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Language of Speaking, Arguing, and Persuading

Cultural Exchange and Adaptation in Greek and Syriac Versions of the 'History of Sindban / Syntipas'

Abstract This paper conducts a quantitative and contextual analysis of the verbs describing verbal, cognitive, and legal activities in the narrative frame of two early versions of the 'Seven Sages': Michael Andreopoulos' Greek 'Book of Syntipas' and the Syriac 'History of Sindban'. Since speaking, arguing, discussing, persuading, introducing stories, drawing conclusions, and asking questions are the major activities performed by the protagonists, such analysis provides valuable insights into how these two texts tap into pre-existing narrative conventions and discursive patterns in the Greek and Syriac literary traditions, specifically into a judicial interest in Greek literature. The paper in this way contributes to the study of frame narratives and the textualisation of traditional storytelling in the Middle Ages, the history of Greco-Syriac cultural exchange, and gender roles in these two texts.

Keywords Verbal Activities; Narrative Frame; Greek; Syriac; Judicial Discourse

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In 1960, Ben PERRY convincingly argued that the 'Book of Sindbad' originated in the Persian cultural and literary milieu, from where it spread into Arabic, Syriac, and other Near Eastern and European languages.[1] Stephen BELCHER further developed PERRY's argument, promoting the idea of the

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1 Perry 1960.

Persian original beyond a reasonable doubt.[2] Despite earlier testimonies of the Persian, Arabic, and Syriac versions, the Greek 'Book of Syntipas' translated from Syriac c. 1090 by Michael Andreopoulos,[3] a grammarian from eastern Asia Minor, is the earliest complete text that exists today.[4] Another Greek version, the anonymous 'Retractatio', is a later reworking of Andreopoulos' text, with simplified grammar, syntax, style, and vocabulary.[5] The Syriac version(s) of the 'History of Sindban' appeared in the 8th to 11th centuries, translated from Arabic. The exact version underlying Andreopoulos' translation is lost, but a later, nearly complete Syriac text was published by Friedrich BAETHGEN.[6]

This overview demonstrates the dynamic of Greco-Syriac cultural exchange, characterised by re-adjustments of the 'Sindbad' tradition within each language and influences across the Greek–Syriac divide.[7] Still, translations from Syriac to Greek were relatively rare in the 11th century. This makes the 'History of Sindban/ Syntipas' ideal for the study of cultural exchange and adaptation between the Byzantine and Syriac literary traditions.

This paper contributes to the study of frame narratives and the textualisation of traditional storytelling in the Middle Ages, Greco-Syriac cultural exchange, and gender roles in the 'Sindban/Syntipas'.[8] Speaking, arguing, discussing, persuading, introducing stories, drawing conclusions, and asking questions are the major activities performed by the narrator-protagonists in the frame tale, which remains relatively consistent within all versions of the eastern family of the 'Sindbad' story.[9] I will conduct a quantitative and contextual analysis of the verbs that describe verbal, cognitive, or legal activities in the Greek translation by Michael Andreopoulos and the existing Syriac version of the text. Such a linguistic analysis, along with literary and legal ones, allows us to zoom in to a microlevel of the cross-cultural textual transmission and provides valuable insights into how these compositions tap into pre-existing narrative conventions and discursive patterns in two literary traditions. I will explore the ways in which male and female characters express themselves in both languages. I argue that, as the Syriac 'Sindban' migrated into the Greek literary context, it went through the processes of linguistic, cultural, and literary adaptation, resulting in a curious hybrid composition, far from what can be traditionally expected by the Byzantine audience. Yet this playfulness

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2 Belcher 1987.

3 Andreopoulos 2021.

4 Toth 2014, p. 94.

5 Jernstedt 1912.

6 Baethgen 1879, transl. Gollancz 1897.

7 For a possible Arabic source: Messis and Papaioannou 2021, Nasrallah 1974.

8 On frame narratives: Irwin 1995; Abbott 2008, pp. 28–39.

9 Krönung 2016.

and fluidity were probably factors contributing to its success. Perhaps its hybrid character reflects the translator's agenda, rather than his lack of skill, and his intention to convey the exotic atmosphere of the Persian court.

1 The Syriac 'Sindban'

1.1 Gendered Language

Many of the approximately 300 verbs and phrases related to speaking and per-suading in the frame tale of the Syriac 'Sindban' are used in gendered ways. While the most common verb ܐܡܪ ("to say", over eighty times) is employed equally for male and female speakers, the verb ܥܢܐ ("to answer, reply", thirteen times) appears in relation to almost all male characters of the story (Sindban, the king's courtier, four philosophers, the boy, the king) but never to the king's wife. The verb is incorporated in one of the ritualised verbal sequences (here "replied and said", ܥܢܐ ܘܐܡܪ) that occur in the story, mostly associated with male speakers.

