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A SYNOPTIC DIGITAL EDITION OF THE *ALEXANDERLIED*

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*A mio nonno Gigi.
Per aspera ad astra.*

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1 Introduction

My doctoral project consists of two parts: this dissertation and a scholarly digital edition. In the dissertation, I introduce the context of this work, the scientific motivations that made it necessary, the object of study, the methodology and the potential of this research. In the digital edition, I present data, metadata, and critical commentary that were the result of philological work in combination with the principles of digital scholarly editing.

The topic of my PhD thesis is the *Alexanderlied*, a Middle High German poem belonging to the wider international historiographical, literary and paradoxographical tradition on Alexander the Great. The *Alexanderlied* is handed down in three different *Fassungen*, ‘versions’, referred to as V, S and B. They share a common nucleus but diverge from one another substantially enough that they can be considered independent rewritings of an allegedly lost original, which is thought to date back to around 1150 (Schröder 1985, Cipolla 2016, 126) and, in the prologue shared by V and S, is attributed to the authorship of *pfaffe*, ‘priest’, Lambrecht. This attribution, either by accident or deliberately, was removed in the early-modern version of B.

The scarce century-old tradition of the *Alexanderlied* shows peculiar issues, since each of the three recensions, which were interpreted as historical works and thus handed down in the manuscripts alongside universal histories, re-writes the lost original according to different agendas, as the medieval copyist is, consciously or subconsciously, “never passive” (Luiselli Fadda 2009, 19). The three recensions vary in the vocabulary and, therefore, they show the lexical development of Middle High German, not only in specific semantic fields and related *realia*,¹ as those of war, strength and intellectual faculties, but also in the idioms and formulas that each version prefers. Just to mention one example, the different lexical choices of the three versions in the characterization of the protagonist individually calibrate the complex of moral values included in the hendiadys of royal *sapientia et fortitudo*, ‘wisdom and fortitude’.

Such a tradition, in which the variability of the versions handed down in the manuscript witnesses does not allow for the reconstruction of a unified text according to the hypothesis of the archetype in genetic-Lachmannian textual criticism, causes peculiar problems to the editor. According to twentieth-century Italian philologist Gianfranco Contini (1986), when a text is transmitted in several redactions, individual editions should be made for each of them, in order to highlight the mobility and plurality of the text. Although each version can have value in itself

¹ *Realia* can be defined as culture-bound terms, concepts and material elements.

as a witness to a specific historical circumstance, the synoptic presentation of the single editions is an effective strategy to observe the relationship between the individual versions and attempt to gain an understanding of the various instances of the transmission process.

From the last quarter of the twentieth century, in the circles of Medieval German studies, the cornerstones of genealogical text criticism were intensively rediscussed in the light of the peculiarities of the Medieval German tradition. When the New Philology theories, stemming from Cerquiglini's *Éloge de la variante*, 'In Praise of the Variant', began to gain popularity in the last decade of the century, the German academic world was at the forefront of the application of its new approaches, less reconstructive and more attentive to the variability of manuscript documents (Schnell 1997).

In the corpus of Middle High German literature, many narrative poems – even those attributed to renowned courtly authors, such as the romances of Hartmann von Aue and Wolfram von Eschenbach – are transmitted in multiple parallel versions. In 1971, the synoptic edition of the three major recensions of the *Nibelungenlied* edited by Michael Batts represented a pioneering test of the new critical orientation, while at the same time showing the limitations that the medium used, the paper book, posed to the realization of an easily usable synoptic edition (Batts 1971). As a matter of fact, in the analog paradigm of the printed page, synoptic editions are often difficult to read and manage, whereas the hypertextual world has the potential to fix these flaws through a multitude of visualization strategies.

Synoptic editions of poetic-narrative texts from the Middle High German period do exist, but they are mostly dealing with authorial works with a relatively higher stability and uniformity than the redactions of the *Alexanderlied*, for which the comparison by metrical units, verses or couplets, proved unfeasible. The three witnesses, in fact, differ substantially also in terms of style. V presents a still irregular use of rhyming couplets, which sometimes turn into assonances, and isolated lines, or even three rhyming lines alternating with couplets; S, on the other hand, normalizes the rhymes, introducing regular couplets, which results in longer utterances; B, with the evident intention of shortening the model, often reintroduces single lines instead of pairs and juxtaposes prosaic wording. Moreover, the span of the texts appears to be subject to continuous redefinition, with the addition or deletion of groups of lines or even long narrative sections, as is the case with the beheading of Darius at the hands of Alexander, which is peculiar to V's conclusion, the encounter with the *Blumenmädchen*, which only in S complements the *Epistola ad Aristotelem de miraculis Indiae*, or the illegitimacy of Alexander as son of Nectanebus, which characterizes the version of B exclusively: these additions are of

extreme relevance to the variability of the sources used in the three versions, since each of them selects freely from the textual corpus of the Middle Latin and vernacular derivatives of the Greek *Romance of Alexander*, according to their specific intents.

The research objective of this thesis is, therefore, to test an encoding model and propose a suitable visualization system to represent the qualitative, i.e., stylistic revision process of the three versions, and the quantitative variability, i.e. the integration of additional sections into the common textual core, in the *Alexanderlied* tradition. Special attention is placed on the highlighting of correspondence, that is, on cases in which a coincidence in language, content and theme among the three texts can be identified.

The field of medieval studies, despite being long-established, is constantly facing new challenges, which can bear much fruit and room for a variety of innovative research strands:

Textual witnesses have been subject to various processes of decay and destruction (e.g., library fires). Texts may survive in intact codices, but many of those works that survive at all now only exist in manuscripts that are fragmentary, lacking leaves or bearing damage from tearing, insects, overuse, etc. Because of parchment's durability, books were often recycled for more everyday practical uses such as small boxes or used as tailors' measures or even packing material for meat. Additionally, strips of parchment were frequently used by binders to strengthen book spines. (Kestemont *et al.* 2022, 766)

As a consequence, it seems valuable and captivating to embark on projects that try to tackle these challenges, preserve and provide new information on our cultural heritage while testing different methodologies and new technologies. Moreover, due to the high textual mobility of the three versions of the *Alexanderlied*, the considerable number of sources, and the Daedalian relationships between them, a comparative study of the three German renditions by means of a synoptic edition can indeed facilitate the understanding of the Alexandrian lore in the German Middle Ages. Such an approach becomes even more needed in the case of medieval German texts, which are, as pointed out by Trovato (2017, 21), most of the time either difficult or impossible to attribute to an author with absolute certainty and are prevalently handed down in a *codex unicus*, i.e., in a single copy.

Kinzel's (1884) synoptic edition of V and S has been digitized and made available online by the Internet Archive, more specifically on the WayBack Machine, a tool that gathers and

provides access to archived websites and their versions in chronological order.² Notwithstanding the usefulness of the resource, which allows the preservation of a 140-year-old edition, highlights the editor's interventions, signals the colored initials for the division into *laissez*, and offers the possibility to click on the *laisse* number and be directed to the beginning of the corresponding text portion, the digital synoptic edition prepared for this doctoral project has different and additional purposes. Apart from including the B recension, the digital component of my project has two main points of interest: defining an encoding model for the synoptic digital edition of the *Alexanderlied* and testing a suitable visualization system alongside its potential functionalities. As will be remarked further on in this thesis, the annotation and presentation of the texts mirror the choices and interpretation made by the researcher and/or the research group in the context of a specific project, thereby generating a new product with an individual rationale.

The advent of the digital age has had, and continues to have, a big impact on the field of philology (Pierazzo and Rosselli Del Turco 2023, 114) since the first scholarly digital editions, dating back to the 1990s. In the words of Patrick Sahle, “a scholarly edition is the critical representation of historic documents” (Sahle 2016, 23).³ Representing a document critically, according to Sahle's internationally acclaimed formula, means proposing a reproduction, a rendition of the item while also adding information that makes it more understandable and following logical, rigorous, contextualized, motivated and theory-based criteria. When editions “make use of the possibilities of digital technology and media” (Sahle 2016, 38), live in the electronic dimension, are machine-readable and contain information and functionalities that would be lost in a print edition, then they are digital and scholarly. Moreover, the way they are interacted with assumes a different nature, as “digital philology has the capacity to record, structure and present textual data and information in ways that empower the reader or rather user to critically engage with the material, impossible to achieve in print” (Fischer 2019, 216). The *de facto* standard that most digital philologists adopt to make their texts machine-readable is the markup language XML.⁴ In addition, it is also customary to use XML following the

² Web archive page for Kinzel's 1884 *Alexanderlied*:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20071221211203/http://dohc.unipv.it:80/scrineum/wight/index.htm>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

³ The original German definition that he proposes is „Edition ist die erschließende Wiedergabe historischer Dokumente“. For a detailed explanation and discussion of this definition, see Sahle 2016, 23 and the following pages.

⁴ The eXtensible Markup Language is a text-encoding system used to describe, store and share data across the internet. An XML tutorial is available here: <https://www.w3schools.com/xml/default.asp>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

guidelines⁵ of the Text Encoding Initiative – TEI –, a consortium of scholars who formulate recommendations for the representation of texts in electronic format (Pierazzo and Rosselli Del Turco 2023, 115, 120).

An open and pivotal problem in the field of digital philology is how to make visualization tools adequately efficient for the understanding of the text, since the main objective of philologists, which must never be overshadowed by the methodologies and technologies used for editing, is to respect the primary object of study, i.e., the text, while offering a publicly available and usable product, thereby reactivating its social function as it engages the community – scholars, in this specific case –, in a new interaction with the text and in reinterpretation processes. Moreover, the importance of reusability⁶ should not be overlooked, as the philological community, in order to acquire new knowledge and advance the discipline, must be able to determine how and in which context the digital edition and all the related data were generated. If comprehensive information is not provided in the project documentation, it becomes difficult to reflect on the hypothesis therein contained and be prompted to observe the data from another perspective, which means that they cannot be reused for other different experiments, thereby creating an impasse in the field of study.

As a first step, I pondered the encoding model best suited to represent the variability of the *Alexanderlied*'s tradition, which could not be based on metrical units. Consequently, I tested a breakdown of the three redactions into textual units and then looked into a system for visualizing the relationships among them while also displaying the texts parallelly. As a result, the annotation model was used as the basis for the development of a web application, as a prototype for the visualization and a basic query of the encoded data. The web application was generated thanks to the transformation of the XML data into HTML⁷ through XSLT,⁸ performed with the Saxon processor.⁹

⁵ For more information and access to the guidelines, see the official website of the TEI: <https://tei-c.org/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁶ Website of the GO FAIR initiative: <https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/r1-metadata-richly-described-plurality-accurate-relevant-attributes/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁷ The Hyper Text Markup Language is a language used to structure web pages. An HTML tutorial is available here: https://www.w3schools.com/html/html_intro.asp. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁸ The eXtensible Stylesheet Language for Transformation consists of a set of styling rules to transform XML documents into other formats. An XSLT tutorial is available here: https://www.w3schools.com/xml/xsl_intro.asp. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁹ Saxon is a package of tools for processing XML documents: <https://www.saxonica.com/html/documentation9.6/about/index.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

This experiment was taken as an opportunity to reflect on how to take advantage of available standards, drawing inspiration from existing projects, and on the aspects that leave room for improvement in the spirit of the FAIR principles (Wilkinson 2016).

The hope that I have for this work is to provide new knowledge and a new product for the disciplines Germanic Philology and Digital Humanities. The comparative research and study tool which stemmed from the use of the *Alexanderlied* as a case study was in fact designed with the ambition to let it be reused for the treatment of similar epic traditions in Middle High German, which, originating in the pre-courtly period, were handed down and varied, under different historical and cultural circumstances, up until the threshold of the early-modern period.

This dissertation is divided as follows:

- In section 2 I discuss theory and practice in textual criticism and digital scholarly editing, with a focus on synoptic editions and the advantages of the digital paradigm for their preparation.
- Section 3 is dedicated to the *Alexanderlied*, and I argue that the problems arising from the study of its handwritten tradition can be a challenging case study for digital philology, thus explaining the rationale behind the scholarly digital edition project and its synoptic representation.
- In section 4 I present my synoptic SDE and describe my workflow, from the choice of the texts to the final steps of publication and archiving.
- In the conclusions in section 5 I reflect on the achievements and further developments of this project.

A link to a prototype of the web application which displays the digital edition will be provided in section 4.4.2.

2 Synoptic editions

2.1 What is a synoptic edition?

2.1.1 *In the beginning was the text(s)*

Medieval handwritten textual traditions are a problematic object of study:

Historical studies of human culture are hindered by the fact that they must work with incomplete samples of material artifacts (books, paintings, statues, etc.) that still survive but do not necessarily represent the original population faithfully. Because of this survivorship bias, we risk underestimating the diversity of the cultural production of past societies. (Kestemont *et al.* 2022, 765)

Philologists analyze extant texts, alongside the history of their transmission and variation, and make hypotheses about their original characteristics which are often based on scarce or obscure data (Digilio 2016, 215). As a matter of fact, German vernacular texts, at least until the end of the twelfth century, often lack an archetype and reached us in a *codex unicus* or in multiple recensions.

Apart from the text which constitutes the object of this work, it is necessary to mention a few other renowned poems. One patent example that was already mentioned in the Introduction is the *Nibelungenlied*. Handed down in thirty-seven copies¹⁰ both in codex and fragment form, the anonymous *Heldenepos*, ‘heroic epic’, was written around the beginning of the thirteenth century, allegedly in the region of Passau, although the legend, stemming from the ancient oral tradition, dates back to the time of the *Völkerwanderung*, ‘Migration Period’, and has its historical roots in the conflict between the Burgundians and the Huns in the fifth century. The most notorious codices are three, namely A, B and C,¹¹ to which three different recensions, conventionally called *A, *B and *C, are associated. A stemmatic approach for the reconstruction of the transmission, just as for the *Alexanderlied*, has been deemed not fitting in light of the nature of the tradition, which should be best considered as composed by different versions existing in the oral dimension and later written down in various stages (Bertagnolli 2020, 30). The three recensions, not unlike V, S and B, present significant discrepancies in

¹⁰ The manuscript transmission of the *Nibelungenlied*: <https://www.handschriftencensus.de/werke/271>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹¹ A: München, Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 34; B: St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 857; C: Karlsruhe, Landsbibliothek, Cod. Donaueschingen 63.

theme, intent and structure. For example, *A and *B represent the so-called *nôt-Fassung* because of the closing remark in the very last line, in which the attention is focused on the demise of the protagonists (*daz ist der Nibelunge nôt*, Bartsch 1988, 371, line 2382).¹² On the contrary, C, also called the *liet-Fassung* again because of its last line, which substitutes *nôt* with *liet*, mitigates the most tragic aspects of the story, on which it sheds a Christian light, and the judgement on the vengeful Kriemhild, while also handing down around sixty additional stanzas.

Batts's (1971) synoptic edition of the three recensions lays out B on the right side of the page because, being the best-known version, the editor decided to adopt its readings. A and C are, therefore, printed on the left page. Batts (1971, VII) states that he has inserted the text of A after C for typographical reasons, but does not offer further explanation, which can create confusion in the readers who are not familiar with the tradition. On the right side of B the reader can find

2 C 1-6, Bl. 17	A 1-6, S. 1a
Auenture von den Nibelungen.	
<p>1 UNS IST¹ in alten mæren wunders vil geseit von heleden lobebæren, von grozer arebeit, von freude vñ hochgeciten, von weinen vñ klagen, von kvner rechen striten mvget ir nv wnder horen sagen.</p> <p>2 Ez wûs in Bvregonden² ein vil edel magedin, daz in allen landen niht schoners mohte sin, Chriemhilt geheizen. div wart ein schone wip; darumbe mvsin degene vil verliesen den lip.</p> <p>3 Ir pflagen dri kunige edel uñ rich, Gunther uñ Gernot, die rechen lobelich, vñ Giselher der iunge, ein wetlicher degene. div frowe was ir swester; die helde hetens in ir pflagen.</p> <p>5 Die herren waren milte, von arde hoh erborn, mit kraft vñ mazen chvne, die rechen vzerchorn. da zen Bvrgonden so was ir lant genant; si frvmten starchiv wnder sit in Etzelen lant.</p> <p>6 Ze Wormze bi dem Rine si wonten mit ir chraft. in diende von ir landen vil stolziv ritterschaft mit lobelichen eren vnz an ir endes zit. si sturben izemerliche sit von zweier frowen nit.</p>	<p>1 Uns¹ ist in alten mæren wunders vil geseit, von heleden lobebærn, von grozzer chvneheit, von fröden hochgeziten, von weinen vñ von klagen, von chvner rechen strite mvget ir nv wunder hören sagen.</p> <p>2 Ez wûhs in Burgonden ein schône magedin, daz in allen landen niht schönens mohte sin. Chriemhilt was si geheizen vnde was ein schône wip; darumbe mvsen degene vil verliesen den lip.</p> <p>3 Der minnechlichen meide trvten wol gezam in mvte kvner rechen. niemen was ir gram. ane mazen schône so was ir edel lip. der ivnchfröwen tugende zierten anderiv wip.</p> <p>4 Ir pflagen dri kvnige edel vnde rich, Gvnthere vnde Gernot, die rechen lobelich, vnde Giselher der ivnge, ein vñz erwelter degene. div fröwe was ir swester; die fvrsten hetens in ir pflagen.</p> <p>5 Die herren warn milte, von arte hoh geborn, mit krefte vnmazzen kvne, die rechen vñz erkorn. da zen Burgonden so was ir lant genant; si frvmden starkiv wnder sit in Ezelen lant.</p> <p>6 Ze Wormitz bi dem Rine si wonden mit ir kraft. in diende von ir landen vil stolziv ritterschaft mit stolzlichen eren vnz an ir endes zit. si stvrben si iamerliche von zweier edelen fröwen nit.</p>
<p>¹ Zwölf Zeilen große Initiale und NS.15T. zwei Zeilen hoch. Stempel am rechten Rande: Ioseph von Laszberg Ritter.</p>	
<p>² Das erste u oben nachgetragen.</p>	
<p>³ Fünfzeilige Initiale.</p>	

Figure 1: Extract from Batts (1971), the synopsis

¹² 'That is the plight of the Nibelungs'. All translations, unless otherwise specified, are mine.

the critical apparatus with variants coming also from other minor witnesses. The stanzas are aligned. When one or more are missing, the editor left a corresponding blank space.

B 1-4, S. 297a	Lesarten	3
<i>Aventiure fehlt abb. Überschrift fehlt I. Daz ist das Bûch Chreimhilden D, /tivre von den Niblungen S, [die auenteur des pueches vonn denn rekchenn vnd vonn Kreymhilden a], Ditz Puech heysset Chrimhilt d.</i>		
C 1 D [S] d		
1 Es d. wunder D. 2 lobüwern d. 3 vreuden vnd D, freuden d. vnd von d. 4 stritten D. nv fehlt D, hie d.		
<p>1 (2)</p> <p>E¹ n Bvrgonden ein vil edel magedin, daz in allen landen niht schoners mohte sin, Chriemhilt geheizen. si wart .in scöne wip; dar vmb mÿsen degene vil verliesen den lip.</p>	<p>1 D I d</p> <p>1 Ez wûchs in Bvrigvnden. DId. vil fehlt DI. 2 daz] so I. schöner d. gesin d. 3 was si gehæizzen D. si] die D. was I. ein DId. 4 mv- sten Dd. vil fehlt d. davon sit vil helde verliesen mÿsen den lip I.</p>	
A 3 D I d		
2 ir mÿtten chvne D, ir gerten kÿne I, von milten kuenen d. 3 vumazli- chen schone I. so fehlt I. edel] schoner D. 4 tugende] schone D. die zierten Dd.		
2 D I d		
3 vÿ fehlt Dd. 4 hetten ir geplegē d. .si hiezzen ir wol pflegen I.		
3 I [S] d, nach 3 D		
1 arde] adel I. geborn DId. 2 vermessen d. 3 zv den DS, ze d. daz den Nibelvngen I. so fehlt Id. 4 Etzeleines D, Etzel d.		
4 Dd		
2 dienten d. lande DI. vil fehlt I. stolzier d. 3 hie I. 4 stvrben Dd. sint nach jæmerlichen D. sit starben si I. edelen fehlt D.		
<p>2 (4)</p> <p>Ir pflagen dric kvnege edel vÿ rich, Gÿnther vnde Gernot, di rechen lobelich, vÿ Giselher der ivnge ein v̄z erwelter degn. div fröwe was ir swester; di fÿrsten hetens in ir pflægn.</p>		
<p>3 (5)</p> <p>Di herren waren milte, von arde hohe erborn, mit chraft vnmâzen chÿne, di rechen v̄z erchorn. da zen Bvrgonden so was ir lant genant; si frvmten starchiv wnder sit in Ezelen lant.</p>		
<p>4 (6)</p> <p>Ze Wormeze bi dem Rine si wonten mit ir chraft. in diente von ir landen vil stolziv ritterschaft mit lobelichen eren vnz an ir endes zit. si erstvrben sit jæmerliche von zweier edelen frowen nit.</p>		
¹ Zehnzeitige Initiale. ² enchvnd'.		
Die erste Strophe in BbeB stammt aus C. 1,1 Ez wuoch in BbeB. 1,3 ein BbeB. Die dritte Strophe in BbeB stammt aus C. 4,4 starben jæmerliche sint B.		

Figure 2: Extract from Batts (1971), the critical apparatus

At the end of the book the reader can find a table of variants for proper names, which is practical in such cases where variation involves a single word, since it vehicles the comparison in a lighter way compared to the structure of the apparatus, especially for non-philologists. Even though the text is not visually hard to follow, the book consists of more than 800 pages of information, which makes learning impractical: the readers, particularly the less experienced ones, have to comb through the material to retrieve what they need without the possibility to

interact with the object as they would, for example, with a website offering structured information and simplified navigation.

An example of a more manageable print synoptic edition is Buzzoni's (2001) synopsis of the thirteen poetic sections of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Probably composed starting from the end of the ninth century during the cultural revival of king Alfred the Great, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is an Old English collection of annals concerning the history of the Anglo-Saxons. The annals that are not written in prose are added to the compilation around the half of tenth century. Buzzoni parallelly lays out three recensions, A, B/C and D, and places the apparatus at the bottom of the page. After the synopsis, an Italian translation is offered, enriched by critical notes on variants. Before their synopsis, each section is preceded by an introduction discussing paleographical features and the historical background.

CAPITOLO IV				«La Battaglia di Brunanburh»	
LA BATTAGLIA DI BRUNANBURH (937: mss. A [938], B, C, D)					
Redazione A	Redazione B/C (basata sul ms. C)	Redazione D			
AN dccccxxxvii	<A>N. dccccxxxvii.	N̄. dccccxxxvii.			
f. 26r18	ƿer Aƿelstan cýning. corla drihten, beorna beahgifa. 7 his broðor eac. Eadmund aþeling. ealdorlangne tír geslogon æt sæcce sworda ecgum ymbe Bru'n nanburh. Beadweall clufan, heowan heaholinda hamora lafum aforan Eadweardes swa hi gearpele was fró cneomagú. ƿ hi æt campe oft wiþ laþra gehwæne land ealgodon, hord 7 hamas. Hettend crungun. Scotta leoda 7 scyppotan fæge feollan. feld dænne lide f. 26v	ƿer Aƿelstan cing. corla drihten. beorna beahgyfa. 7 his broðor eac. Eadmund aþeling. ealdorlangne tír geslogon æt sæcce sworda ecgum ymbe Brunanburh. Beadweall clufan, heowon heaholinda hamora lafum aforan Eadweardes swa hi gearpele was fram cneomagum. ƿ hi æt campe oft wið laþra gehwæne land ealgodon, hord 7 hamas. Hettend crungun. Scotta leode 7 scyppotan fæge feollan. feld dænne lide sega swate. siððan sunne upp on morgentid. mare tungol. glad ofer grundas. godes candel beorht. eces drihtnes oð seo aþele gesceaft sah to setle. ƿer læg secg monig garum ageted. guman norþerne ofer scyld scoten. swylce Scyttisc eac. werig wiges sæd. 7 Wessex forð andlangne dag eorodcistum on last legdon laþum þeodum. heowon hereflyman hindan þearle mecum mylensecarpum. Myrce ne wyrdon heardes handplegan. healeþa nanum þara ðe mid Anlafe ofer gargebland on lides bosme land gesohton. fæge to gefeohite. Fife lagon on þam campstede cýngas giunge swordu aswefede. swilce seofene eac	1 f. 141r 5 10 15 20 25 30	ƿer Aƿelstan cýning. corla drihten. beorna beahgifa. 7 his broðor eac. Eadmund aþeling. ealdorlangne tyr geslogon æt sæcce sworda ecgum ymbe Brunanburh. Headweal clufan. heowan heaholind'a hamera lafum e'a foran Eadweardes swa him gearpele was fram cneomagum. ƿæi hi æt campe oft wið laþra gehwæne land ealgodon, hord 7 hamas. Hettend crungun. Scotta leode 7 scyppotan fæge feollan. feld dænnode sega swate. siþþan sunne up on morgen tid. mare tungol. glad ofer grundas. godes candel beorht. eces drihtnes oð se aþele gesceaft sah to setle. ƿer læg secg monig garum ageted. guman norþerne ofer scyld scoten. swylce Scyttisc eac. werig wiges sæd. Wessex forð 7 langne dag eorodcistum on last legdon laþum þeodum. heowon heora flyman hindan þearle mecum mylensecarpum. Myrce ne wyrdon heardes handplegan healeþa nanum þara ðe mid Anlafe ofer gargebland on lides bosme land gesohton. fæge to feohite. Fife lagon on þam campstede cýngas iunga swordu aswefede. swylce seofene eac	1 f. 49r3 5 10 15 20 25 30

Figure 3: Extract from Buzzoni (2001), synopsis

What is it, then, that leads to investing in a synoptic edition? Before answering this question, it is necessary to discuss the theoretical foundations of textual criticism embraced in this work. Italian philologists of the first decades of the twentieth century espoused a “third way of editing” (Buzzoni and Burgio 2014) which combined some principles of Lachmann's (Maas 1960) reconstructive and Bédier's (1928) documentary approach in the preparation of a critical edition. This middle way consists in integrating the identification of the reading to choose for

the edition's text and, on the other hand, the study of the historical, dynamic dimension of the textual transmission, with the variants that stem from this process. Consequently, the idea of a univocal, absolute text is rejected, as each witness is viewed, in the definition by Segre (1974), as a diasystem:

Segre considers each witness (or group of witnesses) as a 'diasystem', a structure that is constantly traversed by the tension between the respect for the antigraph (inherent in every copying act) and the innovative thrust of the copyist; the philologist's task is therefore to reflect this tension, respecting its results when they produce amended readings which are 'correct' albeit not 'original' ('original' according to the measure of the *stemma codicum*). (Buzzoni and Burgio 2014, 173)

This is where both the synoptic editions and the digital medium effectively come into play, as they are instruments which offer the opportunity to lay out and disclose the primary, documentary sources and their individual characteristics.

In the next section I will focus on practical aspects and examples which actualize these concepts.

2.1.2 *Perks and issues of synoptic editions*

Making a critical edition that represents multi-layered objects and contains related information systems requires the scholar to have a vast knowledge of many different subjects and to string together a complex network of information. In this respect, synoptic editions, as editions that present the texts of two or more witnesses close to one another, generally side-by-side, are a complex but interesting case study because their purpose is to facilitate the comparison of readings and the individuation of relationships inside the tradition.

The alternative to editing a single manuscript, even if it is by all accounts the best manuscript, is to edit the text of several manuscripts and arrange the edition so that they can be read on the same page or spread of pages. This is the synoptic edition, which had its forerunners in Bible editions [...]. Since the first synoptic edition of the Gospels was published in 1774 by Johann Jakob Griesbach (1745-1812), it has been a favored type of edition in New Testament philology. [...] A true synoptic edition is limited to the page or the page spread, and it is also best for manuscripts in which the texts are fairly parallel. Missing pieces of texts or

transpositions (text in different order) are difficult to handle within the confines of the printed page. (Haugen 2014, 236-237).¹³

As a matter of fact, the word synopsis, ‘comprehensive view’, already indicate in its etymology that the core concepts constituting its meaning are observation, juxtaposition and comparison. However, despite being a precious instrument, synoptic editions are quite rare because they pose numerous challenges.

A problematic aspect is text alignment both in print and in digital editions, as already illustrated by Haugen’s words reported above. Traditions in which variation is rich not only in the lexicon but also at a structural and stylistic level, such as the *Alexanderlied*, are not easy to arrange in a layout that facilitates the comparison because of the unfeasibility of line-by-line alignment. Even with software able to perform automatic collation, visual representation and understanding of the significance of correspondence and differences remain crucial to the discovery of relevant patterns. This is also related to another issue, namely respect for the source material, in which synoptic editions can indeed suffer from some shortcomings. For example, Sievers’s 1878 synoptic edition of two witnesses of the *Heliand*,¹⁴ the so-called M¹⁵ and C¹⁶ manuscripts, “to remove the disparallelism between M and C” in terms of *mise en page*, ‘layout’, does not “print the epic according to manuscript arrangement” (Price 2010, 55), but reformats the texts into poetic lines, side-by-side on facing pages. If the parallel page format provides “an easy means of comparing the various manuscript versions” (Price 2010, 56), the peculiarities of each manuscript are lost. Even though information on manuscript characteristics is made available in the notes, as can be seen in note 85 at page 11 of the edition (Figure 4), there is no possibility for the readers to directly verify the data in the facsimile because the images are not included next to the corresponding portion of text. Moreover, it has been observed by several scholars that the digital medium has increased the readability and usability of the apparatus, which acquires a new dynamic dimension and thus allows the reader to be more active and engage with the material (Fischer 2019, 211, 216).

¹³ I use [...] throughout the dissertation to omit some part of the citations.

¹⁴ The *Heliand* is an Old Saxon biblical epic poem. The facsimile edition of Sievers’s work is available here: <http://www.wulfila.be/lib/sievers/1878/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹⁵ München, Staatsbibliothek, cod. Cgm 25.

¹⁶ London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A VII.

10 COTTON. 76—105.

Zacharias uwas hie hetan. That uwas so salig man,
 huand hie simblon gerno gode theonoda,
 uwaraha æfter is uulleon; deda is unib so selu
 — uwas iru gialdrod idis: ni (7*) muosta im erbiuuard
 80 an iro iuguthedi gibithig uuerthan — 5
 libdun im faruter laster, uuaruhtun lof goda,
 uuarun so gihoriga hebanuninge,
 diuridon usan drohtin: ni uueldun derbeas uuith
 under mancunnie menes gifrummean,
 85 ne saca ne sundea. Uwas im thoh an sorogun hugi,
 that sea erbiuuard egan ni muostun,
 ac uuarun im barno los. Than scolda hie gibod godes
 thar an Hierusalem, so oft so is gigengi gistuod,
 that ina torhtlico tidi gimanodun,
 90 so scolda hie at them uuihe uualdandes gold
 helag bihuereban, hebanuninges,
 godes iungerscepi: gern uwas hie suitho
 that hie it thuru ferhtan hugi fremmean muosti.

II.

Thuo uuarth thiū tid cuman the thar gitald habdun
 95 uuisa man mid uuordun, that scolda thena uuih godes
 Zacharias bisehan. Thuo uuarth thar gisannod filo
 thar ti Hierusalem Iudeo liudo,
 uuerodes (7^b) te them uuihe, thar sea uualdand god
 suite thiulico thiggean scoldun,
 100 herron is huldi, that sea hebanuning
 lethas aletti. Thea liudi stoudu
 umbi that helaga hus, endi gieng im thie gierodo* man
 an thena uuih innan. That uuerod oder bed
 umbi thena alah utan Hebreo liudi,
 105 huan er thie frodo man gifrumid habdi

78 æfter 81 uuaruhtun *aus a corr.* 82 gibod^{ga} 86 m^oostun
 93 frē | mean m^oosti 99 thiulico *aus u corr.* 100 he: | ron, r *aus-*
radiert

76—79. L. 1, 6. Erant autem iusti ambo ante deum, incedentes
 in omnibus mandatis et iustificationibus dei sine querela. 79—87. L. 1, 7.
 Et non erat illis filius, eo quod esset Elisabeth sterilis, et ambo pro-
 cessissent in diebus suis. 87—96. L. 1, 8. Factum est autem cum

MONAC. 85—105 (2—3). 11

85 ne saca ne sundea. Uwas im thoh an sorogun hugi,
 that sie erbiuuard egan ni mostun,
 ac uuarun im barno los. Than scolda he gibod godes 3,10
 thar an Hierusalem, so oft so is gigengi gistod,
 that ina torhtlico tidi gimanodun,
 90 so scolda he at them uuiha uua'dandes geld
 helag bihuernan, heuancuninges,
 godes iungarskepi: gern uwas he suido
 that he it thurh ferhtan hugi frummean mosti.

II.

