

*Dan-Tudor Ionescu*

Institute Mircea Eliade-Department of Oriental Studies

of the Metropolitan Library of Bucharest

ORCID: 0000-0001-6944-8637

## THE LEGEND OF ALEXANDER OF MACEDON IN THE LATE MEDIAEVAL AND EARLY MODERN MANUSCRIPTS OF THE ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES

We come *in medias res* to our main topic: this is mainly the Romanian *Alexandria* (the Alexander Romance and the Alexander half mythical tale in the old Romanian culture) and we focus here mainly about the mythical episodes of Alexander's legend in the Romanian version<sup>1</sup>. First, we have here the conception of Alexander as the son

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<sup>1</sup> Vide F. Zgraon, *s.v. Alexandria*, [in:] (AA.VV.) *Enciclopedia Literaturii Române Vechi* [*The Encyclopedia of the Old Romanian Literature*], (coord. and rev.) D.H. Mazilu, Gh. Chivu, E. Pavel, L. Bădescu, Editura Muzeului Literaturii Române, Bucharest 2017, pp. 31-33 (see: p. 32), who gives as dates of the copying of this Romanian *Alexandria* the period between 15<sup>th</sup> of June-4<sup>th</sup> of August 1620 (not 1619, as the older edited writings on this topic). Al. Suceveanu, *Alexandru cel Mare* [*Alexander the Great*], Editura Academiei Române, Bucharest 1993, pp. 15-16 (*Alexandria* AD 1567, Serbian Slavonic manuscript in the library of the Neamț monastery), mainly based upon the information provided by Dan Simonescu. According to N. Cartoian, *Istoria Literaturii Române Vechi* (Postfață și bibliografii de Dan Simonescu; Prefață de Dan Zamfirescu) [*History of Old Romanian Literature (Post face and bibliographies by D. Simonescu; Foreword by D. Zamfirescu)*], Editura Minerva, Bucharest 1980, p. 133 AD 1562 is the date of the Serbian-Croatian Slavonic manuscript of the *Alexandria* copied at the Neamț monastery. See also Al. Duțu, *Alexandria ilustrată de Năstase Negrule*, Editura Meridiane, Bucharest 1984, pp. 5-10 *ssq.* (and *passim* Foreword, pp. 5-33). According to him, the Neamț manuscript of the *Alexandria* is to be dated at AD 1562 (Idem, p. 7). We can see here that Al. Duțu embraced the date given by N. Cartoian in his *History of Old Romanian Literature*. Vide Duțu 1984, pp. 6-7: the Romanian versions have been drafted in the 18<sup>th</sup> century mainly after Greek prototypes from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia (but also in the Hungarian and then Habsburg ruled Transylvania, in the cultural milieu of the Romanian and Serbian Orthodox priests) Slavonic in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries and also Greek in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (at least in Wallachia and Moldavia) were current languages of culture, along with the Romanian language written in Cyrillic characters, starting from the 16<sup>th</sup> and especially from the 17<sup>th</sup> century [and in the Orthodox cultural environment of the Romanian lands Latin was quite rarely used during the 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries (only Moldavian aristocratic chroniclers and high ranking State and Church officials educated in Catholic Poland and Wallachian clergymen and scholars from the boyar social elite privately educated with foreign school masters and/or schooled abroad in Italy or in the Habsburg Empire were truly knowledgeable in Latin; in Transylvania, first the priestly and intellectual Romanian elite belonging to the branch of the Orthodox Church united with the Roman Catholic Church, the so called Greek Catholic churchmen and scholars were the champions of the Latinity of the Romanian language in Transylvania and in the so called Partium counties of Banat, Crișana, Bihor, and Maramureș; they had been soon followed by a Romanian intellectual elite belonging to the Orthodox Church)]. The *Alexandria* was known in the Slavonic language by learned persons in the Romanian speaking area from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, during the times of Michael the Brave of Wallachia (1593-1601); it appears in Romanian version in the *Codex Neogeanus* of Ion Românuț [John the Romanian] din Simpietru (Hațeg) in the years 1619-1620. *Historia Destructionis Troiae* was long known before in the Romanian cultural space through Greek Byz-

antine chronographs translated into Romanian in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and before that, even in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, in Slavonic [*vide* Slavonic manuscript 142 in the Library of the Romanian Academy, according to Radu Constantinescu's and Klaus Henning Schroeder's introduction to the edition of this manuscript, done in the year 1977, where they have dated this manuscript around the years 1409-1418, so very early indeed (Idem, p. 7)]. According to N. Cartoian, *Istoria Literaturii Române Vechi* [*History of the Old Romanian Literature*], Editura Minerva, Bucharest 1980, pp. 132-133, the Greek Alexander Romance was first written in Egypt (hence the numerous mythical, religious, and cultural Egyptian elements in it), in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, in the *koine* Greek. It had been translated in Latin sometime in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE (by Julius Valerius) or even later (Cartoian wrote that a Latin translation from the Greek Alexander Romance had been made in Western Europe probably during the reign of Charlemagne and of the Carolingian Renaissance of Classical Studies in Western Europe, therefore in the late 8<sup>th</sup> or in the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE) and eventually in the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE in Naples the Archpresbyter Leo had done another Latin translation from one of the original Greek versions. Leo of Naples had been sent by the duke of Naples (who was still considered a Byzantine official in the 10<sup>th</sup> century) as a diplomatic envoy at Constantinople, at the Court of the Roman (Greek Byzantine) Emperors Constantine VII Porphyrogenetes and Romanos (either Romanos I Lekapenos or Romanos II). He perhaps brought directly from Constantinople to Naples (probably as a diplomatic literary gift) the Greek manuscript of Alexander's fabulous history or novel of Pseudo-Callisthenes, which is a synthesis of both the written and the oral tradition about the exploits of Alexander the Great and his Macedonian soldiers, embellished with a lot of mythical and legendary elements that transform the story of the Macedonian warrior king in an epic tale (although written in prose), a story of a mythical hero with both Greek and Egyptian features (the legend of the exiled Pharaoh Nectanebus or Nectanebo II as Alexander's father, colored with numerous Egyptian mythical elements related with the cult of the Pharaoh, of Horus and of Amun-Ra). The Latin translation of Leo of Naples is fuller of fantastic elements than the previous Latin translations of Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Greek Alexander Romance* and is entitled *Historia Alexandri Magni Regis Macedoniae de proeliis* [*The History of Alexander the Great King of Macedon about the Battles*]. This Latin version of Leo has been later used to become an epic material for heroic poems recited in France by the minstrels, probably existing an oral version, a kind of early *Chanson de Geste* about Alexander: given the little knowledge of Latin of the itinerant singers and poets of these *Chansons de Geste*, it appears to me more probable that they inspired themselves first from the Old French translation or adaptation from Leo's Latin *Historia Alexandri Magni*, made by the French clerk (*i.e.* Churchman, a priest or a monk) Alberic of Besançon/Briançon. This Old French version from the 12<sup>th</sup> century had been made in verses, the so called Alexandrine verses of 12 syllables, so it was basically a heroic or epic poem about Alexander the Great (transformed according to the royal and knightly ideals of the Classical feudal age of chivalry in Western Europe), more or less in the style of the popular *Chansons de Geste* [*Songs of Valor*], but with a different poetic metre than the heroic songs and epic poems like *La Chanson de Roland* [*The Lay or Song of Roland*] or *Raoul de Cambrai*, *Guillaume d'Orange*, *Cantar (Poema) del mio Cid*, *Mocedades del Cid/Rodrigo*, *Nibelungenlied* and so on and forth. The version of Alberic's "Story of Alexander" had been expanded by three unknown minstrel poets in an epic of about 20,000 verses (longer than Homer's *Iliad*). This Alexander poem had been also translated into Old High German (*Alexanderlied*) by the Priest Lambert or Lamprecht and later appears in many other European medieval idioms (Cartoian 1980, p. 133; Suceveanu 1993, pp. 15-16). The Latin manuscript of Leo's "Story of Alexander" had arrived on the Dalmatian coast of Croatia (in the 13<sup>th</sup> century?); in Italy the French poem about Alexander written by Alberic and his unknown followers had however influenced later Latin versions of Leo's Story of Alexander, as well as the Greek Byzantine later versions of the same tale written in Venice by Greek colonists or immigrants, influenced both by Leo's Latin version and by Alberic's Old French variant. See also Duțu 1984, p.8: a copy of the *Alexandria* was made by the school teacher Ștefan at the Putna monastery of Moldavia in AD 1790 and had the above mentioned history. The history of the Romanian stories or novels directly translated from the Greek originals (*Erotocrit*, *Istoria lui Imberie*, *Istoria Troii*, and *Iliodor*) in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries is both quite complicated and interesting, but it does not interest us here (see also Duțu 1984, p. 8). We should return to the Latin version of Leo's "Story of Alexander" on the Dalmatian coast; this Latin version, as well as the Greek versions circulating in Venice and on the Dalmatian coast had been the inspiration for the Slavonic Serbian-Croatian translation of Alexander's legend, according to the theory proposed by the Russian literary historian Vesselovskij (he wrote that the proper names of this Slavonic Serbian version and of

some Greek versions supposed the existence of Latin and Romance original names, although this is still unproven, according to Cartoian 1980, p. 133). Serbian scholars, put to flight by Ottoman invasions and the Turkish Ottoman conquest of Serbia in the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries, fled to Hungary and especially to the Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia (Orthodox countries like their native land of Serbia), bringing with them their Slavonic Serbian/Croatian version of the Alexander Romance of Pseudo-Callisthenes, heir to so many transformations and inter-influences between Greek original forms, Latin and Old French translations and adaptations of those Greek originals, and eventually also the creation or rather compilation of later Greek variants of Alexander's tale. The only Slavonic version preserved now in Romania is that from the Neamț monastery; it is dated AD 1562 and it had been copied from an even older (now lost) manuscript by the order of the Metropolitans Grigore [Gregory]. The oldest Romanian translation from this Slavonic manuscript has not been preserved and transmitted to us, but it is known that it had been achieved somewhere in Transylvania, around the middle or the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This translation had been copied, the oldest preserved of these copies being the so called *Codex Neagoeanus* ms.nr.3821 from the Romanian Academy's Library that was made by Popa Ion Românu [Priest John the Romanian] in the village of Simpietru [Saint Peter] of the Hunedoara County in what was then the Principality of Transylvania (former Voivodate of Transylvania, an autonomous or semi-autonomous part of the Hungarian Kingdom, but belonging to the Hungarian Crown after the Hungarian conquest of the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries and until the battle of Mohacs AD 1526 and the Ottoman conquest of Buda in AD 1541; during the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and for almost all the 17<sup>th</sup> century Transylvania, except the military conquest and brief rule by the warrior Prince Michael the Brave/Mihai Viteazul of Wallachia in 1599-1601, remained a Hungarian ruled Principality with a mixed population, mainly Romanian, German, Hungarian, and Szekler, and governed by a mainly Hungarian nobility, but subjected to the allegiance of the Ottoman Empire; starting from approx. AD 1700 onwards and until 1918, with various political reforms and oscillations, Transylvania went and remained under the rule of the Habsburg dynasty, as a part of the Habsburg-Austrian Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation until 1806 and then of the Austrian Empire until 1866, and finally of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, from 1867 until December 1918, when it was united with the Kingdom of Romania following the dissolution of the dual Austro-Hungarian Imperial-Royal/"Kaiserlich und Koeniglich" monarchy of the House of Habsburg); it had been copied there between the years 1619-1620. This translation in Romanian of the *Alixandria* (sic!) had been probably diffused in many (nowadays lost) handwritten copies that went also beyond the Carpathians, in Wallachia and Moldavia. During the reign of the cultured Wallachian Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714), *Alixandria* had been printed with the money provided by a rich merchant, Apostol Manu. This printed version is now lost, but we know that it had existed (done in AD 1713, at just one year before the deposition of Brâncoveanu by the Turks) from the writings of Antonio Maria del Chiaro, the Italian secretary of Constantin Brâncoveanu, who mentioned it in his *Istoria delle moderne rivoluzioni della Valachia* [*History of the Recent Transformations of Wallachia*], Venice 1718: "o sia Storia di Alessandro il Macedone, stampata in lingua valaca, ma detta Storia è veramente curiosa per le molte favole che in essa vedonsi frammischiate" ["or the so called *History of Alexander of Macedon*, printed in the Wallachian language, but this so called *History* is truly strange because of the many fables/tales that appear mixed into its content", my English translation from Italian]. Later this *Alixandria* is printed by Peter Bart at Hermannstadt (Sibiu in Transylvania) in AD 1794; since then it had been continuously reprinted in various Romanian publishing houses or by various Romanian culture institutions, like the version printed by Casa Școalelor (the Schools' Publishing House) under the supervision of the great Romanian writer Mihail Sadoveanu, in the 1920-s. Vide Cartoian 1980, pp. 133-134; Al.Cizek, *Foreword*, [in:] , *Alexandre le Grand Histoire Image Interpretations Alexander the Great History Image Interpretations*, eds. Al. Cizek, M. Cioba, D.-T. Ionescu, Editura Universității din București, Bucharest 2016, pp. 7-30 (and esp. pp. 26-30); Al. Cizek, *L'Étrange destine d'un "wretched little book". Le roman médiolatin d'Alexandre le Grand*, [in:] *Alexandre le Grand Histoire Image Interpretations Alexander the Great History Image Interpretations*, eds. Al. Cizek, M. Cioba, D.-T. Ionescu, Editura Universității din București, Bucharest 2016, pp. 103-128 (esp. pp. 114-118); and C. Velculescu, *Encore une fois sur l'Histoire de l'Empereur Alexandre de Macédoine (Povestirea Împăratului Alexandru de Machedonia) du manuscrit roumain 3093 de la B.A.R.*, [in:] *Alexandre le Grand Histoire, Image, Interpretations/Alexander the Great History, Image, Interpretations*, eds. Al. Cizek, M. Cioba, D.-T. Ionescu, Editura Universității din București, Bucharest 2016, pp. 353-369.

of the exiled Egyptian Pharaoh, who was an astrologer as well as a wizard/magus; Alexander was thus the son of the Egyptian sorcerer and former Pharaoh Nectanebo (Nectanebus II King of Egypt or Netinav in Romanian) and of the Queen Olympias of Macedon. Officially, Alexander was the son of King Philip II of Macedon and of Olympias his queen, but in the reality of the legend, Nectanebo, who had been put to flight by the Persian conquerors of his kingdom of the Nile and took refuge at the royal court of Macedon and became there the royal astrologer and astronomer (the two things were identical in Antiquity and even later in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance in Europe), became Alexander's natural father (or rather Alexander was the son of Zeus-Ammon/Amun impersonated by Nectanebo, rather than of Nectanebo magically disguised as the god Amun, at least in an Egyptian lecture key of this famous episode). When Philip was abroad to wage war, Olympias (until then a barren royal wife) had been approached by Nectanebo in the hybrid animal form (in the shape of a fantastic animal, with the head of a lion, with feet of eagle, with the tail of an asp or snake, and with two wings, one black and one golden: it is the description of a *Chimaera* like monster) of the Egyptian god Amun, who slept with her and thus she conceived Alexander; the future Macedonian hero was therefore (according to his posthumous myth) the son of Philip as his social and official father, but the son of Nectanebo by blood lineage (and the son of Amun's as well, because Nectanebo as the Pharaoh was the human incarnation of the god; this fact was most probably unknown to the Romanian copyist, but not to the unknown Greek-Egyptian author dubbed as Pseudo-Callisthenes, of course). Alexander growing and in need of education had been taught philosophy by Aristotle during the day and by Nectanebo he was taught the "dark arts" of astrology and magic during the night.

The relationship master-disciple between Alexander and Nectanebo ended when the teen age Alexander asked Nectanebo that, if he (the astrology teacher and master) really knew the future, did he know how and when he (Nectanebo) would die. They (Nectanebo and Alexander) were at their usual astronomy lesson during the night, observing the stars in the sky, from the height of a high tower, which functioned as the astronomical observatory. Nectanebo promptly retorted to Alexander that he had already made his own horoscope and that he will die by the hand of his own son. Alexander then unexpectedly and quickly pushed Nectanebo over the rim of the tower's upper platform, where they both stood observing the Heavens and the movements of the astral bodies. Falling to his death, Nectanebo had exclaimed that: "oh, my son Alexander, you have killed me!" (or rather he pronounced these last words that he truly died by the hand of his son, as his horoscope foretold, when he was laid as a dying man at the feet of the tower, and where and when Alexander went to see him expiring). Alexander, much troubled by Nectanebo's last words, went to Olympias and

asked her if Nectanebo was truly his father; his mother responded affirmatively and explained Alexander the circumstances of his conceiving and birth and who his true father was. The young Macedonian prince, much afflicted by these news, proceeded to bury Nectanebo with all due honours. This scene, although putting Alexander in a bad light, as a cruel young parricide, full of youthful *hybris* and recklessness, represents nevertheless the necessary final lesson of any initiation *curriculum*: the necessity of symbolically (not really, as in this crude story) “killing” his spiritual father and teacher, in order that someone (the disciple and spiritual son, in this specific case) to become a full person, a true man of knowledge and action. Alexander, after killing his astronomy teacher, finally learnt about his true origin and his own destiny. This episode makes a parallel to the other episode which appears also in the Romanian *Alexandria*, namely the taming of the war horse Bucephalus (or Bucephalas) by the twelve years old Prince Alexander. The taming of the war stallion reveals the future warrior hero and conqueror of the world; the murdering of his mentor and biological father means Alexander had come of age to become the heir apparent to the Macedonian throne.

Before the narrative of these episodes, however, the Romanian *Alexandria* includes the story of Nectanebo (“Netinav-împărat”) as the Pharaoh of Egypt and a very skilled man in the dark arts of magic. The Alexander’s tale begins fittingly with the story of his father, “preste Eghipet împărăția Netinav-împărat” [“over Egypt reigned the emperor Nectanebo”], a man who is presented as follows: “carele era filosof mare, și fermecătoriu, și vrăjitoriu, și cetitoriu de stele”/[“who was a great philosopher, and magician, and wizard, and reader of stars”]. There are presented also his contemporary emperors or kings: in India reigned the emperor Porus (“Por-împărat”), towards the south reigned the great emperor Darius (“Și spre amiazăzi împărăția marele Dărie-împărat”), and in Rome and over the entire West, with all its kings reigned the emperor Merlicius (“iară Rîmul împărăția Merlichie-împărat și tot Apusul cu toți craii”); and over Macedon reigned King Philip (“Și la Machedoniia era Filip-craiu”)<sup>2</sup>. Because of the wealth of his Egyptian Kingdom, Nectanebo was very much envied by the other monarchs. All the kings who strove to conquer Egypt were beaten by Nectanebo’s magic craft, their invading armies were scattered without much fighting; while in Egypt there was richness and plenty of bountiful crops, other countries were devastated by starvation and epidemics. The four kings of the four nations of the *Avi-*

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<sup>2</sup> Ion C. Chițimia, D. Simonescu eds., *Cărțile Populare în Literatura Românească* [*Popular Books in Romanian Literature*], Editura Pentru Literatură, 1963, p. 11 *ssq.* It is interesting to notice that for the unknown Romanian copyist, Persia of Darius was located to the south and not to the East (precise location unspecified, but the sentence comes after India of King Porus, located to the East; to the West is situated the Roman Empire. Macedon of King Philip and Egypt of Nectanebo are both located in the centre of this imaginary map).

