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THE PLACE OF THE LEGEND OF ALEXANDER OF MACEDON IN THE LARGER CONTEXT OF THE OLD ROMANIAN LITERATURE

The arrival of the Alexander Romance in the Romanian principalities was relatively late. The first Slavonian-Serbian manuscript of the legend of Alexander of Macedon (Alexander the Great to conventional historiography) dates from the second half of the 16th century. It has been discovered in the Romanian province of Moldavia (which at that time of the apparition of the first manuscript of the Slavonic Alexander Romance was still a feudal principality), in the library of the Neamț monastery, near the eastern range of the Carpathian Mountains. The precise date of the writing of this manuscript is AD 1567 (or AD 1562, according to other chronological estimate) and it is a copy of a 13th century Slavonic manuscript, which had been probably written in Serbia or in Croatia. This supposedly Serbian/Croatian Slavonic original was in his turn a Slavonic translation (made in the land of Croatia) from the Latin *Historia Alexandri Magni* of the Archbishop Leo of Naples (10th century CE). The ultimate origin of this Latin version of the Alexander Romance was the Latin translation of Julius Valerius in the 4th century CE from Pseudo-Callisthenes' Greek Alexander Romance. This Slavonic version that arrived in Moldavia was primarily a part of a Slavic Orthodox Religious-Cultural Commonwealth, but still not a part of the Romanian literature written in Romanian (which is nevertheless a Romance language). The oldest manuscript of the Alexander legend written in Romanian language was discovered in Transylvania, in the village of Sînpietru (Saint Peter), and it was written beginning with the recorded date of 15th of June AD 1619¹. This very early Romanian version of the Alexander Romance was printed and edited for the first time three centuries later, by Nicolae Cartoian, in 1922. The second version of the Alexander Romance in the Romanian language was printed (perhaps at Bucharest or Târgoviște in Wallachia) by the *Metropolit* Archbishop of Walachia, Antim Ivireanul (Antim of Iveria *i.e.* Iberia

¹ Vide F. Zgraon, *s.v.* "Alexandria", [in:] (AA.VV.) D.H. Mazilu, Gh. Chivu, E. Pavel, L. Bădescu (coord. and rev.), *Enciclopedia Literaturii Române Vechi* [*The Encyclopaedia of the Old Romanian Literature*], Bucharest: Editura Muzeului Literaturii Române, 2017, pp. 31-33 (see p. 32), who gives as dates of the copying of this Romanian *Alexandria* the period between 15th of June-4th of August 1620 (not 1619, as the older edited writings on this topic).

of the Caucasus in present day Georgia), in AD 1713, but it has been unfortunately lost. The first printed edition of the Alexander Romance in Romanian language has been made at Sibiu, in the typography of Petru (Peter) Bart, in AD 1794². There were other printed editions of the Alexander Romance in the Romanian idiom (although in the Cyrillic script and alphabet), at Movilău (Mogilev in Ukraine?) in the typographic house of the proto-priest Mikhail Strealbitsky in 1796, and before that at Iași (Jassy the capital of the Romanian principality of Moldavia) in 1790 by Năstase Negrule³.

The Romanian Alexandria is also a reflection in the old Romanian literature of the Western Romances of Chivalry, a literary genre which began to spread north of the Lower Danube in the Romanian speaking area (Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania) very late, during the late 18th century. Among these we can count the *Istoria Troii* (*Historia Destructionis Troiae*), *Istoria lui Imberie* (*The Story of Imberius*, having as inspiration found the French Novel *Pierre et la belle Maguelonne*), *Istoria lui Erotocrit* (*The Erotocritus/Erotocrites*, the Greek version of the French Romance *Paris et Vienne*), *Filerot cuși Antusa* (*Philerotus with/and Anthusa*, another Romanian version of the Greek *Erotocritus*), *Iliodor* (an adaptation having as ultimate source the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus), and the novel having the warrior *Polition* as title and central hero: the ultimate source of this romance has never been discovered⁴. With

² Alexandru Suceveanu, *Alexandru cel Mare [Alexander the Great]*, Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 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 Nicolae 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 Dan Simonescu; Foreword by Dan Zamfirescu)*], Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1980, p.133 AD 1562 is the date of the Serbian-Croatian Slavonic manuscript of the *Alexandria* copied at the Neamț monastery.

³ Alexandru Dușu, *Alexandria ilustrată de Năstase Negrule*, Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 1984, pp. 5-10 *ssq.* (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.Dușu embraced the date given by N. Cartoian in his *History of Old Romanian Literature (vide supra n. 1)*.

⁴ Dușu 1984, pp. 6-7: the Romanian versions have been drafted in the 18th century mainly after Greek prototypes from the 17th and 18th 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 15th-16th centuries and also Greek in the late 17th and 18th centuries (at least in Wallachia and Moldavia) were current languages of culture, along with Romanian language written in Cyrillic characters, starting from the 16th and especially from the 17th century [and in the Orthodox cultural environment of the Romanian lands Latin was quite rarely used during the 15th-18th 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 per-

the exception of *Istoria Troii* [*The Story of Troy*], known in Slavonic version from the early 15th century and of the *Alexandria*, known first in Slavonic and then in Romanian language in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, all the other adventure novels and Chivalry Romances appear very late in Romanian, being mainly translations from Greek originals (*Aethiopica* of Heliodorus, an ancient Greek romance, was directly translated from Greek into Romanian by the humanist prince of Moldavia, Dimitrie Cantemir himself, at the end of the 17th century)⁵.

sons in the Romanian speaking area from the late 16th century, during the times of Michael the Brave of Wallachia (1593-1601); it appears in Romanian version in the *Codex Negoeanus* of Ion Românu [John the Romanian] din Simpietru (Hașeg) in the years 1619-1620. *Historia Destructionis Troiae* was long known before in the Romanian cultural space through Greek Byzantine chronographs translated into Romanian in the 17th century and before that, even in the early 15th 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)].

