Alexander, the Pilgrim King:

Refractions of a Classical Legacy in Byzantine and Islamic History

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ποῦ εἶναι ὁ Μεγαλέξανδρος; —ὁ Μεγαλέξανδρος ζῇ καὶ βασιλεύει.

Where is Alexander the Great? —Alexander the Great lives and reigns.

(Greek legend)[1]

Zülkender'in boynuzu var. —Boynuzu var!

Zülkender has horns. —Yes, he has horns!

(Turkish phrase)[2]

A traveler and a small band of companions journeyed along the southern Mediterranean coast to the town of Paraetonium.[3] From here, they set out south for some days across sand dunes seared by the sun.[4] After the second day, the group's camel-skin canteens had run dry on account of the heat, and the trek, which had at first seemed manageable for this well-traveled party, began to feel increasingly desperate.[5] No trees or solid hills stood as far as anyone could see, and winds whistling across the desert shifted the dunes and caused any trace of tracks to vanish, sending the company off course.[6]

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1. Described by Patrick Leigh Fermor, *Mani: Travels in the Southern Peloponnese* (John Murray, 1958), 186–7. Greek sailors have frequently told stories of beautiful Gorgons surfacing amid storms on the Aegean or Black Seas and asking the question above. When sailors give the response above, sometimes adding "…and he keeps the world at peace," the waves calm and the Gorgon disappears. Anything else results in the Gorgon pulling the boat to the bottom of the sea.

2. Mentioned by Faustina C. W. Doufikar-Aerts, "King Midas' Ears on Alexander's Head: In Search of the Afro-Asiatic Alexander Cycle," in *Alexander Romance in Persia and the East*, vol. 15, ed. Richard Stoneman et al. (Barkhuis, 2012), 70. In the tale, Zülkender attempts to hide his horns. This phrase is thus said by children who want to keep a secret between the two of them. The character's name is a peculiar combination of Zülkarneyn (Dhu'l-Qarnayn) and İskender (Alexander), both of which will be discussed below. I also found a delightful explanation of Turkish Alexander folk wisdom by Mesut Alp, who grew up in southern Turkey hearing from his parents such tales of a horned İskender Zülkarneyn, and later observed horned Alexander coins in the Mardin museum. See "Arkeolog Mesut Alp | Mezopotamya Hikayeleri," posted April 25, 2018, by Kanaga Series, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Lng07T6G6I&t=8s.

3. Arr. *Anab.* 3.4.

4. Arr. *Anab*. 3.3.

5. Diod. Sic. 17.49.

6. Arr. *Anab.* 3.3.

Fortunately, on the fourth day, strong winds blew in clouds to shade out the sun, and with those clouds came abundant rain.[7] While the throats of the men were too dry to cry out in excitement, they took heart in this blessing of fresh water, refilled their canteens, and pushed onward. After four more days crossing this trackless country, the traveler and his companions spotted a pair of crows circling overhead. Following the birds, they reached a settlement and a fortress beside an oasis, a green gem in the middle of the Western Desert.[8] Olives and date palms stood resolutely around the cool water swelling up from this fortunate spring, which some called the Fountain of the Sun.[9] A small population of locals lived in huts scattered around the shade of the grove, and they would mine the abundant salt around the oasis and carry it back across the desert to markets in Egypt.[10]

Yet the reason for this traveler's visit was not that renowned salt, but the temple that sat beside the oasis. He came seeking guidance about the future and his own birth, and wished to consult the horned god Ammon, whose oracle at the oasis was said to be infallible.[11] The senior priest of the temple approached the traveler and addressed him as "son," recognizing the traveler's father to be Ammon. This priest declared that just as in the past the traveler had been undefeated, so he would remain unconquerable for all time.[12] After hearing these words, the traveler made a sacrifice and offered gifts to the god and the priests, before returning with his entourage across the desert to Egypt. This pious traveler, who had crossed miles of desert to reach this temple and receive the word of the god Ammon, was Alexander III of Macedon.

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7. Plut. *Alex*. 27.1; Curt. 4.14.

8. Diod. Sic. 17.50.

9. Hdt. 4.181; Curt. 4.22.

10. Curt. 4.20.

11. Just. *Epit.* 11.11.2.

12. Diod. Sic. 17.51; Curt. 4.27; Just. *Epit.* 11.11.10.

A Life in Legend: The (Hi)stories of Alexander

Alexander III (356–323 BC) assumed the crown of the kingdom of Macedon at the age of twenty, upon the death of his father, Philip II. In the following years, Alexander set out on an extensive campaign against the neighboring Achaemenid Persians, continuing the efforts of his late father. By the age of thirty, Alexander and his armies had conquered territory that reached from Egypt to modern India, vastly expanding the orbit of the Hellenistic world. From the outset, Alexander was an absolute ruler, but one who ruled tenuously: although he repeatedly framed his rule as divinely ordained, he faced growing resistance from his troops and from other figures in the Macedonian court as his conquering continued.[13] Upon Alexander's death, the Macedonian empire splintered into successor states ruled by his generals and friends, which sparred with each other for over four decades.[14] However, despite the shortness of Alexander's life and the instability of his reign and territorial acquisitions, his manifold legacy persisted and thrived well after his death, taking on a colorful life of its own.

Numerous philosophers, scientists, and writers accompanied Alexander's expedition, including Callisthenes, a historian and the nephew of Alexander's teacher, Aristotle; Anaxarchos of Abdera; Onesicritus of Astypalaia; Nearchus; and Cleitarchus.[15] Few writings from these individuals have survived to the present, except as fragments or as quotations in works by other

13. The vignette above of Alexander's visit to the temple of Ammon at Siwa draws on one of the multiple instances of Alexander's expressed piety in the ancient tradition. I chose to feature it since it appears consistently and in considerable detail across the accounts of five ancient writers. Furthermore, it is a case of Alexander's deification, a politically loaded interpretive process finely elucidated in Ernst Badian, "The Deification of Alexander the Great," in *Collected Papers on Alexander the Great* (Routledge, 2012), 244–281.

14. Albert Brian Bosworth, "Alexander III," in *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2015). For a magisterial treatment of Alexander's life, see Peter Green, *Alexander of Macedon, 356–323 B.C.: A Historical Biography* (University of California Press, 1991). For specific attention to his campaigns, see Waldemar Heckel, *The Conquests of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

15. Richard Stoneman, *The Greek Experience of India* (Princeton University Press, 2019). Many of these lost historians of Alexander are contained in Felix Jacoby's *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (1923–59), which built on Karl Wilhelm Ludwig Müller's monumental *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* (1841–70).

authors. By the third century AD,[16] however, well after the empire of Alexander had collapsed, there emerged an account of the Macedonian king's life and exploits, by an author who came—wrongly—to be identified with the court historian Callisthenes of Alexander's day, and who is now referred to as Pseudo-Callisthenes.[17] Pseudo-Callisthenes relates a fabulous account of Alexander, in which he was supposedly not the son of Philip, but the bastard son of the last native Egyptian pharaoh, Nectanebo, who fled from the invading Persians to Macedon, where he started teaching divination. Using his magical powers, Nectanebo then assumed the form of the god Ammon and slept with Olympias, the queen of Macedon. Similar imaginative variations crop up across the story, blurring reality and pushing the bounds of plausibility, as they tell of Alexander's encounters with the Amazons and terrible beasts in India, his journey to the bottom of the sea in a glass diving bell, and his ascent to heaven on the backs of eagles.[18]

While the literary and historical merit of the Pseudo-Callisthenes account has frequently been questioned by classical scholars, this text in its various recensions has exercised an outsize influence on the literatures of numerous languages in the medieval period. The narrative of

16. Corinne Jouanno and Krzystof Nawotka have argued for this later date, positing that the author lived in the Roman empire: see Krzysztof Nawotka, *The Alexander Romance by Ps.-Callisthenes: A Historical Commentary* (Brill, 2017), 18. Stoneman, on the other hand, proposes that an early version of the Romance was composed by a resident of Alexandria in the third century BC (*The Alexander Romance: History and Literature*, ed. Richard Stoneman, Krzysztof Nawotka, and Agnieszka Wojciechowska (Barkhuis, 2018), viii). Although the discrepancy in times is significant, it is not an issue that this paper will seek to resolve or handle in much detail.

17. For many centuries, this source was *not* attributed to Callisthenes. It was only in the twelfth-century *Chiliades* of Ioannes Tzetzes that the association was made; Anthony Kaldellis, "Alexander the Great in Byzantine Tradition, AD 330–1453," in *A History of Alexander the Great in World Culture*, ed. Richard Stoneman (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 219. The name Pseudo-Callisthenes was first employed by French humanist Isaac Casaubon in a 1602 letter to Joseph Justus Scaliger; see *The Correspondence of Joseph Justus Scaliger, Volume IV: July 1601 to March 1603*, Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, ed. Paul Botley and Dirk van Miert (Librairie Droz, 2012), 207. One complication to the Callisthenes authorial theory worth mentioning is that Alexander had executed the historical Callisthenes in 327 BC, before many of the events in the Romance (Plut. *Alex.* 55).

18. Pseudo-Callisthenes, "The Alexander Romance," trans. Ken Dowden, in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, ed. B.P. Reardon (University of California Press, 1988). This last episode is one that, for the sake of space, I did not treat. Alexander's ascension is absent from the medieval Greek sources I handle in this paper, but did later feature in Byzantine art. It also became prominent in the Latin West as a cautionary tale—a mortal king trying to level with God. For more information, see George Cary, *The Medieval Alexander* (Cambridge University Press, 1967).