*ri* [Avars?], *Harapi* [Arabs], *Câzâlbaşi* [turkic *Kyzylbashi*.e. “Red Heads”, the name of the Turkish and Kurdish Anatolian rebels and religious dissidents, which started as armed insurgents in a great uprising in the Ottoman Empire of the 17<sup>th</sup> century], and *Etiopi* [Ethiopians] made a secret council to conquer Nectanebo and wrote a letter to Darius the Persian Emperor, accusing Nectanebo of defeating them militarily only through magic and not with his war craft and might (Nectanebo did not personally command his own army, but delegated military command to subordinated generals and made them win wars by performing magic himself; the text also suggests that Nectanebo was also a master of unconventional climatic warfare, making lack of rains and famine, and even starvation engulf other lands; he sent hunger, thirst, and epidemics upon other lands and peoples not only as a defensive measure, but also used his magic as an offensive weapon). The four kings requested the military help of Darius in this matter by means of a diplomatic letter. They proposed to Darius to nominate his own man to rule Egypt, because Nectanebo had no sons. Darius goes with all his army against Nectanebo and sent his envoy to the four kings, saying to them that he had just departed to conquer Egypt. The four kings joined their military forces with Darius’ army. The coalition armies approached the entries of Egypt and Nectanebo’s nobles and military governors of frontiers (called boyars/*boieri* by the Romanian copyist, using the old Turkic-Slavonic word of Old Bulgarian origin that entered in the Romanian language to name a nobleman and rich land owner) told their Pharaoh about the incoming danger. One of the Egyptian nobles, called *Verveliş*, told the bad news directly to Nectanebo. The name of this character (*Verveliş*) is somehow similar with the name of an identical figure (*Berberis*) which appears in the Middle Greek and New Greek versions of the Pseudo-Callisthenes’ Alexander Romance<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> J. Lacarrière (tr. du Grec, présenté et commenté), *La Légende d’Alexandre*, Gallimard, Éditions du Félin, Philippe Lebaud, 2000, p. 54; *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. I, Oxford, New York, Toronto, etc.: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp. 58-59, s.v. *Alexander Romance* and *Alexander the Great*: it resulted that the legend of Alexander the Great, popularly known as the Pseudo-Kallisthenes/Pseudo-Callisthenes’ *Alexander Romance* had (at least identifiable) five recensions in the κοινή Greek of Late Antiquity (starting in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE and continuing especially from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, and numbered with Greek letters: α, β, γ, δ, ε, and λ); not all of these Greek versions were preserved and for their reconstruction the early translations made in Latin by Julius Valerius (4<sup>th</sup> century CE) and by the Archpresbyter Leo of Naples (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century CE), as well as the Armenian (5<sup>th</sup> century CE), Syriac, Coptic, and Ethiopic versions of the Alexander Romance are also important. There are also still extant late Byzantine redactions of Alexander’s tale from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century (the so called Middle Greek/New Greek *Alexander Poem*). The story of Alexander of Macedon from the Greek *Alexander Romance* had also passed from an early date in the Slavic speaking lands, migrating from the Southern Slav Balkan lands (or even directly from Constantinople across the Black Sea to Kiev on the Dniepr via Christian missionaries in the late 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century), into the Eastern Slav lands (ruled then by a Slavified Scandinavian dynasty and elite) of the ethnically mixed Norse-Slav Kievan Rus’. There appeared very early a version of the history of Alexander the Macedonian in the Old Slavonic Rus’ chronographs of the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE and later in the 15<sup>th</sup> century CE a so called *Serbian Alexandria*; while the ol-

Nectanebo (*Netinav* in the Old Romanian language) replied to *Verveliş* that he should be fearless, because battles and wars are won not by greater number of troops, but by the superior valour of one of the fighting forces battling against each other. The Egyptian official went back to the frontier guards, while Nectanebo went to his magic room, where he poured wax in a golden flat jar and moulded wax armies (his army and the enemy forces); he saw his army destroyed and the god of the Persians (unspecified) behind the land of Egypt (therefore conquering the Egyptian gods). He left a letter for his Egyptian officials; he wrote that he will leave now Egypt, but he will come back at an unspecified date, in the shape of a young man of thirty years of age. He abhorred his reliance on the magic arts and disappeared from Egypt in disguise, to reappear at the court of Philip in Macedon, in the city of Philip, as a physician and wizzard (“*doftor vrăjitoriu*” i.e. medical doctor using magical arts in the process of healing)<sup>4</sup>.

We saw here the metamorphosis between Nectanebo the Pharaoh (skilled in magic arts) into Nectanebo the Macedonian court’s physician, astrologer, and magician; the Egyptians who returned to Nectanebo’s palace saw in his chamber only his royal emblem (crown) on his bed and his book on the table. They found out also his above mentioned letter of leave, addressed to them. Therefore they have built a statue of Nectanebo on a pillar, with his crown on his head and his book on his hand. After this operation, the Persians and their allies conquered Egypt. Meantime, Nectanebo, who had arrived and settled himself in Macedon as the royal court’s physician, heard from a servant maid about the predicament of Olympias, the queen of Philip (mainly Olympias confessed to her maidservant that she had not been able to bear any son

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der 12<sup>th</sup> century version was closer to the original Greek legend and novel of Alexander, this newer version (*Serbian Alexandria*) is more of a free adaptation of the *Alexander Romance*, insisting on the love story between Alexander and Rhoxane, who is here the royal Persian princess, the daughter of Darius. It is possible or even probable that this “younger” *Serbian Alexandria* in the Rus’ lands was essentially the same or very similar with the Slavonic Serbian-Croatian *Alexandria*, which had arrived at the Neamţ monastery in Moldavia in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries CE (manuscript preserved dated AD 1562 or 1567 according to a different lecture), coming from Serbia (and that will get first time translated into Romanian around AD 1600). Alexander of Macedon became a popular figure in the Mediaeval and Modern Greek popular imagination and folklore and he has entered even in the religious literature (the *Vita* of Makarios of Rome and the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodios of Patara), in the *Kynegetika* of Oppian, etc. Famous episodes were the taming of his stallion Bucephalus, his encounter with queen Kandakes, with the Brahmins of India, etc. Scenes of Alexander’s legend appear on Byzantine art objects (textiles of 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries with Alexander riding on horseback, enamels, and ivories) and also on enluminated manuscripts (both Greek and Armenian) from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries; in the Medieval Greek epic of *Digenes Akritas* (or *Digenis Akritis*) the palace of the hero (Digenis Akritas) has the walls decorated with scenes of Alexander’s epic life (his mythical encounter with the Amazons, etc.) *vide op. cit.*, pp. 58-59; see also *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. I, pp. 47-48 *s.v. Akritai* and *Akritic Songs* and also: pp. 622-623 *s.v. Digenes Akritas*.

<sup>4</sup> Chiţimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, pp. 12-13.

to Philip; and Philip, not a very supportive and compassionate husband himself, had menaced Olympias with divorce if he will have not a son from her; the maidservant, better informed than her mistress, told the royal lady that Nectanebo was very skilled with magical herbs and potions and therefore Olympias convoked Nectanebo in Philip's absence and asked him about her problem; the king was of course out of the city, waging war elsewhere). Nectanebo had been seduced by Olympias' stunning beauty and agreed to help her. The result of this affair has been already exposed above.

Summing up the beginnings of the Romanian *Alexandria* (which until now follows quite literally the Pseudo-Callisthenes' Greek *Alexander Romance*), we have here the legend about the conceiving of a hero larger than life and with both divine and human ancestry. Nectanebo makes Olympias pregnant by sleeping with her in the shape of the god Amun; therefore in a way Amun had impregnated Olympias and out of the god's seed Alexander was conceived and born. In Egyptian custom the King (the Pharaoh) was, in a time consecrated formula, "the first/greatest of men and the last/smallest of gods", being in fact the god Horus (the falcon god of Egyptian royalty, protector of kings and son of Osiris, who was both brother and husband of goddess Isis; in Egyptian myth, Horus is the avenger of his father Osiris, fighting against his evil uncle, the fratricide god Seth and utterly defeating him) incarnated and wearing the double crown of Lower and Upper Egypt, as "Lord of the Two Lands". Philip of Macedon, the King of the Macedonians was however (in Macedon and Greece at least) Alexander's official father. The young Macedonian prince had therefore three fathers, the divine one (Amun), the biological one (Nectanebo), and the social and official one, the cuckooed Philip of Macedon. Olympias, in Egyptian terms, could be seen as a terrestrial and mortal counterpart of the goddess Isis, the mother of Horus by his divine brother Osiris, the god of the dead. Nectanebo however is impersonating here by magic (and for that magic night he truly is) the Egyptian supreme god Amun (Amun-Ra, identified by the ancient Greeks and Macedonians with Zeus, the king of the gods on Mount Olympus, bearer of thunderbolts and patron of storms in the sky) and not Osiris (being therefore a slight variation from the truly age old Egyptian myth of Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Horus). The entire myth of the conceiving of Alexander could be thus read in the ancient Egyptian key of conceiving and giving birth to the future lawful and rightful Pharaoh, "King of the Two Lands of Upper and Lower Egypt".

This Egyptian mythological key is however not the only one to read Alexander's birth myth. Many heroes worldwide were born having two or three fathers. We can refer here to ancient Greek heroes like Heracles (the divine ancestor of the royal Argeadae clan of Macedonian Kings, to whom both Philip and Alexander belonged) and Theseus: Heracles was officially the son of King Amphitryon of Thebes and of his



wife, queen Alkmene, but Zeus had come to Alkmene when Amphytrion was abroad waging war, in the semblance of Amphytrion, and made love to Alkmene (the parallel with Nectanebo and Olympias sharing the bed when Philip was out to war is striking here). Thus Alkides (Heracles' first given name) was conceived by Zeus' seed in Alkmene's womb and born after the due nine months. In the same night, after the fake Amphytrion has already departed, the real Amphytrion returned home and again made love with his (in all probability totally confused) wife and out of his seed Alkides' twin brother Iphikles was born. Alkmene of course did not utter a word to her real husband, but the difference between the twins became apparent when, still in their cradle, two huge snakes (possibly sent by Hera to strangle the bastard child of Zeus) silently came and tried by mistake to strangle Iphikles, but Alkides/Heracles took the serpents by their necks with his little fists and strangled them there and then, thus saving both himself and his little brother Iphikles (the first exploit of the *saurokton* hero). We know from Plutarch's *Vita Alexandri* (1.3-4 and especially 1.4-5) that Olympias, Alexander's mother, as a devotee of Dionysus, was particularly fond of snakes, to the point that the reptiles (Plut. *Vita Alex.*1.4 mentions here a drake or dragon/δράκων, which could be a great snake of the type of a smaller stone python or *boa constrictor*), sometimes shared the bed with her, to Philip's utter dismay and sheer horror. Heracles had been (like Achilles after him) raised by the wise Centaure Chiron, who played the role of his spiritual father, in a way Aristotle and Nectanebo themselves played this role for Alexander of Macedon. Theseus, the hero of the Athenians, was born out of the free (of wedlock) union between his mother, the virgin princess Aethra, and the sea god Poseidon, brother of Zeus. The maiden and mother to be was the daughter of an ancient Greek mythical king, King Pittheus of Troizen, who duly married her with the Athenian Prince, King Aegeus of Athens. Theseus had therefore two fathers, the divine one Poseidon and the social and official one, the mortal King Aegeus. In the same vein, Heracles was the son of the King of the gods, Zeus, but also the son of the mortal king Amphytrion by Alkmene. Perseus, the oldest of the great Greek heroes, was the son of Zeus (transformed in a golden rain or dew) and the princess Danae, the virgin daughter of King Acrisius (Akrisios), shut down in an underground cell by her father, due to the prophecy that her son will one day kill his own grandfather, namely Acrisius himself. This (Perseus') is the case of a great hero without any human and social father; likewise, Aeacus (Aiakos) is the son of Zeus and of the daughter of the river god Asopos, Aegina; Asclepius (Asklepios) the founding hero of the medical art and science is only the son of Apollo the solar god of sun light, music, archery, and healing; Achilles, who was Alexander's ancestor on his mother's side, was the son of the mortal king Peleus and of the sea goddess Thetis (human father and divine mother) and Aeneas, the future founder of the Roman

people in Latium, was a Trojan hero born out of the union between a mortal father (the shepherd Anchises) and the goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite. They both (Achilles and Aeneas) are ancient Greek heroes with divine mothers (“*mater semper certa*”, says the old Latin dictum) and with only one mortal father (who was both the biological and the social father) mentioned in myth<sup>5</sup>.

Not only ancient Greek mythologies know this pattern of double or even triple fatherhoods in the case of the greatest of heroes. In Celtic Gaelic (Old Irish) myth, the hero of the Ulstermen in the heroic epic *Tain Bó Cuáilnge, Setanta*, who was better known by his heroic nickname *Cú Chulainn* (the hound of the blacksmith *Culann*), had also three fathers: his divine father was the god *Lug* (who also acts in the epic as the hero's grandfather), his natural father was the king of Ulster *Conchobar mac Ness* (son of *Lug*), and his social and official father was *Sualtaim*, the husband of his mother *Dechtire*. King Arthur in Brythonic myth was also miraculously conceived, having three fathers: the British (Celtic Brython) King Uther Pendragon, transformed by wizard's Merlin magic in the human double of the Duke of Cornwall, husband of Lady Ygraine, the woman beloved and desired by Uther Pendragon; Merlin himself, who will be the educator and tutor of the young Arthur, offspring of this adulterine union made possible by his magic alone (Merlin himself was therefore, like Nectanebo to Alexander, a kind of spiritual father to him; this ambiguous character of Merlin/Myrddin in the Welsh poems and legendary tales, was himself the fruit of an union between a demon of the air in the Christian mentality, or of a pre-Christian deity in a Celtic polytheistic perspective respectively, and a chaste and virgin maiden); and eventually the cuckooed Duke of Cornwall himself, who was later acknowledged as the official social father of the boy named Arthur by his deceived mother, Lady Ygraine. The official social father of Arthur during his boyhood, until he reached the age of sixteen years old, when he “came of age” and performed the miracle of pulling out the wonder sword fallen from heaven from the stone and/or anvil in which it was fixed and nobody from the realm, no man, be it knight or commoner, could extract it, was the nobleman called Antor, which raised Arthur along with his own nat-

<sup>5</sup> A.N. Kun, *Legendele și Miturile Greciei Antice [The Legends and Myths of Ancient Greece]*, Editura Științifică, Bucharest 1958, pp. 84-85, 96, 100-101, 131-133, 178-181, 240-241, 247-248, *passim*. Not only the birth, but also the education of the heroes is unusual, unlike that of ordinary mortal men. The tutor and mentor of both Heracles and Achilles, both heroes considered as Alexander's ancestors, was the centaure Chiron, a mythical creature half man (the head and upper body) and half horse (the lower body and legs), who had access to both the animal and the human nature, their teacher who taught them not only the warrior arts of weaponry and hunting, but also medicine or the art of healing and also music. Achilles was fed by Chiron with the brain of bears (as to the child so to acquire the warlike mindset of the bear) and with the liver of lions (thus becoming fearless like a lion, with the undaunted courage of the king of the animals). Chiron can be considered as Achilles' second father (the spiritual father) and Heracles' third father (also in the spiritual sense of the formative educator of the future great hero).

ural son, conforming to the *fosterage* custom of the Celtic peoples. This “sword from the stone” was Arthur’s royal and knightly weapon, the first Excalibur; the second and true *Excalibur* sword will be that given to him by the water fairy known as “the Lady of the Lake”. We enter here the domain of the Indo-European (and not only Indo-European) myth of magic weapons (especially swords), given to chosen heroes by gods or goddesses from the Otherworld, in order to perform the office of a great warrior or even of a king, as in Arthur’s case; the Celtic, Germanic, ancient Greek, and Iranian (Ossetian and Persian) mythologies are especially full of such examples of heroes (we can only think at *Cú Chulainn* and *Finn mac Cool* in the Irish and Scottish Gaelic epic, at Sigurdr/Siegfried and Beowulf in the Norse/Old German and Old English epics, of Theseus and Achilles in Greek mythology, and eventually of Batraz and Rustam in the Nart legends of the Caucasus and in Firdousi’s *Shah-Name* respectively) and the mystique of the sword as the weapon of choice of knights and heroes will endure throughout the European Middle Ages, in the feudal legends of the chivalry, both in Western and in Eastern Europe (and even outside of Europe, in the Far East of Asia, for example in Japan in the age of the samurai/*bushi* warrior knights and even in ancient and mediaeval Korea and China). The mentor figure of Merlin (who will later become Arthur’s most trusted counsellor, when the boy transformed himself into the man and hero of legend, King Arthur for Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, *Arthur Dux bellorum* for Nennius’ *Historia Brittonum*) is a mixture between the King’s Druid and the demigod protector of the Celtic warrior king<sup>6</sup>. The Germanic mythology also knows heroes with multiple fathers (or at least with uncertain paternal lineage): for example Sigurdr in the *Volsunga Saga* is the son of Sigemund and of his sister Siggy, and Sigemund himself (Sigurdr’s own father) is the son of Odin king of the gods, but also he is the official son of a mortal king<sup>7</sup>. We

<sup>6</sup> J. Markale, *L’Épopée Celtique d’Irlande*, Payot, Paris 1971, *passim*; J. Markale, *Le Roi Arthur et la Société Celtique*, Payot, Paris 1977, pp. 306-307 reproduced the myth of the birth and youth of Arthur according to the Welsh legend *Kulhwch and Olwen* and here Arthur appears simply as the son of a local nobleman lord of the stronghold of *Kelliwic* in *Kernyw* (Cornwall?) and brother of a young girl called Anna, with no specified mother; Ch.-J. Guyonvarch, *L’Épopée de Cuchulainn La Razzia delle Vache di Cooley*, Edizioni Mediterranee, Roma 2009, pp. 47-48 and 49-51; Ph. Walter, *Merlin și cunoașterea lumii* (transl. by Rodica Caragea and Valentin Mihăescu), Ed. Artemis, Bucharest 2004, pp. 120-123; Ph. Walter, *Arthur Ursul și Regele*, Ed. Artemis, Bucharest 2006, pp. 94-118; Ed. Pace, *The Two Shoulders of Arthur and the Battle List*, [in:] *Arthuriana* 28.2 (2018), pp. 1-27. The mystique surrounding the sword as the noble weapon par excellence will continue in the Mediaeval epic legends and chivalric stories about Arthur and Charlemagne, about Roland and Rodrigo Diaz del Bivar El Cid Campeador, and so on and forth.