In eleven out of thirteen instances, the verb ܡܠܠ ("to speak, converse") is asso-ciated with the young prince. It describes his (in)ability, because of the prohibitive astrological prognosis, to speak for seven days. Unlike the verb "say" (ܐܡܪ), which introduces a specific utterance, ܡܠܠ designates speaking in general or refers to longer discourses. In one episode, the king is said to "converse" with the prince, but he could not "converse" back. The double use of ܡܠܠ mirrors the actions of the king and his son and emphasises the non-trivial character of their conversation. Only once does the king's wife start to "converse" with the boy, to find out the reason for his silence.

Verbs denoting authority predominantly describe the verbal actions of male characters, most commonly the king. They show his power over Sindban, his son, his wife, and the philosophers, whom he summons (ܩܪܐ, "to call, summon", four times) and interrogates (ܫܐܠ, "to ask, inquire", likewise four times). Both verbs have strong ritual significance, associated with a speaker of supreme authority, power, and royal status addressing someone of a subordinate rank. The verb "to consult, be advised" (Ethpeʿel ܡܠܟ) emphasises the royal prerogatives of the king, who is the only person to take counsel (ܡܬܡܠܟ and ܐܬܡܠܟ) or to have counsellors (ܡܠܟܐ). The verb ܦܩܕ ("to command, order", twenty-eight times), in all but four cases describes the authoritative action of the king when he alternately gives orders to kill his son or to keep him alive. While the king wields the undisputable power to command, Sindban in his position as a teacher "commands" the prince three times. The king's wife is once said "to order" her relatives. Only Sindban, the exemplary teacher, is said to "teach" the young prince, another verb that suggests a level of authority and professional status (ܐܠܦ, "to teach", four times).

All seven philosophers prostrate themselves before the king; each case is reported with the set phrase "entered the presence of the king, and prostrated before him, and said" (ܥܠ ܠܘܬ ܡܠܟܐ ܘܣܓܕ ܠܗ ܘܐܡܪ), with two slight variations.[10] These verbal formulas reflect the ceremonial character of interaction in the court of the Persian king. A similar but much reduced and less stable formula announces the appearance of the female protagonist only three times: she "came and said" (ܐܬܬ [...] ܘܐܡܪܬ), "went and stood in king's presence and said" ([...] ܘܩܡܬ ܩܕܡ ܡܠܟܐ), and "entered the king's presence and said" (ܥܠܬ [...] ܘܐܡܪܬ).[11]

Those who try to influence the king's opinion resort to different techniques. The male philosophers employ a soft power of rhetorical and rational persuasion. After almost every speech, they use imperatives and exhortative expressions: "to listen" (ܫܡܥ) and "to know, be aware" (ܕܥ). The prince uses these verbs when he finally is able to speak with his father. By contrast, the king's wife resorts to attempts to influence him emotionally. She "raises her voice very much" (ܐܪܝܡܬ ܩܠܗ ܣܓܝ) and produces a cry (ܩܠܐ).[12] She experiences fear (ܕܚܠ and ܟܪܗ), but also inflicts fear on others – the king "was scared" (ܕܚܠ and ܐܬܪܗܒ) by her suicide attempts. She turns to threatening actions instead of logical words. On some days, she does not tell a story but stages an attempt to drink poison or commit self-immolation. She frames her claims in terms of having satisfaction and justice. She encourages the king to "bring vengeance" (ܥܒܕ ܢܩܡܬܐ) and "do me justice" (ܥܒܕ ܠܝ ܕܝܢܐ); she twice rebukes him for "not doing justice" (ܕܠܐ ܥܒܕ ܕܝܢ ܠܗ) and threatens him that "punishment be upon you" (ܦܘܪܥܢܐ ܟܝ ܗܘܐ) and the philosophers won't help (ܠܐ ܥܕܪܝܢ). Her attempts to persuade have a strong religious component; perhaps a gender marker as well. She appeals to God no fewer than seven times – "there is hope for me in God that he will give me victory" (ܣܟܐ ܠܝ ܒܐܠܗܐ; four times with minor variations) and "I swear by the living god" (ܝܡܐ ܐܢܐ ܒܐܠܗܐ ܚܝܐ). Male characters mention God only twice in much less emotionally charged contexts. While male characters encourage the king to "realise" and to "know", the female protagonist is associated with the idea of trust. She urges the king "not to believe" (Ethpe. ܬܬܠ) the philosophers, who, in turn, emphasise the danger of "believing the woman" (ܗܝܡܢ ܠܐܢܬܬܐ) and warn the king that she "lies" (ܕܓܠܐ).

There are a few more verbs used in a markedly gendered way, though their number is statistically too low to make a strong case. The king's wife twice says to the prince "tell" (ܚܘܝ) and once "reveal" (ܓܠܐ). Neither verb ever occurs in the speech of male characters. On the other hand, the philosophers are said to

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10 Baethgen 1879, pp. 9, 18.

