

Susana Torres Prieto

**A Hellenic Emperor at the Kievan Court:  
Alexander the Great and Apocalyptic Kingship  
in East Slavic Historiography**

The inclusion of Pseudo-Callisthenes' *Alexander Romance* in historiographic texts in East Slavic from the very beginning should not necessarily surprise us. The use of the Classical past in emerging literatures of European nations where no Roman legions ever set a foot, needless to say were remotely associated with the Hellenic empire of the Macedonian emperor, brings East Slavic historiographic tradition in line with the rest of European medieval literatures, far beyond the Byzantine Commonwealth<sup>1</sup>.

However, it is important to understand that, while the models used might repeat themselves (the Trojan War and Alexander of Macedon figured prominently in the repertoire), the reasons and uses of the same examples might vary. The reason, however, of why Alexander the Great's life and exploits were inserted in East Slavic historiographic works is quite different from the reasons of his fame among Western counterparts. The features that we could identify as descriptive of Alexander the Macedon in its own and other traditions (pagan, Hellenic) are completely forgotten to underline radically opposite characteristics: the Alexander the Great of East Slavic historiography is Christian and Biblical.

Similarly, while the reason why Alexander the Great was repeatedly adopted in the West was his legendary power to submit Greeks and foreign peoples, his sagacity in solving complex riddles, and the flashing speed at which he discovered and conquered new lands and kingdoms (a model, no wonder, that any prince would be more than happy to emulate), the main reason why Alexander the Great was firstly known in East Slavic was for having had enclosed the impure peoples until the day of the Second Coming, the famous episode of the Gog and his

---

1 The already famous volume by Matthew Innes and Yazik Hen provides several examples about uses of the classical past among non-Latinised societies in Europe. Among the most closely related ones with the topic under discussion is Matthew Innes, "Teutons or Trojans? The Carolingians and the Germanic Past," *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Yazik Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge, UK and New York, 2000), 227–249.

kingdom, the Magog. More specifically, and according to the *Revelations*, or *Apocalypse*, of the Pseudo-Methodius, the Ishmaelites, which were in due course identified with the Mongols, would at some point come from the East to punish good Christians for having abandoned their true religion by falling into a sea of sinfulness and apostasy. For the princes of the Rus', who had failed to secure their lands against the Mongols in the mid-thirteenth century, if there was someone to emulate, it was this emperor who had managed, according to legend, to keep them outside the Caspian Gates. I would argue that this prowess of a deeply Christianised Alexander was one of the main reasons why Alexander the Great became an East Slavic *speculum principis*.

The question is now trying to understand how this process was made and from where and when was the whole idea of Alexander as saviour of Christianity imported.

### Biblical Traditions

The reason why Alexander becomes a relevant figure in East Slavic medieval letters commences with Ezekiel, one of the three major prophets of the *Old Testament*, together with Isaiah and Jeremiah. It is one of the main apocalyptic books of Second Temple literature. Specifically, it is in the last part of *Ezekiel books* (the so-called prophecies of hope and salvation), the one narrating the future blessings of Israel, where the references to the Gog and the Magog are made<sup>2</sup>. This enemy of Israel and his kingdom are mentioned in chapters 38 and 39 of the *Book of Ezekiel*<sup>3</sup>:

38:1 “And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, [2] Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal<sup>4</sup>, a prophesy against him, [3] And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: [4] And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: [5] Persia, Ethiopia and Lybia with them”;

2 The *Book of Ezekiel* is also referenced in the *New Testament Apocalypse*, known in the *Protestant Bible* as the *Revelation*, in 20:7–8: “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, (8) and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea”. This reference in the *Apocalypse* mixes the text of Ezekiel with the theory of the four kingdoms as expressed in the *Book of Daniel* (see below).

3 All Bible translations are given according to the Authorized *King James Bible* edited by R. Carroll and Stephen Prickett (Oxford 1997).

4 Magog simply means “country or land of Gog”. Meshech and Tubal are countries in Asia Minor (cf. Ez. 27, 13 and particularly Is. 66, 19–21). In this latter problematical addition to the *Book of Isaiah*, several kingdoms are listed where converted Jews will be called upon to reunite: Tarsis (Spain), Put (Libya), Lud (Lydia), Meshech (Frigia), Tubal (Cilicia) and Yavan (Ionia).

and the text continues later in the same chapter:

[8] “After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them”,

whereupon Ezekiel is directly spoken to:

[14] “Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord God; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? [15] And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: [16] And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.”

In chapter 39 the prophesy continues more or less the same, including the famous vision of the valley of Death:

[6] And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the Lord. [7] So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name anymore: and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel.”

And then the prophet speaks for the first time of where this will happen:

“[11] And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea; and it shall stop the noses of the passengers; and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it The Valley of Hamon-Gog”.

Ezekiel finalises the vision explaining how God punished the house of Israel for their iniquity but now He is going to show mercy by defeating Israel’s enemies.

This eschatological vision of a better future to come was particularly relevant in Second Temple Literature and its influence on Early Christianity, aside from the biblical *Apocalypse* itself, was very relevant in Latin Christendom, particularly after the fall of Rome<sup>5</sup>.

The *Book of Daniel*, which comes after the *Book of Ezekiel* in the Bible, narrates a further relevant point: the theory of the four kingdoms as deciphered by

---

5 On Jewish Apocalypticism in Late Antiquity, see a good status quaestionis in Gerbern S. Oegema, “The Heritage of Jewish Apocalypticism in Late Antique and Early Medieval Judaism, Christianity and Islam,” *Vehicles of Transmission, Translation, and Transformation in Medieval Textual Culture*, ed. Faith Wallis, Robert Wisnovsky, Jamie C. Fumo and Carlos Fraenkel (Turnhouts, 2011), 103–128.

Daniel from the dream had by king Nabuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:31–45). These four kingdoms, as described by Daniel as the vision that the king had, were four parts of a large statue: the head made of gold (Babylon), the breast and arms made of silver (the Medes), the body and thighs made of brass (Persia) and the legs of iron and feet partially of iron and partially of clay (Greeks). The fourth kingdom will be the strongest “[40] And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise”. The difference of material in each foot (iron and clay) was supposed to represent the wars between the Seleucids and the Ptolemaic dynasty, as further ‘described’ in chapters 10 to 12 of the same book<sup>6</sup>. By the time of the fall of Rome, Jerome and Augustine of Hippo had already identified these four kingdoms with Babylonia, Mede-Persia, Greeks and Romans, the most widespread medieval interpretation of this theory of salvation of humankind before the arrival of the fifth kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven<sup>7</sup>.

### Classical Historiography

Moving on from Biblical references, the next source that is relevant in this discussion is Flavius Josephus’ *The Antiquity of the Jews*. His last and longest work, written probably around the year 90 C.E., once he had installed himself in Rome after having witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem by his patron, already by emperor Titus, was primarily intended for non-Jewish readers. It is a history of the Jewish nation, from the times of the Creation to his own time. The work draws heavily on the *Septuagint* as well as writings of Greek and Roman historians. It is in this context, and his insistence of showing to his Roman public the superior antiquity of the Jews by comparison to the Greeks, that he includes the visit of emperor Alexander the Great to Jerusalem. This visit is recorded in Josephus’ *Antiquity* in chapter 8 of Book 11 (§ 304–346). According to Josephus, Sanballat, a king sent by Darius to Samaria, had estranged the elders of Jerusalem by promising his daughter, Nicaso, to Manasseh, a brother of Jaddua the high priest, in order to forge an alliance with the Jews, an alliance that was contrary to the rules concerning marriages with foreign (non-Jewish) women. When Alexander crosses the Hellespont and fights against Darius for the first time, Sanballat sides with the Persian king, but when Alexander finally besieges Tyre and is ready to come to Jerusalem, Sanballat changes sides and asks Alexander for help to appease the

---

6 Further references to the victory of the Greek king to come can be found in the same book in 7:6 (the triumph of the leopard, representing the Greeks), 8:3–8, 20–22 (the victory of the he goat coming from the west (Greece) with a horn between his eyes defeating the ram with two horns, representing the kings of Media and Persia).

