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THE TRANSLATOR'S AND LATER REVISERS' ADDITIONS TO THE OLD ARMENIAN VERSION OF THE *ALEXANDER ROMANCE*

Abstract. The ancient Greek *Alexander Romance* by Pseudo-Callisthenes, translated into Armenian probably in the 80s of the 5th century, has come down to us in two complete and two abridged recensions, as well as in a medieval oral version, written down later and preserved in manuscripts. The two complete recensions (only one of which has been published) are slightly modified versions of the original translation. Comparing them with the two earliest Greek recensions, α and β , gave me and Gohar Muradyan the opportunity to prepare a new critical edition of the Old Armenian version of the *Alexander Romance* which reflects the state of the text closest to the original translation. Although the translation is quite accurate, often even literal, both the translator and the two revisers used some elements of interpretation or moderately altered the text. The article presents some of the most interesting examples of such changes. The translator sometimes armenianized the text (for example, replacing Zeus with Aramazd). The author of the first complete edition A, the 13th–14th century poet Khach'atur Kech'arets'i, embellished the text with short poems (often on biblical themes) and added four ethopoeias at the end, as well as a comparison of Alexander with Christ. He inserted some brief explanations in order to make the text more understandable to medieval Armenian readers. The anonymous author of the second complete edition, D, which apparently already existed in the 10th century, like Khach'atur, slightly modified the text at some places, inserted in it a passage from the Armenian translation of Pseudo-Methodius' *Apocalypse* describing the twenty-two barbarian peoples and an apocryphal story about how Alexander transferred the remains of the prophet Jeremiah to Alexandria. He also composed a letter of the dying Alexander to his mother and added a few minor details.

Keywords: *Alexander Romance*, old Armenian translation, recensions, revision, interpretation, additions

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ДОПОЛНЕНИЯ ПЕРЕВОДЧИКА И ПОЗДНИХ РЕДАКТОРОВ К ДРЕВНЕАРМЯНСКОМУ ПЕРЕВОДУ «ПОВЕСТИ ОБ АЛЕКСАНДРЕ»

Аннотация. Древнегреческий «Роман об Александре» Псевдо-Каллисфена, переведенный на армянский, вероятно, в 80-е годы V в., дошел до нас в двух полных и двух кратких редакциях, а также в средневековой устной редакции, зафиксированной и сохраненной в рукописях. Две полные редакции (лишь одна из них опубликована) — несколько видоизменные варианты первоначального перевода. Их сопоставление с двумя самыми ранними греческими редакциями, α и β , дало автору совместно с Гоар Мурадян возможность подготовить новое критическое издание древнеармянской версии «Романа об Александре», которое отражает состояние текста, наиболее приближенное к первоначальному переводу. Несмотря на то что перевод довольно точный, зачастую даже буквальный, как сам переводчик, так и оба редактора использовали некоторые элементы толкования либо слегка меняли текст. В статье представлены некоторые наиболее интересные примеры таких изменений. Переводчик иногда арменизировал текст (например, заменяя Зевса на Арамазда). Автор первой полной редакции А, поэт XIII–XIV вв. Хачатур Кечареци, украсил текст короткими стихотворениями (часто на библейские сюжеты) и добавил в конце четыре эпоса, а также сравнение Александра с Христом. Он вставил некоторые краткие пояснения с целью сделать текст более понятным для средневекового армянского читателя. Анонимный автор второй полной редакции D, видимо, существовавшей уже в X в., подобно Хачатуру, местами видоизменил текст, включил в него кусок из армянского перевода Апокалипсиса Псевдо-Мефодия с описанием двадцати двух варварских народов и апокрифический рассказ о том, как Александр перенес останки пророка Иеремии в Александрию. Он также сочинил письмо умирающего Александра матери и добавил несколько более мелких деталей.

Ключевые слова: «Роман об Александре», древнеармянский перевод, редакции, переработка, интерпретация, дополнения

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1. Introduction

Written in Egypt presumably in the second half of the 3rd century AD [Nawotka 2017: 4], the Greek *Alexander Romance* was translated into Armenian in the late 5th century. It bears the title *History of Alexander the Macedonian* and survives in dozens of manuscripts kept worldwide. Most of them are 17th or 18th century copies [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1989: 34–67].

In the context of early medieval translated literature (which included the Bible and, mostly, ecclesiastical literature) this half-historical and half-fiction work was unique. The purpose of the translation was probably to encourage Armenians with the military exploits of Alexander the Great, since in those years Armenia was engaged in a defensive war against the powerful Sassanid Empire [Vardanyan 2015]. Later it became one of the most favorite books in Armenia, several poets wrote short poems and inserted them into the text. Miniaturists richly illustrated the text; this is one of the most illuminated works in medieval Armenian manuscripts [Kouymjian 2019: 153–157].

In 1892, the Mekhitharist father Yacobos Dashean from Vienna was the first to compare the Armenian version with the Greek recensions and call attention to the fact that it is close to the earliest recension “alpha” (α) [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1958], but in some cases diverts from it and is closer to recension “beta” (β) [Bergson 1965], which is the second oldest. He also stated that the Armenian version has similarities with the 4th century Latin translation of Julius Valerius [Julius Valerius 2004]. This means that the work was translated into Armenian from a Greek original which is now lost and had been the ancestor of both α and β recensions [Dashean 1892: 7–19, 212–270].