11 Ibid., pp. 10, 14, 17.

12 Ibid., p. 3.

"deliberate" (Ethpaʿal of ܗܢܐ), and Sindban promises that the prince will be able to "debate" (ܕܪܫ) with the philosophers after finishing his education. These verbs are not attested in reference to the female protagonist. Both the king's wife and the philosophers are said to "consider, plan" (Ethpaʿal ܚܫܒ), so this verb does not have gendered connotations.

1.2 Judicial Verbs

The use of judicial expressions and some elements of the story frame the narrative in legal terms. The verb ܒܥܐ ("to ask for, seek, require, request"), used twice in relation to Sindban, suggests a legal agreement between him and the king about the prince's education. The king agrees to give to Sindban whatever he requests (ܒܥܐ). The legal nature of the contract is additionally confirmed by the writing of an agreement between Sindban and the king (ܟܬܒܐ ܟܬܒܘ).[13]

Certain terms indicate that the story is staged as a courtroom debate in which the king's wife is a main defendant. The wife's responses to the philosophers' accusations are always introduced by "the rejoinder of the woman" (ܐܢܬܬܐ ܬܗ ܦܢܝ, literally "a reply, return of a word"; in judicial terms, 'a rejoinder', i.e. a defendant's answer to the plaintiff). The context suggests a courtroom setting, in which the king's wife plays the dubious role of an accused defendant while the philosophers act as plaintiffs. This expression ܐܢܬܬܐ ܬܗ ܦܢܝ is also used three times in relation to the prince when he is questioned by the king and his wife about his silence – an implication that he is a defendant as well. The Paʿel form of the same verb (ܦܢܝ) is used when Sindban "answers" the king's inquiry about his son's studies. Since Sindban is bound by a contract, the use of the verb ܦܢܝ with its legal implications is appropriate; they are reinforced by the verb's meanings "to return, restore (like a deposit or possession)." The verb ܒܨܐ ("to investigate"), which appeals to one's rational faculty and signals a judicial context, is used twice by male characters trying to persuade the king.

Being afraid that the prince would be able to speak soon, the king's wife laments that "there is no defense to me (ܡܦܩ ܒܪܘܚܐ ܠܝ ܠܝܬ)."[14] The philosophers warn the king three times not to rely on the "report" of the "wicked woman". The word for "report" (ܛܐܒܐ) implies "(empty) words" or "allegations", i.e. primarily oral claims confirmed by no solid evidence. This vocabulary choice constitutes a striking contrast with the oral stories delivered later by the prince, described as "parables" (ܡܬܠܐ), respectable pieces of the wisdom tradition. Additionally,

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13 Ibid., p. 1.

14 Ibid., p. 20.

the courtroom setting suggests the exchange of accusations and name-calling between the parties. Thus, the philosophers routinely refer to the king's wife as "the wicked woman" (ܐܢܬܬܐ ܒܝܫܬܐ) and urge the king not to destroy his son through her "advice" (ܡܠܟܐ). In turn, she says that the philosophers "have given you [king] bad advice" (ܡܠܟܘܗܝ ܠܟ ܒܝܫܐ ܝܗܒܘ). Moreover, the legal proceedings of the time could involve attempts to bribe executors by gifts (ܐܬܚܫܒܘ ܗܢܘ ܕ ܒ ܡܘܗܒܬܐ) and persuasions (ܐܦܝܣܘ) to delay the execution.[15] The legal aspect of the story culminates in the king's final preoccupation with the question "whose is the fault" (ܣܟܠܘܬܐ). The question, after all, is a judicial one.

Legal vocabulary is employed elsewhere. The verb ܒܥܐ (Ethpeʿel, "to be needed, required") is used by the second philosopher, saying that "it is proper for you [king] to investigate".[16] Some legal binding is implied here. The same verb occurs in the passage in which a philosopher reminds the king that if he did not have a son, he should have "petitioned" God (ܒܥܐ ܗܘ ܡܢ ܐܠܗܐ) to have one.[17] Here, the verb converges judicial and religious implications.

2 'Syntipas' by Andreopoulos

2.1 Diversification of Verbs of Speaking

The Greek 'History of Syntipas' translated by Michael Andreopoulos is largely acknowledged as a faithful rendering of the Syriac original (as far as it can be reconstructed).[18] It has been suggested that the translation might sound too formulaic and rigid for the Greek literary taste:

> The scope of his [Andreopoulos'] work, however broad, does not exceed the limits of interlingual translation: the fixed narrative patterns of the Syriac model such as the passage of time, formula day-night, formalised vocabulary, and protracted *ekphraseis* will unavoidably result in an overelaborate and prolix narrative.[19]

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15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., p. 6.

17 Ibid., p. 20.

18 Krönung 2016, pp. 366 f.

19 Toth 2014, p. 100.

Yet a careful look at Andreopoulos' narrative, especially at the verbs of speaking and interaction in the frame tale, demonstrates his greater flexibility with vocabulary choices compared to what can be assumed for his Syriac original.