<sup>7</sup> D.-T. Ionescu, *Nectanebus II as Father of Alexander of Macedon in the Pseudo-Callisthenes’ Greek Alexander Romance*, [in:] Al. Cizek, M. Cioba, D.-T. Ionescu, *Alexandre le Grand Histoire Image Interpretations Alexander the Great History Image Interpretations*, eds. Al. Cizek, M. Cioba, D.-T. Ionescu, Editura Universității din București, Bucharest 2016, pp. 55-78 (and esp. pp. 65-68 for the heroes with double or triple father figures of the Celtic and Germanic mythology). The essential ideas of this study were first developed in the article of D.-T. Ionescu entitled *Nectanebus II as Father of Alexander the Great*, [in:]

stop here the parallels between Alexander's conception and birth and the conception and birth of other heroes and we return to Nectanebo's magic. His magic room and especially his magic table, where he played out the battles between his army and the invading armies, is in fact a miniature copy of this world; the magician is playing here, trying to predict and sometimes even to influence the future. We encounter here the esoteric correspondence between the magic room and the world; the magician's chamber is the reflection of the outer world (which includes also the wizard's very own inner world, as an integral part of the Universe), but it can also project its own logic of action (with the same outcome as inside) outside the room's walls, on the real battlefield. In fact, the whole episode about Nectanebo's magic is an excursus about what the true nature of what we call reality is: does the magic Nectanebo performs in his room with his toy soldiers and miniature armies only predict the unavoidable outcome of the war, long before predetermined, or Nectanebo's magic really influences or even pre-determines the final result of the battle ahead? Is magic itself a reflection of possible or even probable "lines of future in the Universe" or magic is truly an active force in itself, a power that shapes and moulds the world, by projecting its own logic of action/force field in the world at large? The forces put into motion by Nectanebo's magic or witchcraft clearly created an energy field strong enough to defeat larger invading armies, troops which were normally stronger than the Egyptian army. The Alexander's story rather suggests that Nectanebo by virtue of his magic operations actually made his troops vanquish with ease the enemies of Egypt (and of himself), but the last case shows a more complicated issue: despite Nectanebo's best efforts, the outcome of that particular war against Darius and the other four allied kings will prove disastrous for the Egyptians. The war of Nectanebo failed disastrously first inside his magic room and he would not wait for the war's outcome in the outer world. The only thing Nectanebo has to do now is to flee in time from Egypt, in order not to get caught or killed by the conquerors. We do not even know if he had the time to avert his army commanders that any resistance is futile. They only came to his empty room and found only his book and his crown/royal emblem. The book was on his table and the crown/royal emblem lay on his bed. The Egyptian dignitar-

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*Alexander the Great and Egypt History, Art, Tradition*, eds. V. Grieb, K. Nawotka, and A. Wojciechowska, Harrassowitz Verlag (Philippika 74), Wiesbaden 2014, pp. 367-375. An interesting parallel between the heroic figures of Alexander of Macedon and of the Old Norse (Geatish/Gothic)-Old English Beowulf is made by A. Papahagi, *Alexander and Beowulf*, [in:] *Alexandre le Grand Histoire Image Interpretations Alexander the Great History Image Interpretations*, eds. Al. Cizek, M. Cioba, D.-T. Ionescu, Editura Universității din București, Bucharest 2016, pp. 151-176 (interesting to mention here that the oldest English translation of the Latin *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem* was made in the Old English language and bound together along with the Old English translation of the *Epistola Premonis*, which is a catalogue of the wonders of the East, and with the greatest masterpiece of the Anglo-Saxon epic poetry, the heroic poem *Beowulf*, in the *Codex Nowell*, British Library, ms. Cotton Vitellius A. XV *op. cit.*, pp. 151-153 *sq.*).

ies had nevertheless leisure time to build the pillar and erect the statue of Nectanebo on it, with his crown on his head and his book in his hand, before the conquerors arrived and occupied the capital city of Egypt.

We come back to Alexander's youth according to the Romanian *Alexandria*; the birth first that was also prepared by Nectanebo, who saw the stars and told Olympias to postpone her hour of childbirth a little bit (before that, Nectanebo had also advised Olympias not to drink wine or mead and not to eat anything filthy, without specifying what kind of food is unclean to eat, because she was with child even after the first night Nectanebo in the guise of Amun has bedded her; we are told that Nectanebo, in the absence of Philip, had a cell or small room near Olympias' bed chamber and slept with her several times, to her great delight, amusingly says the story, until Philip has returned from the war), because the hour was not astrologically propitious, the stars and the planets were not yet aligned to determine the birth of a great king and conqueror, but only that of an ordinary man. Only when Nectanebo truly forebode that the astral bodies were aligned in the sky as for the birth of an extraordinary man and monarch, he told Olympias to proceed in giving birth to Alexander. It results therefore that even Alexander's coming on this world had been greatly shaped by Nectanebo's wisdom, magic power, and influence. This alone makes even more Nectanebo, in the logic of this story, the true father of Alexander the Great.

Philip of Macedon came back to Macedon from the military camp of Darius the Persian Emperor (it is not specified in this tale whether he had been there as a military ally or as a vassal prince of Darius or he had waged war against Darius and then they made peace); but, before returning in his capital city, Philip has dreamt of the god Amun bringing to him a small prince. Waking up, Philip went out of his military tent and spoke to Aristotle the Philosopher and told him about his dream. The Stagirite (Aristotle was from the Macedonian town of Stageira/Stagira) answered Philip and promptly told him that Olympias has conceived a son to Philip (although understandably he did not tell him who the real father of the child truly was, if only he knew that). In that particular moment, a great eagle flew over Philip and let fall an egg in Philip's lap. The egg hatched and a small snake exited the broken egg and enveloped the egg with its coils. The little serpent then tried to enter again in the opening of the broken egg and suddenly died there, at the mouth of the egg. Aristotle, ever ready to answer Philip's questions, replied on the spot: this is a portent and a good and bad omen at the same time. It signifies that your son, who is the small asp, will conquer the world (symbolized here by the egg), but he will die when he will try to return home. He will not see his fatherland again, after he had conquered the world. This was Aristotle's prophecy. The famous Greek philosopher will later play in Alexander's life the role of another spiritual father figure, according not only to Pseu-

do-Callisthenes' *Alexandria* (therefore also in the Romanian version of it), but also according to Plutarch's *Vita Alexandri* (7.1-8.4). Alexander of Macedon will have at least three, if not four father figures around him: Amun as his divine father; Nectanebo as his biological father (but also as his first spiritual father, in his quality of mentor and astrology teacher); Philip of Macedon as his social and officially recognized father; and finally Aristotle as his second spiritual father, in his quality of philosophy teacher of the young Macedonian prince.

Immediately after this portent took place, the boyars (meaning the aristocrats or nobles of Macedon, the famous King's Companions and Friends/*hetairoi kai philoi tou Basileos*) came and told Philip about Olympias giving birth to a healthy young boy, a baby Prince, child of Philip (supposedly). Philip was very glad about the news and returned in his city of *Philippous* (Filipus sic!), where he raised the child in his arms (therefore he acknowledged the baby boy as his own son) and compared him to the Biblical Joseph in beauty. There were present many kings and princes, among them the emperor Heraclius (Eraclie-împărat in the Romanian text, obviously a gross anachronism if this refers to Heraclius the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD Emperor of Byzantium; likewise the comparison of Alexander with the Biblical Joseph of the Old Testament is another anachronism, explainable by the great influence of Church lore on the content of Alexander's legend, at least in the Christian Orthodox world of the East). Aristotle, similar to a medieval Christian bishop or priest, blessed the baby Alexander and wished him to rule over all the princes of this world. When Alexander just started to grow up (when he was seven years old?), Philip entrusted his education first to Aristotle and in the first year the young Macedonian Prince, smart as he was, learned all the *Psaltire* (Byzantine Orthodox Church book of religious hymns) and all the Psalms of the Bible. All these anachronistic narrative elements belong of course to the Byzantine Orthodox Church context of the Late Middle Ages in Eastern-Central Europe. Nectanebo also came to Olympias, this time in an official audience, and politely requested that Alexander should come also to him, to learn also Nectanebo's philosophy and science, and not only Aristotle's. His request was of course graciously granted by Olympias (it is clear that, then as now, mothers have the last say in the education of their sons!), who summoned Alexander to come and asked him to kiss Nectanebo's hand (an obvious both Oriental and European medieval sign of reverence and even submission to his teacher and mentor, to his parents, to the Christian Orthodox priest, or to his liege lord in a feudal context) and learn the knowledge Nectanebo wanted to teach Alexander. For seven years, said the Romanian Alexander legend, the young Macedonian Prince was taught by Nectanebo and learned his philosophical and astrological lore. Alexander's usual school day, according to the Romanian *Alexandria*, was during the morning the lessons of Aristo-

tle and during the afternoon and in the evening the astronomy classes and astrology courses with Nectanebo.

Aristotle once asked Alexander what gift he shall give to his elderly teacher, when Alexander supposedly will be King of Macedon. Alexander replied that it is not the province of man to know the future, but that of God alone and God Himself knows the answer to that question (a very wise and convenient reply indeed, coming from a barely teenage boy!). It followed next the episode of Nectanebo's killing by Alexander's hand and Alexander learning who his father truly was. It will come then the taming of Bucephalas by Alexander, sign of his warrior calling. Philip of course exulted. After this first exploit, Alexander performed his first true deeds of arms in the siege against the stronghold of the island of Dalfion (Delphi?)<sup>8</sup>. He of course performed there heroically and successfully, as an exemplary young warrior among veteran soldiers, amazed by his bravery and skill at arms. These exploits of course presupposed that he had also been taught the arts of war and the wielding of weapons, being therefore instructed and trained in the martial skills by qualified instructors, although the legend speaks nothing of these and likewise Plutarch, who in his *Vita Alexandri* (4.5-6; 5.4-5; 6.1-5; and finally 7.1-8.4) mentions only his spiritual mentors and tutors like Leonidas of Epirus (appointed by Olympias), Lysimachus of Acarnania (surnamed "Phoenix" in remembrance of Achilles' own tutor, according to Homer's *Iliad*), and Aristotle. His love for athletic military training as running, hunting, riding horses (like in the taming of Bucephalas), fencing with sticks and staves (*rhabdomachia*), his proficiency in using all the weapons of the Macedonian soldiers of his day, all these soldierly and athletic abilities are also learned skills and therefore teachers and masters to instruct and further train him in these martial arts must have existed, although history did not record their names<sup>9</sup>. Alexander had defeated and killed in single combat an enemy champion

<sup>8</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, pp. 18-19.

<sup>9</sup> Vide Plut. *Vita Alex.* 4.6 for Alexander's athletic skills and preferences: he liked hunting and staves fighting, but he disliked ancient Greek boxing and pancratium (*pankraton*, all force in fighting, an ancient Greek mixed martial art which was a combination of pugilism, kicking, and free style submission grappling); Plut. *Vita Alex.* 6.1-5 narrated the taming of the indomitable horse Bucephalas by Alexander, when he was only a boy of about twelve years old, so by this age he was already an accomplished rider of horses. He was a keen and very swift runner too; in his early youth he was so quick in the foot-race (like his role model Achilles) that his friends told him to compete in the Olympic games (Plut. *Vita Alex.* 4.5-6); he refused, unless he had kings as contenders, a saying that came from a teen age boy and denotes an overwhelming pride and self assurance (although it can be also seen as a smart dodging of the challenge, making use of his princely status). His proficiency in hand to hand combat with weapons (spear and sword) had been obvious from an early age; in the battle of Granicus, in 334 BC, he at twenty one or twenty two years of age fought in the midst of battle on horseback as an already experienced fighting man and dispatched the Persian satrap Rhoesaces, an experienced warrior, while his friend Cleitus the Black saved him from the rear attack of Spithridates, another Persian satrap and feared fighter (Plut. *Vita Alex.* 1.6.4-5; Arr. *Anab.* 1.15.6-8 describes even more vividly this episode when the youthful Alexander succeeded in killing in combat two dreaded Persian warriors and satraps, Mithri-

called Callisthenes, while his comrade in arms Ptolemy had vanquished another elite enemy warrior called Laomedon. It is needless to say that all these Greek names (Ptolemy, Callisthenes, and Laomedon) are also names from Alexander's historical entourage (namely his Companions/*Hetairoi* Ptolemy and Laomedon, his personal historian and biographer Callisthenes). Perhaps during the centuries of filtering and modifications of Alexander's legend through the ages, the names of Alexander's Companions were sifted and some remained his friends and allies, while other became his enemies in the legend. After this exploit, Alexander returned to Macedon and found that his father Philip had divorced his mother Olympias.

The hero's tale of initiation into full manhood continues with Alexander's violently reacting to a Macedonian boyar's (nobleman's) allegation that his mother, queen Olympias, was adulteress, and that Philip should marry a new queen, brought to him by the boyars. This is of course a reminiscence of Attalus' episode in the marriage of Philip with the young Cleopatra, Attalus' niece (*cf.* Plut. *Vita Alex.* 9.4-5); Alexander will grab a stool or chair and kill the impertinent boyar there and then. The other participants at the scene, which took place in a tower, jumped out of the tower and broke their hands and legs. Philip renounced to divorce Olympias, but after two more years of happy marriage, Philip fell very ill for a year. The Tatars (this is of course a modernising item, Scythians of Antiquity becoming Tatars in this late mediaeval version) heard about Philip's illness and their Khan, Emperor Altamish, came against Macedon with fifty thousand warriors. Philip put Alexander as com-

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dates and Rhoesaces, while his friend Cleitus the Black had slain another Persian mighty warrior called Spithridates that almost wounded the young Macedonian king by cleaving his helmet in two and endangered Alexander's life). He risked his life not only as a warrior among his soldiers, but also as a hunter, when he hunted lions and wild boars and faced them in one on one combat in the royal hunts (Plut. *Vita Alex.* 40.3-4 and Arr. *Anab.* 4.13.2). He regularly exerted himself in riding the horse drawn chariot, mounting and dismounting from it when it was driven, riding on horseback and marching on foot alongside his troops, hunting lions, boars, bears, wolves, and foxes, doing archery and so on and forth, in his leisure time. He recklessly exposed his life in combat and shared the dangers of war and battle as every one of his soldiers, like in the famous episode of the assault against the Mallian stronghold in India (Curt. 9.4-5; Plut. *Vita Alex.* 53.1-4; Arr. *Anab.* 6.9.3-6.10.3). Despite his disdain or even dislike for the Greek fighting arts of boxing and pancratium, he kept in his entourage the famous Olympic champion the Athenian boxer, wrestler, and pancratist Dioxippus, who in a famous honour duel had defeated almost fighting bare handed the Macedonian soldier champion Koragus/Chorattas, who fought with all his usual arms and armour; the end result of this episode was that the Macedonians' court intrigues had brought about Dioxippus' suicide with his own sword, in the style of the great Homeric hero Aias the Telamonian, being falsely accused of the theft of a golden cup from the king's table (Curt. 9.7). It is interesting to notice here that the Romanian Alexander Romance, although it is full of episodes of battle and combat, does not describe in detail not even one of single combat or of the individual warrior exploits of Alexander the Macedonian (except the duel with the Indian Emperor Porus) or of any of his Companions. This is a curious lack for a story of heroic deeds of arms, chivalry, epic adventures, and warfare. The reason of this is not self apparent; it is perhaps so because the main frame of the tale counted more for the educated reader of the age than individual details.



mander general in chief of the Macedonian army (some thirty thousand men strong) and the young prince attacked the invading Tatar horde by surprise, with a stealth and lightning quick night attack from three sides, against the Tatar camp. The result of this audacious raid was a night battle, where twenty thousand Tatars fell (among them Altalmish himself) and the surviving thirty thousand Tatars became prisoners of war. They decided to become Alexander's warriors and Alexander graciously accepted, named his cousin Frantza (by the way, in the Romanian language this personal name, spelled Franța, means France, the name of the country) as their overlord and commander and they returned to their land. Meantime, Anarchus (ominous name!) the emperor of an unspecified land and people, who was secretly enamoured to Olympias (although she was of course unaware of his secret love), was allegedly Philip's friend and ally (how convenient!) and came to meet him, accompanied by a strong personal guard, which was more of an army than a simple armed royal escort troop. Philip came to meet and greet him, accompanied by Olympias and followed by a smaller armed force. The result will be the abduction of Olympias by Anarchus and the grave wounding of Philip in the ensuing fighting.

Alexander came victorious over the Tatars, only to be confronted at his return home by the news of his mother's abduction and his father's wounding and defeat. With military help in captured weapons and good horses obtained from the swift Tatar horsemen (and with some ten thousand elite Macedonian soldiers), Alexander pursued Anarchus and in the fight that followed Anarchus' army was crushed and he was captured. Olympias has been freed by her son and brought back to Philip, along with the captured Anarchus. Alexander presented the captive Anarchus to Philip, who promptly stabbed him to death. After this last deed of arms, Philip blessed Alexander as his true son and heir to the throne and immediately after he died. All this part of Alexander's story is construed as the decline and demise of the old king and warrior commander and the ascension to power of the young hero and prince, the King to be.

At seventeen years old, Alexander became the King of Macedon, according to this Romanian version of the *Alexandria*. He called upon his noblemen (his boyars) and his foremost subjects and cities from Macedon, Pelagonia, and the land of the Tatars (Scythia) and they met in an assembly to decide about future policy. They counselled him to go to war, while he was still young, because in his old age everyone should rest on his laurels earned in his youth. Young kings must wage war, was the assembly's decision, and Alexander followed suit and prepared his army for war. He therefore prepared weapons of offence and defence to equip and arm well his troops, named commanders of different units, distributed flags, trained his forces, in short he put his army on war footing; his arms and armour workshops were on full production and totally busy.

