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Faustina Doufikar-Aerts

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The life and exploits of the Macedonian King Alexander the Great were recorded and passed down in the legendary biography, known as the Alexander Romance of Pseudo-Callisthenes. During the Middle Ages the Romance became extremely popular, after its Greek original had been translated and elaborated in numerous versions and vernaculars. Alexander's fame spread all over Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Central and South East Asia. In this study the focus is on the Arabic tradition. For the first time this field of research has now been explored in all its details, resulting in a complete survey and classification of this rich tradition. The book is written as a quest. It presents the process of tracing manuscripts and texts, some of which were considered lost, others still unknown. One of the major results is the discovery of manuscripts of the long sought for Arabic translation of Pseudo-Callisthenes' Alexander Romance. By this find the author proved the survival of this text, reconstructed its stemma and investigated its character and provenance. Another merit of this study is the portrayal of Alexander, as he occurs in all different genres of Arabic and Islamic literature. A classification of the texts, a detailed analysis and many translated episodes offer the reader a coherent view on this literature, that shows Alexander on time as a pre-Islamic world conqueror, another as a seeker of Wisdom and even as a religious messenger. Finally, there is a summary of an Arabic folk epic, Sirat al-Iskandar, which demonstrates the complete incorporation of Alexander as the protagonist of a specimen of Arab popular lore. This survey of the Arabic Alexander tradition complies with a long felt need among scholars of Medieval Studies, Islamic Studies, Comparative Literature, as well as among classicists, historians, orientalists and anyone interested in the legacy of Alexander.

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