7 See Gerbern S. Oegema, “The Heritage of Jewish Apocalypticism in Late Antique and Early Medieval Judaism, Christianity and Islam”.

Jewish elders by building a new temple in Jerusalem (§ 321–322). Sanballat did so and made his son-in-law priest of the said temple. The Jews were thus divided between the faction of Sanballat and the faction of Jaddua, who had opposed the marriage. By the time Alexander had finally taken both Tyre and Gaza, Sanballat had died, and Jaddua and the other priests were afraid of Alexander coming to Jerusalem, since they thought they would be punished by the Macedonian emperor for having opposed him. And then “God warned him in a dream, which came upon him after he had offered sacrifice, that he should take courage, and adorn the city, and open the gates; that the rest appear in white garments, but that he and the priests should meet the king in the habits proper of their order, without the dread of any ill consequences, which the providence of God would prevent” (§327)<sup>8</sup>. The Roman historian further narrates the encounter of Alexander with the people of Jerusalem (§ 331–339):

For Alexander, when he saw the multitude at a distance, with fine linen, and the high priest in purple and scarlet clothing, with his mitre on his head having the golden plate on which the name of God was engraved, he approached by himself and adored that name and first saluted the high priest.

Parmenio, surprised by Alexander reaction, asks him why he has saluted the high priest of the Jews like that, to which Alexander responds:

I did not adore him, but that God who hath honoured him with that high priesthood; (334) for I saw this very person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios, in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of Asia, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly to pass over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army and would give me the dominion over the Persians.

After Alexander’s response, reminiscent to the modern reader of Constantine’s vision before the Battle of Milvian Bridge but *avant la lettre*, of course, he is taken to the temple where he offers sacrifices to God according to Jewish custom and is shown the *Book of Daniel* “wherein Daniel declared that one of the Greeks should destroy the empire of the Persians, he supposed that himself was the person intended” (337). After that, Alexander “granted them all they desired: and when they entreated him that he would permit the Jews in Babylon and Media to enjoy their own laws also, he willingly promised to do hereafter what they desired” (338).

This “conversion” of Alexander to the Jewish God would be later exploited as one of the testimonies of a Christianised Alexander in the Middle Ages. It was also incorporated into the later versions of the Pseudo-Callisthenes *Alexander Romance* in eighth-century Byzantium<sup>9</sup>.

---

8 The translation into English of this work is taken from *The Works of Josephus. Complete and Unabridged translated by William Whiston* (Hendrickson, Peabody, MA, 1987).

9 Further details on Alexander’s visit to Jerusalem and its inclusion in the ε version of the

A much briefer, but maybe equally relevant reference, to Alexander the Great was made by Flavius Josephus in his other great work, *The Wars of the Jews*, narrating the wars of the Jewish people from the time of the Maccabees to the Great War with Rome that the author himself witnessed. In Book 7, chapter 7, when he is describing the events that took place during the reign of emperor Vespasian (69–79 C.E.) and the tragedy of Antiochus, king of Commagene (Armenian Kingdom of the Hellenistic period around the city of Samosata), he narrates how the Alans (also known as Scythians), who inhabited the Lake Meotis (Sea of Azov) wanted to fall upon “Media and the parts beyond it, in order to plunder them; with which intention they treated with the king of Hyrcania<sup>10</sup>; for he was the master of that passage which king Alexander shut up with iron gates. (246) This king gave them leave to come through them; so they came in great multitudes, and fell upon the Medes unexpectedly, and plundered their country”. This is one of the first references to Alexander closing the impure peoples behind “iron gates”. It links the enclosing of the impure people as described in *Ezekiel* with the identification of the material the gates are made of which is iron, one of materials referring to the Greeks, and their invincibility in the *Book of Daniel*.

### **The *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius**

These two traditions, the apocalyptic *Old Testament* one and the historical Latin one seemingly come together in the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius, also known among some scholars, using borrowed Protestant terminology, as the *Revelation*. The *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius, written most likely by an anonymous Syriac monk towards the end of the seventh century was, according to DiTomasso, “the most influential apocalyptic text written during the Middle Ages”<sup>11</sup>. This text is key in understanding the relevance in East Slavic historiography of Alexander of Macedon, who appears prominently in Chapter 8 of the *Apocalypse*. The person who composed the *Apocalypse* was clearly aware of Ezekiel’s and Daniel’s visions, which can be expected from any monk, but may have been less so

---

Alexander Romance are to be found in the excellent monograph by Corinne Jouanno, *Naissance et Métamorphoses du Roman d’Alexandre: Domaine Grec*. (Paris, 2002), 378–381.

10 A historical area southeast of the Caspian Sea and also the name of a fortress in the Judean Desert rebuilt subsequently in the Byzantine period as a monastery named Kastellion, 5 kilometres west of Qumram and 16 east of Jerusalem, in the West Bank. Josephus’ reference is undoubtedly to the Caspian kingdom.

11 Lorenzo DiTomasso has worked extensively on this text. A very good summary of the status quaestionis, including updated bibliography, à propos of the appraisal of Benjamin Garstad’s new edition and translation (*Apocalypse/Pseudo-Methodius. An Alexandrian World Chronicle; edited and translated by Benjamin Garstad* (Cambridge, MA, 2012) can be found in Lorenzo DiTomasso, “The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius: Notes on a Recent Edition,” *Medioevo Greco* 17 (2017), 311–321.

of Pseudo-Callisthenes text. According to Garstad, the anonymous Syriac monk would have known his Bible, but instead of using extensively the *books of Ezekiel and Daniel*, he would have made a more extensive use of Saint Paul's *second Letter to the Thessalonians*.<sup>12</sup> This is arguable, since the content of the Pauline letter focuses on the parousia, the arrival of the ultimate kingdom, rather than on the evils that will necessarily arrive beforehand, and because the Pseudo-Methodius' *Apocalypse* mentions Ezekiel and his prophecy with his name in the last paragraph of chapter 8 ("In the end times, according to what the prophecy of Ezekiel says, in the last day of the consummation of the world Gog and Magog, who are the nations and kings which Alexander shored up in the extremities of the north, will come into the land of Israel", and then he gives the list of nations commencing with the names the prophet used in his book (see supra): "Gog and Magog and Anug and Ageg and Ashkenaz, and Dephar and the Photinaeans and Libians and Eunians and Pharizaeans and Declemans and Zarmats and Theblaeans and Zarmatians and Chachonians and Amarzarthans and Garmiardans and the cannibals called Cynocephalans (Dog-heads) and Tharbians and Alans and Phisolonicians and Arcnaeans and Asarlerians. These are the twenty-two kings set under guard within the gates which Alexander fixed". The author of the *Apocalypse* also refers to the *Book of Daniel* at the beginning of chapter 8, where he refers to the theory of the four kingdoms and the four winds, as mentioned explicitly by Daniel. However, one of the most striking features of the *Apocalypse* also refers to one of the most peculiar lineages attributed to Alexander: while in all texts we know, including those of the Syrian cycle mentioned below, Alexander is the son of Philip and Olympias, or of Nectanebo and Olympias, we can read in the *Apocalypse*: "For Philip, the father of Alexander, was a Macedonian and he married Chouseth, the daughter of king Phol of Ethiopia, and out of her was born Alexander, who became tyrant of the Greeks" (Ch. 8 § 2).