Meantime, Darius the Persian Emperor (the Romanian version of the *Alexandria* shows a particular preference for the term împărat meaning emperor and coming from the Latin word *Imperator*, instead of the simpler and lower term *crai* or *rege*, meaning simply king), hearing word of Alexander's war preparations, wrote a letter to Alexander's boyars, in the same style the Ottoman Sultan wrote to the vassal Christian Princes of Wallachia and Moldavia, requesting that, because of Philip's death, Alexander to be sent as a hostage prince to Darius' royal court, where forty other sons of vassal princes and kings served. Meanwhile, the Persian envoy and letter bearer, Candarcus, should reign as regent of Macedon and vassal of Darius. The Macedonian army should of course be incorporated into the Persian army.

Candarcus bade his King's command and went to Ptolemy, who was Alexander's *voevod* (*voivode* was a Slavic term borrowed by the old Romanian language and meant army commander and by extension prince) and gave him the letter; Ptolemy went with Darius' letter at Alexander, who received Candarcus with all the Macedonian noblemen of his royal court. The letter being read before Alexander by a *logofăt* (*Logothetes*, a Byzantine Greek word meaning chief chancellor scribe, a term that meant a Byzantine court official entrusted with redaction of imperial letters and orders, post control, foreign diplomatic relationships and so on and forth). Alexander wrote a wise letter to Darius, showing to him the sheer senselessness of his proposal: either Alexander was a suckling child or Darius should wait until he came of age to answer him in kind, or he was already grown up and therefore he needed Darius' care no more. The Macedonians are not as stupid as Darius supposes, concluded the young Macedonian king. Candarcus, endowed with gifts from Alexander, went back to Darius and read Alexander's letter to the Persian Great King. Darius laughed, but Candarcus told him that Alexander looked young, but he actually has the mind and wisdom of an older man than he really is.

Darius sent a second envoy, called Callidonus, again to Alexander, hoping to make him bow to his will. Darius is presented here as the Turks' emperor (the terms Turks meaning both Ottomans and Persians respectively are used alternatively with Persians in the Romanian text and have the same meaning here). Callidonus brought with him royal gifts from Darius to Alexander, along with a second letter, in which Darius wrote to his younger Macedonian supposed vassal king that he must pay tribute and personal homage to him, coming at the Persian Royal Court; he gives Alexander as gifts child's toys (toy horses and a toy chariot) to play with (a sharp reminder of the Macedonian King's youth and inexperience in war and politics), as well as two empty boxes and two pouches filled with papaver seeds. The boxes were to be filled with gold and silver as tribute, while the papaver seeds were to show the number of Darius' troops. Callidonus did his job, he read Darius' royal letter and commands to Al-

alexander, who rebuked Darius' orders, ate the papaver seeds (perhaps he has got high in the process?! The story did not specify that possible outcome) and sent Callidonus home with a royal letter of his own, along with a bag full of pepper seeds. He basically wrote to Darius that, as the chariot wheel circles around its hub, so Darius will gravitate around Alexander's might; that as he ate the papaver, so the Macedonians will eat the Persian soldiers; and the pepper is to show Alexander how swift in action the Macedonians truly are. The war was on and Alexander assembled his army on the Philippi field, some eighty thousand ordinary soldiers and ten thousand elite troops. All in all, ninety thousand troops, a much bigger number than that recorded by the Greek and Latin ancient narrative sources (some thirty or thirty two thousand infantry and about five thousand or five thousand and five hundred cavalry at the beginning of the campaign against Achaemenid Asia). His first campaigns were in Greece and were successful; without any struggle Thessalonic (Solun) and his "emperor" Archidonus acknowledged Alexander's overlordship and sent his son Polica to serve in Alexander's court and army. Likewise, the city of Athens, at the behest of the philosopher Sophonius, was inclined to recognize Alexander as lord and master. Another philosopher, however, made them change their minds. The final result was that Alexander and his Macedonian and vassal Tatar troops were forced to lay siege to the city; they suffered important casualties, but, due to a ruse of war (the stratagem of leaving herds of oxen and sheep outside the city walls, as if the besieging army was gone; most interestingly, this ambush was suggested to Alexander by the philosopher Diogenes and not devised by Alexander himself; it is an interesting evolution into legend of the character of Diogenes of Sinope, the Cynic philosopher whom Alexander had met at Corinthus and who had responded him that to get away from the sun's light was all that he wanted from Alexander; this deep answer allegedly made Alexander remark that, if he would have not been Alexander King of Macedon, he would have liked to be Diogenes, *vide* Plut. *Vita Alex.* 14.2-3), they finally succeeded in conquering Athens (which he burnt, including the temples of the gods, massacred part of the population, etc.; perhaps it is a faint memory of the siege and conquest of Thebes in Boeotia by Alexander's troops in 335 BC, which was transferred during intervening centuries to Athens, in the making of Alexander's legend in popular memory). He went on conquering to the west, in order to get to Rome and occupy it for good.

We are clearly here not in the historical time table of Alexander's "real" history, but in the time of myth and legend, where space and time are categories useful only for the inner logic of the fabulous tale, not for putting together the elements of a story of events that really took place. The hero of a mythical or legendary (mythological-historical) narrative is not subject to constraints usual in an ordinary historical narrative (because traditional 19<sup>th</sup> century history is the story "of what has really happened" in

the vision of Leopold von Ranke): he (the mythical hero) has a clearly defined itinerary from cradle to grave, which is not born out of the so called historical events, accidents which made up conventional history, but out of the logic of the myth, of the epic poem or of the legendary tale. It counts not what truly happened, but what ought to have happened. The absurd and useless human suffering and blood spilling of historical wars, waged out of greed and lust for power, wealth, occult interests, and earthly “glory” is altogether omitted or transfigured in the battle between Good and Evil; the hero of one world is not simply the butcher of another world (like in the so called “real world”), but he fights off dragons and super human evil monsters; his human enemies are also embodiments of the initiation proofs and steps he must overcome in order to accomplish his mission in this world. Mission that usually, in the world of myth, is for the hero either to make the world a better place, to bring in or to restore order, righteousness, and balance in the realm of human affairs, or even to achieve a greater aim, that of purifying oneself, of achieving wisdom and immortality, even of attaining *unio mystica* with God, in the case of the “heroes of the Faith” (saints, mystics, and martyrs of all religions which pretend or claim to be universal). Alexander the Great enters in the realm of human heroes like Heracles, Perseus, Theseus, Achilles, Jason, or Odysseus (he has common elements with all of these here enumerated Greek heroes)<sup>10</sup>.

After subduing without fighting some other four Greek princes, Alexander and his army arrived at Rome, which duly submitted to him without a fight or almost and gave him and his troops a hero’s triumphal welcome. All in all, Alexander’s military expedition to Rome proved to be only a pleasure voyage tour in arms. The sacred topography of Rome, almost needless to say, is totally an imaginary one. Alexander had allegedly gone to the “Church” (this is of course a great misunderstanding of chronology, like the child Alexander reading Christian Orthodox Church books as school manuals) of the “Savela Empress sister of King Solomon” (a distorted memory about the Queen of Sheba and Solomon’s Temple at Jerusalem) in Rome<sup>11</sup>. He is met there by priests, almost like a Roman German Emperor of the Middle Ages. The Romans present all their treasures to Alexander: golden jars, and gilded vases, weapons (sword and spear) belonging to a hero of old from Troy, King Aremlush (his name is totally unknown to any modern reader of the Homeric poems; he is probably a modified name of some Trojan hero like Aeneas, Agenor, or Antenor), the shield of the “Emperor Patrachie/Patricius”, and finally the Book of Daniel (instead of the Sybilline Books expected by a cultivated contemporary reader), with the prophecy that read as follows: “when the course of years will be 5,200 (number of years counted in the Byzantine world from the alleged date of the Creation of the World, year 5508 BC; it was therefore the year 308 BC, when the true

<sup>10</sup> Lacarrière 2000, pp. 22-42.

<sup>11</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, p. 29, n. 1.

historical Alexander was already dead for fifteen years), the *inorog* [unicorn] will go forth and chase all the leopards of the West and then he will go to the Great Ram and he will stab him (the unicorn will stab the ram) through the heart and all the tongues [peoples speaking different idioms] of the world will tremble and be shaken"; it is clear that the prophecy means here that the unicorn is Alexander of Macedon, who will first conquer the West and then he will invade and vanquish the Southern and Eastern lands of Darius and of his allied or vassal kings and princes. The Great Ram of Daniel's prophecy is in all probability Darius of Persia<sup>12</sup>. This was however not the explanation given by a Roman philosopher to Alexander, about the prophecy: he actually told King Alexander that the Great Ram was in fact Emperor Porus ("Por Împărat") of India; while the so called *inorog* is Alexander himself. Alexander replies philosophically to this prophecy explanation that all will go as God has already planned it and it is not the province of man to decide here, because (and here comes the Biblical inspired quotation) "the powerful of this world will fall and the weak will rise up". This entire scene, of a Biblical minded Alexander the Great, seems to be of total Christian mediaeval inspiration<sup>13</sup>.

The following story is much more complicated: Alexander goes first north, to Poland and to other fabulous countries and conquers with great slaughter mythical peoples with human heads and snake like bodies and birds with human heads and breasts (a distorted memory of female Sphinxes, *Harpiae*, or *Syrenae*?); he turns back and goes to Egypt and finally arrives at the White Sea. We are clearly here in a wholly mythical geography or cosmography; there is no White Sea near Egypt, but instead in real geography is a White Sea at the Arctic Circle, in the Extreme North of European Russia<sup>14</sup>. He establishes naval bases to build "masts" meaning ships for battle and

<sup>12</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, pp. 20-29 (esp. p. 29, n. 1-2).

<sup>13</sup> *Idem*, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> This allegation is of course due to both the inner logic of the text (Alexander went north to Poland, Scythia/Tatarlands, and Russia; all these countries were often designated as Sarmatia by 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century cosmographers or geographers, ethnographers, and historians) and to our contemporary geographical knowledge. It is also known that at least the 17<sup>th</sup> century Moldavian (Romanian) chronicler Miron Costin, in his history or chronicle entitled *De Neamul Moldovenilor Din ce Țară au ieșit Strămoșii lor* [About the Origins/People of the Moldavians From what Country had originated Their Ancestors], writing about the origins and kin of the Moldavians, in his first chapter entitled *De Italia (On Italy)* he said that Moldavians (*Moldovenii*) and Wallachians (*Muntenii*) alike are originally ancient Romans and Italians colonized by Trajan in Dacia, after the Roman conquest; and in his description of Italy he mentions both the Adriatic Sea (*Marea de Adrië/Mare Adriaticum*) and the White Sea (*Marea Albă*), which is called, wrote him, *Mare Mediteraneum* (sic!) by the Latins, and by us (meaning the old Romanians of Wallachia, Transylvania, and Moldavia), by the Greeks, and by the Turks (Ottomans) as the White Sea (*Marea Albă*). We can see from this paragraph of Miron Costin's work that if him called the Mediterranean Sea the White Sea, also the unknown translator or copyist into Romanian of the *Alexandria* could mean that the White Sea of Alexander's campaigns was in fact the Mediterranean Sea. Vide M. Costin, *Letopiseșul Țării Moldovei* [The Annals of the Land of Moldavia] *De Neamul Moldovenilor* [About the Origins/People of the Moldavians], Editura Minerva, Bucharest 1979, p. 193.

troops transport. All is hyperbolic here, we speak about ships carrying five thousand, six thousand, even ten thousand men each, some twelve thousand of these ships. It is clear that troop's arithmetic or naval realities are not at all the concern of the chronicler of Romanian *Alixandria*. Alexander names commanders and captains of the ships, some with invented names like Byzantius ("Vizantie"), others with names belonging to real life comrades in arms of Alexander the Great, like Ptolemy or possibly also Philon. They had to go in all the Polish lands (sic!), to conquer cities and towns and to impose and raise tribute ("haraci", a Turkish-Arabic word of Ottoman origin in Romanian). Alexander himself went with a fleet of ships transporting thirty thousand men and went east and founded the city called Alexandria; their meeting point will be in Egypt, so we are left to presume that this city truly is the Alexandria of Egypt (*Alexandria ad Aegyptum*, as the ancient Romans knew it). Byzantius will found the city named after him Byzantium (*Byzantion i.e.* future Constantinople, Țarigrad, or Istanbul; we see here that Alexander's subordinated commanders are seen as eponymous heroes of all the important cities of the Levant); Antiochus ("Antioh") founded Antiochia, Seleucus/Seleukos ("Seleuchie") founded in the Arab lands his Seleucia/*Seleukeia* ("Seleuchia") town. Ptolemy/Ptolemaeus/Ptolemaios ("Potolomei") lay the founding stone of other cities; he appears, along with Philon, to have gone to the north-east, conquering the territories later known as the Romanian lands of Wallachia and Moldavia; and they went and conquered Poland as well; after that they conquered the Tatar country of Crimea ("Acrim Țătar") and Transylvania also. They had captured the kings and princes who reigned before them on those lands and brought them captive and bound to Alexander to Egypt. Alexander had nevertheless spared their lives; despite they had tried to resist his conquering armies and made them tributary dynasts. These vassal kings were duty bound to send every year tribute and also ten thousand soldiers to reinforce Alexander's own army<sup>15</sup>.

Until now, Alexander had conquered the West and the North of the known world and also Egypt, which, in the imaginary map of the author, stood somehow south of Macedon, but still in the centre of the known world. From now on, Alexander and his army, after founding at an unspecified location a new city called "Welcoming" ("Întâmpinare" in the Romanian language) finally proceeded to the East, to the great city in Asia which is called "Troada" (Troy of Homeric memory) or, in Greek, "Frighia" (Phrygia)<sup>16</sup>. It will follow an interesting encounter between Alexander and twelve Trojan philosophers, who told him their version of the Trojan war, about the King "Antilish" (Achilleus/Achilles) the Bravest Hero, about "Alexandru Fariz" (Alexander Par-

<sup>15</sup> *Idem*, p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> It is clear from here that for the author or rather for the copyist, the names of ancient cities were more or less identical or superimposable with the names of ancient regions and lands (*ibidem*).

is son of King Priam of Troy), about the cuckooed “Manelau-Crai” (King Menelaus/Menelaos) and his adulteress wife, the most beautiful “Elinușa/curva Elenușa”, meaning literally “Helen the whore”). Troy surrenders to Alexander of Macedon without a fight. The *Iliad* of Homer was clearly remembered throughout the ages<sup>17</sup>. The interesting fact is that the unknown Romanian translator had added here a note that most probably was not included in the Slavonic original, namely that the “Franks” (“Frâncii/Frâncii” meaning here Westerners or Italians, the Trojans that after the fall of Troy went to Italy with Aeneas and founded Latium and made the Latin people by mixing with the “*Aborigenes*” of King Latinus, as it was written in Vergil’s *Aeneid* and in Livy’s first book of the *Ab Urbe Condita*) went from Troy to Rome and from Rome came their descendants, the Romanians (“rumîinii/rumânii”) in Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania. It is a testimony that already in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century learned persons like the translator of this famous book from Slavonic into Romanian were well aware of the Trojan-Latin-Roman connection and origin of the Romanian people and of his essential ethnic unity in the three historical provinces or regions of Wallachia, Transylvania, and Moldavia. Immediately after the Troy episode, Alexander went to the East and came at the border with Persia. Darius reacted by sending spies to Alexander’s army headquarters and succeeded in returning to Darius, bringing him a report of Alexander’s gentle nature (sic?!), righteousness, and his fair and sound judgment. Even Darius was compelled to acknowledge that these were signs of a great world emperor. He nevertheless did not give up without a fight and send letters to the dwellers of Jerusalem and Egypt, bidding them not to bow before Alexander, qualified as a robber. Alexander tried to make the inhabitants of Jerusalem to recognize him as lord and sovereign, instead of the “idolatrous” Darius. The Jewish people responded to the Macedonian by saying they are in fear of Darius, who is their actual and present day lord and master: if they would disobey him and go over to Alexander. Darius and his troops will come and kill them all. Alexander cleverly chose out another strategy, of asking the Jerusalem inhabitants of letting him in to worship God Sabbath in the Jerusalem temple (we remember that at Tyre he did the same thing, asking the Tyrians to let him enter the city and worship Heracles-Melqart, the patron deity of the town; this gesture was tantamount of acknowledging Alexander as the King of Tyre, therefore the Tyrians refused and the siege, assault, and conquest of Tyre ensued)<sup>18</sup>. The Prophet Jeremiah counseled his countrymen to submit to Alexander

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>18</sup> *Vide* Curt. 4.2.2 about Alexander’s intention of sacrificing to Heracles his heroic ancestor worshipped also by the Tyrians on the island temple of new Tyre and the Phoenician clever answer that there is another sanctuary and temple dedicated to Heracles on the sea shore, in the old city (Palaeotyros); Alexander of course went ballistic by hearing their response that promptly undermined his plan of being recognized as the lawful king of Tyre by this very sacrifice; *cf.* Arr. *Anab.* 2.15.7-2.16.2 who consi-

and the Macedonian King himself dreamt of Jeremiah who told him to go to Jerusalem and worship the One True God Sabbaoth; after this ritual act he will be able to conqueror Darius the Emperor of the Turks (scl. Persians); he was the man who was master of the entire world. It followed Alexander has been granted free access in Jerusalem; he adored the Ark of the Covenant and worshipped God Sabaoth of the Jews at the Jerusalem Temple, renouncing the cult of the gods<sup>19</sup>. We see here that the mediaeval author or translator is not very coherent, a bit above he mentioned that the boy Alexander learned from the *Psaltire*, a Christian religious book *par excellence*, so

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ders that it was not the same Heracles from Argos, because the Phoenician Heracles had been venerated in Tyre many generations before the departing of Cadmos for founding the Greek city of Thebes and of course before the birth of Semele, the daughter of Cadmos and the wife of Labdacus son of Polydorus, the woman who will conceive the god Dionysus by Zeus furthermore, Arr. *Anab.* 2.16.3 wrote that there is also an Egyptian Heracles and that Herodotus said that the Egyptians put Heracles among the twelve main gods of their pantheon, so it is also a different Heracles from that of Argos, more probable an heir of Oedipus and Labdacus of Thebes and so is the Athenian Dionysus, son of Zeus and Kore, different from the Theban Dionysus; Plut. *Vita Alex.* 24.3-5 about Alexander's dream with Heracles on the city wall stretching his hand to him and inviting him in, while the Tyrians had dreamt of Apollo leaving their city and going over to Alexander (*cf.* Arr. *Anab.* 2.16.4-7). Before the decisive assault, the Tyrians fettered the statue of Apollo, to prevent him from physically going over to Alexander (interesting insight, if true, on the mind frame of ancient people with respect to the gods), while Alexander dreamt of a satyre who mocked him from afar and after much effort he captured him; his seers and soothsayers had interpreted his dream as meaning *sa genesetai Tyros* ("Tyre will be thine" from *satyros*, meaning satyre in Plut. *Vita Alex.* 24.5).