Alexander's conquest as informed by this Pseudo-Callisthenic source was disseminated and translated, by my count, into over thirty languages by the sixteenth century, which together form a vibrant genre of literature called the Alexander Romance.[19] From Greek, the Romance spread to Armenian; to Syriac into Persian and Arabic, which was then transmitted as far as Indonesia; into a Bulgarian version that spread to the Slavs; and into a Latin version that reached western Europe, crossing over into German, Swedish, English, and French, among others.[20] Geoffrey Chaucer, writing in England in the late fourteenth century, concludes that by his day

> The storie of Alisaundre is so commune / that every wight that hath discrecioun / hath herd somwhat or al of his fortune… I seye, as fer as man may ryde or go, / the world was his—what sholde I moore devyse?[21]

Through translation and creative license, each successive version of Alexander's biography changed slightly and took on even more fantastical elements. I argue in this paper that the Alexander story provided an incredibly fertile ground for reinterpretation, and medieval sources did not just debase classical historians, but created history in their own right for contemporary audiences. The authors of these sources were not merely transmitters, but interpreters. Alexander's historical visits to sacred sites during his conquest were reformulated, and this process led to his becoming a sanctified figure in the Christian and Islamic traditions simultaneously. Studying these reinterpretations in the Middle Ages captures a shared narrative

19. Because of a vexing lack of transparency in many of the existing sources that claim one number or the other, I will provide all the languages for the Alexander Romance I have come across so far: Greek, Latin, Spanish, French, Catalan, Italian, Romanian, English, Scots, Middle Dutch, Middle Low German, Middle High German, German, Old Norse, Old Swedish, Irish, Old Church Slavonic, Old Czech, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Russian, Georgian, Armenian, Coptic, Syriac, Ge'ez, Hebrew, Middle Persian, Persian, Mongolian, Hungarian, Ottoman Turkish, Chagatai, Thai (according to Budge), Malay, Javanese, and Sundanese. Alexander stories exist in medieval Chinese sources, though not a version of the Romance to my knowledge.

20. Pseudo-Callisthenes, "The Alexander Romance," 653–4.

21. Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Monk's Tale," from the *Canterbury Tales*, 7.2631–33, 2651–2.

reflex among these societies, allowing for a particularly clear glimpse into how these discursive communities reckoned with Alexander's story to make sense of their own.

After assessing the state of current scholarship, this paper will first investigate the development of the religious medieval Alexander by looking at the account of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem in the *Jewish Antiquities* of Flavius Josephus from the first century AD, and then by examining its refractions in the late antique historiographical tradition. This varied body of literature finds its roots in part in Pseudo-Callisthenes and other classical authors like Arrian, Plutarch, and Josephus, but also draws on biblical material (sometimes viewed through the lens provided by Josephus's *Antiquities*) as well as on chronographies inherited from the Roman tradition of *annales*, or chronicles.[22] The sixth-century *Chronography* of John Malalas features centrally in this category. Alexander is also incorporated in works of apocalyptic literature that emerge in the late seventh century, as a defender of the pious people of the civilized world from droves of unclean barbarians. As such an apocalyptic figure, Alexander was known to inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula by the seventh century. His likeness was discerned in the Qur'an under the name Dhu'l-Qarnayn,[23] where alongside the Sleepers of the Cave and Moses he represents *barzakh*, an intermediate point between death and resurrection or between the human and spirit worlds.[24]

I then trace how the Alexander character, once tethered to these central religious texts, flourishes in the historical and literary traditions of the medieval eastern Christian and Islamic worlds. Greek chroniclers of the ninth century AD like George the Monk and George Synkellos

22. Cyril Mango, "The Tradition of Byzantine Chronography," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 12/13 (1988), 360.

23. As a stylistic note, where Arabic names, words, and titles are given, I adhere to the International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES) Transliteration and Translation Guidelines.

24. *The Study Qur'an*, ed. and trans. Seyyed Hossein Nasr et al. (HarperOne, 2015), 729.

have Alexander visiting Jerusalem, which would become the center of the Christian world only *after* the historical Alexander's time. Curiously, while numerous historians writing in Arabic in the Abbasid era, like al-Tabari and al-Ya'qubi, weave Alexander into the history of Persian kings, it is with al-Dinawari and Ferdowsi in the ninth and tenth centuries that Alexander makes a pilgrimage to the center of the Islamic world, Mecca, even if Islam did not arise for nearly nine more centuries after the historical Alexander died.[25] This paper explores the incongruences between the Alexander story of antiquity, as described by chroniclers like Arrian and Plutarch, and the Alexander story of successive romances, effectively the difference between history as "what happened" and history as "what is said to have happened," as articulated by Michel-Rolph Trouillot in his work *Silencing the Past*.[26] I am specifically interested in incorporating Trouillot's claim that any historical narrative, because of the silences within, is a text that lies "between truth and fiction," which aligns closely with the state of the Alexander Romance in the Middle Ages: a concoction of past happenings and fictionalized elements that are refabricated and then trusted as a genuine historical source.

A Survey of Historiography

The scholarly investigation of the Alexander Romance and medieval Alexander stories is still relatively young and full of vigor. While Alexander the Great as an individual and the nature of his conquest have been perennial topics of inquiry in ancient history and classical studies, the

25. Classical historical sources mention that Alexander did not even travel to Arabia, let alone make a pilgrimage to Mecca; see Arr. *Anab*. 7.19.

26. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Beacon Press, 2015), 6. Trouillot identifies a positivist view that separates objective historical fact from the narratives about it, and a constructivist view that emphasizes the overlap between historical process and narrative. This paper leans toward the constructivist stance, for in the various medieval traditions it examines, what is said to have happened *becomes* what happened in later sources—truth and fiction are intertwined.

Alexander Romance was long relegated to the fringes of classical research, due in large part to its awkward place in the Greek literary canon. The late Hellenistic-era style was lower than Homer or the fifth-century BC playwrights on the hierarchy of literature. The story was less plausible than the histories of Alexander by Arrian, Plutarch, and Diodorus Siculus. And the tradition was less compelling and easy to understand within the bounds of classical scholarship alone, as much of the Romance took its form outside and after the period generally studied by classical philologists.[27] It was only in 1907 that the German classical scholar Adolf Ausfeld published his commentary, *Der griechische Alexanderroman*, the first on the Greek collection of fictionalized stories about Alexander.[28] In the later decades of the nineteenth century, the study of Alexander was also picked up by Orientalists, and scholarship on it broadened to include Afro-Asiatic and Indo-Iranian languages, which lay beyond the traditional scope of Greco-Roman antiquity. Seminal works in the historiography of the Alexander Romance from this time include Egyptologist and philologist E.A.W. Budge's editions of the Syriac and Ethiopic Alexander Romance traditions, the first of which was published in 1889.[29] Additionally, Theodor Nöldeke,[30] along with Andrew Runni Anderson,[31] examined texts in Arabic, Syriac, Hebrew, and Coptic in conjunction with Greco-Roman source material.

27. A.B. Bosworth's entry in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* describes the work as little more than "popular fiction, a pseudo-historical narrative interspersed with an 'epistolary novel,' bogus correspondence between Alexander 'the Great' and Darius III," whose "historical nucleus is small and unusable." Ken Dowden is even less diplomatic, writing that "its style is limp and rarely rises above mediocre; chronology and geography are grossly muddled; fact and inept fictions are indiscriminately combined." See Pseudo-Callisthenes, "Alexander Romance," 651.

28. Adolf Ausfeld, *Der griechische Alexanderroman* (B.G. Teubner, 1907).

29. E.A. Wallis Budge, ed., *The Life and Exploits of Alexander the Great: Being a Series of Ethiopic Texts* (B. Blom, 1968).

30. Theodor Nöldeke, "Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alexanderromans," *Denkschriften der Wiener Akademie* 37 (1890), 1–56.

31. Andrew Runni Anderson, "Alexander's Horns," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 58 (1927): 100–122.

The study of the Alexander Romance has swelled in recent decades. Moreover, the Romance has become more accessible to Anglophone readers. While the first modern English translation of the Alexander Romance was produced by Elizabeth Hazelton Haight in 1955,[32] several others emerged in short succession in the last decade of the twentieth century: one translation by Ken Dowden was featured in a collection of ancient Greek novels edited by B.P. Reardon,[33] while another, translated by Richard Stoneman, was published by Penguin in 1991.[34] Much of the recent growth of literature on the Alexander Romance is linked to the work of Richard Stoneman, who went to great lengths to promote integrated research between specialists in a wide range of languages and disciplines. Stoneman acknowledged in his 2008 book *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* that study of the Alexander Romance was appreciably complicated by the need to work with a vast array of languages.[35] In the monumental *The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East*, edited by Stoneman, contributing scholars navigate sources in Greek, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Coptic, and Chinese, among others.[36] A significant amount of this recent work on the medieval Alexander has come in the form of collaborative volumes. I have also studied the work of individual scholars like David Zuwiyya, Faustina Doufikar-Aerts, Corinne Jouanno, and Anthony Kaldellis, who have all contributed to these projects.[37] I aim to make my own contribution to the scholarly dialogue by homing in on

32. Elizabeth Hazelton Haight, *Pseudo-Callisthenes, Life of Alexander* (Longmans, 1955).

33. Pseudo-Callisthenes, "Alexander Romance."

34. *The Greek Alexander Romance*, trans. Richard Stoneman (Penguin, 1991).

35. Richard Stoneman, *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend* (Yale University Press, 2008), 3. Stoneman writes that "the legendary material is vast and a lifetime would not be sufficient to explore it completely, or even to acquire the languages in which it is purveyed." He got much closer to this goal than most, and I hope to follow his example.

36. Stoneman et al., *Alexander Romance in Persia*.

37. Doufikar-Aerts, Jouanno, and Zuwiyya all contributed to *The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East*; Kaldellis and Doufikar-Aerts to Richard Stoneman, ed., *A History of Alexander the Great in World Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

Alexander's religious character in late antique and medieval works, by looking both at the eastern Christian and Islamic traditions, and by linking these close readings of primary sources to a selection of theoretical literature that extends our understanding of what these historical authors were doing and why in novel ways.

