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A Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages

Edited by

Z. David Zuwiyya

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Cover illustration: The cover illustration shows the image of Alexander the Great feeding the griffins during his celestial flight. It is from the mosaic on the floor of the Otranto Cathedral in Puglia, Italy made in 1163–1165.

Credit for the image goes to Roberta Morosini of Wake Forest University.

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For my wife Sara

CONTENTS

Abbreviations ix

Chapter One Primary Sources from the Classical and Early Medieval Periods 1
Richard Stoneman

Chapter Two Alexander the Great in Medieval Hebrew Traditions 21
Saskia Dönitz

Chapter Three Alexander the Great in the Syriac Literary Tradition 41
Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala

Chapter Four The Alexander Romance in the Arabic Tradition 73
Z. David Zuwiyya

Chapter Five The 'Accursed' and the 'Adventurer': Alexander the Great in Iranian Tradition 113
Josef Wiesehöfer

Chapter Six The Coptic Alexander Romance 133
Daniel L. Selden

Chapter Seven The Ethiopic Alexander Romance 157
Peter Christos Kotar

Chapter Eight Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis* 177
Maura Lafferty

Chapter Nine Medieval French Alexander Romances 201
Laurence Harf-Lancner

Chapter Ten The Alexander Tradition in Spain 231
Z. David Zuwiyya

Chapter Eleven Alexander Literature in English and Scots 255
David Ashurst

Chapter Twelve German Alexander Romances 291
Danielle Buschinger

Chapter Thirteen Alexander Literature in Scandinavia 315
David Ashurst and Francesco Vitti

Chapter Fourteen The Alexander Romance in Italy 329
Roberta Morosini

Bibliography of Print Editions and Translations by Chapter 365
General Bibliography 377

Index 399

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	*Alexander A also known as The Romance of Alisaunder* or *Alexander of Macedon*
AB	*Alexander B also known as Alexander and Dindimus*
AEF	*Anuario de estudios filológicos*
AdP	*Alexander de Paris*
AHDLMA	*Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Age*
AJS	*American Jewish Society*
AlGdlLOPO	*Alexandre le Grand dans les littératures occidentales et proche-orientales*
Alex.	*Alexandreis*
BA	*The Buik of Alexander*
BAE	*Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*
BHS	*Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*
BJRULM	*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*
BKA	*The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*
BRAE	*Buletín de la Real Academia Española*
CCCM	*Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis*
CHI	*Cambridge History of Iran*
CQ	*Classical Quarterly*
Dicts	*The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosphers*
EETS	*Early English Text Society*
GE	*General Estoria*
HAC	*Historiarum adversus Paganos Libri Septem*
HD	*Hadith Dhulqarnayn* (ed., García Gómez)
HNAM	*Historia novelada de Alejandro Magno*
HR	*Hispanic Review*
HSMS	*Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies*
ILA	*Investigaciones sobre el* Libro de Alexandre
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JSSEA	*Journal for the Society of the Study of Egyptian Antiquities*
KA	*Kyng Alisaunder*
KoA	*Konung Alexander*

LDECETM	*La difussione dell'eredità classica nell'età tardoantica e medievale. Il "Romanzo di Alessandro" e altri scritti*
Met.	*Metamorphosis*
MFRA	*Medieval French Roman d'Alexandre*
MGH.SS	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica : Scriptores*
MusHelv	*Museum helveticum*
NIB	*Name-ye Iran-e Bastan: The International Journal of Ancient Iranian Studies*
OEO	*Old English Orosius*
OEL	*Old English Letter*
PAAJR	*Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*
PC	*Pseudo-Callisthenes*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
PLA	*Prose Life of Alexander*
QD	*Qissat Dhulqarnayn* (ed., Zuwiyya)
RdTCh	*Roman de toute chevalerie*
REJ	*Revue des Études Juives*
RF	*Romanische Forschungen*
RFE	*Revista de filología española*
RILCE	*Revista del Instituto de Lengua y Cultura Españolas*
RFH	*Revista de filología hispánica*
RPh	*Romance Philology*
Rrek.	*Rrekontamiento del rrey Alisandre* (ed., A.R. Nykl)
SS	*Secretum Secretorum*
TPAPA	*Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*
WA	*The Wars of Alexander*
ZDMG	*Zeitshchrift der Deutschen Morgenländendischen Gesellschaft*
ZFRP	*Zeitschrift für romanische philologie*

CHAPTER ONE

PRIMARY SOURCES FROM THE CLASSICAL AND EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIODS

Richard Stoneman

Alexander the Great, King of Macedon, was born in Pella in 356 B.C. Acceding to the throne at the age of 20 following the assassination of his father Philip II, he prosecuted his father's plans for a campaign of conquest and revenge against the Persian Empire. With the Greek states secure behind him, and many Greek soldiers added to his Macedonian army, he defeated the Persian king Darius in three great battles, at the River Granicus (May 334), at Issus (November 333) and at Gaugamela (Arbela: October 331). An interlude in Egypt (332–331) resulted in the foundation of the city of Alexandria and his recognition as Pharaoh. Becoming ruler of the Persian Empire on the death of Darius in summer 330, he spent three years suppressing residual opposition in Afghanistan and Central Asia, and then went on to campaign against India (modern Pakistan, to the Indus valley). The conquest of these regions was accompanied by much bloodshed and no attempt on the king's part to secure his rule in these regions, which lay beyond the Persian Empire. At the River Hyphasis he turned back (mid-326), sailed down the Indus and marched through the Gedrosian desert to the Persian heartland (a detachment was taken by sea under the command of his admiral Nearchus, and the whole army was reunited in autumn 325. Bad omens awaited the king at Babylon, but he entered the city regardless in spring 323. Three months later he was dead, probably of typhoid, though rumours immediately spread that he had been poisoned. He had made no preparations for his succession, and his death plunged his empire into twenty years of war between his generals before the shape of the Hellenistic kingdoms emerged—Egypt under Ptolemy I, the eastern empire under Seleucus, Thrace under Lysimachus and Macedon under Alexander's short-lived heirs.