The Armenian version has two longer and two shorter recensions as well as an oral medieval version that was written down and has survived in manuscripts. The first longer recension was published twice [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1842¹; 1989²]. The other one³ (which we have labelled recension D) is without *kafas*, Khachatur’s ethopoeias and other additions (for which see Chapter 2 below), while one of the shorter recensions (currently also prepared for publication by us) contains more *kafas* that often simply replace the narrative.

The two longer recensions go back to the original translation and are its moderately revised variants. So both contain correct readings confirmed by one of the two earliest Greek texts or both of them, and each of those recensions also contains diversions from the original text. Our study and collation of all

¹ The *kafas* of the Venice manuscript No 424 are not included in this book.

² This edition is based on later manuscripts including *kafas* by Khachatur and other poets. The book also contains the oral and one of the shorter recensions. The editor calls these recensions A (Ա), B (Բ) and C (Գ).

³ It is extant in four manuscripts: two of them, M10448 (16th–17th centuries) and M1664 (copied in 1767), are kept at the Matenadaran, the third one, SABO A 76 (17th century), at the Institute of Oriental manuscripts in Saint Petersburg, and the fourth, W947 (1771), at the Mekhitharist Congregation in Vienna. Its reviser is unknown, but it should have existed already in the 10th century, since the historian T’ovma Artsruni, when citing from the *Alexander Romance*, probably used this text [T’ovma Artsruni 2010, Chapter III, § 34–41].

the mentioned texts has made it possible to produce a new critical edition of the Armenian version of the *Alexander Romance*, which, prepared by Gohar Muradyan and the author, has recently been published [Pseudo-Callisthenes 2025].

2. Literary pieces inserted into the translation

The first longer recension is extant in a number of manuscripts and particularly in the famous Venice codex No 424, copied and illuminated by the outstanding author and clergyman Khach'atur Kech'arets'i, who lived in the 13th–14th centuries.⁴ He also inserted monorhyme poems into it, being the first to do so. This genre was called *kafa*: a short monorhyme poem mostly consisting of eight verses and placed between parts of the prose texts. It retells the topic of the previous passage and expresses the author's mood or emotions on what has just been told [Simonyan 1975]. Besides that, he added four ethopoeias at the end of the text. This genre (imaginary speeches of real or literary figures on a given occasion) was known from the early Armenian so-called *Book of Chreia*, a handbook of rhetoric written probably in the late 5th century in imitation of Greek rhetorical exercises widely used in Byzantine schools, the progymnasmata of Aphthonius of Alexandria [Muradyan 1993: 184–185 (and examples of such exercises: 185–200, 239–247)]. All four ethopoeias written by Khach'atur are speeches on the occasion of Alexander's death, uttered by the dying Alexander himself, by his mother Olympias, by his wife Roxana and by his generals and army. These dramatic speeches are followed by one more chapter added by the same author, in which he compares Alexander to Jesus Christ (see below in Section 4). Then there is another addition by Khach'atur Kech'arets'i:⁵ Alexander's admonition to his friends. In this moral instruction, he mentions his teacher Aristotle who had taught him that his good fortune depends on knowing philosophy. He cites the first sentence from the Armenian version of Pseudo-Aristotle's *On the Virtues and Vices* [Pseudo-Aristotle 1833: 629], corresponding to Ἐπαινετὰ μὲν ἔστι τὰ καλὰ, ψεκτὰ δὲ τὰ αἰσχρὰ (1249a.26) — “Praseworthy are good things; blameworthy are shameful things”.⁶ Then Alexander has the following requirements for three categories of humans: a king must avoid speaking

⁴ There is a facsimile edition of this remarkable manuscript with a book accompanying it (the latter contains a study and an Italian translation of the text of this particular manuscript [Pseudo-Callistene 2003]).

⁵ Published as Appendix 3 in [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1989: 495–497], from Ms V424. The first publisher of this recension (see [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1842: 195]) stated that this “fifth ethopoeia” could not be written by Khach'atur because of its stylistic features. However, he included it in his book [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1842: 196–198]. An author different from Khach'atur was also supposed by the renowned historian of old Armenian literature Manuk Abeghyan [1970: 284].

⁶ The English translations, unless indicated otherwise, are mine. This parallel was noticed by Dashean [1892: 112], and he, too, doubted Khach'atur's authorship (cf. the previous footnote).

lie and taking bribes, he must love his troops more than money. Princes must love their land, be merciful and fond of war, while citizens, laymen and common people should not be thieves, brigands, deceivers, slanderers, tale-bearers, contrivers, gossipers and lazy or stubborn. He also instructs everyone to rule over their desires and passions.

Later manuscripts of the same recension contain the poems and other additions by Khach'atur, as well as poems added by two later poets, Grigoris Aght'amarts'i and Zak'aria Gnunets'i (both lived in the 16th century). In contrast with the main text written in black ink, the poems are written in red, violet or green, probably for distinguishing their authors.

