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SEG 33.802 AND THE ALEXANDER ROMANCE

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SEG 33.802 and the Alexander Romance

Revision, even of one's own past publications, is a necessary and salutary part of scholarship. In 1984 I edited SEG 33.802, a fragment of a *Tabula Iliaca* that had recently been acquired by the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, California.¹ The small fragment is opisthographic and dates from the early years of the reign of Tiberius.² On the reverse are the remains of an inscription in several columns containing excerpts from the so-called *Chronicon Romanum* (FGrH 252).³ The recto is occupied by a sculptured scene and portions of a four line inscription that is broken at both ends. In my original publication I tentatively suggested, erroneously as it turns out, that the text on the recto might be "an excerpt from a narrative, possibly in epistolary form, by a second party concerning some event involving the narrator and the Persian king Xerxes" (p. 158). In actuality, lines 1 to 3 contain fragments of three nonconsecutive sentences from an extant text, namely, a letter of Darius to Alexander that is found both in the *Alexander Romance* (2.17) and in *P. Hamb.* 129, lines 31-56,⁴ while line 4 forms part of the formula marking the transition back to the narrative of Alexander's reign. SEG 33.802, I, lines 1-4 should, therefore, be restored as follows:⁵

I 1 -- ? -- κ]αὶ γὰρ Ξέρξης ὁ τὸ φῶς μοὶ δοῦς ὑπερφ[ρονήσας -- ? --
 -- ? -- ἥ]δη οὐ κατανόησας καὶ τοῦ φρονήματος [τὸ μέγα αἰδοῦμενος -- ? --
 -- ? -- τοῦ]ε θησαυροῦς δεῖξιν τοὺς ἐν τῇ Μινυά[δι χώραι -- ? --
 4 -- ? -- τα]ύτης δὲ τῆς ἐπιτολῆς ἐλθούσης τ[-- ? --

¹ Stanley M. Burstein, "A New *Tabula Iliaca*: The Vasek Polak Chronicle", *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal*, 12 (1984) 153-162. The fragment measures 5 cm. in width and 7.5 cm. in height and is 2 cm. thick. The photograph is printed with the permission of the J. Paul Getty Museum (plate IV). I should like to thank Dr. Marion True, Curator of Antiquities of the J. Paul Getty Museum, and the museum's staff for their assistance in the preparation of this article.

² Burstein, 153-157. Cf. Anna Sadurska, *Les Tables Iliques* (Warsaw 1964) 10-11, 16-17.

³ To be read with the restorations proposed by M.W. Haslam, *ZPE* 62 (1986) 198.

⁴ Cited in the edition of Reinhold Merkelbach, *Die Quellen des griechischen Alexanderromans* (Munich² 1977) 235. For a detailed comparison of the parallel texts and a reconstruction of SEG 33, 802, I.1-4 see R. Merkelbach below, p. 277-280. In this connection, however, it should be noted that the presence of the remains of a tenon on the stone (cf. Burstein, 53) indicates that the fragment is from the center of the monument. Any proposed restorations, therefore, must be balanced on both the right and left sides of the extant portions of the inscription.

⁵ Abbreviations: A = *Historia Alexandri Magni (Pseudo-Callisthenes)*, ed. Guilelmus Kroll (Berlin 1926). Jul. Val. = Julius Valerius, *Res Gestae Alexandri Macedonis*, ed. Bernardus Kuebler (Leipzig 1888). Arm. = *The Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes*, transl. by Albert M. Wolohojian (New York 1969). Leo = *Der Alexanderroman des Archipresbyters Leo* ed. Friedrich Pfister (Heidelberg 1913). β (including B) = *Der griech. Alexanderroman Rezension β*, ed. L. Bergson, Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis, *Studia Graeca Stockh.*, Uppsala 1965; and *Leben und Taten Alexanders von Makedonien, der griech. Alexanderroman nach der Handschrift L* ed. Helmut van Thiel (Darmstadt 1974).

Commentary

1 δοῦς *P. Hamb.* 129 : δείξαι AB.

2 --- ἦ]δη οὐ : ἦδη cὺ *P. Hamb.* 129 : τοίνυν, Ἀλέξανδρε cὺ οὖν L : τοίνυν, Ἀλέξανδρε cὺ FKV : τοίνυν, Ἀλέξανδρε, οὐ B : ἀλλά γε A. In the Getty inscription, οὐ instead of cὺ is probably the result of a simple error, the misreading of *sigma* in the papyrus' master copy of the letter as *omicron*.

κατανοήσας β : σκοπήσας A

[... τοῦ τε φρονήμα[τος τὸ μέγα] αἰδούμενος *P. Hamb.* 129 (see R. Merkelbach, below) : τὸ μέγα φρονεῖν αἰδούμενος Arm. : τύχην καὶ νέμεσιν τὸ μέγα φρονεῖν ὑπέ(κ)ετησο(ν) β : τὴν τύχην A

3 δείξειν : δείξαι A : διδόναι β Leo : *coram referam indicemque* Jul. Val. The final part of the letter is not extant in *P. Hamb.* 129.

τῆι Μιτυά[δι : Μιτυάδι A Leo Arm (*Mina* Arm.) : Μυσιάδι τῆ β (Μηδία B).

4 ἐλθούσης : ἀναγνωσθείσης A : γνοῦς β.

Conclusion

Further restoration is precluded by uncertainty concerning the original dimensions of the Getty *Tabula Iliaca* and, consequently, of the length of the lines of *SEG* 33.802, I. Nevertheless, *SEG* 33.802, I is a significant addition to the small body of texts that illuminate the prehistory of the *Alexander Romance*. It has been assumed since the publication of Reinhold Merkelbach's seminal *Die Quellen des griechischen Alexanderromans* (pp. 224-225) that the *Alexander Romance* is essentially the result of the fusion about 300 A.D. by an editor, conventionally referred to as "Ps. Callisthenes", of two principal sources, an *historische Quelle*, most likely an Alexander history in the Cleitarchan tradition, and a Briefroman in which the story of Alexander was recounted through a series of fictional letter exchanges. *SEG* 33.802 I suggests that this reconstruction requires modification for two reasons. First, line 4 makes it clear that already in the first century A.D. at least one of the letters of the Briefroman (Letter XI in Merkelbach's edition) was embedded in a narrative account of Alexander's reign; and second, the close correspondence between line 3 and the A Recension of the *Alexander Romance*⁶ indicates that this account was one of the sources used by "Ps. Callisthenes", presumably, the *historische Quelle*. Taken together, these facts raise the strong possibility that the two sources identified by Merkelbach may not have been, in fact, independent but that the author of the *historische Quelle* had used the Briefroman and, therefore, that the contribution of "Ps. Callisthenes" to the formation of the *Alexander Romance* may have been less than is currently believed.⁷

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⁶ Particularly revealing is their sharing the reading Μιτυάδι.

⁷ Thus, in this particular instance the suppression of Alexander's answering letter to Darius and the creation of a narrative context for Letter XI is to be credited to the author of the *historische Quelle* and not "Ps. Callisthenes" as suggested by Merkelbach, *op. cit.* 129.



SEG 33.802 (J.Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, California)