The legend of Alexander was already in formation before the conqueror's death in Babylon in 323 B.C. His campaign of conquest was on a scale that had not been seen before, and the king's personality, which drove him to such heights of ambition, made him a figure of

fascination for contemporaries and those who came after. Contemporary writings about Alexander are all lost apart from what is preserved in excerpts and summaries in the later Greek and Latin authors who wrote about him.[1] The first histories were the solid factual accounts of Aristobulus and Ptolemy, which were the main sources for Arrian's account written some 400 years later.[2] The historian Callisthenes, who was executed before the end of Alexander's Indian campaign, wrote an adulatory history of the first part of the campaign, and Cleitarchus, who was probably with Alexander in the last days in Babylon, wrote an account full of marvels. Onesicritus wrote about India from the perspective of a Cynic philosopher and enjoyed describing the wonders of India. Nearchus also wrote a book which covered India and the events of the voyage along the southern coast of Iran.

The most enduring of these early accounts was the Alexander romance, which was attributed in some medieval MSS to Callisthenes and has thus come to be known as *Pseudo-Callisthenes* (*PC*).[3] The formation of this work is complex. It includes several separate strands of writing: a novella about the birth of Alexander in which his father is the exiled Pharaoh Nectanebus II; a military narrative, in which the topography and chronology are highly garbled; a series of letters between Alexander and Darius, which once existed as a separate work (parts have been found on papyrus); the 'Letter to Aristotle about India,' which is full of encounters with fabulous beasts and monstrous races of human beings; the account of the meeting with the Naked Philosophers or Brahmans in Taxila, which started as an independent novella and went on to an independent career through a number of rewritings; a novella about his meeting with the Queen of Meroe, Candace; and the Will of Alexander, which emanates from a Ptolemaic milieu and bolsters Ptolemy's claim to the rule of Egypt. The date at which these elements were welded into a single work is disputed. The present author is of the view that something like the existing earliest recension of the *Romance* was completed in the reign of Ptolemy II, but the traditional view has been that the composition of the work as

[1] The standard survey is Pearson, 1960.

[2] For a recent edition and study of Arrian's work, see J. Romm (ed.) and P. Mensch (trans.), *The Landmark Arrian: The Campaigns of Alexander* (New York, 2010).

[3] There is a translation, with brief introduction and further bibliography in Stoneman, 1991. See also Stoneman, 2007 and 2008, and R. Merkelbach, 1975 for a study of the genesis of this *PC*.

an entity did not take place until the third century A.D., shortly before its translation from Greek into Latin by Julius Valerius. The arguments are discussed in detail in Stoneman 2007.

The Alpha Recension

The first recension (α) is represented by a single MS, A. This recension provides the narrative structure on which the later versions are based. It begins with the story of the last Pharaoh of Egypt, Nectanebus, who, seeing through his magic arts that his country will fall victim to Persian conquest, flees in disguise to Pella in Macedon. Here he becomes the confidant of Queen Olympias, who is anxious that her husband Philip may reject her if she does not produce a son. Nectanebus promises to make her conceive a son by the god Amon (I.4). He sends her dreams in which Amon appears to her and promises her a son. However, Nectanebus plays a trick on her and, after obtaining the key to her room, disguises himself as Amon in order to have intercourse with her (I.7). When in due time a son is born Nectanebus uses his astrological calculator to establish the best moment for birth: he gets her to delay until the most auspicious moment, which will make her son a world-ruler. (I.12. This passage is heavily corrupt in A and is omitted or abridged in all subsequent recensions).

Alexander is looked on with some suspicion by Philip because of the difference of his looks; however, he accepts him as his son, has him educated by Aristotle, and is impressed when he tames the man-killing horse Bucephalus (sic; the correct historical name is Bucephalas). At the age of twelve, Alexander asks Nectanebus to give him a lesson in astronomy (I.14); the magician takes him to a hill outside the city whereupon Alexander pushes him over a cliff. His reason is not given. The dying Nectanebus reveals that Alexander is his son. At fifteen, Alexander attends the Olympic Games at Olympia (I.18–20: in the Gamma recension, the location is changed to Rome) and defeats his opponents in the chariot race. On his return he finds Philip taking a new wife, Cleopatra: a quarrel breaks out, which ends when Alexander reconciles his parents (I.20–22).

Alexander takes part in various military campaigns. Presently a neighboring king, Pausanias, makes an attempt to carry off Olympias, and then murders Philip (I.24). Alexander, on succeeding to the throne, assembles a great army to continue Philip's planned campaign

against the Persian Empire. The historical chronology is very garbled here: after the campaign against Sparta, Athens, and Thebes, Alexander moves immediately to Egypt (via Rome in later recensions), where he founds the city of Alexandria and establishes the cult of Sarapis (I.30–34). He then moves in reverse to besiege Tyre (I.35–37), where he begins an exchange of boasting letters with Darius (I.38), and back again to Asia Minor (I.40). After defeating Darius in a battle which must be that at Issus, he is next found campaigning back in Troy, northern Greece, and Thebes (again). A long set piece contains the appeal, in verse, by the local musician Ismenias for clemency to his city (I.46). This passage is much abridged in later versions.

Book II begins with a debate in Athens about how to react to Alexander's campaigns: this is not found in any later recension. Then Alexander is found in Cilicia (II.8, picking up from I.41), where he is cured of illness by the doctor Philip. Further exchanges of letters with Darius are followed by Alexander's visit in disguise to the Persian court; he is recognised but escapes over the frozen River Stranga, which thaws as soon as he has crossed, so that his pursuers are swept away (II.13–15). A second battle with Darius (based on that of Gaugamela) is followed by the death of Darius, murdered by his own commanders. Alexander finds him dying and is told to marry the king's daughter Roxane and succeed him as king (II.20). Alexander exchanges letters with Darius's mother, wife, and daughter and becomes king (II.21). Book II ends here in A, but the Beta recension continues with a letter to Alexander's mother Olympias describing his adventures (II.23) and then his travels into the Land of Darkness (II.32–41; there are no chapters 24–31 in this recension). The Lambda manuscript extends chapters 39–41 with the stories of Alexander's construction of a diving bell and a flying machine, and his search for the Water of Life. Chapters 42–44 occur in Gamma only: 42–43 repeat the events of chapters 24–41, with some additional episodes, and chapter 44 describes an encounter with pygmies.

