



DELPHI
CLASSICS

The Book of Sindibād

Or, 'Seven Wise Masters'



EASTERN  TREASURES

The Book of Sindibad by

SYNTIPAS

(fl. 100 BC)



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The Delphi Classics Catalogue



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Eastern Treasures Series

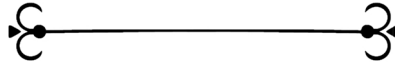
THE BOOK OF SINDIBAD



By Delphi Classics, 2025

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The Book of Sindibad



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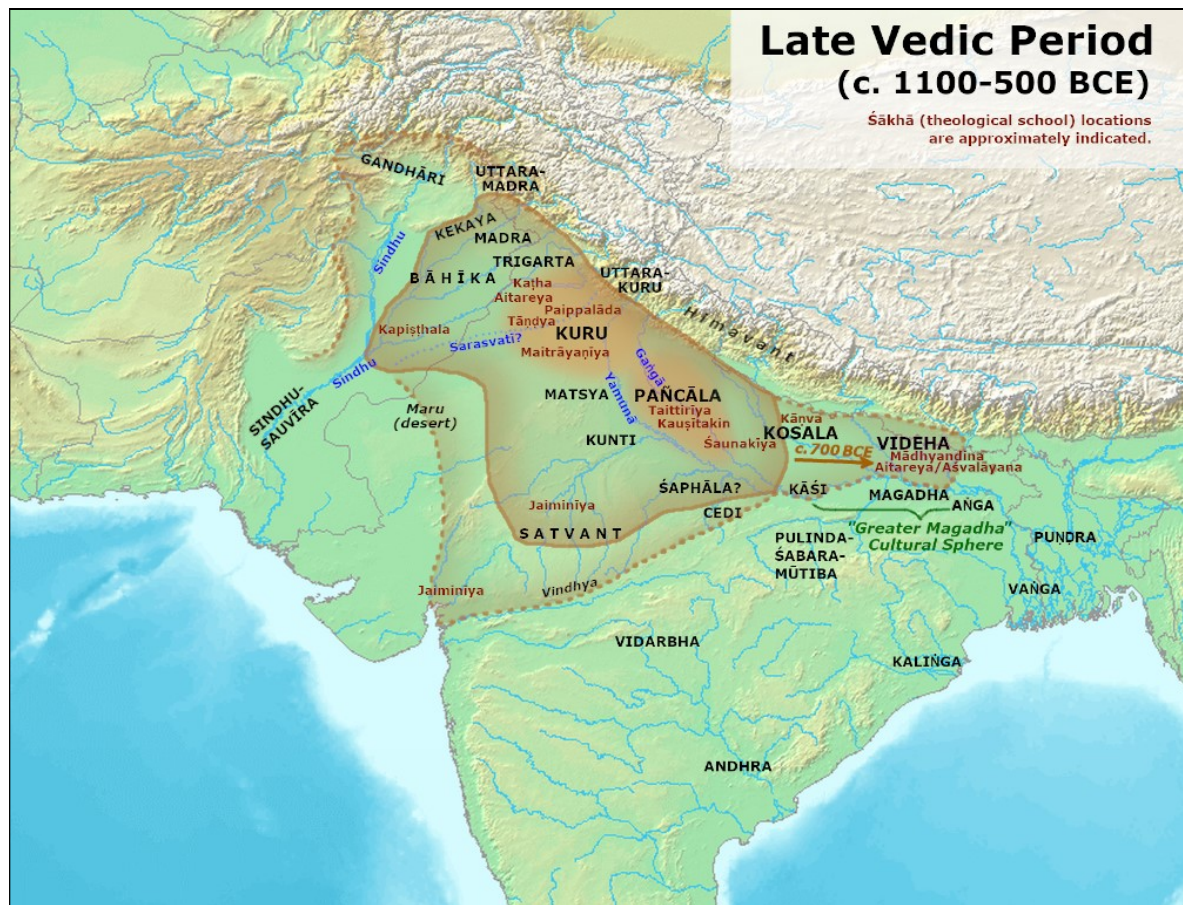
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The Translations



Ancient India, at the approximate time of the origin of 'The Book of Sindibad'



Mohenjo-daro, one of the largest Indus cities

The Book of Sindibad (Persian version)



Translated by W. A. Clouston, 1884

Sindibad-nameh (*The Book of Sindbad*), also known as *Seven Wise Masters*, is a cycle of stories, presumably Indian in origin, that made its way through Middle Persian and Arabic into Western lore. The Indian philosopher Syntipas of the first century BC is the purported original author of the story cycle, though little is known about this legendary figure, as much uncertainty surrounds the origins of this influential work of Eastern literature.