⁵ *Vide* Duțu 1984, p. 7. According to N. Cartoian, *Istoria Literaturii Române Vechi* [*History of the Old Romanian Literature*], Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 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 3rd century CE, in the *koine* Greek. It had been translated in Latin sometime in the 4th 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 8th or in the 9th century CE) and eventually in the 10th 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 10th century) as 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 12th 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

The real boom, so to speak, of the Romanian written (both manuscripts and printed versions) Chivalry and Epic romances was at the end of the 18th and early (the first half) 19th centuries, due to the confluence of (Byzantine and Post-Byzantine) Greek, Ottoman, and Western European cultural influences (the Western cultural elements came mainly through Austrian Habsburg, Phanariote Greek, and Russian intermediaries). *Erotocrites* and the *Story of Imberius*, as well as the *Alexandria*, have been repeatedly copied by hand and also printed. In 1790, the school teacher Ștefan (Stephen) from Putna copied *Alexandria* at the command of a merchant from Chișinău, a certain Donie. The same book was bought in 1808 or 1809 by a certain tailor named Constantin from a police captain (*zapciu*) called Panait⁶. In other words, beginning

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 13th 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.

⁶ *Idem*, 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 *Erotocrit*, *Istoria lui Imberie*, *Istoria Troii*, and *Iliodor* in the 18th-19th 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 14th-15th 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 Metropolitan 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 16th 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 [Priest] Ion Românu [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 11th-12th centuries and until the battle of Mohacs AD 1526 and the Ottoman conquest of Buda in AD 1541); it had been copied there between the years 1619-1620. This translation in Romanian of the *Alixandria* (sic!) had been diffused in many (nowadays lost) handwritten copies also beyond the Carpathians, in Wallachia and Moldavia. During the reign of the cultured

with the 19th century, a century that falls beyond the scope of this brief intervention, the market of both the hand-copied book and of the printed book expanded, and popular books, such as *Alexandria*, *Erotocrites*, *Istoria lui Imberie*, *Sindipa*, *Halima*, *Varlaam și Ioasaf* (*Barlaam and Ioasaf*, a Christian story that is in fact a tale of the life of Buddha Sakyamuni in Christian terms)⁷, etc. – books which combined Western and Eastern mythical and literary *topoi* – multiplied, because gradually (albeit very slowly indeed) new Romanian social groups under the social layer of high aristocracy and clergy became literate (the small nobility and even a nascent Romanian bourgeoisie in the late 18th and early 19th centuries)⁸. We do not analyze here all the subsequent history of the *Alexandria* in the Romanian culture of the 19th century and of the early 20th century, because it is beyond the purpose of this study that stops around AD 1800. Neither are we analyzing in this study all the adventures of Alexander of Macedon in the Romanian *Alexandria*, most of them common to all the other Medieval *Alexandrias* of other languages and cultures, nor the transformation of Alexander from an ancient Macedonian monarch to a feudal prince. We end this brief introduction by underlining the very title of the Romanian *Alexandria*: *Istoriia a Alexandrului celui mare din Machedonia și a lui Dariu din Persida Împăraților* [*The History of Alexander the Great from Macedon and of Darius from Persia of the Emperors*], in the Romanian translation (from Slavonic language) by Dimitrie Iercovici, printed in Sibiu in the typography of Petru Barț (Peter Bart or Bartz), in the year of Our Lord 1794. The very title says clear and loud that this book deals with both the exploits and deeds of Alexander the

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 famous (and infamous) great Romanian writer Mihail Sadoveanu, in the 1920-s. *Vide* Cartoian 1980, pp. 133-134.

⁷ O. Drimba, *Istoria Culturii și Civilizației* [*History of Culture and Civilization*], Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1985, vol. I, pp. 238-239, 305-307.

⁸ Many valorous Romanian and foreign scholars have contributed a lot in this field of investigation: it is enough to mention here the studies of late Ion C. Chițimia and late Nicolae Cartoian, of late Professor Dan Simonescu and late Professor Alexandru Dușu, or of late Acad. Virgil Căndea, of Prof. Cătălina Velculescu, of the younger Ileana Stănculescu, to name but a few of them.

Great of Macedon and of his opponent Darius the Emperor of Persia, thus honouring the memory of both the conqueror and the conquered⁹.

Two very important manuscripts of the Romanian Alexander Romance are the manuscript no. 3093 of the B.A.R./Biblioteca Academiei Române [The Romanian Academy's Library], which is now located in Bucharest and the manuscript nr. 55 of the Astra Library (or the Library of the Astra Society) from Sibiu (Hermannstadt) in Transylvania¹⁰; during the Middle Ages (the 11th to the early 16th century for Transylvania; the late 13th to the early 16th century for Wallachia; the middle 14th to the early 16th century for Moldavia) and the Early Modern Period (the 16th-first half of the 19th centuries), Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania were three distinct principalities (Wallachia and Moldavia being the Romanian voivodates/principalities born in the wake of the Tatar-Mongol invasion from AD 1241 and the Tatar-Mongol

