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Abstract: Translated and retranslated, retold, adapted, enlarged, or simplified, *Kalīla wa Dimna*, this multicultural work, offered by the Orient to the world-at-large centuries ago, has not yet lost its extraordinary vitality, its freshness, its power of fascination exercised on the readers all around the world. The story of its journey, as well as its influence on the world’s literature, and the way it has been shaping the mentality of various epochs, are as fascinating as the book itself.

Key-words: *Kalīla wa Dimna*, *Pañcatantra*, Ibn al-Muqaffa’, *Arab Literature*, *Medieval Literature*, *European Literature*, *Asian Literature*.

Introduction
This paper is based on the data collected during my translation of the book *Kalīla wa Dimna* into Romanian published in 2010 under the title *Ibn al-Muqaffa’, Kalila şi Dimna sau Poveştile lui Bidpai* (Kalila and Dimna or the Bidpai’s Tales) (see Grigore 2010). Some of these data were also presented in the explanatory notes and the afterword which accompanied this translation.

The *Pañcatantra*
The story of the story begins somewhere in India. We are referring here to the *Pañcatantra* whose beginnings were established by certain researchers to be in the 3rd century BC. Even before being compiled in book form, the tales were transmitted orally from one generation to another in the Pali language. Some other researchers suggest that the *Pañcatantra* was composed initially in Sanskrit, in a form very close to what we know nowadays, between the 3rd and the 5th centuries AD (Edgerton 1915, 44–69).

According to the Indian tradition, the *Pañcatantra* was written by the Hindu scholar Pandit Vishnu Sharma most probably around 200 BC. However, in the European translations, this collection is attributed to Bidpai or Pilpai as it was instituted due to the Arabic version made by Ibn al-Muqaffa’ who indicated its author as Baydaba.

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1 An early version of this paper was published in Romano-Arabica 13/2013.
This name is a corrupt form of the Sanskrit word *vidyapati* (“wise man”, “scholar”, “connoisseur”), according to Theodor Benfey (apud. Doğrul 1986, 3).

The *Pañcatantra* is a treatise on human conduct, dedicated to young princes, aiming to guide them on how to attain success in their life by understanding human nature. The primary target lies in their preparation for governing and initiating them in the Hindu principles of *Raja niti* (the political science, the governing science, the wise conduct of life). Conceived to teach the sons of a king through entertainment, the book makes use of animals as characters, such as Karataka and Damanaka, the famous jackals that play different human hypostases, offering the young princes the possibility to deepen their understanding of life in its multitudinous aspects. From the structural point of view, the *Pañcatantra* is a mosaic of interlocking tales that emerge from one another, encapsulated successively one in the other, as the Russian Matryoshka dolls, i.e. one tale closes another tale in it and so on and so forth, getting sometimes to three or four series of tales. This structure is kept in all its translations and adaptations, imposing this specific style in the literatures of the world.

The five parts that compose the *Pañcatantra* (in Sanskrit *pañcatantra* means “the five principles”) are: *Mitra Bhedha* (The Separation of Friends); *Mitra Lābha* or *Mitra Samprāpti* (The Gaining of Friends); *Kākolūkīyam* (Of Crows and Owls); *Labdhapraṇāśam* (Loss of Gains); *Aparīkṣitakārakam* (Rash Deeds).

The first version of the *Pañcatantra*, which was the basis of the Chinese, Tibetan, and Pahlavi versions, was lost; the existent version was made around 1000 AD. In the 12th century, Narayana, a Shivani scholar, used the *Pañcatantra* as the basis for his teaching manual on moral precepts. The new book received the name of *Hitopadesha*, and its tales were translated into many Asian languages.

The *Pañcatantra* and its variants were then translated into all Indian languages, Chinese, Mongolic, Tibetan and others. Only in the 18th century, this book reached Europe, while its Arabic version, Kalīla wa Dimna, starting from the 11th century, will make a long career in European cultures.