<sup>19</sup> Vide C. Bonnet, *Alexandre à Jerusalem: Entre Mensonge et Fiction Historiographique*, [in:] *Fraude, Mentira y Engaños en el Mundo Antiguo*, eds. F.M. Simón, F.P. Polo, y J.R. Rodríguez, Publicacions i Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona 2014, pp. 55-64 (esp. p. 59, n. 18 *vide* Flavius Josephus, *AJ* 11.320-339 and Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander Romance (Historia Alexandri Magni HAM)* 2.24 (the C text) with an echo in *HAM* 2.43 (*Epistula Alexandri ad Olympiadem matrem suam*). These are the only texts reproducing Alexander's supposed visit to Jerusalem and it is a most probably invented episode. A.Ştefan, *Alexandre le Grand et les Juifs: le dossier d'un épisode controversée*, [in:] *Alexandre le Grand Histoire Image Interprétations Alexander the Great History Image Interpretations*, eds. Al. Cizek, M. Cioba, D.-T. Ionescu, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, Bucharest 2016, pp. 79-99 is also skeptical about the historicity of this rather legendary episode, although her final stance about this issue is that Alexander's visit to Jerusalem stands on the fringe between history and myth or legend. It seems fated that Alexander's worship of the God of the Jews to remain on the thin edge between the so called "historical truth" and mythical reality. The place of Alexander's legend in the Jewish culture and his connections with the character of the Biblical Prophet Jeremiah is very thoroughly treated by Al. Kłęczar, *Bones of the Prophet and Birds in the City: Stories of the Foundation of Alexandria in Ancient and Medieval Jewish Sources*, [in:] *Alexander the Great and Egypt History, Art, Tradition*, eds. V. Grieb, K. Nawotka, and A. Wojciechowska, Harrassowitz Verlag (Philippika 74), Wiesbaden 2014, pp. 391-400 (esp. pp. 394-398); Al. Kłęczar, *Wise and the Wiser: The Narratives on Alexander's Wisdom Defeated in Two Versions of Hebrew Alexander Romance (MS London Jews' College no 145 and MS Héb. 671.5 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale)*, [in:] *Alexander the Great and the East History, Art, Tradition*, eds. K. Nawotka and A. Wojciechowska, Harrassowitz Verlag (Philippika 103), Wiesbaden 2016, pp. 345-353 explores and analyzes the relationship between the limited human wisdom and virtues of Alexander and the unlimited and infinite Wisdom of God. Alexander's magnitude as character appears as great, but nevertheless fatally limited, imperfect, and incomplete and he nevertheless fails in the face of ultimate questions on the mysteries of life and death (*op. cit.*, pp. 347-353).



how could he worship the idols of the gods before entering Jerusalem? After taking many riches from Jerusalem, Alexander arrived in Egypt, to the city of Nectanebo. The Egyptians however chose the path of armed resistance and Alexander was forced to lay siege to the city, but could not take it by storm during the first day. It is clear that here the author is not following the historical account that Alexander, after the conquest of Gaza in Palestine, went through Pelusium (*Pelousion*) unharmed and occupied Egypt without a fight; unless we equate the city of Nectanebo besieged by Alexander's army with Gaza, of course. The Egyptians sent a letter to Alexander's personal physician, the medical doctor Philip, to make him poison Alexander, who had get cold bathing in a river (we recognize here the much earlier episode of Alexander's illness after bathing in the ice cold waters of the Cydnus River in Cilicia and Philip's role in his recovery, by means of that powerful medicine; and Parmenio's letter to Alexander, advising him to beware of Philip, who could be bought by Darius to poison Alexander)<sup>20</sup>. Philip read the letter himself and then laughed and sent another epistle to the Egyptians, telling them that Alexander will very soon be cured by his medical art and pharmaceutical science. The Egyptians were scared beyond belief and replied by sending Alexander another letter that warned him against Philip, whom they accused of trying to give venom to Alexander. The King doubted the usefulness of Philip's medicine and read this letter to Philip, after he brought the cup with medical herbs; Philip drank half of that potion and told Alexander that no physician would ever harm his own patron. Alexander drank the rest of the cup and got better. He walked up a healthy young man and made his troops attack the city; the Egyptians finally surrendered to him. The Egyptians acknowledged Alexander as their rightful lord and king, as son of Nectanebo, who had reigned well over them for forty years or so. The royal emblem of Nectanebo (meaning his royal crown) fell from the head of the statue of Nectanebo, erected on the pillar just when Nectanebo fled Egypt, straight on the head of Alexander and this prodigy confirmed his lawful kingship and rightful inheritance over all Egypt. Alexander's reconnaissance squads came to him and told him that Darius awaited him on the Euphrates River, along with an army

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<sup>20</sup> The episode is here identical with that written by Plut. *Vita Alex.* 19.1-5. Here Parmenio sent Alexander a letter, warning him that Darius had corrupted Philip with a huge bribe in gold and the promise of Darius' daughter given to Philip in marriage (thus making Philip not only Darius' son in law, but also a Persian prince of the Achaemenid royal house); Alexander, although ill because of his imprudent bath in the ice cold waters of the Cydnus River in Cilicia, after a forced march in the sun's heat, concealed this letter under his pillow (alongside with his dagger and the volume of Homer's *Iliad* which always accompanied him in a box *vide* Plut. *Vita Alex.* 8.2), and showed the hidden letter only to Philip, when he came to give him the medicine; moreover, he calmly drank the medical potion while reading Parmenio's letter to Philip, noticing his every reaction. Philip protested and defended his innocence in this matter (and Darius' as well, if he had not been contacted by any Persian secret agent) and Alexander, after taking this medicine (*pharmakon*) duly and fully recovered.

of six million cavalry soldiers (“six thousand of thousands mounted troops” says our text) and four million infantrymen (“four thousand of thousands foot soldiers”). All in all, the Turks/Persians were ten million warriors, a clear overestimate of at least ten times more with respect the greatest number of Persian combatants and camp followers at Gaugamela, given by our Classical sources (one million Persians at Gaugamela is still a huge overestimate of the actual number involved; a tenth of this figure would be much more likely). We see that Darius’ horsemen were considerable more numerous than his infantrymen, which, despite the over-exaggeration in numbers, showed a knowledge of Darius’ army structure (an approximate ratio of two thirds cavalry to one third infantry) before the battle of Gaugamela. A series of episodes followed, including a mutually offensive exchange of letters between Alexander and Darius, the stratagem of Alexander burning many camp fires in order to delude Darius’ spies with the supposed number of his troops, the capturing of Darius’ spies by Alexander’s men, etc. Darius still wanted tribute from Alexander, while Alexander compared his own forces with wolves and lions and Darius’ Turks (i.e. Persians) with sheep. The number of Darius’ army, revealed by the Persian captured spies, appeared much greater than before, some ten millions infantry and ten millions cavalry forces. We are clearly here in the realm of myth, legend, and fable.

Darius, advised by his satraps not to fight in person against Alexander, sent his subordinate commander called Mamant (another totally unrecognizable name of a Persian general) with two hundred thousand cavalry, two hundred thousand infantry, and four thousand Ethiopian auxiliary troops against Alexander’s troops at Euphrates. In the fierce battle that followed, Alexander’s army, divided into three battle groups, won the day and one hundred thousand Persians died. Darius, who had followed the battle from afar, had escaped by running away from Alexander. The captured Persians were spared by Alexander and the dead were buried alongside his dead Macedonians. Meantime, Darius ordered a new army to gather at Babylon, it was much smaller than the first one, some fifty thousand troops in all. Alexander rode his Bucephalas war stallion and encouraged his troops; in the night prior to the battle, Alexander had dreamt of the Prophet Jeremiah, who told him to worship God Sabaoth and he will have nothing to fear the next day. One can easily see here how Judeo-Christian elements crept into the fabric of the Greek-Egyptian narrative of Pseudo-Callisthenes about Alexander of Macedon, son of Nectanebo the exiled Egyptian Pharaoh. The first battle, although in number and structure of Persian troops, reminded more of the Gaugamela battle, in outcome appears more of a conflation of the first two great battles against the Persians, at Granicus and at Issus, as well as a souvenir of the flight and defeat on the Euphrates and then east of the Tigris of the vanguard cavalry group of Mazaeus, satrap of Babylon, by Alexander’s own vanguard

units. The army of Mamant could be an enlarged version of this detachment of Mazaeus, as well as a reminder of the past battles of Granicus against the Persian Anatolian satraps and the fight and flight of Darius at Issus. The last battle against Darius, fought near Babylon (a clear mistake, because Gaugamela is located east of the Tigris and in the region of Arbela in Assyria, hence the wrong name of the Arbela battle, although the city of Arbela is situated at a considerable distance from the actual place of the battle, namely Gaugamela) on the Euphrates, ended with a crushing Macedonian victory, with forty thousand Turks/Persians dead and only ten thousand Macedonians fallen in battle. Alexander lay siege to Babylon, which did not surrender peacefully (another historical error), but the Macedonian King was forced to dig a channel to divert the water; through the thus emptied river waterbed, Alexander and a detachment of shock troops entered Babylon and set the city on fire. They opened the city gates; Macedonian cavalry poured in and began to massacre the population (it is a narrative more congruent to Alexander's troops storming the Persian Gates and Persepolis than to the surrender of Babylon). The Macedonians took a lot of riches from Babylon.

The rest of the story gets even farther from our historical Classical sources: Darius lamented his misfortune and in response one of his "boyars" called Amvis offered to go personally to kill Alexander. This Persian took Darius' sword, put on it a Macedonian stamp and, disguised as a Macedonian cavalryman, infiltrated Alexander's entourage and attempted to murder Alexander. He struck him with Darius' sword in the head, but Alexander's helmet absorbed the force of the blow, although it was cleft in two and Alexander's hair had been shaved by the Persian sword (perhaps a distorted reminding of the Granicus episode, when Alexander had been saved by Cleitus the Black). The assassination attempt failed and this would be assassin was caught by Macedonian guards; Alexander nevertheless, after asking about his motives, pardoned and sent him to Darius, to make the Persian Emperor submit to his will. Darius refused to submit and offered Alexander a bargain: Alexander was to keep all his conquests and leave Darius on his throne to rule his remaining possessions as an independent monarch, and not as a vassal of the Macedonian emperor. If Alexander was to refuse this peace offer, Darius will gather all his remaining forces of Turks/Persians and will assemble his army with the army of the Indian emperor Porus and meet again Alexander in battle. Before Darius to join forces with Porus, Alexander had a dream of Jeremiah saying to him to go personally disguised as a diplomatic envoy to Darius. He did just that under the fake name of Philon. Darius, due to Candarcus the former Persian envoy at the Macedonian royal court discovers him to be Alexander, tried to make him arrested, but, using the indecision of Darius and the fact that he took three Persian royal cups as tokens of Darius' good will, Alexander, disguised

by using a Persian helmet, escaped through the three gates of the Persian royal palace. Candarcus was sent by Darius with a detachment of one hundred elite horsemen to capture Alexander, but the Macedonian had outrun them and crossed the river *Sinaris*, escaping for good. Darius and Porus joined forces; they had together an impressive army of some one million men, among them only four thousand Indian cavalry. The last battle against Alexander's army of twenty thousand fighting men of course resulted in Alexander's victory (here it appears as a conflation of the Gaugamela and of the Hydaspes battles). The battle descriptions of course are not at all accurate with what we know from the Classical historical sources. It is more of a fabulous tale, where Alexander cut down the enemies, hacked and slashed with a huge sword, felling down the Persians from the height of his war chariot (the real Alexander always fought on horseback in pitched battles or on foot in the audacious raids of his commando style units; he is never mentioned fighting by Classical sources in a chariot, like Darius did both at Issus and at Gaugamela).

Darius ran to Persis, while Alexander told to Philon to pursue the fleeing Indian troops sent by Porus to militarily help Darius and made them prisoners or force them to submit; after taking their horses and weapons, Philon and his men were ordered to let them free to go to India on foot and tell Porus not to help Darius anymore, because now Alexander was emperor of Persis. Alexander eagerly pursued Darius with all the speed possible on the Persian plains; somewhere in the field, two of the Persian "boyars", one called Răzvan (a purely Romanian name) and Candarcus himself speared Darius to death. It is a clear throw back to the murdering of Darius III Codomanus by the hands of his satraps, Nabarzanes, Bessus, and Barsaentes<sup>21</sup>. Alexander caught up the gravely wounded Darius, abandoned on the field by his own men. He spared Darius' life and brought the dying Persian emperor in a cart and drove it back to Persepolis. The Persians bowed to Alexander and saluted him as their emperor. Darius, before expiring, called for his daughter Rhoxane (named here Ruxanda) and gave her as bride to Alexander. He conveniently died aged sixty years old immediately after this last public gesture. We see here the confusion between the Bactrian or Sogdian (Eastern Iranian) Princess Rhoxane, daughter of the Iranian dynast Oxyartes, and Stateira (sometimes called also Barsine) the elder daughter of Darius, who was wedded at Susa in 324 BC with Alexander the Great. The Macedonian King has married at least two Persian noble ladies, Rhoxane the Bactrian or Sogdian princess and Stateira the Persian princess of royal Achaemenid stock, the eldest daughter of the Persian King Darius III Codomanus. One can add to them another Persian Achaemenid princess, Parysatis the niece of Artaxerxes III Ochus and Barsine, who was

<sup>21</sup> *Vide* Curt. 5.12-13; Plut. *Vita Alex.* 42.3-43.3; Arr. *Anab.* 3.21.1-10.

not Persian royalty, but nevertheless she was of noble birth and as the daughter of the Persian satrap Artabazus and the widow of two important Greek mercenary generals in the Persian army, Mentor and Memnon of Rhodes she received a very refined upbringing and education, both Persian and Greek; after the battle of Issus in 333 BC, she had been captured at Damascus by troops under the command of Parmenion and given to Alexander as prisoner of war. She became his concubine and official mistress and had even allegedly born him a son, named Heracles<sup>22</sup>. In the Romanian *Alexandria*, however, the mention of Alexander's multiple wives and at least one mistress is not made at all; Alexander appears to have been a stern monogamist, an ideal monarch in the eyes of the Church. Darius was buried on a precise date, 15<sup>th</sup> of August of that year.

The traitors Răzvan and Candarcus appear not to have become fugitives, as their real counterparts Nabarzanes/Barsaentes and Bessus truly were. They seemed to have accompanied Alexander at the royal court and patiently waited for Darius to die and Alexander to seize the Persian crown and throne. They probably waited to reenter in the favor of the new reigning emperor, but they were soon very much disappointed; for Alexander called them and duly asked them why they have killed Darius, their reigning lord? They answered tactfully, but frankly, that Darius' death had made Alexander emperor of the Persians. Alexander's reply had been prompt and to the point: hang them both! And he added sharply: "Curse upon him who feeds the assassin, the whore in his house, and the traitor of people!" Alexander's next move will be to write an epistle back home to Macedon, to his mother Olympias and his teacher and mentor Aristotle, about his exploits in the last seven years (the fact that he reigns now over Darius' empire and he has married Darius' daughter Ruxanda/Rhoxane); it is the mention of the famous *Epistula Alexandri Magni regis Macedonum ad Olympiadem matrem suam et Aristotelem magistrum suum*. It is neither our aim nor the place here to insist on the authenticity or the legacy of this text in the Middle Ages. It is enough to say here that Alexander's management of his newly conquered Persian Empire is similar in history (the Classical Sources) and in legend: he basically plunders the treasury left by Darius, in order to finance his upcoming wars. The Romanian *Alixandrial/Alexandria* has however another twist to Alexander's epic story: Alexander decided to renounce the worship of Hellenic gods like Amun/Ammon (who was in fact Egyptian and Libyan), Apollo, and "Spidon" (sic!) meaning Poseidon. He moreover gets in an iconoclastic mood and smashes and burns their statues as idols of fake gods and said to those destroyed Greek statues to rise up again if

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<sup>22</sup> Vide Plut. *Vita Alex.* 21.4-5 and 47.4 and 70.2-3; Arr. *Anab.* 2.12.3-8 for Alexander's respect shown to the captured Persian royal womenfolk after Issus and 4.19.4-4.20.4 for the same topic and for Alexander's genuine love for Rhoxane; Arr. *Anab.* 7.4.4-8 for the weddings of Susa.

they have the power of true gods. He chose instead Abrahamic monotheism (in fact the Hebrew religious cult) and worships God Sabbaoth of the Prophet Jeremiah in Jerusalem as the Only One True God. After leaving Phylon as viceroy in Persia, Alexander went out with his army to war to conquer all land to the ends of the earth<sup>23</sup>.

Alexander leading an army of ten thousand of thousands horsemen (in our computing system ten million mounted warriors) and four thousand of thousands infantry soldiers (in our computation four millions foot soldiers) sets forth in a second great war to conquer this time the whole inhabited world (the Romanian text in the old language uses for the Greek word *oikoumene* or for the Latin expression *orbis terrarum* the Slavonic word *mir* meaning here the world). As a precaution measure, because it will be a very long and protracted war, for the wellness of his troops, Alexander proved also a careful commander, making his army to be followed by ten thousand barren “public women” (so they were proven to be barren before the text implies), under the command of a specially appointed captain, distributed to the tents of the army units in order to provide erotic support or sexual comfort to his troops. The ratio of fourteen million male soldiers to only ten thousand women clearly meant that those female camp followers were kept very busy indeed. Whoever from the Macedonian soldiery slept with one of these public women, he had to give to the woman a coin of gold and a *daller* (the Dutch-German ancestor for the term dollar) to the commander of this women corps. He also organized the logistical train of his army, the beasts of burden and traction, as well as the living meat supply of his troops (mules, cattle, and sheep), but also wild predatory animals with unclear function accompanied his army (lions and leopards to be probably released for royal hunts in the wild, hunting dogs and hounds for guard and battle duties).