⁹ Vide Cartoian 1980, p. 134 and Dușu 1984, p. 9: before the Transylvanian printing of the *Alexandria*, the school teacher Gheorghe from the school of the Putna monastery in Moldavia said in 1781 that he had written a manuscript of the *Alexandria* in the best interest of historical accuracy, he thought. There is also a Romanian manuscript from the year 1777 which includes the *Alexandria* and a chapter from the *Istoria Troii* [*History of Troy*], some hagiographic literature like the *Viața Sfântului Alexie omul lui Dumnezeu* [*Life of Saint Alexis, the man of God*]. Those manuscripts were hard from isolated, they were in fact bound together as books: therefore the *Istoria lui Imberius* [*History of Imberius*] had been bound as a single book along with the *Istoria distrugerii Ierusalimului* [*History about the Destruction of Jerusalem*], with a theological work about the journey of the human soul after death through the so-called *vămile văzduhului* [*the custom posts of the air*], writings about popular medicine, and a fragment from the *Istoria Țării Românești* [*History of Wallachia*] and even fragments from other writings. The manuscript of the year 1742 written by the copyist Matei Voileanu in Transylvania in the Olt River region (on the upper course of the Olt), *Istoria Troii* [*History of Troy*] stays bound together with religious texts about the cult of the Orthodox Saints, biographies of Saints (hagiographic literature of the *Vitae Sanctorum* type), fragments of chronographies or historical chronicles, Patristic Orthodox Christian literature, as well as fragments from the Italian writing *Fiore di virtù*, of course translated into Romanian. In stark contrast with the naive conviction of Church school teachers like Gheorghe from Putna, who considered the *Alexandria* a piece of authentic and true history even at the end of the 18th century, very erudite and learned boyars like Miron Costin and the *Stolnic* (great Wallachian and Moldavian dignitary, who was entrusted with aulic function concerning the princely court and table in both Wallachia and Moldavia) Șerban Cantacuzino, almost a century before in the late 17th century spoke and wrote of *Alexandria* as a collection of fairy tales and fabulous folk stories (Dușu 1984, p. 11). There were also other popular moral-philosophical writings and chivalric romances that deeply influenced the culture of the Romanian readers from the 18th and early 19th century (the first quarter of the 19th century) in all three regions of Wallachia, Transylvania, and Moldavia, like the *Erotocrit*, *Filerot cu Antusa* [*Philerotes with/and Anthousa*], *Istoria Sindipei* [*The History of the Philosopher Sindipa*], the *Halima* (like *Sindipa* of ultimately Indian and Persian origin, transmitted via the *Arabian 1001 Nights* in the Ottoman Turkish culture and from here to the Balkan Greek and Slavic cultures and from south of the Danube these stories entered Romanian culture sometime at an imprecise date between the 17th and the 18th centuries, if not even earlier in the late 16th century) vide Dușu 1984, p. 10.

¹⁰ 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:] Cizek Al., Cioba M., Ionescu D.-T. (eds.), *Alexandre le Grand Histoire, Image, Interprétations/Alexander the Great History, Image, Interpretations*, Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2016, pp. 353-369.

yoke of the second half of the 13th and the early decades of the 14th century, while Transylvania being organized and ruled as a vassal autonomous or half autonomous Voivodate/Principality part of the Hungarian Kingdom between the 11th-15th centuries by the Hungarian Crown, after the Hungarian conquest of Ardeal/Inner Transylvania/former Dacia in Antiquity and of the *Partium* counties of the territorial districts of Banat, Crișana, Bihor, and Maramureș in the outer lands located between Ardeal/Érdely/Siebenburgen and Pannonia/Hungary proper). The ms. 3093 of the *Alexandrial Alixandria* (or *Alixăndria/Alexăndria*) is entitled *Povestirea Împăratului Alexandru de Machedonia* [*The Tale of the Emperor Alexander of Macedon*] and is bound together with other manuscripts: preceding this manuscript we encounter the Romanian translation and Slavonic originals of several Serbian law textbooks of ultimately Byzantine Greek-Eastern Roman origin, legally applied and used on the territories of Romanian countries beginning with the 15th century CE (it contains a shortened version of the *Syntagma* of Matthaëus/Matei Vlastares, several penitential articles of Canonical Greek Orthodox Law by Ioannes/Ioan Nesteutes, a Serbian translation of the Roman-Byzantine laws of Constantine's and Justinian's: by Constantine is perhaps understood here the Byzantine Emperor Constantine V Copronymus the Isaurian of the 8th century CE or the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetes from the 10th century CE, both famous Byzantine law givers, and most probably not Constantine the Great the Roman Emperor from the 4th century CE; and of course it contains also the famous *Zakonik* or Codex of Laws given by the great Serbian Czar of the 14th century CE, Stepan Dušan/Ștefan Dušan from AD 1349-1354). After the ms. 3093 follows a medical-pharmaceutical writing entitled in the Old Romanian Language *Pintru liacuri arată* [*For Remedies* or *About Remedies* as an approximate English translation], where it appears the old word of a healing product called *tiriac*¹¹.

The Romanian *Alixandria* (known forms are also *Alexandria* and *Alixăndria*) was not the only early tale or story about a legendary or myth-historical character that appeared in the Old Romanian Literature of the 16th-17th centuries: we leave aside many purely religious texts, either Christian Orthodox or Heterodox (heretical writings, according to the official point of view and dogmas of the Orthodox Church), influenced either by Bulgarian Bogomilism (a dualistic heresy of possible Manichæan and Paulician-Pavlician origins, from the lands of Persia-Mesopotamia/Iran and Iraq and from Anatolia and Armenia in the 3rd/4th -9th century CE, which flourished in Thrace-Moesia/Bulgaria between the 10th and the 12th centuries, but lingered on also in hidden forms of folk tales and popular rituals in Bulgaria and Wallachia at least until the 13th-14th centuries; it is possible, albeit not at all sure that some ideas of the

¹¹ *Idem*, pp. 353-354, n. 1-3.