Book III (returning to A, which all the versions again follow) begins with the Indian campaign: Alexander marches against Porus the Indian king and defeats him in single combat. He then encounters the Naked Philosophers or Oxydracae of Taxila and interviews them about their customs. A inserts at this point the whole of Palladius's monograph, 'On the Life of the Brahmans' (III.7–16), and then the 'Letter to Aristotle about India' (III.17). This letter exists in two Latin versions (there are 67 MSS of the earlier one) as a much longer free-standing work.

It is clearly translated from a (lost) Greek original, which has been heavily abridged for inclusion in the A-text. This episode is considerably expanded in later versions, especially Beta and L, which (alone) includes the famous episodes of the diving bell and the flying machine. In A, the lacunose text focuses on strange beasts and the 'Night of Terrors' when the army is attacked by monstrous animals, and culminates in a visit to the oracular trees of the sun and moon, which predict Alexander's early death.

Book III continues with Alexander's visit to Queen Candace of Meroe (III.18–24). Either Meroe (Ethiopia) is conceived as an extension of India, or this story has become misplaced in the narrative. He goes to her in disguise but is recognised because she has secretly had his portrait painted. After some tense moments, they part as friends. Candace's son takes Alexander to visit the cave of the Gods, where he sees the dead Phararoh Sesonchosis, and then the god Sarapis, who again warns him of his early death but refuses to answer the direct question of when Alexander is to die.

Alexander then exchanges letters with the Amazons, who describe their way of life and offer their submission (III.25–26). A letter to his mother describes some of Alexander's adventures which have already been told, and also his visit to the City of the Sun (III.28). Ch. 29 occurs in the Gamma recension only. He arrives in Babylon (III.30), where omens foretell his death. He is taken ill at a dinner after swallowing poison sent by Antipater, the regent of Macedon. He tries to drown himself but is prevented by Roxane. He writes his will, outlining the disposition of his empire after his death (III.33). He dies and his body is taken to Memphis, and then to Alexandria, for burial: so "the city he founded becomes his tomb," as Sarapis had foretold in Book I (III.34).

The only MS of this recension is in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris.[4] It dates from between 1013 and 1124 and forms the last portion (from f.395) of a very large codex containing several other historical works. The scribe seems to have been tired by the time he reached the Alexander romance: the writing is slovenly and he was obviously working from a poor exemplar from which he at times copied meaningless strings of letters. All subsequent copyists of the Greek Romance, as well as Julius Valerius in Latin, seem to have been working from this text,

[4] Parisinus 1711: A.

or something like it, and many of their alterations can only be seen as attempts to restore sense to something that made no sense in A.[5]

The Alpha version of the Romance (something close to A, but without the long astrological section in Book I) was translated into Latin by *Julius Valerius Alexander Polemius*, almost certainly to be identified with the Flavius Polemius who was consul in 338 A.D. and *comes* of the East in 345. The MSS give it the title 'Deeds of Alexander translated from Aesop the Greek.' His translation is into flowery and mannered post-classical Latin: it refers to the Aurelian Walls, built in 270, and describes Rome as the capital of the empire, which it ceased to be in 330, so those dates provide the time frame in which it was written. It thus belongs to a time when Alexander was becoming a symbol for the late antique 'pagan revival' in opposition to the newly dominant Christian religion.[6]

A text related to A was translated into Armenian about the year 500, possibly by the great historian Movses of Khoren: the earliest MS is of the 12th century. The translator worked from a much better text than A: the Armenian not only often makes clear what the original Greek actually said, but offers several additional episodes, including the correspondence of Alexander's parents with Zeuxis in Book I and the Letter to Aristotle about India (in fuller form than in A) in III.

Two of the MSS are beautifully illustrated and the iconography probably goes back to the late antique tradition: one is in the John Rylands Library,[7] the other San Lazzaro, Venice.[8]

A version close to Alpha, now lost, was translated into Syriac probably in the seventh century, the golden age of Syriac writing, centered around the churches of Syria (Brock, 1983). The source text was related to A but differs so considerably that it has generally been reckoned a witness for a lost Greek recension known as Delta*. It includes the episode of Alexander's visit to the emperor of China which became a standard feature of the Persian versions. Other episodes only in Syriac are Aristotle's advice to Alexander about the building of Alexandria;

[5] Editions of A: Kroll, 1926; Stoneman, 2007 (Book I; II, and III forthcoming). Translations: Haight, 1955 (English), Pfister, 1978 (German), Tallet-Bonvalot, 1994 (French), Franco, 2001 (Italian).

[6] Edition: Rossellini, 2004 (2nd edition).

[7] Armenian 3, 14th century.

[8] Cod. 424, 13th–14th century. For mondern edition, see (Armenian) by the Mekhitarists in Venice, 1842. Greek retroversion (translation from Armenian into ancient Greek): Raabe, 1896. English translation: Wolohojian, 1969.

Nectanebus's and Olympias's discussion of Philip's disaffection from his wife (I.14); the metaphor of the golden eggs (I.23); and the jokes about the mustard seeds (I.36 and 39). The commissioning of a painting of Alexander by the ambassadors from Darius is properly motivated only in this version, where it is shown to Darius's daughter. But there is a large lacuna at II.6–14, presumably the result of a defective Greek original.