3. Examples of interpretation or comments in the translation

The Armenian version, which belongs to the early period of the translations of the so-called Hellenizing School (last quarter of the 5th — first decades of the 8th centuries) or, rather, to the initial group of pre-Hellenizing translations (see [Mancini Lombardi, Uluhogian 1992]), is quite accurate, often literal, containing a considerable number of loanwords and neologisms calqued from Greek. Nevertheless, the translator or later revisers applied some elements of interpretation or changed the text. For instance:

1. Spies are mentioned in the text: “the so-called explorers (ἐξπλωρατορες) among the Romans and spies (κατάσκοποι) among the Greeks” (β.1.2.1); in the Armenian version, the Latin word is transliterated (and later corrupted by scribes: *ēk'sp'arakratorēs*), just like in the Greek original, but the expression “among the Greeks” is replaced by “among the Armenians” (Chapter 2).⁷

2. In her letter to Alexander, Queen Kandakē of Meroë specifies the gifts she is going to send to him: “one hundred solid bricks of gold, five hundred young Ethiopians, two hundred parrots, two hundred sphinxes (α.3.18.7.2 σφίγγας), etc”. What are the “sphinxes”? The 4th–5th century author Philostorgius in his *Historia ecclesiastica* (Book 3, fr. 11.41) writes: ἡ σφίγξ γένος ἐστὶ πιθήκων (“the sphinx is a kind of monkeys”; I found this in the *Greek Lexicon* of Sophocles). The modern translator of the Greek text into English Haigh didn't know this and translated “two hundred sphinxes” [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1955: 109], but the old Armenian translator knew this, and even more; he translated: *kapiks agewors* (“tailed monkeys”, Chapter 227). Moreover, this reading is missing from the manuscripts on which the two previous editions are based [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1842: 150; 1989: 299], so I have discovered it just recently in the manuscripts of the second longer recension.

3. “To perform mystery” (α.3.19.5.1; β.3 . 19 . 15 τελέσαι μυστήριον) is translated *khohurds iwghaglkhut'ean katarel* (“to perform the mysteries of head-ointment”, Chapter 229) . The added word, “head-ointment” (that is to say,

⁷ In the previous two editions of the Armenian version [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1842; Callisthenes 1989], the text is divided into 276 chapters. We have kept this division in our new edition.

“putting oil on the head”) symbolizes consecration, initiation. It was widely used in the later Armenian translations of the works of Philo of Alexandria.

4. A letter from Alexander to Darius is also addressed “to all inhabitants of Persia, in the country and in the cities” (α.2.21.3.2). After “Persia” Khach'atur adds: “to the Aryans and non-Aryans” (*areats'ew anareats'*, Chapter 199), which means “Persians and non-Persians” — a common expression in early Armenian historiography [Eghishē 2003: 550; Movsēs Khorents'i 2003: 2040, Chapter 3.26; Ghazar P'arpets'i 2003: 2245, 2275, 2278, 2280, 2349, Chapters 26, 44–46, 85], an Iranian borrowing attested already in the old Armenian version of the *Chronicle* by Eusebius of Caesarea [Eusebius 1818, 1.1].⁸

5. In the Armenian version, the River Tigris is *Dghkat' / Dkghat' or Dlkat' / Dklat'* (Chapter 285), and the Euphrates is *Aratsani* (Chapter 158), which is the Armenian name of the eastern arm of the Euphrates. After the name Aratsani, a later reviser, perhaps Khach'atur, has added: “which flows from the flowery hills of the Anghh province to the source of the Euphrates opposite the Ararat mountain”.

6. The name of Zeus is usually replaced by Aramazd, the supreme god of the pagan Armenian pantheon (cf. [Russell 2001: 153–188; Harutyunyan 2001: 34–38]), and Hera (α.1.33.6.1; 1.46a.8.26) is replaced by Anahit (cf. [Russell 2001: 235–260; Harutyunyan 2001: 34–38])⁹ (Chapters 90 and 128), although the translator didn't change the names of Ammon, Dionysus, Heracles, Alcmena, Semele, Athena, Poseidon, Ares, Hephaestus, and once, Hera.

7. In the Armenian version, the Pierian Muses (α.1.42.6.2 αἱ Πιερίδες Μοῦσαι) have become “Pierian musicians” — *pieridean erazhishtk'n* (Chapter 121).

4. Examples of revision in the longer recension A and the unpublished shorter recension

Besides the above-mentioned considerable passages added by Khach'atur Kech'arets'i at the end of the Armenian version, some smaller explanatory additions inserted into the text are a result of later revision.

1. After the reference to the Caspian Gates (194 = α.2.19.7.3), Khach'atur Kech'arets'i has added: *merdz yashkharhn T'alish, i gawar'n Gilana* (“close to the region T'alish in the Gilan province”) [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1989: 233]. These Caspian Gates have been identified with Tang-e Sar-e Dara, 82 km east of Rhagae, south of the Caspian Sea in Iran [Nawotka 2012: 179]. Khach'atur has mentioned the Iranian neighbouring region Talish in the Gilan province in northeastern Iran, close to that place south of the Caspian Sea, trying to specify (though incorrectly) its location.

⁸ The complete Greek original of this work is lost. Only fragments cited by the Byzantine chronographer George Syncellus and other authors have come down to us.

⁹ For the identification of the gods of the Armenian pantheon with Greek gods in the Hellenistic period, see [Sarkisian 1996].