The *Pañcatantra* was also translated into Romanian by Theofil Simenschy (1892, Iassy – 1968, Iassy). It was published in a posthumous edition in 1969 at “Literatura” Printing House under the title *Panciatantra*.
The Journey of the Pañcatantra

During the 6th century AD, Pañcatantra migrated westwards to Iran. According to one legend, the Sassanid King Khosru I Anushiravan (531–579) sent Borzuy, the physician of his court, to India to bring him a secret book which had been kept in the Indian king’s treasury. The book was written by the famous philosopher Baydapa, the Brahmans’ leader, for the powerful King Dabshalim. The legend says that Borzuy went to India in search of sanjivani (de Blois, F. 1990), a miraculous mountain herb. Disappointed by what he had found, he complained to the Indian scholars about it. They revealed to him the existence of a book full of teachings which, by then, was kept in the King’s treasury. Firdowsi (c. 935, near Tus – c. 1020, Tus) dedicated a whole chapter from his Šāh Nāma (The Epic of the Kings) to Borzuy getting and bringing the book Kalīla wa Dimna from India. After obtaining his king’s permission, Borzuy made a trip to India in search of a mountain herb he had read about that is “mingled into a compound and, when sprinkled over a corpse, it is immediately restored to life”. Borzuy found the miraculous herb but, after preparing the potion, realized that it had no effect at all. Upset with his failure and furious because he lost such precious time in search of an illusion, he asked for the Indian doctors’ help. Unanimously, they gave him the following answer: “There is an ancient sage here who surpasses us in years and wisdom and who in his science is superior to any of the great”. They took Borzuy to the wise man who then told him a different interpretation: “The herb is the scientist; science is the mountain, everlastingly out of reach of the multitude. The corpse is the man without knowledge, for the uninstructed man is everywhere lifeless. Through knowledge, man becomes revivified. In the king’s treasury, there is a book which the well-qualified call Kalila. When people become weary of their ignorance, the herb for them is Kalila, knowledge being the mountain. If you seek this book in the king’s treasury, you will find it, and it will be your guide to knowledge.” (Firdowsi 1985, 330–334).

Borzuy took the book, which was the aforementioned Pañcatantra. It was then, with some additions and omissions, adapted to the Zoroastrian thought of the Iran of those times. With the help of some Pandits (Indian scholars), it was translated into Pahlavi. Taking into account that the characters of the opening (and the longest) tale of the book, The Lion and the Bull, are two jackals named in Sanskrit Karataka (Horribly Howling) and Damanaka (Victorious), Borzuy adapted their
names to the Persian phonotactics, entitling his version *Karirak ud Damanak* (Suleman 2006, 432–433).

Lost today, but with the possibility of reconstructing it from a linguistic perspective, the Pahlavi version includes, besides the five chapters of the *Pañcatantra*, five new chapters which contain other Indian tales. Some of these new chapters are taken from the twelfth book of the *Mahabharata*, while two other chapters talk about Borzuy’s trip (Benfey 1859, 6, 57, 74, 585).

*The Syriac and the Arab Versions Based on the Pahlavi Version*

Although the translation of the *Pañcatantra* in the Pahlavi language had been lost, there still remain two translations which were made after it.

With the title *Kalilag wa Damanag* (Kalilag and Damanag), the first one was a translation into the Syriac language made by Bud Periodeutes (*periodeutes*: an itinerant preacher of the Nestorian Christians), just after 570. Considered lost for a long period, it was discovered in a monastery located in Mardin (Turkey) in 1870. Then it was edited and translated into German under the title *Kalilag und Damanag* in 1876 by Gustav Bickell (1838, Cassel – 1906, Vienna), and then in Berlin in 1911 under the title *Kalila und Dimna. Syrisch und Deutsch* (Kalila and Dimna. Syriac and German) by Friedrich Schulthess.