Reading Fiction as History

The Alexander Romance and the world chronicles and apocalyptic narratives that incorporate its parts walk the line between history, biography, and fiction. Classicist David Konstan proposes a useful definition for what the Alexander Romance *is* in an influential paper discussing the noncanonical Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles: an "open text." As he writes,

> All such wise-man tales have in common an episodic structure, in which the several scenes are concatenated like beads on a string until they culminate in the extraordinary death of the hero. As a result, they are easily subject to expansion, reduction, and variation of incident, and they tend accordingly, like the Alexander Romance and the Gospels, to survive in multiple redactions.[38]

The Alexander Romance is a decentralized literary tradition, a text capable of nearly endless variation that is thus especially difficult to confine. So how can this text, or web of related but slightly different texts, be read as history, or used in the study of history?

Richard Stoneman notes that just because we may use a text for historical purposes does not mark it as a work of history.[39] But what is to be said for the Alexander Romance, fragments of which appear in the works of the Byzantine chronographers and Islamic historians? To illuminate this question, I find it helpful to turn to the work of historian Hayden White, who

38. David Konstan, "Acts of Love: A Narrative Pattern in the Apocryphal Acts," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6, no. 1 (1998), 34.

39. Stoneman et al., *Alexander Romance: History*, viii.

suggests that any narrative about the past needs a plot, in order for it to be intelligible to us as readers. He writes:

> Plot-meaning is a way of construing historical processes in the mode of a fulfilment or a destiny considered, not as an instance of mechanical or teleological causality, but as contingent on the interplay of free will (choice, motives, intentions), on the one hand, and historically specific limits imposed upon the exercise of this free will, on the other.[40]

White also writes in his 1972 essay "The Structure of Historical Narrative" that

> a narrative is any literary form in which the voice of the narrator rises against a background of ignorance, incomprehension, or forgetfulness to direct our attention, purposefully, to a segment of experience organized in a particular way.[41]

The medieval Alexander traditions, specifically the episodes of Alexander's devotion and religious visitations, precisely organize the "segments of experience" in a manner comprehensible to contemporary readers. Alexander is not left in the past as an archaic, bygone figure, but his story is reorganized by multiple traditions in terms of familiar religious devotion, like that of a prophet or saint. Literary theorist Yves Citton offers as a definition of a "*lecture actualisante,*" a process that unfolds in these reinterpretations which Corinne Jouanno describes as a reading "based on the play between two temporalities, the past of the text and the present of the reader":

> A literary interpretation of an ancient text is actualizing when a) it seeks to exploit the connotative potentialities of the signs of that text, b) in order to derive a model capable of reconfiguring a problem specific to the interpreter's historical situation, c) without aiming to correspond to the historical reality of the author, but d) by exploiting, when possible, the difference between the two eras (their language, their mental tools, their sociopolitical situations) to cast a new light on the present.[42]

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40. Robert Doran, *Philosophy of History after Hayden White* (Bloomsbury, 2013), 44.

41. Hayden White, "The Structure of Historical Narrative" (1972), in *The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature, and Theory, 1957–2007* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 119–20.

42. Yves Citton, *Lire, interpréter, actualiser* (Éditions Amsterdam, 2007), 265, translation by the author; Corinne Jouanno, "Alexander Romance and Byzantine World Chronicles: History Cross-Fertilized by Fiction and the Reverse," in *The Alexander Romance: History and Literature*, vol. 25, ed. Richard Stoneman et al. (Barkhuis, 2018), 229.

The medieval Alexander, in his multiple forms, is the product of layers of such actualizing readings: he is employed to answer to the interpreter's situation. With this view, we can more clearly understand the motivation behind reinterpretations of Alexander as a pilgrim.

Beyond the concepts and interpretive tools laid out above, I offer a new and apt description for the transmission and development of Alexander: refraction. Each tradition, even each individual author working with the story of Alexander's life, is like a prism, capturing the light of the historical Alexander and scattering it, separating it into different colors and recombining it into a new narrative. Beginning with his name, which takes such forms as Megalexandros, Zülkender, and Alisaundre, the young king of Macedon changes as his light passes through different prisms.[43] This metaphor is fitting since it emphasizes the brightness—and strangeness, and delight, and vivacity—of the tradition of Alexander stories. Additionally, its sense is compatible with both Citton's description of the illuminating *lecture actualisante* and the concept of the open text that Konstan employs, where elements of the story are like beads on a string ready to be rearranged. One of these early refractions of Alexander's legacy emerges in first-century Judaea, and forms a core of the Byzantine Alexander character to develop over the coming centuries.

Alexander in the City of David: Jerusalem, Josephus, and the Book of Daniel

In the *Antiquities of the Jews,* the Roman historian Josephus (c. AD 37–100) sets forth a detailed history of the Jewish people from the creation of Adam and Eve to the Great Jewish Revolt of AD 66. Near the midpoint of the work, Josephus incorporates an account of the life of

43. Alexander is a protean character, and his name is also protean. Where appropriate, I will use the native name of Alexander—that is, for the purposes of this paper, Iskandar in Arabic and Sekandar in Persian.

Alexander, from his ascension to the throne after the assassination of Philip up until his conquest of the Levant.[44] Josephus's account, which generally accords with the timeline established by other classical accounts of Alexander's conquest, curiously injects an episode describing Alexander's entry into the city of Jerusalem.[45] To be sure, Alexander's stopover in Jerusalem receives no mention in the so-called historical authors: Arrian describes the Macedonian siege and capture of the city of Tyre in 332 BC (*Anab.* 2.18–24), and a rejected attempt by Darius to put a halt to Alexander's advance (2.25), followed by the seizure of Gaza (2.26–27). Plutarch's account is similar, and has the siege of Tyre (*Alex.* 24.3–25.2) directly succeeded by the siege of Gaza (25.3), after which Alexander marches to Egypt, founds Alexandria, and visits the temple of Ammon at Siwa. Quintus Curtius Rufus elides the siege of Tyre entirely: Alexander's troops leave Greece, and the next action is an augmented account of the siege of Gaza (4.6). But none of these three accounts offers a description of Alexander's arrival in Jerusalem. It is only in the writings of Josephus that such a scene appears, and this scene merits close analysis on account of how frequently it is reworked by later writers.

Just before this point in the chronicle, the Samarians, enemies of the Jews, gain permission to build a temple in the city of Jerusalem. The Jewish high priest at the time, Jaddus, pledged his allegiance to Darius, but when the Persians are routed at Issos (332 BC) in southern Anatolia and the Macedonians came storming down the Levantine coast, Jaddus is forced to back water.[46] Hearing about the Macedonian advance, the priest hurriedly urges the people of Jerusalem to make sacrifice and pray to God for protection. That night, however, God visits

44. Joseph. *AJ* 11.313-347.

45. Shaye J.D. Cohen, "Alexander the Great and Jaddus the High Priest According to Josephus," *AJS Review* 7/8 (1982), 41–68.

46. Joseph. *AJ* 11.314–325.

Jaddus in a dream, telling him to open the gates of the city and meet the Macedonians, "that they should not look to suffer any harm, for God was watching over them."[47]

On the next day, as Alexander advances to Jerusalem, he is said to see the priests waiting for him at the city. Jaddus stands in his ceremonial garb, which included "the mitre with the golden plate on it on which was inscribed the name of God." Alexander approaches Jaddus alone and "prostrated himself before the Name," much to the consternation of the non-Jewish individuals in attendance.[48] Prodded by his general Parmenion about why he bowed down before the Jewish high priest, Alexander responds that "it was not before him that I prostrated myself but the God of whom he has the honour to be high priest."[49] Much as Jaddus was visited by God in a dream, Alexander had a visitation while he was at Dion in Macedonia, and interpreted the whole situation to mean that he was divinely ordained to defeat Darius and become the ruler of Asia. Curiously, Alexander acknowledges the God of the Jews and shows his thankfulness toward this God, despite his conviction that he is the son of the Egyptian Ammon.[50] Alexander is saluted by the Jews upon his arrival, and proceeds to the temple in the city, where he makes a sacrifice to God and receives a lavish treatment from the high priest and other religious officials. This story in Josephus describes a particularly open and respectful attitude Alexander shows toward believers of other faiths. This episode, I argue, marks the origin of the Byzantine reading of Alexander as a pilgrim king.

47. Joseph. *AJ* 11.326–7.

48. Joseph. *AJ* 11.331.

49. Joseph. *AJ* 11.333–4.

50. It does not appear that any extant non-Jewish source material mentions Alexander's interaction with the Jews. For another cropping-up of Alexander in the Jewish tradition, see *William Davidson Talmud*, Sefaria Library, *Yoma* 69a.

Further in the passage, Josephus writes that "the book of Daniel was shown to him, in which he had declared that one of the Greeks would destroy the empire of the Persians, he believed himself to be the one indicated."[51] The biblical passage alluded to here comes from Daniel 8, which includes a prophecy of a one-horned he-goat destroying a two-horned ram:

> I saw the ram charging westward and northward and southward. All beasts were powerless to withstand it, and no one could rescue from its power; it did as it pleased and became strong. As I was watching, a male goat appeared from the west, coming across the face of the whole earth without touching the ground. The goat had a horn between its eyes. It came toward the ram with the two horns that I had seen standing beside the river, and it ran at it with savage force. I saw it approaching the ram. It was enraged against it and struck the ram, breaking its two horns. The ram did not have power to withstand it; it threw the ram down to the ground and trampled upon it, and there was no one who could rescue the ram from its power. Then the male goat grew exceedingly great; but at the height of its power, the great horn was broken…[52]

Alexander's likeness was represented frequently with horns in coinage and sculpture, most likely a nod to his spiritual adoptive father, the horned god Ammon.[53] However, he is not understood to be the two-horned ram, but the goat instead: Darius is the ram thrown down at his feet, with reference to his historical defeat at the battle of Gaugamela in 331 BC.[54] Shaye Cohen reads the Alexander in Jerusalem episode as a literary construction by Josephus, which combines two common genres of ancient narrative: the *adventus*, which describes the arrival of a powerful figure to a city, and the dream narrative, which is encapsulated by the visions that both the high

51. Joseph. *AJ* 11.337. This scene is echoed in numerous adaptations of the Romance, including *L'Ystoire du bon roi Alexandre* (also called the Berlin Alexander Romance), which resides in facsimile form in Carleton's Special Collections.

