

Animal Fables of the Courtly Mediterranean

The Eugenian Recension of Stephanites and Ichnelates

EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY ALISON NOBLE WITH
ALEXANDER ALEXAKIS AND RICHARD P. H. GREENFIELD



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THE EUGENIAN RECENSION OF
STEPHANITES AND ICHNELATES



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ALISON NOBLE



Animal Fables of the Courtly Mediterranean is a treasure trove of stories and lessons on how to conduct oneself and succeed in life, sometimes through cleverness rather than virtue. They feature human and many animal protagonists, including the two jackals Stephanites and Ichnelates, after whom the book is named, as well as several lion kings. At the heart of this work are tales from the Sanskrit *Panchatantra* and *Mahabharata*, to which more were added, both in the original Middle Persian collection and its eighth-century Arabic translation, the widely known *Kalila wa-Dimna*.

In the eleventh century, readers in Constantinople were introduced to these stories through an abbreviated Greek version, translated by Symeon Seth from the Arabic. The new Byzantine Greek text and English translation presented here is a more complete version, originating in twelfth-century Sicily and connected with Admiral Eugenius of Palermo. It contains unique prefaces and reinstates the prologues and stories omitted by Seth.

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Look
Inside

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ANIMAL FABLES
OF THE COURTLY
MEDITERRANEAN

Φυσιολογικὸν βιβλίον ἔχον λόγους εἰς τμήματα ιε' τὸ κα-
λούμενον *Στεφανίτης καὶ Ἰχνηλάτης*

[Preface]

Τὴν βίβλον ταύτην Περζουὲ πόνος ἔσχεν.
Ἕδονῆς ἀνάπλευα τὰ τῆδε σκόπει.
Λόγοι σοφιστῶν μετασηματισθέντες.

- 2 Μυθικὴ βίβλος ἐξ Ἰνδικῆς σοφίας
προσενεχθεῖσα πρὸς Περσικὴν παιδείαν,
αἰνιγματωδῶς συντείνουσα τὰς πράξεις,
πρὸς βιωτικούς καὶ βαρβαρώδεις ὕθλους
μεταβληθεῖσα πρὸς γλώτταν τῶν Ἑλλήνων,
παρὰ τοῦ σοφοῦ, ἐνδόξου καὶ μεγάλου,
τοῦ καὶ ἀμῆρᾶ τοῦ ῥηγὸς Σικελίας,
Καλαβρίας τε, πρίγκιπος Ἰταλίας·
οὔσπερ εὐρηκῶς ὡς γνωστικούς τοῖς πᾶσιν,
τοῦτο δέδωκε πρὸς ἡμᾶς τὸ βιβλίον,
ὡσπερ δῶρημα διδασκαλίας πλέον,
εὐγενῆς Εὐγένιος, ὁ τῆς Πανόρμου.

A Book of Inquiry into Nature Containing Discourses in
Fifteen Chapters Called *Stephanites and Ichnelates*

Preface

This book is the progeny of Perzoué's toil,
so consider its content filled with much pleasure,
for the words of wise men are now translated here.

It's a fabulous book of Indian wisdom
produced for the sake of Persian education,
by means of dark riddles relating the actions
of men to popular and foreign drivel,
which has here been translated into Greek language
by that wise man, that great man, held in high repute,
the admiral of the king of Sicily
and of Calabria and prince of Italy.
As he found them enlightening for everyone,
he has now donated the present book to us
as a gift that is full of very much teaching,
that noble man Eugenios of Panormos.

3 “Χρήσασθε ἐξ Αἰγυπτίων σκεύη χρυσᾶ καὶ ἀργυρᾶ,” λέγει τις τῶν θείων ἀνδρῶν, ὅτι τὸν ἐν προσοχῇ ὄντα δυνατὸν καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐναντίων κτήσασθαι τὸ ὠφέλιμον, ὥσπερ δὴ καὶ τούναντίον συμβαίνειν εἶωθε τῷ μὴ ζῶντι προσεκτικῶς· ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν μακάριον Ἰακώβ, φασί, τὰ ἐξ Ἀσσυρίων αὐτῷ κτηθέντα ἐν τῇ Γῆ τῆς Ἐπαγγελίας μετενέγκαι. Καὶ Ἰακώβ, τὴν πατριαρχικὴν ψυχὴν, καὶ τὰ πατρικὰ εἶδωλα κλέψασαν ὑπὸ τῆς ἱστορίας ἐκδιδασκόμεθα. Καὶ ὁ Παροιμιστὴς ἐκπέμπει πρὸς μέλιτταν καὶ ἐκ παντὸς ἄνθους τὸ χρήσιμον κτᾶσθαι μιμουμένοις αὐτὴν διὰ τῆς παραινέσεως ἐγκελεύεται.

Οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἡμεῖς, τὰ ἐξ Ἰνδικῆς λεγόντα μυθοπλαστίας εὐρηκότες τῇ τῶν Ἀράβων γλώσση ἐγκείμενα, σκοτεινὸν δὲ καὶ παρηλλαγμένον λόγον ἐπέχοντα καὶ <δί> αἰνιγμάτων τε καὶ παραβολῶν ἱστορικῶς ἡμᾶς ἐκπαιδεύοντα, οὐκ ᾤθημεν τοῖς τῆς λήθης ἐνθάψαι βυθοῖς, ἀλλ’ εἰς τὸ φανερόν τῇ τῶν Ἑλλήνων γλώττει ἀναγαγεῖν. Ἐπὶ τούτων καὶ τισιν ἀνδράσι χρησάμενοι ἀντιλαμβανομένοις τῇ ἡμῶν προθυμίᾳ εὖ εἰδόσι τῆς τῶν Ἀράβων γλώσσης, ἐξ αὐτῆς πρὸς τὴν Ἑλλάδα γλώσσαν διεπορθμεύσαμεν.

4 Οὕτω γάρ τοι καὶ τὴν Ἑλληνικὴν σοφίαν ἐκ μυθικῶν πλασμάτων τὴν ἀρχὴν λαβεῖν ἐπαιδεύθημεν, εἴπερ πιστευτέον τῷ λέγοντι οὕτως· “Ὁ μῦθος ἐκ ποιητῶν προῆλθεν, γέγονέ τε καὶ ῥητόρων, Αἰσωπειῶν τε προσαγορευόμενον καὶ Συβαριτικόν, Κιλικίον τε καὶ Κύπριον, διὰ τὸ ἀρχῆθεν ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων συστήναι τὰ μυθικά.” Καὶ ἡμεῖς τοίνυν εἰδότες <ὅτι> πρὸς ἠθικὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ προσοχὴν τῶν ἐν βίῳ συμπιπτόντων πραγμάτων ὄνησιφόρα φανήσονται τὰ

3 “*You should make use of gold and silver vessels which derive from the Egyptians,*” says one of the holy men, because someone who is attentive is able to acquire what is beneficial even from his enemies, just as the opposite usually happens with someone who does not live attentively. Even the blessed Jacob, so they say, took along with him to the Promised Land what he had acquired from the Assyrians, and Rachel, the patriarch’s soul, even stole her father’s idols, as we are taught by history. The author of Proverbs refers us to the bee, and enjoins us with this advice, by imitating her, to make use of what is valuable from every flower.

In this way we too, having discovered what is told in fabulous stories from India wrapped up in the language of the Arabs, stories which contain an obscure and devious sense and teach us literally through riddles and parables, did not think it right to bury them in the depths of oblivion, but to raise them up into the light in the language of the Greeks. We thus translated them from Arabic into the Greek language, using for this purpose some men who had a good knowledge of the language of the Arabs to help us with our desire.

4 For we have thus, indeed, been taught that even Hellenic wisdom had its beginning in fabulous tales, if the person who says the following is to be believed: “The fable originated with poets, but also came to be used by orators. It is called Aesopic and Sybaritic, Cilician and Cyprian on account of the origin from which these people composed the books of myths.” And so, since we knew that these fables would clearly be profitable regarding moral virtue and attention to things that occur in life, we have collected them with