Bogomily to have influenced the birth of Catharism in Southern France, between the 11th and the early 13th centuries) or by Hungarian Calvinism and Unitarianism and by German (Saxon) Lutheranism in Transylvania (the Reform of the 16th century). The Orthodox Hagiographic Literature like the *Life of Saint Sisinie* (from the 4th century CE of ultimately Assyrian and Egyptian origin) and the *Life of Saint Alexius/Alexie* (of both Byzantine and Old French origin, from the 11th century CE, originating ultimately from a 5th century CE Syriac hagiography that had been later been reworked in Byzantium/Constantinople and Rome and finally in 11th century France by an unknown minstrel, a *jongleur* or *trouvère*) is represented in the Romanian-Slavonic Literature beginning from the 16th century; it is interesting to notice here that even popular fairy tale characters like Sfânta Vineri (Saint Vineri), a female Saint who was not mentioned by any Church Calendar (be it Orthodox or Catholic, but was a popular survival of a pre-Christian goddess; possibly the transformed Roman goddess Venus in a very superficially Christianized form, perhaps influenced by the cult of the real Christian Orthodox Saint Parascheva), has found a way in the Romanian hagiographic literature¹².

The popular Romance (therefore also the *Alexandria*) had been preceded (and accompanied) in the Old Romanian Literature by other literary genres or species: the pedagogical or didactic-*parenthetic* (exhortatory) literature, such as the Slavonic *Teachings of Neagoe Basarab* (Prince of Wallachia) to his son *Teodosie* [Old Romanian form of the Greek-Latin name Theodosius] from the beginnings of the 16th century (it is a collection of parental and also princely advices, admonitions, and counsels that are given by Neagoe Basarab the reigning Prince of Wallachia between 1512-1521 to his son and heir Teodosie, concerning matters of statecraft and politics, the management of the Princely Court, the administration of the state and of justice, military art and warfare, the use in war of a select body of elite knights to act as Prince's body guard and crack troop of warriors, the social skills required for the Prince to select his inner circle of noblemen or boyars and how to select them, which are the virtues required for the Prince and which are the virtues required for his subjects, especially for his courtiers, which vices are to be shunned by the Prince both in himself and in his subjects and close collaborators, how the Prince must act at court banquets and in the dealings with envoys and ambassadors of foreign powers, therefore matters of diplomacy and state protocol in present day terms, and so on and forth). There is also the so-called *Fisiologul* [*Physiologus*] writing, a treaty on zoology and ethics, having also hidden or esoteric meanings: birds and animals become in this treaty symbols

¹² Cartoian 1980, pp. 3-110; 111-119; 119-123. I.P. Cuianu, *Gnozele Dualiste ale Occidentului* [*The Dualistic Gnoesis of the West*], Bucharest: Nemira, 1995, pp.236-246; 247-269; pp. 270-300.

of religious, spiritual, and moral ideas and values. It is a literature work with remote origins in Ancient Egypt and also in the neo-Pythagorean philosophical schools of Ancient Greece (according to Max Wellman), deeply influenced by Oriental wisdom which tried hard to discover the occult sides of all things and living beings: there are described birds like the Phoenix (“finixul”), which is the Peacock with a golden head (“Păunul cu cap de aur”) living by the city of Heliopolis (either the sacred town in Egypt or rather Baalbek in Syria and Lebanon), in the Cedar woods of the Lebanon Mountains, where this bird lives allegedly without eating, being sustained in life by the Holy Spirit (God) for nine years; after this period of time, the Phoenix enters a church, stands on the sacrificial place, is consumed by fire instantly (self combustion) and on the second day a priest who enters the church finds this mythical bird reborn alive and well from its ashes; the mythical creature with a woman’s head and dragon’s hair and the real woodpecker bird (both called “Gheonoaia”), and the *basiliscus* mythical drake (“vasilisc”, a kind of dragon whose venomous look can kill at a distance) are also famous beasts in the *Physiologus*; this work is full of comparisons between the natural world and the moral-spiritual world: for example, as the woodpecker deliberately shuns trees which she finds hard and healthy as wood, but pecks and pokes the rotten or ill trees, piercing their weakened bark and wood, so the devil with his cunning attempts to seduce into sinning tries all men and women, but only conquers those who are weak in moral virtues; those who are spiritually strong within themselves, by fasting, praying to God, doing good things and going to church, therefore leading a virtuous and moral life, the Evil One avoids them altogether (although initially he tries his trade also with them, in order to seduce them into sin). The pelican bird, who tears his flesh and in times of hunger feeds his young with his own blood, is a symbol of Christ the Saviour and Redeemer of all mankind; the doves flying always in groups in order to avoid the falcon or the hawk are very much alike Christians gathering together in Church to avoid temptation and defend themselves against the cunning of the Evil One. The natural world is but a mirror of a deeper and hidden spiritual world¹³.

The *Physiologus* is attested in Wallachia and Moldavia from the 16th-17th centuries, the oldest extant six manuscripts being dated at the end of the 17th century (the oldest of them being from AD 1693, copied from an older prototype by Costea Dascălul from the Șcheii Church of Kronstadt/Brașov), but they derived from older originals going back in time to the early 17th or even to the late 16th century, and derived from a Serbian-Slavonic original of the previous period (15th-16th centuries?). The ultimate and earliest prototype is, however, a Greek Byzantine version that reproduced (more or less faithfully) the original version made in Late Hellenistic-Roman Egypt,

¹³ Cartoian 1980, pp. 123-124.