Tho uuard thiū tid cuman that thar gitald habdun
 95 uuisa man mid uuordun, that scolda thana uuih godes 15
 Zacharias bisehan. Tho uuard thar gisannod filu
 thar te Hierusalem Iudeo liudio,
 uuerodes te them uuiha, thar sie uualdand god
 sunido theolico thiggean scoldun,
 100 herron is huldi, that sie heuancuning
 ledes aletti. Thea liudi stodun
 umbi that helaga hus, endi geng im the gierodo man
 an thana uuih innan. That uuerod othar bed 20
 umbi thana alah' utan Ebreo liudi,
 105 huuan er the frodo man gifrumid habdi

85 Von bl. 2* sind in M die ersten sieben zeilen ganz anradiert, von
 der achten zeile noch zum teil die worte saca ne und Uwas im 91 heuan-
 mit raser aus b corr.

sacerdotio fungeretur in ordine vicis suae ante deum. L. 1, 9. secundum
 consuetudinem sacerdotii, sorte exiit ut inensum poneret ingressus in
 templum domini. 101—6. L. 1, 10. Et omnis multitudo erat populi
 orans foris hora incensi.

Figure 4: Extract from Sievers' 1878

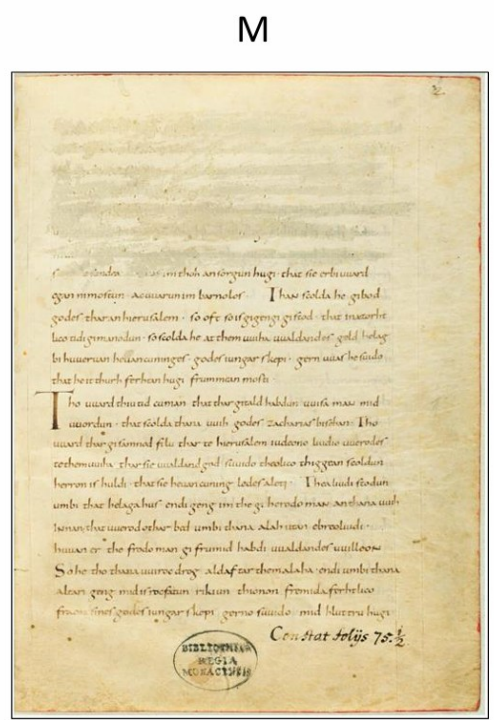
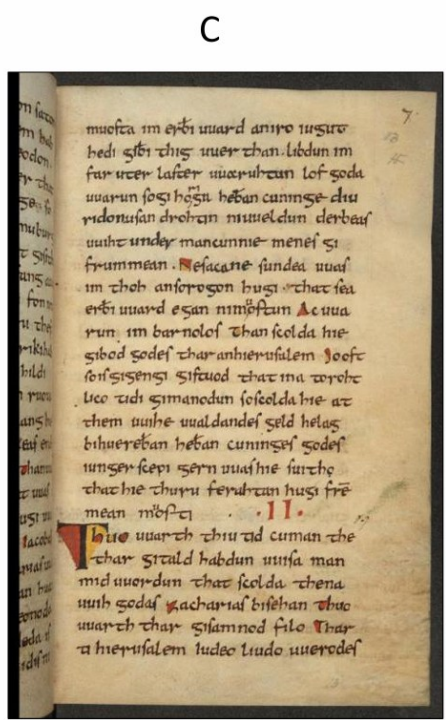


Figure 5: C: London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A VII; M: München, Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 25

It follows that synoptic editions are complex scholarly products in which the quantity and the intricate net of information is mostly directed at a small group of specialists. This leads to the risk of limited distribution of the resource, which, as a consequence, does not favor investment in this type of editions and obstacles collaboration and advancement in the field. Moreover, synoptic editions are expensive. This problem is neither new nor exclusive to synoptic editions, as already observed by Robinson: “we believe that if we can reduce the cost of making digital editions so much that in most cases scholars can fund the work through the resources usually available in universities, then far more digital editions will be made” (Robinson 2013, 101). Complicated projects require time and people from different fields of expertise to closely work together, understand one another and coordinate, such as philologists, data annotators and web developers. Human and technological resources are pricey, especially if they need to be employed for long periods of time. Therefore, institutions with limited funds end up not launching these projects or terminating them at an early, basic stage.

Hence, synoptic editions are ambitious projects which must balance different requirements: complex textual relationships need to be portrayed in an accessible way that allows the target audience to understand and use them, while also serving the purpose of their creators and mirroring the theory and the object at the basis of the project, in an adequate space, with suitable and feasible visual communication.

Another obstacle, related to the previous point, is the lack of specific, shared standards for the synoptic representation of variants. The century-long convention of the critical apparatus in print editions “is an essential part of any scholarly edition, philology’s most notorious feature, a manifestation of textual criticism itself” (Fischer 2019, 204). For the recording of variants in digital editions the guidelines of the TEI contain an entire module¹⁷ dedicated to the critical apparatus, which is designed after the traditional printed one.

Nevertheless, the technological progress of the digital age cannot help but provoke reflection on possible alternative formats to present information. The limitations of the critical apparatus appear mostly evident on the printed page, where the available space can only host a finite number of variants. It appears to be even more restrictive when working with textual traditions such as the *Alexanderlied*, where horizontal contamination is pervasive and variation happens not just at word, phrase, and sentence level but affects longer chunks of text. In addition, related clarifications and auxiliary knowledge are distributed in other sections of the book, such as the introduction and the comment, which makes fruition impractical. On the contrary, the web and

¹⁷ TEI module 13: [13 Critical Apparatus - The TEI Guidelines](#). Last access: 22.04.2025.

the world of hypertext guarantee a boundless, universal data linking system and the power of computers provides a wide range of methods and techniques to visualize information.

Given the vastity and heterogeneity of our cultural heritage and the differences in interests, expertise and opportunities, it is not unusual for research teams to develop ad hoc solutions, with specific functionalities and visualization strategies that are project-specific and not reusable by others, which hinders the work toward generalized methods and all-purpose tools and results in an absence of a shared methodology for the representation of textual variation. Moreover, group work across institutions is made arduous by the fact that researchers are also engaged in different individual projects and additional tasks such as teaching.

One field of study that has extensively dealt with this issue, so much that researchers have given it its own specific label, i.e., *The Synoptic Problem* (Tuckett 1992, Head 2008), is New Testament philology, as also mentioned above by Haugen (2014, 236-237). New Testament philologists have to deal with a much broader tradition, extant in numerous languages and millennia-old documents scattered over a wide geographical space. These scholars have long debated and keep debating on which approach to adopt for textual criticism, which caused a proliferation of different editions according to the goal of each editor. The various tendencies which seem to emerge and are controversial even after centuries of debating are harmonization of the Gospels, the reconstruction of the original texts and the attention to engaging with variants. Naturally, this field is also constantly dealing with the problem of the display of data: what do synoptic digital editions look like, then?

2.1.3 *Some examples of digital synoptic editions*

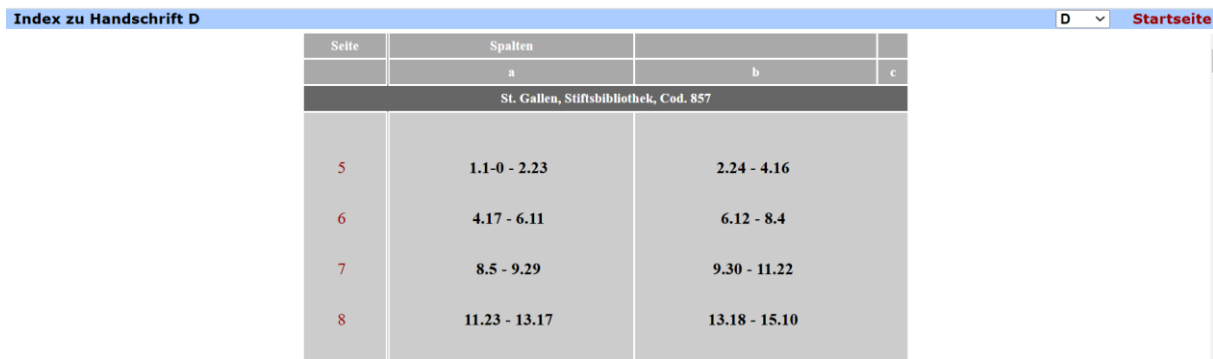
As a testament to the fact that digital synoptic editions are rare, web searches do not return many matches, and the majority of results revolve around print editions and the Gospels. Even combing through the two renowned digital editions catalogues of Sahle (2008-2020) and Franzini (2012-), the synoptic ones are few. This could also be due to lack of submissions and thus findability and accessibility or to different obstacles in the updating of the catalogues. Nevertheless, considering what was discussed in the previous section, it does not come a surprise.

In the following section I will present and comment on the digital synoptic editions that I have been able to find and that I deem relevant to evaluate in light of the requirements of the *Alexanderlied* tradition.

2.1.3.1 *Parzival*

Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* is a cornerstone of courtly Medieval German Literature, handed down in 88 witnesses, both codices and fragments, plus one fifteen-century incunabulum.¹⁸ It was written at the beginning of the thirteenth century and, as summarized by Stolz (2016), the textual tradition is grouped into four main versions: *D, *m, *G and *T.¹⁹ *D and *G are the most complete: between them G has the higher number of missing lines and a tendency to shorten passages (Bumke 2010, 459, 481), which is a phenomenon that affects the *Alexanderlied*, too.

The *Parzival-Projekt*,²⁰ led by Michael Stolz at the Berne University, is a synoptic digital edition of the four versions of the *Parzival*. The web application draws from a database which can be queried in different ways. Apart from the text transcriptions, the user can visualize indexes of lines for all the manuscripts with the respective facsimile to the side, access a list of names with their normalized form and the spelling found in the witnesses, perform single-word searches, visualize single lines in synopsis across the versions and select two manuscripts with desired span of lines to visualize parallelly. Codicological information is signaled in the transcription via color coding: for example, in the transcribed text scribal erasures are represented in a light grey and supplied integrations in green.



Seite	Spalten		
	a	b	c
St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 857			
5	1.1-0 - 2.23	2.24 - 4.16	
6	4.17 - 6.11	6.12 - 8.4	
7	8.5 - 9.29	9.30 - 11.22	
8	11.23 - 13.17	13.18 - 15.10	

Figure 6: The *Parzival-Projekt* and a sample of poetic-line indexing for D

¹⁸ The manuscript transmission of the *Parzival*: <https://www.handschriftencensus.de/werke/437>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹⁹ D: St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 857; m: Wien, ÖNB, Cod. 2914; G: München, BSB, Cgm 19; T: Wien, ÖNB, Cod. 2708.

²⁰ Website of the *Parzival-Projekt*: <https://parzival.unibe.ch/englishpresentation.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

Verssynopse

Es werden Einzelverse in sämtlichen Textzeugen und (optional) Fassungen angezeigt.

Bitte geben Sie im ersten Feld die Zahl eines Dreißigers (z. B. 249), im zweiten Feld die Zahl eines Verses (z. B. 1 oder 14) ein. In Ausnahmefällen kann im dritten Feld die Angabe von Zusatzversen erfolgen (z. B. bei 796.28 mit dem Zusatz 1).

Hinweis: Die Epilogverse (Ep) in V und V' sowie die Prologverse (Pr) in V werden in der Verssynopse **nicht** berücksichtigt.

Vers: . -

Figure 7: The Parzival-Projekt and the line-based search engine

Figure 8: The Parzival-Projekt, a synopsis of transcriptions of D and G, with facsimile plus paleographical and codicological information

Variation seems to happen mostly at spelling and word level, which made a line-by-line alignment possible, although there are cases of *Minus-* and *Plusvers*, i.e., missing or additional line (Bumke 2010, 455, 459). The added value of the resource is the pool of formalized information which can be reused for quantitative analysis and the attention at the manuscripts. A list of publications is presented on the main page so that interested parties can learn about the tools and methods used for the project. Notes on editorial choices and manuscript transmission, such as missing portions of text, support the comparison across recensions.

2.1.3.2 *heiEDITIONS*

The University of Heidelberg and its library manage a massive digital editions project called *heiEDITIONS*,²¹ which provides an infrastructure for the development of customized TEI-XML schemas, the transformation of the XML data into HTML with XSLT and their visualization through multiple views in an HTML viewer. In addition, the visualization platform provides a display of manuscript facsimiles. Thanks to a solid and unified framework, which is extensively documented by Jakub Šimek (2022), concepts, their related vocabulary and usage cases are grouped and formalized in an ontology to ensure consistency. Two of their synoptic editions are particularly relevant to the comparison with the *Alexanderlied*, i.e., *Der arme Heinrich – digital* and the *Kaiserchronik – digital*.

Der arme Heinrich is a short tale composed at the end of the twelfth century by Hartmann von Aue and tells the story of a man who miraculously heals from leprosy. It is handed down in four complete manuscripts and three fragments.²² The tradition is small, as is the case with the *Alexanderlied*, but has a degree of variation that calls for a synoptic treatment of the texts. As a matter of fact, in the case of *Der arme Heinrich*, the application offers a table with line concordances and color coding of phenomena which happen and line level, such as transpositions and disruption of rhyme, translations and comparison between diplomatic transcriptions and normalized editions.

²¹ The infrastructure of *heiEDITIONS*: <https://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/publikationsdienste/heiditions-infrastruktur.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

²² The manuscript transmission of *Der arme Heinrich*: <https://www.handschriftencensus.de/werke/147>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

Synopse Vers 1 🔍 ⏪ < > ⏩ 🔗 📄 ⚙️ Textdarstellung 🗺️ Legende 🌐 Login ⓘ

Zitierhinweis zu Hartmann von Aue: Der arme Heinrich. Textgeschichtliche elektronische Ausgabe ⓘ Verszählung: Standard

Sigle A Ba Bb C D E F Übersetzungen A Ba Bb

Fragment Textstelle nicht überliefert

A ehemals Straßburg, Stadtbibliothek, Handschrift A, 1870 ve...	Ba Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Pal. germ. 341	Bb Fondation Martin Bodmer, Cologny (Genf), Cod. Bodmer ...
kein Vergleich ▾	kein Vergleich ▾	kein Vergleich ▾
Ein ritter so geleret was, 2 daz er an den buchen ⁿ las, 3 swas er der an geschriben vant. 4 der was <i>Hartman</i> genant, 5 dienstman was er zuo <i>Owe</i> .	<i>Ein</i> ritter so geleret was, 2 daz er an den <i>buchen</i> las, 3 was er dar an geschriben vant. 4 der was <i>Hartman</i> genant 5 und was ein dinsteman von <i>Owe</i> .	Ein ritter so geleret was, 2 daz er an den <i>buchen</i> las, 3 waz er dar an geschriben vant. 4 der was <i>Hartman</i> genant 5 unde was ein dienstman von <i>Owe</i> .

Figure 9: Extract from *Der arme Heinrich* – digital, the synopsis

umgestellte Verse	Zusatzvers an Stelle eines anderen	Reimänderung	Spaltenreimvers
A	Ba	Bb	C D E F
226	226	226	226
227	227	227	227
	227a	227a	
228	228	228	228
		228a	
229	229	229	229
230	230	230	230
231	231	231	231
232	232	232	232
233	233	233	233
234	234	234	234
235	235	235	235
236	236	236	236
	236a	236a	
	204	204	
	203	203	
237	237	237	237
238	238	238	238
239	239	239	239
240	240	240	240
241	241	241	241
242	242	242	242

Figure 10: Extract from *Der arme Heinrich* – digital, concordances and phenomena

The *Kaiserchronik* is a mid-twelfth-century anonymous chronicle which tells the stories of the ancient emperors of Rome, starting from Julius Caesar in the first century BCE, and of the

emperors of the Germanic Holy Roman Empire, till the predecessor to Barbarossa, King Konrad III, who ruled from 1138 until 1152. The German kings were presented as the legitimate heirs to the power of the ancient Roman rulers. It is handed down in fifty-one witnesses in both codex and fragment format.²³ The main recensions are three verse recensions and one prose version. The digital edition offers not only the parallel view of some witnesses, but also the possibility to click on specific items and obtain a pop-up with a critical commentary, for example in the case of lacunae and the *Lombarden*, i.e., the decorative, colored initials, or be redirected to notes at the bottom of the page.

Zitierhinweis zu [Kaiserchronik digital. Elektronische Ausgabe](#), hrsg. von Mark Chinca, Helen Hunter, Jürgen Wolf

A	A1	M	H	Cp	Po	a1	a2	a3	a4α	a4β	a4γ	a5α	a5β	a6	a7	a8	a9	a
B	B1	VB	P	b1	b2	b3	b4	b5	b6α	b6β	b6γ	b7	b8	b9	b10	b11	x2	

⚡ Fragment Textstelle nicht überliefert

A1 Vorau, Stiftsarchiv des Augustiner Chorherrenstiftes, StAV-Ms 276 (fr...	B1 Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 2779, foll. 2-46
--	---

D_N Initiale: Lombarde ×

bei der heiden ziten. dū anebette man
witen. abgot div unreinen. die hæiðn
alle mæine. mǫfen fi eren uñ anebeten.
al nach d̄ chunige gebot. div wol gezie-
rte rome: nach d̄ werlte wart fi erha-
ben scone. daz taten zwen gebrǫdriche.

Hie vor pei der haiden zeit
Do an betet man weit
abgot deu vnreine
Di haiden alle gemeine
mǫften fi anbeten vnd eren. vnd nah
der chūnig gebot ir vnglauben meren

Figure 11: Extract from the *Kaiserchronik* – digital, pop-up with commentary

Both digital editions are made available through a simple, user-friendly interface which contains information on manuscripts, transmission, editions, functionalities, documentation on project history and bibliography. The user can also choose how to view the transcription according to the normalization level, for instance by activating or deactivating the expansion of abbreviations.

²³ The manuscript transmission of the *Kaiserchronik*: <https://www.handschriftencensus.de/werke/189>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

The linearity of the workflow and the efficiency of the platform alongside the philological quality of its functionalities make *heiEDITIONS* a first-rate resource that, in my opinion, has the potential to become a standard for digital medievalists and should prompt researchers to initiate a discussion on if and how this can be achieved.

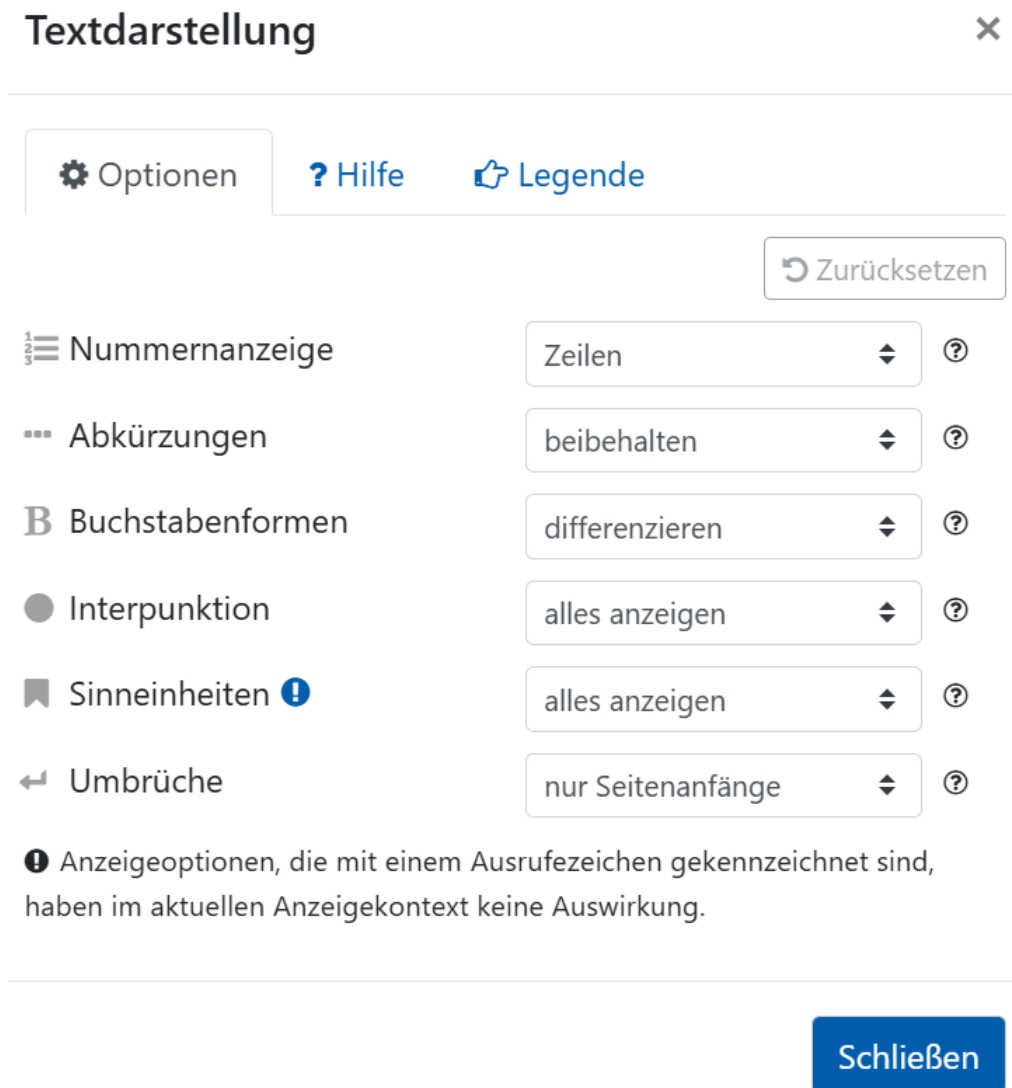


Figure 12: The customization possibilities for *Der arme Heinrich – digital* and *the Kaiserchronik – digital*

2.1.3.3 New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room

Given that I hinted at New Testament philology in the previous section, it is worth mentioning the *New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room* project of the University of Münster.²⁴ It is a platform for the collaborative and comparative study of New Testament manuscripts. The

²⁴ Website of the project *New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room*: <https://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/home>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

platform includes a section for the collation of the witnesses. The user accesses an interface where it is possible to choose the desired witness, called Base Text, select a specific passage and have the algorithm find it in the other manuscripts, but also scan the witness list for differences in the selected passage. The system also lets the users choose which regularization rules for spelling and markers for phenomena – e.g. supplied items – they want to apply or ignore and which visualization strategy they prefer for the output, such as an alignment table or a graph. It is also possible to query the entire list of manuscripts at the same time, but the massive amount of data slows down the loading of the results page, which often crashes when the user tries to change selection.

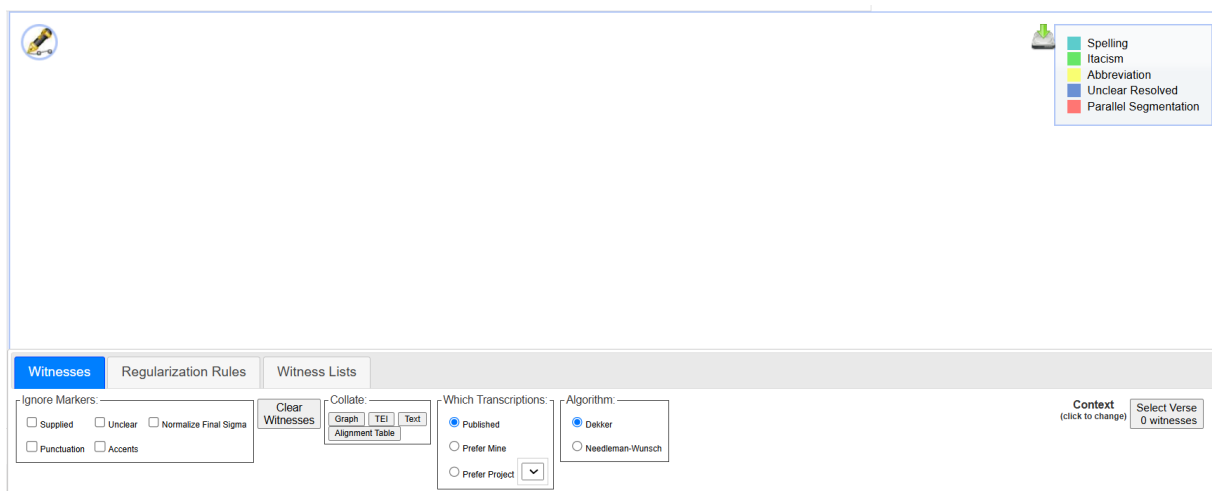


Figure 13: The New Testament Virtual Manuscript Room interface

I mentioned these examples because of their proximity to the *Alexanderlied*, but naturally there are other resources that I have not treated here, such as Prue Shaw’s synoptic *Dante Alighieri: Commedia - A Digital Edition*.²⁵ For the future, it would be interesting to expand the scope of the research and take into account synoptic editions from different places and epochs to have a broader understanding of the problems that are characteristic of each text and reflect on related solutions, as it could refine the approach to the *Alexanderlied*.

2.2 The advantages and challenges of the digital medium for a synoptic edition of the *Alexanderlied*

The surfacing of the digital medium opened new realms of possibilities in the field of medieval studies, which sparked a lively and still ongoing debate on theory and practice in digital textual

²⁵ Website of the Prue Shaw’s synoptic *Dante Alighieri: Commedia - A Digital Edition* project: <https://prueshaw.com/websites/digital-commedia>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

criticism. Consequently, there are several reasons to advocate for the added value of the digital paradigm.

For example, turning to the digital medium can help overcome the limitation of the book format, as it has the potential to enrich the pool of information made available to the user and to “render immediately accessible [...] all the codicological evidence he/she needs to grasp the multi-faceted intratextual and intertextual connections” (Buzzoni and Burgio 2014, 176). As a matter of fact, there is virtually no limit to the amount of data that can be grouped together and accessed in the world of hypertext.

Another benefit is that the digital environment allows to dynamically combine the visual representation of handwritten traditions, preserving the uniqueness of each manuscript, with the critical reconstruction of the text(s) and the attention to “text mobility” (Buzzoni and Burgio 2014, 178).

Moreover, going back to the scholarly task of representing textual material, the web can offer support for the representation of interconnected data through multimodal systems. This means that meaning is vehiculated to the users via multiple modalities, such as graphs (Kuczera 2016 and 2019).

Naturally, a printed book can contain graphs or images as well, but the digital medium redefines the role of the audience, who can no longer be defined as passive readers leafing through a fixed product, but instead are, for all intents and purposes, users taking a more active part in the fruition of the work. Digital editions are, in fact, dynamic and interactive, and allow the audience to exercise more direct control over the acquisition of information and the usage of the product, for example in the active choice of which edition level they want to be displayed.

Information is also more easily accessible thanks to the search engines that can be implemented in digital editions. Searchability of the text enables a quick retrieval of occurrences of interest that can facilitate statistical analysis.

In addition, publishing revised or new versions of an edition takes little effort, whereas the follow-ups of print editions are extremely costly in terms of time and both physical and human resources. The digital philologist maintains access to and control over their product so that changes, fixes, and upgrades can be made directly, easily, and quickly.

Furthermore, preparing data in digital format enables smoother collaboration and swifter communication among the people involved in the process, who can share and work on the

project in real-time. Checking one another's activities and intervening without having to take several steps guarantees the quality of the result.

Finally, having a better understanding of textual traditions is not just beneficial to philologists: the advantages are interdisciplinary because scholars from other fields, such as literature, linguistics, history, and art, can deepen their knowledge, and have a broader and more precise view of their objects of study.

Buzzoni (2009, 117) illustrates the relevance of this approach with an eye on medieval texts:

Il mezzo elettronico si rivela particolarmente adatto a valorizzare la dimensione storica del testo medievale perché permette di produrre edizioni incentrate proprio sul concetto di diasistema. Solo l'interattività infatti può favorire il costante passaggio dal testo-base proposto dagli editori al singolo testimone, ottemperando a due esigenze parimenti giustificate sul piano teorico: la necessità di restituire dignità storica ai testimoni e quella di presentare un testo interpretativo che li trascenda. Tramite l'uso di strumenti interattivi tale testo viene sottratto al processo di assolutizzazione a cui inevitabilmente lo consegnerebbe la fissità dell'edizione a stampa e acquisisce valore non tanto in sé, quanto piuttosto nel confronto con i diasistemi che lo generano. Il testo, insomma, diventa anche visivamente un concetto di relazione. Il supporto digitale consente infatti di apprezzare il processo della costituzione del testo nelle sue fasi di formazione e di fissazione, fino a delinearne i percorsi di attualizzazione in rapporto al contesto culturale di arrivo.²⁶

However, choosing the digital medium comes with drawbacks as well. For instance, the novelty of the discipline and the proliferation of experimental works, despite the generation of new knowledge and the wide use of established standards such as TEI, make the teaching and learning of tools and methods quite complicated, as the lack of homogeneity can be rather confusing, especially to neophytes:

²⁶ 'The electronic medium proves to be particularly suitable for enhancing the historical dimension of the medieval text because it makes it possible to make editions that are centered precisely on the concept of diasystem. In fact, only interactivity can facilitate the constant transition from the base text proposed by editors to the single witness, fulfilling two equally justified theoretical needs: the need to return historical dignity to the witnesses and the need to present an interpretive text that transcends them. Through the use of interactive tools, the text is removed from the process of absolutization to which the fixity of the printed edition would inevitably deliver it and acquires value not so much in itself but rather in its relationship with the diasystems that generate it. The text, in short, becomes a visual concept of relationship, too. Indeed, the digital medium makes it possible to appreciate the process of the text's constitution in its stages of shaping and setting, even to the point of outlining the paths to its updating according to the target cultural context'.

A book does not need any accompanying instructions, and to some degree this is also true for traditional layout critical editions, but the great variability that is typical of more recent DSEs requires some adjusting and, in some cases, the willingness to invest a certain amount of time to learn how to use the navigation tools. (Di Pietro and Rosselli Del Turco 2018, 136)

It is also important to be aware of the fact that the support provided by electronic devices also has its own limitations:

[...] the paradox which presented to us is that of being able to count on an almost infinite storage space, but also that of having to show the multiple layers of edition content (texts, images, notes, etc.) in a two-dimensional space just a little larger than a printed page: the screen of a computer. As long as the DSEs are going to require a computer for their consultation, their use will be that of a research tool and they will not be able to reach the versatility of a traditional printed edition. (Rosselli Del Turco 2019, 104)

As a matter of fact, there is continuity between traditional and digital philology, to be observed, for example, in the problem of practicing the usage of an edition, regardless of the medium. To mention one aspect, instructions on the reading of a critical apparatus, which is built after specific conventions, need to be vehicled, alongside the documentation of the choices made during its preparation. Moreover, in digital editions the core philological process does not – and must not – fall into the background and certainly does not end after the text analysis phase, but the theoretical foundations and the needs of the philologist are at the forefront of all other stages of the project. These tenets need to be addressed in curricula not only when handling print editions, but also while assessing digital ones, as the editor needs to remain accountable.

Taking all of this into account, the choice of making a digital synoptic edition of the *Alexanderlied* seemed like a fitting path to take, in which the advantages of a digital representation of the text outweighed the compromises, challenges and limitations. The rationale for this preference, as already mentioned in the Introduction, was the considerable degree of variation among the three recensions of the *Alexanderlied* in meter and style – the irregularity of V's rhyme and its patchy lines, the uniformity of S's couplets and B's long, irregular *laissez*– and structure – exclamations and comments of the narrating voice in V, S's missing bifolio and addition of courtly details and B's omission of *exempla* and Biblical references –.

These poignant features that lead to this decision will be emphasized in the description of the textual units in section 4.3, but I provide here three examples of the differences in meter, style and structure:

V	S	B
644 Kartanensen er enbôt, <...> 645 sie ne chômen unde wurden undertân,	lacuna	953 Ze Karttanison er sant , 954 das sich dar nach richten , 955 er wold sy des niut erlon , 956 sy müesten im werden undertan .

V's couplet is stumpy (644), whereas B narrates the event through a pericope with no rhyming couplet nor regular rhythm (4.3.12).

V	S	B
686 Er zestôrte ouch Bethuliam, 687 dâ Judith Holofern sîn houbet nam . 688 Unde zestôrte ouch judeisc lant:	lacuna	978 er gewan ouch Bettuliam 979 und alle Jüdeschyland,

V references the Old-Testament Jewish heroine Judith, S lacks these lines because of the missing bifolium and B does not interrupt the narration of the action with additional information (4.3.14).

V	S	B
328 er warf sich nider <...> 329 unde giensch sîneme vater gegene.	387 Er warf sih nider unde ginc. 388 Vestian daz ros entfienc, 389 alsiz Alexander wolde, 390 mit einem breitele von golde , 391 mit gesteine wol beslagen. 392 Sinen vater ginc er ingagen.	647 vom rosse er do sprang und gieng. 648 Vestyana das ros enpfieng, 649 das ward ze stund gezemet hie. 650 Sin vatter in wol enpfie.

This passage (4.3.2) exemplifies S's regularity in meter and rhyme and its usage of courtly elements, in this case Bucephalus's golden (*von golde*) reins set with stones (*mit gesteine*), and the expansion of the episode through their description (cf. also 4.3.4).

3 The *Alexanderlied*

3.1 Alexander the Great and his literary reshaping

Alexander III of Macedonia was born in Pella, the historical capital of ancient Macedonia, in 356 BCE. He was the son of King Philip II of Macedonia and Princess Olympias of Epirus. After Philip's assassination in 336 BCE, twenty-year-old Alexander inherited his kingdom, which, in addition to Macedonia, also included the Greek peninsula.

