through adds merely wise sayings, which often complement points raised in the first round, and it is clearly additive. The top of the page (fol. 7r/pdf 19) is titled however »The Chapter of the Physician Burzoy (Bu)«. That chapter-abridgment follows only on the verso of this folio. It is possible that the redactor labeled it first and then found another manuscript with passages to add to the preceding Im.¹⁶ The technique of excision applied in the Arabic perface (Im) is similar to that used in the short versions of chapters, as shown in the next section.

Here follows an example of the notebook's extracts from chapters, namely fol. 14r/pdf 33, which covers the »The Owls and the Crows (Oc)« and »The Ape and the Tortoise (At)«. Its five extracts all focus on the theme of scheming, its success and failure, its strategies, how one protects oneself from it, or devises a counter-scheme. The page runs as follows:

[1] The Chapter of Owls and Crows

Secrets have ranks. Some [secrets] the family shares, some two men share, some no one is apprised of, and some withstand force.

One says: He who keeps his secret is in control of his affair and receives its benefit.

[2] Wise men say: A good and pious person deems that all of people's possessions are as sacred to him as his mother and sister, and he likes for people what he likes for himself. [The narrator] continued: When the cat had finished his speech, their (sc. the lark's and the hare's) souls had calmed, their hearts were at ease, and they were deceived by his words. Then they approached him, and as they had placed themselves within his reach, he pounced on them viciously.

[3] A man must be wary of everything, even the water he washes with, the bed he sleeps on, the garb he dons, the beast he rides, the food he eats and the medicines he drinks, and not trust anyone with his life but the reliable friend, openly and in secret, and then he must still be on his guard.

[4] [The Chapter of Ape and the Tortoise]

One tells among the wise sayings: The self-sufficient lives long, in comfort, and free of cares, whereas the over-demanding¹⁷ continuously meets with harm, his life is bitter and his heart dejected, all the while he loses his Here and his Hereafter. Then the ape plotted his escape and said to [the tortoise], »Brother, if that is so, what kept you from informing me, so that I would have brought my heart with me?« The tortoise said to him, »Where, brother, is your heart?« He said, »God make you thrive (*aṣlahaka*), I left it in the tree where I seek shelter. We apes, when we travel, do not take our hearts along out of fear.«

16 Or his model was a manuscript that places part of Im within Bu. Indeed some manuscripts move part of Im to another preface, Lv, and further investigation is needed.

17 *Mutasakkbhit* is emended from *mutanahhit* after Cairo 66947 and Paris 5881.

[5] [The fox] said to [the lion]: If he (sc. the donkey) had had two ears to hear with and a heart to think with, he would not have returned, after seeing what you did to him. For that matter (*fa-bi-hādhā*),¹⁸ I (sc. the ape) am not that donkey which returns. The good and pious man checks his words and actions, and if he has committed an error, he is not ashamed to correct himself.

The first chapter on the page (Oc) tells of a war between owls and crows. Having suffered an attack from the stronger owls, the king of the crows, upon deliberation with his ministers, dispatches one of them to infiltrate the owls, where he poses as a refugee, gains their trust, and discovers a way to have them annihilated. He then reports his experience to the king of the crows.

The *first* excerpt is the fifth minister's (and later spy's) explanation of types of secrets in the crow king's consultation with his ministers. He requests a secret hearing to explain to the king his scheme of a secret mission, which he then carries out successfully. The last type of secrets is the one that will crown the crows' scheming with success.

The *second* excerpt derives from the subsequent secret consultation between the fifth minister and the king, in which the future spy explains that scheming can be more effective than open aggression, illustrating this with a sub-story of a lark (*sifrid*),¹⁹ a hare, and a cat. Lark and hare have a dispute and ask the cat for arbitration. The cat, feigning piety, ensnares the litigants to approach him in order to recount their cases to him and then devours them both. The extract contains the execution of the cat's scheme but begins prior with a piece of his sermon with which he bamboozles his victims (exactly as the narrating crow-spy will do with the owls). With extreme brevity, the passage combines method and execution of a scheme.