52. Daniel 8:1–8, from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (Oxford University Press, 2010). Later on, in Daniel 8:21, the archangel Gabriel interprets the vision for Daniel, saying explicitly that "the male goat is the king of Greece."

53. Hence also the appellation of the Qur'anic Dhu'l-Qarnayn figure, or the "Bearer of the Two Horns," which will be expanded on later. For an early study of Alexander's coinage and imagery, see Anderson, "Alexander's Horns." A recent, and more comprehensive, discussion of the same topic can be found in Kenneth Sheedy and Boyo Ockinga, "The Crowned Ram's Head on Coins of Alexander the Great and the Rule of Ptolemy as Satrap of Egypt," in *East and West in the World Empire of Alexander: Essays in Honor of Brian Bosworth*, ed. Pat Wheatley and Elizabeth Baynham (Oxford University Press, 2015), 197–239.

54. John Joseph Collins, *Daniel: With an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature* (William B. Eerdmans, 1984), 87.

priest Jaddus and Alexander experience in their sleep before their meeting in the city.[55] Alexander's arrival is divinely manifested. Such a story—of Alexander in Jerusalem, whose arrival and conquest were prophesied in the books of the Bible—is described by historian Anthony Kaldellis as one of the five principal memes of the Byzantine Alexander figure, which were spliced together in varying proportions in each representation. Or, as David Konstan argues, such episodes were concatenated like "beads on a string."[56] Kaldellis describes that

> Byzantine writers who wrote about Alexander chose what they wanted from among these basic building blocks and spliced them together. This process must have taken place from scratch each time, producing different and idiosyncratic combinations, as if these writers were reaching back into the original store and making individual choices each time, rather than building upon a developing Byzantine tradition about Alexander.[57]

Josephus's *Antiquities* proved especially useful for Byzantine scholars, since it offered a counterbalance to pagan polemics and incorporated biblical history into classical commentaries to form a coherent historical worldview, not least for the historian John Malalas.

From Pagan to Guardian of Christendom: John Malalas and the Apocalyptic Tradition

The *Chronographia* of John Malalas (c. 480–c. 570) stands as the oldest extant Byzantine chronicle, and became the source for many subsequent accounts of Alexander.[58] Malalas juxtaposes elements of diverse origins but does not derive much of his material from the expected classical authors. Instead, he leans on the work of Bottios, an enigmatic figure about

55. Cohen, "Alexander the Great," 45. For an especially useful recent contribution on the tradition of Jerusalem visit stories, see Ory Amitay, *Alexander the Great in Jerusalem: Myth and History* (Oxford University Press, 2025).

56. Konstan, "Acts of Love," 34.

57. Kaldellis, "Alexander the Great," 221.

58. John Malalas, *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, trans. Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys, and Roger Scott, *Byzantina Australiensia* 4 (Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986).

whom little is known,[59] along with the writings of the third- and fourth-century ecclesiastical historian Eusebius of Caesarea.[60] The *Chronographia* contains a compressed version of the historical life of Alexander: the Macedonian king visits the site of Byzantium and the tomb of Achilles in Asia Minor, and with the hero's blessing "set out from there like a leopard" to conquer all the lands that the Romans had lost. He captures Darius, marries his daughter, Roxane, and then captures Porus in India. After conquering Porus, he encounters the widowed queen Candace, who rules the interior of India and lures Alexander to her court. Alexander then wins her hand in marriage and the two travel "to Ethiopia and other countries" before his death.[61]

This Alexander is marked by three distinctive, and ungodly, traits. First, he has irises of two different colors, which was regarded as an ill omen in the late antique Greek world;[62] second, this Alexander has two wives, Roxane and Candace; and third, he is a thoroughgoing worshipper of the old gods: he makes an offering at the tomb of Achilles at Troy, and before founding Alexandria sacrifices a virgin whom he names Macedonia.[63] In Malalas, Alexander is a formidable conqueror and founder of countless cities, yet his religious leanings are still patently pagan; he belongs to a different age.

59. Kaldellis, "Alexander the Great," 219.

60. Corinne Jouanno, "L'image d'Alexandre le Conquérant chez les chroniqueurs byzantins (VIe–XIIe Siècles)," *Kentron* 17, no. 2 (2001), 93–4. Malalas describes "the most learned Bottios" (193), along with Eusebius, Pausanias (197), and Theophilus (195) as his named sources; see Malalas, *Chronicle*. The numbers given here reflect the pagination of John Malalas, *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, ed. Ludwig August Dindorf (Eduard Weber, 1831).

61. Malalas, *Chronicle*, 195.

62. Cf. Malalas, *Chronicle*, 195, ultimately likely drawn from Ps.-Callisthenes 1.13. Emperor Anastasios I (r. 491–518) was born with heterochromia, interpreted as a portent that his reign marked the start of the seventh and final millennium. Cf. Wolfram Brandes, "Anastasios ὁ δίκορος: Endzeiterwartung und Kaiserkritik in Byzanz um 500 n. Chr.," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 90 (1997), 55-61. Also see Jouanno, "L'image d'Alexandre," 95, for several instances in Greek apocalyptic literature (the Apocalypses of John and Ezra) where the devil is described with different right and left eyes.

63. Malalas, *Chronicle*, 193; 192.

In the century following Malalas's death, the eastern Mediterranean passed into another age. After more than twenty-five years of war between the Romans and the Persians, the Byzantine Empire finally dealt a defeat to the Sasanians in AD 628.[64] Yet both sides incurred heavy losses, and lasting stability would prove illusory. Arabian tribes had begun testing the strength of the Persian frontier with exploratory raids, and within a decade a new power, the Rashidun Caliphate, would fill the regional vacuum.[65] Out of this background of social unrest emerged a work of literature presenting to its readers prophetic visions of the end of the world: the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius.[66] This source is widely attributed to a Syriac author writing between 685 and 692 in response to the first Arab invasions and emergence of the caliphate.[67] In the following decades, the *Apocalypse*, which begins with a history of the world and ends with a description of what to expect in the end-times, was translated into Greek and again into Latin, and played a substantial role in shaping medieval Christian eschatology. In the historical section appears a legendary biography of Alexander. Born to Philip of Macedon and Chuseth of Ethiopia, he defeated Darius and "went round the earth" (περιενόστησε τὴν γῆν) before venturing to the Country of the Sun, the home of the unclean nations.[68] Here, the descendants of the biblical Japheth live, eating beetles, dogs, mice, and deformed fetuses.[69] Upon

64. Robert G. Hoyland, *In God's Path: The Arab Conquests and the Creation of an Islamic Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 31. See also James Howard-Johnston, *The Last Great War of Antiquity* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

65. Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2010).

66. Paul J. Alexander, "Medieval Apocalypses as Historical Sources," *The American Historical Review* 73, no. 4 (1968): 997–1018.

67. The case at hand here is similar to the attribution of the Alexander Romance: the *Apocalypse* was wrongly ascribed to St. Methodius of Olympus, martyred in the early fourth century. Garstad offers this seven-year period, citing "internal evidence." Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius. An Alexandrian World Chronicle*, trans. Benjamin Garstad (Harvard University Press, 2012), vii.

68. The Latin translation substitutes "subdued the earth" (*demultavit terram*); Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse,* 97 [8.3].

69. Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse*, 23 [8.3–4].

seeing these hideous things, Alexander "feared lest they should somehow reach the Holy Land and pollute it with their abominable practices, and he earnestly supplicated God."[70] God hears Alexander's prayer and brings together two great mountains. Alexander sets about building a gate between them to keep out the barbarous nations, covered in an impenetrable material called asyncite.[71] Only at the end of the world would the gate break and the nations of Gog and Magog come spilling out into the land of Israel.

As mentioned above, Alexander's parentage in the *Apocalypse* differs from both the accounts of ancient historians and of Pseudo-Callisthenes in that his mother is not Olympias but Chuseth, the princess of Ethiopia. Pseudo-Methodius dedicates some space to extending this family tree after describing Alexander's death. Chuseth marries, presumably on account of the earlier death of Philip (which goes unmentioned in this text), Byzas, the king of Byzantium. She then gives birth to a daughter named Byzantea, who then marries Romulus—also called Armeleus—of Roman mythological fame. Together, Byzantea and Armeleus have three children: Armeleus, Urbanus, and Claudius, who come to rule the cities of Rome, Byzantium, and Alexandria, respectively.[72] In this digression, Pseudo-Methodius distinctly links three of the apostolic sees by blood. Although not immediate kin of these three rulers, Alexander also descends from the "seed of the Ethiopian maiden," which ensures that "there is no nation or kingdom under heaven able to lord it over the kingdom of the Christians."[73] Alexander, the son of Christian royalty of Ethiopia in the *Apocalypse*, is thus enmeshed in the legitimacy of several

70. Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse*, 25 [8.5.2].

71. W.J. Aerts suggests that "asyncite" is either a wholly invented word or a derivation from the Syriac *tâsaqtîs*, related to the Arabic root for "solid." See Aerts, "Alexander's Wondercoating," in *Media Latinitas: A Collection of Essays to Mark the Occasion of the Retirement of L.J. Engels* (Brepols, 1996), 159–167.

72. Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse*, 29–31 [9.4–6].

73. Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse*, 31 [9.8].

of the patriarchates of the early church, and becomes the architect of its safety by constructing the (nearly) invulnerable wall against Gog and Magog.[74]

In addition to what Malalas and the apocalyptic authors describe, we find that Alexander was embraced by many ordinary people as a Christian (or para-Christian) protector figure. John Chrysostom (c. 354–407), the archbishop of Constantinople, writes in that people in his day tied coins (νομίσματα χαλκᾶ) of Alexander around their heads and feet as amulets (περιάπτοις).[75] This trend continued for many centuries in parts of the Greek world: the Irish traveler Edward Dodwell observed that even in Greece in the early nineteenth century, coins of Alexander were worn as amulets by women of Galaxidi, near Delphi.[76] As this paper will describe shortly, coinage bearing Alexander's likeness played a notable role in depictions and imaginings of him elsewhere in the Mediterranean world, further refracting his pious character (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Obverse of a silver didrachm of Alexander III of Macedon with ram's horns. Arados (modern Arwad, Syria), 242/1 BC (posthumous issue). British Museum, London. Wikimedia Commons, CC.