It used to be thought that this translation was made from a Pehlevi (Middle Persian) version, but Ciancaglini (1998) has disproved this and shows that it was made directly from the Greek.[9]

The Beta recension

The author of Beta wrote some time after the Latin translation of A was made by Julius Valerius (by 330), but he was apparently not aware of the variants in the Greek source of the Armenian version. Beta wrestles with the text of A and frequently rewrites and rephrases his model to make better (or any) sense of it, but he also includes new material. The end of Book I and the first six chapters of Book II (the debate in Athens) are missing from Beta, but Beta has the end of Book II which is not in A.

The four main MSS are Parisinus gr. 1685 (B), a finely written MS completed in Otranto in 1468; Vaticanus 1556 (V: 15th–16th century); Laurentianus 70.37 (F: a palimpsest of the 13th century); Mosquensis 436 (298) (K, 14th–15th century). The earliest MS is Parisinus suppl. 690 (S: 11th century), which contains only III.30–35. Some MSS contain additional material, for example K, which has part of the Epsilon recension also.[10]

The Lambda recension

A variant of Beta preserved in five MSS: Bodl. Barocc. 23 (O, 14th century, incomplete); Vaticanus 171 (W, 16th century); Bodl. Holkham Gr. 99 (H, 15th century); Ambrosianus O 117 sup. (N, a faithful copy

[9] Translation: Budge, 1889, based on British Museum Add MS 25, 875 (A.D. 1708), with readings from four other MSS. Van Bladel (2007) casts doubt on Ciancaglini's conclusions.

[10] Edition of Beta: Bergson 1965, with full details of all the MSS.

of H, 16th century); and Bodl misc. 283 (P, 1516). The most substantial additions are in Book III.[11]

L.[12] This is a unique variant of Beta. Its version of the story, written before the eighth century, expands the Beta version with several new adventures, most notably the diving bell and the flying machine. It has therefore been a popular choice for translators.[13]

The next text that should be mentioned is the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius. This pretends to be the work of Methodius, bishop of Patara in A.D. 311, but was, in fact, written in the seventh century, in Syriac and soon translated into Greek; like the slightly earlier seventh-century Syriac works, the Poem of Jacob of Serugh, and the 'Christian legend of Alexander' (Budge, 1889) it is concerned in part with Alexander's enclosure of the Unclean Nations.[14] It presents a history of the world from Adam and Eve to the present, based on the presupposition that the end of the world is imminent: Alexander's role in enclosing the Unclean Nations, who will be released on the coming of Antichrist, is a crucial part of this progression. Because of this, the story was incorporated into subsequent rewritings of the Alexander romance.

Pseudo-Methodius was translated into Greek within twenty years, and into Latin about the same time; the Latin version was then translated into most western languages by 1500, and there are 220 MSS of the European versions.[15]

The Epsilon recension. *(MS Bodl. Barocc. 17, 13th century: Q)*

The importance of this abridged rewriting of the story was only recognised by Jürgen Trumpf who edited it in 1974. Trumpf argued for a

[11] Edition of Lambda: van Thiel 1959.

[12] Leiden Vulcanius 93, 15th c., Sicily.

[13] Editions: van Thiel, 1983. Translations: van Thiel, 1983 (German); Dowden, 1989 (English); Stoneman, 1991 (English); Centanni, 1991 (Italian); Bonoure and Serret, 1992 (French).

[14] Edition of 'Poem': Reinink, 1983; German translation: Hunnius, 1906.

[15] MS of the Syriac text: Cod. Vat. Syr 58; see further Aerts and Kortekaas, 1998, p. 37. Translations: Reinink, 1993 (German). The only modern English translation is Budge 1889; for the Middle English version, see D'Evelyn, 1918. Of the fifteen Greek MSS, four are fundamental: Cod Vat Gr 1700, Cod. Laud. Gr 27, Pii II Gr. 11, Vindob. Med. 23: see Aerts and Kortekaas, 1998, p. 38. Editions: Aerts and Kortekaas, 1998 (Greek and Latin recensions); Lolos, 1983 (Greek).

seventh-century date, but because the source text for the episode of the Unclean Nations, the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius, is now dated around 692, the traditional eighth century date remains likely.

Epsilon narrates this episode in chapter 39, towards the end of its account of Alexander. The other episodes in this version are mostly the same as in the previous ones, but the order is changed so substantially that the text requires a different numbering. The other main additions are a campaign to conquer Rome (ch.13) and a visit to Jerusalem (ch.20) where Alexander is converted to Judaism and subsequently preaches it in Alexandria. This episode is clearly influenced by the milieu of Byzantine Christianity, with its strong interest in Judaism.[16]

The Gamma recension

This is the longest of the Greek recensions. It follows the basic structure of A and Beta but incorporates the new material from Epsilon described above; as a result, the sequence of the narrative becomes quite confusing, and some episodes that are in the first person in the earlier recensions are told in the third person in Gamma. It contains much that is clearly of Jewish origin such as the visit to Jerusalem and the preaching of one god in Alexandria, and some elements also seem to be Christianized, though the main 'theological' elements remain pagan (Sarapis, Amon, Heracles, and Dionysos). III.29 is devoted to the construction of the gate to enclose the Unclean Nations, from Pseudo-Methodius via Epsilon. There is some absurd over-writing, not least the episode after Alexander's death where his horse, Bucephalus, enters the room where Alexander lies, identifies the murderer, and tears him to pieces: "bits of him flew all over everyone like snow falling off a roof in the wind."

There are three MSS: Parisinus suppl. 113 (C: of 1567); Bodl. Barocc. 20 (R: 14th century); and Venice, Hellenic Institute gr. 5 (D; 14th c.), a beautifully illustrated MS whose pictorial tradition probably goes back to late antiquity.[17]

[16] Edition of Epsilon: Trumpf, 1974.

[17] Editions: Lauenstein, 1962 (bk I); Engelmann, 1963 (Bk II); and Parthe, 1969 (Bk III); Stoneman, 2007 (Book I; II and III forthcoming). Translation: none. Facsimile edition: Trahoulias, 1997.