The *third* excerpt, a saying that one should mistrust each and everything (in which the owls failed and the crows succeeded) derives from the chapter's end. The spy, now returned, tells his king how he fared with the owls, describing the owls' gullibility, even after a warning by one of their own ministers. »He told them parables, showing them perdition and annihilation, but they did not hear him out nor paid any attention to his words« (fols. 78r/pdf 161-78v/pdf 162). Being able to understand the meaning of parables is equated with intelligence.²⁰ The entire Oc chapter is replete with such sub-stories: an old man attains the embrace of his beautiful but recalcitrant wife due to a burglar, whom he promptly rewards (discussed in section 5); a thief and a devil quarrel over and lose their chosen victim, an ascetic; a wife carries on an affair before her husband's eyes while making him believe she loves only him, and so

18 The phrase abridges the usual formula with which an in-story-narrator applies a parable he or she has related to the ongoing action: »I told you this parable (*mathal*) so that you know that ...«

19 In other manuscripts the lark is replaced by a falcon (*saqr*).

20 This exemplifies the self-reflexive way in which ›Kalīla wa-Dimna‹ keeps reminding the reader that parables are messages that require decoding.

on. The sub-stories' graphic and entertaining qualities exceed their function as mere pieces of argument on military strategy.²¹

The *fourth* excerpt moves to the next chapter (At) though its title is not indicated. It tells of a burgeoning friendship between a solitary ape and a tortoise, but the tortoise's wife becomes jealous of her husband's new friend. She feigns sickness, and claims her only cure is an ape's heart. The male tortoise succeeds in convincing the ape to ride on his back across the water, allegedly to dine at his home, but confesses the murder scheme halfway. At this point, the ape counter-schemes, pretending that he left his heart at home. The tortoise believes him and brings him to the shore to retrieve it, but the ape climbs his tree and mocks the frustrated tortoise from above.

The extract combines a part of the ape's inner monologue, realizing that greed and gluttony led him to be duped, and that he must either find a stratagem or die, and his subsequent dialogue with the tortoise, who falls for his fancy lie. Again, the act of scheming, here accomplished with words, is given a minimal context with the ape's speech, citing a wise saying. The story's outcome is dispensed with, as the tortoise's gullibility indicates success (and the next extract confirms it).

The *fifth* excerpt is from the same chapter's end, when the ape, now in safety, teaches the frustrated tortoise a lesson. Having pretended to fetch his heart from the tree, he laughs at the deceived deceiver, telling the tortoise he will not make the same mistake twice, illustrating this with a sub-story: A lion falls sick with scab and needs a donkey's heart as medicine, and a fox who had lived off the lion's leftovers, persuades a donkey to come to the lion. The latter, however, is too weak to kill the donkey, who escapes. The fox schemes anew, telling the donkey that the lion had jumped at him out of his keen desire for him. The donkey (who had never seen a lion) returns and is killed this time by the lion. But before the lion can devour the kill, the fox precedes him and eats the donkey's ears and heart, while the lion performs his ablutions. The lion is amazed at the missing body parts, and the fox gives the excerpted explanation. The fox thus misleads both lion and donkey, the latter repeatedly, and the ape relates this parable to the tortoise to confirm that he will not be (literally) taken for a ride twice. The extract pairs an act of successful double scheming (sub-story) with another of frustrated double scheming (main story), showing how to match a parable with the (outer story's) reality. The ape displays his understanding of parables, which the owls of the third excerpt had lacked.