Andreopoulos often resorts to descriptive constructions and circumlocutions where a Syriac passage has a single verb. He is more versatile in his use of synonyms. Wherever the Syriac 'Sindban' repetitively uses ܐܡܪ, Greek provides at least two synonyms – φημί and λέγω. Their grammatical forms created from different stems (εἶπας, εἰρηκώς/εἰρηκέναι, etc.), compounds (προεῖπον, "said before"), and descriptive constructions (προσέθετο τοῖς αὐτοῦ λόγοις, "added to his words") produce a much more vibrant and variegated narrative than a Syriac reader encounters. The examples are numerous: where Syriac invariably has ܫܡܥ ("to listen, hear"), Greek features ἀκούω (most often), ἀκουτίζω, ἀκροάομαι, ἐνωτίζομαι, or ἐπακούω. For the verb "to command" (Syriac ܦܩܕ), Greek has κελεύω, προστάσσω (πρόσταγμα for the noun "command"), διακελεύομαι, or παραγγέλλω. Κελεύω is attested most, but others are used interchangeably without visible difference in meaning. Just like in Syriac, those who give orders are the king and Syntipas in his capacity as the prince's tutor. Syriac ܩܪܐ ("to call, summon") corresponds to Greek καλέω, but also to its compounds προσκαλέω and μετακαλέω. Unlike in Syriac, where the king is the only one who summons, in Greek the verb is used twice in relation to the prince when he addresses a servant girl and a philosopher (a passage is absent in Syriac).

The verb προσομιλεῖν ("to converse") corresponds to ܡܠܠ and ܐܡܪ, though occasionally there are no equivalents in Syriac. The verb designates more sophisticated conversations between philosophers and one's lengthier speech (e. g. the wife's first talk to the prince in private). The noun ὁμιλία is also attested in a similar context.[20] Other close correspondents of Syriac ܡܠܠ ("to speak, converse") are Greek φθέγγομαι and προσφθέγξομαι ("to utter, proclaim"). Both verbs, as well as the noun φθογγή ("voice"), are used mostly referring to the prince, in the same way ܡܠܠ is used in Syriac.[21] It describes what the prince was supposed to do (speak) but refused because of the threatening prophecy. On the sixth day, the king's wife worries that the prince will soon regain his ability to speak (προσφθέγξεται, προσφθέγξασθαι ἔμελλεν, and φθέγξηται); when he does (φθέγγεσθαι ἀπήρξατο), he is described as ἀρξάμενος δὲ φθέγγεσθαι and προσφθεγξάμενος. Additionally, the verb προσφθέγξομαι is used early in the story to refer to the unsuccessful attempts of the king, his courtiers, and his wife to converse with him. In the parallel passage in Syriac, only the king and his wife address the prince; in both cases, ܡܠܠ is used. However, despite the seemingly consistent (προς)φθέγξομαι-to-ܡܠܠ

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20 Andreopoulos 2021, pp. 6, 14, 16, 20, 100.

21 Ibid., pp. 10, 12, 100, 102.

correspondence, there are at least two cases when ܡܠܠ in relation to the prince's refusal to speak is translated by λαλέω ("to talk, speak"). The verb λαλέω is used thrice referring to the wife's attempt to make the prince speak.[22]

The standard way to describe someone responding or answering is the verb ἀποκρίνομαι (or the noun ἀπόκρισις, "an answer"). The word refers to verbal activities of the prince, the king, his wife, his courtiers, and some philosophers.[23] The meaning is often neutral (corresponding to Syriac ܥܢܐ), but in some cases (the king's wife and son), the legal connotations of the verb ("to answer charges, defend oneself") are implied. One who "answers" or refuses to do so is an accused party. This meaning is close to Syriac ܗܦܟ ܦܬܓܡܐ ("return of a word"), referring to a response of a defendant in a court.

There are many ways in which various characters of the Greek story (the king, his son, Syntipas, and the philosophers) reveal, declare, manifest, or share (communicate) something, such as μηνύω, ἀντιμηνύω, δηλόω, ἀνακαλύπτω, φανερόω, ἀνακοινέω.[24] The parallel lines in Syriac have ܓܠܐ ("reveal"), resort to generic verbs ("said", ܐܡܪ), or skip the phrase.

Promising the king to educate his son well, Syntipas uses the verb ἐπαγγέλλομαι ("I proclaim, announce"); in turn, the king says καθυπόσχωμαι ("I promise"), referring to the reward. In both cases, there are no equivalents in Syriac.[25] Instead, Syntipas' ἐπιζητήσω ("I will request") corresponds to Syriac ܫܐܠ in two instances when he agrees to the deal about the prince's education. However, the verb αἰτέω ("to ask, demand") is also used in this context. Both verbs are proper lexical choices for Syriac ܫܐܠ, though only αἰτέω reflects the judicial aspect of its meaning.[26] Other Greek verbs referring to asking or requiring include ἐπερωτάω ("to inquire, question") – the verb describes the king's attempt to make his son speak (τὸν παῖδα ἀποκρίσεως χάριν ἐπηρώτα); and ἀξιόω in its meaning "to ask, request" – the king's wife "asks" (ἀξιοῖ) her relatives to collect firewood for her suicide pyre, while the philosophers "asked" (ἠξίουν) the executioner to delay the punishment of the prince.[27]

In the passages about the prince's education, where Syriac has ܐܠܦ ("to teach"), Greek features ἐκπαιδεύω, ἐκδιδάσκω, and διδάσκω ("to educate").[28] The verbs are used six times to refer to Syntipas' actions and the resulting condition of

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22 Ibid., pp. 12, 14, 18, 102.