In 334 BCE Alexander sailed east to resume his father's military campaign against the Persian Empire and the Achaemenid king Darius III, whose ancestors Darius I and Xerxes had pillaged Greece during the Persian Wars (490-478 BCE).²⁷ He crossed the Hellespont with 40,000 men (Stoneman 1991, 3) and in just four years, Alexander managed to defeat the Persian army and, after Darius was murdered by his conspiring satraps,²⁸ to become the ruler of Asia Minor at twenty-five. During his Persian expedition, he also entered Egypt and founded the city of Alexandria, obtaining the title of pharaoh.

In 327 BCE he married Roxane, a princess of Sogdiana, an ancient region in Central Asia which corresponds to modern-day southern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. However, according to numerous ancient stories, Alexander was polygamous and had other women and wives, using the latter to strengthen the relationship between the Greeks and his new subjects. The ancient sources also mention relationships with men, especially with his dearest companion Hephaestion, a Macedonian nobleman who had studied with Alexander and later became his second-in-command. The medieval tradition censors the relationship with Hephaestion, and even in the ancient sources the exact nature of it is not clear, although some of them draw a parallel between Alexander-Hephaestion and Achilles-Patroclus, the mythical protagonists of Homer's ancient Greek epic poem *Iliad*, and report Alexander's deep sorrow at Hephaestion's death in 324 BCE. Despite the medieval obscurantism, contemporary reception revives the topic, as shown, for example, in the 2004 Hollywood movie *Alexander*, directed by Oliver Stone, in which the love between Alexander and Hephaestion²⁹ is made explicit.

²⁷ Incidentally, the etymology of the name Alexander is rather telling, as it comes from Ancient Greek Ἀλέξανδρος (Aléxandros), 'defender of men', 'warrior'. See the Greek Word Study Tool *Perseus*: [https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=a%29le%2Fcandros&la=greek&can=a%29le%2Fcandros0&d=Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=a\)le/candros&i=1#lexicon](https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/morph?l=a%29le%2Fcandros&la=greek&can=a%29le%2Fcandros0&d=Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=a)le/candros&i=1#lexicon). Last access: 22.04.2025.

²⁸ Satraps were governors of the provinces in the Achaemenid Empire.

²⁹ Alexander is played by Colin Farrel, Hephaestion is played by Jared Leto.

Alexander's march continued till he reached the Indus Valley with the intention of reaching the Ganges, but he was forced to turn back in 326 BCE, as the extreme fatigue and weather conditions prompted his army to mutiny. In 323 BCE they arrived in Babylon, the capital of the empire, where Alexander died shortly after his return, probably of a typhoid fever, although "rumours immediately spread that he had been poisoned" (Stoneman 2011, 1). The Indian territories began to govern themselves again after he left, and chaos erupted in his empire after his death, since he did not leave instructions on succession, causing his generals to fight for leadership for twenty years. Nonetheless,

[...] Alexander's expedition, and his death, brought about a new world that had little place for traditional ethnic boundaries and the narrow loyalties of the Greek states; it created the space in which the Roman Empire and the renewed Parthian and Sassanian Empires of Persia could take shape. This segmentation of the known world into large power blocs facilitated and persisted in the formation of the Christian and Muslim worlds of the present day and even the creation of the European Union. (Stoneman 2022, 14)

Throughout the centuries, the figure of Alexander has always held a great fascination for both scholars and the public, as proved, for example, by the interest in exhibitions on the hero, such as the 2023 exhibition *Alessandro Magno e l'Oriente* at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli³⁰ in Naples and the exhibition *Alexander the Great: The Making of a Myth*, held at the British Library,³¹ London, from October 2022 to February 2023, which spans 2000 years

[...] of storytelling and mythmaking around Alexander. [...] The items include works from twenty-five countries in twenty-four languages, ranging from a Babylonian clay tablet through to Persian, Greek and Latin manuscripts, Italian opera, novels and comics in English, and to modern Japanese and Hindi films. (Stoneman 2022, 4-5)

Nevertheless, for my PhD dissertation I will concentrate on the Medieval German reception of his character and story. These vernacular texts represent an extreme strand of narrative derivatives of an original group of historical and pseudo-historical works in Greek and Latin: The oldest among them, which are now lost, except for a few fragments quoted in later Byzantine historiography, date back to the official historians who accompanied Alexander in

³⁰ Description of the exhibition on the website of the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli: <https://mann-napoli.it/alessandro-magno-e-oriente/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

³¹ Description of the exhibition on the medieval manuscript blog of the British Library: <https://blogs.bl.uk/digitisedmanuscripts/2022/10/alexander-the-great-is-now-open.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

his military exploits. The most influential was Callisthenes,³² whose name was apocryphally attributed to an unknown author from Alexandria, who wrote a “novel” which is the main source of the legendary romance tradition on the Macedonian king with its many witnesses spanning more than a millennium.

3.2 The *Alexanderlied* and its models

In the prologue of two of its witnesses, this poem in rhymed couplets is labeled as *liet*, ‘song’, which in this case is to be identified with the medieval German literary genre *epische Dichtung*, ‘epic poetry’ (Kuhn 1956, Lienert 2019, 555), also because of the structuring of the narrative into *laissez*,³³ which is typical of the performative nature of pre-courtly epic (Cipolla 2013a, 102). However, in the three codices that hand it down, the text is anepigraphic³⁴ and, in modern scientific literature, it is called *roman*, ‘romance, novel’ (Cipolla 2013b, 51, note 6). The title *Alexanderlied*, ‘song of Alexander’, was first used in 1850 by Heinrich Weismann to refer to the international poetic tradition on Alexander the Great. In 1856, Alfred Rochat gave this title specifically to the work by twelfth-century German poet Lambrecht (Cipolla 2013a, 16), supposedly from Trier or Cologne (Cipolla 2018, 104). Indeed, Lambrecht is mentioned as the author of the *Tobias*,³⁵ a poem handed down in a single early-thirteenth-century manuscript and inspired by the homonymous Deuterocanonical book, where an allusion to Trier is made. As for Cologne, in one of the versions of the *Alexanderlied*, the so-called V recension,³⁶ there is a mention of St. Pantaleon of Nicomedia, a Christian healer and martyr from the fourth century, for whom an imperial church in Cologne was founded by Bishop Bruno³⁷ in the tenth century. This church is, incidentally, the earliest western church dedicated to this saint (Cipolla 2016, 131).

Lambrecht’s *Alexanderlied* is a German re-elaboration of Latin and Medieval French versions of the *Alexander Romance* and of Roman historiographical sources on Alexander the Great.

³² Callisthenes of Olynthus was a Greek historian who accompanied Alexander in his Persian campaign and was tasked with compiling the Macedonian king’s biography. He was executed before the end of Alexander’s Indian campaign (Stoneman 2011, 2). Works that were incorrectly ascribed to him became known as authored by Pseudo-Callisthenes, as in this case.

³³ Units that were employed to scan the rhythm of the execution.

³⁴ Modern hands added titles to manuscript V (*hystoria de alexandro magno*, ‘History of Alexander the Great’) e S (*Alexander*). More details on the codices will be given in section 3.2.4.1.

³⁵ Krakau, Bibl. Jagiellońska, Berol. mgq 1418. The manuscript transmission of the *Tobias*: <https://handschriftencensus.de/werke/218>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

³⁶ More details about the textual tradition will be given in section 3.2.4.

³⁷ Bruno the Great, Archbishop of Cologne, was the brother of the Holy Roman Emperor (962–973) Otto I of the Saxon dynasty.

In the following subsections, categorized by genre, I will present the most significant models for the *Alexanderlied*.

3.2.1 *The Alexander Romance and its derivatives*

The *Alexander Romance*, dating back to a controversial period between the third century BCE and the third century CE, is a complex composition of extensive historiographical and fictional material on Alexander the Great, handed down in five Greek recensions, which some medieval manuscripts ascribed to Callisthenes (Stoneman 1991). Around the fourth century, it was translated from Greek into Latin by Julius Valerius Polemius,³⁸ who tried to restore the several corruptions of the version he was working on, i.e., the first, the so-called *alpha* recension.³⁹ The *alpha* recension was also the basis for a fifth-century Armenian translation,⁴⁰ which, in turn, was rendered in Syriac in the sixth century, resulting in the so-called *delta* recension and thought to be the source of a version in Arabic and Middle Persian. A shortened version of Julius Valerius's work, the *Epitome Julii Valerii*, was much more widespread, even more than the unabridged version, which is handed down in seven manuscripts (Cipolla 2013a, 59). The *Epitome* was used as a source for vernacular renditions and it was made "not later than the ninth century and known as the Zacher Epitome from its first editor. MSS: Hagensis 830 (9th c.), and 65 others [...]. It is drastically abridged and seems to have been designed as a prologue for the *Letter to Aristotle* with which it often appears together." (Stoneman 2011, 14). The sixty-seven witnesses date back to a time frame between the ninth and the seventeenth century (Cipolla 2013a, 36, note 18).

Several other rewritings, both from the ancient Western and Eastern world, hand down a substantial number of different legends about Alexander, like the Leiden manuscript,⁴¹ known as L, which contains new stories that become widely popular in the medieval Western world (Stoneman 2022, 16). These are paradoxographical events, in which Alexander subjugates the Amazons,⁴² descends into the sea, soars in the sky transported by griffins and searches for the Water of Life.⁴³ The legend of the Water of Life, for example, is found in the latest *lambda*

³⁸ Julius Valerius Polemius was probably an official of the Roman Empire in the first half of the fourth century.

³⁹ This recension survives only in one codex dating back to the eleventh century, the MS A: Parisinus 1711, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

⁴⁰ The medieval codex Armenian MS 3, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, is an illustrated witness of it.

⁴¹ Leidensis Vulc. 93.

⁴² The Amazons are an all-female warrior people, ruled by a queen, who, according to Greek mythology, inhabited a land on the southern shore of the Black Sea.

⁴³ For more on the manifold recensions and stories, see Stoneman 2022, 15-21.

recension of Pseudo-Callisthenes, which differs from the original the most (Dawkins 1937, 174). During Alexander's adventurous exploration towards the eastern end of the world, he and his men come to a dark and misty region, where they find a clear and shiny spring, the Spring of Immortality, also known as the Water of Life. Alexander's cook, Andreas, sneakily drinks from it, and Alexander punishes him for his betrayal and presumption by tying a rock to Andrea's neck and throwing him into the sea. As a matter of fact, the "theme of the Wrong Man drinking the Water of Life" flowed into the Greek legend from the popular Muslim lore about the Prophet Khidr, who is depicted by Muslim writers as an immortal wanderer who had been Alexander's vizier and drunk from the Water instead of his master (Dawkins 1937, 177-178). From an Arabic source stems an Ethiopian version of the story, but it is not the only instance, as the tale is also found in sixteenth-century Muslim Spain. This example, while only one of the stories involving Alexander, serves to illustrate how different eras, places, and cultures were permeated and interconnected by similar narrative strands and topics, sharing a fascination with the figure of Alexander and the fantastic.

The Western Middle Ages saw another proliferation of works, the most relevant of which was a tenth-century Latin translation of a Greek version of the *Romance* by Leo the Archpriest.⁴⁴ Despite not being strictly related to a specific Greek recension, Leo's work became the basis of the *Historia de preliis – HP –*, 'History of Alexander's battles', which spawned the rich medieval tradition in vernacular languages.

Three expanded versions of Leo's text were made in the course of the twelfth century: *HP J*¹, before 1100, which combines Leo's text with elements from several Latin authors and the *Letter about India* [...]; *J*², 'the Orosius recension' (after the late Latin historian Orosius) which also borrows from several other works including Pseudo-Methodius; *J*³, completed by 1236, which reworks *J*¹ and adds the episode of the Philosophers at the Tomb [...]. The second of these three (*J*²) was the basis of the French Prose *Alexander* [...], while the third was reworked as a long Latin poem by Quilichinus of Spoleto. The third (*J*³) was perhaps the most popular [...]. It was also the source of an enormous number of translations into most of the vernacular languages of medieval Europe. The *HP* was translated more frequently in the Middle Ages than any other work except the Gospels. [...] besides the Old French prose version already mentioned, [...] the *Roman d'Alexandre* of Alexander of Paris (after 1180) is a classic of French literature in its

⁴⁴ Leo the Archpriest was a scholar, translator and diplomat for the dukes of Naples in the ninth century.

own right. There are several versions in German made from 1150 to the 1470s [...]. (Stoneman 2022, 18-19)

The “Orosius recension” is called as such because it is strongly influenced by the work of Paulus Orosius,⁴⁵ the *Historiarum adversus Paganos Libri Septem*, ‘Seven Books of History Against the Pagans’, a vitriolic criticism against the pagans in which he includes also a harsh and unsparing judgement of Alexander. The work of Pseudo-Methodius,⁴⁶ the *Apocalypse*, is a seventh-century history of the world, focusing on the Islamic conquests of those years in the Near East, written in Syriac and then translated into Greek and Latin shortly after. Therein, the author mentions the invasion of Gog and Magog, which only appears in the Basel redaction of the *Alexanderlied* and is also found in the Bible and the Koran, ambiguously denoting two individuals, peoples or territories. In the Alexander lore, the Macedonian king is represented as a Christianized hero who assumes the role of defender against pagan, infidel peoples and builds walls between two mountains to contain them and keep them out, Gog and Magog included. The episode of the *Philosophers at the Tomb* is also handed down in a Syriac text,⁴⁷ and consists in several philosophers gathering around Alexander’s coffin and lament over his death. Quilichinus of Spoleto, a thirteenth-century judge and poet at the court of Frederick II,⁴⁸ wrote the *Alexandreis*, also called *Historia Alexandri Magni*, in Latin elegiac distichs. He recounts Alexander’s legendary fantastical deeds, once again in a Christian and eschatological light.

The whole mass of derivatives of Pseudo-Callisthenes retains its narrative structure. The diegetic parts, which roughly follow the events of Alexander’s biography in the historiographical texts with some anachronisms, such as the counterfactual account of Alexander’s subjugation of the Romans, are alternated with dialogues and epistolary exchanges with deuteragonists such as Darius, Porus, the king of the Gymnosophists, the queen of the Amazons, etc. This aspect reveals how the Greek romance was the conflation of historical narratives and fictional exchanges of letters that probably represented exercises practiced in schools of rhetoric in the late Hellenistic and Roman worlds.

⁴⁵ Paulus Orosius was fourth-century Roman, Christian priest and historian.

⁴⁶ Name attributed to an author mistakenly identified with the Christian bishop Methodius, active in the fourth century.

⁴⁷ In the manuscript Mingana syr. 47, fol. 267a-b. The source is the abstract of Ute Pietruschka and Monica Berti’s contribution for the conference *Énoncés sapientiels brefs, traductions, traducteurs et contextes culturels et historiques* summarized on the blog page of the *Fragmentary Texts* project:

<http://www.fragmentarytexts.org/2012/11/the-laments-of-the-philosophers-at-the-tomb-of-alexander/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁴⁸ Frederick II Hohenstaufen was the grandson of Frederick I Barbarossa and Holy Roman Emperor from 1220 to 1250. He took part in the Sixth Crusade and thereafter anointed himself king of Jerusalem.

The romance's greatest innovation with respect to the hero's historical biography is to state that Alexander's father was Nectanebus II, the last pharaoh, priest of Jupiter-Ammon and magician, who, fleeing to Macedonia to escape the Persians invading Egypt, is said to have suborned the queen and conceived Alexander by sleeping with her under false pretenses. This has led to the conjecture that the original work was written in Alexandria during the Ptolemaic period. Some of the Medieval derivatives react negatively to this bastard filiation, rejecting it in favor of legitimate descent from Philip, as is the case with V, S and their declared ancient-French model, the poem by Albéric.

Leo's translation was quite impactful in the Middle Ages, as shown by the tree-like graph found in Pfister (1913, 41) and added below, which represents what he deems to be the most important western medieval works related to Alexander composed from 950 to 1600 that were inspired by Leo's translation. Even though the scope of this work includes only the three recensions of Lambrecht's *Alexanderlied*, to continue to emphasize how widespread the Alexandrian matter was in the Middle Ages and the consequent difficulties in clarifying the processes of transmission and contamination, it is worth mentioning some other Medieval German texts that dealt with this subject. The verse poem *Der GröÙe Alexander* is a re-elaboration of Quilichinus, handed down in a fourteenth-century manuscript⁴⁹ and written in Bavarian (Guth 1908). Twenty-one witnesses preserve a fifteenth-century translation of a version of Leo by Johannes Hartlieb,⁵⁰ called *Alexander* (Pawis 1991). Rudolf von Ems's *Alexander* (Junk 1929), a courtly verse romance of the thirteenth century, found in three manuscripts,⁵¹ is particularly relevant because it mentions Lambrecht as one of the German poets who, before Rudolf, dealt with Alexander's life, which provides aid to understanding the chronology of the texts and the relationship among them. Rudolf demeans Lambrecht, saying that his work is coarse and not reliable (Cipolla 2013a, 15). Rudolf's work is a convergence of different sources, the *Alexandreis* by Gautier de Châtillon, the *Historia de preliis*, the *Epitome*, the *Epistola ad Aristotelem*, Curtius Rufus, Josephus and Pseudo-Methodius (Cipolla 2013a, 122-126). As noted by Buschinger (2011, 314), "Rudolf von Ems [...] judged that the exemplary perfection of Alexander legitimated him as sovereign and that, like the hero, the person for whom the work

⁴⁹ Krakau, Bibl. Jagiellońska, Berol. mgq 1869. Also known as the *Wernigeroder Alexander*, from the previous name of the manuscript, which was called *Wernigeroder Handschrift*, after the city in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany. The manuscript transmission of *Der GröÙe Alexander*: <https://handschriftencensus.de/werke/1391>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁵⁰ The manuscript transmission of Hartlieb's *Alexander*: <https://handschriftencensus.de/werke/1910>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁵¹ The manuscript transmission of Rudolf's *Alexander*: <https://handschriftencensus.de/werke/320>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

was intended, Conrad IV⁵² most likely, was fit to play a role in salvation history”. Seifrit’s *Alexander* (Gereke 1932), handed down in twenty manuscripts,⁵³ is a short thirteenth-century poem inspired by the *Historia de preliis*. Fifteenth-century scholar Johann Sieder translated a Latin biography of Alexander, the *Vita Alexandri*, into German, another testament to the popularity of Alexander’s figure in the Middle Ages. Sieder’s *Übersetzung der 'Alexandervita' mit Vorrede* (Worstbrock 2012) has come to us in just one sixteenth-century manuscript.⁵⁴ Another thirteenth-century novel on Alexander was written by Ulrich von Etzenbach (Toischer 1888), who, like Rudolf von Ems, takes inspiration from the *Alexandreis* by Gautier de Châtillon. However, even though both authors are strongly influenced by the same Latin sources, it is considered unlikely that Ulrich knew Rudolf’s work, which is fifty years older (Vollmann 1991, 54). Ulrich’s romance is preserved in twelve manuscripts.⁵⁵ The last example that I give here is the *Marburger Alexander* (Schieb 1968). Handed down in two fragments (Ehlert 1996) dating back to the beginning of the fourteenth century,⁵⁶ it shows similarities to Lambrecht’s *Basler Alexander* and is strictly influenced by the *Historia de preliis*, but the anonymous composer introduces some peculiarities, as analyzed by Ehlert (1996). In the first eighteen lines of the fragment, for example, in which Nectanebus suggests that Olympias draw out Alexander’s birth, the Egyptian king is described as young, a detail that seems to be absent from other sources and contrasts with his experience as ruler and fortune teller. The presentation of Nectanebus’s character goes on and he is derogatorily connotated as an enchanter, casting a negative light on the character as briefly reported in V and S but not in the sources which actually include the episode in detail. In the following passage, the sorcerer tells Olympias that Alexander must be born at the right time, otherwise he risks growing up gullible, evil and eunuch, which contrasts with the Medieval German compositions and their Latin sources and, on the other hand, comes closer to the Greek tradition. Another innovation is to be found in the second portion of the poem, where Alexander asks Nectanebus to predict the destiny of Olympias, whereas in the tradition of Pseudo-Callisthenes it is the queen herself who approaches Nectanebus to discover Philip’s intentions with her.

⁵² Conrad IV Hohenstaufen was the son of Emperor Frederick II and ruled as king of Jerusalem (1228-1254), of the Romans (1237-1254) and of Sicily (1250-1254).

⁵³ The manuscript transmission of Seifrit’s *Alexander*: <https://handschriftencensus.de/werke/836>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁵⁴ The manuscript transmission of Sieder’s *Übersetzung*: <https://handschriftencensus.de/werke/5487>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁵⁵ The manuscript transmission of Ulrich’s *Alexander*: <https://handschriftencensus.de/werke/490>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁵⁶ The manuscript transmission of the *Waldecker Alexander*: <https://handschriftencensus.de/werke/550>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

With this excursus on the texts that I have not included in this project, I do not claim to have offered an exhaustive list of Alexander-related Medieval German works, as it must always be kept in mind that a lot of the medieval production never reached us.

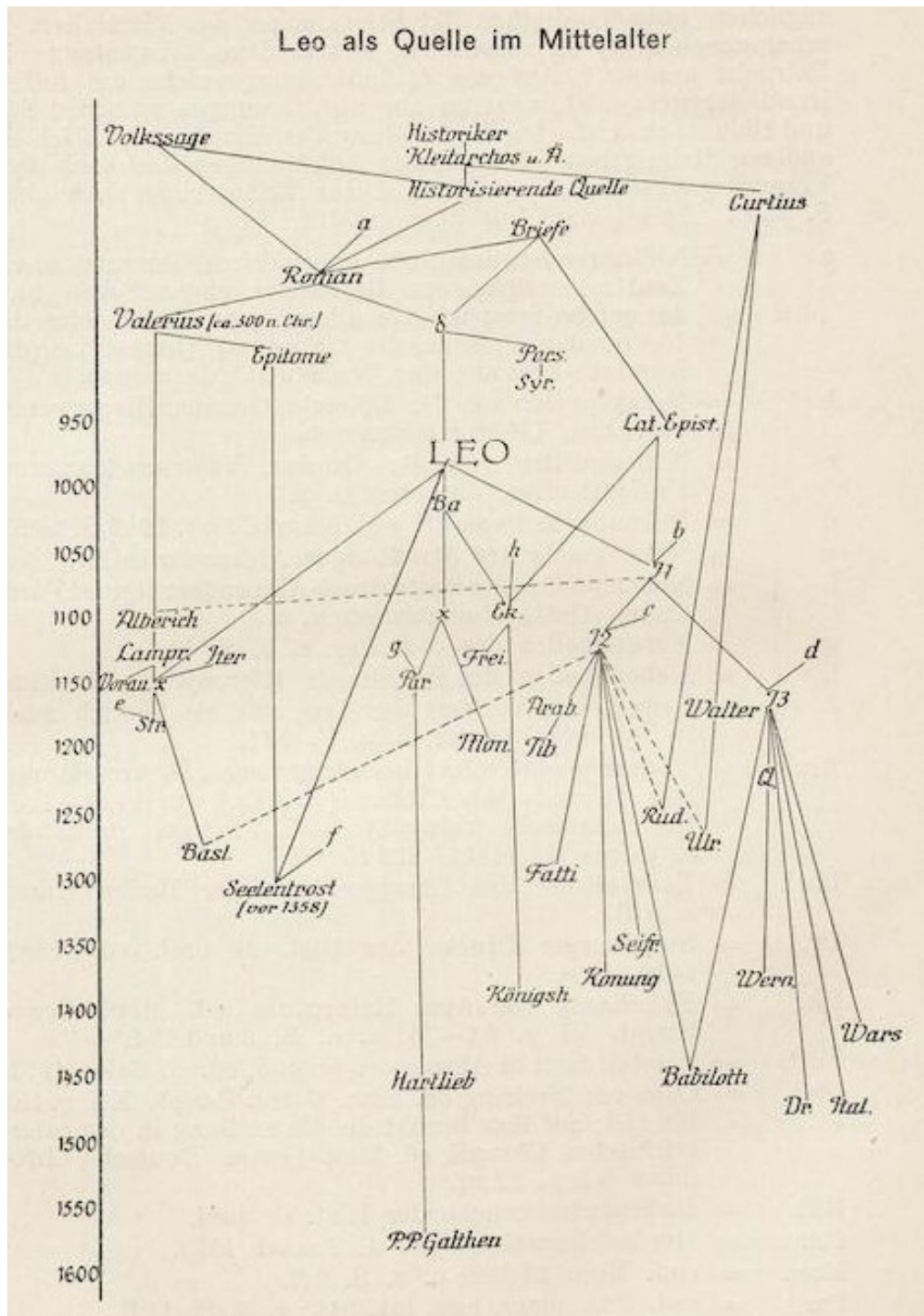


Figure 14: Pfister's (1913, 41). The title of the graph can be translated into English as 'Leo as source in the Middle Ages'.

3.2.2 *Historiographical sources*

In addition to the works mentioned in the previous section, the most influential Latin historiographical source is the *Historiae Alexandri Magni* by the historian Quintus Curtius Rufus:

The earliest Latin text, though the latest to become known, is the History of Alexander by Quintus Curtius Rufus. Written in the early Imperial period (scholarly opinion ranges from the reign of Tiberius to that of Claudius, with a renegade suggestion that it might be as early as Augustus),⁵⁷ its first two books are missing; and thus any preface there may have been, which would give some information about the author and his date, is also lost. [...] his work was not known until the Middle Ages were well advanced. It survived antiquity by the skin of its teeth: a single incomplete MS of the ninth century is the archetype of all the surviving 123 MSS. (Stoneman 2011, 11-12).⁵⁸

Curtius's portrait of Alexander focuses on the king's intemperance, obsession with control, paranoia and yielding to the vices of the Eastern world (Müller 2023, 109, notes 53 and 57). Curtius's rhetorical and moralizing style conveys an unfavorable and harshly critical image of the king, which is, however, balanced by a final praise of his strength. This interplay of darkness and greatness was one of the causes of the medieval fascination with Alexander (Stoneman 2011, 11). Before the beginning of the twelfth century, some of the *lacunae* in three of the manuscripts were filled with extracts from Julius Valerius and Curtius's extant books, in which a few analepses and prolepses of the lost parts were present, giving birth to another text which has been labeled *Supplement* (Smits 1987). The *Supplement* was the source for a Medieval Latin epic poem by twelfth-century French writer Gautier de Châtillon, called *Alexandreis* (Stoneman 2011, 12 and Cipolla 2013a, 52, 59).

Justin, or Justinus, was a second-century Roman historian who wrote an epitome of the *Liber Historiarum Philippicarum*, 'Philippic Histories', by the Gallic historian and Roman citizen Gnaeus Pompeius Trogus. Trogus's text is lost but appears to have been a history of the Macedonian Empire.

⁵⁷ Tiberius was emperor from 14 to 37, Claudius from 41 to 54 and Augustus from 27 BCE to 14. This note is mine.

⁵⁸ Cipolla (2013a, 39) also states that Curtius operated at an uncertain time during the Roman Empire, although his *Historiae* can be probably dated back to the first century.

While Justin's portrait of Alexander is rather damning, Flavius Josephus, a first-century Jewish historian and Roman citizen, in book XI of his *Antiquitates Judaicae*, 'The Antiquities of the Jews', presents Alexander in a favorable light. As a matter of fact, Josephus narrates Alexander's arrival to Jerusalem and praises the way he respectfully and generously treats the High Priest and the God of the Jews.⁵⁹

3.2.3 *Scriptural sources*

Alexander is mentioned in the Bible and in Biblical exegesis (Lienert 2019, 7-8). A brief sketch of his life is given in the first of the *Books of the Maccabees* (I, 1-7), quoted as the primary authoritative source of Lambrecht's work in the prologues of V and S. The *Maccabees* tell the story of the Jewish family from which the title derives and of their struggle against the Seleucid king of Syria Antiochus IV Epiphanes, heir of one of Alexander's successors. Only the first two books are accepted as canonical by the Catholic Church as part of the historical books of the Old Testament.

Secondly, Alexander is connected to the *Book of Daniel*, a text belonging to both the Jewish Bible and the Christian Old Testament. In the eighth book, the biblical Jewish prophet⁶⁰ has visions concerning four animals that have been interpreted by the fourth-century theologian Saint Jerome as the four kingdoms of the Neo-Babylonians, the Medes and Persians, the Greeks and Macedonians, and the Romans, encompassing the whole of human history. In his work *Commentaria in Danielelem*, 'Commentaries on Daniel', the theme of the succession of empires appears several times throughout the chapters of the book and has been subject to many different interpretations. According to Saint Jerome, the vision of a ram attacked by a he-goat symbolize the Persian king, i.e., Darius, being attacked by the Greek king, i.e., Alexander, who serves as the founder of the third empire. This biblical prophecy and its patristic interpretation are also mentioned in one of the *Alexanderlied* manuscripts (V 466-471).

3.2.4 *The medieval tradition*

The first medieval romance concerning Alexander written in a vernacular is the *Roman d'Alexandre*. It was composed around 1130 in Franco-Provençal octosyllabic verse by Albéric

⁵⁹ The source is the website of the *Penelope* project of the University of Chicago: <https://penelope.uchicago.edu/josephus/ant-11.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025. More specifically, this episode is found in Chapter 8. On Josephus's treatment of Alexander's life, see Cary 1956, 125-130.

⁶⁰ The tales are set at the turn of the seventh and sixth centuries BCE.

of Pisançon and only its beginning is extant (Mölk and Holtus 1999), namely around 105 lines spanning from the prologue to the beginning of Alexander's education (Lienert 2019, 16). The fragment was found in 1856 in a *lacuna* of a ninth-century manuscript⁶¹ containing Curtius Rufus's *Historiae*, written in Carolingian minuscule (Cipolla 2013a, 54-55).

The history of the textual tradition shows that the matter was rather popular in medieval France. Following Albéric's *Roman*, an anonymous and fragmentary work appeared around 1160, called *Alexandre décasyllabique*. Moreover, during the last two decades of the twelfth century, another *Roman d'Alexandre* crafted by Alexandre de Paris began to circulate (Harf-Lancner 2011, Lienert 2019, 11-12).

From a century-long and cross-cultural contamination stems the German version, the *Alexanderlied*, which is considered the first secular narrative work in Medieval German literature (Cipolla 2013b, 16) and the first rewriting of a French source (Lienert 2019, 7). However, these two judgments must be put into perspective, since, as mentioned above, the prologue to the *liet* referred to scriptural sources, and because, as far as is known, the redactors of the *Alexanderlied* were familiar with many Roman and Middle Latin sources and, in the case of the Basel version, also with Middle High German sources.

The poem is handed down in three recensions:

- The *Vorauer Alexander* – V – is preserved in a miscellaneous manuscript, located in Vorau, Styria, Vorau, Archiv des Augustiner Chorherrenstiftes, Ms 276, ff. 109ra-115va,⁶² which is commonly dated in the last quarter of the twelfth century.
- The *Straßburg Alexander* – S – was contained in an early thirteenth-century miscellaneous codex from central-western Germany, Straßburg, Seminarbibliothek, Cod. C. V. 16.6. 4°, ff. 13va-29ra,⁶³ which was lost to a fire on August 24, 1870, during the Franco-Prussian War.

⁶¹ Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 64. 35, ff. 115r-116r.

⁶² Facsimile: https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/stav_ms276/0225/image.info. Last access: 22.04.2025.
Description: <https://www.handschriftencensus.de/1432>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

Digital Edition: <https://dh.dlcs.univr.it/dse/dal/v/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁶³ Partial facsimile: <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb10973715?page=45>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

Description: <https://handschriftencensus.de/3680>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

Digital Edition: <https://dh.dlcs.univr.it/dse/dal/s/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

- The *Basler Alexander* – B – is found in a fifteenth-century historiographical miscellany from Basel, Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. E VI 26, ff. 22vb-67va.⁶⁴

There is a general consensus among scholars that the three manuscripts are witnesses to one work on Alexander the Great by a single author and contain heavily manipulated rewritings of it, with no complete archetype (Cipolla 2013a, 17). Therefore, the three rewritings can be considered independent versions of a partially shared model (Cipolla 2023a, 73).

The *Alexanderlied* is an interesting object of study because of the fictionalization of Alexander's figure in the medieval reception and of its complexity as an active, heavily contaminated tradition. As a matter of fact, in V and S the events are presented in parallel from the beginning of the text till the episode of Darius's assembly in Mesopotamia,⁶⁵ whereas in B the beginning is different. The three recensions share a common nucleus, which has been identified with the "patchily survived authorial work of Lambrecht, or even of Alberich, the earliest Old French reference" (Cipolla 2018, 105). As previously mentioned, Albéric of Pisançon was a medieval French poet to whom the earliest vernacular poem on Alexander is ascribed, dating back to the beginning of the twelfth century and surviving in only around a hundred octosyllabic lines. The hint at the French – more specifically Franco-Provençal – model, which draws from the already-mentioned *Epitome* by Julius Valerius and from the *Historiae* by Curtius Rufus, appears in V and S. B, on the other hand, by reintroducing the legend of Nectanebus, rewrites the beginning of the poem, omits the prologue present in the two older versions and does not allude to Lamprecht nor Albéric. As a matter of fact, V and S, as well as Albéric, claimed Alexander's legitimate descent from Philip II of Macedon.