The oldest surviving text of *Sindibad-nameh* is written in Middle Arabic and is partly included in *The Thousand and One Nights* (nights 578–606 in Sir Richard Burton's translation, vol. 6, 1886). The Arabic text gave rise to Hebrew, Syrian and Spanish translations in the thirteenth century. Of the Persian versions the most important is that of al-Samarqandī (featured in our original text section) from the twelfth century. Numerous surviving European texts were inspired by *Sindibad-nameh*. These normally contain fifteen tales, one for each sage, seven from the stepmother, and one from the prince; though the framework is preserved, only four of the commonest European tales are also found in the Eastern version. The tales entered Latin via the Greek version, in the twelfth century, under the title *Dolopathos*, which was translated into French. The German, English, French and Spanish chapbooks of the cycle are generally based on a Latin original.

Like *The Thousand and One Nights*, the tales are connected by a frame story, which concerns an Oriental king, who entrusts the education of his son to a wise tutor named Sindbad (not to be confused with the sailor of *The Thousand and One Nights*). The Prince is sent away from the court to be educated in the seven liberal arts by Sindbad and six other Wise Masters. On his return to court, his stepmother, the empress, attempts to seduce the prince. To avert danger he is bound over to a week's silence by Sindibad. During this time, the empress accuses the prince to her husband and seeks to bring about his death by seven stories, which she relates to the emperor. However, each time her narrative is confuted by the Seven Wise Masters led by Sindibad. Finally, the prince's lips are unsealed, the truth exposed and the wicked empress receives her punishment...



An illustration of 'Sindibad-nameh', British Library, c. 1500



Emperor Pontianus, his son Diocletian and the seven wise masters, as depicted on Cod pal. germ 149 at Heidelberg, 1450

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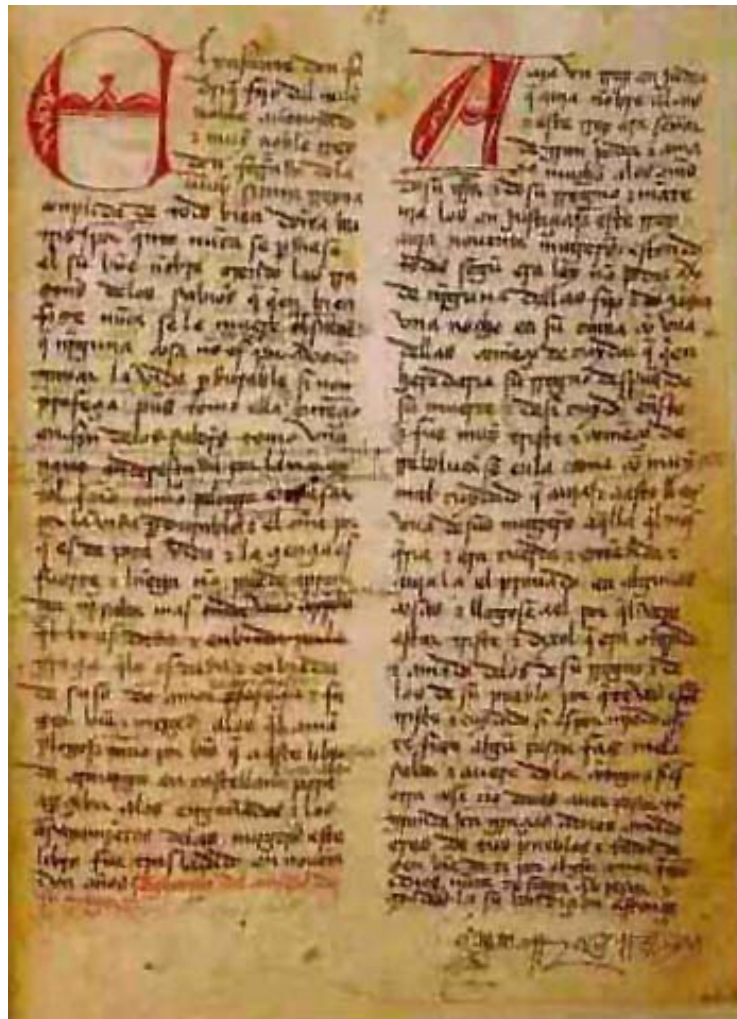
Story of the King and the Virtuous Wife,
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Counsels which were inscribed around the Hall of the happy Faridun.