Garstad is, nevertheless, absolutely right when he places the origin of the encounter between Alexander the Great and the Gog and Magog in the *Apocalypse* "on material in Syrian versions of the legends about Alexander, the *Alexander Legend* and the *Alexander Poem*"<sup>13</sup>.

### The Syriac Cycle on Alexander

These two texts, plus the short life of Alexander that Budge included in his book, what I have called before the Syriac cycle on Alexander, present interesting connections between them and with the *Apocalypse* and the much wider tradition of the *Alexander Romance*. Both were translated alongside the Syriac version

---

12 *Apocalypse/Pseudo-Methodius*, xi–xii.

13 *Apocalypse/Pseudo-Methodius*, xii.

of the *Alexander Romance* by Budge and inspired the writer of the *Apocalypse*<sup>14</sup>. The first one to be composed, probably around the early 630s, was the *Poem*, traditionally attributed to Jacob of Serugh, following Budge's theory. The poem presents Alexander as someone who

desire[s] greatly to go forth and see countries, and also what is the condition of lands far away, I will also go forth and see seas and boundaries and all the quarters of the world; and more than all [I desire] to go in and see the Land of Darkness (vv. 38–41, p. 165)<sup>15</sup>.

After which we are told:

And after he had subdued Macedonia which had rebelled against him, he went down and dwelt in the chief town of all Egypt, and he bound on the crown and he became greater and stronger than all kings (vv. 45–47, p. 166).

Further discussion with local chiefs about the dangers of wanting to go so far in the seas follows, before the first mention relating Alexander with the Gog and Magog is finally made:

And he sent and told Sorik, the king of all Egypt to send to him from his dominions all the artificers, workers in brass and iron, men full of skill, for the Lord had beckoned to him to make a gate against Magog. Twelve thousand cunning workmen did Sorik the king of Egypt send to the son of Philip. King Alexander made ready iron and brass a great quantity, and in his wisdom, he filled the ships therewith. He alone knew this mystery, which Jeremiah, in his prophecy, had prophesied concerning him (vv. 79–88, p. 167)<sup>16</sup>.

From this point, Alexander continues his journey towards the Land of Darkness, in pursue of the Water of Life, until he arrives to where the fountain is, only to receive the instruction from the Lord not to bathe himself in it, since he has to die like any other mortal. Asking an old man who had guided him there about the nations inhabiting those lands, he is told

---

14 Richard Stoneman has summarised the question of the Syriac cycle of Alexander in Richard Stoneman, "Alexander the Great and the End of Time: The Syriac Contribution to the Development of the Alexander Romance," *Syriac in its Multi-Cultural Context*, ed. by H. Teule, E. Keser-Kayaalp, K. Akalin, N. Dorum and M.S. Toprak (Leuven and Paris, 2017), 39–46. What I call the 'Syriac cycle' was fully translated into English by Budge more than a century ago (E.A. Wallis Budge, *The History of Alexander the Great, being the Syriac version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes* (Cambridge, 1889), where the English translation of the Syriac *Alexander Romance* precedes the translation of the Christian Legend (pp. 144–158) and the *Poem* by Jacob of Serugh, called by Budge 'A Metrical Discourse upon Alexander' (pp.163–200). He also included a *Brief Life of Alexander* (pp. 159–161) whose origin is uncertain. A more recent translation into German was made by G.J. Reinink in 1983 (*Das syrische Alexanderlied: die drei Rezensionen* (Louvain, 1983). Budge's theories on the origin of the Syriac *Alexander* were subsequently criticised by Nöldeke, who insisted on a Persian origin for the Syriac translations. The refutation of Nöldeke's theories and a full reexamination of the question can be found in Claudia A. Ciancaglini, "The Syriac Version of the Alexander Romance," *Le Muséon Revue d'études orientales* 114 (1–2) (2001), 121–140. I thank Albert Frey for directing me to this article.

15 All citations are from Budge's translation (1889).

16 Jeremiah does not mention Alexander by name in any part of his book.



This is the dominion of Tubarlika the great king of the house of Persians and of the Amoraye. Within it are the peoples of the house of Japhet and of the house of Magog, a cunning nation, a playd nation, an uprooted nation (vv. 213–216, p 176).

Arriving then to the mountainous region beyond which there were dragons, Alexander once more asks which peoples lie beyond those mountains and is told

Listen, O Master, and king; and we will tell thee. Behold, the family of Agog and the family of Magog are beyond us, terrible of aspect, hateful of form, of all heights, the stature of each one of them is from six to seven cubits; Their noses are flat and their foreheads hateful. They bathe in blood, and in blood wash they also their heads, They drink blood and eat the flesh of men; they wear skins, sharpen weapons and forge wrath, and are more ferocious and have more wars than all other nations. Where the wrath of the Lord rises he sends them; and they overturn the land, and uproot mountains, and devour men (vv. 241–251, p. 177–178).

It is then he realises there is a narrow pass in the mountains and a river of blood flowing down. After that he writes a letter to Tubarliki, the king of Persia, notifying him of his intention to stay in Persia without a fight. When Tubarliki was about to attack Alexander, the latter dreamt of an angel saying to him that he would be victorious in battle against the Persians and their allies because he had the protection from God (similarly to what Flavius Josephus narrated in *The Antiquities of the Jews*, see supra). As predicted by the angel, Alexander won the battle:

And when Alexander had thus gained the victory, he buried the slain and took their arms. Then he courageously took pains and made a door against Agog and the family of Magog, and bound them inside. He took iron and brass, a great quantity, and made it ready for the making of the door that he might shut [it] in the face of the people. [...] He measured the ground of the narrow pass between the mountains, that he might shut in the peoples of the house of Magog until the end (vv. 338–342, 348–349, p. 182).

Once this is done, Alexander has another vision in a dream:

Rise up and make peace with Tubarliki, the king of Persia, and take away from him the land of Egypt and the land of Jabus. Take from him the land of Palestine and the Hebrews' country and the whole land of Syria and Mesopotamia. Take from him Phoenicia and Cilicia, Cappadocia, Galatia and Phrygia, also Asia and the territory of the Greeks and Seleucia, take his dominion until thou comest to Kalkidia, take his dominion and set the river Kallath as a boundary for yourselves. And let not one of you pass over the boundary which ye set for him". The Lord spake by the hand of the angel, [saying] "I will magnify thee more than all the kings and governors in all the world. This great gate which thou hast made in this land shall be closed until the end of times cometh. Jeremiah also prophesied concerning it and the earth hath heard, 'The gate of the north shall be opened on the day of the end of the world, And on that day shall evil go forth on the wicked. There shall be woe to those who are with child and to those who give suck" (vv. 417–434, pp 186–187).

Alexander's dream goes on:

And destructive winds shall go forth against creation; and the Lord shall visit evil upon the world, upon the fertile lands. And the nation that is within this gate shall be roused up, and also the hosts of Agog and of the peoples of Magog shall be gathered together. These peoples, the fiercest of all creatures, Of the mighty house of Japhet [are they] of whom the Lord spake, [saying], 'They shall go forth on the earth and cover all creation like a locust' (vv. 463–469, p. 188).

The visions of Alexander continue as more references to Isaiah or Daniel are noted. The author clearly knew the *Old Testament*, and it was in his imagination that the different apocalyptic visions (*Daniel*, *Jeremiah*, *Isaiah*, *Ezekiel*) were mixed together and maybe also with passages Josephus' works. *Jeremiah*, for example, despite being often quoted by the author of the *Poem*, does not mention the Gog or the Magog in his work, although he refers insistently to the "people of the north" who could attack Israel and the city of Jerusalem, although a king ("The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will raise up for David[a] a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety." *Jeremiah*, 23, 5–6) will spare the Jewish people. This is exactly the main argument at the end of the *Poem*:

They shall not, however, enter into Jerusalem, the city of the Lord. For the sign of the Lord shall drive them away from it, and shall not enter it. All the saints shall fly away from them to Mount Sanir, all faithful true ones and the good and all the wise. They shall not be able to approach mount Sinai, for it is the dwelling place of the Lord, nor to the high mountains of Sinai with their shame. By Jerusalem shall fall by the sword the hosts of the children of Agog and of the house of Magog with great slaughter. After these things shall the days full of trouble decrease (vv. 630–638, pp. 196–197).