The common nucleus spans from Bucephalus's episode to Darius's assembly, although the shared parts show relevant discrepancies, by the presence or elimination of certain Scriptural allusions, but, more importantly, by marked differences in style, meter, and vocabulary. Then, they diverge substantially from one another and independently carry on with the story drawing on different source material from the same Middle-Latin Alexander tradition (Cipolla 2013a, 17). V ends with Darius's defeat and beheading at the hands of Alexander, S with Alexander's letter to his mother Olympias, in which he tells of his mythicized adventures in India, with a legendary attempt to submit the Earthly Paradise, and then with his death, whereas B, in

⁶⁴ Facsimile: https://ub.unibas.ch/digi/a100/diverse_projekte/pdf2010ff/bau_5/BAU_5_000086050.pdf. Last access: 22.04.2025.

Description: <https://handschriftencensus.de/7373>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

Digital Edition: <https://dh.dlss.univr.it/dse/dal/b/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁶⁵ In section 4.3 I will provide more details on line numbering, but for further information on the line numbering criteria and the related editions, cf. Cipolla 2013a, 17.

addition to the last two enterprises mentioned in S, includes accounts of Alexander's fantastical travels in the sky and under the sea, probably deriving them from a source in German vernacular:

All three manuscripts recount similar episodes from the taming of Bucephalus to the gathering of Darius's troops on the meadows of Mesopotamia, for the final battle with the Persian king. The common text of *Alexanderlied* does not comprise the travels in India. These are narrated in the continuations that stem from at least two hyparchetypes conjectured as intermediary stages behind the S and B versions, both significantly longer than that of V. (Cipolla 2016, 126-127)

The *mouvance* of the tradition and its sources makes a comparative study even more arduous:

The models [...] are manifold and the common text was engendered by a compilative method. Under the impact of Crusade writing, the earliest Latin offspring of Pseudo-Callisthenes (Julius Valerius and his *Epitome*) was merged with Alexander's depictions in Roman historiography (Curtius, Justin, Josephus and Orosius) and with biblical speculations. [...] It seems impossible to trace any consequent and stable line of derivation through the stemma of sources, or to mark a neat divide between Middle Latin, Old French and Middle High German Alexander traditions, inasmuch as the poems in both the Francophone and Germanophone areas unexpectedly diverge or converge in isolated features, at the same time unpredictably varying their adherence to interchangeable Latin models (which were in part coeval to the vernacular texts). (Cipolla 2016, 128)

However, it is not just the plentiful sources and the heavily contaminated content that complicate the comparison of the three versions. Naturally, given that they belong to different centuries and geographical areas, the texts also differ with respect to the language (Cipolla 2013b, 59). Moreover, stylistic features need to be taken into account, as, for instance, the text in V and S is organized in *laissez*, as was customary in the *Frühmittelhochdeutsch* period, although these two redactions differ greatly in the regularity with which the verses and couplets are crafted.⁶⁶ On the other hand, B is divided into longer paragraphs, more in keeping with the historiographical context within which the poem is transmitted (Cipolla 2013b, 65).

⁶⁶ A *laisse*, from the French verb *laisser*, 'to leave', is a type of verse that was popular in medieval epic poetry, starting with France. The number of lines constituting an Old French *laisse* was variable, but generally the number of syllables for each line was eight, ten or twelve, i.e., octonaries, decasyllables or dodecasyllables. In early Middle High German poetry, the lines could be connected by assonance which gradually evolved to rhyme.

In the following sections I will describe the three German versions in more detail and highlight their peculiarities.

3.2.4.1 *The manuscripts*

3.2.4.1.1 *Vorau*

3.2.4.1.1.1 *Codicology, paleography and language*

The *Vorauer Alexander* is part of a bilingual miscellaneous parchment codex, *Vorau, Augustiner-Chorherrenstift, Cod. 276*, dating back to a period between the end of the twelfth century and the first decade of the thirteenth century.⁶⁷ The only text in Latin is the prose work that brings the manuscript to a close, i.e., Otto von Freising's *Gesta Friderici I. imperatoris*,⁶⁸ whereas all the other texts are in Austro-Bavarian. The opening text is the *Kaiserchronik*, which is followed by a series of vernacular poems inspired by the Old and the New Testament and Christian eschatology.

It is a luxurious, parchment book consisting of 183 ff., not to be used as a study instrument. As a matter of fact, a marginal annotation placed before the beginning of its Latin section states that it was realized on the commission of Abbot Bernard of Vorau, in office from 1185 to 1202 as monastery provost and school master. The importance of the figure and the prestige of the center are directly proportional to the care put in the crafting of the codex (Cipolla 2013b, 31-32, 50), whose worth is also indicated by its considerable dimensions, i.e., 45 x 32,5 cm. However, even though it is clear that the *Gesta Friderici* were commissioned by Bernard and that the codex has a consistent appearance, it is not sure whether it comes from Vorau, as it shows stylistic features of the Salzburg school, to which the Vorau scriptorium belonged. It was written by one main hand, plus three others who intervene only sporadically, and by the rubricator, who designed the small capitals, the *litterae Langobardae*, i.e., the colored uncial or small capital initials – red and blue in this case – that signal the beginning of a *laisse* in the German section of the codex with poetic texts.

⁶⁷ To be more precise, according to Cipolla (2018, 104) the period of time is 1163-1202, which corresponds to the span between the foundation of the Vorau scriptorium and Bernard's death. Buschinger (2011, 291) proposes around 1150.

⁶⁸ Otto von Freising was a twelfth-century Catholic bishop. The emperor who is the subject of his *Gesta* is Friedrich I "Rotbart", emperor of the Holy Roman Empire for the second half of the twelfth century.

It is worth noting that the *Alexanderlied* begins on a new folium, namely f. 109r, with seven empty lines at the top of the left column, and that the last word, *lazen*, ‘leave’, on the ninth line of f.115v, ends with small capital *e* and *n*.

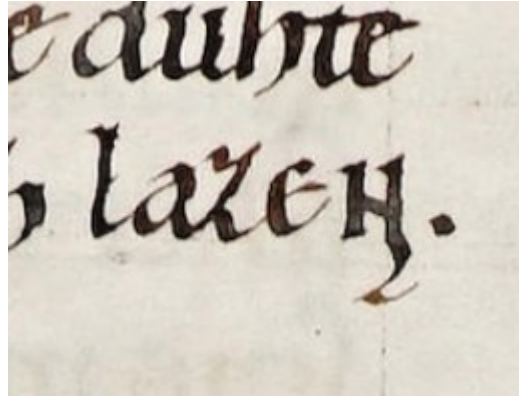


Figure 15: Vorau, Archiv des Augustiner Chorherrenstiftes, StAV-Ms 276. 115v

Since blank space before the beginning of a text is to be found in only three instances,⁶⁹ this probably indicates, in addition to the fact that the *Alexanderlied* is exactly in the middle of the codex, that Lambrecht’s work was given particular importance and, therefore, needed to be emphasized graphically (Cipolla 2013a, 101 and Cipolla 2013b, 49-51). Furthermore, it could also hint at a different antigraph from that of the neighboring works (Grubmüller 2000). The first capital letter occupies a space corresponding to four lines, it is blue with red, floral decorations. The text is arranged in a two-column layout and the end of a poetic line is indicated by metrical dots. As a matter of fact, line breaks in the manuscript are not used to signal the end of a line of verse.

The script is a calligraphic, elegant and homogeneous kind of Late Carolingian or Proto-Gothic book script. Late Carolingian scripts of the tenth and eleventh century are characterized by a smaller and narrower appearance and by the elimination of ligatures in favor of separate and more legible letters and words. Gothic scripts first appeared in England, northern France and Belgium at the end of the eleventh century and they started to spread to Germany mid-twelfth century, starting from the Rhine area. These scripts are characterized by a narrower and elongated ductus in the shafts, whereas the horizontal and diagonal lines appear thinner. Another distinguishing feature is the so-called *Brechung*, ‘breaking’, namely the interruption of the ductus while drawing arches, which increases the angularity of the characters. Arches and letters are often connected, resulting in compact writing which makes it trickier to discern the ductus.

⁶⁹ F. 73vb between the *Kaiserchronik* and the *Vorauer Bücher Mosis*, f. 96vb between the *Wahrheit* and the *Summa Theologiae*, f. 108vb between the *Jüngere Judith* and the *Alexanderlied*.

In the German area, spreading from the West to the Rhine region before the half of the thirteenth century, a type of Gothicized script, called *textualis*, asserted itself in almost all German-speaking areas till around 1275, and comes across as fairly regular, legible and compact (Schneider 1999, 22-39). In the specific case of the *Vorauer Handschrift*, it would be more precise to talk about *schrägovaler Stil*, ‘oblique oval style’, a transitional type of Carolingian minuscule originated in Bavarian and Austrian monasteries in the first half of the eleventh century and named after the typical slanting of the character *o*, which does not appear to be completely round, and of the shafts. Another peculiarity of this southern style, in addition to its uniformity and harmony, is the form of *z*, which looks like an *h* with an arched ascender, hence called *h-z*. This script thrived in the twelfth century and remained widespread in its original areas till the beginning of the thirteenth (Schneider 1999, 26). Another characteristic of the *Vorauer* manuscript is that abbreviations and superscripts are not frequent (Cipolla 2013b, 51).

If, on the one hand, the attention to calligraphy is evident, irregularity is pervasive in other aspects. Looking at the *Vorauer Alexander*, meter, style and language are not used consistently. For example, as far as meter is concerned, in the *laissez* the length of the poetic lines is sometimes uneven and the rhyming couplets unmatching. The style seems crude at times, with abrupt passages and abbreviated poetic lines, giving the impression that the copyist intervened on his model by summarizing the text, making it difficult to establish definitively which features belong to the source text and which to the *Vorauer* hand. The reading is further complicated by a strikingly chaotic treatment of *h*, which is omitted, dislocated, redundant or metathesized more frequently than in other manuscripts, as there was no orthographic standard at the time. As already mentioned, the book is a collection of texts found in and gathered from different manuscripts, and it can be observed that the ones at the extremities have Bavarian traits, whereas the ones in the middle show traces of Franconian dialects (Grubmüller 2000, 220). The *Vorauer Alexander* is also a mixture of various dialects, which contributes to the irregularity that characterized the text. Cipolla (2016b, 28-29), states that:

[...] the script of the *Vorauer Alexander* appears difficult to categorise in phonological terms, while the closeness of its graphemes with either Franconian or Austro-Bavarian descriptions is doubtful. It displays atomised regionalisms and impenetrable features scattered throughout the whole poem, so that conventional dialectology fails to explain graphemic issues such as the reversibility of diphthongs (either in expanded forms or abbreviations), or the inconsistent use of *h* (merging with the similarly inconsistent spelling of consonant clusters, *sch* ahead).

Some instances from the idiom of the Trier area, allegedly Lambrecht's region, are present, but inconsistently and alternating with Bavarian ones (Cipolla 2013b, 52-53), such as <ai> for the diphthong /ei/, as mentioned by Cölln (2004, 34). Cölln (2004, 27) also observes that the transmission process has obscured the Moselle-Franconian features so much that only traces of the dialect can be found in the *Vorauer Alexander*, and, to justify the presence of non-Upper-German forms – *Oberdeutsch* –, he takes the idiosyncratic end of the V version as an example:

Es stehen mitteldeutsche Formen (*bizher*), mittelfränkische Formen (Reibelaut im Auslaut; ›gescheen‹ oder ›geschiet‹ als Partizip von ›geschehen‹) und mosel- und/oder rheinfränkische Formen (/u/ für /iu/) neben den bairischen. Hinzu kommen einige Formen, die eine nicht-bairische Herkunft vermuten lassen: *infahen* statt ›enphahen‹, und <h>-Schreibungen vor und nach -t-. Der sogenannte ›Vorauer Schluß‹ weist also eine wmd. Schreibdialektmischung auf, wie sie die Vorauer Überlieferung von Lamprechts Alexanderdichtung im Ganzen hat. Ob ihr die ursprüngliche Fassung Lamprechts zugrunde liegt oder eine bereits im Wmd. umgearbeitete Fassung, ist freilich nicht entscheidbar. Jedoch ist der Schluß der Alexanderdichtung nicht erst für die Vorauer Handschrift entstanden, sondern befand sich bereits in der Vorlage, die der für die Herstellung der Vorauer Handschrift verantwortliche Propst Bernhard I. zur Verfügung hatte. Aufgrund der Ordenskontakte zwischen den Augustinerchorherren sind zudem Vermittlungswege aus dem wmd. Raum nach Vorau historisch nachweisbar. (Cölln 2004, 35)⁷⁰

Cölln rectifies Waag's work (1886, 128-129), which had already discussed the issue, claiming that the scribe of V was copying carefully from a Central German model, whose peculiarities he reproduces in his writing. According to Waag, a Central German provenance of the original, more specifically from Cologne, is demonstrated by linguistic features such as the forms *têht* and *dêht*, 'did', which always rhyme with *deit*, 'does'. Waag surmises that the original was then copied by an Upper German scribe, who behaved less conservatively and tried to bring the original closer to his own southern dialect, for example by alternating *b-* and *p-*. It is this southern version that Waag imagines as the model of the scribe of the *Vorauer Alexander*.

⁷⁰ 'There are Central German forms (*bizher*), Central Franconian forms (a fricative sound in final position; *gescheen* or *geschiet* as the participle of *geschehen*), and Moselle and/or Rhine Franconian forms (/u/ for /iu/), alongside Bavarian ones. In addition, there are some forms suggesting a non-Bavarian origin: *infahen* instead of *enphahen*, and <h>-spellings before and after -t-. The so-called "Vorau Conclusion" thus displays a mix of written West Middle German dialects, as is generally the case in the Vorau recension of Lamprecht's *Alexanderlied*. Whether it is based on Lamprecht's original version or on a version already adapted into West Middle German cannot be determined. However, the conclusion of the *Alexanderlied* did not originate solely for the Vorau manuscript, but was already present in the exemplar available to Provost Bernhard I, who was responsible for producing the Vorau manuscript. Moreover, historical evidence confirms channels of transmission from the West Middle German region to Vorau, thanks to the religious orders' contacts between the Augustinian Canons'.

Another stylistic peculiarity that V does not share with S and B is the frequent presence of exclamations and comments by the narrating voice, which indicate ties to the oral tradition (Cipolla 2013a, 105).

3.2.4.1.1.2 *Vorauer Alexander: content, sources, relationship to S and B*

Consisting of 1,515 couplets⁷¹ and ninety-two *laissez* of varying length, the *Vorauer Alexander* is located, as already mentioned, in the middle of the codex, between the veterotestamentary poems and another series of texts of religious matter, as a sort of connection between the two groups and, therefore, between Old and New Testament. The moralizing tone of V and the anachronistic feudal context in which the story is set are testament to Alexander's role as link between the ancient rules and the Germanic emperors. As a matter of fact, Alexander serves as *exemplum* to the Christian sovereigns, both as a warning against the deadly sins of wrath and pride and as a legitimation of the military campaigns in the Holy Land (Cipolla 2013b, 25-26).

V's text relies on Julius Valerius's *Epitome* and on the *Supplement* to Curtius Rufus, and recounts only a part of Alexander's legendary life and deeds. It begins with a prologue in which the poet states that the *lit*, 'song', that is about to be presented was composed by the cleric Lambrecht, who is referred to in the third person as a sign of humility (Mackert 1999, 88). In the following lines, the poet mentions Alexander's appearance in the *Book of the Maccabees*, as another hint to the Christian framework of the poem. He goes on to say that the song was composed by the French Albéric of "Bisinzio" and that his present task is translating it into German.⁷²

Shared by the older Vorau and Strasbourg versions only, Lambrecht's prologue adduces as a model an Old French *liet* by a certain Alberich. Scholars believe that, at the beginning of the twelfth century, the opening stanzas of this lost poetic source were recorded by later users on ff. 115va-116r of the Florentine codex of Curtius (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. LXIV, cod. 35, ninth century), to fill one of the gaps in the tradition of the historian's work (which stems from a defective Caroline archetype). In all surviving manuscripts of Curtius, in fact, the first book and the opening incidents in the Macedonian's life, along with other ensuing sections of the work, are lost. The fragmentary French poem recovered in the Florentine manuscript was recast many times in the course of the twelfth century, changing metrical form

⁷¹ In Lienert (2019) and Cipolla (2013b). Kinzel (1884) counts 1,533 lines.

⁷² According to Buschinger, Albéric wrote his poem around 1100, which Lambrecht adapted into German around 1150 (2011, 291).

and extent: the whole of this prolonged and multi-authored literary undertaking is known as the Old French *Roman d'Alexandre*. (Cipolla 2016, 127)

On the topic of Albéric's geographical location, several scholars debated vividly, as summarized by Mölk and Holtus (1999, 582-584). They report that Lambrecht, on line 13 of the *Vorauer Alexander*, undoubtedly indicated the city of Besançon in Eastern France, although some philologists seemed to exclude the hypothesis because of Albéric's language and thus assumed that Lambrecht made a mistake in his writing. Consequently, other theories on Albéric's provenance were proposed. Meyer suggested Briançon, in Southeastern France and close to border with the Italian region of Piedmont, Pisançon, to the south-west of Briançon, or Pizançon, in the southeastern department of Drôme. This last conjecture was supported by Ronjat on the basis of the fragment's language, which he describes as a midway point between Franco-Provençal and Provençal – *langue d'oc*, Occitan –, surmising that the name found in documents between the eleventh and the fourteenth century, i.e., *Pisansan*, underwent two changes, namely the sonorization of the initial bilabial occlusive /p/ > /b/ and the change of the suffix *-an* to *-o(n)* to become the *Bisinz*/*Bisenzun* found in Lambrecht – in V and S respectively –. However, Mölk and Holtus question the plausibility of this reasoning, since it cannot be assumed that Albéric used the language of his area in his own work. Instead, they believe it is more likely that he used a mixture of a language that his audience would understand and of the two Gallo-Roman written, literary languages. Hence, they propose that Besançon could have been his hometown and that he could have written his poem elsewhere in Burgundy, as traveling was not uncommon and can exert some influence on language.

Lambrecht/Lambert and Albéric are also mentioned in the *Alexandre décasyllabique*, the already-mentioned and earliest reworking of the French *Roman d'Alexandre*, handed down in two witnesses.⁷³ In the two manuscripts, the fragmentary decasyllabic text stops at the episode narrating Alexander's victory against Nicolaus and is continued by a longer section in dodecasyllabic lines, which comes from Alexandre de Paris's versions and resumes the story from Darius's defeat and contains the attribution of the work's authorship to twelfth-century poet Lambert le Tort, cleric of Châteaudun. Nineteenth-century scholars have debated whether Lambrecht can be identified with Lambert, and while Jacob Grimm seems to consider the possibility, Massmann, Weismann and Meyer reject the hypothesis. As far as Albéric is concerned, the Venice recension explicitly deny his authorship, while V and S state that Lambrecht readapted his model, i.e., Albéric's French text, in German. In the Arsenal

⁷³ Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, ms. 3472 and Venice, Museo Civico VI, 665.

manuscript, the line in which the matter of rejected authorship is discussed is, on the other hand, absent (Cipolla 2013a, 29, 62-64).

Alexander's story starts with his birth and has a peculiar end in the Vorau version. V's tale is the only one among the countless sources on Alexander to state that Darius was decapitated and killed by Alexander himself, whereas both narrative and historiographical sources report that the Persian king was victim of a conspiracy among his men.

After this episode, V ends abruptly, which led scholars to formulate a series of hypotheses. It could be speculated that the compiler of the Vorau manuscript shortened the version of Lambrecht's text he was copying, or, on the other hand, that Lambrecht's text ended with Darius's death. Given that the continuations in S and B draw from Leo and the *Historia de preliis*, it would be plausible to surmise that S and B followed the same subarchetype.

The *Vorauer Handschrift* shows signs of usage, as it was rebound in the fifteenth century and the first folium of the *Alexanderlied*, f. 109r, in particular on the right column, has light exposure damage evident from the faded ink, which could be an indication that it was unbound, separated from the rest of the book, used and then inserted into the manuscript again. Looking at the apparent intent of the manuscript, another consideration that could be made is that:

[...] the V version represents the career of the Macedonian king [...] as a turning point in the providential history of the world [...], forerunning the Roman Empire and the triumph of the True Faith. The structure of the Vorau collection drafts the inescapable development of mankind towards its eschatological destiny [...]. Therefore, the events following the death of Darius (even the much beloved marvelous travels of Alexander) did not matter and were consequently kept out of the shortest V version of the *liet*, since its main purpose is the *translatio imperii* from the Persians to the Greek Alexander. (Cipolla 2018, 106)

Lienert (2019, 13) divides the text of the *Vorauer Alexander* into two main parts. The first part consists of Alexander's origins, birth, education, first heroic deeds and his ascent to the throne of Macedonia. The second part is taken up by the Persian war and it starts with the rally of Alexander's army, then it goes on with the campaigns in Italy and Palestine, the battle of Tyre, the duel against Mennes,⁷⁴ the exchange of letters with Darius, and ends with the final battle between the two kings and Alexander's beheading of Darius. Mölk and Holtus (1999) and Lienert (2019, 16) surmise that Albéric's text also ended with Darius's death, but other scholars

⁷⁴ The scene of the duel was inspired by the Battle of the Granicus, Alexander's first victory against Darius, which took place in 334 BCE.

claim that it originally consisted of more than the extant 105 lines, thinking that the narration ends too abruptly and that the comparison with other much longer poems in the Alexander tradition suggests several lost or cut-off episodes, as was common in the Middle Ages.

Nevertheless, the question remains unresolved. As I will show in the analysis of S and B, the understanding of the storyline is further complicated by the issue of sources and horizontal contamination.

3.2.4.1.2 *Straßburg*

3.2.4.1.2.1 *Codicology, paleography and language*

As already mentioned, S is the only one of the three manuscripts that was lost. It comprises 6,854 couplets⁷⁵ and presumably originates from the Rhineland. According to Schröder (1926, 150), it was copied at the earliest in 1187 or in any case soon after. On the date, however, there can be no absolute certainty:

As far as the version of Strasbourg is concerned, it lies between 1170 and 1187. Nevertheless, after the recent discovery of a copy of the first page of the manuscript of Strasbourg-Molsheim, burned in 1870, in which redaction S of the *Alexander* was transmitted, we can situate the manuscript around 1210, or even 1220 [...]. (Buschinger 2011, 292)

Further evidence for a more modern date can be found in the composition style of the S version, which strings together episodes from various sources in a mostly linear fashion and “is therefore very modern and would strengthen the hypothesis that it was written at a date later than that at which it is currently placed” (Buschinger 2011, 296).

In addition, Lienert (2019, 17), states that the *Straßburger Handschrift* was composed in 1187 at the earliest. This hypothesis is due to the colophon written in Latin at the bottom of f. 29r, the penultimate folium, and between the *Alexander* and the *Pilatus*, which reports Saladin’s conquest of Jerusalem and the Holy Land and the year 1187: *captuante saladino irohitanos annos millenos centenos ottogenos septenosq; reuolusat incarnatio uerbi*, ‘when Saladin captured Jerusalem’s inhabitants | it was the year 1187 from the Incarnation of the Word’.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ In Lienert (2019) and Cipolla (2023b). Kinzel (1884) counts 7,302 lines.

⁷⁶ Translation by Cipolla 2023b, in the MS Desc.

The miscellaneous parchment codex originally had four quires and thirty folia with a two-column layout and fifty-six lines for each column. It used metrical dots to signal the end of a poetic line, which was typical in German poetry until 1210 (Schröder 1925, 151). Schröder also praises the copyist as one of the best, given the precision and the respect with which he seems to handle the text by not intervening, except for very few cases in which he misunderstands it. Mackert (2001: 152) states that the dimensions of the folia were 29/30 x 21 cm. Therefore, as demonstrated, in order to be able to form an idea about what the parchment codex must have been, contemporary philologists need to resort to nineteenth-century editions, in addition to the lucky case of Heinrich Schreiber, professor at the University of Freiburg, who managed to replicate some lines of the first column of the codex in 1828,⁷⁷ having previously announced its discovery in 1824.

A bifolium, the outer of the second quire, was already missing before the editions could be prepared,⁷⁸ but the text handed down by the print editions comprises Alexander's life in its entirety. The missing parts, which I have indicated in table in 4.3 (20: A synoptic table of the textual units), span from Alexander's realization of Philip's accident during the banquet brawl to Alexander's message to the city of Tyre. The *Straßburger Alexander* is preceded by two short devotional texts, the *Rede von deme heiligen gelouben*, 'Discourse on the Holy Faith', by the *Armer Hartmann*, 'poor Hartmann', a twelfth-century preacher, and the *Litanei*, 'Litany', by Heinrich von Seckau, a twelfth-century poet. The only text coming after the *Alexanderlied* is the unfinished poem *Pilatus*, which counts 621 lines and is attributed by some scholars to Herbot von Fritzlar, a poet active between the twelfth and the thirteenth century (Mackert 2001, 144, note 5). Mackert (2001) and Cipolla (2023b) speculate that, rather than a contemporary note, the colophon was added later as a pen trial before the copying of the *Pilatus*, after the *Alexander* was completed. Schröder (1925, 151) surmises that the manuscript itself was left unfinished and was meant to have space for other texts.

The *Straßburger Handschrift* is likely to have been composed in central-western Germany. Schröder (1925, 159) affirms that the copyist's most plausible area of provenance is the vale of the river Lahn and that his language shows influences from Moselle Franconian. Mackert (2001: 145) observes that this is rather peculiar, as the extant miscellaneous manuscripts from the twelfth and thirteenth century were normally made in Bavaria and Austria. However, a Low German feature can be spotted in the text, namely the alternation between *-m* and *-n* in the

⁷⁷ The *Schriftprobe*, 'writing sample', is available on the website of the Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum: <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/view/bsb10973715?page=45>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁷⁸ See the table (20: A synoptic table of the textual units) below for the list of the missing episodes.

endings of the demonstrative pronoun and of the definite article, which causes problems with the expansion of abbreviations (Schröder 1925, 154-159). Another interesting feature is the elimination of intervocalic /h/, for example in *hoer* instead of *hóher*, ‘higher’ (770, 3707), *hoe* instead of *hóhe*, ‘high’ (3448, 4617), *hoen* (4963, 5020), *ho* instead of *hóh*, ‘high’ (4746, 5653, 6018, 6406) and *hoisten*, ‘highest’ (5349). Moreover, it is notable that the verb *sehen*, ‘to see’, is written with <g> instead of <h>, for example in the form *sagen* in lieu of *sahen*, ‘they saw’.

At least five different hands have been individuated. The first three are contemporary, while the last two are later. The first is an early gothic hand which wrote the texts and the colophon; the second was responsible for the decorated initials; the third corrected mistakes and lacunae; the fourth one added titles and explicit, except for the explicit of the *Alexanderlied*, which was written by the fifth (Mackert 2001, 151, note 35). As already mentioned, in contrast to the *Vorauer Handschrift*, the first hand show signs of gothicization: despite the rounded shape of the bows, which is typical of caroline scripts, the characters have upright shafts, <s>, <f> and <r> rest on the baseline, the *Brechung*, i.e., the interruption of the ductus, is visible on characters and shafts, upright and round <d> are juxtaposed, and round <s> is inconsistently found only at the end of the word. (Cipolla 2023b).

The manuscript first emerged in Alsace (Schröder 1925, 160) and was fully published by Massmann in 1828. Roth’s annotations, made in 1847 and collating the manuscript with Massmann’s 1828 edition, are extremely valuable because they allow for a partial reconstruction of how the codex was written. For example, he records punctuation marks, albeit inconsistently, explains Massmann’s expansions of the manuscript’s abbreviations, describes instances of unclear writing in the codex, signals printing mistakes, reintegrates omissions and comments on the language.

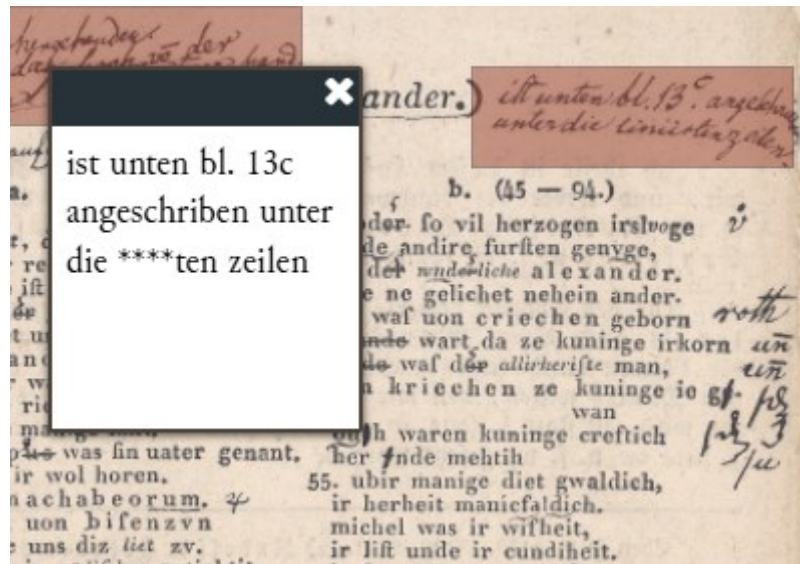


Figure 16: Screenshot from the DAL-S edition of the University of Verona, with an example of Roth's interventions: *DAL - Sp. 16*. The hotspot presents an older version of the transcribed intervention, in which the word *liniierten* had not yet been recognized. Last access: 22.04.2025.

3.2.4.1.2.2 *Straßburger Alexander: content, sources, relationship to V and B*

Lienert (2019, 17) divides the text into five parts. After the prologue and the presentation of the hero, the first section contains Alexander's youth and is interrupted, due to the loss of a bifolium, at the brawl during Philips's wedding feast scene. The second section gathers the Persian war, starting from the attack against Tyre and not from the description of the city because of the *lacuna*, following with the siege of Tyre, the duel against Mennes, the exchange of letters with Darius, the interruption of the war and the return to Greece, the new march towards Persia, the battle of the Euphrates, other sieges, the battle of the *Strâge*, Darius's getaway and subsequent murder, Alexander's takeover of the Persian throne and his wedding to Roxane. The third section contains the war against the Indian king Porus. The fourth section is dedicated to the adventures in the East, beginning with the peaceful encounter with the Occidrates, an exotic, fictional people, the letter about his journey East, including the stay in the land of the *Blumenmädchen*, the conflict-free encounter with resourceful queen Candace⁷⁹

⁷⁹ In the third book of Pseudo-Callisthenes, which starts with the Indian campaign and continues with Alexander and Candace's encounter, this female figure is the queen of Meroe, which, however, is not in India but in North-East Africa. This indicates either that it was thought that the region belonged to India or that the episode is an interpolation (Stoneman 2011, 5).

and the finding of the Amazons. The fifth and last part of the story is Alexander's failed attempt to submit the Earthly Paradise, his years of peaceful reign and his death.

The models for the continuation, as pointed out above, are Leo and the *Historia de preliis*, hence the presence of the Persian and Indian campaigns, the meeting with the Amazons and the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*,⁸⁰ 'Alexander's letter to Aristotle', about the wonders of India. At this point of the story, S adds an episode that in B is present in a shortened version drawn from Jans der Enikel, i.e., the expedition towards the Earthly Paradise, whose source is the *Iter ad Paradisum*, 'Travel to Paradise', a twelfth-century anecdotal tale from the Jewish sacred text Talmūd. As in V, the purpose of this insertion was reinterpreting Alexander's figure in a Christian light. In fact, in the *Straßburger Alexander*, the pagan conqueror converts to Christianity before his death. Alexander's religious passing and his failure in the siege of the Earthly Paradise are once again a symbol of the defeat of vices, in this case Alexander's pride in his compulsive and continuous thirst for power, and epilogue of S's narration. As a matter of fact, the now lost S manuscript gathered a few of early German poems pointing at ethic and devotional issues, and it seems to revolve around the topic of faith, redemption and conversion from sin. Stoneman (2011, 20) clarifies the matter in detail:

It describes Alexander's voyage up the Ganges and arrival at a building with high mossy walls. An old man looks out and gives Alexander's messengers a stone resembling a human eye. Alexander takes this back to Susa, where an aged Jew interprets its meaning by placing it on a set of scales: it outweighs all the gold that can be piled on to the other pan of the scale, but a handful of dust easily outweighs it. Like the eye of man, it is never satiated by gold, but instantly overwhelmed by the dust that covers it in death. This parable encapsulates the moral that Alexander brought, above all, to the Middle Ages: limitless conquest does not provide an escape from death.

In S, not only does Alexander convert and humbles himself before God, but he also rules for twelve years as a non-violent king before dying, as opposed to the traditional death in Babylon reported by narrative and historiographical sources. Therefore, the final intent of the Straßburg version seems to present Alexander's journeys as a path to the realization he should abandon his frenzied eagerness:

⁸⁰ According to Buschinger (2011, 292) the *Letter* dates back to the tenth century.

