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P.HAL. INV. 31: ALEXANDER AND THE SPEAKING BIRD  
(CF. PS.-CALL., III, 28)

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W. Luppe has recently published two 'Warte'-Texte from the papyrus collection in Halle<sup>1</sup>. He dated the first of these, *P. Hal. Inv. 31*, very correctly to the first century B.C. The slowly written capital hand shows indeed a remarkable resemblance to the scripts of *P. Oxy. 24. 2399*<sup>2</sup> and of *P. Fouad Inv. 266*<sup>3</sup>, which have both been assigned to that same period. Especially the hand of the *Oxy*-papyrus looks very similar for several letters ( $\alpha$ ,  $\epsilon$ ,  $\eta$ ,  $\tau$ ,  $\upsilon$  and  $\omega$ ). The *Fouad* papyrus, on the other hand, furnishes interesting parallels for the form of  $\theta$ ,  $\mu$  (in four movements) and  $\nu$ .

The text in the Halle papyrus corresponds with a passage of one of the 'miracle letters' included in the Alexander-Romance, viz. Alexander's letter to Olympias (Ps.-Call., III, 27-28)<sup>4</sup>. As is well known, the Alexander Romance, composed in the II<sup>nd</sup>-III<sup>rd</sup> cent. A.D., has been preserved in many recensions<sup>5</sup>. According to the standard theory of R. Merkelbach<sup>6</sup>, its author, con-

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<sup>1</sup> *Zwei literarische 'Warte'-Texte der Hallenser Papyrussammlung*, in *Archiv für Papyrusforschung*, 37 (1991), pp. 7-8 and Abb. 4 and 5. We thank Dr. W. Luppe for his willingness to check our readings against the original and for his kind suggestions and Prof. Dr. David Thomas (Durham) who corrected our English.

<sup>2</sup> Anonymus (Duris?), *History of Sicily* (= Pack<sup>2</sup> 2194). See the reproduction in E.G. Turner - P.J. Parsons, *Greek Manuscripts of the Ancient World*<sup>2</sup>, London, 1987, no. 55.

<sup>3</sup> *Septuagint, Deuteronomy*. Cf. J. Van Haelst, *Catalogue des papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens*, Paris, 1976, no. 56. See the reproduction in E.G. Turner - P.J. Parsons, *o.c.*, no. 56.

<sup>4</sup> The identification was made with the help of the computerized T.L.G. (University of California, Irvine) and of the program Pandora 2.5.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed description of all the recensions and their manuscripts, see L. Bergson, *Der Griechische Alexanderroman, Rezension  $\beta$* , Stockholm-Göteborg-Uppsala, 1965, pp. V-XXV. In the meantime the Byzantine  $\epsilon$ -recension has been edited by J. Trumpp, *Vita Alexandri regis Macedonum*, Stuttgart, 1974. The most complete description of the manuscript tradition is now to be found in R. Merkelbach, *Die Quellen des griechischen Alexanderromans*, Zweite, neubearbeitete Auflage unter Mitwirkung von Jürgen Trumpp, München, 1977, pp. 93-108 and 201-214. For the recensions providing the 'miracle-letters', see also L.L. Gunderson, *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle about India*, Meisenheim am Glan, 1980, pp. 37-47.

In view of the commentary below we mention here the editions which we have used for the relevant recensions. The A-recension, the oldest recension, not earlier than the II<sup>nd</sup> cent. A.D., has been edited by W. Kroll, *Historia Alexandri Magni (Pseudo-Callisthenes)*, vol. I: *Recensio vetusta*, Berlin, 1926, anastatic reprint, 1977. The  $\beta$ -recension, which came into existence between A.D. 300 and 550 and which provides a more detailed version of Alexander's letter to Olympias, has been edited by L. Bergson, *o.c.*, while the sixth-century  $\gamma$ -recension of book III was published by F. Parthe, *Der Griechische Alexanderroman, Rezension  $\Gamma$ . Buch III*, Meisenheim am Glan, 1969. The A- and the  $\beta$ -recensions of Ps. Call. III 27-28 have in a very useful way been printed in a synoptic edition by M. Feldbusch, *Der Brief Alexanders an Aristoteles über die Wunder Indiens. Synoptische Edition*, Meisenheim am Glan, 1976, pp. 124a-147b. He also included the Latin translations by Julius Valerius (early 4th cent. A. D.) and by the archipresbyter Leo (10th cent. A. D.), the anonymous Armenian translation (5th cent. A. D.) and the Syriac translation of the 7th cent. A. D. The Armenian translation has been translated back into Greek by R. Raabe, *Ἰστορία Ἀλεξάνδρου*, Leipzig, 1896 and into English by A. M. Wolohojian, *The Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes*. Translated from the Armenian Version with an Introduction, New York-London, 1969.