A 1253 manuscript of 'The Book of Sindibad'

S Y N T I P A E
PHILOSOPHI PERSAE
FABVLAE LXII.
GRAECE ET LATINE

EX
DVOBVS CODICIBVS MOSQVENSIBVS
PRIMVM EDIDIT

ET
ANIMADVERSIONES ADIECIT
CHRISTIANVS FRIDERICVS MATTHAEI,
LITTERARVM HVMANIORVM IN VNIVERSITATE CAE-
SAREA MOSQVENSIS PROFESSOR PVBLICVS
ORDINARIVS.

*Accefferunt Scholia inedita Porphyrii aliorumque ad Iliados
Homeri Ω. et notitia variorum Codd. MSS.*

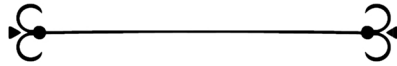


LIPSIAE, 1781.
IMPENSIS CHRISTIANI RVDIGERI
VNIVERS. CAESAR. MOSQVENS. BIBLIOPOL.
PROSTAT LIPSIAE APVD ADAM FRIDER. BOEHMIVM,
AMSTELODAMI APVD VIDVAM H. MERCVS.



The important Latin edition of 'The Fables of Syntipas', 1781

PREFACE.



THE PRESENT WORK is, I believe, the first attempt, in this country, to furnish a compendious account of the Eastern and Western groups of romances known respectively under their generic titles of the BOOK OF SINDIBĀD and the BOOK OF THE SEVEN WISE MASTERS. Wright's introduction to his edition, for the Percy Society, of an Early English metrical version of the *Seven Sages* may perhaps be considered as such a work, but he has confounded the Eastern with the Western versions, having been misled by Des Longchamps and other investigators, who, in this field of inquiry, according to Gödeke, "fell into such confusion in essential points that they contributed almost as much to perpetuate old errors and spread them anew as to lay and root out others." Moreover, several important texts have been since discovered, throwing new light upon the history of both groups. — Professor Comparetti's *Ricerche intorno al Libro di Sindibād*, an English translation of which, by Mr. H. C. Coote, forms one of the publications for the Folk-Lore Society, is undoubtedly one of the most important contributions to the history of the romance; but it assumes the reader to be familiar with the details of the several Eastern texts, the subordinate stories being mostly referred to only by their titles, and its usefulness is consequently confined within a narrow circle, in the absence, for merely English readers, of the tales themselves. This want I have now endeavoured to supply, to the best of my ability, in the following work, which comprises:

(1) An introductory account of the structure of the Book of Sindibād, and the probable sources of the several Eastern versions; to which is prefixed a Comparative Table of the Tales in this group, designed to exhibit, at a glance, the degrees of relationship which the texts bear towards each other.

(2) An epitome, by Professor Forbes Falconer, of a Persian text, entitled *Sindibād Nāma*, composed in 1375, of which the only known copy is an imperfect MS. in the Library of the India Office. Falconer's work left much to be desired: of some of the Tales he gave only the titles, and others he presented in a very abridged form; it has therefore been compared with the MS.; the abridged and omitted Tales — ten in number, of which three seem to have altogether escaped his notice — translated and inserted, and several grave errors rectified. In foot-notes I have explained such references and expressions as might be obscure to some readers, and adduced from the other versions passages which correspond with, or vary from, this text.

(3) An Arabian version of the *Seven Vazīrs*, translated by Jonathan Scott, with corrections and additions, and similarly annotated. In my preface to it are some particulars regarding this and other Arabian texts.