After his victory over Porus and after the Indians had submitted to his authority, he did not want to conquer anything more for the time being. [...] he undertook the entire expedition to the East only because of the desire for discoveries and thirst for knowledge. [...] Now Alexander was master of the world, his career as a warrior was finished (S 6449–6464). Nonetheless, that was not sufficient for him. He wanted to conquer Paradise and demand a tax from it (S 6465ff.). The S redactor who suppressed both the voyage to the bottom of the sea and the voyage in the air, went on then, certainly of his own free will, instead of recounting the two battles of Babylon and expanding on the death of Alexander [...]. [...] the S redactor, who Christianized the figure of Alexander, showed him in a favorable light. Alexander, who with his expedition to Paradise wanted to surpass the limits assigned by God to men, to set foot on God's own territory, had a change of heart [...]. The S redactor [...] summed up the *vita* of Alexander [...]: *niwit mêr er behîlt/ allis des er ie beranc,/ wene erden siben vôte lanc,/ also der armiste man,/ der in die werlet ie bequam* [Of all that he had obtained, there remained to him nothing but seven feet of ground, like the poorest man who had ever come into the world] (S 7274–7278), and he ended his whole work with a new *memento mori* addressed to the public. (Buschinger 2011, 296-299)

Another episode that S does not share with V and B is the story of the *Blumenmädchen*, ‘flower-maidens’, which is found in the Eastern tradition on Alexander and in the *Alexandre dodécasyllabique* by Alexandre de Paris, the latest re-elaboration of the French *Roman d’Alexandre* from the end of the twelfth century. As Alexander and his army wander through the Indian deserts, they encounter one of the many marvels of India: beautiful, delightful young girls in an enchanted forest, who blossom directly from the vegetation when spring comes and wither away, dying, at the end of summer. As a kind of regeneration and abandonment, Alexander and his army spend three months and twelve days laying with the flower-girls, who, however, are bound to follow the cycle of nature and die in front of their forlorn lovers. The Macedonian king and his soldiers, released from their brief blissful condition, can do nothing but resume their march (lines 4707-4908 in Lienert 2019).

3.2.4.1.3 *Basel*

3.2.4.1.3.1 *Codicology, paleography and language*

The *Basler Alexander*⁸¹ is contained in the paper miscellany Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. E VI 26, originating from the city of Basel itself. It was copied in the codex between 1400 and 1439 (Cipolla 2018, 104) and written in Early New High German – *Frühneuhochdeutsch* – with marked Alemannic traits (Cipolla 2023c, 112). Although the codex was composed in a timeframe that goes from the beginning of the fifteenth century to the 1470s, its poetic texts are earlier. The composition of the *Basler Alexander*, for instance, can be dated back to the years between the 1280s and 1400 (Cipolla 2023c, 121) and the text is considered to stem from a thirteenth-century lost rewriting (Cipolla 2013a, 104). The manuscript was discovered by Wilhelm Wackernagel in 1835 at the university library of Basel, where it is still conserved today, and was first sent to print by Richard Maria Werner in 1881. Unfortunately, as of now, the codex is severely damaged due to the corrosion caused by the iron gall ink and needs to be restored, as the spine cannot be stretched to more than a narrow angle, making it impossible to leaf through it.⁸² Nevertheless, it is possible to notice that the manuscript lacks punctuation and that reading units are separated by two-line initials according to the content, giving the impression of a single and continuous tale, even though, as already said, the codex is a miscellany. Additionally, the manuscript does not contain illustrations, despite the dedicated blank spaces that can be observed between columns. The script is a cursive Gothic hand with many loops and thick descenders. The folia measure 29 x 21 cm, and the layout is double-column only until f. 179ra, whereas afterwards the text is arranged in one column.

As a matter of fact, the codex can be divided into two sections. The first one, from the beginning of the text until f. 179ra, is written by a single anonymous hand, whilst the second, a chronicle of the city of Basel, is written by different hands, some of whom signed their names, with few passages in Latin. The main text in the first section is the *Sächsische Weltchronik*, interpolated by the *Weltchronik* by Rudolf von Ems, which is itself interpolated by the *Weltchronik* by Jans der Enikel, and by the *Basler Trojanerkrieg* and the *Alexanderlied*. The end of the first section contains the *Baierische Fortsetzung*, ‘Bavarian Continuation’, to the *Sächsische Weltchronik*.

⁸¹ At the moment of writing, my colleague Lorenzo Ferroni (PhD Linguistics, cycle 37, University of Verona) is preparing a scholarly digital edition of B for his doctoral project. For more information on the *Basler Alexander*, I suggest looking at Cipolla 2023c and the website of the *Digital Alexanderlied* project: <https://dh.dlcs.univr.it/dse/dal/b/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁸² Colored scans of the pages transmitting the *Alexanderlied* were made by the library, which gave us permission to use them for the *Digital Alexanderlied* project (4.1).

The second part is started by the chaplain Erhart von Appenweiler, who compiled the chronicle from 1439 till 1471, also intervened with rubrications in the first part of the codex, serving as thematic indexes for the texts (Cipolla 2023c, 116-117), and is followed by an anonymous redactor. The other non-anonymous hands belong to the merchant Heinrich Sinner von Tachsfelden and to city-council member Hans Wiler. Although the chronicle by Rudolf is considered the prototype for the genre of German universal chronicles written in rhyming couplets, it appears that Jans's work was more relevant for the composition of the *Basler Alexander*. The *Weltchronik* by Jans der Enikel, written in Wien in the late thirteenth century, is a history of the world divided into episodes, from the Creation to the year 1250, from which B draws for the anecdotes concerning Alexander's fantastical travels. Jans's chronicle is also interpolated in Rudolf's and they open the *Basler Handschrift* with tales from the Old Testament. After these, before the history of the Roman empire, the narration touches upon its epic premises, namely the Trojan war, with the *Basler Trojanerkrieg* (Cipolla 2023c, 117). Alexander is also depicted as a central figure for the history of the world, in particular as the forerunner, alongside his soldiers, of the Saxons and the Swabians, to create a direct, legendary link between the Macedonian hero and the German peoples.

Indeed, as was common in miscellaneous fifteenth-century manuscripts, the text on Alexander was embedded in a historiographical work, in this case, the *Sächsische Weltchronik*.⁸³ The *Sächsische Weltchronik* mentions Alexander in chapters 13 and 19, in addition to an unidentifiable book named after and about Alexander. B spans over 45 ff., starting inside chapter 22 of the *Sächsische Weltchronik*, where the quires handing down B were added by mistake, breaking up a sentence of the *Sächsische Weltchronik* which started on the last lines of a left page (*verso*) and continued on the first lines of the following right page (*recto*), probably belonging to a different quire, before which the folia with the *Alexander* were inserted: this peculiar structure, alongside the empty section left for illustrations that did not make it into the manuscript, point to the existence of an antigraph of the codex. It is likely that B was copying from a model whose quires became mixed up, thereby prompting the displacement and inclusion of the hero's poetic biography at this point of the compilation (Cipolla 2023c, 119-121). In addition, the hand of the copyist of B and the hand of the redactor of the manuscript are not the same, as can be deduced by some mistakes in the text and the displacement of the *Alexander* inside an episode from Roman history (Cipolla 2023c, 112, 120). It is the only

⁸³ The *Sächsische Weltchronik*, 'Saxon World Chronicle', is a thirteenth-century universal history in prose, handed down in 53 known witnesses. Its manuscript transmission can be viewed here: <https://handschriftencensus.de/werke/327>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

witness that hands down the B recension of the *Alexanderlied*, and, despite the inaccuracies in style and meter, being the *codex unicus* for this text is not its sole feature of interest. As typical of the temporal and geographical context in which it was composed, the German Late Middle Ages, the codices intended as collections of universal chronicles – *Weltchroniken* – were also used as keepers of local historiographical reports and often had blank pages that were spared to subsequently write down a wide range of works, in prose and verse, on medieval German historiography and its subgenres, from different centuries. This information is critical to understanding the intent behind the text and the purpose of the whole codex. The deeds of Alexander the Great can be interpreted as the premise and model of the Christian empire, but it is not just the case with Alexander. As a matter of fact, the *Basler Handschrift* is the only witness handing down the *Trojanerkrieg*, an anonymous short poem on the fall of Troy, whose story, much as Alexander's, was particularly popular and perceived as connected to the vicissitudes of the period (Cipolla 2023c, 111).

3.2.4.1.3.2 *Basler Alexander: content, sources, relationship to V and S*

The *Basler Alexander* consists of 4,735 (Cipolla 2015) lines and is written in four-stress rhyming couplets, following the Middle High German tradition. Despite containing the highest number of stories, it is shorter than S because of a more concise writing style. Two other stylistic features that distinguish B from V and S is the often-broken rhyme and prose-like cadence (Cipolla 2013a, 226).

The B recension of the *Alexanderlied* is of particular significance because it gathers all of Alexander's adventures, drawing from numerous sources. It shows a predilection for the fantastical tales, which, as is the case with the *fabulae*, have a moral-teaching subtext. As a matter of fact, B diverges from V and S in the episode of Alexander's birth: in B, Alexander's father is not Philip, but an Egyptian sorcerer, Nectanebus, as told by Pseudo-Callisthenes and in the *Historia de preliis*. After the common nucleus, B shares some episodes with S: Alexander chasing after Darius and getting revenge on the men who murdered him, the war against the Indian king Poros, and the letter reporting the marvels of the East till the encounter with the Amazons (Cipolla 2023c, 120-122).

The episodes that do not appear in V and S converge in B from different sources. The *Historia de preliis* is the model for the beginning, as already mentioned, and the end of the tale, which consists of Alexander's return to Babylon, the alleged poisoning, the anointment of his Diadochi as successors, his death, and the transportation of his body to Alexandria. After the Indian

expedition, which is also narrated in S, Alexander launches a siege against the Earthly Paradise, then explores the depths of the sea in a vase, flies in the sky on a machine pulled by griffins, and then receives a prophecy of death from two talking trees at the eastern edge of the world. These adventures derive from Jans von Wien/der Enikel's *Weltchronik*.

Indeed, as opposed to V and S,

Due to the very fact that Alexander was the son of Nectanebus, the author of the Basel version could not make reference to Christian or aristocratic norms (like conjugal fidelity), nor could he integrate the hero into salvation history. The profane historiography could, at the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century, be recounted independent of biblical references and the B redactor gave priority to marvelous and exotic details. (Buschinger 2011, 300-302).

The complex interplay of different sources and traditions make it rather difficult to define the story and motifs of both the manuscript and the B recension with absolute certainty. For example, the episode of Gog and Magog, which is here inserted after the Indian adventures and before the fantastical travels inspired by Jans von Wien, does not seem to point to a specific direct model. However, the popularity of the *Historia de preliis* and the moral intent to present Alexander as an example of *hybris*, the negative personality trait that in the ancient Greek world designated excessive pride and arrogance, symbolized in B by Alexander's preposterous, unrealistic deeds (Cipolla 2023c, 124-125). Fascinating evidence, also in light of the fact that the manuscript is a celebration of the city of Basel, lies in one of the capitals of the Basel cathedral, on which the scene of Alexander's flight is sculpted in an array of other *exempla* of the deadly sin of pride (Cipolla 2023c, 124). Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Alexander's exploit into the sky was rather popular in the Middle Ages. For example, it is represented on a Byzantine relief of the St. Mark Basilica in Venice, stolen from Constantinople by the Venetians in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade, and also on a mosaic in the Italian city of Otranto, Puglia, crafted by Greek artists in the twelfth century (Cipolla 2016b, 130-131).

As summarized by Buschinger (2011, 313-314),

The fabulous destiny of Alexander, dead in the full flower of youth after having carried off quantities of successes and having conquered half of the then-known world, haunted the Middle Ages. The judgment of Alexander's life and deeds is only rarely objective. The majority of poets made use in their texts of the historical character with the goal of making a eulogy of the prince or even a "mirror of princes" for their patrons and sponsors, and with that in mind, they vindicated him, minimizing or completely wiping out the bad sides of his character. [...] In

contrast with V who inserted the history of Alexander into salvation history and in contrast with S who pursued goals of religious and political edification, the history of Alexander in the Basel version which is integrated into a historiographical compilation was recounted for itself, apparently without didactic intention. [...] It is nevertheless interesting to note that, most often, the poets did not fail to warn against the superbia and lack of moderation of the Macedonian king, and to consider his destiny as an example of the vanity of all human things. In this vein they continued thus to make use of the biography of Alexander to denounce the overconfidence of the age. In closing, let us underscore that this theme (the voyages and military campaigns of Alexander the Great) satisfied the needs of the public of the end of the Middle Ages for distraction and adventures.

3.2.4.1.4 Final remarks

I conclude this chapter by once again remarking that, in light of the transnational, cross-cultural and cross-epochal network of themes and intents, with the breadth of possible interpretations that comes with these intricacies, a synoptic representation of the sources handing down the Alexandrian matter seems to be absolutely essential if one hopes to understand the relationships among the texts and their peculiarities. Moreover, a synoptic representation of the tradition based on the division into textual units can be useful in a classroom environment to practice comparative analysis and teach the principles of textual criticism.

4 The synoptic digital edition of the *Alexanderlied*

4.1 Context

The idea for this PhD thesis was born as part of the *Digital Alexanderlied* – DAL – project,⁸⁴ launched at the University of Verona in the context of the funding scheme for the program “University Departments of Excellence”, which was established by the Italian Ministry for Universities and Research. For the round spanning the years 2018-2022, the focus of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures in Verona was the study of the application of digital technologies to language and literature.⁸⁵ The Germanic Philology section,⁸⁶ led by Adele Cipolla as principal investigator, embarked on various projects, including the *Digital Alexanderlied*.⁸⁷

The general goal of the DAL project is to create scholarly digital editions of all three versions of the *Alexanderlied*.⁸⁸ Diplomatic and interpretative transcriptions have been prepared for V and B, whereas for S, since the manuscript is no longer available, the text that has been encoded is a copy of its earliest printing (Massmann 1828), with comments by the German archivist Franz Roth on the margins.⁸⁹ In addition to the multi-level transcriptions, the editions, which so far can be visualized with the beta version of the software EVT 2 (Rosselli Del Turco 2019),⁹⁰ offer the possibility to browse through the digital facsimile of the manuscripts for V and B and through the scans of the annotated print edition of S. At the moment of writing, the HotSpots functionality has also been implemented to highlight features of interest in the facsimiles. A description and analysis of paleographical, codicological and textual features has been inserted in the <msDesc> section of the TEI files⁹¹ and can be accessed in the EVT presentation by clicking on BUTTONS.MSD in the top left corner.

⁸⁴ Description of the project on the department’s website: <https://www.dlls.univr.it/?ent=grupporic&id=413>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁸⁵ Description of the project on the department’s website: https://www-dlls-univr-it.translate.goog/?ent=progetto&id=5327&lang=en&x_tr_sl=it&x_tr_tl=en&x_tr_hl=en&x_tr_pto=sc. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁸⁶ Description of the research group on the department’s website: <https://www.dlls.univr.it/?ent=arearic&id=19&tipo=gruppo>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁸⁷ Home page of the DAL project: <https://dh.dlls.univr.it/dse/dal/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁸⁸ A beta diplomatic edition of V and a beta interpretative edition of S are freely available online. V: https://dh.dlls.univr.it/dse/dal-v/#/imgTxt?d=doc_1&p=DALV_fol_109r&s=text-front-div&e=diplomatic; S: <https://dh.dlls.univr.it/dse/dal-s/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁸⁹ Roth’s work is particularly valuable because he managed to behold the manuscript because it went lost. He collated the codex and Massmann’s edition, faithfully reporting the variants of the manuscript in his annotations, thereby bringing the print edition closer to the parchment witness.

⁹⁰ Downloadable here: <http://evt.labcd.unipi.it/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁹¹ Element description: <https://tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/ref-msDesc.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

Nevertheless, the ultimate goal envisioned for the *Digital Alexanderlied* has always been making a scholarly synoptic edition of V, S, and B. The aspiration is to offer a study tool to observe the three versions parallelly and provide the possibility to research similarities and differences without the constraints of the written page, by taking advantage of the hypertextual nature of the digital paradigm.

Indeed, a synoptic edition of the three versions continued to appear as the most efficient way to represent them:

Several early German texts (whose unwritten circulation is often more than presumptive) were freely adapted, in terms of extent, style and even the plot, to the general plans of the few books they were inserted in, resulting in strongly variable traditions. Therefore, to the editors of such works, current genealogical procedures (though never completely ignored) are inefficient: when actually choosing the readings to publish in critical texts, such editors seem relentlessly doomed to eclecticism. (Cipolla 2018, 102)

In the words of Haugen (2014, 237, 239, 241-242),

The traditional printed edition typically had to choose one way, or at best a few ways, to present the text. The need to focus was of economic nature: lack of space and cost of printing. The digital edition, as so often observed, is no longer limited by economy in the same sense as a printed edition. [...] Until recently, the synoptic edition was a cornucopia in the history of editing, an extravaganza, but it has now been superseded by the complete collection of texts made possible by digital editions. The digital age has in many ways redefined textual scholarship and will have profound effects on editorial practice. However, this redefinition has in no way, or at least not so far, led to any revolution in our understanding of texts. What it has revolutionized is our way of working with texts, because it has given us new and extremely versatile tools in organizing and analyzing texts and their history. Moreover, digital editions have become dynamic and interactive. In many cases they have moved the focus from the editor to the users [...].

Ten years later, Haugen's insightful and extensive reflections are still topical and apply very closely to this project.

The discussion on the descriptive and the reconstructive approach, which to choose and if they should be combined, is a vexing methodological problem of for traditions such as the *Alexanderlied*, which cannot be represented with the Lachmannian bidimensional tree-like

structure because of the already-mentioned heavy horizontal contamination. Selecting readings to build a single text is, in this case, impossible, not to mention that it would terribly skew the rendition of the *liet* and would not do justice to the immense and precious variation that makes the Alexandrian lore so challenging and fascinating. Due to time constraints, for my PhD project I focused on one possible presentation of V, S and B, namely their comparison by means of the division into textual units. However, an expansion of the project – for instance with the inclusion of sources – or a collation of the texts according to different criteria would not be “limited by economy” in the *continuum* of the digital environment:

It is true that synoptic editions are a rarity, even in the digital world, probably because, despite the endless potential of the hypertext and of the infinite information system that is the World Wide Web, the making of a synoptic edition is still rather demanding. Even though the parallel display of the text can highlight the textual variants, it is rather challenging to handle significant variation, as is the case with the *Alexanderlied* and, to mention a few, the lost bifolium of the *Straßburger Handschrift* and the additional episodes present in S and B. Moreover, the diversity and vastity of our textual cultural heritage hinders the establishment of standard, one-size-fits-all model for the encoding and presentation of a synoptic edition, leading to the development of *ad hoc* solutions to respect the nature of the source data, which is time-consuming and sometimes so project specific that a product cannot be reused. Regardless of the discipline, if a project remains closed in itself and does not reach specialists nor the general public, is it really honest to talk about *Erschließung*?

In light of the consideration made above, choosing a synoptic digital representation and a lean encoding model based on the marking and alignment of specific points in the texts was the guiding principle of the technical part of this project. By doing so, I avoided selecting or discarding variants, committing to an ideal text form that does not exist and complicating the use and reuse of the edition through an intricate system for, in Haugen’s words, the organization and analysis of the materials.

This synoptic edition was first intended as a prototype to experiment with the TEI and evaluate the suitability of an annotation scheme meant to support the research group in Verona in improving the observation and understanding of the texts. For this purpose, we decided to take only the common nucleus into consideration. Therefore, the amount of variation inside this shared portion was deemed an adequate testbed for the encoding model and the development of a web application that could mirror the interpretation of the textual data, which, as already mentioned, counts as only one possible take on the matter. However, the advantages to the team

were not the only aspect we strived for because we chose a limited portion of text with the intention of devoting sufficient time to testing the visualization options. To quote Haugen (2014) again, one of the best achievements of digital scholarly editing is the successful inclusion of the user through dynamic and interactive tools. This edition, therefore, is also designed as a study tool for students, interested parties and other scholars of the Alexandrian tradition.

In the next section I will describe how I have tried to abide by these principles in the making of the edition.

4.2 The encoding model

Creating an encoding model for textual material is a data structuring process based on multiple choices:

La codifica del testo si caratterizza pertanto come un processo di “formalizzazione”. Essa richiede la scelta o la costruzione del linguaggio formale che meglio risponde alle esigenze specifiche dell’elaborazione testuale, la correlazione tra le strutture sintattiche di tale linguaggio e le caratteristiche o elementi significativi del testo e, infine, la produzione di un modello formale e digitale che sia isomorfo rispetto all’originale. (Ciotti 2023, 68)⁹²

One of the priorities was creating a markup that could be as unbound as possible to specific of the *Alexanderlied*, so that it could also be applied to other textual traditions. In the words of Patrick Sahle,

Sophisticated editions require large amounts of time and money, making it unlikely that a subject, once dealt with, will be tackled again soon. Moreover, foundational work such as digital representation and basic transcriptions may be created only once. For this reason, editions should be as useful across disciplinary boundaries as possible. (Sahle 2016, 22)

Another reason to adopt this approach lies in the fact that forcing text into a formal representation can skew the nature of the text and provide a distorted view of it, especially if editorial choices are not documented and justified. This is why the digital philologist has the

⁹² ‘Text encoding is thus characterized as a “formalization” process. It requires choosing or creating the formal language which best suits the specific needs of textual processing, the correlation between the syntactic structures of this language and the characteristics or significant elements of the text and, to conclude, the development of a formal and digital model which is isomorphic to the original’.

imperative duty to highlight that the annotation scheme of choice is the result of their own scholarly interpretation:

The act of formalising the competence of the editor is to be seen as an achievement *per se*, for it can lead to more accountability and verifiability of the scholarly processes, which can be shared in its complexity with the community. As a matter of fact, such processes are of fundamental importance not only from a methodological perspective, but also for the proper understanding and contextualisation of the presented results. (Cugliana 2023, 1).

In the following sections I explain how I have analyzed and annotated the texts. Direct access to the XML files is possible from my public GitHub repository. GitHub⁹³ is an open, collaborative cloud-based developer platform which provides storage, sharing and exposure for code. It allows users to have control over the versioning of their work and to promptly show updates to other members of the team.

To access my repository, readers can simply click on this link and freely browse through my data, distributed with a CC-BY-NC-SA⁹⁴ license:

https://github.com/giudag/test_files_edition/tree/main/DAL_main_edition.⁹⁵

4.2.1 Trial and error

Despite the already mentioned advantages of XML, there is one significant limitation that the philologist may contend with. The rigid, hierarchical tree-like structure sometimes fails to represent the complexity of human literary production, since it is a computer language. Even the TEI, with its many perks, may create difficulties:

Although at the moment it is the most widespread and effective standard, we cannot but conclude that TEI encoding is a non-neutral tool, one which imposes its own *modus operandi* and constraints on the scholar. In addition to the numerous variables mentioned above regarding philological methods and types of texts to be edited, there is also the fact that inevitably different editors will encode the same text in a different way in spite of sharing the same methodology. (Rosselli Del Turco 2019, 106)

⁹³ GitHub home page: <https://github.com/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁹⁴ Description of the license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁹⁵ Last access: 22.04.2025.

Moreover, due to the richness of the TEI guidelines, it can be quite challenging to decide on an annotation model that structures a scholar's data precisely according to the scholar's interpretation:

With hundreds of elements for the description of textual structures and phenomena it embodies a pluralistic theory of text, developed over three decades by a large number of textual scholars representing various fields of research. (Ciula *et al.* 2023, 186)

As a matter of fact, the use of textual units as a criterion for dividing the text is not the one that had been envisioned in the original concept. The initial idea was to employ the category of events, which ultimately proved inadequate and overly restrictive. By event I was referring to an occurrence either in Alexander's life or in the course of the narrative, hence, in the TEI header, I had prepared a list of events grouped in `<listEvent>`.⁹⁶ This label, however, was later discarded because it would not have been applicable to passages such as the narrator's exclamations or comparative descriptions, e.g. the mention of Samson's strength during the duel with Mennes in 4.3.30, which are crucial to the study of the textual tradition and deserve to be identified by the markup. For this reason, textual units were subsequently chosen for the organization of the texts into building blocks.

After a preliminary individuation of the textual units, I started to use the TEI guidelines for a structural markup of the texts. The obvious choice for encoding the lines of verse that constitute the formal unit of the *laissez* was the element `<lg>`.⁹⁷ This element can be contained by the neutral textual division element `<div>`,⁹⁸ which I had assigned to the textual units and sub-units. However, since textual units do not always correspond to the span of text embedded in the *laissez* but, on the contrary, overflow in the following *laisse*, sometimes also ending in the middle of it, the hierarchical structure of the TEI would have forced me to break up the *laissez* and the textual units in an unorthodox manner that would have complicated the reading of the text, the markup and skew the perception of the texts' structure. For example, the markup would have become excessively dense with the use of the attributes to link disaggregated *laissez* and distinguish the main units from their subsections.

⁹⁶ Element description: <https://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/de/html/ref-listEvent.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁹⁷ Element description: <https://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/de/html/ref-lg.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

⁹⁸ Element description: <https://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/ref-div.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

```

<div type="episode_macro" xml:id="S_Darius_letter_gifts" corresp="#Darius_letter_gifts">
  <head>Darius sends Alexander a letter and three mocking gifts</head>
  <div>
    <lg xml:id="x1" next="#x2">
      ...
    </lg>
  </div>
  <div type="episode_subsection" xml:id="S_Darius_badmouths_Alexander" corresp="#Darius_badmouths_Alexander">
    <lg xml:id="x2" prev="#x1">
      ...
    </lg>
  </div>
  <div>
    ...
  </div>
</div>

```

Figure 17: A screenshot from an early phase of my annotation

For this reason, I had to look for a less rigid solution.

4.2.2 The final choice

The annotation model that I adopted is a stand-off markup. A stand-off markup is kept separate from the text and in my case it is found in the file **DAL-main**. The encoding is based on the following TEI elements and attributes:

- In the files with the texts:
 - **<pb/>**⁹⁹ to indicate the beginning of a new manuscript folium or, in the case of S, of a new page of the print edition, accompanied, in alphabetical order, by:
 - **@facts** for linking to the facsimile of the folium/page
 - **@n** for the folium/page number
 - **@xml:id** for the unique identification of text and folium/page
 - **<div>** for the *laissez*, with:
 - **@n** for numbering
 - **@type** to specify that the portion of text embedded in **<div>** is a *laisse* or a paragraph for B
 - **@xml:id** for the unique identification of witness, unit of lines (i.e. a **<div>**), and number of the *laisse*/paragraph
 - **<l>**¹⁰⁰ for each verse line, with the addition of:
 - **@n** for numbering

⁹⁹ Element description: <https://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/ref-pb.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹⁰⁰ Element description: <https://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/ref-l.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

- **@xml:id** for the unique identification of witness, unit (i.e. a `<l>`), and line number
- `<anchor/>`¹⁰¹ to delimit the beginning and end of a textual unit, alongside:
 - **@xml:id** for the unique identification of the textual unit, in which I indicate the witness, a short name for the unit, and whether it is the start or the end of the textual unit
- `<gap/>`¹⁰² for *lacunae* in the text, according to the editions I used, and to indicate the end of the common nucleus, with:
 - **@ana** to clarify the type of gap
 - **@extent** for the lacuna caused by the loss of S's bifolium
 - **@reason** to explain the presence of the gap
 - **@resp** to indicate the people responsible for the choice and/or the annotation
 - **@quantity** for the number of missing units in S
 - **@unit** for the measurement of the gap in S

```

<anchor xml:id="V_AlexandersDukes_against_Tyre_start"/>
<div n="60" type="laisse" xml:id="V_div_60">
  <l n="827" xml:id="V_l_827">Unde alsô daz castel was endwart,</l>
  <l n="828" xml:id="V_l_828">dô huob sich aein sturm hart</l>
  <l n="829" xml:id="V_l_829">von den herzogen zwein.</l>
  <l n="830" xml:id="V_l_830">Dô beleib der burgêr nie nechein.</l>
  <l n="831" xml:id="V_l_831">Â, wie maneger des sturmes enhalt!</l>
  <l n="832" xml:id="V_l_832">Ze zwain hundert wâren sie gezalt,</l>
  <l n="833" xml:id="V_l_833">die dâ tôt piliben,</l>
  <l n="834" xml:id="V_l_834">al dâ sis von den porten triben.</l>
  <l n="835" xml:id="V_l_835">Dâ wart in gescadet vil sêre.</l>
  <l n="836" xml:id="V_l_836">Duo alrêrist chom ir herre:</l>
  <l n="837" xml:id="V_l_837"><anchor xml:id="V_lament_for_Tyre_start"/>owê, daz Tyre duo
    niht genas,</l>
  <l n="838" xml:id="V_l_838">alsô wol ir ganegenget was!<anchor
    xml:id="V_lament_for_Tyre_end"/></l>
</div>
<anchor xml:id="V_AlexandersDukes_against_Tyre_end"/>

```

Figure 18: A sample from the TEI-XML encoding of *V*

¹⁰¹ Element description: <https://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/ref-anchor.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹⁰² Element description: <https://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/ref-gap.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

- In the stand-off file:
 - **<spanGrp>**¹⁰³ to group together a series of **** elements, accompanied by:
 - **@xml:id** to specify what kind of items the group of **** elements contains
 - ****¹⁰⁴ to define the portion of text I associated with a textual unit, specified by:
 - **@ana** to point to a sample of notes containing the critical commentary on the characteristics of the textual units (4.2.3.2)
 - **@corresp** for linking the textual unit under observation to the same units, when present, in the other texts
 - **@from** and **@to** to refer back to the start and end of a unit, defined by the **@xml:ids** inside the **<anchor>** elements
 - **@type** to specify whether the unit is a main unit or a sub-unit
 - **@xml:id** to identify the witness that contains the unit and the name of the unit's name
 - Since **** can contain itself, I used a nested hierarchy of **** elements to include sub-units inside an episode, i.e. in the main ****. The embedded **** elements are accompanied by the same attributes previously mentioned for the main ones.

The attributes **@n** and **@xml:id** were automatically assigned by running Python scripts written by Livio Bioglio.¹⁰⁵

<anchor> elements can be viewed as pins that fix a specific point in the text to which an identifier is assigned. It is an extremely neutral and flexible element which is not limited by literary genre nor the TEI hierarchy. A drawback, however, is that it is a self-closing element, which makes it hard to process it by XML parser, especially if it is used to delimit the beginning and the end of a portion of the text. This is why, for the future, I would like to experiment with the element **<seg>**,¹⁰⁶ still neutral and flexible because it indicates an arbitrary segment of text.

¹⁰³ Element description: <https://tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/ref-spanGrp.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹⁰⁴ Element description: <https://tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/ref-span.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹⁰⁵ Python scripts for EVT: <https://github.com/evt-project/scripts/tree/main/python>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹⁰⁶ Element description: <https://tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/ref-seg.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

The stand-off file was prepared to store information related to the textual units and their relationships separately, as opposed to in-line markup. The files containing the normalized transcriptions from the editions are thus more manageable because they contain only structural markup. Moreover, the problem of hierarchical constraints is solved with this method. Additionally, it gave me the possibility to take advantage of the fact that `` contains a comment on the portion of text it is associated with to add a brief description of the textual units without cluttering the text files with information.

```
<!-- TYRE FALLS-->
<span ana="#Tyre_falls" corresp="#S_Tyre_falls #B_Tyre_falls" from="#V_Tyre_falls_start"
to="#V_Tyre_falls_end" type="unit" xml:id="V_Tyre_falls"
><!-- TYRE'S REBIRTH --><span corresp="#S_Tyre_rebirth #B_Tyre_rebirth"
from="#V_Tyre_rebirth_start" to="#V_Tyre_rebirth_end" type="sub-unit"
xml:id="V_Tyre_rebirth"/>Tyre finally falls</span>
```

Figure 19: A sample from the stand-off file, section for V

4.2.3 Two small attempts for future expansion of the annotation

4.2.3.1 Couplets

After determining that the model for textual units worked well for alignment because of its flexibility and generic nature, I tried being more granular and connecting smaller units, i.e., the corresponding poetic lines.

The criterion I adopted to spot correspondences is looking for the same rhyming couplets in the three versions. Naturally, this approach is limited by the already-mentioned issues and characteristics of the tradition, such as the irregularity of meter for V and B.

I used the following TEI elements and attributes in the stand-off file:

- `<spanGrp>` inside the `` elements containing the textual units, i.e. `@type="episode"`, to group together another series of `` elements, this time with indications of the corresponding lines, accompanied by:
 - `@type`, with the value `"lines_alignment"`, to specify that this kind of `<spanGrp>` is a subgroup inside the textual units which gathers matching lines and not "episodes"
- `` to hold each match, specified by:
 - `@corresp` for linking the line or lines under scrutiny to their counterparts in the other witness or witnesses

- **@from** and **@to** to individuate the start and the end of a portion of text containing multiple lines that have matches in the other recensions or in just one of them
- **@xml:id** to refer to the witness and line number or numbers being examined. If only one line is matching, I used the same **@xml:id** I assigned to the line in the files with the annotated text, i.e., **witnessname_l_linenumber**. In the case of a span of more lines I used an **@xml:id** with a value that indicates the witness and the line numbers, **witnessname_linenumber1_linenumber2_**

4.2.3.2 Notes

The quantity of information that could be provided for each textual unit is massive, which I have attempted to summarize in 4.3. Given that potential users of the digital edition may not want to browse through the pages of the dissertation for details on the textual units, their content, and how they relate to one another, a rather important nice-to-have is the possibility of retrieving and visualizing information directly from the web application.