2. In a letter to his mother Olympias, Alexander describes his voyage to the edges of the world and mentions “the city of the Sun” (*Areg k’aghak’*, Ch. 258 = πόλιν τοῦ Ἡλίου, α.3.28.3.2), which “had fourteen towers built of gold and emerald <...> One of them had sixty steps. On top stood a chariot with horses of gold and emerald”. Before this description, Khach’atur Kech’arets’i adds: “It seems to me that this is what they call the City of Bronze” [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1989: 326]. The *Story of the City of Bronze* (see [Mkrtychyan 1986]) was another fiction tale popular in Armenia in the Middle Ages, translated twice from Arabic into Armenian in the 10th, then in the 13th century (it is one of the *1001 Nights’* stories). The second translation, like the *Alexander Romance*, was embellished with *kafas*. It is about a splendid city of bronze, gems and moving statues.¹⁰

3. In some cases Khach’atur has replaced the names Alexander by *Sk’andar / Sk’andarios* (Chapters 162, 167, 203, 214 [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1989: 203, 205, 247, 268]), and Alexandria by *Isk’andariē* (Chapter 274 [Ibid.: 350]) and *Sk’andria* (Chapters 86, 93, 247 [Ibid.: 129, 135, 318]). These are medieval forms borrowed from Arabic and used in Middle Armenian.

4. After the foundation of Alexandria, an inscription was written: α, β, γ, δ, ε. The text explains what these initial letters mean: τὸ μὲν οὖν α Ἀλέξανδρος, τὸ δὲ β βασιλεύς, τὸ δὲ γ γένος, τὸ δὲ δ Διός, τὸ δὲ ε ἔκτισε πόλιν ἀείμνηστον (α.1.32.9.2–3). Thus, the inscription says: “Alexander the King, offspring of Zeus, built the unforgettable city”, the initial letters of the words being the first five letters of the Greek alphabet. In the second long recension D of the Armenian version, which here has preserved the original text, only the first letter corresponds to the word “Alexander” (as in English): *a, b, g, d, e: Aybn Aghēk’sandros, benn t’agawor, gimn azg, dayn Aramazday, ech’n shinē k’aghak’ annmaneli* (α is “Alexander”, β is “king”, γ is “offspring”, δ is “of Aramazd”, ε is “built the incomparable city”) (Chapter 87). In recension A, the passage is revised by an addition of adjectives with corresponding initial letters: *a, b, g, d, e: Aybn Aghēk’sandros, benn bardzragoyñ t’agawor, gimn geragoyñ azants’, dayn der Aramazday, ech’n ēj ew shineats’/shrjeats’ k’aghak’ annmaneli* (*a* is “Alexander”, *b* is “supreme king”, *g* is “highest of the offspring”, *d* is “equal to Aramazd”, *e* is “came down and built the incomparable city”) [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1989: 130].

5. Another means of interpreting the text and bringing it closer to the medieval reader was *Christianization*: we see this in the *kafa* poems as well as in the last passage added by Khach’atur (and the subsequent poets) to the text. The monorhyme poems are mostly very simple, at times tasteless, although there are some nice verses among them. They are stylistically quite similar to one another, so it is difficult to identify the specific author of this or that poem. Scholars have

¹⁰ In a recent article, Alex MacFarlane has demonstrated that Khach’atur Kech’arets’i’s *kafas* following the detailed description of another splendid city in the *Alexander Romance*, which is Meroë ruled by Queen Kandakē, a descendant of Semiramis, are inspired by the description of the City of Bronze, and that Ms M7726 contains *kafas* uniting Kandakē and the City of Bronze [MacFarlane 2022].

attempted to do that, but there are cases when the same poem is attributed to different authors, even by the same scholar in different works.

6. After his defeat, Darius wrote to Alexander, asking him to return his mother, wife and children, and promising to show him his treasures kept in various cities; one of them was Sousa: ἐν... Σούσοις (α.2.17.3.5; β.2.17.14) is translated as *i Shōsh* (“in Shōsh”, Chapter 190), i.e., the common Armenian name of that city is used. Ms M5472, which contains the text copied by the 16th century poet Zak‘aria Gnunets‘i, adds a gloss mentioning the new name known to him: “which is Aspahan” (Isfahan).¹¹

In some poems, characters figuring in the narrative are compared to biblical personages. For example, on the occasion of the legend about Nectanebo, and not Philip fathering Alexander, the short (yet unpublished) recension has a series of poems, one of which is the following:¹²

<i>Astuats arar zAdam i hoghēn</i>	God made Adam from the soil,
<i>’W i koghēn steghts zEwa</i>	And from his rib he created Eve,
<i>Ewa ēr kerel zptughn,</i>	Eve ate the fruit
<i>Khabanawk’ keroyts’ Adamay,</i>	And by deceit she fed it to Adam,
<i>Girn ē vkay ays banis,</i>	The Scripture is witness to this,
<i>Banali drakhtin Adinea,</i>	The key to the Garden of Eden,
<i>Ayspēs Olompas nengets’</i>	In this way Olympias cheated,
<i>Mogin mut eret khabebay:</i>	Allowed the lying magician to enter her.

As we see, the infidel Olympias is likened to the mendacious Eve. In another poem, (Chapter 12, [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1989: 76]), Nectanebo who seduced Olympias and fathered Alexander is compared with “Susanna’s elders” (*Dan.* 13), or David and the story of Uriah’s wife (2 Kings / *Samuel* 11) are mentioned as examples of the transience of the house of Israel.