It is perhaps unfortunate that this recension was the first to be edited, by Carolus Müller in 1846, since that edition established the book and chapter numbering which subsequent editors have perforce followed: this results in some at first sight puzzling jumps from one chapter number to another in the other recensions (e.g. the omission of II.1–6 in Beta, and of III.29 (the Unclean Nations) in all other recensions.

This concludes the survey of the Greek Romance texts which became known to the Latin Middle Ages. In addition, the following Greek text was known:

Palladius, *On the Life of the Brahmans*

This originally independent treatise is a 5th c. Christian rewriting of a Cynic *diatribe* written before the second c. A.D. (the date of the papyrus),[18] with an additional preface describing the adventures of a Theban scholar who is the writer's informant. It was incorporated into the Alpha and Gamma versions of the Romance (III.7–17) because of its similarity in theme to the episode of Alexander's interview with the Brahmans or Naked Philosophers. It describes the way of Life of the Brahmans, and the second part is given over to the teaching of Dandamis, the leader of the philosophers, who tries to turn Alexander from his career of conquest to a life of quietude. There were three Latin translations, one of which was falsely attributed to St Ambrose.[19] It also had a considerable progeny in another Latin text, the *Correspondence of Alexander and Dindimus*, which was known in the eighth century to Alcuin, who sent a copy to Charlemagne.[20]

Latin Texts

The Latin texts surviving from antiquity, which had an influence on writing in the Middle Ages, are as follows:

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[18] Martin, 1959; Photiades, 1959.

[19] A. Wilmart (1933), "Les texts latines de la lettre de Palladius sur les moeurs des Brahmanes," *Revue Benedictine* 45, 29–42, identifies three versions: B, the *Commonitorium*, found in the Bamberg M; this is an abridgement of V, the Vatican MS; the third is S, the text attributed to Ambrose, an arbitrary recension, probably composed by a humanist, in which the character Ambrose replaces the narrator, and Moses replaces the Theban scholar.

[20] Editions: Derrett, 1960; Berghoff, 1987; Stoneman (forthcoming). Translation: Stoneman, 1994e. Literature: Stoneman, 1999a.

The earliest Latin text, though the latest to become known, is the *History of Alexander* by Quintus Curtius Rufus. Written in the early Imperial period (scholarly opinion ranges from the reign of Tiberius to that of Claudius, with a renegade suggestion that it might be as early as Augustus),[21] its first two books are missing; and thus any preface there may have been, which would give some information about the author and his date, is also lost. The narrative as we have it begins with Alexander at Celaenae in Phrygia (333 B.C.). It continues with a chronological account of the rest of the campaign up to Alexander's death. The events of these ten years do not diverge in essentials from the accounts in Arrian (2nd century A.D.) and Diodorus (around 1 B.C.), or any modern textbook, though details may differ between the ancient writers. Curtius, like Diodorus, based much of his account on the history of Cleitarchus, while the later Arrian followed Ptolemy and Aristobulus, whom he regarded as more sober and reliable.[22]

The main distinguishing feature of Curtius's history is its rhetorical color. Stylistically he has much in common with the Augustan historian Livy, in whose pages we find a hostile view of Alexander developing (9.5.21): Alexander would not have been so successful if he had encountered Romans. Curtius enjoys lurid details and, for example, makes Alexander's liaison with the Amazon queen Thalestris (6.6.1–6) the turning point in his moral decline—just as Mark Antony's liaison with the oriental queen Cleopatra had proved his downfall. Pride, tyranny (i.e. cruelty) and drunkenness were the main points of the hostile view of Alexander developed in the Stoic philosophers before and after Curtius, and these are given full rein in Curtius's account. But his final judgment is encomiastic: "It is obvious to anyone who makes a fair assessment of the king that his strengths were attributable to his nature and his weakness to fortune or his youth" (10.5.26–37). A character like this is an epic hero, flawed but magnificent, and this made Curtius's Alexander a suitable subject for epic in the Middle Ages.

But his work was not known until the Middle Ages were well advanced. It survived antiquity by the skin of its teeth: a single incomplete MS of the ninth century is the archetype of all the surviving

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[21] See Stoneman, 1999a.

[22] For a complete narrative of the important events in Alexander's life by the four ancient writers, see J. Romm (ed. and trans.) and P. Mensch (trans.), *Alexander the Great: Selections from Arrian, Diodorus, Plutarch, and Quintus Curtius* (Indianapolis, 2005).

123 MSS.[23] Three of the MSS were interpolated with additional material to fill the gap, and this must have been done before the twelfth century when Walter of Chatillon made it the basis of his epic poem *Alexandreis*.

Itinerarium Alexandri

This is a broadly historical work based on Arrian's authoritative history, but it also makes use of Julius Valerius's *Res Gestae*. It can be dated to 340–345 since it is addressed to Constantius on the eve of his departure for an eastern campaign. It survives in one MS in the Ambrosiana in Milan. It was, in turn, used by the author of one MS of the *Res Gestae* (Parisinus 4880), so it is possible that both it and the variant version of the *Res Gestae* are also by Julius Valerius.[24] It survives in a single MS in Milan (Ambrosiana P 49 Sup.) plus a couple of fragments, and is unlikely to have been widely known in the Middle Ages.[25]

The texts relating to the Romance tradition were however familiar in the early Middle Ages and consequently exercised a far wider influence on medieval literature.