This text is probably the first to link the key elements of the story as it will be transmitted in chapter 8 of Pseudo-Methodius' *Apocalypse* and later on in the later Greek and Byzantine, and Slavic, versions of the *Alexander Romance*. The link between Alexander and the king that would be sent by the Biblical God to save Jerusalem was made by Flavius Josephus, but the elements of the Caspian Gates, or Iron Gates, and the Gog and the country of Magog are clearly only present in the Syriac texts.

The other text from which Pseudo-Methodius could have taken inspiration, aside from the Syriac version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes (translated from Greek into Syriac in the fifth or sixth century), was the so-called *Christian Legend* concerning Alexander. Written before the *Alexander Poem*, Budge thought that they had been possibly equally inspired in some chapters of the *Alexander Romance* (Book II, chapters 38 and 39). These chapters contain mainly the episodes of the diving bell and the water of life. The former is missing in the *Poem*, but, as we will see, the episode of the Unclean Nations, the Gog and the Magog, once incorporated into later versions of the *Alexander Romance* (λ, γ or ε), will be

placed immediately after the episode of the exchange of letters with the Amazons,<sup>17</sup> and not after the search of the water of life, as it was in the *Poem*. The *Legend* focuses on Alexander shutting out the Huns, the people from the north, whom he finds at the end of the world, behind an iron gate. His salvation of Jerusalem also figures prominently. In this text, inspired in the *Poem*, the process of Christinization of Alexander is complete, who at one point in the *Legend* says:

O God, Lord of kings and judges, thou who settest up kings and destroyest their power, I know in my mind that thou hast exalted me above all kings, and thou hast made me horns upon my head, wherewith I might trust down the kingdoms of the world; give me power from thy holy heavens that I may receive strength greater than [that of] the kingdoms of the world and that I may humble them, and I will magnify thy name, O lord, for ever, and thy memorial shall be from everlasting to everlasting and I will write the name of God in the charter of my kingdom, that there may be for Thee a memorial always. And if the Messiah, who is the Son of God, comes in my days, I and my troops will worship Him. And if He does not come in my days, when I have gone and conquered kings and seized their lands, I will carry this throne, which is a seat of silver upon which I sit, and will place it in Jerusalem, that, when the Messiah comes from heaven, He may sit upon my kingly throne, for His kingdom lasts for ever<sup>18</sup>.

And when he manages to get to the end of the land, before a mountain that “comes to an end in outer Persia” he asks the locals whether they have ever gone to the other side, to which they answer “neither we nor our fathers have been able to march one step in it, and men do not ascend it either on that side or on this, for it is the boundary which God has set between us and the nations within it” and when further asked by Alexander, who are these nations, they responded “They are the Huns” whose kings are “The Gog and Magog and Nawal the kings of the sons of Japhet; and Gig and Teamron, and Tiyamron, and Beth-Gamli, and Yaphobar, and Shumardak, and Glusika, and Ekshaphar and Salgaddo, and Nislik and Amarphil and Kaoza, these are the kings of the Huns”.<sup>19</sup> This list does not coincide with the one that will give Pseudo-Methodius in his text, who will amplify it to 22 (actually 23). The *Book of the Bee* will also list 22 nations, partially coinciding with this and partially with Pseudo-Methodius. The *Legend* narrates subsequently the construction of the iron gates,<sup>20</sup> the prophesy of Alexander in which he sees the destruction of the kingdoms from the North:

And when the Huns have gone forth, as God has commanded, the kingdoms of the Huns and the Persians and the Arabs, the twenty-four kingdoms that are written in this book, shall come from the ends of the heavens and shall fall upon one another, and the earth shall melt through the blood and dung of men. Then the kingdom of the Greeks shall move itself,

---

17 Richard Stoneman, “Alexander the Great and the End of Time,” 185–187.

18 E.A. Wallis Budge, *The History of Alexander the Great*, 146.

19 E.A. Wallis Budge, *The History of Alexander the Great*, 150.

20 E.A. Wallis Budge, *The History of Alexander the Great*, 153.

and shall come and take a hammer of iron in its right hand, and a hammer of brass in its left, and the kingdom of Greece shall smite the hammers one upon the other, and as iron which is melted by fire, and as brass which boils in the flame, so shall the power of the kingdoms melt away before the might of the kingdom of the Greeks which is that of the Romans. And the kingdoms of the Huns and of the Persians shall be desolated the one by the other; only a few of them shall escape who shall flee to their country; and what remains of them the kingdom of the Romans shall destroy. And my kingdom, which is called that of the house of Alexander the son of Philip the Macedonian, shall go forth and destroy the earth and the ends of the heavens; and there shall not be found any among the nations and tongues who dwell in the world that shall stand before the kingdom of the Romans.

The *Legend* goes on elaborating how Alexander is there to fulfil the prophesy of Jeremiah, then describes Alexander's victory and his final arrival to Jerusalem.

This is the material with which the author of the *Apocalypse* worked. As mentioned above, the main references to Alexander are made in chapter 8, although indirect references to Alexander are to be found elsewhere ("these last men who stretch out their hands to God are from the seed of Chuseth, the daughter of Phol, king of Ethiopia. When the Cross has been lifted up on high to heaven, the King of the Romans will directly give up his spirit", ch. 14, 2–3)<sup>21</sup>. In chapter 8, we are told, contrarily to all traditions about Alexander, including the Syriac cycle, that the mother of Alexander is not Olympias, but Chuseth, the daughter of King Phol of Ethiopia. Supposedly, this is the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy: "Now hear again precisely how the four kingdoms were united with one another, the Ethiopians with the Macedonians, and the Greeks with the Romans. These are the four winds under heaven, which Daniel saw disturbing the great sea" (Chapter 8, § 1). The rest of the content is mainly taken from the *Poem* and the *Legend*: the brutality, including cannibalism, of the barbarians and how Alexander enclosed them behind the iron gates.

### **The *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius in Slavic**

The *Apocalypse* was written in Syriac at the end of the seventh century and soon translated into Greek and from Greek into Slavic. The first translations of it into Slavonic may date to the end of the ninth century, the early eleventh at the latest. Both Tikhonravov (1863) and Istrin (1897) dedicated studies to it<sup>22</sup>. Tikhonravov

---

21 See my chapter "Between the Third Rome and the New Jerusalem: the Fall of Constantinople viewed by Russians," *New Perspectives on Late Antiquity in the Eastern Roman Empire*, ed. by A. de Francisco Heredero, D. Hernández de la Fuente and S. Torres Prieto (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2014).

22 Tikhonravov, N.S. *Pamjatniki otrechennoj russkoj literatury* (The Hague, Paris, 1970) (repr. of 1863 edition), and Istrin, V.M. *Otkrovenie Mefodija Patarskogo i apokrificheskie videnija Daniila v vizantijskoj i slavjano-russkoj literaturu*. Vol. 1 Otkrovenie Mefodija (Moscow, 1897).

edited four manuscripts of the text, dating from the fourteenth to eighteenth century.<sup>23</sup> The text was of course known much earlier in Kievan Rus'. It is also, I would argue, the reason why we preserve an early form of the *Alexander Romance* in an early Byzantine redaction (manuscript L of the  $\beta$  version, written before the eighth century) long before another translation was made in the fifteenth century from later Byzantine versions ( $\gamma$  or  $\epsilon$ ).