23 Ibid., pp. 12, 14, 16, 58, 88.

24 Ibid., pp. 8, 10, 14, 96.

25 Ibid., p. 6.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., pp. 12, 100, 102.

28 Ibid., pp. 4, 8.

the prince (ἐκπαιδεύεσθαι or τέλος δεδιδαγμένος). The Greek translation demonstrates a greater variety of lexical choices and Andreopoulos' attempts to create a fancier narrative (e. g. two verbs with prefixes ἐκ-, when there is no special need). The boy's learning is described by μανθάνω; elsewhere, the same verb means "hear about" (the sixth philosopher "learned" [μαθὼν] about the order to execute the prince).

While a comprehensive one-for-one comparison of verbs of speaking in Greek with their Syriac counterparts is not possible because of the frequently paraphrastic rendering of parallel passages in translation, the analysis above offers some interesting observations. First, neutral vocabulary largely functions in Greek and Syriac in similar ways (ܐܡܪ and φημί and λέγω). There are some partially overlapping semantic fields and relatively regular pairs of the verbs in two languages (ܡܠܠ and προσφθέγξομαι; ܡܢ ܦܘܡ ܕܝܢ and ἀποκρίνομαι in its legal meaning). Yet Syriac ܡܠܠ is also translated as προσομιλέω or λαλέω, while multiple Greek synonyms are employed to reflect a single Syriac verb (ܫܡܥ vs. ἀκούω, ἀκουτίζω, ἀκροάομαι, ἐνωτίζομαι, ἐπακούω; ܦܩܕ vs. κελεύω, προστάσσω, διακελεύομαι, παραγγέλλω). Andreopoulos makes good use of the ability of the Greek language to produce compounds by adding and alternating prefixes: (προ) εῖπον, (ἐκ)διδάσκω, (προσ/δι)ομιλέω, (προσ/μετα)καλέω, (προσ)φθέγξομαι. Only some of these variations are justified by differences in meaning, while the rest aim at diversifying vocabulary and embellishing the narrative. Since the Greek text is longer and more elaborated than the Syriac, in many instances Greek verbs of speaking do not have equivalents in Syriac (ἐπαγγέλλομαι, καθυπόσχωμαι, descriptive phrases). These translation techniques and choices produce a more dynamic narrative in Greek than what is attested in Syriac.[29]

This conclusion, however, has obvious methodological flaws. The actual Syriac text underlying Andreopoulos' translation is unknown. The existing Syriac manuscript is dated to a later period, has lacunas, and may reflect a different version of the text. Nonetheless, even if Andreopoulos produced "an overelaborate and prolix narrative",[30] it is not because he was overly faithful to the Syriac original. In fact, it is the Syriac narrative that looks more rigid and formalised compared to Greek.

The ritualised verbal formulas that announce the appearance of a new speaker in the 'Syntipas' are also diversified. In the Syriac 'Sindban', each philosopher "entered the presence of the king, prostrated before him, and said". This formula has only a slight variation in two cases. In Greek, by contrast, the narrative realisation of the tripart sequence – "entered, prostrated, said" – presents a variety

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29 On the importance of minor differences and adaptations in the frame story: Kunkel 2020.

30 Toth 2014, p. 100.

of patterns, with no two being the same.[31] The opening address that all seven philosophers but one use greeting the king – the phrase from the LXX Daniel 2:28 and 3:9, βασιλεῦ, εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ζῆθι – is also fluid and adaptable. There are only a few verbatim correspondences between what different speakers said. The phrase remains recognisable, but the playful variations enliven the narrative and make it less rigid or formulaic, even though the formula is there. The corresponding greeting (لحلم سم) appears in the Syriac 'Sindban' except when the text has lacunae.[32] A similar sequence of verbs marks the appearance of the prince and Syntipas before the king. This includes "entering/coming" and "making *proskynesis*", but the actual wording varies.[33] By contrast, the wife's appearance does not require a *proskynesis*, so her actions are usually described by the verbs of coming and speaking.[34] There are significant similarities and verbal parallels in the way different characters greet the prince. This includes enthusiastic welcoming (ποθεινότατα ἠσπάσατο) or kissing and joyful embracing (χαριέστατα περιλαβὼν, χαριέντως προσυπήντησεν, περιλαβόμενος).[35]

There is some noticeable formalisation in these passages, such as the repetitive use of the verbs παρέστη and φησὶ; remarks on the wife learning about the delay of the execution (ᾔσθετο/αἰσθομένη or ἐνωτισθεῖσα); her characteristic as a wicked concubine (πονηρὰ, πονηροτάτη, or μιαρωτάτη παλλακὴ or γυνὴ). However, this is nothing on the level of Syriac, where the wife's speech is almost invariably introduced by "the reply of the wicked woman on the second (third, etc.) day". The tokens of verbal formulas and repetitive ritualistic actions reflect court ceremonies, and yet the texture of the narrative demonstrates the translator's skills to diversify the phraseology.