The first target of Alexander’s huge armed force was the legendary wealthy kingdom of “Cris împărat” (Emperor Croesus), another anachronism which did not bother our brave chronicler at all. Alexander’s troops conquered Lydia and all the huge accumulated riches herein became part of the wealth of Alexander’s empire. He went farther east (clearly that the author did not locate Lydia in Asia Minor or Anatolia, west of Persia) and conquered many kings and princes and took their lands and riches. Further however Alexander found himself and his troops in lands more and more exotic, as he approached the ends of the earth. He passed through and conquered the land of wild hairy women (“gadini”) armed with primitive weapons like wooden clubs and stones; he and his soldiers massacred some twenty thousand of these poor creatures, who had opposed the passing of his army through their country and attacked Alexander’s seasoned warriors. The well armed and battle hardened Macedonians and their

<sup>23</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, pp. 32-49.

allies or rather auxiliary subjects (Tatars, Romans, Egyptians, and Turks/Persians) had short work to do here, it was pure butchery work to them. They arrived further in a land full of sands, where they fought against huge ants which used to eat human flesh; these insects attacked at night, captured men and took them to their holes, where they devoured them. Alexander ordered his troops to amass straws at the openings of the ants' nests and burnt the straws, killing most of them by smoke and fire. Even farther Alexander encountered the land of dwarfs, who immediately surrender to him without any battle and request his help against the cranes, their mortal enemies. We see here the Homeric age old *topos* of dwarfs fighting against cranes, a literary motif as old as the *Iliad* itself<sup>24</sup>. These epic battles between cranes and dwarfs or pygmies took place in Greek imagination in the extreme south or south-east of the inhabited world (*oikoumene*), near the land of the blessed Ethiopians, loved by the Olympic gods who feasted with them, in that country where the sun god *Helios* mounted his chariot to rise up in the East, from the waters of the *Okeanos*, the Ocean that girdles the Earth. The meeting between Alexander and dwarfs is a clear sign that he approached there the ultimate land limits of the Earth. Alexander reacted to their pleas by a prompt reply, teaching them how to make bows and arrows in order to defend themselves against the cranes. Alexander had also appointed a king to rule over the dwarfs, king whom he had chosen from their own kind and kin. He thus acted as a kind of "culture hero" for the unfortunate pygmies (nicknamed "people of dwarfs" in the Romanian *Alexandria*).

The Macedonian hero and his army advanced farther in a wonderful field with running rivers full of sweet water, but the field was full of human bones. Onto the field they saw a huge stone pillar overlaid with gold and bearing an inscription in Greek characters: "I, the Emperor Sachnus («Sahnos-Împărat»), I was the ruler of the whole world and I wanted to go up to Paradise and I came until here, where unexpectedly arrived wild men and killed me. Whoever wants to go up to Paradise stop here and from here he must go back where he came from, otherwise he will perish". The illiterate Macedonian soldiers asked Alexander what was written there on the golden stone pillar; Alexander promptly replied with a lie that ahead lays a sweet looking country and they proceeded farther. Unavoidably the savages mentioned by the inscription appeared; first there was only one and Alexander ordered two of his horsemen to spear him there and then. He however was only wounded and cried loudly, making many other wild people to appear from the woods and fight the Macedonians. They fought fiercely with stones and pieces of wood, as well as with their bare hands and feet. Alexander was forced to withdraw his troops from the forest; once into the

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<sup>24</sup> Homer, *Iliada*, 3.2-7.

open field, the savages ran out of clubs and stones and the army corps commanded by Antiochus, one of Alexander's subordinated generals, outflanked them and cut their line of retreat to the woods, while Alexander's forces attacked them head on and cut them down "like harvested crops", says the original text. The savages, when they saw one of them wounded and bleeding, attacked him and ate their wounded fellow man while still alive. Finally, one hundred thousand savage people lay dead and only fifteen thousand men from Alexander's troops had perished in this gory battle. Alexander was fast approaching the last frontiers of the inhabited world and he had already passed well beyond the boundaries of the civilized world of his age. We see that the writer of the *Alexandria* builds his world in circles of civilization; after the conquest of the kings of the East, Alexander had entered lands of fabulous creatures: hairy wild women, huge men eating ants, dwarfs who used to defend themselves from cranes, and eventually wild cannibals. Beyond the belt of civilized kingdoms lay the zone of fabulous creatures, more and more exotic and dangerous as Alexander approached the boundaries of the world. His known world he had already behind him<sup>25</sup>.

After fifteen days of travel through the land of the wild men, Alexander's troops had arrived into a beautiful country, where they found two pillars of stone which were gilded with gold; these boundary markers had on them the faces of the Emperor "Eraclie" (who could be either Heraclius the Emperor of Byzantium in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century AD or the ancient Greek hero Heracles, Alexander's own paternal ancestor; this second possibility is even more probable due to the fact that alongside this emperor appeared on the pillars hewn in stone the face of the Empress Semiramis of ancient Babylon, who could be accounted for chronologically nearer to Heracles than to Heraclius). On the pillars were inscriptions on Greek characters; Alexander went to a pillar and so he read that those two emperors (*Eraclie* and Semiramis) had gone out of this world, because of the lawlessness of humankind<sup>26</sup>. This would imply that they both acted together in building a kingdom outside the borders of the known civilized world. It could be a kingdom built in a physical space and geographical place; although the text could imply that it is more about a spiritual and mythical realm. *Eraclie* could be here a conflation of the age old characters of Heracles the Greek hero and of the mythical King Ninus of Assyria-Babylon, husband of Queen Semiramis. The Romanian spelling of his name however reminds irresistibly of the Roman Byzantine Emperor Heraclius, who (like a reborn Alexander the Great!) in the years 620-630 AD had fought victoriously precisely in Assyria and Mesopotamia (the lands of the mythical Ninus and Semiramis) against the Persian armies of the Sassanid "King

<sup>25</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, pp. 50-51.

<sup>26</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, p. 52.



of kings” Khusraw (Chosroes) II Parviz (*i.e.* “the Victorious”). In the realm of myth and legend there are neither limitations of time order nor constraints of space. They went forth and arrived at the palace court of the late emperor *Eraclie*. It was adorned with gold and precious stones **and it contained a well with fresh cold water**. This mythical motif of the well will be important in all the versions of the Alexander Romance; it is or could be the well of immortality and eternal youth. The story says no more on this topic right now.

After passing by this royal palace, they marched for again another week and arrived at a great and broad river. Beyond this water course, there was a rich land full of people. Ptolemy offers himself to go with a scouting party formed out of seven men and explore an island of the river; he went back and told Alexander that he had found there naked men that spoke Greek; Alexander immediately landed on the island and met many naked men<sup>27</sup>. The wise naked men answered to Alexander’s questions in Greek that they are Macedonian Greeks, who had fled Macedon because of the incessant wars and bloodshed; they chose from among their own the Macedonian Greek emperor *Eraclie* and his queen, empress Semiramis. They had emigrated with ten thousand ships and they chose for emigration only righteous and good people; they landed and burnt their ships behind them; their two rulers (*Eraclie* and Semiramis) died after a reign of some forty years, after they had arrived at the place where Alexander saw their courts and palaces. Leftleaderless, they elected twelve philosophers from among them to judge their affairs. The people of course did not listen to their wise admonitions and counsels and resumed their wickedness; as a divine punishment for their transgressions and sins, God sent them wild people that wrought havoc upon them and their new found land. Those savages were man eaters, who killed and ate them and their sons and daughters. In order to escape this scourge, they had taken

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<sup>27</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, p. 53, n. 1: these Greek naked men were the *Gymnosophistai* (naked wise men/nude sages in Greek) mentioned by all the Classical sources about Alexander of Macedon (Q. Curtius Rufus, Diodorus Siculus, Trogus Pompeius-Justin, Plutarch, and Arrian) and their name had been translated in the Slavonic *Alexandria* as the *nagomudryi* (naked wise people); the Romanian versions either take over the Slavonic term in the slightly modified form *nagomudrii* or simply translate it into old Romanian as *oameni goli* (naked people) see also: Cartoian 1980, pp. 132-135, esp. p. 134, n. 2 (“*nagomudrii* derives from the Slavic *нагъ*=naked and *мъдръ*=wise, sage, which corresponds to the Greek *γυμνός*=naked/nude and *σοφιστής*=clever, smart, skillfull, even wise”; the English translation and adaptation from Romanian is mine). Al. Cizek, *Foreword*, [in:] *Alexandre le Grand Histoire, Image, Interprétations/Alexander the Great History, Image, Interpretations*, eds. Al. Cizek, M. Cioba, D.-T. Ionescu, Editura Universității din București, Bucharest 2016, pp. 28-29 identifies the *nagomudryi* with the *γυμνοσοφισταί* and also with the Brahmans and they were transformed into the blessed people of the *Makaroi* or *Blajenii*, who descend from the Biblical Rechabits and live in the Earthly Eden or Terrestrial Paradise (this is the Island of the Blessed), under the guidance of Evanthios/Ivantie, who had been formerly called Dandamis, in his terrestrial existence. The encounter between Alexander and the emissary of Ivantie is like a monastic welcome greeting scene.

refuge on that island and lived from the fruits of wild trees and plants. They offered to give Alexander some seven philosophers who knew the way up to the kingdom of *Ivant/Ivantie*, another legendary character unknown from any of the Classical sources available. Alexander gratefully took their seven given guides and sages and, after remarking that a sage is a perfect treasurer, proceeded in his quest. After another fifteen days of marching he arrived at the land of the so called *căpcăunil cătcăuni*, meaning in Romanian folklore man eating monsters and portrayed as dog headed people, who barked like dogs do (*kynoskephalai* in ancient Greek, *Cynocephalae* or even *Cynocephali* in Classical and Mediaeval Latin) in the *Alexandria*. In another version of this story, Alexander's army marched through a land with wild people, having seven hands and seven feet, who fought them for ten days, many of them were killed in action and many, although had not fallen in battle, were taken prisoners, but died of inanition, because Alexander and his men did not know what their food was. This was before he arrived at the land of the dog-headed people<sup>28</sup>. After seven days of continuous marching and fighting, Alexander went through their country, after killing many of them. They arrived at a great river (a clear boundary symbol between physical and/or spiritual realms; needless to say, Alexander moves here in a mythical geography), where a horse of a soldier fell into the water and was eaten by crabs or lobsters. Those lobsters or crabs were huge and even man eaters; Alexander ordered that the soldiers were to dig pits on the river bank and cover them with straws. The crabs or lobsters went out of water one night, fell into the covered holes which worked as traps and were hunted down and killed by Alexander's troops. The soldiers had cooked and eaten the trapped lobsters.

After another one week of marching, Alexander clearly approached another realm: he arrived at a huge mountain, where a giant man had been bound in iron chains and wept; his voice was heard from a three days distance and no one dared to come near him. It is a clear reference to the myth of Prometheus, who appears here still chained on the Caucasus Mountains and still not freed by Heracles. Another fifteen days had passed and Alexander and his army, guided by the seven naked philosophers, had arrived at another great river or water (a clear boundary sign of another realm, in this case a spiritual one, as we shall later see). Their guides pointed the way over the water and said in ancient Greek: there lies *Makaron* (*scl. Makaron Nesos i.e. the island of the Blessed/Happy*)<sup>29</sup>. He ordered a boat to be made and sailed forth to the island, where he encountered birds of white, red, and black color, which sang happy songs like girls do, and also he saw green and gloomy looking birds. On the island

<sup>28</sup> Duțu 1984, p. XXVIII.

<sup>29</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, p. 54, n. 2.

there were wells with good fresh and cold water, sweet as sugar, as well as fruit bearing trees, which tasted also like sugar (or like honey would have been in the older Slavonic original text, when sugar as such was still unknown to the Old World). We are here in the realm of pure spirit or at least of pure myth: Alexander meets the emperor of the birds (a possible metaphor for human souls or for other spiritual entities), *Ivantie*, who sat naked on a golden throne and was crowned with a golden diadem, wreath, or crown. Before the encounter with *Ivantie*, Alexander encountered another naked man, who greeted him in Slavonic: *Mir tebea, brate!* ["Peace be with You, brother"] and Alexander had answered him: *O vseacom radosti!* ["For all the joys!"]. It is important to notice here that all these Slavonic sentences appear in the Romanian text, as surviving elements of the Slavonic original text<sup>30</sup>. The meaning of the first encounter with the naked man remains obscure; he is seen, in the economy of this narrative, as an announcer and forerunner of the essential dialogue between Alexander of Macedon and *Ivantie*, emperor of the birds. The story then follows with many details showing that *Ivantie*'s kingdom is not of this world: under his feet boils water of the color of gold, in a kind of well. Alexander does not seem here to be in a dominant position, as usual: he seems more of a supplicant here, bowing down to the birds' emperor and kisses his hand; in response, *Ivantie* kisses Alexander's forehead in a fatherly way, a clear sign of superior position. It followed then a long discourse of the Birdman Emperor (*Ivantie*), who foretells Alexander's future and that he will conquer the whole wretched and sinful world (meaning here the kingdoms of the Earth), but he will not return to his native land of Macedon, his own country. Alexander offers gifts to *Ivantie*, a plate full of gold coins, good bread, and a flask of wine (symbols of earthly royalty and kingship). The naked Birdman flatly refuses Alexander's gifts, a clear sign that earthly goods mean nothing in his own world. He fills instead a bottle of water from the well underneath his feet and gives it to Alexander, saying to him these words: you must drink it, when you feel that you are growing old and you will have thirty years of age once again. Every man who has the fortune of having the bottle of this water of eternal youth should do so when he feels his strength is failing him and old age comes upon him (the story does not say yet nothing about ladies having this water of immortality though; in the beautiful Irish stories about Oisín/Ossian the son of Finn mac Cool/Cumhail, about Art son of Conn, about the *Echtraíl Imrama* i.e. Adventures/Navigations of Mael Duinn and of Saint Brendan/*Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, as well as in the Romanian folk tale "Youth without old age and life without death", the main hero arrives at a land or island full of

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<sup>30</sup> *Idem*, p. 55, n. 1.

fairy women, where time does not flow like on earth; an hour there could be a century in our own human world on Earth)<sup>31</sup>.

Alexander received this gift and ordered the bottle to be hermetically closed and sealed. This “Island of the Blessed People” was known in the old Romanian language with a name which came from the Church Slavonic idiom as the “Ostrovol Blajinilor” [the Island of the Meek/Good People]. *Ivantie*, greeted by Alexander as the *blajenie* (good or meek in Slavonic) or *fericit* (happy, a Romanian term coming from the Latin word *Felix*) that is the Happy or Blessed *Ivantie* continues with a Biblical Story about the origin of his people (it results from here that the birds Alexander had seen were in fact people’s souls or human spiritual entities in the physical form of birds); according to the Birdman Emperor, after Adam and Eve committed the original sin and were expelled by God from the Garden of Eden (Paradise or *Rai*, another Church Slavonic word which had been borrowed by the Romanian language and during the Middle Ages and the early Modern Age had substituted the old Latin word *Paradisus* of Greek and ultimately Iranian origins), Adam wept and the two sons of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel/*Avel*, fought each other and Cain killed Abel. Until now we are in the Book of Genesis from the Old Testament, the tale of the original sin and of the first fratricide. The story becomes more interesting to us when the Birdman says the following (which is also in the Book of Genesis 4.25-26) that five hundred years after the crime of Cain, after suffering a deep sorrow from the violent death of Abel, Adam knew or entered Eve again (*i.e.* he had carnal or sexual relations with her) and she gave birth to a righteous man called *Sit* (the Patriarch Seth of the Old Testament) and from Seth descended the people of *Ivantie*. Adam and Eve with sons, daughters, and grandchildren of them, some fifteen thousand men, women, and children, **went from the land where God had put them after the Fall from Eden into the world where now people like Alexander and his men are living.** This could be a peculiar interpretation of the Bible: **after falling from Paradise, Adam, Eve, and their progeny were sent not directly to present day Earth, but to an intermediate place between Paradise and Earth.** This is of course one possible line of interpretation; **another is that Paradise or Eden was a terrestrial space, here on Earth, as other verses (quoted in the *Alixandria*) of the Old Testament (Book of Genesis) suggest.** We should see further that the *Alixandria* includes both interpretations. Alexander continued with questions to *Ivantie*, such as which God is worshipped by him and his people and he responded that they worshipped God Sabbaoth (*Savaot-Dumnezeu*) of the Bible. Then followed an unexpected twist of the story, for a pure spiritual realm, as it was supposed to be the kingdom of *Ivantie*: Alexander asks the Birdman Em-

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 54-55; Markale 1971, *passim*.

peror how do they reproduce and multiply themselves, since he had not seen yet any women around. In fact, apart from *Ivantie* and the other naked man who announced his presence, he had not seen any men either on that island. He has seen in fact only singing birds. *Ivantie* answered Alexander that they indeed have women as wives or concubines, but they don't live with them. These girls and women have an island of their own, surrounded by a high wall made of copper (brass or bronze). Once in a year for a full month (thirty days) these ladies come to the island of *Ivantie* and one is left to suppose that the bird people (presumably all males who assume the human form of men for an entire month) marry those women and sleep with them. Thus are born the children of these curious unions; this episode seems like a distant memory of the Greek myth of the Amazons, the female warriors who slept with men only to produce heirs; the boys, after three years of staying with their mothers, were entrusted to their fathers, while the girls followed their mothers in their country, where no man lived (and in the case of the Amazons from Greek mythology girls were trained like boys elsewhere in the arts of war and hunting, they wielded swords, battle axes/*sagaris*, shields, spears, and javelins, they shoot with bows and arrows and had one of their breasts burnt in order to be able to draw the bow well enough, etc.; this martial training of the girls of the island of women is not mentioned though in the Romanian *Alexandria*)<sup>32</sup>. If the man or the woman who were in this kind of marital or matrimonial relationship died, his or her partner did not marry again.