The latter is the famous version in the Arabic language made by Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (the nickname of *al-muqaffa‘* means “the cripple-handed”, a mutilation suffered by his father in consequence of a punishment) under the title *Kalila wa Dimna* (Kalila and Dimna). Ibn al-Muqaffa’, Abū Muḥammad Abd-Allāh or, according to his Zoroastrian name from before his conversion to Islam, Rōzbeh pūr-e Dādōe (around 721, Gōr, Fīrūzābād – 757, Baṣra), was a secretary of chancery (kātib) and also a prose writer. Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ was born in the family of a Persian aristocrat, named Dādōe, and then Mubārak, after his conversion to Islam.

Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ studied in Baṣra with two famous teachers. Then, in 743 he was appointed as a secretary to the Governor’s chancery, the ’Umayyad Masīh bin Hawārī in Šāpūr, Fārs, after which he worked in Kermān with the last ’Umayyad Governor. When the ’Abbāsid family came to power, he returned to Baṣra, where he lived from 751 until 757 and worked as ʾĪsā bin ‘Alī’s secretary. His life ended tragically in 757. He was condemned of *zandaqa* (apostasy) and burned (Sourdel
During his short life, Ibn al-Muqaffa' succeeded in giving to Arabic literature both original and translated works of great importance: “He was an example of the Arabized and Islamized secretaries who were bringing into Arabic ideas and literary genres derived from their own inherited tradition” (Hourani 1991, 52).

Among the original works written by Ibn al-Muqaffa' in Arabic we can mention, first of all, two treatises of morals, manners, wisdom of conduct, or simply 'adab (this word means “literature” in modern Arabic, but at that time it could be connected with the English “polite letters” or the French belles-lettres), Kitābu l-'adabi l-kabīr (The Major Work on Secretarial Etiquette) and Kitābu l'adabi 's-sāgīr (The Minor Work on Secretarial Etiquette). According to certain specialists, only the first work can be accepted as belonging to him ('Abbās 1977, 538–80). Influenced by Zoroaster’s Avesta, it contains two parts: the first part talks about rulers and court etiquette, the second part talks about the manners and norms of the community. “The Minor Work” consists of a collection of bits of advice for the young princes. Another work is Risāla fī ṣ-ṣaḥāba (The Letter on the Companions) – a brief presentation of fewer than five thousand words on the ‘Abbāsid Dynasty (750–1258) that had just begun to rule the Arab Caliphate, after overthrowing the ‘Umayyad caliphs.

The work which brought him fame was Kalīla wa Dimna, one of the first great texts of the classical Arabic prose literature about which the American-Lebanese historian Philip K. Hitti wrote:

The earliest literary work in Arabic that has come down to us is Kalīlah wa-Dimnah (fables of Bidpai), a translation from Pahlavi (Middle Persian) which was itself a rendition from Sanskrit. The original work was brought to Persia from India, together with the game of chess, in the reign of Anūsharwān (531–578). What gives the Arabic version special significance is the fact that the Persian was lost, as was the Sanskrit original, though the material in an expanded form can still be found in the Panchatantra. The Arabic version therefore became the basis of all existing translations [...]. This book, intended to instruct princes in the laws of polity by means of animal fables, was done into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa’ [...]. Ibn al-Muqaffa’‘s translation was in itself a stylistic work of art, and ever since the ‘Abbāsid age Arabic prose has borne the impress of Persian style in its extravagant elegance, colorful imagery and flowery expression. The ancient Arabic style with its virile, pointed and terse form of expression was replaced to a large extent by the polished and affected diction of the
The old, Arab, virile, percussive and dull style was replaced, to a large extent, with another precious one, the Sassanid style (Hitti 2002, 308).

Both in comparison with the *Pañcatantra*, as well as with its version in Pahlavi, *Karirak ud Damanak*, the version made by Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ is different in many ways. For instance, the first part of the *Pančatantra* ends with the incontestable victory of the tireless instigator Damanaka (“Victorious”) over his understanding and good-hearted brother, Karataka (“Horribly Howling”), who howls of revolt. In order to avoid an evident conflict with the teachings of the Koran, thus shocking the spiritual rulers of the Islamic community of those troubled times, Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ composed and inserted a chapter entitled Dimna’s Judgement where he described how the latter was judged, convicted and, finally, killed painfully. Apart from this, he added the following new chapters: “The Monk and the Guest” and “The Dove, the Fox and the Heron” sources of which remain unknown.