2.2 Judicial Verbs

The elements of judicial discourse are present in Greek 'Syntipas' even more prominently than in Syriac. It is explicitly stated that Syntipas and the king signed a legal contract regarding the prince's education. It had binding force and clearly articulated stipulations, was set in writing, and entailed tangible consequences for both parties. After the initial discussion of the terms and some questions about Syntipas' teaching strategies and outcomes (τούτων οὕτως παρ' ἀμφοτέρων πρὸς

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31 Andreopoulos 2021, pp. 20, 32, 46, 58, 74, 92, 100, 120.

32 Baethgen 1879, pp. 6, 9, 14, 18, 20.

33 Andreopoulos 2021, pp. 12, 120, 124.

34 Ibid., pp. 30, 40, 52, 72, 88.

35 Ibid., pp. 12, 118, 120.

ἀλλήλους λεχθέντων), the king agreed with the philosopher's arguments and signed the deal (συμβόλαιον ἐξέθετο).[36] Later, Syntipas explained to the prince, "I have made a contract (συνθήκας ἐποιησάμην) with your father."[37] The legal terminology surrounding the agreement between the king and Syntipas is explicit.

In the Greek 'Syntipas', the debate between the philosophers and the king's wife is set in judicial terms. As demonstrated above, the Syriac narrative is framed as a legal competition between two parties where the wife acts as a defendant, while the philosophers are plaintiffs. The competition is conducted via storytelling. Storytelling features both as a form of legal procedure and an instrument to gather arguments and structure defense. As a result, the reader of the Syriac 'Sindban' is presented with the somewhat impressionistic character of legal decision-making based on analogy thinking. While such narratives are rather conventional in Near Eastern literary traditions and, to a degree, familiar to the Greek audience of the time, the overreliance on storytelling as a means to build and win a legal case is not typical by Greek cultural standards.[38] Andreopoulos could not change this fundamental feature of the composition he chose to translate. And yet, as we can judge by comparing his translation with the preserved Syriac version, he made attempts to tap into what his Byzantine readers might have expected from a proper legal procedure. For example, the philosophers repeatedly insist that the king should not resort to killing his only son "without investigation" (ἀνεξερευνήτως, ἀσυζητήτως), "without examining" or "unquestionably" (ἀνεξετάστως), "without not yet knowing" (μήπω εἰδότα, μήπω εἰδὼς, μὴ εἰδὼς), "without first inquiring" (μὴ πρότερον συζητεῖς), "without due consideration" or "unthinkingly" (ἀσυλλογίστως), believing "the mere charge of a woman" (διὰ ψιλὴν γυναικὸς ὑποθήκην), assenting to "the wicked counsel of his wife" (τῇ τῆς γυναικὸς πονηρᾷ βουλῇ), and being "carried away by [her] intrigue" (συναρπαγῆς […] σκεωρίᾳ).[39] What the philosophers are doing is calling for a proper legal procedure and investigation based on evidence.

Reading the Greek 'Syntipas', one has the impression that the seven-day-long attempt of the wife and the philosophers to persuade the king is not yet the actual judicial process (unlike in Syriac) but a prelude. The philosophers do not immediately argue for the case but try to switch the discourse into what, in Byzantium, would be taken as the legal proceedings based on facts, arguments, and evidence-driven decision-making.[40] For example, the second philosopher

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36 Ibid., p. 8.