<sup>6</sup> *O.c.*, esp. pp. 224-225. The theory was criticized by S.M. Burstein, *SEG 33.802 and the Alexander Romance*, in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*, 77 (1989), pp. 275-276 and plate IV. But see the

ventionally referred to as Pseudo-Callisthenes, used as main sources an Alexander history in the Cleitarchan tradition, a letter-romance<sup>7</sup>, in which the Alexander campaigns were told through letters to and from leading persons, and some 'miracle letters', which belonged to the teratological literature<sup>8</sup>. To the latter group<sup>9</sup> belong Alexander's long letter to Olympias and Aristotle (Ps.-Call., II, 23-41) about his trip through the desert to the sea, his voyage to the land of the blessed, his descent in the depth of the sea and his ascent in the air; further also the letter to Aristotle about his adventures in India (Ps.-Call., III, 17), and finally his letter to Olympias (Ps.-Call., III, 27-28) about similar experiences.

As already mentioned, *P. Hal. Inv.* 31 corresponds with a part of the latter letter, more precisely with the account of Alexander's visit to the palace of Cyrus and Xerxes, where he finds among other marvels a speaking bird.

We provide below a supplemented transcript, for which we had to use several of the recensions which exist for the Alexander Romance<sup>10</sup>.

### Transcript

- 1 ὄρνειον] τὸ μέγεθος ἦ[ν ἡλί-  
 κον περιστερά. τοῦ[το δὲ  
 ἔφασα]ν ἐρμηνεύει[ν τοῖς  
 βασιλ]εῦσιν ἀνθρῶ[πίνηι  
 5 φων]ῆι, ἠνίκα ἄν [τὰς  
 προσπι]πτούσας φ[ωνὰς  
 ἀκούσηι.] εἶναι δ[ὲ  
 ]..[

### Translation

"The bird was of the size of a dove. And they said that it spoke to the kings with a human voice, whenever it heard the voices that reached it, and that is was..."

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reply to this article by R. Merkelbach, *Der Brief des Dareios im Getty-Museum und Alexanders Wortwechsel mit Parmenion*, *ibid.*, pp. 277-280.

<sup>7</sup> R. Merkelbach, *o.c.*, p. 224 has dated this 'letter romance' to about 100 B.C. Some letters collected in the anthologies *P. Hamb.* 2. 129 (Ist cent. B.C.) (= Pack<sup>2</sup> 2115) and *PSI* 12. 1285 (IIInd cent. A.D.) (= Pack<sup>2</sup> 2114) recur in the Alexander Romance.

<sup>8</sup> To this theory some authors have added that there must also have been specific Egyptian sources. Cf. B. Berg, *An Early Source of the Alexander Romance*, in *Greek-Roman-and-Byzantine Studies*, 14 (1973), pp. 381-387 and R. Maruch, *Egyptian Sources and Versions of Pseudo-Callisthenes*, in L. Criscuolo - G. Geraci, *Egitto e storia antica*, Bologna, 1989, pp. 503-511.

<sup>9</sup> The letters have been studied thoroughly by R. Merkelbach, *o.c.*, pp. 55-70 and by L.L. Gunderson, *o.c.*

<sup>10</sup> As L.L. Gunderson, *o.c.*, p. 86 rightly stressed, "this Letter is incredibly distorted in all recensions and translations of the Romance". On p. 89 he even exclaimed: "Would that this Letter to Olympias had survived in a less ruined condition!"