74. For more material on Gog and Magog, see E.J. van Donzel and Andrea Schmidt, *Gog and Magog in Early Eastern Christian and Islamic Sources: Sallam's Quest for Alexander's Wall* (Brill, 2010).

75. J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus, series graeca* XL (1859), col. 240.

76. Edward Dodwell, *A Classical and Topographical Tour Through Greece, During the Years 1801, 1805, and 1806*, vol. 1 (Rodwell and Martin, 1819), 141. See also the analysis in Phaidon Koukoules, *Vyzantinon vios kai politismos*, vol. 6, Collection de l'Institut français d'Athènes (Papazese, 1948), 265.

George the Monk and Synkellos: Middle Byzantine Historians

George the Monk (fl. mid ninth century) followed Malalas several centuries later, and in his *Chronicon* expands on the Jerusalem episode.[77] Whereas earlier figures like Adam and Solomon only receive the space of a paragraph, or half-page, in George's chronicle, Alexander's story is granted around twenty pages. Of the passage devoted to Alexander, his supposed visit to Jerusalem assumes a central role. The structure of the Jerusalem visit is calqued from Josephus, as are multiple other elements of George's description. Indeed, of the sizeable section on Alexander's visit, the author dilates for several pages on the details of the high priest of Israel's dress, borrowed from Exodus 28. The dream scene of Josephus receives less attention, apart from the fact that George has Alexander declaring that "God was seen by me in a dream [κατ' ὄναρ], in the form of this high priest, and he exhorted me to have courage, saying, 'Unto you will end the dominations of the Persians.'"[78] In George's version, Alexander has received a message from God, in heaven, that the king of the Macedonians must put an end to the rule of the Persians (ὡς δεῖν τινα τῶν Μακεδόνων τὴν βασιλείαν Περσῶν χειρώσασθαι).[79] In this way, George the Monk renders Alexander a prophetic figure: he has been foretold by Daniel, a past (and legitimate, biblical) prophet, to throw off the yoke of the Persians. His place in the prophecy is borne out by a dream-visit from God, much like the prophetic dreams and visions Daniel himself receives.[80] Alexander's visit is doubly significant: he not only partakes in pilgrim activity, but he is destined to play an active part in enacting God's word on earth.

77. George the Monk, *Georgii Monachi Chronicon, Vol. I*, ed. Carl de Boor (B.G. Teubner, 1904), 25–43.

78. George the Monk, *Georgii Monachi Chronicon*, 31. Translation by the author.

79. George the Monk, *Georgii Monachi Chronicon*, 32.

80. For instance, Daniel 7 (the four monstrous beasts or kingdoms), Daniel 8 (the ram and the goat, described above), and Daniel 10 (the vision of an angel who presages the coming of a "prince of Greece").

Another account of Alexander's visit-turned-pilgrimage to Jerusalem appears in the *Chronography* of George Synkellos (d. c. 810). The features of Alexander that Malalas underscores—heterochromia, polygamy, and idolatry—are *not* described by Synkellos in any particular detail. In fact, the primary sources of Synkellos's account—the *Chronicle* of Eusebius, along with the works of Diodorus Siculus, Dexippus, and Josephus—demonstrate a patent move away from the Pseudo-Callisthenic Romance. The material is referred to with circumspection: in a section detailing the reign of the pharaohs, Synkellos mentions Nectanebo, but interjects that "there are others who say" that Nectanebo fathered Alexander.[81] However, in shifting the focus of the source material, Synkellos also reworks the character of Alexander, refracting his traits through the prism of Christian virtues. As Alexander advanced down the Levantine coast, he "laid siege to Tyre, and appropriated Judaea. He showed honour to the high priest Jaddous by sacrificing to God, as if he were confessing that he had acquired the whole inhabited world from God."[82] Synkellos speaks for Alexander such that he becomes a monotheistic ruler. Not only is Alexander interpreting his dream of the Jewish high priest as a retrospective justification of what is yet to come, but he is ascribing his success until that point to the one God of the Abrahamic tradition.

As these materials indicate, Alexander became a prophetic figure in the Byzantine tradition, a king largely scrubbed of his pagan rites and sanctified through a gradual accretion of Christian faith. Alexander's traits of virtue and piety, which found their origins in the accounts of his ancient biographers, were redirected through a matrix of historical editorial moves—that is, refocused through a series of prisms—so that he came to appear like one of the heroes of the

81. George Synkellos, *The Chronography of George Synkellos: A Byzantine Chronicle of Universal History from the Creation*, trans. William Adler and Paul Tuffin (Oxford University Press, 2002), 372 [307].

82. Synkellos, *Chronography*, 380 [314].

faith in manner.[83] To use Trouillot's language, history as narrative *became* history as fact: the pseudo-historical Alexander of Josephus and the Romance was stripped of his pagan vestments and draped in a mantle of Christian virtue.

Builder of Walls, Burner of Books: Alexander in Early Medieval Islamic Histories

Emerging around the same time as these Greek narrative refractions, and springing out of the same apocalyptic and narrative historical soil, stories of Alexander became the focus of Islamic historians, religious scholars, and lay Muslims alike. The earliest appearance of an Alexander figure in the Islamic tradition comes in its central religious text: the Qur'an. To be sure, Alexander himself is not referred to by name. Sura 18 of the Qur'an (*al-Kahf*) refers to a shadowy figure called Dhu'l-Qarnayn ("the bearer of the two horns").[84] This individual travels westward until he reaches the place where the sun sets. There he encounters a spring and a people whom he threatens in order to compel them to behave righteously. At this point, Dhu'l-Qarnayn acts as an arbiter and intercessor of God: "He [Dhu'l-Qarnayn] responded, 'Whoever does wrong will be punished by us, then will be returned to their Lord, Who will punish them with a horrible torment.'"[85] He then travels eastward until he arrives where the sun rises, where he meets a people who have no protection from its rays. Next, Dhu'l-Qarnayn travels along another path to a place where two mountains stand side by side, which is inhabited by people who cannot understand his language. These people beg Dhu'l-Qarnayn to protect them from Gog and Magog (*Ya'jūj wa-Ma'jūj*) and all work together to fill the gap in the mountains with a wall

83. George Galavaris, "Alexander the Great Conqueror and Captive of Death: His Various Images in Byzantine Art," *RACAR: Revue d'art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 16, no. 1 (1989), 10.

84. Qur'an 18:83–98.

85. Qur'an 18:87.

of iron and copper, so strong that Gog and Magog could not get through—a striking parallel to the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius.[86]

The connection between Alexander and Dhu'l-Qarnayn is not made in the text of the Qur'an itself, but it is made repeatedly in the most authoritative commentaries such that it became a firmly established reading. In several of the most widely read *tafsirs*, or Qur'anic exegeses, the link between this apocryphal two-horned figure and the historical Alexander is distinctly made: the *tafsir* of Muqatil ibn Sulayman (d. 150 AH/AD 767) glosses Dhu'l-Qarnayn as meaning Alexander and Caesar (*al-Iskandar wa-Qayṣar*).[87] Alexander is also identified by name—Iskandar in Arabic—in *Tafsir Jalalayn*.[88] *Tafsir al-Kashani* notes that "the story of Dhū'l-Qarnayn is well-known. He was a Greek (*rūmī*) who lived in times not long ago."[89] The ultimate reason for this may well be due to coinage, drawing on the Hellenistic iconography of Alexander with two horns as the son of Ammon (Figure 1), rooted in another story of religious visitation which subtly shaped this one. Alternatively, a scribal alteration in Hebrew rabbinical literature has been suggested as an impetus for the horned epithet: ד (d) was interpreted as and replaced by ר (r), and so *Maqdon* (Macedonian) became *Maqron* (Horned).[90]

86. Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse*, 27 [8.10].

87. Muqatil Ibn Sulayman, *Kitāb-i Tafsīri Muqātil ibn Sulaymān* (al-Maktaba al-Shamela), 18:83. Where relevant, I include dates in the Hijri calendar in the format (AH/AD).

88. Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli and Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, trans. Feras Hamza (Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021), 18:83; 18:93

89. *Tafsīr al-Kāshānī, Part I: 1-18*, trans. Feras Hamza (Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021), 18:82.

90. Moses Gaster, "An Old Hebrew Romance of Alexander," *JRAS* (1897), 488. Gaster downplays the importance of official imagery and coinage. I disagree with his comment about the scarcity of Alexander coins and how they were not circulated after his death, on the basis of Chrysostom and Dodwell's observations, described above on page 20. Furthermore, the collection of medals and coins (of Alexander) kept and used by the residents of Chrysoupoli in northern Greece, as just one example, was significant enough to beggar belief; Edward Daniel Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europe, Asia and Africa*, vol. 8 (T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1818), 31–5.

Regardless of the exact combination of forces behind Alexander's arrival in the Islamic tradition, it is worth looking more closely at the way he is characterized by those working with his persona. Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir ibn Yazid al-Tabari's *History of the Prophets and Kings* (*Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*) is one of the most detailed works of the early Islamic historical tradition, comprising a monumental 39 volumes. Al-Tabari (224–310/839–923) takes his epithet from his birthplace in Tabaristan, south of the Caspian Sea in modern Iran. He features the history of the Persians centrally in his world chronicle, though not just because of his own background. As Robert Hoyland writes, all Islamic chronicles that begin from Creation incorporate the histories of three pre-Islamic peoples: the Israelites, the pre-Islamic Arabs, and the Persians. The first was included for religious reasons, the second for genealogical reasons, and the third for intellectual reasons: Persian Muslims had become such a part of medieval intellectual culture that their origins became a part of Islamic world chronicles.[91] As al-Tabari describes the issue of the Persian rulers, he also documents the rupture that accompanied Alexander's defeat of Darius and, in the process, furnishes some information about the life of Alexander, or Iskandar. He is the son of the Greek queen Hali (Helen), and not Philip *or* Nectanebo but the elder Dara (Darius) of Persia. Dara was set to marry Hali, but he found her to smell strongly of body odor and sweat. To mask the smell, Dara prescribed an herb called *sandar*.[92] Much of the smell was concealed, but not all, so Dara returned her to Greece, though

91. *The "History of the Kings of the Persians" in Three Arabic Chronicles*, trans. Robert G. Hoyland (Liverpool University Press, 2018), 6.