where Old Egyptian culture and its Christian Coptic offshoot crossed with Judaism, Greek-Hellenistic culture and philosophy, and early Christianity in both Coptic and Greek forms (with a variety of Orthodox, Monophysitic, and Gnostic branches). This work travelled from Egypt to Asia Minor, Constantinople, and Greece, then to the Southern Slavs in the Balkans, eventually reaching the Romanian lands sometime around AD 1600. It was translated from Greek into Slavonic and from Slavonic into Old Romanian. In the 18th century, when Greek cultural influence was very strong in Wallachia and Moldavia under the Phanariote Princes (at least in the field of letters, humanities, and sciences), a new translation directly from Greek into Romanian was made after a much more complete text of the *Physiologus* of Damascenus the Studite (Damaschin/Damaskenos of Stoudion), the bishop of Naupactus (Naupaktos): this Greek text had arrived in Wallachia and Moldavia either in the stamped form Venice or as a manuscript from Mount Athos. The author of the original Romanian translation of this Greek original remains unknown to this day; the oldest version, however, of the Romanian translation of this different version of the Greek text is that of the Duma Dascălu' (the school teacher Duma), a manuscript hand-copied in AD 1774 and first published by C.N. Mateescu in the Calendar and in the literary review *Ion Creangă* in the years 1914-1915, just before Romania entered First World War¹⁴.

Another important old Romanian literary text (along with *Alexandria* and other texts of the same genre) is a translation from the Italian moral and didactic writing entitled *Fiore Di Virtù* [*The Flower of Virtue*] that had been stamped for the first time in Italy in AD 1474 and had over 40 editions in about 60 years from the first edition. It has been translated from Italian into all or almost all the Western and Central European languages and also in many Eastern European idioms like in Serbian, Greek, Romanian, Bulgarian, Russian, and even in Armenian. Those translations were made partly directly from Italian and partly from one language to another, from one dialect to the other. It has 34 chapters, where the moral virtues and vices are antithetically presented in pairs of ethical opposites (courage-cowardice; goodness-badness;

¹⁴ Cartoian 1980, pp. 124-125: Saint Hieronymus the Latin translator of the Bible in the 4th century CE, in one of his letters narrates the encounter in the Egyptian desert between Saint Antony the Great and a fabulous creature of the Greco-Roman mythology, namely a satyr that kindly asked the saint to pray for him to God. From Egypt the moral *Bestiarium*, that is the Greek *Physiologus*, passed to Byzantium, and from Constantinople in the 5th century CE it passed over to Rome and the Latin West (being translated into Latin either in Constantinople or rather in Rome and Italy), giving birth to the Western Latin *Bestiaria* of the Middle Ages and elements of it entered the poetry of the Aquitanian-Provençal troubadours and of the Northern French trouvères (Thibaud Count of Champagne and King of Navarre for example), as well as in the Old French *Romans Courtois* like *Floire et Blanchefleur*, in the writings of Jacques de Vitry, etc. The influence of the *Physiologus* on the Old Romanian Literature had been great *vide* Cartoian 1980, p. 125 (in the *Gospel Teaching of the Dealu Monastery*, in the *Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his son Teodosie*, etc.).

generosity-avarice; justice-injustice; love-hatred/envy; truth-lie and so on and forth). The descriptions of animals and birds are borrowed here massively from the *Physiologus*, the animals are manifestations or representations of the inner feelings and thoughts of all human beings, of moral virtues and vices, and also of a deeper and hidden spiritual level of cosmic reality. The comparisons appear a bit childish and naive, like fear is associated with the hare or rabbit, moral courage and bravery with the falcon or hawk, vain self-pride with the peacock, anger and fury with the bear and so on and forth. The ancient philosophers and thinkers like Cassiodorus, Pythagoras, or Varro and their sayings are explicitly quoted; many of the fantastic or imaginary beasts from the *Physiologus*, like the drake *basiliscus* (*vasilisc*) and others (*leoncorn*, *calandrinon* bird, *inorog* or unicorn, etc.) appear also here. Those imaginary animals and birds have magical powers of killing or healing at a distance by their look only, all taken from the *Physiologus*. In the 4th section of this book, appear many influences and narrative elements borrowed from other famous writings of the medieval times like the *Gesta Romanorum* and the *Alexandria*. The Bible and the *Vitae Sanctorum* were also other sources for this writing; the famous legend of the angel and the hermit appears here, later used by Voltaire in his *Zadig* and by the 20th century Romanian writer Mihail Sadoveanu in the story about the hermit Hieronymus (*Pustnicul Ieronim*), published in the volume entitled *Povestiri pentru copii* [*Children's Stories*], originating probably from Syria or Palestine. The legend of Cassia and her friend Theodora appears here as well, in connection with a Roman-Byzantine emperor and with the golden apple (therefore many mythical themes of various origins: Greco-Roman, Greco-Iranian, Greco-Semitic and so on). This story had entered Old Romanian literature, according to the researches of Nicolae Cartoian, the Romanian scholar whose demonstration we are following here, coming on three main ways: the first of these versions is through a translation done in Moldavia of the 16th century from the original Italian directly into Romanian, nowadays unfortunately lost, but preserved in a Russian translation done from this Romanian (Moldavian) translation in the 18th century and whose title (in Russian) can be approximately translated into English as such: "The Flower of Virtues and Vices, translated from the Italian tongue into the Wallachian or Bogdanian «Moldavian» tongue by Gherman the Wallachian, and from Wallachian into Slavonic by Veniamin the Hieromonachus Rusin, in the Year «of our Lord» 1592"¹⁵.