37 Ibid., p. 10.

38 On storytelling as a transformative experience: Velázquez 2013.

39 Andreopoulos 2021, pp. 18, 48, 62, 74, 92, 94, 96, 108, 110, 116.

40 Judicial aspects in other versions: Kunkel 2020, pp. 189–191.

starts his speech by making a polite suggestion and using the *topos humilitatis* ("As your servant I thus suggest to your majesty that"), posing a hypothetical situation and indicating the due course of action ("even if you had nearly one hundred sons, you should not by any means"), and asking a rhetorical question ("since you have just one [son], how much more lovingly ought you to protect his life?"). Above all, however, he exhorts the king to apply the rational faculty ("Therefore, master, consider (σκέψαι) that") and emphasises the need for proper investigation, reasonable doubt, and logical analysis ("you should instead investigate first whether the slander levelled against him is true and not treacherous").[41] His fellow philosophers use similar imperatives or subjunctives: "Hear (ἄκουσον)!" "Know (γνῶθι)!", "Investigate (συζητῆσαι)!", "See then (ἴδε οὖν)!" and encourage rational decisions: "You are filled with wisdom and intelligence, why then do you pronounce such an irrational sentence?"[42] They try to persuade the king by pointing toward the danger of making rash decisions ("it is not right to do anything before they know the truth") and taking irreversible actions ("you will perhaps execute your son unjustly and then, when you have bitterly repented, will blame yourself to no avail, and though you will look very hard for your son again, you will not find him"). Logic and evidence should be paramount ("not every accusation or suspicion against someone is true, nor should one readily believe slander or condemn someone without examining the evidence"), while emotions should be kept under control ("be patient and do not be in a hurry"). The king must not take action when he is "shocked by her extraordinary claim", "became deeply angry with his son", "profoundly stung and cast into bitter despair", "consumed by grief", or "overcome by the vehemence and excess of his anger and grief".[43] He ought not to believe "rumours (τὸ ἀκουτισθὲν)" and "a mere *hypothetical* charge (ὑποθήκην) of a woman".[44]

All philosophers end their stories with clearly articulated conclusions reminding the king of what they have just 'proved' and 'demonstrated'. The second philosopher says: "See then, my king, that I have proved (ἀποδέδεικται) to your majesty that one should not be seduced." Their tales are co-witnesses in the legal case: "Hear the story (διηγήσεως) that bears witness (συμμαρτυρούσης) to my statement (τῷ λόγῳ μου)." This choice of legal vocabulary shows that for Andreopoulos, storytelling goes beyond providing analogies and parallels. The stories are *martyria*, not simply *exempla*; above all, they are calls for a proper legal procedure.

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41 Andreopoulos 2021, p. 32.

42 Andreopoulos 2021, pp. 30, 32, 44, 46, 48, 52, 72, 74, 78, 96, 108.

43 On governing anger by men in the Persian 'Sindbād-nāmeh': Hoffmann 2020.

44 Andreopoulos 2021, pp. 58, 116.

2.3 Gendered Language

Finally, we should explore how female characters speak and behave in the Greek 'Syntipas'. As mentioned above, the appearance of the king's wife in the story is marked by a repetitive passage that yet allows certain variations within the formula. She is constantly described as "most wicked concubine" or the like. However, she is not the only speaking female character in Andreopoulos' story. A servant girl was around when the prince began to talk and was "glad to hear his voice". He sent her to announce the news to the chief philosopher. Unfortunately, the Syriac text has a lacuna; we do not know if this female character appears in Syriac.

The legal strategy of the king's wife is presented in gendered ways. She is one who perhaps feels most comfortable with the exchange of stories as a form of a legal process and resists the philosophers' attempts to switch the discourse to a fact-based investigation. She maintains control over the conversation by appealing to the sense of urgency, emotions, reputation, threats, matters of faith, and divine forces. She manipulates the king, trying to make him feel guilty ("the blame for my condemnation will be on you"), insecure ("if you do not order such a man to be executed, no one will have faith in your majesty's righteousness"), and condemned by God ("God will condemn you without forgiveness"). She pushes him to take a quick action ("once a man has been found guilty and condemned to death, it is proper for him to be killed immediately"), emphasises the danger of delay ("if you postpone his execution even for a second, he will surely exalt himself and rise up against you and bring an end not only to your reign but also to your very life"), slanders the opposite party ("your so-called very wise advisors, my king, are really crooked and malicious, and are trying to cause you great harm"), calls upon God ("I am confident that God will grant me victory against these advisors"), and resorts to the suicide threats ("for this reason I myself am telling your royal highness that I will certainly kill myself"). She is not only full of passions herself ("the woman was very distressed and anxious, and her heart was beset with worries and pains") but also pushes the king off-balance, coming to him "with tears" and "piteous wailing" (σὺν δάκρυσιν, μετὰ οἴκτου). Eventually, he is overcome by emotions and "angrily (μετ' ὀργῆς) declared that his son should be put to the sword without delay". She swears falsely ("I swear to you by the living god") and appears to the king carrying physical items as evidence of her intentions – she comes "with a package [containing poison] in her hand" (ἀπόδεσμόν τινα τῇ χειρὶ κατέχουσα), "holding a knife in her hand" (μάχαιραν κατέχουσα τῇ χειρί), and preparing the fire for her suicide.[45]

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[45] Andreopoulos 2021, pp. 52, 72, 100–102.

All these feminine persuasive techniques are not much different from what is attested in the Syriac 'Sindban.' They belong to a standard toolkit across Greek and Syriac cultures.[46] The Greek text provides more picturesque details because of its general tendency to expand the story. The passage from the 'Syntipas', "you [king] must take note of the variety of feminine wiles and know that women are capable of behaving wickedly and fabricating stories however they wish", sounds similar to misogynistic sentiments in the Syriac 'Sindban.'