<sup>32</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, pp. 56-57; Dușu 1984, pp. XXVIII a-b; Herodot, *Istoriei* [Herodotus, *Histories*: Bilingual Greek-Romanian Edition, vol. IV, Book 4 *Melpomene*], Teora, Universitas, 1999 (translation, historical notes, and footnotes by Felicia Ștef), Bucharest, Sibiu, pp. 102-107 (Herodot. *Hist.* 4.110-117 writes about the origin of the Sauromatae from the Amazons who fought against the Greek heroes of old, from the mythical times of Heracles and Theseus at the battle of the Thermodon River and, being vanquished by the Greek heroes, were captured and taken into three ships as prisoners of war and slaves; they succeeded nevertheless in killing their captors, captured their ships and sailed to the Maeotis Lake at Kremnoi, near the mouth of the Tanais/Don in the Azov Sea; these Amazons, who plundered the Scythians, by sleeping with the young and unmarried Scythian warriors gave birth to a new people, the Sauromatae or Sarmatians. The young women of these Sauromatae appeared to have been warrior Amazons until they killed an enemy in combat and only then were they allowed the wedding ceremony. A similar legend is narrated by another ancient author (Strabo, *Geography* 11.5.1-5), who has the Amazons having sex only during two special months every year, with the men of a tribe (the so called *Gargaraioil Gargareioi*) from Northern Caucasus, who live beyond a mountain dividing their lands from those of their randomly chosen female companions, in order to produce offspring; the girls went with their mothers and undertook their special warrior training, while the boys went with their fathers. Because they did not know who the real father was of every boy, they considered themselves as fathers of each of the boys, who were thus the sons of all the men of this strange population (*Gargaraioil Gargareioi*). This "island of women" (*ostrovul muierilor* or *insula femeilor* in Romanian) evokes a strange parallel with the *Tir na'n Og* [*the Land of Youth*] or *Tir na'm Ban* [*Land of Women*] of the Irish Gaelic myth (vide Markale 1971), as well as with the charmed land of the fairy ladies from the Romanian folk story gathered by the Romanian scholar Petre Ispirescu and entitled *Tinerete fără Bătrânețe și Viață fără de Moarte* [*Youth without Old Age and Life without Death*] and not only with the Amazons of Classical memory. This is proven by the location of their so called island, just before the gates of Paradise.

After passing by this fairy island of women, said *Ivantie*, only by going straight forward anyone could find the Paradise, girdled by water, with walls made of copper, covered by fire and guarded at the gates by the Cherubim and the Seraphim, formed out of fire and light. Alexander, said *Ivantie* or *Ivant* (a possible form of the Greek name Euanthios/Euanthius?), was destined to go near the gates of Paradise, where angels will come forward and will foretell him everything. Alexander, as any other man or woman of this world, continued the Birdman Emperor, could not see the Paradise with his bodily eyes, but only with his soul. This conclusion fits very well in the interpretation that, after all, Paradise was not a geographical and physical space. Only after Alexander saying and kissing good bye to *Ivantie* does the average reader realize that in fact the birds who sang with human voices were in fact another form of manifestation of the naked philosophers, the *nagomudryi* (*nagomudrii* or γυμνοσοφισταί) and the Birdman Emperor *Ivantie/Ivant*, who sat naked on his throne in his human form was in fact the king of the naked philosophers. His Slavonic epithet of *blajenie* (in Greek μακάριος, in Latin *felix*) was usually applied to dead people and so we find ourselves as readers immersed in a weird world: it is an island of the souls of the deceased people descending from the Biblical Patriarch Seth and once ruled by *Eraclie* (Heracles?!) and Semiramis; in this strange world of seemingly dead people, they appear as not being entirely dead. Their souls assume the form of singing colored birds and these souls assume human form of men in order to beget offspring from fairy women of their own folk. So these *nagomudryi* appeared as going in between the land of the living and the land of the dead; they are not in fact truly dead, but their own form of life or of existence slips or slides between these two worlds (as they slide between human form and birds form). Alexander in his own words would have wanted to stay with *Ivantie* and pursue that kind of quasi-angelic life style, but the emperor of the naked philosophers urged the Macedonian hero on, reminding him that the kingdoms of the world and especially the Indian Empire of Porus awaits him to conquer them all. He must not tarry in the land of the fairies, but return to Earth. He kissed *Ivantie* and all the *nagomudryi* **and received pardon from them**; Alexander came back to his army camp and told his bewildered soldiers all what he had seen there. He then went forth to the other island, the so called “island of women”<sup>33</sup>. He nevertheless did not enter the island, because, as the story teller said, “only God could visit that place”. The fairy island of women was a spiritual realm clearly out of Alexander’s reach. He arrived at the gates of Paradise, which, according to *Ivantie*’s words, were the gates of Heaven, of the realm of pure spirit, which man can see only with his soul, not with his physical eyes. However, before coming to the gates of Par-

<sup>33</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, pp. 56-57, n. 2; Duțu 1984, pp. XXIX a-b.

adise, Alexander and his men marched for ten days and arrived at a field full of beautiful flowers; here all smelled as incense and myrrh and aromatic substances; some of these wonderfully scented flowers were of red color, some were white, some were even black, some were green or dark blue and gloomy looking flowers, and there were also flowers yellow as gold. Alexander had then looked east and saw the gates of Heaven/Paradise and on them he noticed there was the glow of fire and flames. This Paradise stood perched high on a tall mountain. He saw from afar the trees of Paradise, high and tall, without comparison in height and beauty with trees from our Earth. He saw all these with the eyes of his soul when he stood at a physical distance of some fifteen miles from the mountain. Two angels appeared then suddenly before him and told him sharply not to advance any farther, because the mountain was a holy place and he will be burnt by the Cherubim and Seraphim from Heaven. He must return to the world, where the kingdom of the Indian Emperor Porus was waiting for him and his conquering army. Alexander replied to them promptly: "O Good Lord, where-to should I go to the world?" and the angels responded that from Paradise descend four great rivers, one is Tigris, the other is Euphrates, the third one is called Fison, while the fourth one is known as Gheon. From the angels' answer we see that Paradise here is also a terrestrial place; the four rivers correspond as names to the four rivers mentioned by the Book of Genesis (2.11-14) in the Bible as surrounding the Garden of Eden. The angels answered him again to take the course of the Euphrates and descend back to the world, where he was destined to see many more wonders. Alexander is thus spiritually unable to advance any further towards Paradise<sup>34</sup>.

Alexander resumed his conquests after he put a pillar to mark his most advanced point towards Paradise, pillar inscribed with Greek and Hebrew Characters and telling his exploits. He took the water course of the Euphrates and arrived at what seemed an artificial water pond or manmade lake. Here they set camp and Alexander took with him a cook and a dead fish and ordered the cook to wash the fish in the lake. The dead fish revived; it came back to life so well that escaped the cook and swam into the lake, disappearing forever. Alexander had then ordered all his soldiers to wash their horses in this lake, in order to make them stronger. **It was clearly a magical lake, also filled with life giving and life restoring water, while *Ivantie's* well or fountain spring beneath his throne contained the golden water of eternal youth.** After another seven days or a week of marching, Alexander and his troops arrived at the mouth of a dark and big cave. Alexander ordered his men to mount on mares and bind the foals at the mouth of the cave. His herald proclaimed, when Alexander had entered the cave that any man who will enter the cave and take out any-

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<sup>34</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, pp. 57-58.

thing he will find there (woods, stones, earth and so on) will repent no matter if he took little or a lot. The men entered the cave after their king and returned later loaded with gold, silver, and precious stones. Alexander ordered them to divide equally among them the spoils; this was the true meaning of Alexander's herald previous announcement. This episode shows a *katabasis* (κατάβασις) or *descensio ad inferos* (after the *Anabasis* or *Ascensio ad Superos* towards Paradise) in order to get his hands on the riches of the netherworld. Alexander's army continued its advance downward the Euphrates River course and after five more days arrived at another lake. Here Alexander bathed, but was attacked by a huge fish, who tried to swallow and eat him whole. He hurried to shore and grabbed his sword or spear and killed the man eating fish (the conquest of the water beast). The fish had golden scales and Alexander cut him open and found in his heart a precious stone, big as a goose's egg and the stone put on a spear and attached to it had lit the entire camp in its glow. Out of the water, during the night had emerged beautiful girls (another memory of the old water goddesses of rivers, lakes, swamps, and forests, the *Naiades* and Nymphs of the ancient Greeks, the *Iele*, *Frumoase*, *Sânziene*, or *Drăgaice*, *Rusalce/Rusalki* of the Romanian and Slavic folklore), who loudly lamented the killing of their emperor by the hand of the Emperor Alexander. It is clear from here that Alexander went successively through different realms populated by spiritual entities. He had until then conquered the earth (not yet in its entirety), the underworld, and the water world. He arrived at an isolated Church, after one hundred days march, which was dedicated or consecrated ("hram" or dedication to a special Saint or Religious Feast in the Orthodox Christianity of Byzantium) to the Sun (it had the "hramul Soarelui" in Romanian). It is an obvious remembrance of the Sun cult in the polytheistic pagan world and of a heathen temple dedicated to the Sun (*Helios/Sol Invictus*), before the triumph of Christianity. He worshipped there and prayed not to the Sun, to Apollo or to Mithras, but to God Sabbaoth and read here inscriptions or scriptures that told him his future; he will conquer the whole world, he will evade death in combat or by disease or accident, until those near him will poison Alexander. After that foreboding reading in the temple of the Sun, Alexander arrived after ten days in a land with people having only one hand, one foot, and one eye, and endowed with a sheep tail each of them. After sparing their lives, they committed the error of telling Alexander that their flesh is the sweetest meat on earth. Without much ado, Alexander ordered his army and his hunters to surround them all and kill one hundred thousand of them; they were cut down by hunting predator animals kept by Alexander (lions, leopards, etc.) for use in hunting, they were flayed, because their skin was so hard that no sword could cut through it and no arrow, spear, or bullet could pierce it. How Alexander's men succeeded in skinning them it is not explained. In their bowels they had each pearls



and precious stones and their meat had been eaten by the Tatars (Scythians) of Alexander's army. The Macedonians and the other soldiers of Alexander were not as cruel and ferocious as to eat the flesh of creatures with humanoid appearance and also endowed with human voice and reason; only the Tatars from all of Alexander's army could do that<sup>35</sup>.

Alexander finally arrived at the frontier with the Indian Kingdom of Emperor Porus: he had eventually returned from the above mentioned fairy lands to the human world. Porus got word that Alexander had come upon him and his kingdom and he wrote a letter to Alexander. This epistle admonished Alexander to turn back, because he will not succeed in defeating Porus as he had conquered Darius. Moreover, Porus warned Alexander that he will destroy his (Alexander's) army, unless Alexander returns to his native country of Macedon and surrender to Porus all the tributes (*haraciuri*, from an Arabic-Turkish word *haraci* meaning tribute, tax payment) he had gathered from the lands he had until now conquered. Alexander responded with a letter of his own, essentially claiming his conquests as due to the help of God Sabbaoth and not to his own strength; he transmitted to Porus that his gods, like those of Darius, are now in hell (*iad*, another Slavonic word which entered via Church the Romanian language with the clear meaning of inferno or hell), being fake gods. In conclusion, Alexander will win with the help of the True One God, while Porus will be miserably vanquished, because his might rests not upon the True God, but upon fake gods who are demons. Darius himself, not worshipping the One True God, is now in hell and his soul is tormented. Porus by fighting against Alexander is basically fighting against the champion of the One True God (of the Bible) and is doomed to fail. He then challenges Porus to a trial of strength between their two armies in open pitched battle. The Macedonian King sent also another letter to his mother Olympias and to his mentor and teacher Aristotle; in this epistle he recounted his past five years of adventures and conquests far away from home, he apologized that he had not written anything to them while he stayed abroad, and most importantly that *Ivantie* the Emperor of the *Makaron* [*Nesos*] i.e. the island of the Blessed People told him that the Greek gods are in fact in hell and are tormented by demons. It is a survival here of the famous *Epistula Alexandri ad Olympiadem matrem suam et Aristotelem magistrum suum* in one of the popular versions of the Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander Romance*: what is important in the Romanian version is that it shows a monotheistic and almost Christian Alexander and the Macedonian monarch is portrayed as fight-

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<sup>35</sup> *Idem*, pp. 58-59; *Id.* (Duțu 1984), pp. XXIX b-XXX mentioned the boiling of the corpses of the unfortunate and hapless victims, in order for Alexander's men to be able to flay their dead bodies and cut them open.

ing against heathen princes<sup>36</sup>. Alexander concludes his letter to Olympias and Aristotle by telling them that he is now preparing to wage war against Porus in India.

Porus had gathered all his military forces to face Alexander's attack: his army numbered eight hundred thousand cavalry and four thousands of thousands (four millions) infantry. His troops, both Macedonians and Persians, were terrified by the huge numbers of Indian soldiers. We see here not only the usual arithmetical exaggeration of Psuedo-Callisthenes' and Cleitarchus' stamp, but possibly also a distant memory of the Macedonian military strike at the Hyphasis River in India (326 BC), as well as the memory of the Macedonian military rebellion at Opis (324 BC) in Persia. Alexander's response to his soldiers sounded almost as a reproducing of Alexander's discourse at the Hyphasis River: "if you will not follow me, I will go alone to fight Porus", he said. Of course, the medieval chroniclers and copyists had forgotten that the battle against Porus was fought on the shores of the Hydaspes River and not of the Hyphasis, which was after Porus had been defeated, but they conflated the two episodes into one. The Macedonians protested their innocence and blamed the so called "Turks" (*i.e.* the Persians or Iranians) as unwilling to go to war against the Indians, being their neighbors (it is the precise reverse of what all the Classical sources tell us, namely that Alexander had menaced the Macedonians he will go along with his Persians to wage war in the depths of India and later of Arabia, at Hyphasis and at Opis respectively). Alexander reacted by humiliating the "Turks" in his army by making them wear womanly clothes instead of manly military garb. This is the reason, continued our anonymous author, why until this day the Turks wear large clothes, which resemble women's dress. It is another so called "historical explanation" of a cultural difference perceived by the Romanians of the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries between the clothes of Christian Europeans (including of course those of the Romanians themselves) and the clothing of the Ottoman Turks and of the Easterners in general (Persians, Tatars, Arabs, Armenians, and so on and forth). The last letter before departing to war Alexander had written to Philon, his viceroy in Persia, and to his wife, queen (empress says the text) Ruxanda (Rhoxane). He summoned Philon to come with his troops to his help<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> C. Glassé, *Dictionnaire Encyclopedique de l'Islam*, Bordas, Paris 1991 [London: Stacey International, 1989; French translation and adaptation from English by Y. Thoraval; French Foreword by J. Berce], pp. 22-23, *s.v.* "Alexandre le Grand" [*Alexander the Great*]. It seems that also in Islam the figure of Iskandar or Alexander of Macedon, concealed under the epithet of Dhū-l-Qarnayn, *the man with two horns* is seen as a forerunner of Islam and even as a prophetic character, who followed the monotheistic religion of the Patriarch Abraham (Ibrahim) and by his conquests, paved the way for the later expansion of Islam *cf.* J. Sourdél, D. Sourdél, *Dictionnaire Historique de l'Islam*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1996, p. 60 *s.v.* "Alexandre le Grand" [*Alexander the Great*].

<sup>37</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, pp. 60-61.

The war against Porus is described by our author in even more epic and mythical colors as the war against Darius. They used not only human soldiers in this war, but also lions and bulls, elephants, camels, and mules. The combatants on both sides used canons and matchlocks or flintlocks (the use of guns and gunpowder shows a clear influence of the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century military conditions), the numbers of troops engaged in battle is wildly overestimated at millions of combatants and the human losses are also numerically huge and unrealistic; the first battle took place not on the Hydaspes, as conventional history has it, but on the Euphrates. Eventually Porus withdrew with heavy losses, after an undecided battle and broke the bridges over the river behind him. The relief troops of Philon came in and succeeded in crossing the Euphrates by swimming, every horse rider taking with him an infantryman on horseback; Alexander followed suit with his troops, they surrounded the army of Porus from three sides and the Indians were crushed there and then. Porus had nevertheless achieved to escape to his capital city, which were both a military stronghold and a fortified town. He asked help from all his neighboring kings and peoples, twenty four in all, from the East. Alexander, sensing that an eventual battle with all the forces gathered by Porus could be indecisive, challenged Porus to single combat. Alexander and Porus should fight before their two assembled armies drawn in battle order, which were required to keep the distance and not engage in combat against each other. The victor of this duel to the death shall be the winner of the war and the final conqueror. The tall and strong Porus faced Alexander in deadly combat on horseback, like two medieval knights, before their assembled armies, which stood at due distance opposite one to each other. They broke spears in gallop, like in a joust or medieval tournament; they took to their war maces and hit each other ten times on their helmets. Eventually Porus took to his sword, unsheathing it from the scabbard. Alexander used cunning and treachery, telling Porus that they did not agree like this and suggested to him that the Indians were moving on them; Porus turned his body in the saddle to order his troops to keep distance; when his head and gaze were turned to his army, Alexander unsheathed his dagger and mortally stabbed Porus in or under the armpit, where his breastplate armor was articulated and vulnerable. Porus fell dead on the battle ground. Alexander conquered Porus' city and took all his innumerable treasures and riches, as well as his empress and many Indians as prisoners. Porus' queen wailed and wept his murdered husband, accompanied by ten thousand Indian girls, ten Indian chief priests, and ten thousand Indian ordinary priests. Antiochus, Alexander's deputy commander or *voivode*, became Alexander's viceroy of India.

We can see from this less honorable episode of the legendary Alexander's career that his life slid on the slope of moral decline. His trick used in the mortal combat against Porus was as far as it gets from the ethics of medieval Chivalry, as well as from

the warrior standards of Homeric Greek and Trojan heroes of old or of Macedonian Companions (*Hetairoi*) from the lifetime of the historical Alexander of Macedon. The wealth of Porus was however beyond any imagination. From this point on (the war against Porus), the separation between the historical account of the battle between Alexander and Porus and this legendary interpretation of the events is total and absolute. Our brave chronicler seems not at least disturbed, however by this blatant breach of the code of chivalry in duels done by King Alexander, whose hero image remains largely unspoiled and static during this dynamic narrative. We can attribute this situation either to the fact that Porus being an idolatrous king, worshipping fake gods, it does not matter how Alexander ultimately won the day or to the more pragmatic assumption that on the battlefield anything goes. Alexander now proceeded against the Amazons and their queen Talistrada (a clear memory of the Queen Thalestris of the Amazons, who according to the Cleitarchus inspired authors like Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, Q. Curtius Rufus, Trogus Pompeius-Justin, and Plutarch, came to Alexander to the south of the Caspian Sea in order to get pregnant with him, slept with him for thirteen days or nights and then returned to her home)<sup>38</sup>. The kingdom of Talistrada as described by the Romanian *Alexandria* is a reversed image of the usual human society: the monarch was of course a queen without a king, women were the warrior rulers, while men were little better as slaves to the women, giving them tributes in work products and being the tax payers. In short, it was a matriarchal society, opposed to the usual patriarchal societies of the day. Alexander sent a letter to Talistrada, according to his usual custom of asking the neighboring monarchs to bow to his rule and give him tribute in sign of submission. Talistrada responded in kind with a letter, writing to Alexander that she had an army of seventy thousand warrior women, both on horseback (fifty thousand) and on foot (twenty thousand), used to fight in wars and wield javelins and bows. So she fears him not and will face him in battle. Alexander responded with a letter by menacing her city and her people with utter destruction. Talistrada renounced the idea of military resistance and sent a letter to Alexander, telling him that he will dishonor himself by waging war against women, no matter if he will win or lose. Talistrada sent Alexander, in sign of submission,

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<sup>38</sup> Strabo, *Geography* 11.5.4; Plut. *Vita Alex.* 46.1-2: the meeting between Alexander and Queen Thalestris of the Amazons took place, according to our Classical authors, either in Hyrcania south of the Caspian Sea in North-western Iran (or in what is now Azerbaijan) or on the shores of the Tanais-Oreartes/Jaxartes River (Syr-Darya in Central Asia). Plutarch, *op. cit.* even quotes a long list of early authors about Alexander the Great who wrote that Alexander's encounter and sleeping with the Amazon queen had actually taken place (Cleitarchus, Polycleitus, Onesicritus, Antigenes, and Ister) and another list of authors who deny the historical existence of this episode and think of it as a fantasy story (like Aristobulus, Chares, Ptolemy, Anticleides, Philon the Theban, Philip of Theangela, Hecataeus of Eretria, Philip of Chalcidice, and Duris of Samos).

one hundred thousand beautiful girls, crowned with golden wreaths and clothed in red. Alexander sent them untouched back to Talistrada, despite Ptolemy's mild protest and deep sorrow to lose such an opportunity of becoming the leader of this girls' army. Talistrada gave Alexander a yearly tribute and an army corps of ten thousand Amazons every year<sup>39</sup>.