μυθεύματα, πολλῶ πόνῳ ταῦτα συναγροχότες, τῇ Ἑλληνικῇ μετηνέγκαμεν γλώττῃ. Καὶ γάρ τοι καὶ τὴν τοῦ Ἰσραήλ τῶν Ἰσραηλῶν πραγματείαν, ἐξ αἰσθητῶν, μᾶλλον δὲ ἐρωτικῶν, πραγμάτων ὁ θειότατος Σολομὼν συνεστήσατο. Ἦν οἱ θεοφόροι πατέρες, ἀνάξιον ἡγούμενοι τὰς φωνὰς τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος ἱστορικῶς οὕτω καὶ χαμπερῶς ἐκλαμβάνεσθαι, πρὸς τὴν κατὰ σάρκα τοῦ Λόγου νύμφευσιν ἑτεροτροπολογικῶς ἀλληγόρευσαν. Οὕτω μέντοι καὶ τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσι τοῖς ποιήμασι τοῖσδε <δεῖ> μὴ μέμψιν ἐπάγειν πρὸς ἡμᾶς διὰ τὸ ἀνάξιον ἡγεῖσθαι τὴν Ἑλληνικοῖς καὶ θεολογικοῖς ποιήμασιν ἐπιβαίνουσαν γλώτταν ἡμῶν, καὶ ταῖς μυθικαῖς καταχραίνειν καὶ βαρβαρῶδεσιν ἀγροικίαις, καὶ τὸ πιστοὺς ὄντας ἀνωφελέσιν ἐκπονεῖσθαι τοῖς ἀναγνώσμασιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐκ μυθεύσεως καρπούμενοι ὄφελος, τὸ βλαβερὸν εἰς κόρακας εἰκότως ἀπορρίψωμεν, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν φύσιν ἐκ νοερᾶς καὶ αἰσθητῆς οὐσίας ὁ Τεχνίτης καὶ Λόγος συνεστήσατο. Ἄλλ' ὁ μὲν τὴν σάρκα προθέμενος ἀποτυγχάνει τοῦ Πνεύματος, ὁ δὲ οικειούμενος τῷ Πνεύματι καὶ αὐτὴν πᾶσαν τὴν λυομένην σάρκα πρὸς ἀθανασίαν μείζονα οὐσιοποιεῖ, ὡσπερ παρὰ τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἐκδιδασκόμεθα.

5 Οὕτω δὲ ἀναγνοὺς καὶ σὺ τοῦσδε τοὺς λόγους,
ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐν βάτῳ ῥόδα ἐκφύονται,
ἀλλ' ἢ μέλιττα τοῖς ῥόδοις ἐφιζάνει,
τὸ χρήσιμον ζήτησον ὡς τερπνὸν ῥόδον,
τὰ δ' ἐναντία ὡς ἀκάνθας ἐκτρέπου.

6 Ἀνακεφαλαίωσις τῆς παρουσίας πραγματείας αὐτῆς.

great labor and have translated them into the Greek language. For, indeed, even the most holy Solomon composed the subject matter of the Song of Songs from sensual material, or, rather, from erotic material, but the divinely inspired fathers, who thought it was improper that the words of the Holy Spirit should be thus taken in a literal and unspiritual sense, understood it figuratively and allegorized it as referring to the marriage in the flesh of the Word. Thus also, those who read these compositions should not find fault with us because they think it unworthy to defile our language, which is employed for secular and theological writings, with mythical and barbarous rusticities and to have the faithful practice unprofitable reading. But, in order to reap the benefit from recounting mythical tales, let us reasonably throw to the crows what is harmful, since the Architect and the Word formed our nature from a rational and sentient essence. But, while someone who prefers the flesh fails to attain the Spirit, someone who identifies himself with the Spirit makes all this perishable flesh assume an essence that leads to greater immortality, as we are taught by the Savior.

So, as you now yourself peruse these discourses, 5
since even when roses grow in a bramble bush
it is upon the roses that the bee alights,
look for what is useful like a most pleasant rose,
but make sure you avoid the opposite like thorns.

This is a summary of the present work: first, Perzoué's 6

πρῶτον μὲν ἢ περὶ τοῦ Περζουὲ ἀποστολῆ πρὸς Ἰνδῖαν καὶ διάγνωσις τῶν ἐκεῖσε, ἔπειτα ἢ Ἰνδικὴ βίβλος ἣν ἐκόμισεν ἐξ Ἰνδίας, δύο μὲν ἔχουσιν πραγματείας—μίαν μὲν τὴν τοῦ Στεφανίτου καὶ Ἰχνηλάτου, ἑτέραν δὲ τὴν Περιτραχήλιον Περιστεράν—καὶ ὅσα περιέχουσι ἀμφοτέραι τροπικὰ μυθεύματα.

mission to India and a discussion of what was there; then, the Indian book which he brought back from India. It comprises two works—one is the book of *Stephanites and Ichnelates*, the other is *The Collared Dove*—and whatever allegorical fables both contain.

The Byzantine Sinbad

MICHAEL ANDREOPOULOS

TRANSLATED BY JEFFREY BENEKER AND CRAIG A. GIBSON

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EDITED AND TRANSLATED BY
ROBERT H. JORDAN AND ROSEMARY MORRIS

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