92. I tentatively identify this *sandar* with sandarac (سندر / سندروس), a precious resin obtained from the *'ar'ār* tree (*Tetraclinis articulata*), a kind of cypress. The fragrant resin has found many medicinal applications, including for burns and intestinal worms, and is still used in parts of North Africa; see Clara Azémard, Matthieu Ménager, and Catherine Vieillescazes, "On the Tracks of Sandarac, Review and Chemical Analysis," *Environmental Science and Pollution Research* 24 (2017), 27746. In addition, sandarac has been long used as a coating for wood—its Latin name *vernix* produced English "varnish," and itself derives from the Greek name Βερενίκη (modern Benghazi, Libya). I looked in several medieval Islamic pharmacopoeias, including the ninth-century *Aqrabadhin* of Sabur ibn Sahl, and while I found mentions of sandarac, none specifically dealt with odor. I also have considered an association (very sketchily) with the Persian *sandara*/*sondare*, an obsolete term for "bastard," which may establish a

not without a son. This son was named for his mother and the strong-smelling medicament she received: Hali-Sandar, or Alexander.[93]

Although Iskandar is related by blood to the younger Dara, whom he fights against, the Macedonian king of al-Tabari's history is uncharitable toward Persian cultural heritage: al-Tabari refers to several sources to which he had access which report that Iskandar "carried away (many) books—the learning of the Persians on the sciences, the stars, and philosophy."[94] This episode, which may seem to run counter to the flattering refractions of Alexander's legacy highlighted thus far, apparently derives from a native Persian tradition of Alexander narrations that perpetuated the distress felt by Persians when the Macedonian army swept through and conquered their land.[95] For one, Persian historian Hamza al-Isfahani (d. ca. 960s) recorded how Alexander was a destroyer of culture: he criticizes the account of Alexander's founding of cities—twelve in number, as cited elsewhere—as "baseless, for Alexander was a destroyer rather than a builder."[96] This interpretation was prevalent for a time: the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadim (d. 384/994), an encyclopedia compiled in the late tenth century, describes how Alexander "ruined whatever there was in the different buildings of scientific material," and "after he had finished copying what he had need of, he burned the material written in Persian."[97] This Alexander is

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punning link between this remedy, Alexander's name, and doubts of his parentage. As the length of this footnote suggests, this issue would make an interesting topic for another paper. Thanks to Hope for raising this question.

93. al-Tabari, *The History of al-Ṭabarī, Volume IV: The Ancient Kingdoms*, trans. Moshe Perlmann, Bibliotheca Persica (State University of New York Press, 1987), 90–1 [697].

94. al-Tabari, *History*, 93 [700].

95. Haila Manteghi Amin, "The Alexander Romance in the Persian Tradition: Its Influence on Persian History, Epic and Storytelling," Ph.D., University of Exeter, 2016.

96. Isfahani 40, in Hoyland, *History of the Kings*, 55.

97. Ibn al-Nadim, *The Fihrist of Al-Nadīm*, vol. 2, ed. Bayard Dodge (Columbia University Press, 1970), 574 [7.1].

shown to have little respect for Zoroastrian scriptures, destroying the Avesta, and is explicitly positioned as an enemy of native religious practices.

Yet in al-Tabari, these destructive traits are diluted: while some of the material illustrates Iskandar as a menace to the followers of Zaradusht (Zoroaster), his character is also attached to the Islamic tradition where he played a much more positive role. Al-Tabari traces Iskandar's descent back to Abraham, linking the Greek king to a common forebear of Muslims and Christians.[98] Still, the Alexander in al-Tabari's *History* is not overwhelmingly devout: his religious tendencies are left unmentioned, he does not make pilgrimage, and his character is not especially virtuous. What is interesting, though, is that Persian sources were making claims on Alexander—he is born of Dara and marries the daughter of the shah—to *create* history. In the interest of preserving an unbroken dynastic line, al-Tabari's Alexander is possessed of a "plastic power," in the words of Nietzsche, who writes: "Summoned up by hunger, regulated by the degree of need, […] the understanding of the past is desired at all times to serve the future and the present."[99] Al-Tabari brings Alexander's historical legacy to the present to address the exigencies of his time. And in the works of some historians and poets, another narrative historical turn would again refract Alexander's light, turning him into a model of a pilgrim king.

Iskandar al-Ḥājju: Alexander's Travels to Mecca

Abu Hanifa Ahmad ibn Dawud al-Dinawari (212–282/828–895) was a Persian historian, whose *Book of Lengthy Histories* (*Kitāb al-Akhbār al-Ṭiwāl*) marks one of the early attempts to

98. Tabari, *History*, 94 [701]. In describing disagreements on dates and intervals of time, Tabari writes that Zoroastrians, Christians, and Jews all acknowledge the same story, which includes "Alexander's victory over Jerusalem and Palestine," in Tabari, *History*, 108 [719]. However, from what I could find, no detailed mention is made to a visit to Jerusalem in the Islamic tradition.

99. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life," *Untimely Meditations* (1874).

merge the Iranian past with Islamic history. Like al-Tabari, al-Dinawari attributes to Iskandar eastern parentage. He describes how the daughter of the king of Rum was afflicted by bad odors, and so traveled to the court of Dara (Darius), king of Persia, for a cure. She became pregnant there, and named her son after the strong-smelling natural remedy (*āl sandar*) that Dara prescribed to fix her condition.[100] While many of the elements of the king's life are common between the two, al-Dinawari undertakes an alteration of Iskandar's character that gives him a distinctly religious bent: the pagan Iskandar becomes a champion of monotheism over the course of al-Dinawari's account. The young Iskandar meets the philosopher Arstatalis (Aristotle), who "affirmed the unity of God" and urges Iskandar to turn away from idolatry and insolence.[101] Iskandar heeds the philosopher's message and "hearkened unto his exhortation, parable, and admonition," for Iskandar "knew that what he said was the truth, and that what is worshipped apart from God is vain."[102] After this remarkably willing conversion, Iskandar becomes a missionary of God's word: he "commanded the distribution of the book concerning this unto the east of the earth and the west of it, that men should be dealt with in accordance with their acceptance or refusal."[103] This book—the Qur'an—comes to Dara, who is enraged by what he understands as an attempt to delay the tribute owed by Macedonia to the Persian king. Dara writes an angry letter back and so incites war between the two.[104] In this way, al-Dinawari firmly positions Iskandar as a devout Muslim, and frames the eventual defeat of Dara at the hands of the

100. Interestingly, al-Dinawari acknowledges a differing opinion among the "learned men of Rum," who unanimously consider Faylafus (Philip) to be Iskandar's father; Abu Hanifa Ahmad ibn Dawud ibn Wanand al-Dinawari, *The Book of Lengthy Histories*, trans. Michael Richard Jackson Bonner (2018), 32.

101. al-Dinawari, *Book of Lengthy Histories*, 33.

102. al-Dinawari, *Book of Lengthy Histories*, 33.

103. al-Dinawari, *Book of Lengthy Histories*, 34.

104. al-Dinawari, *Book of Lengthy Histories*, 34.

Greeks, which Persian scholars took pains to explain, as a result of ignorance and opposition to God's word.

After pushing eastward to India, Iskandar and his army make a turn back west, to Sudan and then to Yemen. While in some ways this route reflects the Pseudo-Callisthenic episode of Alexander's trip, following his victory over King Porus in India, to visit Candace of Ethiopia,[105] it reaches fuller creative expression when Iskandar leaves Yemen for Mecca. At that time, the city had been taken over by the tribe of the Huza'a, which did not permit Muslims to worship at the Ka'ba. As al-Dinawari writes, when Alexander arrived, "he took the Ḫuzā'a out of Makka and dedicated it to Naḍar and to the sons of his father. Iskandar made the pilgrimage [*ḥajja*] to the House of God, the Sanctuary."[106] Al-Dinawari's Iskandar is reworked to possess the character of an ideal Muslim: he goes on the hajj himself, and makes it so that other Muslims will be able to do the same in without being harassed by nonbelievers.

One of the crowning achievements of Persian poetry, the *Shahnameh* of Abolqasem Ferdowsi (329–416/940–1025), was born out of a matrix of Zoroastrianism as described above, though to a distinctly different tune. The poem was written on the eve of Persia's conquest by the Arabs and consequent conversion to Islam, and it recounts the deeds of pre-Islamic kings and heroes like Gayumars, Kay Khusrau, and Rustam.[107] The first half is largely a sequence of legendary rulers, but the second half of the *Shahnameh* is more heterogenous, and gazes distinctly westward. Its first section tells the story of King Luhrasp and his son Gushtasp, who lives in exile in Rum before ascent to the throne. Yet a great expanse of the second half is

105. Pseudo-Callisthenes, "Alexander Romance," 3.18–23.

106. al-Dinawari, *Book of Lengthy Histories*, 36; for the Arabic text, Abu Hanifa Ahmad ibn Da'ud al-Dinawari, *Kitāb al-Aḫbār al-Ṭiwāl*, ed. Vladimir Guirgass (Brill, 1888), 36.

107. *Muhammad Juki's* Shahnamah *of Firdausi*, ed. Barbara Brend, The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland (Philip Wilson, 2010), 9.

occupied by the story of King Sekandar (Alexander), born in Rum neither to Philip *nor* to Olympias, but as the bastard son of Dara, king of the Persians, and Hali (Helen), the wife of the Greek king.[108] Genealogical connection was paramount for Persian rulers, so creating a link to Alexander, the individual who historically defeated the Achaemenids and preceded the Arsacids, two native Persian dynasties, signifies a skillful rhetorical and dynastic move. Through his parentage by Dara, Sekandar is the last of the Kayanid line, a king who possesses the divine glory (*farr*) that characterized the kingship of the shahs.[109] Ferdowsi draws closely on the Romance Alexander but, like al-Dinawari, adds a remarkable episode of his visit to Mecca (Figure 2).