Despite the late date of the Slavic manuscripts studied by Tikhonravov, the *Apocalypse* was surely known much earlier in East Slavic.

### The *Apocalypse* in the *Povest' vremennykh let*

One of the earliest secondary references to it is in the *Povest' vremennykh let* (hereafter — *PVL*) sub anno 1096, which would seem just appropriate given the fact that on that year the Polovtsy managed to inflict great defeats on the Kievan princes and even arrive to the environs of Kiev and pillage and burn the Caves Monastery itself<sup>24</sup>. The *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius must have seem only too real. The entry for that year is quite a long one, narrating not only the attacks of the Polovtsy but also the internal disputes between the princes Sviatopolk, Vladimir and Oleg. The text from the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius is inserted after the description of the attacks to the monastery. The text quotes, more or less verbatim, from the *Apocalypse's* chapter 8, §§ 3–9 (according to Garstad's edition)<sup>25</sup>.

Аще ли бо си суть отъ пустыня Етревьскыя, межѣ вѣстокъмь и сѣверъмь; ищѣли же естъ ихъ колѣнь 4: Търкмене и Печенѣзи, Търци, Половци. Мефодии же сѣвѣдѣтельствуетъ о нихъ, яко 8 колѣнь пробѣгли суть, егда исѣче Гедеонъ, и осмь ихъ бѣжа въ пустыню, а 4 исѣче. Друзии же глаголють: сыны Амоновы; се же нѣсть тако: сынове бо Моавли Хвалиси, а сынове Амонови Българе, а Срацини отъ Измаила, и творять ся Сарини, и прозъваша имя собѣ Саракыне, рекъше: Сарини есмы. Тѣмъже Хвалисе и Българе суть отъ дщерию Лотову, иже зачаста отъ отьца своего, тѣмъже нечисто естъ племя ихъ. А Измаило роди 12 сына, отъ нихъже суть Търкмени и Печенѣзи и Търци и Половци, иже исходятъ отъ пустынь. И по сихъ 8 колѣнь къ коньчинѣ вѣка изидуть заклепении въ горѣ Александръмь Макидоньскымъ нечистыя челоуѣкы.

23 Tikhonravov, N.S. *Pamjatniki otrechennoj russkoj literatury*, vol. II, 213–281.

24 See Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia 980–1584* (Cambridge, 1993), 51–55 for a summary of this period. Donald Ostrowski has analysed in depth this part of the *PVL* in Donald Ostrowski, “The ‘enclosed people’ of the Revelations of Pseudo-Methodius of Patara in the *Povest' vremennykh let*,” *Philology Broad and Deep: In Memoriam Horace G. Lunt*, ed. by D.J.B. Michael S. Flier, and Cynthia M. Vakareliyska (Bloomington, IN, 2014).

25 This corresponds to *PVL* lines 234, 3 to 236, 15 in D. Ostrowski's edition. The text presented here corresponds to Ostrowski's paradosis (*The Povest' vremennykh let. An Interlinear Collation and Paradosis* edited and collated by Donald Ostrowski, with David Birnbaum and Horace G. Lunt (Cambridge, MA, 1999) [Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute Publications, vol. 10).

Се же хошо съказати, яже слышахъ преже сихъ 4 лѣтъ, яже съказа ми Гурята Роговичъ Новгородецъ, глаголя сице, яко “Посълахъ отрока своего въ Печеру, люди, иже суть дань дающе Новугороду. И пришъдъшю отроку моему къ нимъ, а отъгуду иде въ Угру. Угра же суть людие языкъ нѣмъ, и съсѣдять съ Самоядию на полуношьныхъ странахъ”. Угра же рекоша отроку моему: “Дивно находихомъ мы чудо ново, егоже нѣсмы слыхали преже сихъ лѣтъ, се же третее лѣто поча быти: суть горы заидуче въ луку моря, имже высота ако до небесе, и въ горахъ тѣхъ кличъ великъ и говоръ, и сѣкуть гору, хотяще просѣчи ся; и есть въ горѣ тои просѣчено окъныце мало, и туда мѣлвятъ, не разумѣти языку ихъ, нъ кажють желѣзо, и помавають рукою, просяще желѣза; и аще къто дасть имъ желѣзо или ножъ или секиру, и они дають скорою противу. Есть же путь до горъ тѣхъ не проходимъ пропастьми, снѣгъмъ и лѣсъмъ, тѣмъ не доходимъ ихъ вьсыгда; есть же и подаль на полунощии”. Мнѣ же рекъшю къ Гурятъ: “Се суть людие заклепении Александрѣмъ, Макидонскымъ царѣмъ”, якоже съказа о нихъ Мефодии Патариский, глаголя: “Александръ, царь Макидонский, възъде на восточныя страны до моря, нарицаемое Сълнече мѣсто, и видѣ ту челоуѣкы нечистыя отъ племене Афетова, ихъже нечистоту видѣвъ: ядыху сквърну вьсяку, комары и мухы, котъкы, змяя, мъртвъць не погрѣбаху, нъ ядыху, и женскыя изврагы ядыху и скоты вься нечистыя. То видѣвъ Александръ убоя ся, еда како умножать ся и осквърнятъ землю, загна ихъ на полуношьныя страны въ горы высокия, и Богу повелѣвшю, съступиша ся о нихъ, тѣкъмо не ступиша ся о нихъ горы 12 локътъ, и ту сѣтвориша ся врата мѣдяная, и помазаша ся сунклитѣмъ; и аще хотять възяти, не възмогутъ, ни огньмъ могутъ иждъжещи; вещь бо сунклитова сица есть: ни огнь можетъ иждъжещи его, ни желѣзо его приметь. Въ послѣдныя же дъни по сихъ осми колѣнъ иже изидуть отъ пустыня Етривьскыя, изидуть и си сквърнии языци, яже суть въ горахъ полуношьныхъ, по повелѣнню Божию<sup>26</sup>.

26 “They came forth from the desert of Yathrib in the northeast. Four races of them issued forth: Torkmens, Pechenegs, Torks, and Polovtsy. Methodius relates concerning them that eight nations fled when Gideon massacred them; eight fled into the desert, and four he massacred. Others say that they are the sons of Ammon, but this is not true, for the Caspians are the sons of Moab, while the Bulgars are the sons of Ammon. But the Saracens descended from Ishmael became known as the sons of Sarah and called themselves Sarakyne, that is to say, “We are descendants of Sarah”. Likewise the Caspians and the Bulgars are descended from the daughters of Lot, who conceived by their father, so that their race is unclean. Ishmael begot twelve sons, from whom are descended the Torkmens, the Pechenegs, the Torks, and the Cumans or Polovcians, who came from the desert. After these eight races, at the end of the world, shall come forth the unclean peoples shut in the mountain by Alexander of Macedon. I wish at this point to recount a story which I heard four years ago, and which was told to me by Gyuryata Rogovich of Novgorod: “I sent my servant,” said he, “to the Pechera, a people who pay tribute to Novgorod. When he arrived among them, he went on among the Yugra. The latter are an alien people dwelling in the north with the Samoyedes. The Yugra said to my servant, ‘We have encountered a strange marvel, with which we had not until recently been acquainted. This occurrence took place three years ago. There are certain mountains which slope down to an arm of the sea, and their height reaches to the heavens. Within these mountains are heard great cries and the sound of voices; those within are cutting their way out. In that mountain, a small opening has been pierced through which they converse, but their language is unintelligible. They point, however, at iron objects, and make gestures as if to ask for them. If given a knife or an axe, they supply furs in return. The road to these mountains is impassable with precipices, snow, and forests. Hence we do not always reach them, and they are also far to the north’. Then I said to Gyuryata, ‘These are the peoples shut up by Alexander of Macedon. As Methodius of Patara says of them, ‘He penetrated the eastern countries as far as the sea called the Land of the Sun, and he saw there unclean peoples of the race of Japheth. When he beheld their uncleanness, he marvelled. They ate every nauseous thing, such as gnats, flies, cats, and serpents. They did not bury

Aside from the free adaptation made by the monk of the four-nation topos from the *Book of Daniel*, by which Babylon, the Medes, the Persians and the Greeks become something of Torkmens, Pechenegs, Torks, and Polovtsy<sup>27</sup> and a wonderful cross-reference map of parts taken from the Bible, from the *Apocalypse* and probably from other sources, the only part he retells as being part of the *Apocalypse* is a retelling more of or less accurate of the second part of chapter 8 of the *Apocalypse*.