Alexander's trail of conquests did not stop here; he also conquered the land of the unknown people of the *Mersii* and killed their emperor *Evimitrie*. He conquered their capital and chased the pagan people over a mountain for fifteen days. He then set camp at the feet of the mountains and prayed to God Sabbaoth that the mountains should unite and keep the wild peoples descending from the Biblical Gog and Magog away from the lands he conquered and subdued. The pass between the two mountains was thus much narrowed to almost nothing (near to twelve elbows of width) and Alexander ordered his soldiers to make here a strong and high wall of stone and copper mixed with other metals; it is the same episode which appears in the Islamic legend about (*Iskandar*) *Dhū-l-Qarnayn*, who, according to the 18<sup>th</sup> *Sura* of the Quran, the *Surah al-Kahf* (the *Surah of the Cavern*), had built a wall of molten metal (copper and iron) in the pass of Derbent (the Iron Gates or Alexander's Gates) in the Caucasus Mountains, to isolate and close outside those gates the people of *Jūj wa Mā-jūj* (Gog and Magog)<sup>40</sup>. There is also given an elaborate description of Alexander's wall in the Romanian *Alexandria*, with a bell as alarm and deterrence system against the peoples of Gog and Magog, whose long list of strange names is given. It followed then the episode of Alexander's going to the kingdom *Mastridl/Amastrid* (Amastris?) of the empress *Cleofila* (the Cleophas of Classical sources from the Indian Mountains of the Hindukush/Paropamisus?) and the adventures undertaken by Alexander in dealing with *Cleofila* and with her two sons, *Candusal* and *Dorit*; *Candusal* fled from Alexander and got captured by the rival emperor *Evagrid*, but has been finally freed by Alexander, who defeats *Evagrid* and conquers his land. Alexander disguised as Antiochus becomes blood brother with *Candusal*. Alexander in all these adventures impersonates his subordinate commander *Antioh* (Antiochus), while Antiochus impersonates Alexander. Alexander in the guise of Antiochus visits Cleophas, who discov-

<sup>39</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, pp. 62-66.

<sup>40</sup> Glassé 1991, *loc. cit.* According to the esoteric interpretation of this text (*Surah al-Kahf*), the wall built by *Dhū-l-Qarnayn* (the Two Horned One) is the Islamic law, the *Shariah*, which will endure until the end of times; when the wall of the Two Horned One will fall, the wild peoples descended from Gog and Magog will invade the world and apocalyptic events should follow (the end of the world as we know it, before the Last Judgment). Even the Arabic word *qarn* had an exoteric meaning (horn) and an esoteric meaning, meaning epoch, cycle of time. *Dhū-l-Qarnayn* is the man of two epochs (before and after the coming of Islam), not only the man of two horns (the traditional image on coins of Alexander the Great with the ram horns of the Egyptian-Libyan god Amun/Zeus-Ammon), if we choose to identify this shadowy mythical figure of *Dhū-l-Qarnayn* with *Al-Iskandar* (Alexander of Macedon).

ers his true identity and finally, after menacing him adopts Alexander as her own son. Before this episode of Alexander's adoption by Cleopis, Alexander in disguise and impersonating Antiochus visits a cave and goes to see hell, where he saw the Greek gods Apollo and Ammon being tormented by demons, he spoke to Darius his father in law, he saw his enemy Porus and also the ancient emperor Sachus, through whose empire he had crossed in his quest; the image of hell in the Romanian *Alexandria* is filled with scenes worthy of the imagination of a Hieronymus Bosch, like the first vision of two demons carrying a grape on a pole, then another two demons carrying a nutshell on another pole (symbols of hidden meaning), he saw beasts with human bodies and faces of lions, he saw the condemned souls of the deceased chained in iron chains by pillars of stone and tormented by snakes and so on and forth. *Candusal* had warned Alexander not to enter that cave, because people who had entered it either did not come back to earth or they turned back insane. Alexander nevertheless succeeded not only in entering the cave and coming back alive and well, but also he questioned Sachus and Darius about the meanings of what he saw in the Netherworld and was told that the beasts with human bodies and lion heads were cruel and ferocious kings and nobles, thus punished for eternity. Alexander after the episode of Cleopis came back to Persis, to *Ruxandal/Rhoxane* his empress and divided his empire among his friends, who acted henceforth as his viceroys or vassal satraps: Antiochus ruled India, Philon had as his share Persis, Antigonus the mythical land of *Merisidon* the kingdom of *Evrimitrie*, Philip had Asia and the sea of Cilicia with all islands; Ptolemy took Egypt, Jerusalem, and Pelagonia (*Pelagonitis*); *Leomedus* (Laomedon?) took England, Venice, and Poland; Seleucus had as province Rome; *Finec* had Germany, France, and the other western European lands. One can easily see from this enumeration that historical or geographical considerations had little impact upon this Romanian version of the *Alexandria*. The main idea was that Alexander was the  $\kappa\omicron\sigma\mu\omicron\kappa\rho\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\rho$ , the world ruler from the Atlantic shores of Europe to India and he divided his empire between his generals, a dim memory of the period of Alexander's  $\delta\acute{\iota}\alpha\delta\omicron\chi\omicron\iota$ . Alexander finally came in the biblical land of *Senar* and *Sid*, where Job (*Iov*) once lived and suffered. He summoned to his court at the *marele Vavilon* ["great Babylon"] Olympias his mother and Aristotle his teacher and they came from Macedon to meet him, unlike what "true history" teaches us. All this end of Alexander's story is full of moral and spiritual teachings given in form of fables and anecdotes of possible Classical, Oriental (Middle Eastern), and Biblical origin: the story of the man who escaping a lion, climbed a tree, where a huge snake descended towards him; below was the lion, above the serpent. The tree was above the shore of water and he wanted to jump into the water, in order to save his life, but saw in the water a crocodile ready to eat him (the story of *Candusal* told to Alexander, a metaphor or alle-

gory of the frailty of human life; the tree here is the Tree of Life and of Universe, the *Axis Mundi*, common to many mythologies worldwide, including the Norse Germanic, where *Yggdrasil* the tree of the worlds has also a serpent/dragon at his roots and an eagle above, animals with different meanings than in Alexander's legend). Alexander in his last stages of his life and reign appears more concerned with giving away gifts to all his dear ones and administering justice to his subjects with wisdom and righteousness (a pretext for even more moral anecdotes, stories, and fables, like that of the thief pardoned by Alexander, who being caught and brought to trial before Alexander, said to him that because he had stolen a few coins or killed few people is going to be hung, while Alexander who plundered kingdoms and massacred whole peoples is acclaimed as world emperor); from the young and reckless heroic young warrior, full of courage and even cruelty to the wise, generous, and just world ruler, the transformation of the legendary Alexander is now complete (unlike that of the "true" historical Alexander the Great). Alexander's dream before his death is another interesting episode, when Jeremiah the Biblical Prophet appears to Alexander in his dream and forebodes his earthly death and the journey of his soul before the Throne of God for receiving Judgment. It is announced here the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection of Bodies of the dead all at about thirty years of age, the medical Hippocratic doctrine of the four elements or humors of the human body, and the Idea of the Souls' Last Judgment (Jeremiah taught basics of Christian religion to Alexander). Finally Alexander is poisoned by a bad woman from Macedon called Minerva (like the Roman goddess corresponding to the Greek goddess Pallas Athena), who had two sons, *Vreonuș* the cup bearer (*Paharnic*) and *Levcaduș* the horse master (*comis*) in Alexander's service. She sent them a special herb or grass and told them to give it to Alexander mixed with his drink in a cup, if he refuses to give them Macedon to rule; because if they will not return home, she will commit suicide. *Vreonuș* wanted to cast away this herb and kindly asked his brother to do so, but *Levcaduș* boldly went before Alexander and asked him Macedon to rule. Alexander gently told him that he cannot, because he wanted to remain to his death Alexander of Macedon, but offered him Russia, Great Cilicia, and Asia instead, a more than generous proposition. It appeared that Alexander tried to avoid, however, the fate of King Lear until his very end! The horse master insisted once more and Alexander again offered him another kingdom to rule, but not Macedon. The horse master withdrew and mixed his poison in Alexander's wine and presented the cup to Alexander at the feast, which drank it to the full. Sensing that he had been poisoned, Alexander called his physician Philip and asked him for an antidote; the medical doctor gave him a *tiriac*, the only antidote to this kind of venom, which could only delay and not cancel the poisoning. He told Alexander that this is all he can do for him and that he had earned three more days

of life to put things in order with his empire. In a quick succession of events, *Vreonus* kills himself with his own dagger, *Levcadus* is killed by Alexander's stallion *Ducipal* (Bucephalas), seen here as an unicorn (*inorog*) which stabs with his horn the traitor *Levcadus* through his heart. Finally, in the arms and among the tears of his dear ones (Olympias, Rhoxane, and Aristotle), after being put by Philip in the disemboweled body of a horse to give him warmth while he was trembling with cold before having high fever, Alexander gave his final admonitions to his Macedonians and told them about Christ' Last Judgment of the Souls of all people, dead and alive as well. They will be all naked before the Rightful Judge. He asked them not to forget about Macedon and to bring his corpse to be buried in Alexandria of Egypt. Alexander's last prediction is a contemporary reality of the Ottoman conquest and rule over the Balkans for five hundred years or so (from the late 14<sup>th</sup> to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century): in the last days of this world, the Turks will conquer Macedon and the Macedonians and Greeks will be slaves to the Turks, as the "Turks" (Persians) are slaves to Macedonians and Greeks in Alexander's days. He told that must be cursed the man who feeds in his house the assassin of kings or princes, the whore in his own household, and the traitor of cities and kingdoms. He therefore gave Ptolemy the cup with what was left from the wine mixed with poison and told him so: "**Drink, brother, from the cup that you have given me!**", a clear hint that he suspected foul play from his Companion and brother in arms Ptolemy (suspect to have been behind the plot by Minerva and her two sons), but Ptolemy emptied the cup to the dogs, thus claiming his innocence (*and saving his own life*). The Great Emperor Alexander died well, said our story, in the Biblical land of Ghersim near Egypt (so it appeared he had been moved from Mesopotamian Babylon in his last days), at the date of 15<sup>th</sup> August<sup>41</sup>. Rhoxane (*Ruxanda*),

<sup>41</sup> The Assumption to Heaven of the Holy Mother of God (15<sup>th</sup> of August) is a date which appears at least twice in the Romanian *Alexandria* ([the death and royal burial of Darius and the death of Alexander himself *vide* Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, p. 48 and p. 83]). This 15<sup>th</sup> of August was also the date when the Romanian Prince C. Brâncoveanu of Wallachia and his sons, son in law, and his most faithful and trusted counselor had been executed at Constantinople (Istanbul) by the Ottomans in AD 1714. There is a possibility to link this date with deaths of emperors, kings, and princes, especially if we remember that Antonio Maria del Chiaro, the personal secretary of C. Brâncoveanu, mentioned that a first printed edition of the Romanian *Alexandria* (now unfortunately lost) had been achieved at Bucharest in the "year of our Lord 1713", probably under the expert supervision of the learned monk and scholar Archbishop Antim Ivireanul (Antim of Iveria *i.e.* Iberia in the Caucasus or Georgia) *vide* Carrojan 1980, p. 134: "o sia Storia di Alessandro il Macedone, stampata in lingua valaca, ma detta Storia è veramente curiosa per le molte favole che in essa vedonsi frammischiate" (A.M. del Chiaro, *Istoria delle moderne rivoluzioni della Valachia*, Venice 1718); the first preserved edition of the *Alexandria* in the Romanian language will be that of Peter/Petru Bart of Sibiu (Hermannstadt, Nagyszeben) in Transylvania, under Habsburg rule (AD 1794). It is not impossible that a parallel will have imposed itself in the mind, heart, and soul of the Romanian reader from Wallachia between the tragic deaths of Alexander and Darius and the execution of Constantin Brâncoveanu (1654-1714; regnal years 1688-1714), who died as Darius himself did, at the same age of sixty years old, according to the Romanian *Alexandria*.



after kissing Alexander thrice, stabbed herself to death with Alexander's dagger. She died and was buried beside her beloved Alexander, in a golden coffin in Alexandria of Egypt, concludes dramatically this fantasy story, so different from the tale of the historical characters of Alexander and Rhoxane. Olympias (*Olimpiada*) turned to Macedon and died as well of grief. Ptolemy will rule Alexandria of Egypt; Antiochus will rule India that once belonged to the Emperor Porus. Philon ruled Persis (Iran), while Antigonus ruled Rome and all West (a dim and distorted historical memory of the existence of at least four of the important *Diadochoi* of Alexander the Great). Thus ends the Romanian story about Alexander of Macedon<sup>42</sup>.

## Conclusions

The Romanian version of Alexander's legend is a fantasy story, full of mythical elements of various origins (Greek-Roman, European, Egyptian, Middle Eastern, and Biblical), which totally transformed the historical Alexander of Macedon or Alexander the Great in a mythical hero and an epic character of almost super human proportions. He conquers not only the whole inhabited earth known before the discovery of the New Worlds in the 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries by Western European explorers and conquerors, but also mythical and spiritual realms populated by mythical creatures born out of wild fantasy and imagination. After conquering Darius' realm and at least half of the known world, he goes to the Island of the Blessed; he passes by the Island of Women, and arrives (but could not enter Paradise) at the Gates of Heaven (Paradise). He descends back to the world and conquers it up to India and the mythical land of the Amazons and descends to the depths of hell and still comes back loaded with even more knowledge. He defends the world through prayer to God and through Faith that literally moves mountains and through building up the wall of metal and stone blocking the mountain passes against the descendants of Gog and Magog, like in the Islamic versions of his legend. He is told the secrets of the After Life and of the future Christian religion by the Biblical Prophet Jeremiah; he abjures the false Hellenic gods and worships instead the One True God. He dies by treason and poisoning from angry and envious subjects, although he has become a most righteous king, after being the conqueror of the world. From his epic saga in the Romanian version only lacks the Western episode of Alexander's flight in a kind of aircraft to Heavens (replaced by the ascension on the Mountain towards Paradise) and his descent into the depths of the sea in a kind of submersible ship or globe. This last adventure is substituted with his above mentioned descent in the Netherworld. The so cal-

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<sup>42</sup> Chițimia, Simonescu eds. 1963, pp. 67-84; Dușu 1984, pp. XXX-XLIV.

led “Romanian Alexandria” recreates Alexander of Macedon as a hero made out of the stamp Gilgamesh was once made, in the lands where the “true” historical Alexander has met with his death and his so called historical immortality.

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#### THE LEGEND OF ALEXANDER OF MACEDON IN THE LATE MEDIAEVAL AND EARLY MODERN MANUSCRIPTS OF THE ROMANIAN PRINCIPALITIES

##### S u m m a r y

The main aim of this quite long study was to draw an essential image of Alexander of Macedon as he appears through the pages of the Romanian *Alexandria*: somehow the true essence of this hero and of his legend had eluded me many times. Compared with the Romanian *History of Troy*, so faithful still to Homer and his *epigonoi*, the Romanian *Alexandria* seems to the untrained reader of old Romanian literature (like the author of these lines confesses to be) a collection of wild fantasy stories. This article tries to highlight the universal mythological *topoi* which pervade the Romanian legend of Alexander the Great, as well as the place of this tale in the larger context of the popular old Romanian literature and the stories of some of its manuscripts and early printed versions, stories which are sometimes even stranger than the tale of the main character of the legend, Alexander himself.

**Keywords:** Alexandria, Alexander of Macedon, the Blessed, Island of Women, Amazons, Cleitarchus, Pseudo-Callisthenes, Nagomudrii, Gates of Paradise

LEGENDA ALEKSANDRA MACEDOŃSKIEGO W PÓŹNOŚREDNIOWIECZNYCH  
I WCZESNONOWOŻYTNYCH MANUSKRYPTACH KSIĘSTW RZYMSKICH

Streszczenie

Głównym celem tego dość długiego artykułu jest nakreślenie obrazu Aleksandra Macedońskiego, jaki wyłania się z kart rzymskiej *Aleksandrii*: w jakiś sposób prawdziwa istota tego bohatera i jego legendy wielokrotnie mi umykały. W porównaniu do rzymskiej *Historii Troi*, wciąż tak wiernej Homerowi i jego *epigoni*, rzymska *Aleksandria* wydaje się niewprawionemu czytelnikowi literatury starorzyskiej (do bycia którym przyznaje się autor tych słów) kolekcją burzliwych, fantastycznych historii. Niniejszy artykuł stara się wypuklić uniwersalne mitologiczne toposy, które przenikają rzymską legendę Aleksandra Wielkiego, oraz miejsce tej opowieści w szerszym kontekście starorzyskiej literatury ludowej i historii zawartych w niektórych jej rękopisach i wczesnych starodrukach; historii, które czasami są nawet dziwniejsze niż opowieść o głównym bohaterze tej legendy, o samym Aleksandrze.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Aleksandria, Aleksander Macedoński, Wyspy Szczęśliwe, Wyspa Kobiet, Amazonki, Klejtarchos, Pseudo-Kallistenes, Nagomudrii, Bramy Raju