108. This accords with al-Tabari and al-Dinawari. The trope of Alexander's eastern parentage is remarkable: in Pseudo-Callisthenes, his father is the Egyptian Nectanebo; in Pseudo-Methodius, his mother is Cusheth, queen of Ethiopia; and here, his father is Dara while his mother is *not* Olympia but Helen (perhaps of Troy). I tentatively suggest that this trope, coupled with legends of his illegitimacy (finding out Philip is not his real father) and subsequent great deeds nonetheless, offers an explanation for Alexander's superhuman character, but this would best be made the subject of another paper.

109. Marianna Shreve Simpson and Louise Marlow, *Princeton's Great Persian Book of Kings: The Peck Shahnama* (Princeton University Art Museum, 2015), 134. For more on the concept of *farr*, see Gholamreza Maroof and Iraj Dadashi, "Classification of the Different Types of Farr(ah) and Its Transformation under the Influence of the Qur'ān during the Islamic Period," *Hekmat Mo'âser* 8, no. 3 (2018): 131–169.

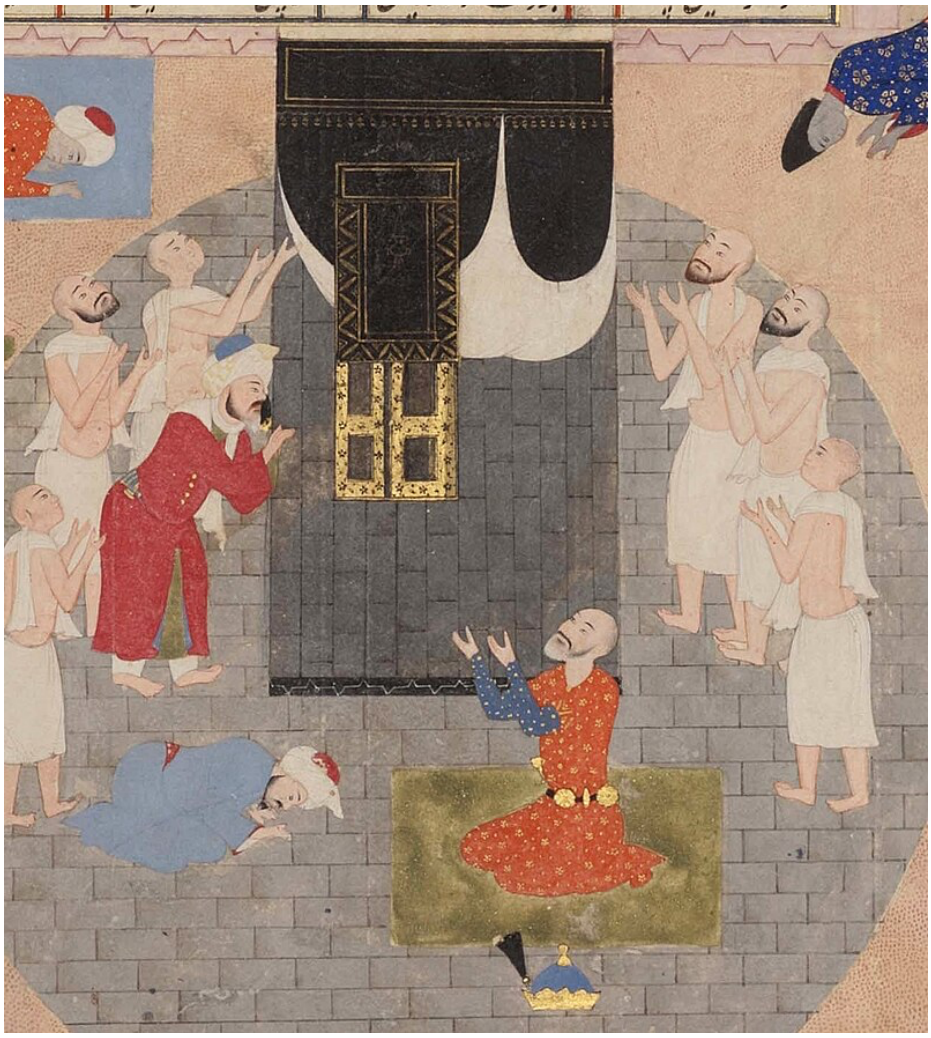

Figure 2. Alexander (figure kneeling with hands raised) at the Ka'ba, Mecca. In illustrated *Shahnameh* from Shiraz, Iran. Mid sixteenth century. Khalili Collections, London. Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Following victories at Tyre and then Gaugamela, Sekandar campaigns to India, where he engages in a protracted conflict with King Foor (Porus) of India. After besting Foor in single combat, he spends two months on the Indian throne, loading his soldiers with riches.[110] Then, tired of living so lavishly, Sekandar decides to set out for Mecca.[111] To great fanfare, "with

110. Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, trans. Dick Davis (Penguin, 2016), 596.

111. In another translation of the *Shahnameh*, the language is different, and strongly reflects the language of *pothos* or longing which is employed by Arrian (*Anab.* 3.3) i.a. when referring to Alexander's visit to religious sites: "a

drums rolling and trumpets blaring," Sekandar and his entourage arrive at the House of Holiness, the Ka'ba. He is greeted by Nasr, son of Qotayb, who informs Sekandar that the land around Mecca is controlled by the unjust Jaza' (Huza'a), who "gives no thought to the one God."[112] Sekandar, affected by Nasr's story about the oppression of the tribe of Esmail, tracks down all of the members of the family of Jaza' and executes them. Leaving the kin of Nasr free to worship at the Ka'ba, Sekandar himself visits the shrine and has gold coins thrown wherever he goes, before leaving for Egypt.[113]

Sekandar's visit can be read as a pinnacle of kingly virtue: after conquering as far as he could conquer, he is struck with the urge to visit the holiest place in Islam. However, Sekandar does not exactly come as a humble pilgrim, but as a king who eliminates the ruling tribe for not permitting Muslims to worship. And most curiously, unlike in al-Dinawari, Sekandar is not himself Muslim, but Christian. Shortly after his pilgrimage, Sekandar travels to the kingdom of Queen Qaydafeh (Candace), in an episode that clearly mirrors the Pseudo-Callisthenes Alexander's visit to see Candace of Ethiopia. Alexander invokes God—importantly, not the plural gods of the Greek pantheon—but swears an oath "by the Messiah's faith" and by "our vestments, our clergy, and the Holy Ghost."[114] While Sekandar is not Muslim in Ferdowsi's narration, artists revised the literal material to formulate a more Muslim Alexander: as Marianna

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sudden impulse came on Sikandar, and he greatly longed to journey to the Kaaba." See Firdawsi, *The Shahnama*, vol. 6, trans. Arthur George Warner and Edmond Warner (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, 1912), C. 1310 (p. 119). After looking at the original Persian text (Ferdowsi, *Shâhnâme*, Ganjoor, https://ganjoor.net/ferdousi/shahname), I found that Davis offers a more faithful rendition, as tantalizing as Warner's may be.

112. Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, 597.

113. Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, 597–8.

114. Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh*, 608. Interestingly, the Warner translation of Sekandar's marriage to Rushanak (Roxane), daughter of the deceased Dara, reads that "he gave command, and all the men of lore, / and understanding, in the host of Rúm / sat by while he demanded her in marriage, / the which he solemnised with Christian rites…" (Firdawsi, The Shahnama, 104 [1300]). This language is not represented in the Davis translation.

Shreve Simpson writes, "over centuries of *Shahnama* illustrations, however, Iskandar was slowly transformed from a passive visitor into a devoted worshipper" (Figure 2).[115] Although not without variation, Islamic historians used Iskandar/Sekandar as a model for virtue and devotion: by the early eleventh century, he had decisively shifted from an infidel, sacker of cities, and burner of books to a pious king with a religious conscience who made room in his travels to pay homage to the holiest site in the Islamic tradition.

Undying Light: Early Modern Refractions of Alexander

By the middle of the fifteenth century the Ottoman Empire had expanded rapidly across the Balkans.[116] In 1451, when Sultan Mehmed II (835–886/1432–1481) ascended to the throne, he came into an empire that controlled much of Greece, Bulgaria, and Anatolia; two years later, Mehmed captured Constantinople and trained his sights on Rome. George Phrantzes and Michael Critobulus, both Greek historians and contemporaries of Mehmed, write that he studied the life of Alexander and made it his aim to surpass his reign in its extent.[117] While a copy of Arrian's *Anabasis* indeed sat on the shelves of the palace library, and the sultan's vision of Alexander the world conqueror was clearly informed by classical Greek sources, there was another current in the Alexander tradition with which he would have been familiar.[118] In the early years of the fifteenth century, the Ottoman poet Taceddin Ahmedi (d. 815/1413) published his *İskendernâme*,

115. Simpson and Marlow, *Princeton's Great Persian Book*, 139.

116. Tursun Beg, *The History of Mehmed the Conqueror*, ARIT Monograph Series 1, edited by Halil İnalcık and Rhoads Murphey (Bibliotheca Islamica, 1978).

117. *CSHB* 19 (1838), 93; *FHG* 5 (1873), 56–7. See also Hans Joachim Kissling and Franz Babinger, "Mehmed II., der Eroberer, und Italien," *Byzantion* 21, no. 1 (1951): 127–170.

118. Babinger, "Mehmed II.," 142. Mehmed was schooled by two tutors, one of Greek and one of Latin, in the years prior to the conquest of Byzantium; Julian Raby, "A Sultan of Paradox: Mehmed the Conqueror as a Patron of the Arts," *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (1982): 4.

a work of some 8,000 couplets that chronicles the life of Alexander and the figures who followed him. Ahmedi captures the lives of Muhammad and the first four caliphs, the Umayyads, Abbasids, and Mongols, and continues until Mehmed I (r. 816–824/1413–1421), Ahmedi's patron and the grandfather of Mehmed II.[119] While Ahmedi was the first to render the life of Alexander in Ottoman Turkish, Persian and Arab poets and chroniclers had for centuries, as we have seen, been reformulating Alexander's malleable character, in the process stretching the limits and possibilities even further than what was accomplished in the Hellenistic sphere.