Pseudo-Methodius will be later referred to, in passing, under the year 1223, not surprisingly, the year of the first Mongol invasions. It is likely that the scribe simply took inspiration from the entry of the year 1096 describing the invasions of the Polovtsians. This time Alexander the Great is not mentioned:

Того же лѣт. [1223] Явиша<sup>с</sup> язъщи . ихже никтоже добрѣ ясно не вѣсть кто суть и ѿколѣ изидоша . и что языкъ ихъ . и которого племени сут. и что вѣра ихъ . и зовуть я Татары. а инии глѣють Таумены. а друзии Печенѣзи . инии глѣють яко се су<sup>т</sup> в ни<sup>х</sup>же Мефодии Патомьскыи еп<sup>с</sup>пъ свѣдѣтельствуе<sup>т</sup>. яко си су<sup>т</sup> ишли ис пустына Стриевьскыи суше межю востоко<sup>м</sup> и сѣверо<sup>м</sup>. тако бо Мефодии ре<sup>ч</sup>. яко къ скончанью времянь явитиса тѣ<sup>м</sup>. яже загна Гедевнѣ . и поплѣнать всю землю. ѿ востока до Сфранта. и ѿ Тигръ до Понетьска<sup>г</sup> мора. кромѣ Сфиупья. Бѣ же единѣ вѣсть ихъ кто сути ѿколѣ изидоша . премѣрии мужи вѣдать я. добрѣ кто книги разумно умѣсть. мы же и<sup>х</sup> не вѣмъ кто су<sup>т</sup> . но сдѣ wpisахо<sup>м</sup> в ни<sup>х</sup> памяти ради. Русскы<sup>х</sup> князии бѣды. яже бы<sup>с</sup> ѿ ни<sup>х</sup>. и мы слышахо<sup>м</sup> яко многы страны по<sup>л</sup>ѣниша. Ясы. Сѹбезы. Касогы. и Половецъ безбожны<sup>х</sup> множество избиша. а инѣхъ загнаша. и тако измроша оубиваеми гнѣво<sup>м</sup> Бжѣимь. и прч<sup>т</sup>тяя его Мѣре . много бо зла створиша ти вканныи Половци Руской земли. того ради всемл<sup>т</sup>вѣи Бѣ<sup>х</sup>ола погубити. и наказати безбожныя снѣ Измаиловы Куманы. яко да ѿмьстятъ кровь хрѣьянскую. еже и бы<sup>с</sup> над ними безаконныими. придоша бо ти Таурмению всю страну Куманьску . и придоша близъ Руси<sup>28</sup>.

---

their dead, but ate them, along with the fruit of abortions and all sorts of impure beasts. On beholding this, Alexander was afraid lest, as they multiplied, they might corrupt the earth. So he drove them to high mountains in the regions of the north, and by God's commandment, the mountains enclosed them round above save for a space of twelve ells. Gates of brass were erected there, and were covered with indestructible metal. They cannot be destroyed by fire, for it is the nature of this metal that fire cannot consume it, nor can iron take hold upon it. Hereafter, at the end of the world, eight peoples shall come forth into the desert of Yathrib, and these corrupt nations, which dwell in the northern mountains, shall also issue forth at God's command." This is the translation provided by Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd Sherwobitz-Wetzor in their 1953 edition of the *Laurentian* text, pp. 184–5, Cross, Samuel H., and Olgerd P. Sherwobitz-Wetzor. 1953. *The Russian Primary chronicle. Laurentian text*. Cambridge, MA.: Medieval Academy of America.

27 It could also makes reference to *Ezekiel* 38 3–5 as mentioned above: "Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, a prophesy against him, [3] And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: [4] And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: [5] Persia, Ethiopia and Lybia with them", in which Gog, Persia, Ethiopia and Lybia seem to constitute the alliance instigated by God to go against Israel for the sins they have committed against Yahve before they are finally delivered by Yahvé, who will send a victorious king (Alexander?) to deliver His people.

28 PSRL 1: 446.

Also, the reference to Pseudo-Methodius is made under the year 1224 in the *Novgorod First Chronicle*:

Въ лѣто 6732 [1224]. Въ то же лѣто, по грѣхомъ нашимъ, не ту ся зло створи: выеха Федоръ посадникъ съ рушаны, и бися съ Литвою, и съгониша рушанъ съ конь и много коневъ отьяша, и убиша Домажира Търлинница и сънь 5 его, а рушанъ Богъшю, а иныхъ много, а другихъ по лѣсу розгониша. Том же лѣтѣ, по грѣхомъ нашимъ, придоша языци незнаеми, их же добръ никто же не вѣсть, кто суть и отколе изидоша, и что языкъ ихъ, и котораго племени суть, и что вѣра ихъ; а зовуть я Татары, а инии глаголють Таурмены, а друзии Печенѣзи; инии же глаголють, яко се суть, о них же Мефодии, Патомьскыи епископъ, съвѣдѣтельствуеъ, яко си суть ишли ис пустыня Етриевьскыя, суще межи вѣстокомъ и сѣверомъ. Тако бо Мефодии глаголетъ, яко скончанию врѣмень явитися тѣмъ, яже загна Гедеонъ, и поплѣнять всю землю от вѣстокъ до Ефранта и от Тигрь до Поньскаго моря, кромѣ Ефиопия. Богъ единъ вѣсть, кто суть и отколѣ изидоша; прѣмудрии мужи вѣдятъ я добръ, кто книги разумѣть; мы же ихъ не вѣмы, кто суть; нѣ сде въписахомъ о нихъ памяти ради рускыхъ князь и бѣды, яже бысть от нихъ имъ. Слышахомъ бо, яко многы страны поплѣниша, Ясы, Обезы, Касоги, и Половчъ безбожныхъ множество избиша, а инѣхъ загнаша, и тако измоша убиваеми гнѣвомъ божиемъ и пречистыя его матере; много бо зла створиша ти оканънии Половчи Русьскои земли, того ради всемилостивыи богъ хотя погубити безбожныя сыны Измаиловы Куманы, яко да отмыстятъ кровь крестьянскую, еже и бысть над ними безаконными<sup>29</sup>.