The Metz epitome

In the fourth or fifth century a breviary of Alexander's career was made. This probably derived ultimately from Clitarchus, one of the earliest Alexander historians, and was combined with a separate work known as the *Liber de Morte Alexandri Testamentoque Eius*, and preserved in a single MS in Metz, hence known as the Metz epitome (MS Mettensis 500). This MS was destroyed by fire following a bombing raid on Metz in World War II, but fortunately two copies (apographs) had been made and published by the scholars Dietrich Volkmann (1886) and Otto Wagner (1901), as well as a third, by the French scholar Quicherat, which was not published, but which was discovered in the 1960s in the Bibliotheque Nationale. The epitome contains some historical information not known from elsewhere, such as the death in infancy

[23] Baynham, 1998, pp. 2–3.
[24] As argued by Romano, 1974 and Lane Fox, 1997.
[25] Edition: Tabacco, 2000.

of a son born to Roxane in the far east. The *Liber de Morte* is a Latin version of a lost Greek original which also provided the substance of Book II.31–33 of the Greek *Romance*.[26]

The last writer of antiquity to write at any length about Alexander, and the first to use the Romance,[27] is Fulgentius in his *De aetatibus mundi et hominis* of the late fifth century. Fulgentius drew most of his information from some version of the Romance, and tells the Nectanebus story as well as that of Candace and the wonderstone—but not the episodes of the diving bell, the flying machine or the unclean nations, which must have entered the romance tradition after this date.[28] Fulgentius's other works were quite well known in the Middle Ages, with numerous MSS existing from the ninth century onwards; but the *De Aetatibus* (which is possibly by a different Fulgentius) is known in only two MSS from the 12th and 13th centuries. By contrast, Orosius, Otto of Freising's main source, survives in about 250 MSS, indicating a much wider distribution in the Dark Ages of the sixth to tenth centuries.[29]

In the eighth century the *Cosmographia* of Aethicus Ister incorporated several of the stories from the Romance: the encounter of Alexander with the Unclean Nations, Gog and Magog; his construction of a diving bell; as well as information about the monstrous races and strange beasts of India, and the Amazons, without specific reference to Alexander. He also mentions the supposed location of the Garden of Eden or Earthly Paradise in India. (According to a Talmudic story which entered the Latin tradition in the twelfth century, Alexander was supposed to have visited there). Aethicus is the pseudonym of an Irish cleric, Virgil (i.e. Fergal) of Salzburg, who attributed his work to a pseudonym in order to deflect criticism of his heretical ideas. His cosmographical ideas led him to fall foul of Pope Zacharias, as we know from the latter's letter to St Boniface:[30] "as to the foolish

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[26] Edition: Thomas, 1966 (2nd edition). Concerning the *Liber de Morte*, see literature: Cary, 1956, pp. 59 and 355–357; Ruggini, 1961; Heckel, 1988; Baynham, 1995.

[27] Except, of course, its translator, Julius Valerius.

[28] Stöcker, 1979.

[29] An Old English translation of Orosius is attributed, with little plausibility, to King Alfred (ed. H. Sweet, 1889, EETS 79). The Middle Irish *Alexander*, belonging possibly to the eleventh century, derives mainly from Orosius, with the addition of some material from the *Letter to Aristotle* and the *Collatio*. See Meyer, 1949. For the text of the Middle Irish work, with German translation, see Stokes and Windisch, 1887; another German translation in Peters, 1967.

[30] Letter LXIV (80), p. 121 in E. Emerton's translation of the Letters (Emerton, 2000).

and sinful doctrine which he teaches: if it should be made clear that he believes there is below this earth another world and other men, and also a sun and moon, then summon a council, depose him from the office of priest, and cast him out of the church." Virgil/Aethicus's heresy consisted in believing that the world is a sphere and that there were Antipodes where the monstrous races dwelt, outside our world and thus outside God's plan of salvation.[31]

The Zacher Epitome of Julius Valerius

Made not later than the ninth century and known as the Zacher Epitome from its first editor. MSS: Hagensis 830 (9th c.), and 65 others: Cary, 1956, p. 25, n. 2. It is drastically abridged and seems to have been designed as a prologue for the *Letter to Aristotle* with which it often appears together. It provides the main source for Thomas of Kent and Vincent of Beauvais, and was translated into French in the 14th century. There were two other similar epitomes (Oxford-Montpellier and Liegnitz-Historia),[32] but from the 12th century onwards the popularity of these was eclipsed by the *Historia de Preliis*.[33]

The *Letter to Aristotle* about India

The Greek original of this is lost though it is preserved in abridged or truncated form in all the Greek versions of the Romance. The first Latin translation belongs to the seventh century (or earlier); a second was made, into a Latin which is already becoming Italian, in the tenth century. It purports to be written by Alexander and to describe his adventures after the conquest of Porus. It is thus the source for most of the wonder stories so familiar in the tradition. In the later Greek recensions (Epsilon and Gamma), the contents are told in the third person as part of the continuous narrative of the Romance, which causes some dislocation of the chronological relations.

The *Letter to Aristotle* resists summary for it is too long and colorful, but the following is a brief outline. It starts with the conquest of Porus in July 326 B.C., and a description of the palace of Porus. Alexander

[31] Edition of Aethicus: Prinz, 1993.
[32] Both in Hilka (ed.), 1911.
[33] Edition: Zacher, 1867. See Cary, 1956, pp. 24–26.

then advances to the Caspian Gates (see below for discussion of the geography) and proceeds through sandy wastes of extreme danger, led by unreliable guides. The river they discover is bitter and undrinkable, but eventually they observe an island in the river inhabited by Indians in a castle built of reeds. Alexander sends some of his soldiers to swim to the island, but hippopotamuses emerge from the water ('they are called hippopotamuses because they are half men and half horses') and devour the men. So Alexander has the guides thrown into the river where they too are devoured by the beasts, which "swarm like ants." Presently, some Indians in a boat appear and guide them to a lake of sweet water. But when the army has pitched camp, they have to endure a 'Night of Terrors.'[34] First there are huge serpents and giant crabs; next to arrive are white lions, bigger than bulls, followed by giant pigs and huge bats with human teeth. Biggest of the lot is "a beast larger than an elephant, with three horns on its forehead. In the Indian language it was called Odontotyrannus or Tooth-tyrant. It looked a bit like a horse and its head was black." It kills several dozen Macedonians before they overcome it. Before dawn arrives they have to face shrews the size of foxes and bright red vultures with black beaks. It is a relief to be able to strike camp, tired as they are, and march onwards.