It was an extremely popular work. With time, the copyists added other tales, too. In the majority of the versions, Ibn al-Muqaffa’s presentation contains a foreword telling the history of this book in India. It was penned by Bahnūd bin Ṣahwān or ‘Alī bin al-Šāh al-Fārisī (Ali, the son of the Persian Shah), who could not be identified by historians, despite the two names he gave himself. Immediately after this foreword, there is an explanation of Burzoy’s mission of bringing the book from India, signed by the Vizier Buzurğmihr. Then there follows Ibn al-Muqaffa’s foreword, after which Burzoy’s presentation is included. He is called *ra’su’atibbā‘i Fāris* (the head of the physicians of Persia) – the one who copied and translated this book into Pahlavi.

Taking into consideration the changes and the additions in the Pahlavi version, over which other changes and additions occur in the Arab version, *Pañcatantra* and *Kalīla wa Dimna* are two distinct works. Despite their incontestable common points, Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ cannot be considered only the translator, but also the author of this last one.

**The First Translations of the Arab Version of *Kalīla wa Dimna***

From Arabic, the book was translated in the 10th century into Syriac. Based on this version, the Scottish missionary Ion Grant Neville Keith-Falconer (1856, Edinburgh – 1887, Aden), published in Cambridge in 1885 a translation into English under the title *Kalīla wa Dimna, or, the Fables of Bidpai: being an account of their literary
history with an English translation of the later Syriac version of the same, and notes.

In 1080, Simeon Seth, a Byzantine Jew, made a Greek version of the book *Kalīla wa Dimna*, entitled *Stefanites kai Ihnilates*. The Greek form of the names of the two jackals can be explained through the identification by the translator of the *Kalīla* name as being connected to the Arab word 'īkliš “wreath” (in Greek: stefanos; so, stefanites “wreathed victorious”), and *Dimna* with the Arab word *dimna* “trace” (in Greek: *ihnos*; so, *ihnilates*, “who comes on / who comes from behind”) (de Sacy 1816).

This translation was the basis for Giulio Nuti’s translation into Italian (Ferrara 1583) as well as the basis for one translation into German and two into Latin and a lot of other translations into the Slavic languages. The 12th-century Russian translators considered it a Christian book of devotion, attributing it to such saints like Saint John of Damascus (c. 676, Damascus – 749, Jerusalem) or Saint John Climacus (c. 525, Syria – 606, Mount Sinai).

Based on this Greek version too, the Jesuit Pierre Poussines published in 1666 a translation into Latin entitled *Specimen sapientiae Indorum veterum* (A Model of Wisdom of the Old Indians) (Loiseleur-Deslongchamps 1838, 18–66).

In 1121, ’Abū I-Ma‘āli Naṣrullāh made a translation into Persian, entitled *Kitāb Kalīla wa Dimna* (The Book of Kalila and Dimna). This Persian version was readjusted around 1500, under the title *Anwār-i Suhaylī* (The Lights of Conopus) by Husayn bin ‘Alī al-Wā‘īz who wanted to simplify the very flowery style of the old versions. Suhayl, the Vizier of the Sultan Ḥusayn Miḥdā of Khorasan (1470–1505), whom the book had been dedicated to, is also the name of the Canopus star in Arabic, and all later translations will take into account only this meaning.

In 1578, there followed a new retelling of the book after this version, yet it was combined with *Hitopadesha*, published by ’Abūl-Faḍl, Vizier of Akbar (1556–1605), the Great Mogul of India, entitled *’Iyār-i Dāniš* (The Measure of Knowledge). With the title *Hirad Afrōz*, the book was translated by Ḥafīzuddin into Hindustani and Urdu, as well as into other Indian languages. Thus, the *Pañcatantra* came back to India after a long journey, modified by its numerous translations and adaptations. Al-Wā‘īz’s version was the basis for a long series of translations into Asian and European languages.