The story of adultery is followed by a long poem (Chapter 20 [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1989: 82–87]) on the snake, containing the following passages:

<i>...Awdzn ē korstean patchar,</i>	...The serpent is the cause of perdition,
<i>Or ehan zAdamn i drakhtēn <...></i>	It expelled Adam from Paradise <...>
<i>Awdzn ē imastun khelawk’,</i>	The serpent is wise in the mind (cf. Mt. 10:16).
<i>Hramayeats’ tērn kenarar,</i>	The Saviour Lord commanded:
<i>Awdzn ē vishapi tsēnund,</i>	The serpent is offspring of the dragon;
<i>Soghomon gēreats’ iwr hanchar...</i>	Solomon wrote his understanding... (Pr. 1:2)

Ms M5472 (which is the basis of Pseudo-Callisthenes 1989, and from which this *kafa* is published in it) has an illustration here with the following caption: “This is paradise: Eve, Adam and the deceiver serpent” (fol. 9^r, see fig. 1).

¹¹ In fact, there is quite a long distance (about 450 km) between Isfahan and ancient Sousa.

¹² This passage corresponds to chapters 60–61 of the longer recensions.

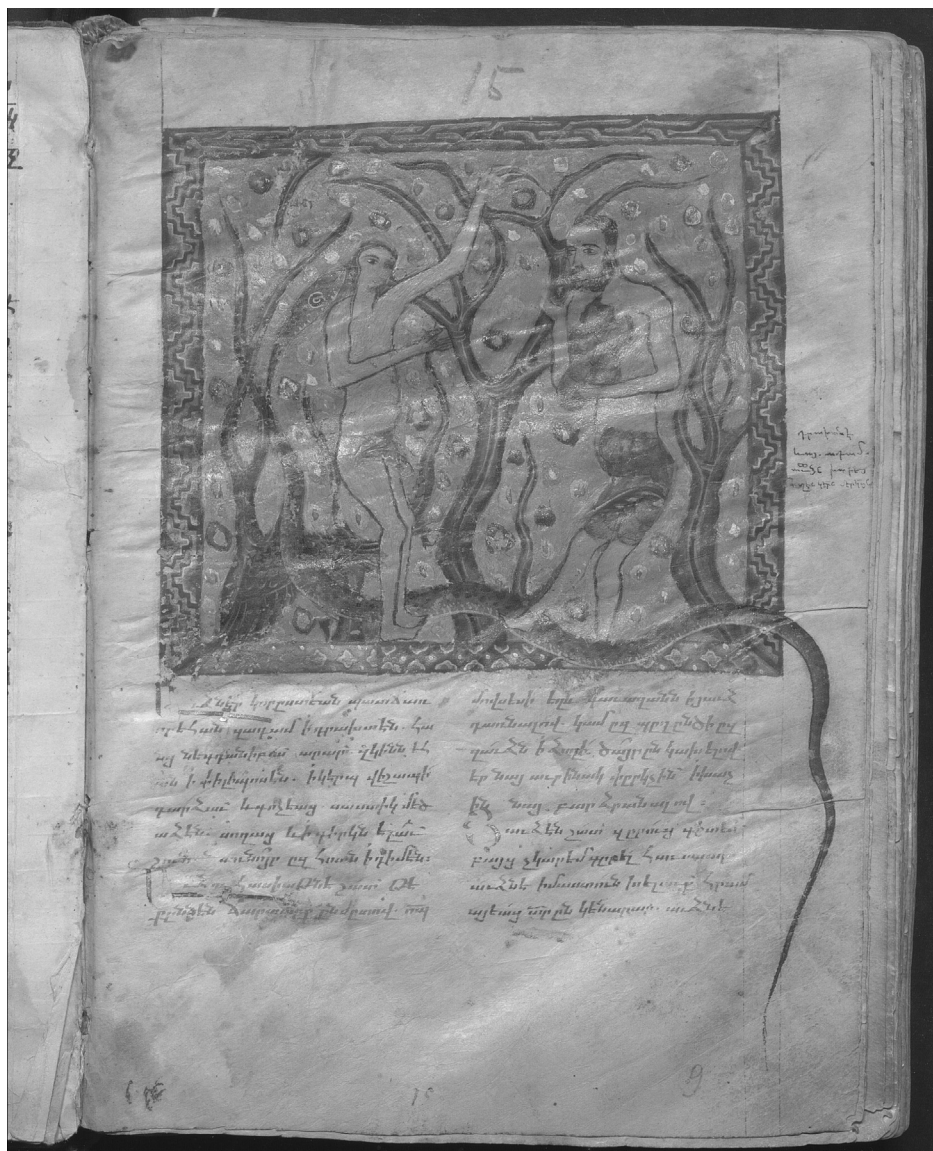


Fig. 1. Adam and Eve with the Serpent in Paradise. Ms Matenadaran 5472, 16th c. (9')
Image provided by the Matenadaran in Yerevan

Then the author of the same long *kafa* mentions Moses' staff that became a snake (*Exod.* 7:11), the bronze serpent which Moses hang on a pole (*Num.* 21:9) — an example of the Word ascending the cross (*Jn.* 3:14), the story of the serpent deceiving the woman, the fall of the humans, how they died, descended to hell and suffered there until He, the paternal Word, came down and by His Father's will ascended the cross, bound Satan with it, defeated the Prince of Perdition, took his

beloved Adam and raised him to heaven. Enoch, Joshua the son of Nun, Daniel, the four winds and the four beasts, the last of which had evil teeth, are compared with kings Porus and Darius. Other biblical figures and episodes are also referred to. All the mentioned personages (and Aristotle) are painted in Ms M5472 on 3 pages (fols. 10^r–11^r), with corresponding explanations in the captions (see fig. 2a–c).