*Commentary*

The whole passage can be restored fairly well on the basis of the different recensions of the Alexander Romance. We have used as a starting-point the text of the A-recension (cf. Kroll, p. 130 and Feldbusch, pp. 140a-142a), which is the oldest one, though at the same time very corrupt:

(7) ἦν δὲ ὁ οἶκος μέγας προμήκης, οὗ αὐτὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς εἴθιστο χρηματίζειν, ἐν ᾧ ἔφασαν ὄρνειον ἀνθρωπίνη φωνῇ ἐρμηνεύειν † ἡνίκα ἄν τὰς πρῶ†.

(8) ἦν γὰρ ἐν μέσῳ τῆς ὀροφῆς ὀρτυγοτροφεῖον χρυσοῦν κρεμώμενον, ἐν ᾧ ἦν ὄρνειον ἡλίκον (περιστερὰ). τοῦτο ἔφασαν ἐρμηνεύειν τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν. ἐν αὐτῷ δὲ ἔφασαν εἶναι χρόνον ἰκανόν.

1 It seems impossible to assume, so shortly before the bird-sequence, a reference to the tall priest described several lines earlier in ms. C of the γ-recension with ἔβλεπον καὶ τὸ μέγεθος (cf. Parthe, p. 417.11), or to the magnitude of the palace of Cyrus and Xerxes (cf. the A-recension: οἶκος μέγας προμήκης). Therefore τὸ μέγεθος is more likely an accusative of respect, which refers to the size of the bird. Cf. the A-recension (ἐν ᾧ ἦν ὄρνειον ἡλίκον (περιστερὰ)), the Armenian version (cf. Feldbusch, p. 142a: ἐν ᾧ ἦν τὸ ὄρνειον τοῦτο ἡλίκον περιστερὰ - see also Wolohojian, p. 146: "and in it was that bird which was about the size of a dove"), and Leo Archipresbyter (cf. Feldbusch, p. 143b: erantque coturnices tam magnae sicut columbae). For τὸ μέγεθος added as an accusative of respect to ἡλίκος, cf. Plut., *Thes.*, 8.2: ἡλίκου τὸ μέγεθος θηρίου κρατήσειεν. After reading a first draft of our article Dr. W. Luppe proposed to complete the first line as follows: ἐν ᾧ ἦν ὄρ-][νεον, ὃ] τὸ μέγεθος ἦ[ν ἡλί-].

2-7 Kroll has added in his A-text, (8) περιστερὰ on the analogy of the β-recension (cf. Bergson, p. 178.8) and of the Latin, Armenian and Syriac translations (cf. Feldbusch, pp. 142a-143b). In (7) Kroll assumed that ἡνίκα ἄν τὰς πρῶ was a corruption of ἡλίκον in (8). He also proposed to delete the whole phrase ἐν ᾧ ... πρῶ, except for ἀνθρωπίνη φωνῇ, which he wanted to transfer from (7) to the next paragraph, as a complement there of ἐρμηνεύειν.

L. 5 of the Halle papyrus, where ἡνίκα ἄ[ν is beyond any doubt, rather suggests the following procedure. It seems likely that the copyist of A at first made an (unjustified) jump from ἐρμηνεύειν in (7) to the same word in (8), where, in his model, ἡνίκα ἄν κτλ. followed. He must have noticed his error and broken off the text of (7), without, however, taking care afterwards to finish properly the temporal clause in (8). That such a temporal clause was indeed part of (8), is suggested very strongly by the Armenian translation, which Raabe has translated back into Greek as follows: τοῦτο δὲ ἔφασαν ἐρμηνεύειν τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν ἀνθρωπίνη φωνῇ, ὅταν τῶν φωνῶν τῶν προσπιπτουσῶν αὐτῷ ἀκούσῃ (cf. Feldbusch, p. 142a). See also the English translation by Wolohojian, p. 146: "They say that it interprets in a human voice to kings when it hears the sounds which pulse through it". It is furthermore supported, we believe, by a variant in ms. K of the β-recension (cf. Bergson, p. 178.7-8) which reads: ἡνίκα τὰς προσπιπτούσας φωνάς instead of διὰ τὰς προσπιπτούσας φωνάς. The Armenian translation also supports the papyrus, ll. 4-5, in the addition of ἀνθρωπίνη φωνῇ as a complement to ἐρμηνεύειν and thus eventually the transposition of these terms in the A-recension from (7) to (8), as it was proposed by Kroll.

