Proverbia de Animalibus: The Greek Rendering of Hebrew Animal Names in Proverbs

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In recent years, a new approach to study the translation technique of the different Septuagint (LXX) books has been developed in Leuven/Louvain: it pertains to the so-called 'content- and context-related approach'. This approach takes the rendering of content- and context-related criteria such as, e.g., Hebrew *hapax legomena*, Hebrew wordplay in the context of parallelism and jargon-defined vocabulary as a starting point.

The present research focusses on the translation technique of LXX-Proverbs. Although it is commonly accepted that LXX-Proverbs is a free translation, not many scholars have attempted to give an adequate characterisation of the translator's translation technique. Therefore, this study analyses the translation technique of LXX-Proverbs by looking at the rendering of specific jargon-defined vocabulary: the rendering of animal names. By studying the Greek rendering of Hebrew animal names in Proverbs, this study aims at providing a more nuanced and adequate characterisation of the translation technique of LXX-Proverbs.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How did the LXX-translator of Proverbs render the Hebrew animal names that were attested in his Hebrew *Vorlage* into Greek?
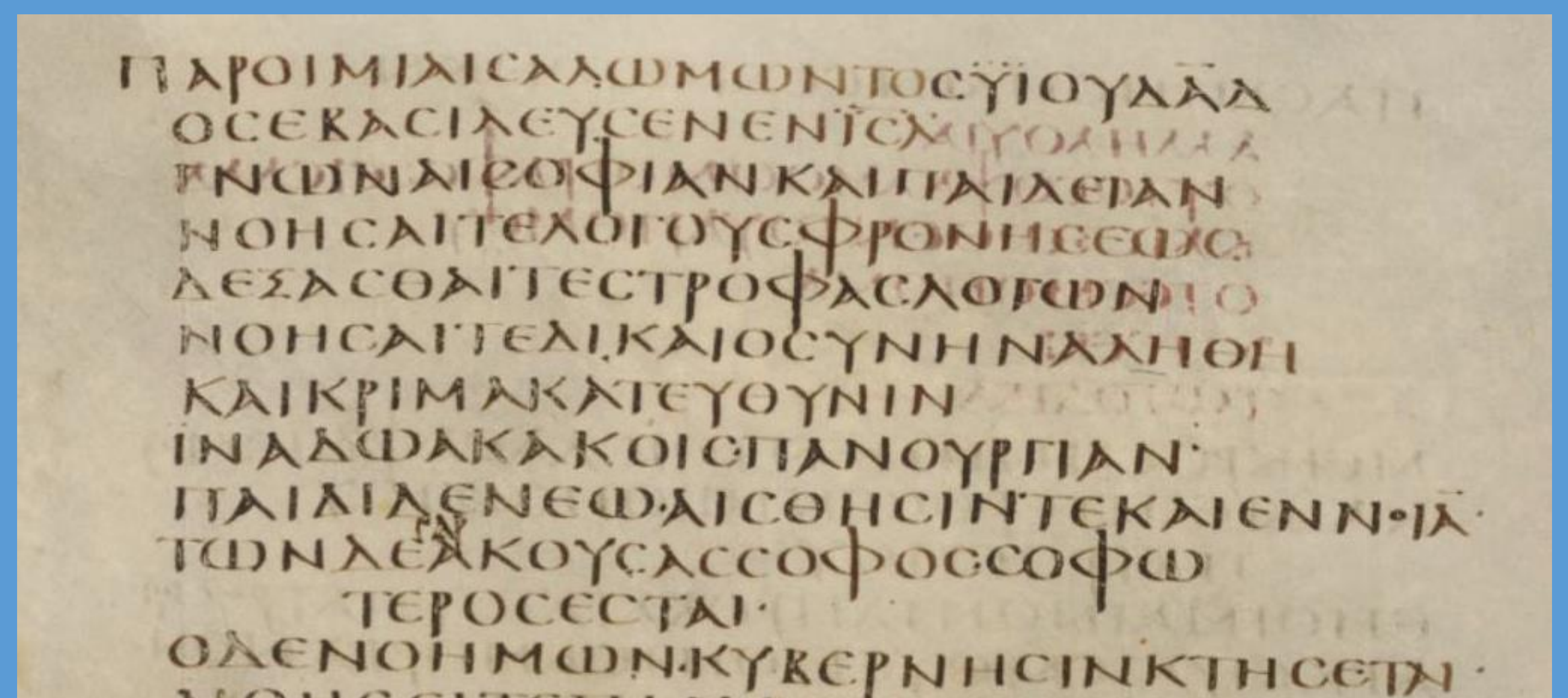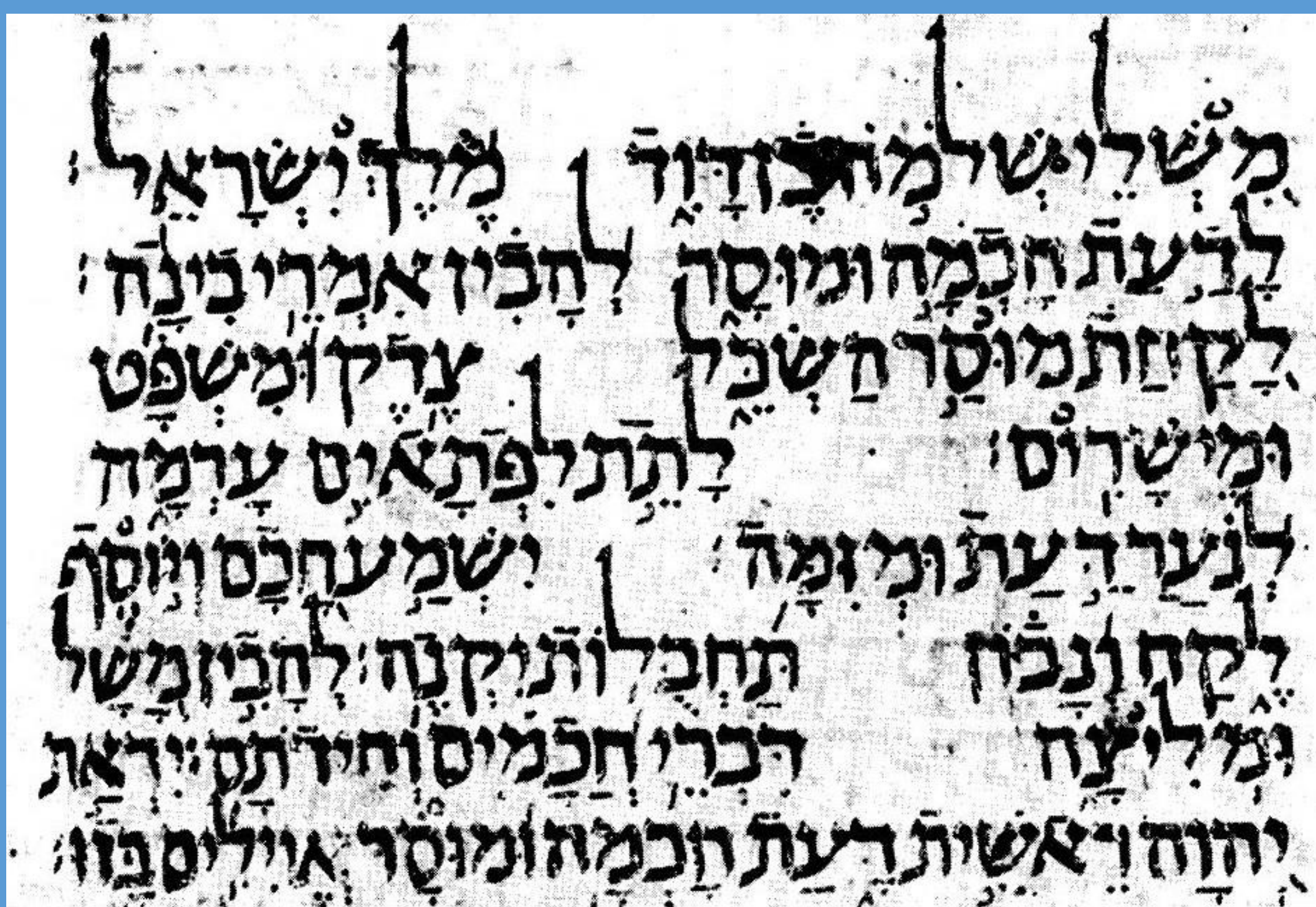
Codex Leningradensis