Much can be said about the information contained in this title (it gives the information that the Wallachian and the Bogdanian/Moldavian language were one and the same at that date, being what we call now the Romanian language), that the writ-

¹⁵ Cartoian 1980, pp. 125-127 (esp. pp. 126-127). The translation from Romanian into English is mine, done after the translation in Romanian given by Nicolae Cartoian of the original Russian (or Slavonic Russian/Ruthenian) title of the book (*op. cit.*, p. 127).

ing had been translated directly from Italian into Wallachian by a certain Gherman/Germanus the Wallachian and from Wallachian into the Slavonic language by the Ruthenian/Rusyn or Rusin monk Veniamin; therefore it was a very old translation into Slavonic Ukrainian/Ruthenian and/or into Slavonic Russian, copied in Russia well into the 18th century (the modern literary Russian language will only emerge, as it is well known, only in the 18th and early 19th century); the original translator from Wallachian into Slavonic (Veniamin the Hieromonachus Rusin meaning probably Veniamin the Rusyn/Ruthenian Hieromonachus) does not say he translated it into Russian, but into Slavonic; the date of the translation is AD 1592, therefore it is not given the usual date of the Slavonic Orthodox chronology, with the presumed date of the Creation of the World, but the more modern date and chronology counted from the Birth of Christ¹⁶. This fact in turn could suggest a Western Ukrainian or Ruthenian/Rusyn monk and scholar (Veniamin), familiar with both the Wallachian (Romanian) language spoken in Moldavia and with the Roman Catholic style of chronology, used in the Kingdom of Poland and the Great Duchy/Principality of Lithuania (the Polish-Lithuanian Union or Monarchical-Aristocratic *Res Publica/Rzeczpospolita*), therefore a translator perhaps located or educated in the border regions between Moldavia and Poland-Lithuania, somewhere in Western or North-western Ukraine or South-eastern historical Poland; or it could have been just an interpolation of the more modern Russian scribe or editor of the 18th century, who took himself the liberty to change the original date given by the monk Veniamin, although this is pure speculation (viole infra n. 16).

The Slavonic/Russian title also implicitly stated that before AD 1592 the Romanian translation of this work already circulated in the Romanian speaking lands (or at least in Moldavia, the Easternmost Romanian principality). The second translation of this work into Romanian had been made from a Serbian-Croatian intermediary [a Serbian-Croatian translation from Italian, done probably in the 13th century by a Croat monk on the coast of Dalmatia, translation which went deep into Croatia and then into the Serbian lands and eventually reached Transylvania (and probably also Wallachia; *i.e.* what is now the southern part of Romania and was back then called Țara Românească *i.e.* the Romanian Land by its inhabitants and Wallachia or the Wallachian Country by foreigners)]. Here in the heart of Transylvania (ancient Dacia) this book had been translated sometime about the middle of the 16th century from Serbian-Croatian into Romanian, by an unknown translator, but unfortunately

¹⁶ Cartoian 1980, p. 33: the old Orthodox system of chronology considered that the World had been created by God in the year 5508 BC: therefore AD 1592, according to this system of chronology, is calculated by adding 5508 to 1592: $5508 + 1592 = 7100$. The year 7100 from the Creation of the World is the year 1592 after the Birth of Christ, according to the Old Slavonic-Byzantine system of chronology.

this original translation is now lost. It had however survived in the copy made in the year 1620 by the same Romanian village priest from Sîmpietru [Saint Peter] village of the Hunedoara County, Popa Ion Românu, to whom we also owe the first preserved Romanian manuscript of the *Alexandria*¹⁷. This Romanian translation from Serbian-Croatian, done probably in Transylvania, was however full of errors, according to Cartoian (*op.cit.*), and therefore the Romanian clergy, eager to provide moral lectures to the better educated Romanians belonging to the Orthodox Church, had commissioned another translation. This third translation was nevertheless done neither after the Italian original, nor after some Slavonic translation, but after a Greek version of the same work, printed in Venice in one of the Greek printing houses there. This version was translated after a 15th century Italian *incunabulum* and printed in Greek for the first time in AD 1529 under the title Ἄνθος τῶν Χαρτῶν (*Anthos ton Chariton* meaning *The Flower of the Graces*), and was reprinted several times in the 16th and 17th centuries. One of these Greek printings of this book had arrived in the Mount Athos Greek monasteries; a Greek-Romanian boyar from the court of the Wallachian Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688-1714), the *Paharnic* (Cup Bearer at the Princely Court) Constantin Sarachini (perhaps from the Greek Sarakinis), who was himself the son of a Greek physician from Crete, went to Mount Athos to worship God there as a pilgrim. He found this book in a monastic Athonite library and, wishing to contribute to the culture of his adopted country (Wallachia), persuaded the well-schooled Romanian monk called Filoftei (Philotheus) to translate it from Greek into Romanian. This Filoftei, purely by chance, was also in Mount Athos for a time as a pilgrim and was about to return to Wallachia, like Constantin Sarachini himself was. The translation made from Greek into Romanian by Filoftei had been printed in AD 1700 at the Snagov monastery near București [Bucharest] by the order and probably under the direct supervision of the learned Wallachian Hieromonachus and future Metropolitan of Wallachia and Archbishop of Bucharest Antim Ivireanul (Antim from Iveria meaning ancient Iberia in the Caucasus, nowadays Georgia). This edition circulated all of the 18th century not only in Wallachia, but also beyond the Carpathian Mountains in Habsburg ruled Transylvania of the 18th century and probably also in Moldavia and Bucovina (the Northern part of Moldavia, annexed in the year 1775 by the Habsburg Empire). In the 19th century it was reprinted four times:

¹⁷ *Vide supra* n. 4. Both the first Romanian *Alixandria/Alexandria* (the Romanian translation of the Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Historia Alexandri Magni* made from the Slavonic Serbian-Croatian version now preserved in the library of the Neamț monastery of Moldavia in the eastern parts of modern Romania) and the *Fiore Di Virtù* [*The Flower of Virtue*] Romanian manuscript are included into the *Codex Neagoeanus* from Sîmpietru, Hunedoara (Popa Ion Românu being the copyist of the older translations done sometime in the second half of the 16th century-first years of the 17th century, now no longer extant) *vide* Cartoian 1980, p. 127 and pp. 133-134.

first time in Braşov (Kronstadt) by the Romanian priest named Ioan Ştefanovici from a place called Bolgaseghiu, and the editors being the brothers, Constantin Boghici and Ion Boghici (most probably owners of a printing press, one of the first Romanian publishing houses in Transylvania), in the year 1807, working after a sample book of the 18th century Snagov edition; the second edition appeared in the subsequent year (1808), issued by the German publisher and editor, the master printer Friedrich Herfurt; the third edition was printed in Sibiu (Hermannstadt/Nagyszeben) in 1814, therefore also in Transylvania in the Habsburg Austrian Empire, while the fourth edition was issued in 1864 at Bucharest in the young new state of Romania (Wallachia and Moldavia being recently united under the Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza in 1859)¹⁸.

The so-called Old Romanian “popular literature” (the Romanian *Alexandria* belongs to this category of the Old Romanian literature; the other main category is constituted by the religious literature *stricto sensu*, which is not the object of this article; the annals and chronicles, which constitute the medieval Romanian historiography is also not within the scope of our analysis here) includes also the astrological writings (not officially accepted by the Church and condemned by religious authorities from the times of the Eastern Roman/Roman Byzantine Empire of Late Antiquity, in the 4th-5th centuries CE). Saint Joannes Chrysostomus of Constantinople already in the 4th century CE severely condemned the use of this kind of literature for the flock of the Christian believers (because astrology was assimilated with heresy, witchcraft, and magic as survivals of Pagan religious and para-religious beliefs in Late Antiquity; it was considered already in the first millennium AD by both the Greek and the Latin Church as very dangerous stuff, which could lead into sin the herd of Orthodox-Catholic Christian believers); a thousand years later, in the 17th century Wallachia and Moldavia, the condemnation against astrology remains: the *Pravila* (meaning Codex of Law) translated from Greek or Slavonic into Romanian by Eustratie Logofătul (the last name is in fact a court title meaning chief of the princely chancellery scribes, from the Middle Greek *logothetes*) in the times of the Moldavian Prince Vasile Lupu in AD 1644 condemns to a five years “*canon*” or religious-judicial punishment those who practice astrology as well as those who seek out astrologers and ask them to make horoscopes, and so on and forth. The homily of Saint Joannes Chrysostomus against the astrologers and their clients (a text dating from the late 4th or early 5th century CE Constantinople) was translated from Ancient Greek into Romanian by the chronicler Radu Greceanu of the Wallachian Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu. The astrological literature arrived in the Romanian lands through the Southern Slavic

¹⁸ Cartoian 1980, pp. 127-128.

lands from Byzantium and is represented in the early 17th century by the following documents: the *Rojdanic* (a Slavic word meaning Birthday) or (according to its Greek name) the *Zodiac* (meaning the animal names of the constellations). Interesting to notice is that this text has been found also in the same *Codex Neagoeanus* handwritten (meaning copied) by the same Popa Ion Românu from the Sîmpietru Village (Hunedoara County); a Romanian and Orthodox Christian village priest with wide spanning cultural interests, including the forbidden knowledge of astrology, but also moral literature like that included in the *Fiore di Virtù* and Alexander's legend in the *Alixandria*. Another very interesting astrological book is the *Gromovnic* (a Slavic word meaning *Book of Thunders*, from the Slavic word громъ meaning thunder; it is a kind of Mediaeval *Liber Fulguralis*, which tries to predict the fate of humankind and also the future results of the agricultural harvests from the celestial quarter where and when one hears the thunder and sees the thunderbolt, if it thunders during the day or the night, to the East or to the West, etc). It was a widely sought after book in the Romanian speaking world of the 17th century and, despite the formal Orthodox Church interdiction against astrology and divination, it was printed along with religious texts, both in the Alba-Iulia printing house of the Romanian Orthodox Church Metropolis (*Mitropolie* meaning in the Orthodox world the ecclesiastical headquarters of the Archbishop second only to a Church Patriarch); this Orthodox printing house in the heart of the Hungarian ruled Transylvania (where the Hungarian and German elites passed in great majority in the 16th and the 17th century from the Catholicism of the Church of Rome to the different Christian Churches of the Reformation, while the majority of the Romanian peasantry and herdsmen had remained faithful to their already ancestral Orthodox Church of Greek rite and Slavonic expression, a curious religious characteristic for a Romance speaking people, which can be historically explained elsewhere) was established there in AD 1639, with the financial and technical help sent by the reigning Prince of Wallachia Matei Basarab; the very first books that were issued by this printing house were a *Gromovnic* along with the religious book *Paraclisul Maicii Domnului* (the *Parakleisis* of the Holy Mother of God), a fact that speaks volumes about the strictness and rigour of the condemnation issued by the Orthodox Church against astrology (compared with the *Index librorum prohibitorum* issued by the Roman Catholic Church after the Trento Council of the Counter Reformation or the practices of the contemporary Spanish Inquisition). In this first issue of the Alba Iulia typography were printed also different religious texts such as *Molitvenic*-s (Prayer Books for the Confession of sins) and others. Another divinatory text was the *trepetnic* (the Slavonic word for tremor) which deals with predicting the future of a man or woman by body language, the movements of the