3   Conclusion: Greek–Syriac Exchange and Cultural Adaptation

Language of speaking, arguing, and persuading is important; it articulates political structures, cultural patterns, and power dynamics in society and adjusts itself to new situations and new generations of readers. The vocabulary of verbal, cognitive, and legal activities in the Syriac 'Sindban' much closer reflects cultural and literary standards of its original Near Eastern context than its Greek counterpart. The rigid word choice, set phrases, and fixed verbal sequences indicate a distinct hierarchy of speakers' authority and create the atmosphere of ritualised royal court ceremonies. These narrative techniques represent performances of universal kingship traditional for Near Eastern societies[47] and conventions of the prose fiction originated in their milieu. Paying due respect to his original and reproducing, to a degree, its verbal and performative routine, Andreopoulos, however, significantly diversified the vocabulary and created a narrative that is more vibrant and variegated, whose ritualised phrases are more fluid, and whose formulas are more flexible. The characters are less clearly set apart according to their hierarchical status.

The comparison of Andreopoulos' 'Syntipas' and Syriac 'Sindban' reveals a number of adaptations of the composition to Greek cultural realities, Byzantine civil norms, and Christian sensibilities.[48] The philosophers call the prince "the child of purple" (γόνος τῆς πορφύρας) where Syriac has simply "the youth" (ܛܠܝܐ); Andreopoulos used a metaphor familiar to his readers given the significance of the royal colour in Byzantine political realities. The prince was said to take "sophistical lessons" (τοῖς σοφιστικοῖς μαθήμασι); Syntipas promises to "fill him with philosophy" (ἐμπλῆσαι φιλοσοφίας); the philosophers were not simply "consulting" among themselves but συλλογισάμενοι ("discussed syllogistically"). In all cases,

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46 For gender aspects and misogyny in the 'Sindban' tradition: Reynders and Sleiderink 2020; Foehr-Janssens 2020; Lundt 2020.

47 Inglebert 2014, pp. 171–196.

48 Texts of the 'Sindban' tradition demonstrate similar adaptability to the cultural standards of each new linguistic milieu: Johnson 2015; Gadsden 2020; Reynders 2020.

the vocabulary signals Andreopoulos' intention to adapt the text to Greek cultural realities. The parallel Syriac passages, if available, use the non-specific vocabulary. When Syriac invariably has "god" (ܐܠܗܐ), Greek features "divinity" (τό θεῖον) along with "god" (θεός). Perhaps Byzantine readers would feel more comfortable about "divinity" in the story staged in ancient Persia than about "god", which, for them, refers primarily to the Christian God. The occasional insertion of biblical quotations in the 'Syntipas' shows Andreopoulos' intent to make the story more approachable for his Christian audience.

The analysis of the gender aspect of language performance contributes to intersectional studies and the ongoing discussion about misogyny and masculinity in the 'Sindbad' tradition in various languages and cultures. The results indicate that qualities traditionally taken as 'feminine' – intrinsic 'wickedness' or untrustworthiness of women, their emotional instability, inability to exercise self-control, exaggerated appeal to the divine, acting and showing off instead of making logical arguments and bringing evidence – are depicted similarly in both languages. Future comparative studies of the gendered language in other versions of the 'Sindbad' story from remain a desideratum.

The most important transformation of the 'Sindban' as it migrated to the Greek literary context happened on the level of judicial discourse and persuasive techniques. This informs the literary makeup the text assumed. The genre of 'Syntipas' is defined as composite, incorporating elements of romance, philosophical dialogue, didactic tale, hagiography, history, question-and-answers (ἐρωταπόκρισις), fable, collection of proverbs, etc.[49] While the framing format was familiar in Greek from classical antiquity[50] and storytelling as a literary technique – from more recent translations of Eastern fiction, the storytelling duel in the 'Syntipas' awkwardly feels like a prelude to a real judicial action yet to take place. For a courtroom debate, it falls short of the principles, structure, and forms of argument prescribed by the traditional handbooks of judicial rhetoric.[51] On the other hand, the text reminds one of a philosophical dialogue; yet it lacks its fundamental features, such as a wise man leading the discussion, interrogation as a driving force of the narration, and cooperative character of the intellectual endeavour. Other traditional Greek forms of wisdom performance provide only distant parallels.[52] Moreover, 'Syntipas'' colorful stories are too frivolous to fit the genre of political oration or panegyric. In all these cases, the Byzantine audience held different expectations for, correspondingly, legal, philosophical, and

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49 Toth 2016, p. 389; Toth 2014, p. 99.

50 Belcher 1987, p. 39.

51 Katos 2007.

52 Martin 1993, pp. 115–120.

epideictic discourses. Storytelling is a conventional means to avert death in Near Eastern literature, while Greek literary standards call for a formal judicial debate. Andreopoulos' 'Syntipas' comes as a hybrid composition – an absolutely charming unicorn in its seemingly quixotic and yet probably precalculated attempt to merge the two traditions.

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