At nearly the same historical moment, several monasteries in Greece, one of which was the Monastery of Varlaam in Meteora, decorated their walls with a particular scene whose subject matter seems to cut back across centuries (Figure 3).[120] A man mourns over a grave containing a skeleton. The mourner, as the captions in the image describe, is the desert father Abba Sisoes, who lived as a solitary in the Egyptian desert in the early fifth century AD; the grave, that of Alexander of Macedon. Perhaps this scene was a historical occurrence lost except for in iconography, perhaps an erroneous identification with some other Sisoes from the fifteenth century.[121] However, the timing of this artistic set-piece seems conspicuous, and the content is worth our attention.

119. Günay Kut, "Ahmedî," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (1989).

120. See also Donald MacGillivray Nicol, *Meteora: The Rock Monasteries of Thessaly* (Chapman and Hall, 1963).

121. Galavaris, "Alexander the Great," 17. I have not been able to locate a reference to Alexander of Macedon in the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*.

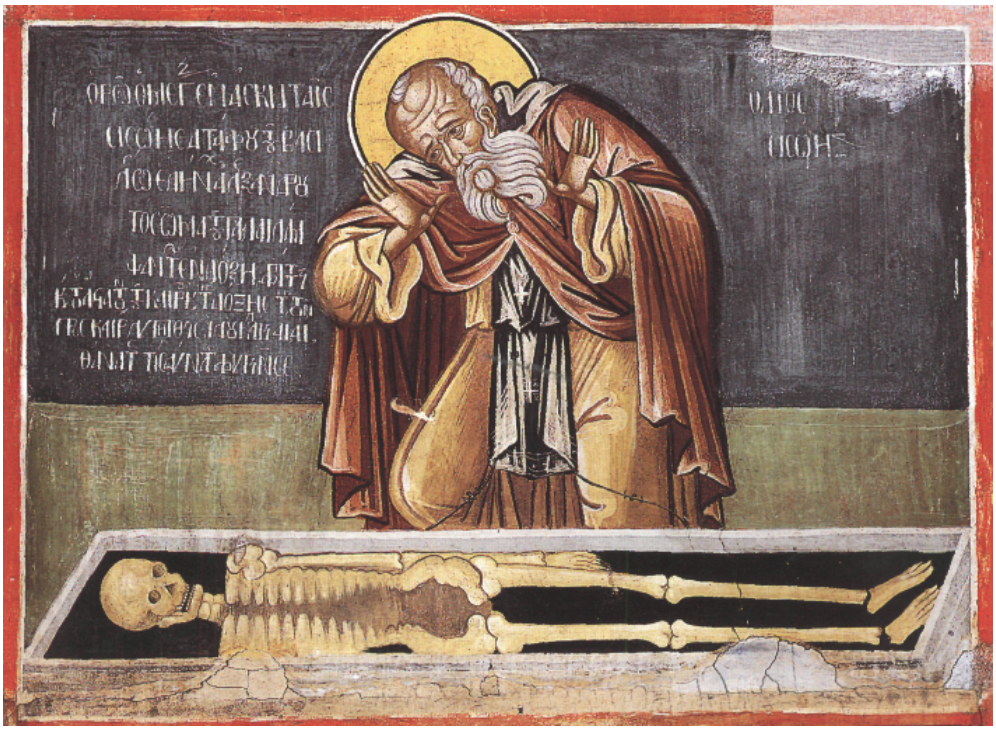

Figure 3. Abba Sisoes at the tomb of Alexander. Monastery of Varlaam, Meteora, Greece. Mid sixteenth century (an earlier version can be found in the Monastery of Dionysiou at Mount Athos). Wikimedia Commons, CC. The text on the right identifies Sisoes, and that to the left reads:

Ὁρῶν ὁ Μέγας ἐν ἀσκηταῖς / Σισώης ἄταφον τοῦ Βασι/λέως Ἑλλήνων Ἀλεξάνδρου / τὸ σῶμα τὸ πάλαι λάμ/ψαν ἐν δόξῃ, φρίττει / καὶ τὸ ἄστατον τοῦ καιροῦ καὶ τῆς δόξης τοῦτων / πρόσκαιρον λυπηθείς, ἰδού καὶ κλαίει / Αἰ Αἰ Θάνατε, τίς δύναται φυγεῖν σε;

"The great hermit Sisoes, seeing the unburied body of Alexander, the king of the Greeks, which was once covered in glory, trembles and laments, pained by the unsteady nature of life and the temporary pursuits of glory: Oh Death, who can escape you?"[122]

By the latter half of the fifteenth century, the Byzantine Empire had reached its end as its territory was conquered by the Ottomans. Thus, in this monastic meditation on mortality, Alexander's central place is doubly important. First, the historical king, who conquered as far as India—and plumbed the depths of the ocean and ascended to heaven, as the Alexander of the romantic tradition accomplished—is not omnipotent. Despite the glory heaped on him in life,

122. Translation by the author.

that glory was transitory (so was the case with Byzantium), and he lies alone and dead in the desert. Second, the fact that the tomb of Alexander is a site of pilgrimage for one of the Desert Fathers, of all people, belies a level of sanctity and respect that hardly fits a ruthless pagan.[123] Here rests Alexander, apocalyptic guardian, pilgrim to Jerusalem, worshipper of God, and mortal king. Yet while these scenes can be read as fatalistic, a product of rumination on disheartening current events, in the same historical moment, Alexander's story and its meanings were actively being refracted by some as a model for world conquest and enlightened rule, while also maintaining elements of sanctity in a distinctly different religious context.

Alexandros, Iskandar, Sekandar: Reflections and Conclusions

Alexander's legacy, as it pertains to his devotion and virtue with respect to religious activity, has proven remarkably rich for centuries of poets, historians, and painters, not to mention for ordinary people. Beginning with expositions of Alexander's piety by the classical historians, as seen clearly through his visit to the temple of Ammon at Siwa, a significant current in later histories of Alexander underscored his religious connections and exemplary religiosity. Alexander was made to fulfill prophetic messages in the Book of Daniel to break the reign of the Persians and usher in a new world order. Amid fears of Arab incursions against Christian populations in the eastern Mediterranean, he was deployed as a guardian of the Christian world from barbarous tribes. At the same time, on the other side of the Anatolian plateau and the highlands of Armenia, Alexander was tied up in the royal lineage of the Persian kings, positioned

123. Although this paper does not handle western European material, it is worth noting that Alexander was similarly used as a reminder of the shortness of life. Alexander was in some places condemned for arrogance and rapacity: in Dante's *Inferno*, for one, Alexander the Great is *not* mentioned among the illustrious pagans in Canto IV, and may be the tyrannical Alexander whose soul is submerged in the boiling river of blood (XII.107). For a still-excellent study of western Alexander narratives, see Cary, *The Medieval Alexander*.

as a world conqueror born abroad who returned to his roots and made a pilgrimage to the holiest site in Islam.

As philosopher Alain Locke wrote, "There is nothing more galvanizing than the sense of a cultural past."[124] The myth/history fed by the Alexander Romance and accompanying traditions, which this paper lays out, did exactly that: it gave listeners, readers, and other individuals and societies engaging with the story of a man—who might seem, at first glance, an ancient king in a far-off land—a means to interpret their own personal historical position. Indeed, refractions of Alexander's light have been cast into curious and unexpected places: among rulers and clans of the valleys of Afghanistan and northern Pakistan,[125] in the shadow plays of the former Ottoman Empire,[126] and perhaps even in the folk epics of Tibet.[127] Known by many names—Alexander, Megalexandros, Alisaundre, Zülkender, Iskandar, Sekandar—the young king of Macedon became a model, not just for proper religiosity and virtue, but for the societies reckoning with his story to make sense of their own.

In Hayden White's language, history is a story, and so the Alexander Romance is history, and the stories based around it have become history: giving meaning, and a sense of cultural past.

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124. Alain Locke, quoted in Mark Dery, "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delaney, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose," in *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture*, ed. Mark Dery (Duke University Press, 1994), 179.

125. Marco Polo mentions that the rulers of Badakhshan (northeast Afghanistan) claimed descent from Alexander's offspring by the daughter of Darius, and so called themselves *Zulkarnein*; Marco Polo, The Travels of Marco Polo, trans. Manuel Komroff (Modern Library, 1953), 59–60 [1.29]. This observation is corroborated separately by the Mughal emperor Babur in the *Baburnama* (Oriental Books Reprint Co., 1979), 22. Multiple rulers of the Gilgit, Hunza, and Swat valleys in the Hindu Kush and Karakoram ranges (northern Pakistan) also alleged Alexandrian ancestry. Cf. Cacopardo (2011) for a full treatment of this question and similar claims concerning the Kalash people of Pakistan's Chitral valley.

126. Linda Suny Myrsiades, "Legend in the Theatre: Alexander the Great and the Karaghiozis Text," *Educational Theatre Journal* 27, no. 3 (1975): 387–94.

127. This is somewhat sketchy, but see Laurence Harf-Lancner, Claire Kappler, and François Suard, eds., *Alexandre Le Grand Dans Les Littératures Occidentales et Proche-Orientales* (Centre des Sciences de la Littérature, Université Paris X - Nanterre, 1999), 13, for the theory that the twelfth-century *Tales of King Gesar* take their name ultimately from (*Iskandar*) *Qayṣar* of *Rūm*.

This story from antiquity did not shrivel up as time went on, did not remain a fossil for future generations to chance upon. Medieval readers found and explored their own values and sensibilities through each refraction of Alexander's legacy. With a view to the vibrant and kaleidoscopic medieval Alexander tradition, this paper concludes that Alexander lives and reigns, indeed.

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