Consequently, in the **DAL-main** file I have added a section for the encoding of critical commentary, which was left as a small sample of notes because, for reasons of time, this functionality was not envisioned for the first release of the web application.

I used the following TEI elements and attributes at the bottom of the stand-off file:

- **<interpGrp>**¹⁰⁷ with the attribute **@type="comment"**, to group together another series of **<interp>** elements containing critical commentary on a textual unit
- **<interp>** with the attribute **@xml:id** to encode comments and link them to the corresponding **** through the **@ana** attributes of the latter

4.3 The textual units

In this section I will offer a detailed description of the textual units I have individuated in the three recensions and present them synoptically in a table, with concise titles and line numbers.

¹⁰⁷ Element description: <https://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/de/html/ref-interpGrp.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

I used three interpretative editions as sources for the texts that compose my synoptic edition, as the loss of S does not allow diplomatic transcription. Moreover, diplomatic transcriptions of V and B are already provided in other branches of the DAL project. For V I used Cipolla's (2013b) normalized print edition, who matches the line numbering also found in Lienert (2019, and her first edition from 2007), for S I took the version already provided in Cipolla's digital edition (2023b), who follows Massmann (1828), and for B¹⁰⁸ I followed Cipolla's (2015). For the numbering of lines, I adhere to the conventions adopted by the editions I used, which means that in this synoptic edition the common nucleus spans from line 235 to line 1479 in V, from line 269 to line 1583 in S, and from line 531 to line 1519 in B. Other authoritative editions propose different numberings, as they integrate lost or conjectured lines, such as Kinzel (1884), who proposes 237-1496 for the common nucleus in V and 270-2035 for S, and Werner (1881), who uses 535-1622 for B.

Despite the differences inside the tradition, which varies in the arrangement of the *laissez*, the core structure of the *Alexanderlied* consists of his historical and legendary biography, organized into the same recurring textual units in all three versions, which derive from Pseudo-Callisthenes and the main historical sources, such as Curtius Rufus, and flowed into Julius Valerius, Leo and derivatives, namely the *Historia de preliis*:

- Narrative parts, revolving around Alexander's life, deeds and adventures
- Embassies
- Letters
- Similes

I have categorized the units into two types, namely main units and sub-units. The criterion I adopted to determine which groups of lines count as main units is considering the timeline of Alexander's life and his deeds. A new phase of life, for example the passage from boyhood to manhood, or a new enterprise, like a new expedition, prompts a change of textual unit in my division. With sub-units I intend excurses, such as references to legendary or biblical content, and switches of location or perspective inside the same event, for example the actions and counteractions of opposing armies during the same battle or turn-taking in dialogues. The division of the text that was made for this project broadly corresponds to the one proposed by

¹⁰⁸ For the future, we plan to substitute this version of B with the edition prepared by my colleague Lorenzo Ferroni for his PhD thesis, so that, for consistency's sake, all the various branches of the DAL project can converge in the synoptic edition.

Lienert (2019, 13-14 and 17-18) but it is more granular to allow for a more detailed comparison and alignment of the three reworkings of Lambrecht's poem.

After this schematic representation, I will provide a broader analysis of each unit to point out the differences among the three texts, also considering the sources.

UNITS	SUB-UNITS	NOTES
<p>Bucephalus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 235-319 • S 269-376 • B 531-640 	<p>Presentation of Bucephalus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 235-263 • S 269-306 • B 531-565 <p>The prophecy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 264-271 • S 307-316 • B 566-579 <p>Alexander tames Bucephalus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 272-319 • S 317-376 • B 580-640 	
<p>Alexander's accolade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 320-373 • S 377-444 • B 641-683 	<p>Philip praises Alexander's bravery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 334-337 • S 397-400 • B 651-652 <p>Alexander asks to be knighted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 338-349 • S 402-419 • B 653-664 	

	<p>Alexander doubts that he is already worthy of being chosen as king</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 366-373 • S 437-444 • B 674-683 	
<p>King Nicolaus: Alexander's first military exploit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 374-379 • S 445-450 • B 684-690 		
<p>Philip's wedding with Cleopatra</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 380-433 • S 451-507 • B 691-766 	<p>Alexander breaks into the wedding feast</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 380-403 • S 451-480 • B 691-723 <p>Alexander's quarrel with Lysia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 404-415 • S 481-496 • B 724-745 <p>Brawl at the banquet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 416-433 • S 497-507 • B 746-766 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only in V Alexander reconciles his parents • S's lacuna begins at line 507 due to the lost bifolium
<p>Alexander conquers a city</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 434-459 • B 767-782 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In V the city is called <i>Antonia</i> • In B the city is unnamed
<p>Dispute with the Persian heralds on the tribute</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 460-499 • B 783-809 	<p>Daniel's prophecy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 466-471 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The biblical reference is omitted in B

<p>Alexander conquers the city of Thelemone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 500-519 • B 810-830 		
<p>Olympia's abduction and Philip's injury, Alexander's revenge and Philip's death</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 520-551 • B 831-862 	<p>Alexander's encounter with Pausonia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 520-529 • B 831-839 <p>Alexander's revenge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 530-540 • B 840-845 <p>Philip's death</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 541-551 • B 846-862 	
<p>Alexander becomes king</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 552-585 • B 863-891 	<p>Alexander gathers his warriors to fight the Persian tribute</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 562-579 • B 870-883 <p>Alexander's men swear allegiance to him and give him their blessing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 583-585 • B 887-891 	
<p>Alexander recruits allies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 586-603 • B 892-908 		
<p>Alexander in Italy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 604-629 • B 909-936 	<p>Subjugation of one of Darius's fiefs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B 909-916 <p>Sicily</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medieval element of the fief only in B

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 604-613 • B 917-922 <p>Subjugation of Rome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 614-629 • B 923-936 	
<p>Alexander in Carthage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 630-655 • B 937-961 	<p>Expedition to Africa and to Carthage</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 630-639 • B 937-948 <p>Alexander's call to arms in several countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 640-643 • B 949-952 <p>Feudal submission of the Carthaginians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 644-655 • B 953-961 	
<p>Alexander in Egypt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 656-673 • B 962-967 	<p>Alexandria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 656-659 • B 964-967 <p>Praise of the city</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 660-673 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrator's comment only in V • Alexandria is founded in V, conquered in B
<p>Alexander in the Holy Land</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 674-693 • B 968-984 	<p>Destruction of Biblical regions and cities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 674-682 • B 968-979 <p>Syriam and Naaman</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 683-685 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical references omitted in B

	<p>Betulia and Judith</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 686-687 <p>Alexander burns down Jerusalem and Bethlehem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 688-690 • B 980-981 <p>Alexander moves towards Tyre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 691-692 • B 981-983 <p>Alexander's losses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 693 • B 984 	
<p>Alexander arrives in Tyre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 694-748 • S 508-577 • B 985-1017 	<p>Description of Tyre's position and fortifications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 694-719 • B 985-988 <p>Alexander's embassies and claims on the inhabitants of Tyre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 720-731 • S 508-551 • B 989-1003 <p>Alexander's emissaries are hanged</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 732-748 • S 552-577 • B 1004-1017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S resumes after the description of Tyre

<p>Alexander besieges Tyre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 749-766 • S 578-621 • B 1018-1037 	<p>Alexander's first attempt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 749-752 • S 578-585 • B 1018-1025 <p>Tyre's counterattack</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 753-759 • S 586-606 • B 1026-1029 <p>The wind destroys Alexander's fleet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 760-762 • S 607-616 • B 1030-1034 <p>Alexander orders his fleet to withdraw</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 763-766 • S 617-621 • B 1035-1037 	
<p>Alexander's countermeasure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 767-810 • S 622-685 • B 1038-1068 	<p>Alexander devises to use war machines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 767-778 • S 622-639 • B 1038-1045 <p>Expedition to Mount Lebanon</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 779-786 • S 640-647 • B 1046-1051 <p>King Solomon and Hiram</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 787-794 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical references omitted in B

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S 648-657 <p>The Arabs hinder the expedition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 795-800 • S 658-665 • B 1052-1058 <p>Alexander leaves to rescue his men and entrusts the siege to two dukes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 801-810 • S 666-685 • B 1059-1068 	
<p>Tyre's revenge and attack</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 811-826 • S 686-709 • B 1069-1083 		
<p>Alexander's siege army and dukes against Tyre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 827-838 • S 710-730 • B 1084-1091 	<p>Lament over the fall of Tyre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 837-838 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrator's comment only in V
<p>Alexander breaches the first walls with the siege towers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 839-868 • S 731-777 • B 1092-1108 		
<p>Alexander breaches the second walls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 869-906 • S 778-829 • B 1109-1127 	<p>Alexander's weapons_1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 881-886 • S 796-804 <p>Alexander shoots the Duke of Tyre down</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise of Alexander's weapons omitted in B

	<p>from the walls with his spear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 887-892 • S 805-809 • B 1118-1121 <p>Alexander and his men leap to the battlements of Tyre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 893-906 • S 810-829 • B 1122-1127 	
<p>The battle on the walls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 907-940 • S 830-879 • B 1128-1147 	<p>Alexander's weapons_2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 922-926 • S 849-855 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise of Alexander's weapons omitted in B
<p>Alexander's council with his princes and the Greek fire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 941-980 • S 880-933 • B 1148-1192 		
<p>Alexander's revenge and the destruction of Tyre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 981-1005 • S 934-969 • B 1193-1215 	<p>Punishment of 3,000 of the wealthiest inhabitants of Tyre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 984-988 • S 937-941 • B 1196-1201 <p>Tyre's rebirth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 997-1005 • S 951-969 • B 1207-1215 	
<p>Darius learns of Tyre's fall</p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1006-1017 • S 970-985 • B 1216-1228 		
<p>Darius's letter and gifts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1018-1057 • S 986-1035 • B 1229-1253 	<p>Darius insults Alexander</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S 988-996 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darius's raging monologue only in S
<p>Alexander receives the gifts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1058-1115 • S 1036-1104 • B 1254-1289 	<p>Alexander and Darius's messengers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1058-1080 • S 1036-1060 • B 1254-1269 <p>Alexander reinterprets Darius's gifts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1081-1115 • S 1061-1104 • B 1270-1289 	
<p>Alexander's letter and challenge to Darius to the pitched battle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1116-1134 • S 1105-1125 • B 1290-1299 	<p>Prolepsis of Darius's beheading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1131 • S 1117 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrator's comment only in V and S
<p>Darius's reaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1135-1181 • S 1126-1190 • B 1300-1326 	<p>Darius receives Alexander's letter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1135-1145 • S 1126-1140 • B 1300-1305 <p>Darius calls his dukes Marios and Typotes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1146-1157 • S 1141-1154 • B 1306-1313 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darius's threat omitted in B

	<p>Darius threatens to hang Alexander</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1158-1161 • S 1155-1159 <p>Darius's dukes are skeptical of the king's request</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1162-1181 • S 1160-1190 • B 1314-1326 	
<p>Mennes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1182-1367 • S 1191-1452 • B 1327-1453 	<p>Darius sends Duke Mennes and his men to threaten Marios and Typotes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1182-1195 • S 1191-1214 • B 1327-1335 <p>Marios and Typotes gather their men</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1196-1202 • S 1215-1229 • B 1336-1339 <p>Alexander attacks at the ford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1203-1220 • S 1230-1253 • B 1340-1355 <p>Alexander's weapons_3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1221-1224 • S 1254-1258 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise of Alexander's weapons omitted in B: The weapon is a shaft in V, the weapons are a sword and a shaft in S • Mennes's bodyguards are 1,000 in S, 100 in V and B • Narrator's comment on Samson's strength only in V • Narrator's comment on Wulfinwerde and Troy only in V and S

	<p>Mennes and his bodyguards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1225-1232 • S 1259-1270 • B 1356-1357 <p>Single combat between Alexander and Mennes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1233-1246 • S 1271-1285 • B 1357-1374 <p>Comparison with Samson's strength</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1247-1250 <p>Alexander is thrown to the ground and loses his helmet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1251-1258 • S 1286-1308 • B 1375-1380 <p>Daclym defends Alexander from Jubal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1259-1273 • S 1309-1340 • B 1381-1397 <p>Thanks to Daclym, Alexander recovers and starts fighting again</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1274-1303 • S 1341-1377 • B 1398-1419 	
--	--	--

	<p>Comparison with the battles fought at Wulfinwerde and Troy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1304-1321 • S 1378-1396 <p>Alexander vs Pincun</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1322-1353 • S 1397-1434 • B 1420-1443 <p>Alexander kills Mennes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1354-1367 • S 1435-1452 • B 1444-1453 	
<p>Alexander takes Sardis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1368-1383 • S 1453-1472 • B 1454-1462 	<p>St. John and the Book of Revelation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1378-1383 • S 1465-1472 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical reference omitted in B
<p>Darius vows to hang Alexander</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1384-1397 • S 1473-1488 • B 1463-1470 		
<p>Darius calls the pitched battle in Mesopotamia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1398-1416 • S 1489-1513 • B 1471-1481 		
<p>Catalogue of peoples and countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1417-1479 • S 1514-1583 • B 1482-1519 	<p>Media and Tobia's legend</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1443-1445 • S 1542-1544 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biblical references omitted in B

	Armenia and the landing of Noah's ark <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1450-1455 • S 1553-1556 	
	Gaza and the Philistines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • V 1456-1459 • S 1561 1564 	

20: A synoptic table of the textual units

4.3.1 *Bucephalus* (V 235-319, S 269-376, B 531-640)

The common nucleus begins with the textual section dedicated to Bucephalus, which I have further divided into three sub-units: 1. The presentation and description of the horse, 2. The prophecy on the person who will tame it, 3. The account of how Alexander manages to do that.

The episode, i.e., the first sub-unit, opens with the tale of Bucephalus's provenance (V 235-263, S 269-306, B 531-565), which remains unexplained in V (236) and S (270): *dar under wart ein ros getragen*, 'there was brought a steed'. B, on the other hand, peculiarly reports that the horse is a gift from a prince of Cappadocia (533-534). B draws from an unspecified version of Leo (I, 13, *In ipsis temporibus quidam princeps Capadocie adduxerunt Philippo polletrum magnum*: Pfister 1913, 54¹²⁻¹³),¹⁰⁹ which, from this point onwards, is put aside in favor of an exemplar of the *Alexanderlied*. However, B's text continues to be occasionally contaminated by the above-mentioned adaptation of Leo. This episode is, therefore, the point of junction between the two models.

The description of the horse, probably derived from the *Alexanderlied* antigraph, is shared by all three manuscripts, which introduce Bucephalus's first quality, i.e., being *wunderlich*. It is worth noting that this adjective appears again in the common nucleus, for example in V 920, S 272 and B 536, to connote Alexander and his extraordinary nature, but also in Early Middle High German epic, such as the *Annolied*, line 326 (Roedinger 1895) and the *Kaiserchronik*, line 328 (Matthews 2012), which probably inspired the composition of the *Alexanderlied*. The German tradition describes the horse as a chimeric beast, which is an exclusive innovation of the three versions, perhaps deriving from Albéric, as revealed by an analogous passage in the

¹⁰⁹ 'In those very times, certain princes of Cappadocia brought Philip a large horse'.

Alexandre décasyllabique (Venice version, 11, 106-07) in which the horse is compared to different creatures (Cipolla 2013a, 175). In the *Alexanderlied* Bucephalus has a donkey-like snout, eagle eyes, a lion's mane, bovine hair on his back and spots on his sides like a leopard's. In B, however, the couplet in which V and S draw the parallel with the gaze of the bird of prey is patched and the horse's eyes are, instead, said to be like blood (*sin ougen waren als ein bluot*, 543). B also mentions its wide nostrils, a feature shared with S (282) and missing in V. B differs from V and S also in avoiding the mention of the Saracens when the text reports that neither the Saracens nor the Christians had a better horse than Bucephalus. As a matter of fact, Bucephalus's description in V (250-251) and S (291-292) culminates in a hyperbolic formula: *so Sarrizin noch Christen man | nichein pezzet ros gewan*, 'no Saracen nor Christian ever gained a finer steed'. It contains the earliest occurrence of *Sarrazin* inside the Middle High German tradition and reveals an interest for contemporary historiography on the Crusades, which returns later on in the episode about Alexander's expedition to the Holy Land (4.3.14), where the Persians are identified with the Saracens and the intent seems to be making Alexander an ideal model for crusader kings (Cipolla 2013b, 167, note 250). Bucephalus is a raging beast, so savage that it needs to be restrained by iron chains. It receives its name from Philip, with the approval of the spectators. The agreement is an innovation of the *Alexanderlied*, which omits the reason for the consensus and does not include an explanation for the choice of name, either, presumably because of a *lacuna* in the shared model (Cipolla 2013a, 176).

Finally, the most relevant element of Bucephalus's characterization is that the horse is anthropophagous (V 260-263, S 277, B 537), as Philip orders to feed it people who committed a crime. In line with its penchant for the fantastical, as it can be deduced by the description of the eyes, B insists on this aspect (Cipolla 2013a, 176), dedicating ten lines (556-565) to the theme of anthropophagy.

In the second sub-unit (V 264-271, S 307-316, B 566-579), Bucephalus is said to be the object of a prophecy by a messenger who comes to Philip, sent from a man who was acquainted with the horse: the person able to tame and ride the horse, would become king after Philip. B (566-568: *Da nach in kurzen tagen, | Pilipo begonden wissagen | die gætter all gemein*, 'A few days after, all the gods together began giving prophecies to Philip'), however, follows a version of the *Historia de preliis* which narrates that the prophecy came from the gods: *Interea Philippus rex responsum accepit a diis, quia post mortem eius ille debet regnare, qui hunc caballum ferocem equitaverit*, 'Meanwhile, King Philip received an oracle from the gods, that after his death the one who will have ridden this fierce horse shall reign' (J¹ and J², I, 15).

In the third sub-unit (V 272-319, S 317-376, B 580-640), Alexander comes back home after leaving his teachers (V 272-275, S 317-320, B 584-585) as it was normal for the medieval aristocrats to study away from home (Cipolla 2013b, 168, note 272-273), and is praised for his mind in V (274) and S (319). B specifies that the young prince is twenty (583), whereas V and S state, in the following narrative unit, that he is fifteen (V 342, S 409). In all three recensions Alexander is not yet aware of Bucephalus's presence (V 276-277, S 321-322, B 586-587) and is confused when he hears the horse's whinny (V 280, S 327, B 590).

Alexander is accompanied by his peers, Ptolemy and Hephaestion, called Vestian in S (325) and Vestyana in B (648), whereas V reads *geste*, 'foreigners', a *lectio* accepted by both Kinzel and Lienert in their editions. On the other hand, Cipolla's edition (2013b, 168, note 279) restores the botch to *Vestian* (279), who is again eliminated by V later on, before line 330, when Alexander dismounts from the horse. The censorship of the relationship between Alexander and Hephaestion is already present in Pseudo-Callisthenes.

V (286) and B (594) proceed parallelly, as they report that Alexander asks if the noise thundering in his ears is a horse or a lion. He gets a reply from Ptolemy, also in S, who tells him about Bucephalus and the impossibility of going near it because of its aggressive nature. In S (339), Alexander addresses Hephaestion directly, asking if he is hearing a horse or a wild beast. In these versions, Alexander's companions assume a more relevant role, as the anonymous convoy and stable boys of V and B are eliminated from the scene, whereas B innovates making the stable boys talk directly to their master (616-619). On the other hand, in V (296-297) and B (612-613) he asks the stable boys for the keys to Bucephalus's stable, but no one dares to bring the horse out, which irritates Alexander to the point where he breaks down the door on his own (*mit dem fuos*, 'with the foot', in B 622), an innovation of the vernacular texts (Cipolla 2013a, 180) and introduction to the protagonist's choleric character, and enters alone (V 303, B 625). In these two recensions, the horse tries to attack Alexander (V 304, B 626), but is again tamed by the prince's stare. B adds a detail about Bucephalus's reaction by mentioning that it quivers in front of Alexander and wags its tail like a dog (631), highlighting the boy's scary might and the horse's fear. Alexander strokes Bucephalus and then mounts it, accomplishing his first feat.

S differs from V and B and censors the violence of the other two versions. In the passage in which Alexander directly enters Bucephalus's stable, he looks it in the eyes and the horse, abruptly abandoning its fury, placidly kneels before him in servitude (362-363), a feudal paradigm (Cipolla 2013a, 180).

4.3.2 *Alexander's accolade (V 320-373, S 377-444, B 641-683)*

This episode consists of three sub-units: 1. Philip's praise of his son's bravery, 2. Alexander's request to be knighted, 3. Alexander's speech on the royal title he has not yet earned.

In the first sub-unit (V 334-337, S 397-400, B 651-652), as specified by V and B, Philip hears about Alexander's venture from a messenger and shows his excitement and pride for his son, going to meet the boy on the way. V has several *lacunae* and does not reference Hephaestion taking Bucephalus from Alexander as the prince dismounts (S 388, B 648), whereas S also describes its golden reins, set with precious stones (390-391), which is a glimpse into the medieval courtly society (Cipolla 2013b, 170, note 328). When they meet, they bless each other, and Philip confirms that Alexander will succeed him as king (V 335, S 398, B 652).

In the second sub-unit (V 338-349, S 402-419, B 653-664), Alexander tells his father that at his age, fifteen in V and S, twenty in B, it is time for him to carry weapons and perform valiant deeds, which, in the Greek tradition (Julius Valerius I, 18), corresponds to being allowed to participate in the Olympic games (Cipolla 2013a, 184). In the *Alexanderlied*, on the other hand, it symbolizes the medieval ritual of the investiture, in which he is knighted and receives the consecrated weapons.

In the third sub-unit (V 366-373, S 437-444, B 674-683), when the Macedonian subjects see him armored and mounting Bucephalus, they acclaim him as king, to which Alexander responds that he has not deserved the title, yet, because he does not have a kingdom. He asks them to wait until he has proved his worth, starting with defeating a king and taking away his crown: only then would he accept the title. In Alexander's dialogue with his father over the investiture, S (415) and B (663) also mention the theme of the tribute, *zins*, that should be paid to Philip, which is presented as the cause triggering the war.

4.3.3 *King Nicolaus: Alexander's first military exploit (V 374-379, S 445-450, B 684-690)*

Alexander sets off for his first military exploit against King Nicolaus of Caesarea, which, according to what is told by Julius Valerius, was actually an athlete against whom Alexander competed in a cart race during the Olympic games. Nicolaus's laurel crown was reinterpreted as a royal crown in the *Alexandre décasyllabique*, a parallelism between agonism and war which can be already found in Leo (Cipolla 2013a, 186) and shows how medieval vernacular authors re-elaborate the costumes of the classical period. The toponym Caesarea is probably handed

down because of a confusion with namesake cities in the Holy Land reported by the chronicles of the time. B (687: *det er in des lebens mat*, ‘he defeated in life’), in inserting the chess metaphor associated to warfare, echoes a previous passage in Albéric’s presentation of the hero (II, 14: *tant rey fesist mat ne mendic*, ‘many kings he defeated or ruined’) as found in Curtius’s Florentine manuscript (Cipolla 2013a, 186-187).

4.3.4 Philip’s wedding with Cleopatra (V 380-433, S 451-507, B 691-766)

This episode can be divided into three sub-units: 1. Alexander causing a scene at Philip’s wedding banquet, 2. Alexander’s quarrel with Lysia, 3. The brawl.

In the first sub-unit (V 380-403, S 451-480, B 691-723), as Alexander returns home, he discovers that his father repudiated his mother Olympias and now has another woman, named Cleopatra.¹¹⁰ The prince gives Philip Nicolaus’s crown (V 388-389, S 461-463, B 705-706), which in B (707) is extended with Alexander’s declaration that Nicolaus’s land now belongs to his sire, and shares his heavy heart and disapproval of Philip, weeping in V (400) and B (718), and also threatening the advisors who encouraged the king to do that in all three recensions. The scene takes place at the Philip and Cleopatra’s wedding feast in V and B, whereas S does not explicitly mention the nuptials nor the banquet.

In the second sub-unit (V 404-415, S 481-496, B 724-745), after hearing Alexander’s words, Lysia — a knight, *riter*, in V (404) and S (481), an earl, *graffe*, in B (724) — replies arrogantly to the prince. S adds that Lysias was part of the bride’s entourage and would not have benefited from the journey, whereas V and B vary the same closing formula (V 409: *alsô dicke der stolze man tût*, ‘as often does the proud man’; B 731: *als der tore dike duot*, ‘as the fool often does’), which is eliminated in S. Alexander is outraged and throws a goblet in Lysia’s face, a blow so strong that knocks out Lysias’s teeth, while B (735-742) develops the description of the effects of the blow on Lysia.

In the third sub-unit (V 416-433, S 497-507, B 746-766), Philip stands up in fury at the sight of this scene, but falls and breaks his leg, making the bride fall with him in S (503), whereas in V and B the narrator reports that he does not know what happened to Cleopatra. S (504-505) once again inserts courtly elements, alluding to the entertainers and gifts of the missed party (Cipolla

¹¹⁰ The historiographical sources report that Philip’s second wife was the niece of the Macedonian prefect Attalus and that, after the wedding in 337 BCE, Alexander was exiled till Philip’s death and Olympias was permanently repudiated in 338 BCE (Cipolla 2013b, 171, notes 385 and 433).

2013a, 191). Philip's fall is the last event before S's lost bifolium which, taking into account the integration proposed by Kinzel on the basis of B, consisted of 450 lines; therefore, from this point to Alexander's arrival in Tyre it is not possible to compare V and B with the other versions. In V and B, as Alexander sees his father's accident, he goes berserk and starts striking anyone who crosses his path till he reaches Philip, heals his leg and reconciles his parents.

4.3.5 *Alexander conquers the city of Antonia / an unnamed city (V 434-459, S lacuna, B 767-782)*

After the previous events, Philip gets notified about the rebellion of a city under his rule. He sends Alexander to quell the uprising and the prince proficiently brings order back to the city, without any losses in V (459) and with the lords of the city as prisoners in B (780-781). V reads *Antonia* for the toponym, but it is a place name that is difficult to identify, as in S this episode is missing due to the lost bifolium, and in B the name of the city is not mentioned (Cipolla 2013b, 172, notes 438-439). Moreover, confusion in the sources between Philip's conquests and Alexander's enterprises complicates the matter further, and other toponyms appear: the city is called Mothona in Julius Valerius, whereas in Leo and in the *Historia de preliis* the city turns into a whole land, namely Armenia (Cipolla 2013a, 192).

4.3.6 *Dispute with the Persian heralds on the tribute (V 460-499, S lacuna, B 783-809)*

This episode begins with the first Persian embassy and the first mention of Darius (Cipolla 2013a, 194). As he returns, Alexander finds Darius's messengers in the palace, demanding that Philip pay tribute to their king. Alexander refuses to be subjected to Darius's rules any longer and threatens the messengers to kill both them and their king if they do not return home and warn Darius to stop his requests. A sub-unit, only present in V and omitted in B, reports how Alexander is displeased by his father's subjugation and anticipates the war with the Persian king by referencing the *Book of Daniel* (466-471). Moreover, another prolepsis, which is a stylistic innovation of the *Alexanderlied* (Cipolla 2013a, 195), namely Darius's beheading at the hands of Alexander in V, is to be found in Alexander's reply to the Persian heralds as a specific warning (V 495 and B 804).

According to historical accounts, Philip was never Darius's tributary, but the literary trope of the tribute is found in the work of Pseudo-Callisthenes and its derivatives (Cipolla 2013b, 172,

note 464). Buschinger (2011, 294), among others, interprets the theme of the tribute, especially in light of V's narration of Darius's death at the hands of Alexander:

Vorau's entire narrative was constructed in view of this death. That is evident when we consider the fact that the moment the question of this tribute arose for the first time in the work the narrator announced the death of Darius: 483–484 *Darius wart umbe den selben zins erslagen/ daz ich iu sal wâre sagen* [it is because of that tribute that Darius was slain: I am telling you the truth]. We ought to see here the proof that Vorau's version has not been truncated, as certain commentators maintain, but that it actually ended with the death of Darius.

Buschinger finds evidence in Alexander's words to Darius before he delivers the fatal blow to the Persian opponent:

In the last battle against the Persian king, Alexander threw him down and said "*ir sult zins hie infâhen,/ dâ ir vil manegen tach habeth nâch gesant,/ den hân ich iu brâht in diz lant!*" [V 1521; now you must receive the tribute which you have claimed many times; I have brought it here into this land], and then cut off his head.

The liberation from the tribute and the assertion of the Greeks' dominance, therefore, seems to be the underlying theme of the whole story. Alexander's choleric behavior, which is underlined throughout the story, is indeed represented also by his final action, i.e., Darius's beheading. Moreover, the mention of the *Book of the Maccabees* and of the *Book of Daniel* supports the hypothesis that in V the fall of the Persian empire, leading to the rule of the Greeks with Alexander, can hint at a step in the *translatio imperii*.

4.3.7 *Alexander conquers the city of Thelemone (V 500-519, S lacuna, B 810-830)*

Philip and Alexander receive another visit, this time from messengers who warn them that their subjects in the city of Thelemone are plotting a revolt against the king. Philip sends Alexander to stifle the riot, and Alexander wins again, also ransacking the city for his men's benefit. The name of the city has no matches in the sources nor in the parallel texts (Cipolla 2013a, 196). Another adaptation to medieval customs is the term *burgrâfæen / burgraffen* (V 513 and B 825) for the ruler of Thelemone, which was a figure responsible for the military, administrative and legal stewardship of a city (Lienert 2019, 573).

4.3.8 *Olympia's abduction and Philip's injury, Alexander's revenge and Philip's death (V 520-551, S lacuna, B 831-862)*

There are three sub-units that can be individuated in this passage: 1. Alexander's encounter with Pausonias, 2. The revenge against Pausonias, 3. Philip's death.

In the first sub-unit (V 520-529, B 831-839), on his way back from Thelemone, Alexander sees Pausonias, one of his father's margraves, trying to flee, dragging Olympias with him. Alexander learns that Pausonias has mortally wounded Philip.

In the second unit (V 530-540, B 840-845), the prince wounds the criminal with his spear. In V, he keeps him alive and has him tied up to a horse, whereas in B he kills him on the spot.

In the third sub-unit of V (541-551), Alexander arrives home with the captured margrave in tow and finds his father in serious condition. He asks him if he wants to be avenged, to which Philip replies to give the order to execute Pausonias. Alexander obeys and his father dies after a few days. In B (846-862), a messenger reports to Philip that Alexander is on his way back with his mother unharmed and killed Pausonias. The king is relieved to hear that he was avenged and, when Alexander arrives at his deathbed, Philip tells him that he can die peacefully thanks to Alexander's vengeance, wishes his heir good luck and passes away.

In V (537) and B (845), Alexander calls Pausonias his "stepfather", but history reports that he was Philip's favored man and that he killed the king during Alexander's sister's wedding (Cipolla 2013b, 173, note 522). Olympia's abduction and transportation on horseback is an anticipation of a *tópos* found in later chivalric novels (Cipolla 2013a, 197).

4.3.9 *Alexander becomes king (V 552-585, S lacuna, B 863-891)*

This scene consists of two parts: 1. Alexander's gathering and speech against the Persian tribute, 2. Alexander's men legitimating him as their king.

In the first sub-unit (V 552-579, B 863-883), after Philip's burial, Alexander ascends to the throne and is acclaimed by his men. V (556) sheds a positive light on the young king by highlighting two of his characteristics, *listen*, 'wit', and *mahten*, 'power', corresponding to the medieval formula of royal *sapientia et fortitudo*. B omits the hendiadys, which are choices in line with the rest of the two different versions (Cipolla 2013a, 199). Alexander shares with his trusted veterans the plans for his reign: emancipating Greece from Darius's tribute. In V, he says that he will provide them with battle equipment, a sign of generosity that was typical of military

culture in the twelfth century, even though it is already found among the sources of the *Alexanderlied*, namely in the romances, Julius Valerius and the *Historia de preliis* (Cipolla 2013a, 199-200). Alexander also vows that he will share his life and possessions with them, promising his eternal benevolence to those who will assist him in this venture. In B, in addition to sharing his riches, he goes as far as to say that he is ready to die beside them.

In the second unit, (V 580-585, B 884-891), his soldiers hail and bless their new king with a single voice, officially acknowledging him as their leader and swearing their allegiance (Cipolla 2013a, 199-200).