Instances of excerpting and extracting tell about a reader's interpretation of the text. What did this redactor select? Together the excerpts cover multiple facets of schemes and schemers, while including narrative highlights of both chapters, giving testimony of an astute reader, who succeeds in bringing out the recurring salient themes of ›Kalila wa-Dimna‹. He also shows awareness of the modules out of which ›Kalila wa-Dimna‹ is built and recombines these in miniature. These are the frame dialogue

21 On the ›narrative addition‹ of enframed tales, see Tzvetan Todorov, *Poetik der Prosa*, Frankfurt a. M. 1972, pp. 87-98.

that strings together the chapters, and within the chapters, narrative, the characters' monologue and dialogue, sub-stories they tell each other, and wise sayings and shorter analogical images. The *third* extract is a wise saying, and the *first* pairs two. These elements are often found reused in other works. The *second* extract, however, a saying that is part of a character's speech, is combined with the narrative outcome of the speech. The *fourth* extract is even most complex. It begins too with a saying uttered by a character, then follows a piece of narrative, and finally a dialogue between the characters. It is also the most dramatic dialogue of the At chapter and its turning point, when the deceived ape becomes the victorious schemer. This attention to the climax of a chapter will be seen in the abridgment discussed in the next section. The *fifth* passage shows parables at work: it is a character's explanation of a parable and his application of it to his own situation, and he then gloats at his successful act of scheming. This extract dispenses entirely with sayings and focuses on scenes of dialogue. By including parts of dialogue, the snippets introduce in short space the narrative context in which the scheming occurs. This differs from the excerption of sole sayings for anthologies, in which the context (of animal parables) is not desired and animals' names omitted or replaced by humans.

Regarding the theme, the extracts from Oc speak to the salient topic of this chapter, namely scheming. But the At chapter is not usually defined under this aspect in the synoptic tables of content but rather described as showing how someone loses what he has gained (the tortoise losing the ape's heart after having held him captive in the water). The redactor refocuses this tale in sync with Oc, and indeed makes a convincing case that scheming, not inadvertent loss, is its core message. For this reason the Oc and At chapter are probably combined and placed (against the common sequence) directly behind Lo, which speaks to the same topic. The last two extracts share moreover a narrative motif (an animal's heart as medicine).²² Besides preserving salient passages, the notebook obviously served as a place to try out abridgments. At times its version is identical, but at others, shorter or longer than the short version of the same chapter following in the codex.²³

22 Such a cluster of similar motifs ties together, for instance, the second group of sub-stories about men with severed body parts in the tale of »The Hunchback« from »The Thousand and One Nights«. Motifs can also supply the guiding thread in anthologies, see e. g. Beatrice Gruendler, *Literary Sweets: Interlacing Motifs in the »Sukkaridān al-Sulṭān« of Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah (1325-1375)*, in: *The Sultan's Anthologist; Ibn Abī Ḥaḡalah and His Work*, ed. by Nefeli Papoutsakis and Syrinx von Hees, Baden-Baden 2017, pp. 71-100.

23 Note-taking with its various purposes has been studied for the early modern period by Ann M. Blair, *Too Much To Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age*, New Haven/London 2010 (pp. 22-28 touch upon on Islam), but in Arabic book culture this remains to be investigated in-depth; for an example of notes from the ninth century, see Beatrice Gruendler, *The Rise of the Arabic Book*, Cambridge, Mass., 2020, p. 41.

5. Two versions of a chapter

The following demonstrates how the short version of a chapter relates to its long counterpart, with a passage from the same chapter (Oc) whose excerpts in the notebook have been discussed. Preceding the passage under discussion is the arrival of the crow at the owls' camp, claiming that he was tortured and expelled by his own, while his actual intention is to spy on the owls. A discussion ensues among the king of the owls and his ministers, whether to trust the crow. The passage begins with the advice from one of the owls' ministers not to kill the crow, because he came to them as a refugee and might offer advice on how to vanquish the crows. To support his opinion he declares that a harmless foe deserves mercy, and proceeds to tell a story about a man who softens to his enemy and grants him safety.