Fig. 2a. *Adam and Eve, Christ holding Adam by the hand, Enoch, Moses holding the Tablets, Jesus son of Nave, the Four beasts from the Book of Daniel. Ms M5472, 16th c. (10^r–1^r). Image provided by the Matenadaran in Yerevan*



Fig. 2b. The Ancient of Days (God) in the Book of Daniel, Elijah, Isaiah, David, Solomon, Elizabeth. Ms M5472, 16th c. (10^r–1^r).
Image provided by the Matenadaran in Yerevan

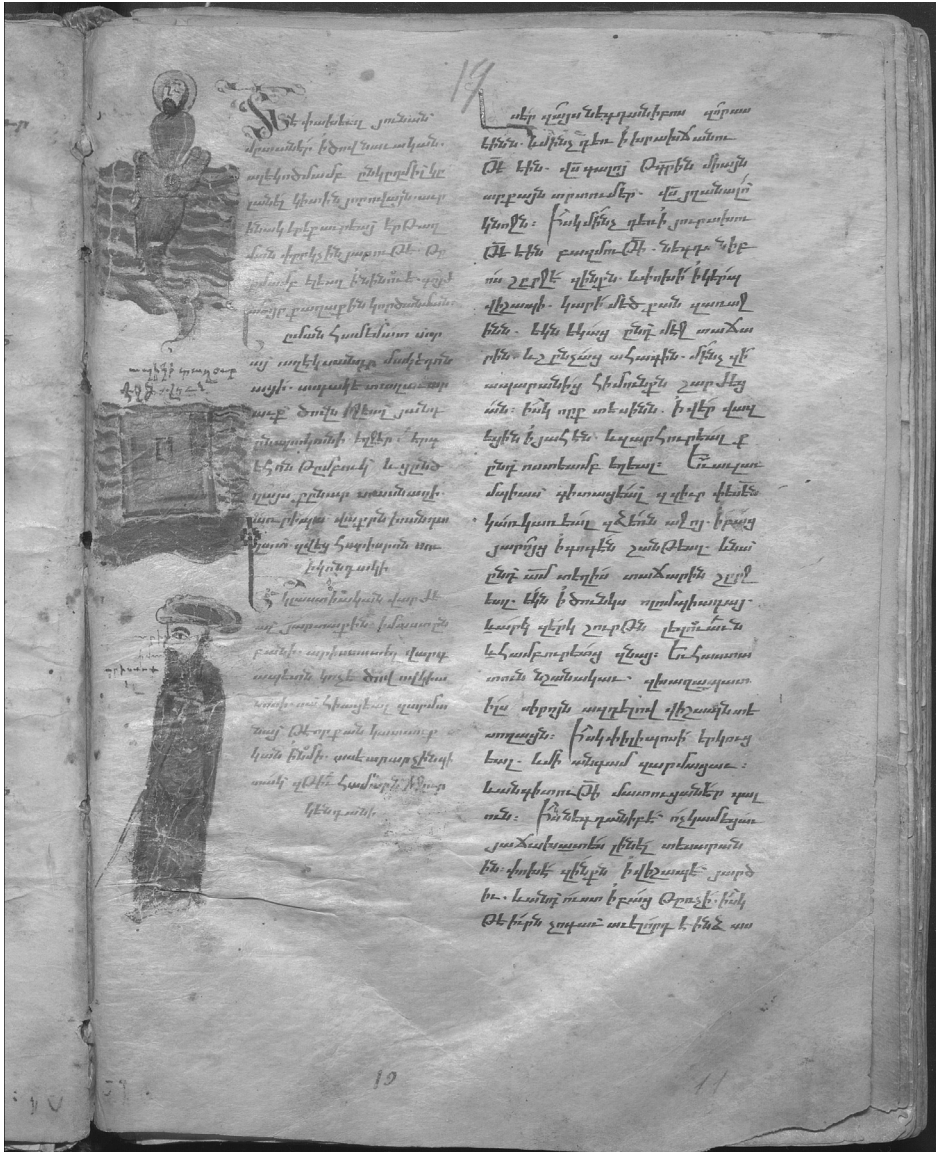


Fig. 2c. Jonah, Aristotle, etc. Ms M5472, 16th c. (10^r–1^r).
Image provided by the Matenadaran in Yerevan

Another poem in the shorter recension (Chapter 223) tells that the Indian Gymnosophists (Brahmanes) follow “the tradition (*zawandn*) [starting] from Eve. // They said: ‘We are the children of Adam who went out naked from Paradise’”.

Alexander is compared with “the Lord, whose name is Messiah” (Chapter 105 [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1989: 146]).

In a *kafa* on the occasion of Alexander’s death (Chapter 281 of the shorter recension), he is called a brave lion who had Solomon’s wisdom and Samson’s might. Also, Alexander was the prototype (*awrinak*) of Christ. Such examples may be multiplied.