Codex Sinaiticus

METHOD

This study analyses the translation technique of LXX-Proverbs by applying the content- and context-related approach. More specifically, it examines the Greek rendering of Hebrew animal names in Proverbs in order to come to a more nuanced characterisation of the translation technique of the LXX-translator.

RESULTS

(1) The LXX-translator of Proverbs tried to render most of the Hebrew animal names with an adequate Greek equivalent. Some renderings seem to be inadequately renderings at first sight but can be explained due to (a) a different Hebrew *Vorlage* or (b) the best possible Greek equivalent available;

(2) The LXX-translator had a profound knowledge of Greek and Hebrew fauna jargon and was well-versed in both Hebrew and Greek. The LXX-translator was a Jew who was well-educated in Greek language;

(3) More research necessary in order to arrive at an even more adequate image of the translation technique of LXX-Proverbs.

REGISTRATION AND EVALUATION

1. Registration

43 attestations of Hebrew animal names in the Masoretic Text (3 with no counterpart in LXX), 1 extra attestation in LXX without Hebrew counterpart (*i.e.* μέλισσα (bee)), no Qumran fragments that attest verses containing animal names.

2. Evaluation

(a) Most Hebrew animal names rendered with adequate Greek equivalent

(b) One inadequate rendering (*i.e.* צַלְסος/יַעֲלָה (Prov 5:19)
=> Different Hebrew *Vorlage*

(a) Some renderings exhibit a lack of variation (*i.e.* כְּפִיר, שַׁחַל/λέων, לַיִשׁ, אֲרִי (Prov 19:12; 20:2; 22:13; 26:13; 28:1; 28:15; 30:30)
=> Still adequate translations

(a) Some animal names are not rendered at all (*i.e* דֹּב (Prov 17:12), שַׁחַל (Prov 26,13), עֵז (Prov 27:27)
=> Different Hebrew *Vorlage*

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