Fig. 3 visualizes the abridgment the redactor performed. The three columns of the figure show from right to left: col. a (fol. 75r/pdf 155) the longer version, col. b the same version with everything that has been excised in gray shading, and col. c (fol. 43r/pdf 91) the resulting abridgment; underlines in b and c mark passages that have been rephrased.²⁴

The passage is composed of two parts, the minister's advice and his short parable. In the **long** version of the chapter, the advice is more detailed and persuasive. The minister asks the king to keep the crow alive in both the negative, »you must not kill him«, and the affirmative, »spare him and let him live«, and gives as reasons sympathy for the tortured crow and the hope to gain information from him about the crows, which, according to the minister, will be the crow's way to express his gratitude for being spared. Finally, he declares that one should forgive a helpless foe. Then he tells a parable to corroborate his view. In the **short** version, the redactor keeps only the minister's negative statement, not to kill the crow. He retains only one reason why the king should do so, namely to elicit the crow's gratitude. This abridging process changes the crow's gratitude from being a cause for him to share information, to a goal of the king in keeping him alive.

In the sub-story of the **long** version, the minister introduces it with a description:

»Like the merchant who softened to the thief due to something [the thief] had not intended.«

كالتاجر الذي عطف على السارق بشيء لم يتعمده

In his analogy, he has the merchant stand for the king and the thief for the crow.

This analogy is reversed in the **short** version. The redactor makes up a new phrase to connect the truncated parts of the narration, and reuses the first verb for the crow's attitude to the king:

24 The Middle Arabic features, typical of many manuscripts of ›Kalila wa-Dimna‹, have been retained, e. g., *istabqihī* (for *istabqihī*), *nā'imayni* (for *nā'imāni*), and *rakabū*, probably a spelling error for *irtakabū*.

»And [the crow] softens to you, like the merchant softened.«

ويعطف عليك كعطف التاجر

His equation of the crow with the merchant and of the king with the thief does not seem to match the subsequent advice. He also rephrases the sub-story's title from a relative clause to a nominal phrase. This phrase alone introduces the story, without any additions. In the **long** version, the introduction to the story is longer; the minister begins with its gist:

»To wit, one mentions that a thief entered a merchant's house, then the merchant praised him for something he obtained due to the thief's arrival.«

وذلك أنّه ذكر لنا أنّ تاجراً دخل بيته اللصّ فأثنى عليه التاجر لأمر ناله بموافقته

This summary builds suspense for the story, further heightened by the king's question:

»How was that?«

وكيف كان ذلك

Summary and dialogue are removed in the **short** version, where title and story follow each other immediately. The body of the story differs as well. Regarding the wife's attitude to the merchant in the **long** version, the minister describes in detail how she resents her husband, repeatedly denying him intimacy:

»She loathed him and hated being next to him. She had no intercourse with him and did not let him embrace her. Whenever he held her close she moved away from him.«

وكانت تبغضه وتكره جانبه وكانت لا تضاجعه في الليل ولا تمكّنه من إلزامها وكان كلّها ضمّها تباعدت عنه

In the **short** version, the redactor merely mentions her dislike of him, choosing only two phrases and dispensing with particular scenes. Likewise in the thief's break-in: in the **long** version, the thief enters at night while the merchant and his wife are »sleeping«. Then »the wife wakes up«, is terrified by the thief, and throws herself into her husband's arms, who »wakes up« at this. In the **short** version, the redactor lets the reader complete these obvious details from the context. When the woman embraces her husband, the merchant expresses wonder in the **long** version. He addresses his wife saying:

»I wonder what softened you to me tonight, whence comes this luck?«

ليت شعري ما الذي عطّفك عليّ في هذه الليلة ومن أين تمت لي هذه النعمة

The expression of his delight counterbalances the detailed description of her former coldness. However, in the **short** version, the redactor turns the utterance into a brief third person phrase:

»He was amazed at that.«

فَعَجِبَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ

When the merchant looks up and sees the thief in the house, he understands his wife's unexpected embrace, and this is what the **long** version contains:

»So he knew that her fear came from him (sc. the thief).«

فَعَلِمَ أَنَّ فِرْعَهَا كَانَ مِنْهُ

This is not spelled out in the **short** version. The merchant merely sees the thief, and the reader is left to imply the rest. The story proceeds directly to its point. In the **long** version the merchant thanks the thief and explains that he brought him the affection of his own wife. This is absent in the **short** version, in which the merchant thanks the thief without any explicit motivation. The redactor retains instead the repeated explanation at the end of the husband's speech:

»Take any stuff from the house you want for having softened the one I love and treasure to embrace me – all this by your blessing.«

خَذَ مِنْ مَتَاعِ الْبَيْتِ مَا أَرَدْتَ بِمَا عَطَفْتَ عَلَيَّ عَلَى مَعَانِقِي مِمَّنْ كُنْتَ أَحَبَّهُ وَأَخْتَارَهُ كُلَّ ذَلِكَ بِيَرِكَتِكَ

To summarize, the extent of abridging varies in the two parts of the text, as also visible in the spatial distribution of the retained (black) passages in fig. 2, col. b. In the minister's arguments in discussion with the king, the redactor performs major cuts, slightly altering the meaning of the long version. The short version however acquires a new meaning, due to the redactor's artful connection of the truncated parts, and he²⁵ makes the text appear coherent. Sometimes, however, he fails to keep the logic of the narrative, such as when he reverses the analogy, likening the king to the thief and the crow to the merchant. The redactor further deletes the story's introductory summary and likewise the question of the king (recurring in every chapter before the parable), »How was that?« He wastes no space with building suspense.

The focus of the abridgment lies the on second part, the sub-story, with a greater density of retained passages. Shortening sub-stories requires great caution to keep the plot's vital elements and to maintain the intended message. The redactor deletes digressions and replaces an exclamation by the husband to his wife with a narrative phrase. He also drops details evident from the context, trusting the intelligence of the reader. The change speaks to his priorities. In the abridgment, he keeps the plot but elides elaborations and illustrative sayings and analogies. It is impressive, that in the process of his excision, the passages retained verbatim result in a cohesive version with a minimal reformulation of connecting phrases.²⁶ The short version, it is true,

25 Though the redactor is anonymous, names found so far in colophons of ›Kalila wa-Dimna‹ have been masculine.

26 This concurs with the definition of excision by Gérard Genette, *Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré*, Paris 1982, pp. 323-331.

(c)

لا ينبغي لك أيها الملك أن تقتله
 اقتله لأنه يشترك على إيقانك إياه ويعطف عليك كمعطف التاجر قال زعموا
 أن تاجراً كان له امرأة شابة جميلة وكانت تبغضه وكرهه جانبه في الليل ولا
 تمكنه من إزالتها فذات ليلة دخل عليهم لخص فلما رأته المرأة فرغت منه
 فأزمت زوجها فحسب من ذلك فرغ رأسه وإذا هو باللص في البيت
 فقال له التاجر يا أيها اللص قد أتيت إلي ما أنا أشكرك إلى الأبد فخذه
 منع البيت ما أردت بما عطفك علي على معانفتي ممن كنت أحبه وذلك
 ببركتك

(b)

لا ينبغي لك أيها الملك أن تقتله
 اقتله لأنه يشترك على إيقانك إياه ويعطف عليك كمعطف التاجر قال زعموا
 أن تاجراً كان له امرأة شابة جميلة وكانت تبغضه وكرهه جانبه في الليل ولا
 تمكنه من إزالتها فذات ليلة دخل عليهم لخص فلما رأته المرأة فرغت منه
 فأزمت زوجها فحسب من ذلك فرغ رأسه وإذا هو باللص في البيت فلم آن
 فرغها كان منه قال له التاجر يا أيها اللص قد أتيت إلي ما أنا
 أشكرك إلى الأبد لأنك أصلحت لي من إمالة الحبيب إلي ما زدت
 في حياتي به خذ منع البيت ما أردت بما عطفك علي على
 معانفتي ممن كنت أحبه وأختاره كل ذلك ببركتك