### **The Hellenic and Roman Chronicle**

The relevance of the quotation of Pseudo-Methodius in the *PVL* for the study of the *Alexander Romance* is to be found in the *Hellenic and Roman Chronicle*<sup>30</sup>. This compendium is important for many reasons, and in the study of the transmission of the *Alexander Romance* also, because it contains the earliest full translation of the Pseudo-Callisthenes into Slavic preserved today. The *Hellenic and Roman Chronicle* (*LER*) has come down to us in two versions. Both of them are deeply related to the so-called *Archive* and *Vilnius compendia*, as well as the *Troitsky Khronograph*<sup>31</sup>. All these collections of historical writings contain parts of *Malalas*, parts of *Hamartolos*, parts of Josephus' *Jewish Wars* and also parts of the historical books of the *Old Testament*. The second version of *LER* adds, after the main corpus including *Hamartolos*, *Malalas* and the Pseudo-Callisthenes *Alexander Romance*, the *Book of Daniel* with an interpretation, a life of the Virgin, the *Tale of the capture of Jerusalem* by Titus (maybe taken from the *Josippon*, the Slavonic particular version of Josephus' *Jewish Wars*), the *Lives of Constantine and Helena*, the *Tale of the building of St. Sophia in Constantinople* and the *Tale*

29 NPL: 61–62.

30 *The Hellenic and Roman Chronicle* was edited, studied and analysed by Tvorogov (Tvorogov O.V. *Letopisets Ellinskii i Rimskii* (Saint Petersburg, 1999). This edition and analysis is, to my understanding, unsurpassed.

31 PSRL 1: 446.



on the *Latins*. The version of *Malalas* in Slavonic, since it can only be called a real translation in parts, is often interrupted or supplemented by other tales by the scribe. For example, shortly after commencing, in the change from *Malalas* book I.1 to I.2, the Slavonic scribe turns to the Bible for supplementary information, including parts of *Genesis* 5. In other parts, like in Book I. 10–12, where the classical pantheon is described, the text is extremely abridged, and in fact the rest of Book I is completely missing. Similarly, with all the beginning of Book II until II.13. The particular methodology of editing is also present at the end of Book VII (VII.17–18) where the *Alexander Romance* is added. In the *Chronicle of Malalas*, the story of Alexander of Macedon is recounted in Book VIII. His genealogy (son of Nectanebo and Olympias, though believed by Macedonians to be the son of god Amon) is recorded in Book VII §§ 189–190 (acc. to E. Jeffreys editions, p. 100<sup>32</sup>) and his life is the focus of Book VIII (§§ 192–196, pp. 102–103). *Malalas* focuses on the building of Alexandria, the trip to Troy and his homage to Achilles, his defeat of the Persians and the “restoration” to the Romans of all they had lost, Alexander’s marriage to Roxane, his trip to India and his encounter with Candace and his marriage to her and the final trip to Ethiopia. But this Book VIII of *Malalas* is substituted by the *Alexander Romance*. In fact, within *Malalas*’ Book VIII, Alexander the Great occupies only paragraphs 1 to 5, precisely those that, according to Simon Franklin are either completely missing (2–4) or “substantially reduced or paraphrased” (1 and 5),<sup>33</sup> one of the “defective” portions of the Slavonic *Malalas*.

The scribe must have done something similar to what he had done before when he introduced parts of the *Book of Genesis* to complement what *Malalas* did not have, or did not contain the way he wanted: he took the Pseudo-Callisthenes text and added it here, almost ‘inserted’ it, because then the *Malalas* Book VIII continues with the story of Seleukos (from sections 6–12 and then, after paraphrasing sections 13 and 14, from section 15 until the end, except for sections 17 (lacking) and 18 (paraphrased).

The Greek version from which this translation was made is to be dated between the fifth century and the seventh centuries. The text follows closely the L manuscript of the β version (fifth century) and the λ version (before eighth century). We can attest this by the inclusion of certain episodes in the first Slavonic of three key

---

32 *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, translation by Elizabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys, and Roger Scott with Brian Croke [et al.] (Melbourne, 1986). A partial translation of *Malalas*’ *Chronicle* into Slavic is available in a translation by Matthew Spinka, and Glanville Downey: *Chronicle of John Malalas: Books VIII–XVIII*, translated from the Church Slavonic by Matthew Spinka in collaboration with Glanville Downey (Chicago, Ill., 1940 (2007 printing)).

33 All these historical compendia, which also contain parts or the *Chronicle of John Malalas* in Slavonic, were reviewed by Simon Franklin (Simon Franklin, “Malalas in Slavonic,” *Byzantium-Rus-Russia: Studies in the Translation of Christian Culture* (Aldershot, Hampshire; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate/Variorum, 1990 [2002]). *The Alexander Romance* from the *Troitsk Khronograph* has been edited by Tatiana Vilkul in successive volumens of the journal *Paleoslavica* (2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011).

episodes lacking in earlier Greek versions: the Gog and Magog (the unclean nations), the episode of the water of life (and the diving bell), and the episode of Alexander's apotheosis carried to the skies by two big birds. Specifically, the versions we now call  $\lambda$ ,  $\varepsilon$  (eighth century) and  $\gamma$  (ninth century), the latter being a later combination of  $\varepsilon$  with the above-mentioned earlier  $\beta$ . Both  $\lambda$  and  $\varepsilon$  contain references to the Pseudo-Methodius tradition, but since  $\varepsilon$  is a further Christianised and epitomised version, datable to the end of the eighth century or beginning of the ninth,  $\lambda$ , usually dated to the early eighth century, is the first of the Pseudo-Callisthenian versions in which this apocalyptic role of Alexander is explicit. The other two episodes used to trace back a Greek original of the Slavonic translation (the water of life / diving bell, and the apotheosis/flight into the air) are also present in the famous manuscript L of the earlier  $\beta$  version, but this ms. does not include the Pseudo-Methodian references. So the relation of the *Alexander Romance* with the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius is also extremely relevant to understand the history of the Pseudo-Callisthenes text in Slavonic.

Furthermore, the Slavonic version copied in *LER* contains certain particularities worth mentioning:

Firstly, the visit to Jerusalem, or rather, the description of the building of Jerusalem and the story about Saul, is placed between chapters 33 and 34 of Book I, that is, between the oracle at the Serapion and Alexander's arrival to Egypt. The origin of this composite part is obscure, but part of Saul's story is certainly biblical. A similar interpolation with a holy city as protagonist will take place between Book II.17 and Book II.18 where a short text relates Alexander's visit to Babylon.

Secondly, the episode of Alexander flying into the skies occurs immediately after the episode with the water of life and is slightly modified. In Slavic, the birds with human form and face, speaking in Greek (!) order him to attack Porus.

Finally, the episode of the enclosed peoples, as mentioned above, is referred to twice: once immediately after Book II, ch. 23, which is closest to the *PVL* interpolation, and also more in full in the chapter 8 of the Pseudo-Methodius text copied immediately after the *Romance* in the *Hellenic and Roman Chronicle*. The text is within a description of the four empires that have been so far in the world: Ethiopia, Macedonia, Rome and Greece (sic.).

Immediately after the *Alexander Romance*, the compiler of the *LER* inserts chapter 8 of the *Apocalypse*, which forces him, for a start, to make sense of the contradictory theories about Alexander's own mother<sup>34</sup>. Tvorogov has already noted the similarity between this passage, Pseudo-Methodius *Apocalypse*, and the parts inserted in the *Alexander Romance*<sup>35</sup>. It is without a doubt this disparity on who was Alexander's mother that forces the introduction by the scribe of a necessary clarification not to be found in Pseudo-Methodius either in Greek or in

34 Tvorogov O.V. *Letopisets Ellinskii i Rimskii*, 178–179 .

35 Tvorogov O.V. *Letopisets Ellinskii i Rimskii*, vol. 2, 166–167.

Slavic: “Филипъ убо, Александровъ отецъ, макидонянинъ бѣ и поя жену Хузиту, глаголемую Алумпиаду, дщерь Фола, царя ефиопска”<sup>36</sup>. None of the editions of the *Apocalypse* contains this clarification at the beginning of chapter 8<sup>37</sup>, although at the beginning of chapter 9 this double-name of Alexander’s mother is mentioned in an attempt to explain that the kings of Byzantium are half-brothers of Alexander because Chouseth/Olympias remarried Byzas, since Alexander never had issue. Despite changing the nationality of Olympias and shortening the number of years Alexander was ruler (from 19 to 12<sup>38</sup>), chapter 8 was copied in full, including the 24 impure peoples Alexander managed to enclose. And then it was followed by chapter 9 of Pseudo-Methodius, under the heading in Slavic of “Начало Царства Царяграда” or “Сказание началу Царства Царяграда”.