4.3.10 *Alexander recruits allies (V 586-603, S lacuna, B 892-908)*

For his expedition against Darius, Alexander demands support from the regions that were under the rule of the Macedonian kingdom, promising rewards in exchange for help and threatening serious consequences in case of a refusal. The text mentions Calabria, in Italy, as the westernmost land, while the easternmost borders are represented by Bithynia and its capital city Nicomedia, in present-day Turkey. The *Alexanderlied*'s account of the recruiting campaign is rather dubious from a geographical point of view. Calabria could be imagined as a sort of departure point to the Holy Land, whereas Nicomedia is presumably an addition of Lambrecht's tradition, as a tribute to St. Pantaleon, who, however, is not explicitly mentioned in B (Cipolla 2013a, 201). In V, the city sends Alexander 1,000 men, while in B it provides 12,000.

4.3.11 *Alexander in Italy (V 604-629, S lacuna, B 909-936)*

This episode consists of two sub-units for V and three for B: 1. The subjugation of one of Darius's fiefs (just in B), 2. The expedition to Sicily, 3. The subjugation of Rome.

Alexander, with an army of 70,000 men, sets sail and levies taxes out of spite towards the Persian king. The first sub-unit of B (909-916) narrates an event that is not present in V, namely that the young king launches an expedition against a fief that is loyal to Darius – another example of medievalization of the setting –, subjugates it with force and plunders its wealth.

Then, he ships out to Sicily (V 604-613, B 917-922), overpowers everyone he encounters and manages to impose a conscription on the island, something that his father had never achieved (V 613 and B 922).

Afterwards, in the last sub-unit (V 614-629, B 923-936), he reaches Italy, where he is welcomed by the Romans with all the honors and many luxurious gifts, such as silver, a cape embroidered with gold and precious stones – the latter only in V – and a red-gold crown. This welcome earns the Romans Alexander's gratitude and favor, as the Macedonian king praises the Roman's goodness.

4.3.12 *Alexander in Carthage (V 630-655, S lacuna, B 937-961)*

This event can be divided into three sub-units: 1. Alexander's expedition to Africa and Carthage, 2. Alexander's call to arms, 3. The submission of the Carthaginians.

In the first unit (V 630-639, B 937-948), Alexander takes 1,000 Roman soldiers and travels to the direction of the Africans, who were already submitted by Darius, rides through to Carthage and enters the city with violence. The local people surrender, which is a narrative that was inspired by Julius Valerius, but they do not follow Alexander in his expedition because of the hostility between them and the Romans.¹¹¹ Julius Valerius writes that Alexander refuses to protect Carthage from the Romans, and B misinterprets the common model, as it reports that Carthaginians and Romans are in agreement (947-948) (Cipolla 2013a, 203).

The lines dedicated to the Carthaginians are interrupted by a short sub-unit (V 640-643, B 949-952): after this victory, Alexander dispatches heralds to various lands in the Near East to demand their assistance, which is an innovation of the twelfth-century poets and can be seen as a watershed between the first part of the story and the second, which is dedicated to the eastern campaign (Cipolla 2014a, 204). The geographical scope of the call to arms is rather confusing, especially in B, where the toponyms are corrupted. *Meridientlant* (V 641, *Ellielant* in B 950) could be a reference to Palestine, Arabia or Ethiopia, *Bethaniam* (V 642, *Britanyan* in B 951) could indicate the Anatolic city of Bithynia, and *Galatiam* (V 643, *Gallileam* in B 952), a region in central Anatolia, Galatia, adjacent to the Bithynia (Cipolla 2013a, 204).

In the third sub-unit (V 644-655, B 953-961), the narration shifts the focus back to the Carthaginians, whom Alexander threatens into following him with the punishment of crucifixion in V, whereas in B the Macedonian warlord makes a generic request of servitude (960-961). The Carthaginians do not hesitate to obey, and they bring silver and gold to Alexander, who is pleased but refuses to accept the gifts. Alexander acknowledges their spirit

¹¹¹ The three Punic wars, fought from 264 to 146 BCE, broke out between Rome and Carthage because of the increasing tensions between the two confining people in Sicily, and are here hinted at with the anachronism (V 638-639) (Cipolla 2013b, 175, note 639).

and treats them with kindness, and in B he specifies that he would rather have their servitude (960-961), i.e., their feudal submission. As a matter of fact, he takes some of them, 1,000 in V (656) and 2,000 in B (963), under his command, leading his growing army to Egypt.

4.3.13 *Alexander in Egypt (V 656-673, S lacuna, B 962-967)*

This episode consists of two sub-units in V and just one main unit in B.

In V (656-659), Alexander reaches Egypt, founds a city in his own honor and names it after himself, namely Alexandria. B (962-967) shortens the passage, omitting the description and just reporting the name (965, *Allexandry*), while also telling that Alexandria was not founded, but rather conquered by Alexander. V, in its second sub-unit, dedicates fourteen lines to the praise of the city (660-673), which is inspired by Julius Valerius and omitted in B (Cipolla 2013a, 207). Julius Valerius uses Antioch, Carthage, Babylon and Rome as terms of comparison, which in V are listed in a different order for metrical reasons (for instance *Antioch : noch*, V 670-671) and for a Christian interpretation of the succession of kingdoms. V adds Troy, Cappadocia and Pede to the assessment: Alexandria is said to be unlike any other city in the world, so much that Babylon and Troy do not compare to it, respectively in size and fame, nor Rome and Antioch can top its wealth. As the translator proceeds with the encomium, he misunderstands the model, because the text in V mistakes the region of Cappadocia for a city, which Alexandria is said to surpass in robustness, and reads *Pede*, which is a corruption. As a matter of fact, no evidence of a city called *Pede* has come to us, which has led scholars to interpret the error in different ways: Lienert (2019, 576) reports that the word is actually not a toponym, although some propose to read Pella or Theben, but derives from a confusion with the measuring unit *pedibus* found in the corresponding passage by Julius Valerius (I, 31).

4.3.14 *Alexander in the Holy Land (V 674-693, S lacuna, B 968-984)*

This episode consists of five sub-units in V and three in B. First (V 674-683, B 968-979), in both V and B, Alexander, furious with Darius, embarks on a journey through Palestine and its holy sites, on which he wreaks havoc. He is said to destroy Galilee, the lands of Nephtali¹¹² and

¹¹² Nephtali was the sixth son of Jacob and founder of tribe named after him (*Genesis* and *Numbers*).

Zabulon,¹¹³ the city of Naason,¹¹⁴ Samaria, Syria,¹¹⁵ Bethulia, Judea, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. V, in its two central sub-units (684-685 and 686-688), integrates the list of places with references to the Biblical stories, which are as usual omitted in B. For Syria, it mentions Naaman the Syrian, the soldier of the king of Aram-Damascus who was healed of leprosy by God, and for Bethulia it cites Judith, the Old Testament heroine who saves her people from the siege of the Assyrian army by pretending to ally with the enemy and then decapitating their general Holofernes. The expedition towards Jerusalem is a fabrication found in Flavius Josephus, from which it enters the *Historia de preliis* and the *Roman* by Alexandre de Paris. V and B, however, do not follow the respectful and providential end of the encounter between Alexander and the Jewish High Priest, in front of whom the Macedonian conqueror kneels, but once again resume the theme of Alexander's ferocity by making him burn Jerusalem to the ground (V 689-690, B 980-981), which is an innovation not found elsewhere. Moreover, the destruction of Jerusalem in the *Historia de preliis* and in Alexandre's *Roman* is found after the sieges of Gaza and of Tyre, that is, displaced further on in the story.

In both V and B (V 691-693, B 980-983) this episode is connected to the following by anticipating the mention of the many losses Alexander suffers in the battle against Tyre, which, as also reported by Julius Valerius, is the first city that manages to oppose him, unlike the Palestinian cities. After this remark, the text proceeds with the description of Tyre.

4.3.15 Alexander arrives in Tyre (V 694-748, S 508-577, B 985-1017)

This passage can be divided into three sub-units: 1. The description of Tyre, 2. Alexander's embassies to the citizens, 3. The hanging of Alexander's emissaries.

The unit opens with the description of Tyre (V 694-719, B 985-988), which V (694-711), partially following Curtius Rufus, presents as extremely rich and well-fortified, surrounded by the sea, a fact that makes Alexander's enterprise even more challenging. On the contrary, the description of the city in B is much shorter (985-987) and reports only that it is a mile wide and half embraced by the sea, adding that it was under Darius's rule (988). In addition, B omits the lines that, after the description, lament the destruction of the city and reprimand Alexander's arrogance and lack of control (V 712-719). According to V, Tyre was a vast city, a mile wide

¹¹³ Zabulon was the tenth son of Jacob and founder of the tribe named after him (*Genesis* and *Numbers*).

¹¹⁴ Naason was the leader of the tribe of Judah (*Numbers*) and part of Christ's genealogy (*Matthew* I, 4 and *Luke* III, 32), here mistaken for a city.

¹¹⁵ Syria is the only toponym among the ones listed here that also appears in the Latin sources, namely Julius Valerius and the *Historia de preliis*, and in the dodecasyllabic Alexander (Cipolla 2013b, 176, note 683).

and very solid, surrounded by the sea, with three circles of granite walls made of squared stones, reinforced with iron, mortar and lead, decorated with gold and mosaics: its only sin is being loyal to Darius. As evident, features of the typical twelfth-century medieval citadel are attributed to the city (Cipolla 2013b, 177, note 694), such as the reinforcement of the stone walls with iron and lead (Cipolla 2013a, 212).

Of paramount importance is the *Historia* by William of Tyre (Huygens 1986), chancellor of the Kingdom of Jerusalem from 1174 and archbishop of Tyre from 1175, excommunicated in the early 1180s and passed in 1186. His unfinished chronicle of the events in the twelfth-century Levant, especially in the Crusade kingdoms, circulated in the thirteenth century mostly in French and English versions of the tradition. Even though the episode of Tyre in the *Alexanderlied* is inspired by Curtius's text and Lambrecht could not have known William's work for chronological reasons, it resembles, for example in the description of the machines used for the siege, the chronicle of the Crusades found in the archbishop's work, who describes how the city of Tyre looked like in 1123-1124: he reports that Tyre was protected by two walls on the side facing the sea, to which it had direct access also through a harbor, and by three circles of towers on the land side (Cipolla 2013a, 210-212).

After the description of Tyre, from the second sub-unit it is possible to resume the comparison with S, as the lacuna ends before Alexander's embassy (S 508) and the text is reintroduced with a *Littera Langobarda*. As a matter of fact, Alexander sends messengers to the citizens of Tyre (V 720-731, S 508-551, B 989-1003) to ask them to betray Darius and let him become their new sire and lord of the city, promising his favor and benevolence in V and B, threatening to take their lives in S. The people of Tyre send Alexander's men back and remain loyal to Darius, following their feudal obligations and only offering their riches to the Macedonian, saying that they do not fear him. Alexander is seized with anger and pride: in S and B, he sends three of his princes to threaten the people of Tyre by boasting his victories in Rome and Greece, whereas in V there is a short lacuna that does not allow the identification of the new ambassadors, who are mentioned later (987).

In the last sub-unit (V 732-748, S 552-577, B 1004-1017), the citizens of Tyre respond to the verbal assault by hanging them, which in V is presented as an out-of-proportion reaction, making them as guilty as Alexander. Cipolla (2013a, 215) observes that hanging appears as a counterpoise, a punishment to the sin of pride.

4.3.16 *Alexander besieges Tyre (V 749-766, S 578-621, B 1018-1037)*

The development of the action in this unit can be divided into four parts: 1. Alexander's first attempt at the siege, 2. The resistance of the Tyrians, 3. The effect of the wind, 4. The retreat of the Greek army.

In the first sub-unit, Alexander launches the first attack (V 749-752, S 578-585, B 1018-1025) against the city, both by land and sea, but it results in massive losses for his army, because of the arduous resistance of Tyre, which V praises, and of the wind. As a matter of fact, in the second sub-unit (V 753-759, S 586-606, B 1026-1029) the citizens of Tyre slay so many of his soldiers that the sea turns red with blood, whereas the third sub-unit (V 760-762, S 607-616, B 1030-1034) reports that one hundred (V 761, B 1033) of his ships are sunk by the wind, causing all the warriors on board to drown.

In the fourth unit (V 763-766, S 616-621, B 1035-1037), at the sight of all his dead, Alexander orders his men to fall back and his fleet to retreat into the harbor. V (752) and S (592) underline how Alexander was moved by evil intentions, whilst B omits these lines, and only S compares him to a raging lion (581).

The type of wind is not specified in V, but in Curtius it is the *Africus*, a south-western current, in B (1031) it is the *wester*, which corresponds to the Föhn, the wind of the Alps, whereas S (607-612), introducing an *hápax* in the German corpus of its time, calls it *Boreas*. V proves to be more generic in this episode also because it narrates the outcome of the first attack directly: S describes the arrival of the Macedonian ships, the encirclement of the city and the start of the assault with the siege towers, plus Tyre's preparation of the defense on the battlements, whereas B also hints at the camp set by the Macedonians by mentioning the tents and anticipating the use of fire.

4.3.17 *Alexander's countermeasure (V 767-810, S 622-685, B 1038-1068)*

This episode consists of five sub-units in V and S and four in B: 1. Alexander's plan, 2. The expedition to Mount Lebanon, 3. The mention of King Solomon and Hiram (not in B), 4. The Arabs' attack, 5. Alexander's rescue operation.

In the first unit (V 767-778, S 622-639, B 1038-1045), Alexander, affected by his great losses, which he is said to mourn greatly in S (622-625), reflects on how to go about the siege. Thanks to his wit, expressed in V and S with the word *list*, belonging to the pool of Alexander's

characteristics, he decides to have siege machines built with wood and stones, so that he can climb past the walls. Both these versions also underline Alexander's hatred (V 778, S 639). The machines he devises, which give a fascinating glimpse into medieval warfare engineering, do not appear in the main source for this episode, namely Curtius, but they are often mentioned in contemporary chronicles of the Crusades, such as William's 1124 one: B, as usual, is scanty on the details, but V and S use the pre-courtly term *ebenhæhe*, which indicated a movable tower structure used to climb to the merlons. In the following section, V (782) also mentions another type of movable machine, the *perfrit*, 'battering ram', for approaching the walls (Cipolla 2013a, 218).

In the second unit (V 779-786, S 640-647, B 1046-1051), Alexander sends his men to Mount Lebanon, with the intention of cutting its renowned cedars to use them to reach the walls of the city. The geographic coordinates are again mixed up, because the three recensions imagine Tyre and Mount Lebanon as separated by the sea, whereas in reality they overlook the same coastline.

In the third unit (V 787-794, S 648-657), another biblical allusion is to the Old-Testament king Hiram from Tyre, making an appearance also in William's chronicle and is said to be responsible for the precious material coming from the trees and the construction of the temple of Salomon, who reportedly appreciated the high quality of the wood, which never rots, so much that he gifted Hiram with half of Galilee. These Biblical references, as usual, are omitted in B.

In the fourth unit (V 795-800, S 658-665, B 1052-1058), Alexander's men mission is hindered by the Arabs, who support Tyre and attack them. This detail is a re-elaboration from Curtius, in which the fallen are thirty, whereas in V (800) they are one thousand, and in S (665) and B (1058) one thousand or more. As a matter of fact, V and S report that Mount Lebanon is located in Arabia and is the source of the river Jordan, to once again reference the Scriptures.

In the last unit (V 801-810, S 666-685, B 1059-1068), after hearing about the Arabs slaughtering his men, Alexander entrusts the siege of Tyre to two dukes, Gracto and Perdix in V, Glatte and Perdix in S, and Berdix and Glasat in B, to go defend his men himself. V uses the term *herzogen* for the two men, whereas S and B call them *fursten*. In this passage, V has lacunae and shortens the description of the action, but it is possible to obtain more detailed information from S, which stresses how Alexander rushes to the forest where his men were preparing the wood to build the war machines and grants them protection and peace until they finish their work.

4.3.18 *Tyre's revenge and attack (V 811-826, S 686-709, B 1069-1083)*

During Alexander's absence, the Tyrians seize the opportunity and launch an attack early in the morning to burn down one of the Macedonians' *castel*, another twelfth-century moveable siege rook, and kill the people inside. The Macedonians retreat and plunge into the sea to escape from the flames and to hide all day until the fire goes out.

The action, again a rewriting of Curtius, is rather unclear in V because of the pronouns, which makes it harder to identify which party is responsible for which maneuver. The *si* at 818-820, 'they', refers to the Tyrians, whilst the other *si* at 822-826 stands for the Macedonians.

4.3.19 *Alexander's siege army and dukes against Tyre (V 827-838, S 710-730, B 1084-1091)*

During Alexander's absence, his dukes attack the city again, albeit to their demise, as Tyre does not suffer any losses and repels the besiegers.

Again, the use of the pronouns in V complicates the understanding of the action. *Sie*, 'they', at 832 refers to the two hundred Macedonians who lie dead on the ground, *in*, 'to them', at 835 and *ir*, 'their', at 836 indicate the survivors of Alexander's army. At 834, *sis*, composed respectively by *si*, third person plural nominative, and *si*, third person plural accusative, contains both the nominative agent, the Tyrians, and the theme – the affected party – of the action, namely the Macedonians, represented by the cliticized accusative argument of the verb *triben*, given that it is the Tyrians who push the enemies away from the doors of their city. B (1084-1088), however, reverses the direction of the action and tells that the two hundred victims belong to the Tyrians.

Only in V it is said that the two dukes (829) to whom Alexander had entrusted the siege respond to the destruction of the *castel* with a fierce counterstrike. Moreover, V (837-838) is the only version which dedicates a couplet to a lament over the fall of Tyre, with a prolepsis which anticipates the outcome of the battle.

The fact that S doubles the length of the *laisse* by adding more details to the narrative is another example of how it would be impractical, if not unfeasible, to perform a line-by-line alignment due to the stylistic differences among the recensions.

4.3.20 *Alexander breaches the first walls with the siege towers (V 839-868, S 731-777, B 1092-1108)*

As Alexander comes back with large forces, he has his men secure the ships two by two by tying them together, adding iron chains and covering them with leather to shield them from the waves. Afterwards, the Macedonians use the tree trunks to erect the battering devices on the floating platform and push them against the battlements to besiege the rook.

At the same time, he orders to attack the first walls with steel weapons, and the fight is so violent that the considerable amount of the slaughtered turns the whole sea into blood. Alexander himself faces the citizens in battle, pushed by hatred (V 861, S 768) and rage (V 864). The Macedonians finally manage to breach the first walls after smashing the towers and the arches and plunging them into the sea. V, in line with the previous lament for the destruction of the city, and S point out that the towers were beautiful (V 866, S 772) and the walls among the best the city had ever had (V 868, S 777), a detail also found in B (1108). B, however, has many lacunae in this passage, resulting in a rather short description of the action, and tells that the leather was used to protect the siege machines, as was usually done to shield them from the fire (Cipolla 2013a, 226).

4.3.21 *Alexander breaches the second walls (V 869-906, S 778-829, B 1109-1127)*

This episode can be divided into three sub-units for V and S and two for B, inside the context of the main action: 1. The description of Alexander's weapons (V and S), 2. Alexander killing the Duke of Tyre, 3. Alexander and his men charging inside the city.

The main action takes place in front of the second walls of Tyre: Alexander has the siege machines hoisted up, climbs the watch tower and from the highest point of the fortification orders his soldiers to hammer down the walls. V laments the numerous foot soldiers who fell during the attack and uses a *lectio singularis*, namely *werlte* (877), as opposed to S (788) and B (1116), which read *erde* (Cipolla 2013a, 229).

In the first sub-unit, V (881-886) and S (796-804) present a description of Alexander's weapons: the incomparable ivory shield, the robust helm which no sword ever notched, and the spear. S (800-802) omits the mention of the splendid golden decorations on the spear (V 886) but adds a sharp sword to Alexander's arsenal. B tends to eliminate not only the Biblical references but also the descriptive passages.

In the second sub-unit (V 887-892, S 805-809, B 1118-1121), Alexander spots the duke who rules over Tyre and effortlessly throws his spear at him, stabbing him to death and making his body fall back inside the fortress. The events of the second sub-unit and the character of the duke are absent in Curtius, from which the *Alexanderlied* takes only some details such as Alexander's climb to the highest tower and killing spree with his spear, but can be found in Alexandre de Paris (II, 84, 1945-58) and in recension J³ of the *Historia de preliis* (27b).

In the third sub-unit (V 893-906, S 810-829, B 1122-1127), Alexander and four thousand of his men leap onto the merlons, moved by evil purposes in V (898) and by courage in S (815), and they destroy the second walls, again praised as among the best which ever existed (V 906, S 828). However, the consequence of the Greeks' arrogance is that one hundred of Alexander's men do not survive the jump and fall to their deaths, a useless sacrifice which is underlined in S (823-826) and not elaborated on in B, which shortens the passage as usual.

4.3.22 *The battle on the walls (V 907-940, S 830-879, B 1128-1147)*

This passage does not have parallels in the sources and the models. The battle inside the city violently rages, as many men from both sides fall dead. These lines represent a turning point in the action, as the massacre of the Greeks reaches its peak here and the story is brought closer to the nefarious outcome for Tyre.

The wondrous (V 920, S 845) Alexander, also thanks to his magical armor, is the only fighter who keeps going undeterred and unscathed, leaving piles of bodies on the floor. As a matter of fact, his breastplate is drenched in serpent or dragon's blood, as *wurm* (V 923, S 850) is an polysemic noun. As robust as horn, it is the result of Alexander's *list* in V (926 S 855). In V (922-926) and S (849-855) a sub-unit dedicated to Alexander's weapons can be isolated, whereas B eliminates the description, as typical, and all hints at the breastplate, Alexander's *list* and wondrousness. The syntax of this passage in V is rather confusing, as it mixes short, incidental remarks on both Alexander and his armor. The use of this reptile's blood to temper weapons is not an uncommon trope, which could have been found also in the sources of the *Alexanderlied*, but is also a reminder of a passage in the *Nibelungenlied* (Becker 1977), the anonymous thirteenth-century Middle High German poem, in which the hero Siegfried kills a dragon and bathes himself in its blood, transforming his skin, which becomes as hard as horn. Whether this detail could have been taken by Lambrecht from the Nibelungic subject circulating in the oral dimension is unclear.

S (862) reintroduces the image of the blood-red sea, even though the battle is now inside the city.

The citizens of Tyre, compared to ferocious boars (V 933, S 866), valiantly try to resist both inside and outside the city, where they venture to slaughter the men staying back in Alexander's encampment. They managed to retreat and take refuge inside the city again. V (939-940) tells that Alexander loses worthy soldiers and acts with great unfairness towards them, whereas in S (878) the pronoun *in* is connected to the protagonists of the preceding action, i.e. the sortie, and thus refers to the Tyrians (876), as the line order is inverted.

4.3.23 *Alexander's council with his princes and the Greek fire (V 941-980, S 880-933, B 1148-1192)*

Alexander, violently choleric, marches towards the city door, full of hatred, but the Tyrians attack from above, standing on three rooks, and cause him other losses. Angered by the slaughter of his men all around him, he retreats and seeks council in his princes and urges them to devise a plan. They suggest readying the catapults, which are also present in William of Tyre's report on the First Crusade, to throw burning embers inside the city, as the king is skilled in making Greek fire, which is able to burn even when in the water thanks to unknown tricks. As a matter of fact, the Greek fire is represented as an invention of Alexander's *list* (V 965, S 914). S (896-897) and B (1168-1169) also add a request for reinforcements. Alexander complies and, in addition, throws many rocks inside the fortress. Terrorized by the fire, the people of Tyre leave the merlons and Alexander finally breaks down the door, full of hatred, affected again by many losses.

In all the recensions, the episode is brought to a close by a comment of the narrator (V 976-980, S 925-933, B 1189-1193), even though the exclamation at V 976 is not present in the other two, as exclamations are a characteristic of V. Another peculiarity of V (977) is the reading *zeren*, namely *ze êren*, in which the word that indicates the honors, *Ehren* in modern German, that Alexander could have gained if the siege had not ended is to be interpreted as irony, given all the criticism that the narrative voice makes toward the protagonist and all the laments over the fall of Tyre and the deaths among the Macedonians.

4.3.24 *Alexander's revenge and the destruction of Tyre (V 981-1005, S 934-969, B 1193-1215)*

This unit can be further divided into two sections: 1. The punishment of the Tyrians, 2. The story of Tyre's rebirth.

In the first (V 984-988, S 937-941, B 1196-1201), Alexander, now inside the citadel, seeks vengeance and orders to destroy the remaining rocks that had not burned down. He has his men capture 3,000 of Tyre's wealthiest residents and gives the order to blind and hang them to avenge the three princes who he had sent and lost in his second embassy to the city (4.3.15). He rejoices in his victory, even though his losses were greater, which is mourned by the narrating voice (V 989-995, S 942-949, B 1202-1206).

In the second (V 997-1005, S 951-969, B 1207-1215), the three recensions make a digression on the rebuilding of Tyre. The excursus consists of two sections based on the two examples used to tell the story of the new Tyre.

The first one (V 997-1001, S 951-959, B 1207-1212) is dedicated to Apollonius, presented as he who re-founded the city. Apollonius of Tyre is a fictional character of the Latin romance *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* (Kortekaas 1984), a rewriting of a lost third-century Hellenistic-Greek model. The Latin version is handed down in two recensions from the fifth/sixth century and in the twelfth century several different versions of it were circulating in more than twenty copies. In the romance Apollonius solves king Antiochus of Antioch's riddle, which the king was submitting to his daughter's suitors. Apollonius thus finds out about the incest between father and daughter and Antiochus starts to hunt him down, but Apollonius manages to escape. In the variant of the story which flowed into the *Alexanderlied*, Apollonius's reconstruction of Tyre justifies the presence of the city during Christ's time, as in the *Historia* the protagonist is the donor responsible for the reconstruction of the city of Tarsus. Moreover, Apollonius acts in a time after Alexander because of the probable identification between the Antiochus of the novel and the namesake of the Seleucids, the historical king Antiochus Epiphanes who ruled in the second century BCE and is mentioned in the first book of the Maccabees (Cipolla 2013a, 237). The resolution of the riddle via letter links this passage to the next episode, as it contains the themes of epistolary correspondence and enigmas. B, however, does not mention the riddle.

The second one (V 1002-1005, S 960-969, B) mentions the Canaanite woman from the Gospel of Matthew who, in the new Tyre, implores Jesus to help her Devil-possessed daughter. Going against what is customary for the recension, B does not omit the scriptural reference.

4.3.25 *Darius learns of Tyre's fall* (V 1006-1017, S 970-985, B 1216-1228)

Soon after Tyre's destruction, a survivor from the city escapes and tells Darius what happened to Tyre and its inhabitants. V (1012) and B (1223) remark once more that Tyre was a beautiful city. The man accuses the king of not going to their rescue and says Darius should be ashamed of bearing the royal title, a reproach based on the principle of reciprocity between a lord and his vassals. This criticism, as seen in previous episodes, had also been directed at Alexander, who had done the same wrong to his own men by letting many of them die for him.

A peculiarity of S is the rhyming couplet *gelfe : helfe*, 'battle cries : help' (982-983).

This episode re-elaborates a passage from the J² (29) recension of the *Historia de preliis*, in which it is a group of survivors who report to Darius and show him a portrait of Alexander, which prompts the Persian king to make fun of the Macedonian's short stature.

4.3.26 *Darius's letters and gifts* (V 1018-1057, S 986-1035, B 1229-1253)

From this episode, the German texts resume following Julius Valerius. Darius, believing that Alexander amounts to nothing and wanting to offend him, prepares three gifts for the Macedon king, accompanied by a letter in which he explained their meaning. The first gift is a ball, to suggest that Alexander go play with it like boys do, a comparison which, as mentioned above, is inspired by Alexander's short stature in J²; the second gift is a pair of strings, which mean that Alexander should serve Darius every day, as his predecessors did – a specification found only in V 1042 –, like people use strings every day – the detail of everyday usage is not mentioned in S 1022-1023 –; the third gift is a small heap of gold, which symbolizes the tribute Philip had paid to Darius and which Alexander has to use to go back home without ransacking any other land. Darius concludes the letter warning Alexander that, if he dared to disobey, he would be flogged.

A sub-unit can be individuated in S (988-996), which dedicates more lines to Darius's point of view, in which the Persian king denigrates Alexander by calling him childish and threatens to kill him if he does not return home immediately. S is also the only version which simplifies the term for ball, i.e., *bal* (1000), whereas V (1021) and B (1235) use, respectively, *stuzel* and *stüczel*, a hapax which, given its appearance in the Venice version of the *Alexandre décasyllabique*, could be derived from the Old French *estuef*, **estu(i)t*, which in turn stems from the Germanic word **stôt*, 'ball'.

V, following the *Historia de preliis*, once again insists on one of Alexander's negative traits, in this case his folly (1040), seen as excess, lack of measure, and attributed also to Bucephalus (238). V (1047) is also the only recension which specifies that the tribute is due once a year.

4.3.27 *Alexander receives the gifts (V 1058-1115, S 1036-1104, B 1254-1289)*

This unit can be divided into two sections: 1. The exchange with Darius's messengers, 2. Alexander's interpretation of the gifts.

In the first sub-unit (V 1058-1080, S 1036-1060, B 1254-1269), Darius's messengers bring the gifts and the letters to Alexander, who, humiliated, gives the order to hang them. One of the messengers, however, convinces Alexander to show mercy, as the emissaries were simply doing their job. Alexander shows indulgence, *mâze* (V 1076) / *maze* (S 1054). The messengers' plea is not present in the other vernacular texts and the *Alexanderlied* follows Julius Valerius and the *Historia de preliis* in invoking the fairness and benevolence of Alexander when he does not violate the diplomatic immunity of the messengers (V 1064-1068, S 1042-1045, B 1260-1264).

V (1059) is the only recensions with the exclamation about Alexander's humiliation and B shortens as usual, omitting the messengers' praise of the Macedonian ruler.

In the second sub-unit (V 1081-1115, S 1061-1104, B 1270-1289), Alexander gives the gold back to the messengers while comparing Darius to a useless dog (*rude* V 1086 and *rüden* B 1273, 'hound', *hovewart* S 1069, 'barnyard dog') that only barks and takes no action.

According to Alexander, who interprets the gifts from his own perspective, the ball represents his own ownership of everything under the sky and on the Earth: V (1103) uses the adjective *sciblig*, 'sphere', as a symbol, whereas S (1083-1092) re-elaborates and B (1282-1285) shortens the comparison, as usual. The pair of strings are a symbol of Darius's submission to him, and the gold is a legitimization of Alexander's role as a collector of tributes from Darius and the entire world.

4.3.28 *Alexander's letter and challenge to Darius to the pitched battle (V 1116-1134, S 1105-1125, B 1290-1299)*

Alexander's ultimatum is an innovation of the vernacular rewritings: he writes a letter to Darius challenging him to a battle on the Mesopotamian Plain, adding that he will wait, only three months in V (1121) and S (1108), one month in B (1293), before bringing his forces to Babylon,

where Darius, according to the derivatives of Pseudo-Callisthenes, was staying when Alexander's letter reaches him. The challenge is made even more serious by a threat: Darius has to stop collecting tributes unless he wants to be forced to pay them in his land with his own death, and, after the fight between their armies, he needs to give up his crown even if he survives the battle.

The mention of Mesopotamia is inspired by Curtius (IV 6, 2), who mentions a gathering in Mesopotamia before the Battle of the Granicus.

V (1131) and S (1117) present a sub-unit, as they both anticipate Darius's beheading with a prolepsis.

4.3.29 Darius's reaction (V 1135-1181, S 1126-1190, B 1300-1326)

The unit describing Darius's reaction can be divided into four phases: 1. Darius's reaction to the letter, 2. Darius's sending for his dukes, 3. Darius's threatening to hang Alexander (not in B), 4. The dukes' reaction to Darius's plan.

The first (V 1135-1145, S 1126-1140, B 1300-1305) presents Darius's reaction, who is enraged after reading the letter and swears that Alexander will pay for having offended him.

In the second (V 1146-1157, S 1141-1154, B 1306-1313) Darius sends for two of his dukes, i.e., satraps, who are dear to him, Marios and Typotes – *Zibottes* B 1309 –, and asks them to defend him by blocking Alexander's ships before they could cross the Euphrates and to bring the Macedonian back to him alive. Only V inserts the allegorical image of the tied-up ram (1155), which is a reference to Daniel's vision.

The third sub-unit is omitted in B and consists in two couplets (V 1158-1161, S 1155-1159) containing Darius's mockery toward Alexander: since the Macedonian aspires to achieve the highest honors, Darius will help him reach the top by hanging him.

The final unit (V 1162-1181, S 1160-1190, B 1314-1326) is dedicated to the dukes' comment on Darius's plan. After reviewing all of Alexander's conquests, which allows for a reconstruction of the lines on Alexander's travels that are lost in S, and criticizing Darius's passive attitude, they conclude that their sire must be delirious and that he should act with common sense before Alexander's challenge results in great shame for the Persians.