The letter continues with the campaign against Porus and his elephants, storms, and a visit to a cave where "Father Liber lies sleeping." The expedition visits the oracular trees of the sun and moon, which predict Alexander's early death, the valley of serpents which have emeralds in their necks, and more strange peoples. The letter concludes with Alexander erecting two golden statues, 25 feet high, in Babylon and Persis, bearing an account of all his deeds.

There are 67 MSS of the Latin text in European libraries, dating from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries, and a further five in the USA. This was the first 'fabulous' Alexander text to be translated into a medieval western language:[35] the translation into Old English forms part of the unique codex (British Library Cotton Vitellius A XV), which also contains *Beowulf* and *The Wonders of the East*, suggesting perhaps that the scribe, or patron, was interested in monsters).[36]

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[34] The episode is borrowed by Umberto Eco, *Baudolino*, 2002, pp. 341ff.

[35] The Irish Romance is not an exception to this generalization as it is not based on the romance tradition but on Quintus Curtius (Meyer, 1949; Peters, 1967).

[36] For monsters, see Sisam, 1953; Tolkien, 1983. Editions: Boer, 1973; Feldbusch, 1976. For the Middle English translation: DiMarco and Perelman, 1978. Translation:

The Letter of Pharasmanes (On the Wonders of the East)

This purports to be a letter from Pharasmanes, the King of Iberia (modern Georgia) to the Emperor Hadrian. The historical Pharasmanes, King of Chorasmia in Central Asia, had sent ambassadors to Alexander offering to lead him to the land of the Amazons;[37] so his name came to be attached to this account of eastern wonders, which in one MS brings in Alexander. But this is not strictly an Alexander text as the king does not feature in most of the widely varying versions. It draws on earlier lore including the *Memorabilia* of Solinus, the *Letter to Aristotle*, the *Etymologies* of Isidore and Augustine's *City of God*, describing the strange races including the pygmies, the Sciapodes and the Dog-heads.

The earliest MS is of the 8th century, but material from it was also used in the anonymous *Liber Monstrorum*,[38] which was composed in the seventh or eight century, so the Latin version must be some time earlier than that; furthermore, the Latin derives from a lost Greek original of uncertain date. Because *Pharasmanes* supplemented the Alexander texts so nicely, it was pressed into service in the composition of the later versions of the *Historia de Preliis* (see below).[39]

This was one of the small number of sources known to Otto of Freising when he wrote his *Two Cities* in 1147. In writing his pages on Alexander his aim was to write credible sober history, but he was hampered by the limited sources available. Apart from a couple of allusions in Cicero and the brief account of Orosius (which he follows closely in some portions of his history),[40] the main lines of his account follow the narrative given in the Alexander romance.[41] He tells several stories known from the Gamma recension of the Greek *Romance*: the visit to Jerusalem, the preaching in Alexandria, the single combat with Porus, as well as the visit to the oracular trees and the poisoning (common

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Gunderson 1980 (of the first Latin version); Stoneman, 1994 (of the second); Stoneman also translates *The Wonders of the East* (Letter of Pharasmanes) and other works.

[37] Arrian, *Anabasis* 4.15.4.

[38] Ed. F. Porsia (Bari, 1976).

[39] Edition: Lecouteux, 1979.

[40] The contemporary John of Salisbury (1115–1180) likewise drew mainly on Cicero (possibly via Augustine, but probably direct) for his allusions to Alexander: Cary, 1956, p. 95.

[41] It is certain that he did not use Orosius alone, since he knows the story that Alexander was the son of Nectanebus, which is not in Orosius.

to all recensions). He also knew the *Letter to Aristotle*, as the following passage makes clear:

> If anyone desires to know about Porus's golden house and the silver-and-gold vine with clusters of grapes made of precious stones, let him read the letter of Alexander to his teacher, Aristotle the philosopher. Therein the careful student of events will find the perils he endured, and the images of the sun and moon that foretold his death, and many matters so strange that they seem actually beyond belief.

Such skepticism befits one of the founders of modern historiography, but it shows vividly what kind of material a writer in the twelfth century had to work with.

But the following work, which marks the turning point of knowledge of Alexander in the Middle Ages, was beyond his ken. With the work of Leo the Archpriest we come to the text which was the fountainhead of almost all the Alexander books of the Middle Ages.

Leo the Archpriest

In the tenth century a cleric named Leo was sent by the Duke of Naples on a diplomatic mission to Constantinople. He brought back a MS of the Greek Romance (perhaps A) and made a new translation in unawareness of the earlier version by Julius Valerius. This translation ended up in the cathedral library at Bamberg, founded by the Emperor Henry II in 1007 (Bambergensis E.111.4, circa 1000): presumably he brought it back from his campaigns in Southern Italy along with many others. This MS also contains the *Commonitorium Palladii;* Palladius on the Brahmans; the *Collatio Alexandri cum Dindimo* and the *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle about India.* There is a second, partial copy of Leo in Lambeth Palace Library, MS 342. The scribe had clearly made a compilation of Alexander works for the Bamberg library. Leo's version of the Romance does not correspond exactly to any of the known Greek recensions, though it is close to the Alpha recension as known from the Syriac. It is evident that the Greek work was still being copied and adapted in Byzantium when Leo went there, though in Byzantium it was Epsilon that was to become the dominant influence.[42] This work,

[42] Leo does not include the text of Palladius which forms chpts. III. 7–16 in A. But, like Beta, it stops halfway through Book II. The letter to Aristotle is given in the first person as in A and Beta. The story of the diving bell and the flying machine appears,

through its successive rewritings as the *Historia de Preliis*, is the foundation stone of the whole medieval European tradition.[43]

Somehow Leo's work became well known, and three expanded versions of Leo's work were made in the course of the twelfth century.

The *Historia de Preliis*

The oldest MS of this work is Bodleian Rawlinson B 149 and bears the title *Liber Alexandria Philippi Macedonum qui primus regnavit in Grecia et de proeliis eiusdem*, hence its usual designation as *Historia de Preliis* or *HP*. There are three recensions:

HP J^1, before A.D. 1100. This is a combination of Leo's text with elements from Josephus, Jerome, Orosius, Solinus, Isidore, the Letter of Pharasmanes, the Indian treatises and the Letter to Aristotle.