At the end of the narrative, after the episode about Alexander’s sickness and death, Khach’atur Kech’arets’i added four ethopoeias that I have already mentioned. These are followed by one more chapter in which Khach’atur compares Alexander with Christ. After mentioning a few biblical figures who, in his opinion, prefigured Jesus’ character, he writes: “To a much greater extent this wondrous man, Alexander of Macedon, was the archetype and the image of our heavenly king Jesus Christ”. Then, begging the pardon of the Holy Spirit for his insolent comparison, he awkwardly confirms his view by a list of “similar” characteristics of (and events in) the lives of Alexander and Jesus. Alexander was born of Olym-pias in Macedon, through deception of the Egyptian magus Nectanebo, and Jesus was born of Mary in Bethlehem because of the deception of the slanderer serpent (who deceived Adam and Eve); Alexander was educated by the Athenians, and our Lord Christ received his paternal wisdom; Alexander conquered Egypt, and our Lord was called from Egypt; Alexander defeated Darius, and Jesus defeated Satan with his might; Alexander subdued the barbarians, and our Lord addresses the heathens / gentiles and Jews; gifts were presented to Alexander from a remote place, and to our Lord, by the kings of Arabia and Sheba; Alexander went to an uninhabited and wild land, and our Lord, rising from his paternal throne, came to our brutal nature and tamed it with his divinity and incarnation; Alexander overthrew the tyrant Porus, and our Lord, the Prince of Darkness; Alexander was received by queen Kandakē, and our Lord was bound by love with the heart of the Church; Alexander came to Babylon, and our Lord to the assembly of the Jews; Alexander was betrayed by people close to him, and Jesus was betrayed by Judas; Alexander was given deadly venom by Iullos, and our Lord was given vinegar and gall; when dying, Alexander gave twelve kingdoms to twelve friends, and our Lord appointed twelve apostles to preach in the world, etc.

5. Examples of revision and additions in the longer recension D

As for the recension D, it too contains additional passages which are absent from the Greek original and were probably inserted into the text by the author of that recension.

1. In Chapter 113, after receiving Darius’ threatening letter, Alexander is not frightened but starts out for war through Arabia (α.1.41.1.2–3 διὰ τῆς Ἀραβίας). In recension D, after reading the letter and before “crossing the plain of Arabia”, Alexander writes the following letter to Darius: “You, Darius, resembling feeble and weak dogs, bark loudly, thinking that you will frighten Alexander and draw him back? Now I’ll come myself and see your might”.

2. In Chapter 153, Darius summons an assembly of his leading men before the war with Alexander. Different kinds of advice are given to the king, but then it is said that they are worthless, because one clever decision of the Greeks chases away hordes of barbarians, just as one Laconian dog drives away a whole flock of sheep (α.2.7.11.2–3; β.2.7.33–34 ὡςπερ καὶ εἷς κύων Λακωνικὸς ὄλην (β om.) ἀγέλην ποιμνίων ἀποδιώκει). In recension D, the last part is changed into: “as one Arabian wolf chases away the flocks, drives, and only a Laconian dog arms against it. Now look and think about what is necessary”.

3. Alexander outwits the Persians: “He cut branches from trees and tied them on the four-legged animals, and the flocks followed behind the soldiers. And as the trees were being dragged upon the ground, they unsettled the whole surface of the earth which poured skyward; and the dust rose as high as Mount Olympus” [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1969a: 93] (cf. β.2.13.6 ἕως Ὀλύμπου). In recension D we read that “the dust rose as high as the sky and the upper air, reaching the rays of the sun”.

4. In a letter, Darius persuades Alexander to obey and swears by Zeus to forget his bad deeds (α.1.40.5.6; β.1.40.16); in recension D he swears by Aramazd (the equivalent of Zeus, see above) and by *Mihr* (Mithras) (Chapter 112, cf. Chapter 190). This god is mentioned in other passages of the Greek original: in a letter Darius calls himself “sharing the throne” (α.1.36.2.2 σύνθρονος) with him, and the Persians argue with the Macedonians for taking Alexander's body to Persia and worshipping him as Mithras (α.3.34.1.1–2). These two cases are faithfully reflected in Chapters 107 and 272 of the Armenian version. Mithras, an Iranian Zoroastrian god, was also a god in the Armenian pre-Christian pantheon [Russell 2001: 261–274; Harutyunyan 2001: 38–41].

5. Darius' mother and wife in their letter to victorious Alexander express their obedience to the “new Darius” (α.2.22.9.2). Recension D (Chapter 205) adds: “You are noble, Alexander, since divine and human justice is this: not to be malevolent at a fellow's fortune, but to test oneself and ponder on the future”.

6. In Alexander's long letter to Aristotle and Olympias with the description of the marvels he saw on the way to India (it is missing from the Greek recension α), he mentions some cannibals against whom he fought by fire (β.2.36.1). Recension D (Chapter 209) adds another adventure: “From there we proceeded a little, and winged men attacked us and violently fought with us, and by no means could we resist and confront them. I ordered archers to apply naphtha (*nawt'*) with sulphur to their arrows and, striking them with this flash of fire, cast them down. And when they did this, [the winged men] were defeated and, taking flight, disappeared from us”.

7. In the same letter, another adventure is added (after the passage corresponding to β.2.38.5): “When we sailed to an island in the sea and went ashore from the sea, a malicious dragon-like beast, with three heads and four feet, encountered us. As soon as the warriors saw it, they were terrified and took to their heels, while my horse Bucephalus rushed and attacked it. I struck the wolf's mouth with a double-pointed lance, and it was immediately killed”.

8. In recension D, according to the reviser, Alexander visits the Indian Brahmanes (cf. β.3.5.1) “in order to see them, learn something from them and test them with questions”.

