

# The Owls Are Not What They Seem: War and Peace in the Pañcatantra and the Tantrākhyāna

Camillo A. Formigatti  
University of Cambridge

The third book of the *Pañcatantra*, the *Kākolūkiya*, “The Book of Owls and Crows” deals with peace (*sandhi*) and war (*vigraha*). After a short introduction about *Pañcatantra* studies and the complex textual history of the many different recensions, a comparison of the frame story of the third book—the war between the owls and the crows—as depicted in three different works will be presented.

The first work analyzed, the *Tantrākhyāyika*, belongs to the Kashmirian recension of the *Pañcatantra* and according to J. Hertel is the closest to the “Ur-*Pañcantantra*.” The second work considered in this paper is the *Pañcākhyānaka*, written by the Jaina monk Purṇabhadra in 1199 CE in Gujarat. The third and last work is the little known Nepalese recension of the *Pañcatantra*, called *Tantrākhyāna*. This work is known mostly in its Newari version, in which Sanskrit stanzas at the beginning of each story have been retained. However, a manuscript of the complete Sanskrit text (ms Or. 727) is kept at the Cambridge University Library. Despite its geographical provenance, in Hertel’s opinion the *Tantrākhyāna* is more akin to the Southern recension of the *Pañcatantra* and to the *Pañcākhyānaka* than to the Kashmirian *Tantrākhyāyika*.

The comparison of the depictions of the war between the owls and the crows in the above mentioned three works should be the starting point for some considerations about the prevailing aims and methodologies so far employed in the study of the *Pañcatantra* and related texts.