‘Alī bin Şāliḥ’s translation into Ottoman Turkish dedicated to the
Sultan Sulaymān (Soliman) I (1512–1520) and entitled Hūmayunname (The Royal Book) merits a special mention. It was looked upon as a starting point for many other translations into Czech, Georgian, Icelandic, etc. Al-Wā‘iz’s version will also be translated into French by Gilbert Gaulmin, who in 1644 signed it with the pseudonym David Sahid, then published it in 1698 under the title Le Livre des lumières ou la Conduite des Rois, composée par le sage Pilpay Indien, traduite en français par David Sahid, d’Ispahan, ville capitale de Perse (The Book of Lights of the Kings’ Conduct, Composed by the Indian Wise Sage Pilpay and Translated into French by David Sahid from Ispahan, a city-capital of Persia).

This version enjoyed great success and was translated in its turn into Swedish, English, and German during various periods of time. An Old Castilian translation was published in 1252 under the title Calyla e Dymna. Starting from this version and with the consultation of Giovanni da Capua’s Latin translation, Raimundus de Biterris (Raymond de Berzier) did a translation into Latin, Liber de Dina et Kalila (The book of Dimna and Kalila) which in 1313 he offers to King of France Philippe le Bel (Philip the Handsome, 1285–1314).


Based on Giovanni da Capua’s Latin version, a German version made by Anton von Pforr in 1483 was published under the title Das Buch der Beispiele der alten Weisen. Apart from its influence exercised on German literature, it was also the basis of the Danish, Icelandic and Dutch versions. The same Latin version mentioned here above constituted the basis of a Castilian version published in Zaragoza in 1493 under the title Exemplario contra los enganos y peligros del mundo (The Ideal Path to Follow in Order to Avoid the World Temptations and Dangers). In 1548, under the title Discorsi degli animali ragionanti tra loro (The Speeches of Animals Who Quarrel among Themselves), Agnolo Firenzuela retold, taking great liberties, the Castilian version in the Italian language. Another Italian translation made by Anton Francesco Doni (1513, Florence – 1574, Monselice) was published in 1552 under the title La moral filosofia del Doni (The Moral
Philosophy of Doni). Doni’s Italian version was translated into English by Thomas North in 1570, a proof of this relation being, among others, the very title which he gave to it: *The Morall Philosophie of Doni* (The Moral Philosophy of Doni).

In his foreword to North’s translation, on the occasion of its republication in 1888, Joseph Jacobs mentioned twenty more translations which were circulating by then in Europe (Jacobs 1888).

During the same period of the early translations of Ibn al-Muqaffa’s version, Yāʿqūb ben Ἐλ’āzār rendered it into Hebrew in 1283 as rhymed and rhythmic prose. From this Hebrew version, only its first half remains. Quite deteriorated, both Hebrew translations, i.e. that of Yōʾēl’s and that of Ἐl’āzār’s, were republished in a critical edition by Joseph Derenbourg (1811, Mainy – 1895, Bad Ems), with a translation into French in 1881 (Schirmann 1955, 208–13).

Ibn al-Muqaffa’s version is also the original of an Armenian 13th-century version by Vartan, which in its turn constituted the basis of a translation made into French in 1676.

Ibn al-Muqaffa’s Arab text was also published by Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758, Paris – 1838, Paris) in a critical edition in Paris in 1816 under the title *Calilah et Dimnah ou Fables de Bidpai en Arabe, précédées d’un mémoire sur l’origine de ce livre* (Kalila and Dimna or Bidpai’s Fables, Preceded by a Written Statement on the Origin of This Book). This edition will be the basis of the translation into German made by Philipp Wolff *Calila und Dimna, oder die Fabeln Bidpais, das Buch des Weisen in lust-und lehrreichen Erzählungen des indisches Philosophen Bidpai aus dem Arabischen* (…), published in Stuttgart in 1839, as well as the source of several translations into German, Danish, French, Russian, etc. (Nöldeke 1905, 794–806).