5-7 Our tentative restorations have been inspired by the Armenian translation (cf. *supra*). As mentioned, the  $\beta$ -recension has τοῦτο ἔφασαν ἐρμηνεύειν τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν διὰ τὰς προσπιπτούσας φωνάς and it is followed by the  $\gamma$ -recension, which however inserts δέ after τοῦτο (cf. Parthe, p. 418. 16-17).

Since the verb προσπίπτω regularly governs a dative, an alternative restoration for l. 6 might be προσπι]πτούσας α[ύτῳ]. Dr. W. Luppe in fact prefers now to identify the last legible letter as an  $\alpha$  rather than as a  $\phi$ . However, the omission of φωνάς seems improbable, in spite of the preceding φωνῆ. Indeed, none of the recensions omits this word, whereas αὐτῳ does not figure in the  $\beta$ - and  $\gamma$ - recensions.

In l. 7 εἶναι should be interpreted as a second infinitive along with ἐρμηνεύειν and still governed by ἔφασαν (l. 3). It is paralleled in the A-recension (ἐν αὐτῷ δὲ ἔφασαν εἶναι χρόνον ἰκανόν), the  $\beta$ -recension (cf. Bergson, p. 178. 8: καὶ τοῦτο δὲ ἔφασαν ἱερὸν εἶναι) and the Armenian translation (cf. Feldbusch, p. 142a: καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ εἶναι χρόνους πολλούς). In our fragment, however, εἶναι apparently introduces a new dependent clause and was almost inevitably followed by δέ. The traces on the papyrus seem to confirm this: the two last strokes visible on l. 7 may be best interpreted, according to Dr. Luppe, as the diagonals of a somewhat flat *delta*.

An alternative restoration of l. 7 would be: ]ειν ἀκο[ύση, with τὰς ... φωνάς (ll. 5-6) as the subject of the infinitive of a verb meaning 'to speak' or 'to sound', such as λέγειν, φράζειν, φωνεῖν, ἠχεῖν or a compound of one of them. The vertical stroke identified in our transcript as a *iota* might indeed also be the hasta of a *kappa*, and the diagonal which follows does not seem too far removed to have belonged to that same letter. But *omicron* as the last letter before the lacuna is very doubtful, since, as mentioned, the last remaining stroke seems to be a diagonal rather than part of a loop.

The remaining text unfortunately does not allow us to determine whether the story about Alexander's visit to the palace of Cyrus and Xerxes was told in the form of a letter, as it was in the later Alexander Romance. The complete text may have had the form of a narrative or even have belonged to a larger collection of sagas about the great Alexander<sup>11</sup>. *P. Hal. Inv.* 31 in any case provides us with one of the sources of Ps.-Callisthenes, a source which dates back at least to the first century B.C.<sup>12</sup> It is not necessary to assume that this source was adopted integrally and literally by Ps.-Callisthenes, which may account for some slight differences in the wording of the papyrus fragment vis-à-vis the text of all known recensions.

Leuven

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<sup>11</sup> R. Merkelbach, *o.c.*, p. 224 stated about the three 'miracle-letters' in the Alexander Romance: "Diese Briefe sind der literarische Niederschlag lebendiger, alter Sagen von Alexander; sie sind also der merkwürdigste und interessanteste Teil des Buches".

<sup>12</sup> According to R. Merkelbach, *o.c.*, p. 68 the 'miracle letters' reflect oral traditions about Alexander which may have originated already during his life-time.