### The next Roman Emperor

In his seminal work, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, Paul J. Alexander devotes a whole section, one of the chosen themes, to the idea of the Last Roman Emperor, this is, the Emperor that would eventually surrender all his earthly power to God after defeating all His enemies at the end of times. As we have seen, the theme is popular in Biblical literature, in some Roman historiography, in Second Temple literature, and certainly in medieval times, East and West, as borders were being threatened by barbaric, non-Christians hoards. The inclusion of the story of Alexander the Great, albeit in a novelistic form such as the Pseudo-Callisthenes work undoubtedly responds to this concern. It would not have made sense, otherwise, to introduce it for the first time between the *Chronicle of John Malalas* and the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius. If we review the elements that are present both in the *LER* and the *PVL*, for example, we see that they both lead us back to Pseudo-Methodius, but not to the *Alexander Romance*. This first version of the *Alexander Romance*, however, differs from its original Greek not in the parts that are also present in *Pseudo-Methodius*, i.e., the episode of the Unclean Nations, but also in two elements that are relevant: Alexander’s visit to and partial building of Jerusalem, and the episode of his flying into the skies (whose artistic depiction might be in St. Dimitrius Cathedral in Vladimir) when he is told by the angels from heaven to attack King Porus in India. The model of Christianised king who saves the day, the planet, the world becomes abundantly clear.

We have seen the precedents of these two topics: Alexander’s visit to Jerusalem is in Josephus, from where *Hamartolos* probably took it, as well as in some of the

---

36 Tvorogov O.V. *Letopisets Ellinskii i Rimskii*, 178.

37 Tikhonravov’s edition of 1863, 217, 232, 258, 272.

38 The Syriac version translated by Paul Alexander also states that Alexander rules for 12 years (Paul J. Alexander and Dorothy de F. Abrahamse, *The Byzantine apocalyptic tradition* (Berkeley, CA and London, 1985), 40). The Greek text translated by Garstad records 19 years.

texts of the Syriac cycle, whose direct borrowing into Slavic is more problematical; the episode of the unclean nations (the Gog and the Magog) seems to have been known outside the *Alexander Romance* via *Pseudo-Methodius*, and the episode of Alexander's flying into the skies is relevant only to date the original Greek version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes text from which the Slavonic translation was made and, if, it is the figure depicted in Vladimir cathedral between king David and Jesus Christ. No other version of the *Alexander Romance* in Greek or in later translations made into Slavic in the fifteenth century contain these interpolations in precisely these places. This was an innovation made by the Slavic scribe. The interpolation of the *Pseudo-Methodius* is particularly surprising if we take into account that he recopied the whole chapter 8 (from where this interpolation is taken) at the end of the *Alexander Romance* text. It is probably not by chance that this abridged part of chapter 8 of the *Apocalypse* is inserted after the death of Darius, king of Persians, as Alexander retells the whole incident to his mother Olympias in a letter. It is the Greek defeating the Persian that the Biblical sources had spoken of (*Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel*). If the Slavic scribe had continued with the text of the *Alexander Romance* in the version he had available, he would have had to talk about the desert they crossed, the Phytoi, enormous people of 36 feet tall who lived in the woods, or giants who were spherical in shape with fiery expressions (Book II, chapters 32 and 33 in R. Stoneman's edition), and so until he finds the Apple-eaters, the point in which the text of the *Alexander Romance* included in *LER* retakes the story. The only reason for the scribe to include this interpolation here is that he knew Pseudo-Methodius' text, or had it also available, as shown in the chapters he copied afterwards, and that he thought these terrible creatures were the unclean nations and therefore the interpolation was suitable here. In later Byzantine versions of the *Alexander Romance* that were subsequently translated into Slavic the interpolation of the Gog and Magog goes where the Byzantines put it, after Book III. 26, following Alexander's encounter with the Amazons.

It remains a mystery as to why the scribe decided to include the text of the *Alexander Romance* in the middle of a historical compendium, and then modify it. If the inclusion had been made in a Byzantine compendium translated in block into Slavic, the difference in language, let alone in genre literary conventions, probably could not have gone unnoticed: to a Greek speaking scribe/writer, the difference in language between the high style of the chronicles and the popular Greek of the Romance would have been crystal-clear, a nuance that was probably lost in translation. Most likely, the innovation was made in Slavic: the scribe decided to use the Pseudo-Callisthenes text just as he had decided to use the Bible before, to fill in the gaps of what he wanted to say with a better text. This could maybe favour the idea that there must have been a translation of the *Alexander Romance* made into Slavic, separated from the historical compendia we have now, and used as an independent source, as a building block, to incorporate it into the historical narrative. If that was the case, we cannot know, because there is no manuscript to

attest it. In any case, there is something unique about this first Slavic version. The close relation in Slavic of the text of the *Alexander Romance* with the apocalyptic vision of Pseudo-Methodius and its introduction in Slavic literary culture as a Biblical figure linked to the salvation of Christianity would justify more clearly his inclusion in the iconography of salvation in St. Dimitrius cathedral in Vladimir, for example, as well as the use of the Pseudo-Callisthenian text as a long interpolation to praise the life and deeds of the monarch responsible of enclosing the Unclean Peoples. In this sense, the Slavic scribe probably used the *Alexander Romance* as functionally equivalent as he has previously used books the *Old Testament*, possibly due the limited space dedicated by either *Malalas* or *Hamartolos* to a character that clearly epitomised for him the personification of a pagan monarch who, nevertheless, can 'become' Christian and be decisive in the teleological history of the Christian oikoumene. In this sense, Alexander provided the best possible precedent to a recently converted ruling dynasty in the idea that it was possible for formerly pagan monarchs to occupy a relevant place in Christian history. In East Slavic literature, Alexander the Great was used as a biblical character in the global history of salvation in which Kievan Rus' wanted to immerse itself.

The other side of this, of course, is that, as pointed out in the other specific interpolation (Alexander's visit to Jerusalem), the nation that Alexander protects is Israel, the chosen people of God. Maybe it is also not by chance that in later redactions of the *PVL* in the Laurentian text, the text known as 'Instruction' of Vladimir Monomach is inserted precisely in between references to Alexander. It might not be by chance, either, that, the scribe decided to copy chapter 9 of Pseudo-Methodius alongside chapter 8 of the *Apocalypse* after the *Alexander Romance*, since this is the one that states that the kings of Byzantium, heirs of Byzantia, are the natural heirs of Alexander since they were children of a same mother, the princes Chouseth /Olympias, and therefore Alexander and Byzantia were half-brother and sister. Interesting also that Alexander's lineage is transmitted by maternal line, like in Judaism, rather than by paternal one. How much more attractive would it seem, then, to take a Byzantine bride. One should not forget that, despite having taken place decades before, if the matrimony between Anna Porphyrogeneta and Vladimir Sviatoslavich would have produced any male issue, that boy could have claimed the imperial throne in Constantinople for himself and his descendants.

So, even by emulation, if not by blood ties, Alexander the Great, protector of God's chosen people, defender of Christianity, victorious over the barbarians of non-Christian faith became the perfect role-model to imitate for Kievan Rus' princes. Whether the text was written in the high, courtly style of *Malalas*, or in the metaphoric obscure one of *Old Testament* apocalypses, or in low colloquial romance of Pseudo-Callisthenes was by the by. And a difficulty the Kievan scribe solved exactly as Alexander would have done: by cutting the Gordian knot of literary genres with his plume.