MSS: Graz, Universitätsbibliothek MS 1520 (12th c.), Innsbruck Universitätsbibliothek 525 (A.D. 1304); Editio princeps Cologne (ca. 1471); two Dutch editions probably from Utrecht (ca. 1475).[44]

HP J^2, The 'Orosius recension', so-called because of its heavy use of Orosius. It also borrows material from Valerius Maximus, Pseudo-Methodius, Josephus (the visit to Jerusalem), Pseudo-Epiphanius *de Gemmis* and the Indian works. It was the source of the Old French Prose Alexander[45] and of two Middle English poems.[46]

HP J^3, completed by 1236 when it became the basis of the Latin verse version by Quilichinus of Spoleto. It is a reworked version of J^1 and also includes the episode of the Sages at the Tomb of Alexander. There are very many MSS and it was printed at Strassburg in 1486, 1489, and 1494.[47]

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but in the first person, in the course of the Letter to Olympias (III. 27–29), not as part of the narrative as in the Greek version of L. The story of the trees of the sun and moon does not appear.

[43] Editions: of Leo: Pfister, 1913 (Bamberg MS); Ross (Lambeth MS). For the other works in the Bamberg MS: Pfister, 1910. Translation: Stoneman, 1994a (of the minor works, not Leo). Kratz, 1991 includes translation of Leo.

[44] Edition of J^1: Hilka and Steffens, 1979. English Translations Pritchard, 1992; Kratz, 1991 (with portions of J^2 and J^3, the Letter to Aristotle, the Journey to Paradise and Leo).

[45] See Hilka, 1920.

[46] Edition of J^2: Hilka, Bergmeister, and Grossman, 1976–77.German translation: Kirsch, 1991, with miniatures taken from the Leipzig MS.

[47] Editions of J^3: Kirsch, 1971 (with Quilichinus); Steffens, 1975. Synoptic edition of all three recensions (books I–II only); Bergmeister, 1975.

The third recension was the one that became best known, and was the source of an enormous number of translations into the vernacular languages of Europe, not least the verse reworking by Quilichinus of Spoleto, whose date of 1236 provides a terminus ante quem for its creation. Not only are there numerous MSS, but it was printed several times from 1471 onwards. (It should be noted that all of these recensions draw on Latin sources for their elaborations of the original: there was no further use of Greek after Leo's initial, one might say epochal, act of translation).

During the next three centuries the Romance would be translated more frequently than any other work except the Gospels. The figure of Alexander would be incorporated into Arthurian legend and into sacred scripture and he would take his place in the *Universal Histories* of Vincent of Beauvais, Peter Comestor, Alphonse X the Wise and Ranulph Higden. He would become an example for moralists and theologians and a vehicle of the scientific knowledge of the age, a model for kings and emperors and an emblem of the life of man equal, sometimes, even to Christ.

Quilichinus of Spoleto

Quilichinus, who was connected with the court of Frederick II, wrote a Latin poem of 3914 lines in elegiac couplets about the career of Alexander: it is based on the J^3 version of the *HP*. He may have been inspired to compose his poem by the Emperor's known interest in Alexander's career. Not only did the king like to be compared with Alexander,[48] but his court astrologer, Master Theodore of Antioch, who had been sent to Frederick some time before 1236 by the Sultan of Egypt, had received from his oriental contacts a mythical account of Alexander's conquests as well as other romance material.[49] This was perhaps the source of the third recension of the Latin *HP*, which formed the basis of Quilichinus's poem.

The final Latin version that needs to be mentioned is the one that formed the basis for Johan Hartlieb's German *Alexander* of ca. 1444.[50]

48 Kantorowicz, 1931.
49 Haskins, 1927, p. 254.
50 Besides the 19 MSS of Hartlieb, there were 18 printings from 1472–1670. It was used as a source by Hans Sachs and was translated into Danish in 1584.

This is the Latin *Liber Alexandri Magni*, preserved in a unique MS in Paris, BN n.a.l. 310. This MS dates from the second half of the twelfth century, the age when the outlines of the Alexander tradition were still being forged. Its author set out to create a compendious account of all the available versions of the story, using Leo, the *Epitome* of Julius Valerius, Orosius, Peter Comestor, both the *Collatio* and the *Correspondence* for the Brahmans episode, and the *Letter to Aristotle*. One result of this is some repetition: the episode with the Brahmans occurs twice, introducing them first as gymnosophists (1147ff) and then as Brahmans (1349ff). Some other MSS of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries similarly contain compendia of Alexander texts,[51] but none attempts to weld them into a single narrative as this author does.

Alexander's Journey to Paradise

This 12th-century Latin text is perhaps the work of a Jewish author, as it derives from the Talmudic story, and the story was therefore current by about A.D. 500. The Latin version was composed before 1175, when it was incorporated in the German Alexander poem of Pfaffe Lamprecht, also known as the Strassburg Alexander. It describes Alexander's voyage up the Ganges and arrival at a building with high mossy walls. An old man looks out and gives Alexander's messengers a stone resembling a human eye. Alexander takes this back to Susa, where an aged Jew interprets its meaning by placing it on a set of scales: it outweighs all the gold that can be piled on to the other pan of the scale, but a handful of dust easily outweighs it. Like the eye of man, it is never satiated by gold, but instantly overwhelmed by the dust that covers it in death. This parable encapsulates the moral that Alexander brought, above all, to the Middle Ages: limitless conquest does not provide an escape from death.[52]

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[51] Montpellier H 31 (13th c.); Bamberg MS Hist 3 (13th c.); Madrid 9783 (mid 13th c.). See Schnell's (1989) edition of the *Liber*, and pp. 31–32 on these MSS.

[52] Text: Hilka, 1935. English translation: Stoneman, 1994a. It forms an important episode of Gilbert Hay's *Buik of Alexander* (1460), which is derived from the *Historia de Preliis*.