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These versions, mentioned above, were translated, adapted, and retold, in their turn, into other European languages and, not in few cases, after a winding journey, translated again into the languages they had left before, thus creating confusion for the one who gets quickly discouraged (despite good intentions) of elucidating the history of this work.

**The Influence of Kalīla wa Dimna on other literatures**

In its translations and adaptations, *Kalīla wa Dimna* was and keeps being an endless source of inspiration. In the Orient, the tales from
Kalīla wa Dimna became part of Arabic, Iranian, and Turkish folklore long ago (Biţună 2012), and its influence was found in the works of famous coryphaei. The first great poet of the reborn Persian literature, Rūdakī (?–940), was not only influenced in his work by Kalīla wa Dimna, but also published a version of it which was put into verses. On the other hand, other great coryphaei such as Firdowsī (c. 940, Tus – 1020, Tus), Ḣāfīz (c. 1325, Shiraz – c. 1390, Shiraz), Jāmī (1414, Jam – 1492, Herat), Rūmī (1207, Balkh – 1273, Konya) and others made use of certain motifs from this famous book. In Europe, the first work where one saw the influence of this book was Disciplina clericalis (Clerical Discipline) written by Petrus Alphonsus (a Jew who converted to Christianity in 1106), then in Roman de Renart and then in Gesta Romanorum (a Latin collection of jokes and stories from the 13th century), etc. Furthermore, critical studies emphasize a tight connection between Kalīla wa Dimna, on the one hand, and the works of such authors as Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375), Giovanni Francesco Straparola (1480–1557), Geoffrey Caucher (c. 1343, London – 1400, Westminster), Jean de La Fontaine (1621, Chateau-Thierry – 1695, Paris), Marie de France (a poetess and fable writer from the 12th century), the Grimm brothers, Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm (1786–1859) and others. As far as Jean de La Fontaine is concerned, he paid homage to the famous creation of the Orient in the foreword of the second edition of his fables: Seulement, je dirai, par reconnais-
sance, que j’en dois la plus grande partie à Pilpay sage indien. Son
livre a été traduit en toutes les langues (Finally, I will say with grati-
tude that I owe the greatest part of it to Pilpay, the Indian sage. His
book was translated into all languages) (La Fontaine 1678).

Kalīla wa Dimna in Romanian culture

Into Romanian, Kalīla wa Dimna was translated only recently. For the first time, excerpts from this book were translated by Grete Tartler (1988), and the book in its entirety was translated by George Grigore (2010).

Kalīla wa Dimna influenced Romanian culture, too. Thus, Dimitrie Cantemir’s (1673, Silişteni – 1723, Harkov) Istoria ieroglifică (Hieroglyphic History) – written in Romanian during 1703–1705 while he was living in Istanbul, was influenced by Simeon Seth’s Greek version, Stefanites kai Ihnilates (Stephanites and Ihnilates) which was circulating in the Christian Orthodox area, and by the Turkish Ottoman version, known under the name of Hümayunname (The Royal
Kalīla wa Dimna and its Journey to the World Literatures

A book from the Romanian folkloric patrimony, *Cele 12 vise ale lui Mamer* (Mamer’s Twelve Dreams) has many similarities to *Kalīla wa Dimna* in its form and content, most probably because of its origin in the same Greek version. As one can see, although it was translated very late into Romanian, the influence of this work was strongly sensed in Romanian culture as well (Anghelescu 1973, 195–200; Bhose 1974).

**Conclusion**

*Kalīla wa Dimna* has stood the test of time and is pertinent even nowadays, after almost a millennium and a half since it began its long and winding journey to the cultures of the world that adopted it under various forms and names. Its tales have been arousing readers’ interest and inspiring artists from diverse fields. Translated and retranslated, retold, adapted, enlarged, simplified, this multicultural work, offered by the Orient to the world-at-large, is still far from having said its last word. It is considered an endless source of wisdom that editors from the entire world continue to emphasize. The story of its journey, as well as its influence on the world’s literature, the way it has been shaping the mentality of various epochs, is as fascinating as the book itself.

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