(a)

لا ينبغي لك أيها الملك أن تقتله
 اتركه واستبقيه لأنه قد لقي من أصحابه ما تراه وقد ركبو منه ما
 يعطفه لك على النصيحة فيكون ذلك دليل لك على عورتهم ومعيناً
 لك على ما فيه هلاكهم لأنه يشترك على إيقانك إياه ورحمتك له
 فإية العدو الدليل الذي لا شكوك له أهل أن يؤمن ويحار مع آن الرجل
 يرى عطفه على عدوه بالأمن إليه كالتاجر الذي عطف على
 السارق بضيء لم يعتمده وذلك أنه ذكر لنا أن تاجراً دخل بيته
 اللص فأثني عليه التاجر لأمر ناله بموافقته قال له ملك اليوم
 وكيف كان ذلك قال الوزير زعموا أن تاجراً كان له امرأة شابة
 جميلة وكانت تبغضه وكرهه جانبه وكانت لا تتضاجعه في الليل
 ولا تتمكنه من إزالتها وكان كلها ضمتها تابعدت عنه فيبينما هما ذات
 ليلة نائمين إذ دخل عليهم لخص فاستيقظت المرأة لما رأته
 لأتبا فرغت منه فأزمت زوجها ثم استيقظ من نوميه وقال لها
 ليت شعري ما الذي عطفك علي في هذه الليلة ومن أين تمت
 لي هذه النعمة ثم رفع رأسه وإذا هو باللص في البيت فلم آن
 فرغها كان منه قال له التاجر يا أيها اللص قد أتيت إلي ما أنا
 أشكرك إلى الأبد لأنك أصلحت لي من إمالة الحبيب إلي ما زدت
 في حياتي به خذ منع البيت ما أردت بما عطفك علي على
 معانفتي ممن كنت أحبه وأختاره كل ذلك ببركتك

Figure 3: An example of abridgement in MS Vatican Borg. ar. 213.

From right to left, col. a: long version, fol. 75r/pdf 155; col. b: excised passages shaded grey;
 col. c.: short version, fol. 43r/pdf 91.

lacks the drama and liveliness of the long version. Yet its essence and the lesson to be gained remain intact. What is more, the woodcut-like excision foregrounds the husband's recognition of the situation and reaction to the thief, and thus accentuates the story's turning point: the foe becomes benefactor, as the narrating minister had argued. The abridgement's focus is the story's climax.

Not only the text differs, but so does the layout of long and short versions: the long version, fol. 75r/pdf 155 contains 363 words written in twenty-seven lines per page, while the short version, fol. 43r/pdf 91, has 462 words in thirty-five lines per page.²⁷ These numbers clearly show the contrast in structure between the two pages, permitting to project a similar difference in the structure of short and long versions as a whole. Indeed, most of the pages containing the short versions are jammed with text, with narrow margins and tightly spaced lines and words. The pages containing the long versions are largely written more carefully, with wider margins and more space between lines and words, which makes the text easier to read. The change in layout suggests that economic reasons may have contributed to the abridging. The redactor certainly got the most out of ›Kalila wa-Dimna‹ with the least amount of paper. (What we do not know is what amount of effort and time it cost him to reduce it to so little text.) Further inspection of this intriguing manuscript is doubtless needed. The present preliminary study, however, reveals facets of a redactor's working and thinking process, recorded on paper, which could so far only be surmised.

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27 In terms of length, the manuscript's short versions represent between half and a fifth of the longer versions, counting pages (counting words would slightly reduce the difference, because of the short versions' smaller script). The notebook selects far less from each chapter, extracts range between half a page and two pages.