9. In Chapter 275, the dying Alexander finishes writing his will, seals it and sends a copy to his mother Olympias (= α.3.33.25.1–2). After this, a farewell letter to Olympias is inserted in recension D (the reviser calls her daughter of *P’aghgha*,¹³ king of the Thebans). Alexander deplores his upcoming death, remembers her motherly love, speaks about missing her, and asserts the truthfulness of Netanebus’ prediction about his death. He is sure that like Dionysus and Heracles, he too will share a table with gods (this comparison with the two gods is quoted from Chapter 260). Finally, he asks her to gather mourning women to weep over his death. Olympias receives the letter and weeps a lot. Alexander also writes a letter to a certain *Kebas* who watched the city of the Rhodians, ordering to expel the guards from the city. This letter is not cited.

10. In Chapter 285, the subjugation of twenty-two barbarian nations by Alexander is mentioned (= α.3.35.1.5; β.3.35.2). In recension D, this is followed by a description of those abominable nations (who ate flies, mice and dead bodies of humans) whom he drove away to the North and secluded behind iron gates. This passage is quite accurately borrowed from the Armenian version of the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius. It was written in the 7th century in Syriac, soon translated into Greek, from which the Armenian translation was made [Topchyan 2014; 2016].

Interestingly, two Greek recensions, γ (3.26a) and ε (caput 39), which probably appeared in the 8th century and predates γ, also contain a passage from the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius,¹⁴ but it is different from the Armenian passage. One may assume that they are independent of each other: one is from the Greek, the other (in recension D) from the Armenian version. These same recensions (3.33.1–30 of γ and caput 45 of ε) also contain a letter of the dying Alexander to his mother [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1969b: 203–207; 1974: 169–173], but it considerably differs from the Armenian letter. It is difficult to explain these two coincidences.

11. The passage inserted from Pseudo-Methodius is immediately followed by another, shorter insertion. It is literally borrowed from the apocryphal *Death of the Prophet Jeremiah* [Yovsēp’ean 1896: 222–223]. It reads:

This Alexander reached Egypt, the place where the grave of prophet Jeremiah was, close to the king’s palace, and saw that the Egyptians glorified his relics, because they had found favour with him by his prayers. For he prayed and the basilisks that were killing them died, as well as the beasts in water, whom the Egyptians call *nep’ot*, and the Greeks call crocodile. Hearing such things, seeing those wonders and understanding the mystic sense, Alexander took his relics to the city

¹³ It is difficult to reconstruct the nominative of this genitive form: *P’aghghos* / *P’aghghēs*? The name is probably corrupt. According to Diodorus (XIX.51.6) and Pausanias (I.11.1), Olympias was the daughter of Neoptolemus, king of Epirus.

¹⁴ [Pseudo-Callisthenes 1969b, 29.35–79 (3.26a); 1974: 144–148 (caput 39)].

of Alexandria and gloriously placed there. And the basilisks that were there died, as well as the crocodiles. And those who until now pray in that place and take soil from the tomb, cure the basilisk's bites and put the crocodiles and [other] water beasts to flight.

12. One more passage is inserted in the end, describing the unrest that arose after Alexander's death:

“There were many turmoils on the earth after the death of Alexander the Great. His troops scattered each to their own place and were like sheep without a shepherd, or like an army without a general. The great Macedonian princes and his close friends, attacking and slaughtering each other with the sword, shed the blood of each other. After a short time, his mother Olympias and his wife and sister were cruelly killed by their kinsmen and family members and his beloved ones. And the faraway enemies rejoiced at his death, for the horn of the one who smote them was broken, and the yoke of serving Alexander fell down from their neck. And Ptolemy started to reign in Egypt, and Philip's son *Aradis* (= Arrhidaeus) in Macedonia”.

The source of this information on Alexander's successors could have been Eusebius' *Chronicle* [Eusebius 1818 (1): 236, 325–326, (2), 225].

6. Conclusion

These were different kinds of examples of how explanatory notes and whole passages were added to the Armenian version of the *Alexander Romance*, a fascinating work widespread in Armenia and obviously a great favorite among Armenians, and what other revisions and transformations it underwent on Armenian soil. Some of them may look strange and even funny, but all this material is very interesting for further research. As to the translation itself, it is very valuable due to the fact that it was made from a lost original older than the extant Greek texts and, therefore, can sometimes help to better understand what is said and even make corrections in the original. Elsewhere, in a forthcoming article, I'll give a number of instances in which, through a collation of the Armenian and Greek recensions of the *Alexander Romance*, corrections can be made both in the Greek original and the old Armenian version. There are much more similar examples, which, as far as it is possible, are cited in our new Armenian edition of this remarkable work [Pseudo-Callisthenes 2025].

At the end of this paper, I insert the only medieval Armenian miniature in which a Greek mythological hero is depicted (see fig. 3). It is from the manuscript John Rylands Arm. 3 (dated 1544), kept in the collection of the University of Manchester (fol. 41^r). Alexander is on the left, standing near the Scamander River and imagining Achilles, behind the large red shield on which a strange animal is depicted (supposedly, this is the famous seven-fold shield of Aias mentioned in the text). Achilles had jumped into the river painted in a rectangular form on the right. The caption near Achilles' nose reads: Vaznak'ill (Վազնաքիլլ), a very funny word which could be translated as “Jumpachill”.



Fig. 3. Alexander Imagining Achilles on the Bank of the Scamander River.
Ms John Rylands Arm. 3, University of Manchester, 1544 (41').
Image provided by The John Rylands Research Institute and Library,
The University of Manchester

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