4.3.30 *Mennes* (V 1182-1367, S 1191-1452, B 1327-1453)

This long unit has many sections: 1. Darius dispatching Mennes, 2. Marios and Typotes gathering their men, 3. Alexander's attack at the ford, 4. The description of Alexander's weapons (not in B), 5. Mennes's bodyguards, 6. The single combat between Alexander and Mennes, 7. The comparison with Sanson's strength (just in V), 8. Alexander's fall, 9. Daclym's intervention, 10. Alexander's recovery, 11. The comparison with the battles fought at Wulfinwerde and Troy (not in B), 12. Alexander's fight with Pincun, 13. Alexander killing Mennes.

The fight with Mennes is inspired by the *Supplement* to Curtius and is a re-elaboration of the Battle of the Granicus. Mennes is Memnon of Rhodes, the commander of the satraps who was defeated in 334 BCE.

In the first sub-unit (V 1182-1195, S 1191-1214, B 1327-1335), Darius learns about the dukes' words from the messenger and is overcome by a violent rage. He summons another duke, Mennes, whom he sends against Alexander alongside thousands of men. Darius orders to tell the other dukes to threaten them into action with the promise of significant losses and shame if they let Alexander cross the river. S (1211-1213) expands on this nefarious prediction by mentioning the danger to women, children and riches and by anticipating an event that is not present in V, namely the capture of Darius's harem.

In the second (V 1196-1202, S 1215-1229, B 1336-1339), Marios and Typotes's fear prompts them to send their troops against Alexander, gathering 40,000 men.

In the third (V 1203-1220, S 1230-1252, B 1340-1355), Alexander and his men arrive at the ford, and the young king loses many soldiers before he can conquer it, as they are met by Darius's army. Alexander, riding Bucephalus, launches his own attack, killing enemies with tremendous blows, from which no one can defend themselves. V (1203) uses a *figura etymologica*, namely *ubermuoten muot*, to praise Alexander's passion and determination in fighting. V (1206) is also the only recension that mentions "master" Albéric as the source of this tale as a legitimation of the importance of this battle. Moreover, this is the only instance of Alexander fighting on horseback with Bucephalus, which is shared by the three versions. Alexander's furious blows are compared to thunder in V (1214) and S (1248) and to hail in B (1351). Alexander's spear is said to be so big that it kills anyone it stabs (V 1221-1224, S 1253-1258 – sub-unit –).

The fifth (V 1225-1232, S 1259-1270, B 1356-1357) introduces Mennes, the dedicated duke dispatched by Darius and surrounded by the solid protection of his knights, one hundred in V and B, one thousand in S (1267), and their good swords.

The sixth sub-unit is dedicated to the single combat between Alexander and Mennes, in which the two injure and unseat each other (V 1233-1246, S 1271-1285, B 1357-1374). The duel is modeled on the pre-courtly epic tradition, where the action first starts with the contenders on their horses, with long spears, who have to try to unsaddle the opponent by hitting his shield, and then proceeds on the ground with a sword fight. V and B focus on Alexander and Mennes's mirroring actions when they pierce each other's shields and both bleed, whereas S (1275-1280) shortens this passage to move on to the sword fight. V is the only recension with an excursus on Samson's strength in relation to the sword fight (1247-1250), as Samson is a legendary, Biblical Israelite warrior with immense strength which he gets from his uncut hair. As usual, V's exclamations (1245, 1251) are omitted by the other two texts.

The eighth part of the action (V 1251-1258, S 1286-1308, B 1375-1380) describes how Mennes manages to throw Alexander to the ground and dislodge his helm.

In the ninth sub-unit (V 1259-1273, S 1309-1340, B 1381-1397), one of Alexander's knights, Daclym, sees one of Mennes's knights, Jubal – who belongs to Marios and Typotes's men in S 1327 –, observing Alexander's exposed neck and going for a blow and promptly reacts to protect the Macedon king: he cuts Jubal in half with his sword, thereby saving Alexander. Daclym fastens Alexander's helm back onto his king's head, who is still semi-unconscious from the blows, and encourages him to stand up, pick up his sword and resume his brave fighting. The name Daclym – Danklin in B 1382 – is a misreading from the Old French *Dans*, 'master', *Clins*, which refers to Cleitus the Black, one of Alexander's companions and officers who, in the *Supplement*, saves Alexander during the Battle of the Granicus by cutting off the hand of a satrap who was about to hit Alexander. V (1273) praises Daclym's sword, whereas S and B direct the compliment to Daclym as a warrior. S is the only recension which also presents an overview of the battle raging around the duel (1291-1296) and the Persians' attempt to kill Alexander when he is on the ground (1302-1305).

In the tenth sub-unit (V 1274-1303, S 1341-1377, B 1398-1419), Alexander manages to recover, mounts Bucephalus again, thanks Daclym, and rides into the fray, killing an incomparable number of enemies. In the eleventh sub-unit of V (1304-1321) and S (1378-1396) another parallel is drawn with the epic battles fought in the *Saga of Hild* and in the *Iliad* to accentuate

the ferocity of the slaughter committed by Alexander, which B omits, always in line with the style of the chronicles. S (1392) replaces Paris with Ajax in the mention of the Trojan fighters.

In the twelfth sub-unit (V 1322-1353, B 1397-1434, B 1420-1443), Alexander spots an earl named Pincun – Sinkun in B 1420 –, who stole his banner when he fell during his fight with Mennes, and goes after the Persian to retrieve it. Pincun provokes Alexander by saying that he will kill Alexander with the banner itself and proceeds to cut him above his eyebrow – not in B 1437, where the blow is generic –. Barely injured, Alexander mocks Pincun for his inconsequential bragging and decapitates him, with one blow of his sword, a gory scene that is left undetailed in S (1429-1434), which follows Alexandre de Paris instead of Curtius. As a matter of fact, this episode shows contamination with the *Roman d'Alexandre* by Alexandre de Paris, which tells about a *conte Pinçons*, who severely wounds Alexander but is later pierced through the heart by the Macedonian king's spear. In V (1330) Alexander addresses Pincun with the polite plural you, whereas the Persian uses the informal singular you (1336) for Alexander, as a sign of disrespect. S reverses the situation (1405, 1416) and B uses the singular you for both parties (1427, 1432).

In the thirteenth section (V 1354-1367, S 1435-1452, B 1444-1453), as soon as Mennes sees Alexander with the banner, he lashes out at the young king, but Alexander is unfazed, violently knocking down Mennes and piercing the duke's lung with his spear, as also happens in the *Supplement*. Upon seeing one of their leaders falling, the Persian abandon all hope and courage and stop fighting. The banner is the weapon used to knock Mennes out in B (1446-1447), which also tells a different ending for Mennes, whose arm gets severed by Alexander, causing his death (1449-1450).

4.3.31 *Alexander takes Sardis (V 1368-1383, S 1453-1472, B 1454-1462)*

After winning the battle, Alexander, boldly, arrogates himself the authority to stop on the site to let his own wounds heal. He then decides to march east again, getting closer to Darius, and sack one of his cities, Sardis, which was the capital of the Lydian Empire. In contrast with the disaster of the siege of Tyre, this time his men are completely in charge and set Sardis on fire. With the spoils of gold and silver, Alexander endears himself to many soldiers.

The Orosius recension of the *Historia de preliis* reports that Sardis immediately surrendered to Alexander after his victory at the Granicus.

B, as usual, eliminates the reference to the Scriptures, which constitutes a sub-unit in V (1378-1383) and S (1465-1472). It is a reference to the first chapter of the last book in the New Testament, the *Apocalypse*, in which the narrator, a John that sometimes, including in the *Alexanderlied*, is identified with Saint John the Apostle (Lienert 2019, 596) is taken by the Holy Spirit and hears a voice which commands him to write down in a book what he sees in his vision and send it to the Seven Churches, including Sardis.

4.3.32 *Darius vows to hang Alexander (V 1384-1397, S 1473-1488, B 1463-1470)*

After hearing of the events, Darius is taken by pride, *stolz* (V 1385, S 1476) and, moved by arrogance, *ubermuot* (V 1387, 1475) vows that within fourteen nights he would hang Alexander from a tree, letting birds devour his body, as a punishment for having overstepped all boundaries with him.

V (1388-1891) once again comments extensively on the futility of haughtiness, a mistake that brings who falls prey to this deadly sin to submit in disgrace to those who they had deemed inferior. The retaliation for this sin is, again, hanging.

4.3.33 *Darius calls the pitched battle in Mesopotamia (V 1398-1416, S 1489-1513, B 1471-1481)*

Darius dispatches his messengers by land and sea to ask for military support from his princes and other powerful rulers. He calls for their soldiers to gather in the plain of Mesopotamia so that he can inspect the army himself. This call to arms corresponds to the premise of the Battle of Issus in 333 BCE, narrated by Curtius.

This unit ends in the three recensions (V 1412-1416, S 1507-1512, B 1480-1481) with a comment on the number of men needed to form a legion, *scar*. The passage is inspired by information on the Roman legion found in the seventh-century encyclopedic work by the Christian bishop Isidore of Seville, the *Etymologiae*. An analogue is found in the *Kaiserchronik*, in which a legion is said to consist of 6,666 men. B (1481) agrees with the number in the *Kaiserchronik*, whereas S (1510-1511) reads 6,660. V (1415), on the other hand, reads 6,160, which has been interpreted as a lacuna by Kinzel e Lienert, who both correct the number following S and propose 6,660 (Lienert 2019, 596-597).

4.3.34 *Catalogue of peoples and countries (V 1417-1479, S 1514-1583, B 1482-1519)*

The last section of the common nucleus contains a list of peoples and countries which respond to Darius's plea and is taken from Curtius with the addition of some Biblical references, omitted as usual in B. From Curtius's catalogue the *Alexanderlied* keeps:

- Persia
- Pamphylia
- Media (sub-unit, V 1444-1445, S 1543-1544)
- Armenia (sub-unit, V 1452-1455, S 1553-1556)
- Gaza and the Philistines (sub-unit, V 1456-1459, S 1561-1563)
- Phrygia
- India
- People of the Red Sea

Nineveh (V 1458, B 1498) is added by the *Alexanderlied* and also present in Rudolf von Ems and in Lambrecht's *Tobias*; Cilicia (V 1446, B 1497) is found in an analogue passage of the *Jüngere Judith*; the *Zinnonenses* (V 1435, S 1533 *Cenonenses*, B 1487 *di von Kononeses*, a toponym) have not yet been identified by the scholarship.

In the three sub-units, Media is linked to the apocryphal Jewish story of Tobit (V 1444-1445, S 1543-1544), Armenia to the landing of Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat (V 1450-1455, S 1553-1556), which the *Etymologiae* locate in Armenia, and Gaza (V 1456-1459, S 1561-1563) to the giants who took refuge there to escape the persecution of Joshua, Moses's right hand.

The *laisse* ends with the mention of the total, which amounts to 630,000 men.

4.4 Visualization

4.4.1 *The first steps*

Since the other digital editions belonging to the wider DAL project use EVT, a collaboration for the development of the support for the synoptic view in the third release of the software was launched. EVT is a general-purpose, open-source software tool for displaying TEI XML documents by generating a web application from the TEI XML data themselves. Since the beginning of the project, which began in 2003 at the University of Pisa, Italy as part of the

coursework for the Digital Humanities degree program and of the Digital Vercelli Book¹¹⁶ project, collaboration between interdisciplinary research groups has been an opportunity to implement new functionalities, also thanks to the modular nature of the software.

EVT 2 already included the possibility to choose a collation view. A case study that makes use of this feature is the doctoral project by Elisa Cugliana (2022), which consists of a synoptic scholarly digital edition of the Early New High German versions of the *Devisement dou Monde*, a travel account of the Venetian merchant and explorer Marco Polo.¹¹⁷ As pointed out by Cugliana (2022, 180), who used a separately customized version of EVT 2,

[...] EVT 2 is designed to visualise “critical” editions, that is, editions in which a critical text is proposed on the basis of multiple witnesses, although also this version supports the integration of facsimile material. Specifically, EVT 2 can create parallel visualisations of multiple witnesses based on an XML encoding of the critical apparatus provided that the latter follows the parallel segmentation method of the TEI.

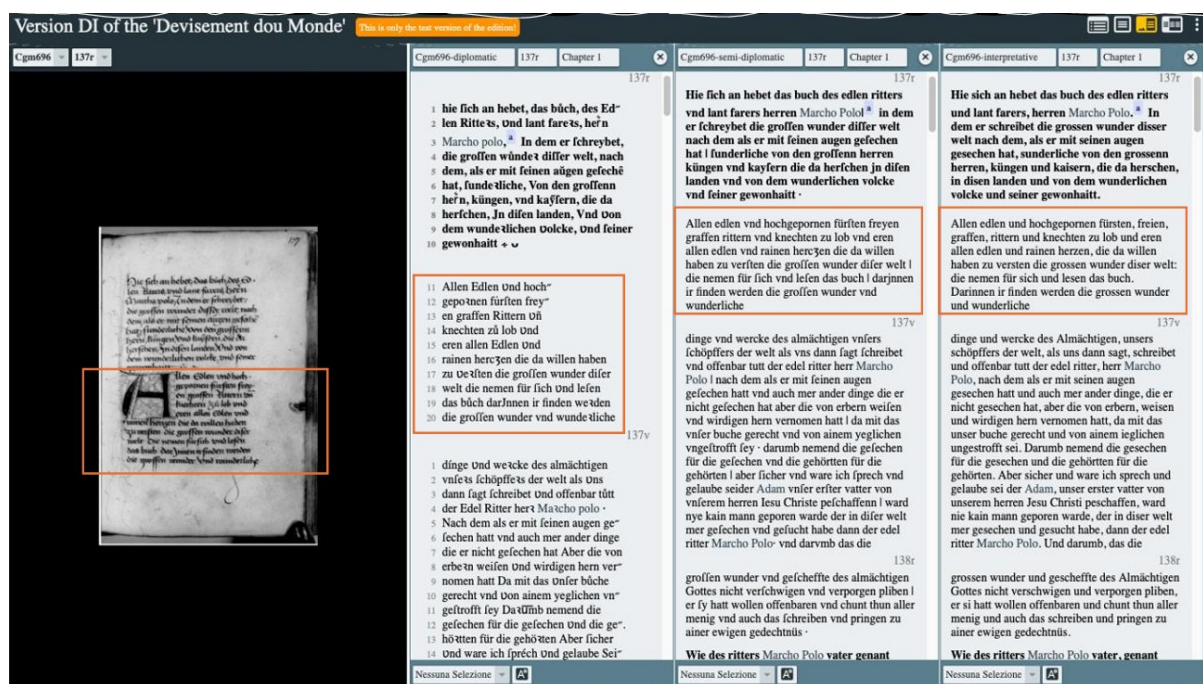


Figure 210: Cugliana (2022) *EVT Viewer*. The orange boxes have been added to the screenshot by me

Given that binding the tool to a very specific type of markup comes at the expense of both software flexibility and fidelity to the peculiarities of the textual tradition, EVT 3 aims to

¹¹⁶ The Vercelli book, or *Codex Vercellensis* (Vercelli, Archivio e Biblioteca Capitolare, MS CXVII) is a tenth-century manuscript containing Old English poems. The Digital Vercelli Book is available here: <http://vbd.humnet.unipi.it/beta2/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹¹⁷ Marco Polo journeyed along the Silk Road towards the Far East during the last years of the thirteenth century.

overcome this shortcoming, also because the development of the previous release stopped and is now limited to bug fixes. To achieve this goal, several steps are needed.

First, the main *desideratum* was offering the possibility to upload individual, independent TEI files, freeing the user from the obligation to prepare a single TEI file with a specific type of markup. It follows that EVT needs to be able to manage different encoding solutions, as not every editor needs or wants to prepare a critical apparatus, according to the goals of the project and the kind of materials under scrutiny.

Moreover, thanks to Cugliana's work, the text alignment and, consequently, the synoptic visualization, occurs at chapter level, because of the nature of the texts at the basis of her digital edition. It is also crucial to mention that Cugliana's text are prose, whereas the *Alexanderlied* is a poetic composition. This is why we thought of building on the opportunities provided by Cugliana's project and making EVT 3 handle text alignment at a more granular level.

However, in the summer of 2024, the EVT developers team found several problems with the XML parser of the third release, which created a need for code refactoring. These technical difficulties, which are not related to my project, hindered the development of the software's support for my specific type of visualization.

Given that expanding software and fixing bugs requires time, because of the deadlines set for my project I had to search for an alternative solution for the synoptic visualization of my edition. This circumstance demonstrates some of the issues faced by those involved in Digital Humanities projects.

First, the humanist who decides to embark on a project in which various computer skills are required can only go so far, because they will inevitably need IT specialists, be it for general advice or for support in one or more phases of the workflow – web development, maintenance, server management, etc. –, depending on the knowledge the humanist already has. This necessity puts the researcher in the position of being dependent on other people, which is not always easy in the case of PhD students with limited time and funding, and on the dynamics of teamwork.

Secondly, I strongly believe that, as a consequence of the obstacles mentioned above, there is a strong call for more IT-focused training and courses inside Digital Humanities programs, so that the students can be enabled to develop their digital projects independently, or at least a functioning prototype. In case this should not be possible for various reasons, such as course structure, departmental interests, lack of teachers, etc., I am convinced that universities should

strengthen technical support by hiring a larger number of IT specialists who can follow projects beyond the uploading, publishing and maintaining of the students' products.

During my stay at the Cologne Center for eHumanities (October 2023 - March 2024), several members of the team suggested I try to transform my XML data into HTML with XSLT in order to create a basic website, with a few additional functions implemented in JavaScript.

As a matter of fact, adopting universal standards such as XML, XSLT and HTML to describe, handle and structure textual data gives the advantage of being able to derive different outputs depending on the requirements and goals of the project:

The edition is indeed generated on the basis of the encoding and processing of its components: in other words, the scholarly effort is mostly captured in the data, metadata and code. This means that the EVT presentation of the data is just one possible output of the editorial work, but the contents are not bound to the tool at all and could be visualised and used in many other contexts too. (Cugliana 2022, 202)

I presented the idea to senior web developer and XSLT expert Frank Kröber, who developed a web application which made me able to visualize my data through a web interface, check the correctness of the normalized texts and verify if the annotation worked smoothly. These and other features of the application will be illustrated in the following section.

4.4.2 *The web application*

The web application developed by Frank Kröber consists of a single-page website. It opens with the parallel view of the three texts, laid out in three side-by-side columns, and is accessible here: <https://dh.dlls.univr.it/dse/dal/sinottica/>.¹¹⁸

Lines and *laises* are preceded by their number, as in the XML files. As a matter of fact, in the V and B manuscripts, each *laisse*/paragraph is introduced by colored initials or a blank space where the initial was supposed to be drawn and is indicated by thicker and higher letters in S's edition: in the web page these numbers are displayed above the first line of their *laisse*/paragraph, at the center of the column. I do not start the numbering from 1 but from the actual line and *laisse*/paragraph number assigned by the editions I used.

¹¹⁸ Last access: 22.04.2025.

The user has immediate access to the full text of the common nucleus for each witness simply by scrolling down the page. At the top, in the navigation bar, the user can find a drop-down menu, first envisioned by web designer Dennis Buyna, where it is possible to select first the witness – V, S or B –, and then the textual units. By clicking on the name of the textual unit of choice, the user is automatically redirected to the portion of the text that corresponds to that unit.

The pivotal feature is the outlining and highlighting of the selected textual unit in all the versions it is present in, as this allows the synoptic visualization of corresponding portions of texts. Therefore, the attention of the user is directed to the lines that constitute the textual units, which can thus be read parallelly and more easily compared.

As it was important for me to visualize the representation of my markup locally and to be as autonomous as possible in the handling of the edition, I obtained full access to the whole folder containing the data related to the website, so that I could test and, when needed, change some features of the page myself. For example, I modified the CSS files to encase *laisse* numbers in a thick, solid black border in order to give the user a clearer representation of the text structure.

```
#div_id {  
    padding: 0.2em;  
    border: 3px solid black;  
    float: left;  
}
```

Figure 221: An example of CSS customization

Moreover, thanks to Saxon 10.8 which processes the data, with a simple string in the Command Line Interface I can quickly and easily launch the transformation any time I need to modify my XML files and have the changes displayed in the web app.

Since digital philology is a young discipline, choosing versatile tools based on widely adopted specifications unlocks new possibilities for varied research questions. This represents a valuable opportunity for the advancement of the field and provides space for developing solutions to problems which are common to researchers working on different textual traditions. Such tools, especially if they include a comprehensive set of functionalities, are also timesaving because

they relieve philologists, to some extent, from having to navigate the sea of choices in the edition creation process and invent an isolated, noninteroperable instrument from scratch.

Integrating HTML, XSLT, CSS and JavaScript offers considerable advantages. First, they are all universal, free to use and stable technologies, which guarantees the usability and the duration of the resource. Each of these technologies performs a specific task, which makes the workflow easier and the files cleaner and lighter. Structuring the content of a web page with HTML and keeping it separate from the CSS file containing indications for the definition of style and layout makes the handling and updating of the website uncomplicated. XSLT is supported by all modern browsers and can transform XML data, again kept separate from the instruction file, into different formats for visualization. JavaScript also functions in all modern browsers and programs the behavior of the web page, which can be altered in real-time, and allows the user to interact with the page.

Nevertheless, there is room for improvement on this web page. For instance, even though a brief description of the project and the web application can be found in the dedicated page of the main DAL project website, taking the information from the TEI header and transforming it into a home page or introductory paragraphs would make the rationale and goals of the synopsis more evident and the usage of the page more immediate. It would also be useful to have a button that redirects the user to the navigation bar at the top of the page without having to scroll back up to the drop-down menu when another unit needs to be selected. As far as the menu is concerned, given the considerable number of sub-units that I have identified, it would be more precise to create an additional menu, opening from each main unit, in which their subsection can be listed. This would also make the main menu shorter, optimizing usability. Another *desideratum* is the inclusion of a search function to increase website engagement, as it would encourage more active user participation in information retrieval.

We opted for this visualization strategy because it offered a compromise between a cautious approach and an exploratory effort. On the one hand, we followed conventional methods such as text annotation with the TEI and web application building with the standards mentioned above to ensure comprehension, reproducibility, flexibility, and security within our time constraints. On the other hand, it was an attempt to detach ourselves from EVT and evaluate other visualization systems for the DAL project, to test the performance of the `<anchor>` element, to observe and compare the textual units by means of clickable lists and to provide a tool richer than the digital version of Kinzel's (1884) edition on the WayBack Machine.

The results of this work mirror the choices discussed above, though alternative paths would certainly have been possible. Another approach which has been gaining popularity in the last twenty years is the representation of knowledge as graph, for example via RDF – Resource Description Framework –¹¹⁹, which formalizes data as triples consisting of subject, predicate, and object. The subject, or resource, is the entity which is being described, the predicate is a property or a relationship assigned to the subject, and the object is a value/fact or another resource/entity in relation to the subject via the predicate. Graphs allow us to model information in machine-readable, searchable, flexible, and non-hierarchical structures. Information is represented as relationships – graph edges – between entities – graph nodes –. Of particular interest for a future revision of my data and its presentation is the digital annotation environment Codex (Palladino *et al.* 2020), which is also based on stand-off properties and thus favors the annotation of different interpretation layers, e.g. people, places, concepts, qualities, morphosyntax, and semantics, while also avoiding conflict in the markup. The complex network of information in the *Alexanderlied*'s texts would be particularly well-suited to this system of representation, as Alexander's actions, encounters and travels, alongside the narrator's comments, the metaphors and the excursuses, could be made visually accessible, thereby revealing associations among them within one text but also across the three versions and the sources.

4.5 Publication and archiving

The publication and archiving of editions and their interfaces are demanding tasks in terms of time and IT skills: therefore, these steps are often carried out in collaboration between the editor/philologists and IT specialists (Mancinelli and Pierazzo 2020, 80). The DAL project benefits from the support of the IT technicians of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures of the University of Verona, who manage the institutional server that hosts its website. The platform groups all the works sprouted from the DAL project, is reachable from this link: [DAL Project](#).¹²⁰ It was built with a minimalist design to increase accessibility, namely with simplicity, a sans-serif font and a basic, narrow color palette, all of which prevent distraction and help focus on the content.

Since longevity and safety of research data must be ensured, I will upload the edition and the related metadata to Zenodo,¹²¹ an open repository where researchers can upload, curate, share

¹¹⁹ The Semantic Web Standards page on RDF: <https://www.w3.org/RDF/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹²⁰ Home page of the *Digital Alexanderlied* project. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹²¹ Zenodo home page: <https://zenodo.org/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

and publish their data and software. Zenodo runs daily backups of data and metadata, which are stored and kept in multiple replicas, and retains them for the duration of its lifetime. In addition to ensuring accessibility and preservation, Zenodo does not impose restrictions on field of research, file format and type of license. In line with the FAIR principles of Findability and Accessibility (Wilkinson 2016), Zenodo gives the possibility to reserve and obtain a DOI – Document Object Identifier –, a persistent and unique identifier to assign to the content one wants to upload. Moreover, Zenodo keeps track of changes to the resource through DOI versioning, which means that it registers a DOI for every version of the upload and one DOI for the content as a whole, comprehensive of all versions. This facilitates and improves the quality of citations.

For information and/or access to Frank Kröber’s data and for details on the website of the DAL project, the responsible parties can be contacted.¹²²

¹²² Frank Kröber: info.fk@web.de; IT team in Verona: matteo.lissandrini@univr.it.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Achievements

Naturally, this work is just one possible outcome of the study of the *Alexanderlied*, representing a personal perspective. In the words of Cugliana (2022, 97),

[...] even in the simplest editorial choice there is both a win and a loss: although editorial decisions are usually supported by a solid theoretical basis, there always remains an unavoidable level of subjectivity: editions are and will always be hypotheses.

It follows that some information and aspects of the object of study are excluded from the final result, which also mirrors the interpretation of the person who studies, edits and annotates the text.

The philological process is, in fact, a perfectible and constantly in-progress operation (Segre 1985, 41). One example that I could mention from direct experience is that, during the text analysis phase, the delimitation of the textual units changed constantly, as every new reading and discussion opened the door to new details to observe and to different perspectives that had eluded me before.

To exemplify a few features that have not been included in this work, I could point to what I discussed in section 4.2.3, which are two *desiderata* for a future revision of the edition. Moreover, to avoid redundancy, I have omitted specifications on the manuscripts and their digital editions because they were already present in the related works. An accurate digital critical apparatus such as the one prepared by Lorenzo Ferroni for his edition of B¹²³ could also have been tested as a path to take for the treatment and presentation of variants.

Nevertheless, this work achieved the two goals set forth in the original idea behind this project: proposing an annotation model for the synopsis of the three versions of the *Alexanderlied* and developing a web application for a prototype of their synoptical digital edition. As far as the XML model is concerned, it is consistent, clear, reusable and above all suitable for the division of the *Alexanderlied* into textual units. The synoptical digital edition and the related application represent new products, openly available on the web. Although it was already possible to read the *Alexanderlied* online on the already-mentioned Internet Archive page hosting Kinzel's

¹²³ Home page of the edition: <https://dh.dlss.univr.it/dse/dal/b/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

edition, my synoptic edition differs in the number of versions made available, namely three as opposed to two, and the nature of the textual analysis, which I performed through the individuation of textual units. Moreover, V and S are accessible and annotated in the *Referenzkorpus Mittelhochdeutsch*¹²⁴ but the modality of consultation and the information accompanying the texts are different, as the corpus focuses on morphological and part-of-speech analysis. The *Referenzkorpus Frühneuhochdeutsch*¹²⁵ does not contain B, yet.

The workflow and the point of view adopted in this work have made it possible to give a structure, represented visually, to the similarities and variations of the three recensions, as elaborated in the description of the textual units (4.3). To mention a handful of the most evident characteristics, it is possible to notice how B consistently omits biblical and mythological references, V's predilection for the narrator's comments and S's consistent rhyming pattern. For example, Daniel's prophecy (4.3.6) and the comparison with the battle of Troy (4.3.30) are not inserted in B's version, whose writing style is more concise compared to the other two recensions and favors a paradoxographical and anecdotal register, distancing itself from the epic-like one of V and S (Cipolla 2023c). A couple of instances of V's narrator's emphatic comments can be found at lines 940, *Alexander tet in grôz unreht*, 'Alexander committed a grave injustice towards them', and 1273, *Â, wie guot ainen lob daz swert gewan*, 'Oh, such a good praise deserved the sword'. This characteristic can be explained with the general moralizing intent of the Vorau manuscript and V's adherence to the sources, such as Curtius for line 1273 and the praise of the weapon (Cipolla 2013a, 89-90, 261). Finally, as already shown in the extracts presented in 2.2, S's rhyme is regular, a trait that follows the fashion of romance writers of the time (Cipolla 2013a, 121-122).

5.2 Further developments

Despite the obtained results, this project can give origin to several other research avenues.

First, since this edition comprises only the portions of the text belonging to the common nucleus, the next step would be to include the remaining lines to shift attention to the divergences between the three recensions, in particular to S and B's continuation. This could also provide an opportunity to add more information and reflections on the sources and on the different episodes of Alexander's life and legend that, since antiquity, have appeared in multiple

¹²⁴ Home page of the project: <https://www.linguistics.rub.de/rem//index.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹²⁵ Home page of project: <https://www.linguistics.rub.de/ref/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

manuscript traditions, thus improving the understanding of the complex relationships that exist among the numerous witnesses on Alexander's figure.

Continuing on the subject of sources, depending on the availability of the texts, it is fascinating to envision a multi-witness, multi-lingual synoptic edition, drawing from the international Alexandrian lore, also not limited to the closest models of the *Alexanderlied*. The annotation model that I proposed could effectively be reused with this purpose, as it would allow to delimit portions of text spawning from the same source across witnesses, with the *caveat*, however, that the visualization strategy is chosen carefully. Despite the continuum of the hypertext, a web page is still contained by a screen, and there is only a certain number of columns containing different texts that it can accommodate without loss of accessibility and user-friendliness.

Particularly useful would be a discussion on multi-version texts and their synopsis with New Testament philologists. These experts could provide precious advice on methodological problems and the treatment and visualization of variants.

Collaboration with *heiEDITIONS* would also be thought-provoking because seeing how the group would handle the *Alexanderlied*'s data would be a learning experience in terms of what can and cannot be extracted from the tradition using the state-of-the-art Heidelberg infrastructure, for both the annotation process and the visualization of the edition.

Cooperation and networking could also be fostered by adding markup for named entities. For this purpose, the Virtual International Authority File – VIAF –¹²⁶ could be used to ensure consistency and disambiguation through the use of controlled vocabularies. This would, in turn, facilitate searchability of the texts and interoperability with other digital editions or archives, and enhance the value of the edition through the incorporation of Linked Open Data.¹²⁷

Another opportunity for project enrichment could be cooperation with the new research center Digital Arena for Inclusive Humanities – DAIH – of the University of Verona.¹²⁸ The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures was again awarded funding by the University Departments of Excellence initiative for the years 2023-2027 to foster studies in the field of inclusive Humanities. From this perspective, the web application could be a test bed for improving the accessibility and inclusivity of web-based digital editions. As a matter of fact, digital edition projects must provide open access to the interface of the edition, not only to the

¹²⁶ Home page: <https://viaf.org/en>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹²⁷ The Linked Open Data principles: <https://www.w3.org/DesignIssues/LinkedData.html>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

¹²⁸ Home page of the initiative: <https://daih.eu/>. Last access: 22.04.2025.

data and to the documentation on the process and criteria adopted in the workflow. This also includes the principle of equity and inclusion in the production and use of knowledge, eliminating barriers for people with sensory disabilities and cognitive disorders. Inclusive design encompasses many aspects, and the goal of accessibility can be achieved in various ways. One of the requirements of an efficient accessible web page should be providing so-called assistive technologies to facilitate usability for people with disabilities. For example, people with visual impairments could benefit from a screen reader, which can read the content of a page, alert the user when the page has finished loading, or when there have been errors in loading or compilation, and so on. Moreover, people who cannot use the keyboard need to be able to use voice recognition to control their interaction with the computer. Another important theme is the use of color as a vehicle of meaning, which limits, for example, people with color blindness. Therefore, a web application should include other strategies for representation, such as captions, graphics with patterns, or other indicators, like numbers, for instance. These points only scratch the surface of the issue, but the main tenet behind inclusive and accessible design is to reach as many people as possible and to allow them to have control over their experience with the product.

When considering accessibility, in addition to the *desiderata* signaled at the end of 4.4.2, the web application could be improved by the inclusion of source references, project documentation, navigation guidelines, download and conversion possibilities for the files for a more comprehensive understanding of the whole enterprise.

Moreover, alternative visualization strategies could be considered, and the benefits of a text-as-graph visualization have already been mentioned.

Spatial analysis could also be performed by creating digital synoptic maps of Alexander's travels in the three recensions, which is made even more riveting by the presence of fictional or unclear places in the story.

Another intriguing experiment would be to try to automate the collation of the witnesses with CollateX, which would enable a token-based comprehensive view of correspondences and differences in an alignment table.

The range of possibilities is as vast as the works dealing with the story and myth of Alexander the Great, since "there will never be a definitive portrait of Alexander" (Stoneman 1991, 4). It follows that working on the Alexander tradition, the process of data structuring and

visualization strategies can certainly advance research in many different fields, most importantly philology, comparative literary studies, and digital humanities.

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