It certainly formed no part of my original design to treat of the Western Texts. These have, in some measure, preserved — from oral tradition, unquestionably — the leading ideas of the ancient original tale: the orphanhood of the accused youth; his education at a distance from his father; his step-mother's malice against him, and so on; — but, as Comparetti has observed, "there is no Eastern version which differs so much from the others as the whole Western group differs from the Eastern group, whether it be in the form of the fundamental story, or in the tales inserted in it, of which scarcely four are common to both groups." As my work progressed, however, it occurred to me that abstracts of an Early English metrical version of the *Seven Wise*

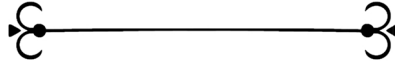
Masters and of the oldest European form of the romance, the Latin original of the old French metrical version, *Dolopathos* — discovered within recent years — with variants as found in other collections, would be acceptable to English students of the history of Fiction, which I have accordingly inserted in the Appendix.

My work is, of course, not free from errors: I trust they will be excused by those who know the difficulties that beset a task of this kind. But however imperfect it may be, it would certainly have been still more so, but for the valuable assistance which I received from several eminent scholars; especially, from Mr. J. W. Redhouse, on whose stores of learning I drew, as on former occasions, perhaps too frequently; Mr. William Platt, to whose erudition I am also much indebted; Mr. E. J. W. Gibb, author of *Ottoman Poems*, etc. whose great kindness of disposition is equalled by his attainments in, and enthusiasm for, Oriental literature; and to Mr. David Ross, Principal of the E.C. Training College, Glasgow, of whose classical and general scholarship I was also happily able to avail myself. That the work should be as comprehensive as possible has been my aim from the first; and, notwithstanding occasional inaccuracies and shortcomings, I venture to hope that it will prove interesting to general readers, and possibly even not altogether without its use to some of those who make a special study of the origin and spread of “old-world tales.”

W. A. CLOUSTON

GLASGOW, *May*, 1884.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.



THE FOLLOWING ANALYTICAL account of a unique Persian MS. poem, entitled *Sindibād Nāma*, or the Book of Sindibād, belonging to the Library of the India Office, was published by Professor Forbes Falconer in the *Asiatic Journal*, vols. xxxv and xxxvi, 1841. By the courtesy of Dr Rost, I have been favoured with a loan of this manuscript, which is beautifully written in the *ta'liq* character, and adorned with numerous paintings. Unfortunately, several *lacuna* occur throughout the volume, and thirty leaves are misplaced. It now comprises about 170 *folia*, and 5000 couplets. The original numbering of the leaves seems to have been cut away when it received its present Oriental binding, as many of the full-page pictures are imperfect at the top, and the re-numbering is in a different hand from that of the text, and made consecutive, notwithstanding the displaced and missing leaves. Owing probably to the defective condition of the MS. Falconer has altogether overlooked one story (the title of which is written in faint blue ink at the foot of a page) and the remains of two others; from which it is evident that in this text, as in all others of the Eastern group of the *Sindibād*, each of the Seven Vazīrs had originally two stories. He states that in his analysis he has "sometimes, for the purpose of giving the reader a better idea of the work and of the author's style, freely used his own diffuse and Orientaly fanciful expressions and imagery; and sometimes compressed his narrative and trimmed his exuberance (for compression and curtailment were necessary in analysing a work of such extent); and sometimes, especially when the tale was already familiar to readers in other works, or objectionable in its nature, satisfied himself with giving the title, or a reference to the corresponding portion of the Greek version. Those who know the difficulties of Persian poetry," he justly adds, "and the disadvantage of possessing but a single manuscript, will not only excuse, but will even lay their account with meeting, occasional misapprehensions of the sense."

An account of the several Eastern texts of the Book of Sindibād being given in the introductory pages of the present volume, Falconer's preliminary observations on the same subject need not be here reproduced; indeed, they are rather out of date, so many important discoveries regarding this work having been made of recent years. His plan of leaving some of the tales untranslated must be unsatisfactory to students of the genealogy of popular fictions, since it is only by comparing different versions of these stories that their original forms can be ascertained. Stories which are not objectionable are therefore now presented as fully as the state of the manuscript permits, and the additions and corrections printed within square brackets; while such of Falconer's notes as have been retained are distinguished by the letter F from those for which I must be held responsible.

W. A. C.



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