eyes and eyelids, etc. This text has been hand copied, the oldest of them being from the year 1639. The Orthodox Church printing houses of Alba-Iulia and Jassy (Iași in Moldavia) also printed astrology texts and divination texts, along with purely religious texts. A cultured prince like Constantin Brâncoveanu had his own personal astrologer (apparently an Italian man called in Romanian as Ioan Romanul/John the Roman or Ioan Frâncul/John the Frank *i.e.* the Westerner) and consulted regularly the Italian astrological almanacs (*Foglietti Novelli*), although he was also a very pious and devout Christian Orthodox prince (canonized as Saint Martyr by the Romanian Orthodox Church some two hundred years after himself, along with his sons, his son in law, and his most trusted counselor, all refusing to abjure Orthodox Christian faith and to embrace Islam, will be beheaded by the order of the Ottoman Sultan in Constantinople/Istanbul, on the 15th of August 1714. This date was symbolic in both ways: it was the Feast of the Assumption of Holy Mother of God and also the birthday of Constantin Brâncoveanu himself; when he reached sixty years of age, he died along with his sons under the executioners axe). The influence of astrology was not only restricted to the princes, clergy, and aristocracy in Wallachia and Moldavia; it spread among the common people the belief in the influence of stars (which included the planets in folklore) upon the destiny of each individual and it also found its way into popular Romanian poetry¹⁹.

We finally come to the literary species to which the Romanian *Alixandria/Alexandria* truly belongs: the sub-genre of the popular romance or the popular novel. In our old literature of the 16th and 17th centuries these are represented by three main books: *Alexandria, Varlaam și Ioasaf* [*Barlaam and Iosaphat/Budasaf/Budisaf*], and also *Archirie și Anadan* [*Archirius and Anadan*]; one could also add the *Ceasornicul Domnilor* [*The Clock of the Princes*] (a translation from a Latin version of Antonio de Guevara's *El Relox de Principes*, made by Nicolae Costin the son of Miron Costin) and Miron Costin's own poem *Viața Lumii* [*Vita Mundi/Life of the World*] among the works of the Romanian scholars (Moldavian chroniclers) who studied in Poland and mentioned Alexander the Great in the books they wrote; although their above quoted writings are not considered popular novels; nevertheless, these texts contain both mythical and historical information about the Macedonian world conqueror²⁰. *Habent sua fata libelli!* This antique saying applies also to our popular novels, when these books appeared, when were widely read by the cultivated people, and when they fell out of fashion. The *Alixandria* Romanian translation is more or less contemporary with the warlike reign of the warrior Wallachian Prince Michael the Brave, so very consonant

¹⁹ Cartoian 1980, pp. 129-131.

²⁰ Cartoian 1980, pp. 131-132, 312-316, 341-347.

with the military atmosphere and soldierly habits of the age; after the warlike reigns of Michael the Brave (1593-1601) and Radu Șerban (1602-1610) were over, after two or three decades the learned Wallachian boyar Udriște Năsturel, the man who translated Thomas a Kempis' *Imitatio Christi* from Latin into Slavonic had also translated from Slavonic into Romanian the Christian novel of ultimately Buddhist inspiration (the Life of Siddhārta Gautama/Buddha Śākyamuni written in a Christian key) *Varlaam și Ioasaf* [*Barlaam and Josaphat*]; when the interest for purely religiously inspired literature slowly became more tepid, so to say, the moral text of the novel *Archirie și Anadan* [*Archirius and Anadan*] became of interest to the cultured Romanian readers of the age, not only because of its moral teachings, but also due to its fables, proverbs, and riddles, making it a synthesis of scholarly and popular culture. It is however important to notice that the *Alixandria* remained popular in the Romanian lands well into the 19th or even the beginnings of the 20th century, especially among the younger readers, of course, due to its content of heroic adventures, epic drama, and mythical fantasy²¹.

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²¹ Cartoian 1980, pp. 132-134.

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THE PLACE OF THE LEGEND OF ALEXANDER OF MACEDON IN THE LARGER CONTEXT OF THE OLD ROMANIAN LITERATURE

S u m m a r y

The main aim of this quite a short study was to complete the essential image of Alexander of Macedon as he appears through the pages of the Romanian *Alexandria*, with an overview on the so-called Old Romanian "popular" literature: somehow the true essence of this hero (Alexander of Macedon) and of his legend had eluded me many times. Compared with the Romanian *History of Troy*, so faithful still to Homer and his *epigonoii*, 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 place of this tale about Alexander the Great (his legendary story) 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, Island of the Blessed, Island of Women, Amazons, Cleitarchus, Pseudo-Callisthenes, Nagomudrii, Gates of Paradise, Old Romanian Literature

MIEJSCE LEGENDY ALEKSANDRA MACEDOŃSKIEGO W WIĘKSZYM KONTEKŚCIE STAREJ LITERATURY RZYMSKIEJ

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Głównym celem tego krótkiego badania jest ukazanie ogólnego wizerunku Aleksandra Macedońskiego, jaki wyłania się z treści rzymskiej *Aleksandrii* z jednoczesnym przeglądem tzw. starorzyskiej literatury „ludowej”: w jakiś sposób istota tego bohatera (Aleksandra Macedońskiego) i jego legendy wielokrotnie mi umykała. W porównaniu do rzymskiej *Historii Troi*, wciąż tak wiernej Homerowi i jego *epigonoii*, rzymska *Aleksandria* wydaje się niewprawionemu czytelnikowi literatury starorzyskiej (do bycia któ-

rym przyznaje się autor tych słów) kolekcją burzliwych, fantastycznych historii. Niniejszy artykuł stara się podkreślić miejsce tej opowieści o Aleksandrze Wielkim (jego legendarnej historii) w szerszym kontekście starorzymskiej 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, Literatura Starorzymaska